

## I Epiphany 2022

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

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*Romans 12.1-5 St. Luke 2.41-52*

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*Epiphany...means manifestation or showing or striking appearance.* Orthodox Christians call the feast *Theophony*...God showing himself to the World in the striking appearances Jesus makes.

The first *epiphany* was to the shepherds in Luke's Gospel who listened to the Angels and came to see the newborn Jesus. God makes himself known to us in ways that are most likely to get our attention. The Jewish Shepherds understood Angels. They were surrounded by light as the Angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased."

The *Magi* of Matthew's Gospel...visitors from the East...saw a bright star and got the message. The word *Magi*...from the Greek word *magios*...may have been Zoroastrian priests from ancient Persia. The non-Jewish *Magi* studied and understood stars. They began the long journey to Bethlehem where they found the young child Jesus...now about two years old...and gave him precious gifts of gold (Jesus is King), frankincense (Jesus is God), and myrrh (Jesus will be anointed at his burial).

The Church's observance of the Christmas Season officially concludes on the Feast of the Epiphany...January 6th...the "Twelfth Day of Christmas". Our Epiphany Season is long this year...five Sundays...we will be exploring many of Jesus' striking appearances, including Saint Paul's Conversion and the Presentation of Jesus in the Temple.

This morning's Gospel is the only incident of Jesus' boyhood preserved in the canonical Gospels of the New Testament. It is the logical and natural sequence to the infancy stories about Jesus of Christmas and Epiphany.

Father Massey Shepherd, author of the *Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, calls this a story full of natural human interest...clearly seen in the anxiety of His parents at discovering Jesus was missing after traveling a whole day on their way home to Nazareth. We can only imagine what was

going through the minds of Mary and Joseph as they frantically searched for him for three days in Jerusalem. We can only imagine their relief at finding him safe in the Temple. Did Mary say to Jesus, "Just wait until we get home...you are so grounded!" Probably not!

Our human-interest story continues with Jesus having deep theological discussions with the religion teachers at the Temple, who were amazed at his maturity and understanding far beyond his age of 12 years.

Mary, quite naturally, asks Jesus to explain why he has done this to them? Jesus almost acts surprised at the question and answers with a question of his own..."Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" Jesus is not being disrespectful to his parents. He has a clear understanding of the unique relationship he has with His heavenly Father.

We would like to know more about what Jesus was up to while he was growing up in Nazareth. Did he play sports with his friends? Did he grab a beer after work at the Capernaum Bar and Grill? Did he go swimming in the Sea of Galilee? The human-interest side of the story leads us to believe he might have done all of these things. All we know for certain is what we are told in this morning's Gospel...he went back with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth and was obedient to them...he knew His heavenly Father had placed him in their care. And we are told Mary treasured everything that has just happened in her heart.

Jesus had complete knowledge of himself...who is was...the special relationship he had with the Father...and in everything he did conformed his will to God's will. He is the Second Person of the Trinity...God's will is Jesus' will.

In the Epistle, Saint Paul tells us we should try to conform our wills to God's will. We do that best when we work together as the Body of Christ...with the individual gifts God has given us through his Spirit. We can then be effective epiphanies for Jesus...in his Father's house...and everywhere.

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