

## **OUR LADY STAR OF THE SEA WEYMOUTH**

### **HOMILY FOR THE EPIPHANY 3<sup>rd</sup> JANUARY 2010**

A happy New Year!

The thought of New Year causes mixed feelings to arise. New Year for some people means facing big changes, so it's a step into the unknown, into darkness. For others it's a time to face harsh reality and unwelcome facts, a step into anxiety and insecurity.

Happy New Year needs to be a prayer as well as a wish. Perhaps the gospel can help us to face our fears as we enter the year 2010.

The wise men were in a similar situation. Quite literally they set out into the unknown, leaving their homes for a mystery destination, not knowing where they were going or how long it would take. How could they plan their journey?

As they were following a star they must have travelled in literal darkness for much of the time. Any journey at that time was dangerous and hard. They must have experienced anxiety and uncertainty; especially after they had gone to the wrong palace and discovered that there were no other palaces to go to. In spite of all their difficulties the wise men found Jesus, their destination.

Having found Jesus their questions were answered and their worries disappeared, all because they followed a star.

The gospel seems to be telling us that following a star to Jesus will give us the confidence that we want as we go into the New Year. Taken literally, "following a star to Jesus" sounds like fantasy but this Gospel is hugely symbolic. Think of the purpose of the star for the wise men – to lead them to Jesus.

A star can be anything that leads us to Jesus - prayer, worship, the Bible, love, beauty, wisdom; anything that gives us a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

Let's recognise our star and follow it wherever it leads.

Let's overcome our doubt and hesitation.

Our star may lead us to the wrong place. We may make wrong choices but if we are following the right star it will lead forward until we are united with Jesus.

The star in the gospel moved and the wise men moved forward with it. They never stopped or went back.

It is essential for us to move forward in faith, respond at once, never let the past hold us back. Sins are forgiven, the past is history. Jesus is our present and our future.

Moving forward strengthens hope. Hope is the quality that does most to get rid of fear and anxiety. The absence of hope underlies and explains much of the pessimism that some people feel about the New Year, but hope is an essential Christian virtue.

It is not an option for Christians to feel and think hopelessly, but it is very difficult to move out of hopelessness when nothing happens to encourage us.

The psalmists knew this, and their answer was to think of the power that God had demonstrated in the past.

We can see the power of God revealed to us in Jesus as St. Paul says in our second reading.

The Jesus that we seek is God and has the power of God to give us hope.

This was very well expressed by the editor of a Catholic journal this Christmas. She wrote:

“The message of revelation is that Almighty God, creator of all things, does not desire the human project to end in failure. The meaning of Christmas (and Epiphany) is that humanity’s endless striving to make a better world, far from being forlorn, was judged worthy of divine intervention”.

In other words God’s coming as man in Jesus is a sign that God will not let us fail if we are prepared to move ourselves to seek him. The Epiphany is meant to be God’s beacon of hope for us.

It’s amazing, it’s a mystery, but as St. Paul insists, “the mystery has now been revealed through the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets and through them to us.

Epiphany means revelation.

The power of God is revealed in Jesus.

When we think everything is hopeless, let’s remind ourselves of this in prayer.

Jesus is with us and has given us our star to guide us to himself.

He will not allow our lives to end in vain.

Let’s pray always for hope and let the hope that Jesus gives move us forward until all our anxiety dissolves in him.

**Rev Geoff Carey**