

01/07/18 Epiphany, 2018

--Some events are life-altering. 100 years ago an event took place that was life-altering for my family and many others. It was a tragic event, but much good also came from it.

-- In 1918 a flu epidemic hit around the world and in the United States. It was so powerful over 600,000 people died in our country alone, one half of one percent of the entire population of our country at the time.

-- Two of them were the parents of my grandmother. They died three days apart from each other. She was the oldest child, a senior in high school preparing to go to college (rare for a girl in that day).

-- Those plans were quickly changed, as she had to get a job. Because of that, though, she would meet my grandfather. And 12 years later their youngest child would be born, my own mother.

-- Over 2,000 years ago, a life-altering event took place which was barely noticed by the world at the time. A baby was born in a backwater town in Judea. But some magi from countries east of there did notice. They were not Jews, but they were seeking God's presence.

-- And the story of their journey is not all light and peace, like it's depicted in a manger scene. Their arrival on foreign soil was met with fear and skepticism. The local ruler didn't want any challenge to his power.

-- So he played a sneaky game, asking the magi to go to seek the child and bring back news so he could share the joy. Of course, we know that was a ruse. Herod's cruel slaughter of infants in the area would be proof.

-- But their visit to the child Jesus made all the difference. This child would not just be significant for the Jewish people. The entire world would be changed by his life, death and resurrection.

-- The funny thing, though, is that we don't really know what happened to these men afterward. Like Melchisedek in the book of Genesis, they appear and quickly disappear. They may not even have lived to hear of Jesus' death and resurrection.

-- But they were witnesses to Jesus' power nevertheless. Many traditions developed around them and, as a parish, we inherit them through our name of St. Caspar. Some of these may be legends, but that doesn't really matter.

-- What does matter is that people witnessed to the power of Jesus Christ even when he was young. And we inherit the call to witness to the power of Jesus Christ—we, who come from ancestors from all corners of the world.

-- Our personal family story and our parish family story are testimonies to the power of Jesus present in our corner of the world. They tell us that we are co-heirs with the original people of God and members of God's family on earth, as St. Paul says today.

-- Most of us, like those magi, will live our lives on earth and will die with no mention in the history books and little memory other than those of our loved ones who knew us in this life.

-- But that does not mean our lives have made no difference. Like those magi, we witness to the power of Jesus Christ when we pass on our faith to our children and grandchildren.

-- We witness to the power of Jesus Christ when we refuse to be caught up in hopelessness and cynicism, when we do not return evil for evil, when we seek to make peace among friends and enemies alike.

-- We witness to the power of Jesus Christ at St. Caspar's when we welcome people of various ethnic groups into our community, and when we reach out to the poor and the needy in mind, body and spirit.

-- Yes, several centuries from now our names may be forgotten. If like the magi, however, we welcome the power of the Savior into our lives, it will make a difference for the entire world.