

# Homily for the Feast of the Epiphany

January 6-7, 2018

Readings: Isaiah 60: 1-6; Ephesians 3: 2-3A, 5-6; Matthew 2: 1-12

Preacher: Gloria Ulterino

Catherine was her name. You could easily spot her in church—tall, stately, usually wearing a stylish hat. A professional woman, of friendly demeanor, she always accompanied her husband and his disabled daughter. Her husband, Tom, was one of the “pillars of the church,” lovable and compassionate. On the day of Catherine’s funeral, it was Tom who stood tall to deliver her eulogy.

Although the pastor was a fine preacher, I cannot remember a word he said. But Tom? His words I’ll never forget! “When I was growing up,” he began, “we lived at the very end of a cul-de-sac. At dusk I loved to go outside as the lamplighter arrived. I would watch ... as he very carefully lit each lamp ... one after another ... until a soft glow covered the entire street. (Pause) Catherine was my lamplighter.”

Tom was drawn to the light. So are we, in this clouded, darkened world, where bullying has become commonplace in politics. Where the earth cries out for our care. Where devastating storms rob so many of their homes. Where so many people in poverty worry about lack of health care. Where physical and mental diseases still have their say. And so very much more.

Yes, we are drawn to the Light, for we are people of faith. Hardwired to seek out the Source of All Light—The One and Only, who created each and every one of us for good, caring, mercy, and setting things right in this clouded, darkened world of ours.

We are seekers, not unlike the magi of old. Gentiles, from a faraway world. Not necessarily three, but an unknown number. Not kings, but people who had studied the heavens. Enough to be drawn by a star they couldn’t explain, a star that promised more of life than they had previously known. A path to a Mystery they *had* to follow. Even at night, when their way would have been strewn with the danger of robbers and who knows what else. They *had* to discover the Source. They *had* to offer the proper gifts—gold for royalty, frankincense for worship, and

myrrh to proclaim that this king was one of us, yes, even in death itself. They *had* to go home by a different way, for their lives—after finding this king—would never, ever be the same.

So it is for us—hardwired, like the magi, to seek that Ruler of our very lives. That same Mystery who created each and every one of us. Who yearns for *us* beyond all telling—first, last, and always—never giving up on us. How privileged we are, then, to be baptized into this Mystery of Love. To be given a candle that is none other than the Very Light of this World. To be charged with keeping this candle burning brightly all the days of our life, on into eternity. To set out on the journey of a lifetime: discovering, claiming and living out our own unique God-given gifts in our own unique way.

Doesn't this journey flow out of companionship with others? Relationships of nurturing, caring and mentoring? In and through nudges, challenges and glimpses of "more"? Perhaps out of a desire to right wrongs ... and sufferings? Consider your stories. And those of the magi. Is it easy? No! Possible? Risky? Sometimes even dangerous? Courageous? And worth every step, even every misstep? Yes, yes, and yes, by the grace of God.

I know. For at a certain point in my life two people—a priest and a faith formation director—set me on a new pathway home. *Never* had I been so certain of anything! I *had* to discover this Source of All Life. I *had* to study theology. I *had* to go into parish ministry and follow wherever else this path would lead. The struggles have never ceased, but the joy has been beyond all telling.

Since Vatican II in the early 1960s, we—the Church, all of us—are called to be lamplighters, just like Catherine. People who glow with the Light of Christ, the Light of All Peoples (Lumen Gentium). Or, a field hospital, as Pope Francis likes to describe it. A place of continual reaching out to others rather than holding ourselves aloof. A place of building communities of health and healing rather than walls. A place of listening, conversing, understanding, forgiving, helping to make whole.

*This* is our calling. *This* is our vocation, however we live it out. As musicians, scientists, creators of families, pray-ers, politicians (yes, politicians), lawyers, teachers, priests, lay ministers, "techies," factory workers, laborers, and on and on. For the One we seek is the Lamplighter of our Hearts, the Source of all gifts,

intended for lifting the clouds of darkness and disease, intended for our good and the good of our world, intended for healing and hope. This is the true meaning of Epiphany, the revelation of Christ to the entire world.