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Their story, our story

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez | Jan. 6, 2013 Spiritual Reflections

As we gather together today around God?s living word and the living bread of Eucharist, we will hear Isaiah share his vision of a cavalcade of nations streaming toward Jerusalem. We will take note as he describes gift-bearing riders astride camels, proclaiming God?s praises. We will listen attentively as the author of Ephesians reveals the ?mystery? that gentiles and Jews -- that is, all the peoples of the Earth -- are ?coheirs, members of the same body and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel? (Ephesians 3:6). Then, as we hear the uniquely Matthean Gospel of the Magi proclaimed, we might think that the Isaian vision has already been realized and that the Ephesians author?s mystery has been fully revealed.

Epiphany of the Lord
Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72
Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

But reality attests otherwise. The process of being gathered unto God is nowhere near completion. In fact, in some ways, it appears to have reached an impasse, for as we look about, we see separation and alienation. We see rejection and prejudice and stubborn unwillingness to be gathered together. We make war, not peace. We build walls instead of bridges. Instead of reaching out, we keep our distance. We do not converse; we accuse, we decide, we gossip, we curse. We are not united but divided, and thus we bear counter-witness to the God in whom we are alone.

For those reasons, it is good for us to enter yet again into the spirit of today?s feast and renew our efforts at coming together in the Lord. William Bausch has suggested that one way of entering into the feast of the Lord?s Epiphany is to recognize that the story of the Magi is the story of each of us. ?Their timeless tale,? insists Bausch, ?follows the time-honored, indelible, irreplaceable storyline of everybody? (*Once Upon a Gospel*, Twenty-Third Publications, 2008).

Like the Magi, every human person is born with a call that we must answer, a vision to follow and a goal to be achieved. In order to respond to that call, each of us must be willing to journey forth from home and family and make our way into an unknown future. Inevitably, that journey will entail risk. There will be obstacles along the way, detours and even dead ends that will mean we have to start over.

There will also be other people, each pursuing their journey, some of whom will prove to be helpful while others may deter or delay our progress, either openly or through deceit. Notice the role that Herod played in

today?s Gospel narrative. He was threatened by the child in whom the prophecies of a savior would be fulfilled. So, while plotting murder in his heart, he feigned a sincerity of spirit before the Magi. On our journeys, we too will encounter Herods. Their deceptions may fool us; their manipulations may even cause us to lose our way. Bausch suggests that our ?Herods? may come in the form of ?rationalistic hucksters? who preach that there is nothing beyond this life ... that there is no journey ... that all is illusion.? We also hear Herod?s voice in countless commercials that promise to ease our pain or enhance our good looks or tempt us to tune out, lie back and ignore the needs of others.

Along with the Herods, however, there will be helpers who support our journey. Just as the Magi were guided by the shining light of a star and by the overtures of God (in a dream), so will our paths be lit and our journeys made easier by the gifts God sends our way. As we respond to God?s call, as we try to realize our visions and accomplish our goals, we will not be traveling alone. Others with similar calls and visions and goals will be following an itinerary like ours.

Like the Magi, let us be willing to bring gifts along with us to offer God. Our gift could be our willingness to accept the mystery that we are all one in Christ; the surrender of the mistrust, ignorance and prejudice that cause us to reject those we do not understand. Let us embrace one another and make our way home together to God.

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