

Epiphany Sunday
January 8, 2012 - Cycle B

“Straight from the Heart”

There is an Epiphany legend that originates somewhere in ancient Persia. The legend goes something like this: Once upon a time, a long time ago, a star, somewhere in that invisible world, left the heart of God and shot through the universe. It crashed through invisible barriers and then crashed through the invisible barriers of the visible universe. It moved at the speed of light and all the other stars of the visible universe hushed their glow, dimmed their beauty and bowed their heads as this great star broke all the barriers of time and space. Down it moved, from an uncreated universe to a created universe, down, down toward the earth. Sprung from the heart of God it kept moving, silently, mysteriously, yet majestically. And when it encountered the atmosphere of the earth it split in two, a part of it circling the earth and the other part imbedding itself in the heart of the earth.

Oh yes, observers noted this new star. They noted the radiance, a new light, coming from above; and they felt the radiance coming from somewhere in the caverns of the earth. It was as if the light of God was above, below, and everywhere. Three old observers, Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar charted the movement of this split star and they were overjoyed, filled with hope at what was to come.

There was one observer, however, who disliked the whole event. He was an evil genius. He knew Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. They had all been educated together. And Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar knew the evil genius. His name was Sargon. What a sour old person he was. All this talk about a star, a new radiance from within the earth and a light orbiting the earth. Well as fate would have it, Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar were on their way to a small village where the new radiance seemed to be found from above and below. They met Sargon. "Tell us, Sargon, have you discovered

the meaning of this new light?” “No,” said the evil genius, “but I will.”

As the days passed, Sargon located the inner radiance. It was coming from a small cave tucked in the earth in a Near Eastern village. Sargon noticed a father, a mother, and a newborn child. They had been anticipated by the radiance of the star, both from above, and from below. Sargon only complained, “What’s so special about another newborn child, a newborn to parents who were Jewish peasants?”

On the other hand, Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, and any number of curious shepherds were overcome with joy and hope, and a new sense of well being. In fact, Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar presented this child with gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gifts were remarkable indicators of the destiny of this child clothed in the radiance of a star.

Old Sargon was having nothing of it. If he could not be happy, nobody could be happy. If he had no hope about this world, nobody was allowed to have hope about this world. If he could not believe in a heaven, where a star sprang from the heart of God, then, for sure, nobody was going to believe in a parallel, uncreated universe. Sargon began to assemble his forces. As he went from place to place, he ran into his old friends from Persia, Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. His old friends knew that Sargon was up to no good. "Sargon," they said, "open your heart and your mind and discover this child of Bethlehem, wrapped in the light of a star sent from the heart of God."

"Nonsense," said Sargon, "I'm only interested in what this light from the sky will do for me. I'm only interested in what the light from the cave will do for me. To hell with the child and his peasant parents."

“Have it your way,” said Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. “But Sargon, they said, “your way will not last.” And the three wise men disappeared into the night. They repeated their warning that “your way will not last.” Time passed and Sargon was dead, and gone. But the holy child shines on, forever.

So we pray: *Christ Jesus, sprung from the very heart of God, yet now taking flesh in the heart of this world, radiant light all around us, from within the earth and from the heavens above, You outshine the darkness of ignorance and sin; help us to choose You that outshines the darkness of ignorance and sin, help us to choose You as our hope, our wisdom, our truth. You are King, God, and Sacrifice. As King, You establish a peace not of this world; as God, You redeem us and save us from our destructive, unloving ways; as Sacrifice you gave yourself completely, suffering on a cross to prove Your love for all of us. Help us to choose You and Your ways*

of living, loving, and dying. For our ways will not last.

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Hear our prayer Lord, for we need You. You are the radiance of God's wisdom. You are the star that will never set. You are hope that is forever, and love that is never spent. Your ways outlast our ways, and You live forever and ever. Amen.

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