

Homily for the Epiphany
Jan. 2-3, 2010

“What would you do if you were the devil?”
If you were the devil, what would be your plan of action to undermine the works of God?

If I were the devil, I would work with all my might to convince people that ideas didn't really matter and that actions were not very important. I would set up experts that would speak authoritatively about what popular society believed in, and these same authorities would demonstrate how foolish Christ's words and messengers are.

That way people would not pay much attention to the Church, they would consider it's leaders out of touch with current trends and they would tame the word of God, and make the Son of God a pet that could give comfort, but has no power. People would not need to be concerned about their choices and they would not have to ask, whose kingdom their choices promoted. I think this is exactly how the devil has worked in the world since he first had to confront the power of Christ,

When the three wise men came to Herod, who was a smart and educated man, he tried to convince the wise men that he too wanted to share in the joy of the Christ's birth. He tried to hide his suspicions and hatred. He made a point of telling them that there was no risk of danger if they would just trust him. He was one of them. He simply wanted to know and understand, like them. The Devil was up to his old tricks.

It is said that these three wise men followed a star. Do we believe that there was actually a star? It seems foolish

to think that three wise men actually followed a star to Bethlehem.

But you see how the devil still works on us? We listen to learned men and women of science who tell us that the star was a myth. We listen to experts in psychology who tell us that this story is a fiction. But we ignore the witnesses that God has put before us, because they are out of touch.

And here is the devil's genius; if the star is a myth, then the story is a fable and if the story is a fable it is not really true. If it is not true, what real value does such a story have for our day-to-day living?

There are many voices that tell us that we really don't have to take all of this Epiphany stuff seriously. These are the loud voices that come from darkness. But the Magi were wise because they were attentive to the spirit of God. They let God's spirit direct them to truth. They trusted the signs of god and these witnesses allowed them to see the lies of Herod and his master.

Recently I learned that Astronomers have strong evidence that an unusual star did exist at the time of Jesus birth. As a matter of fact, it was so unusual that Dr. Mike Molnar in his book, "The Star of Bethlehem" asserts that it would have attracted the attention of astrologers from Persia and Egypt and other countries that took astrological occurrences very seriously.

It is possible to calculate what the night sky would have looked like 2000 years ago. It is evident from these calculations that not only a bright star appeared in the sky, but Jupiter, which was known to be the Regal star, was in close proximity to the moon heightening it's appearance in

the night sky and magnifying it's importance as a sign of the birth of a great King. From the point of view of ancient astrologers this meant that not just a king was to be born, but a King of Kings, a ruler of rulers. Now we can see more clearly why these Magi came such a great distance and why Herod was so threatened.

But what I also found fascinating is that an old foe of religion is becoming more and more it's ally. Science, which for so long claimed to be in opposition to faith and religion, seems to support and witness to the historical truth of our scriptures. In the end, God's voice will always speak the truth and unmask lies and deceit.

The three wise men from far off places, without prejudice, observed the hand of God in the world. They recognized a cosmic event. They understood that this thing would drastically change the course of human history.

God uses the wise men to show that though the world does not recognize it's savior, never the less his birth has profound consequences for all creation and for all peoples. The voices of darkness will try to distract us, but the star shines brightly. We will see Gods hand clearly if we have faith and trust in his witnesses.

We remember this event so that we will not miss the significance of Christ's birth. It is God's word and promise alone that gives meaning to human life. It is in Jesus alone that we will find joy and peace. No other food will feed us or fill us.

We also remember this even to stay alert to the falsehoods, which destroy faith and can allow darkness to overcome the light of truth.

The words of Christ **do** matter. God has taken the effort to speak directly to our hearts.

The Mass **does** matter; it should be a priority in our lives. Christ has given it to us to deepen our love and commitment to him and his household. The star in **our** midst does not **point to Christ it is** Christ himself.

Celebrating the Sacrament of Confession with thoughtfulness and honesty **matters**. It is the way we listen to the voice of God and identify the deceit of sin in our lives.

Like the wise men, we are asked to leave the comfort of suspicions and bad habits to follow the star of truth. We are asked to bear witness to other people, by avoiding sin, living our faith, and honoring the dignity of all people.

We can mess up the devil. We can throw a wrench in his plans by trusting in the teachings of Christ's Church, and by respecting and supporting those who Christ has chosen as our Pastors and teachers.