

Homily. Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. 1/2 January 2022.

These days it seems like a lot of people are doing one of two things. They're either spending time with their faces looking skywards at what's coming or they're focused downwards on their feet just trying to make it through another day in one piece. The first gift offered to us from the Wise Men, the Magi from the East, is that they managed to do both of these things at once; walking hopefully towards the future without ever losing their footing in the slippery sands as they went along.

Certainly, they'd started out with hearts and minds inspired by the light of the bright new star that they'd seen rising. But, they realised that following the starlight meant they'd have to make a perilous journey across the desert wastes into foreign, not always friendly lands. The hope-light of the future was worth the risk and effort, but getting there safely meant staying focused on each and every step that they took along the way.

Moreover, the traps that they had to look out for weren't all in the desert. Having arrived in Jerusalem they ran into the trickery and scheming of King Herod. He wanted to milk them for information in exchange for his hospitality, asking them to return to him once their mission was over with the newborn's location. Thankfully, they aren't called wise for nothing. They listened to Herod, went on their way and very wisely listened even more to a dream they had warning them to avoid Herod's will and head home by a different route. We know that Herod, driven by fear and jealousy, later on ordered the massacre of all the children of Bethlehem.

So, as I said earlier, this story gives us a gift, not of gold, frankincense and myrrh because you and I aren't the Light, but the gift of God's light and wisdom, showing us a future worth moving towards while helping us on our way one safe and steady step at a time. But, there's more though, a bonus gift for us all, a sort of Easter egg if you will hidden just under the surface of this saga. You see, the Wise men weren't Jews, but pagans with their own strange beliefs and customs. As it was first to lowly shepherds that the birth of Christ was announced, so it was for these pagans that the new star shone bright and clear. It was they, people of the big wide world out there, who discerned it before anyone else calculating the steps their feet would have to take in following its guiding light to the home of the King and Light of the world.

During the course of this coming year as we look up in faith and hope to the Light of the Lord, so, too, we wisely draw closer to him in every small loving act and by every simple step and service we take and render to others. This can be so because we have been graced to realise that no one of good will is ever excluded from the circle of love and warmth surrounding the crib of the Christ, our King, our Lord and Light of all.