

Sermon
Sr. Linda Gibler, OP
Feast of Epiphany, January 5, 2020

Like the Magi, We are all on journeys, but are we wise?

We journey through life, from birth to death, through the stages of our lives from childhood to youth, to adult to middle age and old age and ultimately, to God.

Within that arc, we journey through the beauty and challenge of family as we grow together, separate, and return.

Our interests may lead us to education, degrees, credentials that bring us from jobs to careers, and perhaps retirement.

And all of this occurs within the journey of our planet as its Biosystems evolve and it continually circles the Sun. And within our Universe as it stretches outward, rushing to embrace the future it creates.

Teilhard de Chardin tells us that the entity of creation is journeying together from its infancy as inorganic matter, to life then consciousness and finally to Christ.

We are all, and always, on a journey.

The thing is, everything knows how to journey except us humans. The planet knows how to hold on to the Earth as they spin through the Milky Way together. Birds know how to migrate across the continents and return home. Even plants know how to provide for the next generation, even if they face changes in their ecosystems.

All of creation is endowed with an innate wisdom that guides their path, except us.

We have to learn to be wise.

How do we learn to be wise?

Today, on the Feast of the Epiphany, we look to the Magi, the wise men, for advice on how to be wise journeyers. Let's see what they did.

First, long before they set out after the star, they had a practice of watching the sky for signs. They had habits of attentiveness that enabled them to see the star and recognize its import.

Next, they had a destination, they knew what they were trying to accomplish

Then, they did not go alone. The wise men with their caravan journeyed together as they followed the star.

They also sought advice, They stopped in Jerusalem, the seat of power where they might have expected to find an infant king, and asked where they should go.

At the stable, they recognized that they had fulfilled their purpose and adored the child with his mother And, they were provisioned with treasures they drew from to give the child.

They were attentive to their dreams which allowed them to alter their route.

And finally, they returned home.

In short, they were ready to seize the opportunity when it presented itself. They knew what they were up to. They travelled together, sought advice, and were willing to change course. They had what they needed when they reached their goal. And they went home.

Every one of these lessons in wisdom is worth our attention. But let's focus on just one and turn our attention to gifts and stars.

We read that the Magi opened their treasure chests and offered the child gifts of gold frankincense, and myrrh. Since they still had a long road home, we can guess that there was much more in the treasury than just what they gave the Jesus.

What they leave signify that they recognized that Jesus was and king, gold, a priest, frankincense, and a healer, myrrh, which is a pain reliever.

They were looking for a king but found something more. How is it they had what they needed so they could give the appropriate gift?

How do we have what we need? How do we provision ourselves for our journey?

Here, we look to the star as a source of gift and abundance

And we get a bit science-y

The life of a star is a journey of gift giving and abundance.

In the core of a shining star, like the one the magi followed, is a furnace of creativity.

The weight of the entire star presses in on the tiny atoms in its core. These tiny particles fuse and exert an outward force that balances the inward crush. As the particle fuse, two things happen. They themselves are transformed into heavier, more durable atoms that withstand more pressure, and in the process of their transformation, the fusion releases waves of energy we see as light.

Stars, the size of our Sun, transform 4 billion tons of their cores into light each and every second. The light streams forth in every direction. In our solar system, only one billionth of the light of the Sun shines on a planet with life, the vast majority of the Sun's radiance is seemingly wasted in the coldness of space.

As a star pours out its very self as the gift of light, its internal transformation continues. Pressure is met with creative response that transforms and releases energy, as the star goes through its life until it can go no further. When the furnace in the center stops, the elements created there are released to the universe where they become clouds of particles awaiting a new journey.

Stars are the primary sources of gift and abundance in the Universe. They are furnaces of creativity and energy that provision the journey from inorganic matter, to life, to consciousness, and to Christ. They journey from Alpha to Omega.

Like stars, we are called to be gift and abundance. Pressure, creatively borne, yields the strengths and energy to provision our own journeys with overflowing Star-like radiance and generosity. When we balance the endless pressures of daily life, small or large, our core are strengthened. Our creativity is boundless. Our treasure chests have whatever we need. We are ready for the journey.

And like stars, much of the radiance created in our transformation might be seemingly wasted. We keep giving; keep trying, but the situations around us causing the pressure doesn't seem to change. But, in the case of a star, that is not the point. Radiance is cast in all directions heedless of efficient energy use or waste. Star shine for the sake of shining. The gift of who we become on our journeys has no other goal than to be itself. Available to anyone or anything it encounters.

So Arise, shine! Perhaps the most significant goal of our journeys is not to follow stars but to become stars. To return home with the wisdom we've learned

Isaiah tells us: Arise and shine for your light has come.
The glory of the Lord has risen upon you.
Nations shall come to your light and King to the brightness of your dawn
Lift up your eyes and look around
They all gather together. They come to you
Then you shall see and be radiant.
Your heart shall thrill and rejoice

The goal of every journey is to become the stars we follow.
To bring the wisdom, the truth, we sought and adored home with us.

Like the Magi, we are all on journeys. We become wise as we embrace the abundance and generosity of Stars.