

Gospel Reflection Christmas 2A

January 5, 2014

John 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Epiphany A

January 6, 2013

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Reflection

This Sunday some will be hearing the powerful prologue to the Gospel according to St. John and some will be celebrating Epiphany (transferred by one day) with its story of palace intrigue, a mysterious star and three scholars who were looking for the one whose birth they had come to believe the star proclaimed. Those of us living in and near Eureka, California, are dealing at the same time with the brutal murder of a local Roman Catholic priest, the Rev. Eric Freed. Somehow it's all intermingled.

It has been said by wise people in various ways that sentiment is an enemy of Christianity; a truth underscored by John, by Matthew and by ongoing, irrational violence. Sentiment can't deal with the hard, hurting things with which we too often have to cope. Sentiment can't shine light into our

darkness, fear, losses and confusion. Only God who is with us in Christ can give us that light and help us find actual, concrete, daily hope even in the midst of the worst that happens.

The prologue to John is a reminder that the child the Magi were seeking was more than a baby born in difficult times to a poor couple; more than a lovely scene with animals, angels and shepherds, more even than the birth of one destined to inherit a crown. He was the ultimate revelation of love beyond comprehension; the love of God Who, as John reminds us, not only created all that exists but humbly became one of us to reveal to us more powerfully than ever before who we are – people created by Love and meant to live and be love. The child sought by the Magi was the One who, before there was anything as we know it, was Life and Light. That child is the One through whom “all things came into being”, and who is the Light that Herod, in the darkness of his paranoia could not imagine, let alone overcome. Nor can the darkness of violence and murder. That child is also one among countless others who live in the midst of unspeakable, unexplainable malice and evil. He is *the* one who, through the fullness of his life, his struggle with death and his incomprehensible resurrection continues to show that even in the worst that can happen, evil does not have the final word. He is “the Word [who] became flesh and lived among us” – and still lives in and through us.

The light can be seen even in the grief-stricken days following the murder of a much beloved priest and teacher. Many people of that congregation are reaching out to each other and beyond, struggling to pray for the killer and his family even as they reel with the grief of their violent loss and justified anger. The light can be seen wherever God’s children refuse to let bitterness, hatred, violence, destruction and loss have the last word – wherever the choice is to live love anyhow. That is how, with the magi, we pay homage to the Christ and continue to reflect God’s light to others who need to see.