

From the Pastor's Desk

The Feast of Epiphany: Many Catholics think of Epiphany as the feast of the Three Kings, but Scripture doesn't actually say that they were kings. They appear only in Matthew's gospel and they're called Wise Men or Magi (the plural of Mage). Scripture also does not say how many Wise Men there were. That notion derived from the fact that there were three gifts, and people assumed one gift per person. There is also a legend claiming that their names were Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. Actually, the Wise Men are highly symbolic. They represent "all nations" and in most Nativity scenes the Wise Men are of different races. The word Epiphany means *manifestation* or *showing forth*. That's why Epiphany is such an important feast: on Christmas the newborn King is revealed to Israel; on Epiphany he's revealed to the whole world. The feast of Epiphany is older than the feast of Christmas and was celebrated as early as the year 194. The feast included three "manifestations" of Christ: the visit of the Wise Men, the Lord's baptism in the Jordan, and Christ's first miracle at the wedding in Cana. So great is Epiphany that in most Catholic countries around the world, gifts are given on Epiphany, not on Christmas. I always encourage people to keep their Christmas trees and decorations up for the feast of Epiphany.



Core Team Progress: At our last meeting our core team evaluated our parish in the areas of evangelization, catechetical formation, Catholic school education, vocational awareness, stewardship, social justice, outreach programs to the needy, parish leadership, financial stability, staff and facilities, and how well (or not so well) we take into account the diminished number of priests. As we talked, we knew the areas where we are strong and the areas where we're not. For example, the Diocese is committed to having parishes provide some kind of "life-long" religious education. We have religious education in our parish up to the 12th grade, but we really don't have any ongoing religious education for adult parishioners. That's just one example. It made for good discussion, and also showed us what areas we could focus on. Also, please remember to fill out and return the survey in last week's bulletin to the big box in the gathering area, because we need the input of the entire parish as well.

Planning Tomorrow's
PARISHES

Coming to Mass When You're Sick: If you're suffering from the flu, a sore throat, or even the common cold, I encourage you to stay at home instead of coming to church. It's really not a good idea for someone who's sick to spend an hour in a confined space with 250 other people. Illness ends up spreading like you wouldn't believe. Please don't think that God threatens sick people with sin when it comes to Mass attendance. Besides, this isn't a matter of whether you could *manage* coming to church when you're sick; it's a matter of whether you *should* be coming to church when you're sick. We can arrange for Communion to be brought to you at home.



Stewardship Lesson From the Core Team: When we were evaluating our parish's stewardship at our core team meeting, we realized that we missed a great opportunity. The surveys that were in last week's bulletin made us realize that we should have had a stewardship survey for the parish after we'd used the Little Burgundy Books. We could have asked questions like:

- What have you learned about stewardship that you didn't know before?*
- What areas of stewardship are you strong in?*
- What stewardship areas stood out as areas where you're not as strong?*
- How can we make stewardship an ongoing part of parish life so it doesn't fizzle out?*
- Are you more likely now to get involved in a ministry of the parish?*



We realized that a stewardship survey done right after the Little Burgundy Books could have been incredibly helpful, and furthered our stewardship efforts at the parish. Of course, we could still have some kind of stewardship survey, and we'll keep talking about stewardship at the parish because it's not really a program; it's a way of life.

“Consubstantial”: In the Nicene Creed we now say that Jesus Christ is “consubstantial” with the Father. This word is deeply meaningful. It means that God the Father and God the Son are of the *same substance*. In John's gospel, Jesus tries to get the disciples to understand this. Philip asks Jesus to show them the Father and Jesus says, “Philip, have I been with you all this time and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’ Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” This is part of our wonderful belief about the Trinity. That is, there's no “hierarchy” in the Trinity. God the Father and God the Son are of the same substance, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from Them both.



Upcoming Workshops: We have two liturgical workshops scheduled. This coming Monday at 7 pm is a workshop for parish cantors and choir members, and on January 19th (a Thursday) we have a workshop for all parish lectors at 7 pm. The new Roman Missal has revised more than prayers and responses during Mass; it also has revised how liturgical ministries are approached, and it will be good to come together, talk about them, and do some practicing.



Have a good week,

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