

A LIFE'S JOURNEY

MATTHEW 2:1-12

It seems as if nothing has really changed in humankind's attitude toward Jesus since the time he walked the face of the earth. Some are still seeking to destroy anything that represents his presence in the world while others are seeking him in order to open the treasure chests of their hearts in praise, adoration, and worship. As you embark on a new year, consider how each step you take may well be a step in one of these two directions. Herod sought the wisdom of the chief priests and the scribes of the people in order to learn the birthplace of the Messiah. Having learned this, he secretly called for the wise men of his court to determine the time of the star's appearance.

There is for each of us a place and a time when we can come to experience the living presence and reality of Jesus Christ in our midst—an answer to our own question that lies deeply within us: “Where is he who has the ultimate reign and sovereignty over my life? Where is he who is worthy of all my worship and devotion?”

We all have the “star” of life experiences, of the people God puts into our lives, of the quiet stillness that draws us into deeper meditation on the goodness of God and our heartfelt communion with him, all of which draw us to him. This leads us to a relationship into which we enter with joy, just as the magi entered with joy into the house where Mary and the child were that day.

It is a life of kneeling down in humility to the one who was and is and will always be; to the one who “is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8 NRSV); to the one who “was in the beginning with God” (John 1:2), who redeemed

us and has called us by name as his (Isaiah 43:1b). The gift we bring is ourselves. For many, this has been a long journey marked by fear and uncertainty, joy and excitement, questions with no answers and despair mixed with hope. It is a journey that leads us by one path, reflecting on how our lives have been lived unto ourselves. And yet it is a journey of transformation that takes us out by another path into the possibilities that exist for us as we live for him and please him in all our ways.

Question of the Week for Daily Reflection:

Who may have “lifted the veil” to how your life is a continuous quest of drawing closer to Christ in worship, adoration, and praise?

Prayer:

SHAPED IN THE WAITING

LUKE 3:15-17, 21-22

Our lives are filled with situations requiring us to wait. For example, a businessman or woman sits in heavy traffic waiting for the red light to turn green, all the while checking his or her watch in hopes of getting to an important meeting on time. We all know the frustration of sitting in the waiting room of a doctor's office bearing some illness or waiting to receive the results of recent medical tests.

My own father once asked in his late eighties for a stopwatch as a Christmas gift in order that he could time how long he had to wait at his doctor's office before the staff called him back. A college student waits in anxiety over the posted results of a critical exam; a young mother-to-be knows what it means to endure the ups and downs of her pregnancy, waiting for her beloved child to be born.

We cannot escape times of waiting. We are even told in Scripture to "wait for the Lord" (Isaiah 40:31). Suffice it to say that we wait generally in two ways: (1) in eager expectation for the fulfillment of a long-awaited hope to become a reality, or (2) in fear, anxiety, and trepidation over an event or situation we would rather avoid.

In the events leading up to the baptism of Jesus, Luke records that

The people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah. John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (vv. 15-16)

Baptized Christians today have received the water of holy baptism, incorporating them into the household of God as members of the family of Christ. The universal church becomes our true home and Christians throughout the world our family. How we are molded and shaped in our spiritual home determines who we are as children of God—much like the shaping we receive from our earthly family unit.

We are always living under our Christian baptism. And as the people of Jesus' day had long awaited the coming of the Messiah, we are waiting today for his second coming and the time when everything about our earthly lives will be weighed in the scales of God's justice. Unfortunately, getting preoccupied with the time of Jesus' return and with all that points to this time can blind us to ways in which he comes to us through the people that cross our paths each day. We might consciously ask, "Could this person standing before me be Christ making his presence known to me?" Whether our waiting is in eager expectation or in anxious uncertainty, our life is a time of preparation for the day when you and I will stand before our maker and render an accounting of our lives.