

**“It’s not the destination, it’s the journey.” I *think* that’s Ralph Waldo Emerson. I wonder if the Magi would agree. Travel.**

**Remember when you used to go on car trips with your parents? It always took for—ev—er. And maps! I love to keep track of where we are on a map! But real maps are hard to find these days!**

**Everything's supposed to happen on your phone screen! Yecch!**

**And remember Trip-Tiks from Triple A? Every page you flipped was more miles covered — on and on and on — until you got to the end and the trip was done! You’d done it! Phone screens aren’t nearly as much fun.**

**What if you had to find your way by following the stars? There are probably a few scouts out there who could do it. What if a really important part of your life was studying the patterns of the stars in the night sky? Because those patterns could tell you where you were? What would you look for? What would you see? Especially 2000 years ago when our skies were much clearer?**

**However we do it, going on a journey, especially to somewhere we’ve never been before, somewhere entirely new — it’s exciting, isn’t it? Brad and I drove across country with Andy and Emmie when they were kids a few times and we had special tapes we would play in the car (remember cassette tapes?) and we’d start every morning singing the same song. “Drift Away” “Give me the beat**

**boys and free my soul...” at the tops of our lungs! “I wanna get lost in your rock and roll and drift away!”**

**There was one point when the kids were a little older and they argued about what music we’d listen to. So we bought them each a little cheap cassette player. They could listen to whatever they wanted to. But they decided they didn’t like listening alone. It was much better to listen together. So back we went to the player with the car radio — all singing at the top of our lungs.**

**I doubt the magi had as much fun as we had. Noooo. They were on a mission - a serious journey.**

**The magi, the wise, kings (?), were probably not kings. Hundreds of years later, people thought they must be kings because of the valuable gifts they brought, but we don’t know who they were or even if there were only three. There were three noted gifts so it was assumed that there were only three of them. But they must have had servants, people to keep them comfortable as they traveled.**

**I think we can assume they were scholars. I think we can also assume this was the great journey of their lives — to see this newborn, new kind of king. Whatever they were looking for — did they find it? I think they did. But when did they find it? Once they arrived? Or along the way?**

**What does the word “epiphany” mean? Well, according to the dictionary, the word means “a sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something.” Or perhaps more**

to the point, “an intuitive grasp of reality through something.” Is that what they saw, what they felt when they saw the baby Jesus? Maybe it was like, when you see the ring on your finger, *that’s* when you *know* you’re married. Or - when you feel all those hands on your head, you *knoowww* you’re ordained. It’s as though you realize, you *discover* that you’re married. I *discovered* I was ordained.

In that sense, an epiphany is a discovery. I think we need epiphanies to remind us to keep going, to move forward into the unknown.

In our tri-fold this week I quote Pope Francis as he notes that the Wise were looking for a king so they went to a king’s court - Herod’s court. That’s logical. Francis notes the usual expectations of people regarding kings as opposed to this new “king.” “...the gaze of this unknown but desired king does not abase, enslave, or imprison us. The gaze of God lifts up, forgives, heals. His strength and his power are called mercy.” God is about love. That was unexpected - Love!

And with that love, Jesus attracted not only the shepherds, the common people, but also these notable visiting foreigners. They signified Jesus’ desire to reach out to the world. The journey of the Wise is most significant in that God chose them to give Jesus to the world, to everyone, to us. He opened salvation to all.

No one really knows who or even what the Magi were. We don’t know where they came from. All we know is they brought gifts

appropriate for a king. That's who they thought they were going to see.

But I'm sure it ended up being kind of weird for everyone present. The presentation of gifts of incredible value to a child clearly living in incredible poverty.

Gold — “Quick! Put this in the college fund!”

Frankincense — processed sap from a tree — almost as valuable as gold — just the scent of it is still considered healing.

And Myrrh — the *really* weird gift — an ointment that was spread on dead bodies to prepare them for burial.

This was the cradle-to-grave gift assortment for the new-born king.

The Wise were learned people who paid attention to the movements of the planets and the stars and to the forces of Creation around them. They would also have considered history and past writings. It is a truly wise person who treats all of nature, all of history as informative, who digests information to apply it all to the past, present and future.

Could they foresee who Jesus would become? Could they foresee *what* Jesus would become?

It's all about journeys, isn't it? The wise went on their journey. Jesus' life was and still is an incredible journey. Our lives are journeys too. Do we have the courage to set out as the Wise did, into the unknown, trying new ways, seeking new answers, moving forward in faith? Finding comfort and joy in the journey? That's

**how I want us to start our new year. Let us embrace faith and move forward!**