

HOMILY

The Epiphany of the Lord January 4, 2009

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In *The Family Circus* cartoon, the little girl sits her baby brother on her lap and tells him the story of Christmas. It goes something like this:

"Jesus was born just in time for Christmas up at the North Pole surrounded by eight tiny reindeer and the Virgin Mary... then Santa Claus showed up with lots of toys and stuff and some swaddling clothes...the three Wise Men and elves all sang carols while the Little Drummer Boy helped Joseph trim the tree...in the meantime, Frosty the Snowman saw this star."

Thus concludeth the reading from *The Family Circus*.

Today, we want to set the story right. It wasn't Frosty the Snowman who saw the star; it was three Wise Men, men who went in search of the place where the star would lead them.

We need a star that we can follow. It may be that the greatest need of our time and our generation is to find a star—a singular goal, objective or ideal upon which we can fix our gaze and toward which we can move. The tragedy of our time is that people are pulling in so many different directions that rather than moving toward the Kingdom of God, we seem more likely to be headed toward anarchy.

We need a star from on high to follow. We need a vision of a better world toward which to strive. Everyone in life has to follow someone. Epiphany points us to Jesus and says, "***Follow that star.***"

There are a lot of different reasons to follow that star. Some do it to find wealth—to reach for the gold, frankincense and myrrh. Herod sought out the star in order to

try and preserve his own power. For Christians, we follow Jesus' star because Jesus, the Star, is the way, the truth and the life.

The opposite of life is not necessarily death. It is also an unlived life. Jesus calls us to live life, a five-pointed, five-dimensional life.

Think of what happens when a character in a movie jumps into the back of a waiting cab and yells to the driver, "Hurry! Follow that car!" You're now on a journey and you don't know where it will take you. You will go on side roads, alleyways, places you never expected and didn't even know existed.

This is what happens when you follow the Jesus Star.

For the Wise Men who began following this star, it was the beginning of a long, life-altering, all-consuming journey. But no matter where our journey begins, if we faithfully follow that star, we will come into the light. We will experience the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We will come to the baby, lying in his mother's arms, to the rabbi preaching, teaching and healing all over the countryside. We will come to the Son of God hanging on the cross, to the Risen Savior standing by our side and calling us into the light.

On this first Sunday of the New Year, let's follow Jesus' star and let his light shine a new outlook on life. If God gives me another day, as I awake, by his light may I realize that this is the best day of my life, ever!

- ✦ In 2009, I'm going to celebrate what an unbelievable life I have had so far—the accomplishments, the many blessings, and, yes, even the hardships, because they served to make me stronger.
- ✦ I will go through 2009 with my head held high and a happy, grateful heart. I will marvel at God's seemingly simple gifts—the quiet morning, the clouds, the freshly fallen snow. In 2009, none of these miraculous creations will escape my notice.
- ✦ In 2009, I will share my excitement for life with other people. I'll make someone smile. I'll go out of my way to perform an unexpected act of kindness for someone.

- ✦ This year, I'll give a compliment to someone who seems down. I'll tell someone how special they are. I'll tell someone I love just how deeply I care for them and how much they mean to me.
- ✦ This is the year I'll quit worrying about what I don't have and start being grateful for all the wonderful things God has already given me.
- ✦ I'll remember that worry is a waste of time because my faith in God and his Divine Plan ensure everything will be just fine!
- ✦ Tonight, before I go to bed, I'll go outside and raise my eyes to the heavens. I will stand in awe at the beauty of the stars and the moon and I will praise God for these magnificent treasures.

As the day ends and I lay my head down on my pillow, I will thank the Almighty for the best year of my life. And I will sleep the sleep of a contented child, excited with expectation because I know tomorrow is going to be the best year of my life.

