

Greetings to all those who dare to believe,

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 2:1 (NIV) – Larger reading: Matthew 2:1-18

“[The Visit of the Magi] After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem”

STORY as told by Keith Warner:

Besides freeing us from fear and guilt, Jesus came to help us see. He wasn't talking about physical blindness, but rather, spiritual blindness.

We can't see because we are trapped by habits, addictions and illusions of happiness. Therefore we are trapped, oppressed by our own choices and situations. Some of us are in denial. Others of us are reinforced through the enabling of other people. Consequently, we are not free.

One night a tiger trainer was performing at a circus. He went into the cage with the tigers and a huge hush came over the crowd as the doors were locked behind him. Skillfully, the trainer put the tigers through their routine, entertaining the crowd. But, suddenly there was a “pop” and all the lights went out under the big top.

The trainer was locked inside the cage with the tigers in complete darkness. They could see him with their night vision, but he could not see them. All he had was a chair and a whip for protection. Finally the lights came back on and the trainer finished his performance.

Later in a TV interview, the trainer admitted how scared he was. Then he realized that the tigers did not know that he could not see them. “I just cracked my whip and talked to them,” he said, “until the lights came on.”

REFLECTION:

Today the Christian church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany when the Magi came to the house and fell at the feet of the boy Jesus to worship him. We also recognize Christ's baptism. Did Magi stake their reputation on making this journey? Did it take certain amount of brevity to venture forth on this long multi-year journey to arrive in the Holy Land at the house in which Mary, Joseph and the boy child were living? And, does the Christian church truly affirm, in our celebration of this day, that the Christ child truly came to help us see differently? To believe differently? To live differently?

I find interesting that those in France also celebrate the birth of Joan of Arc on this day. Her birthday is actually unknown. Even Joan herself didn't know the actual day since the people of that era didn't celebrate birthdays stating at her Trial of Condemnation on January 1431, “As far as I know, (I am) about 19 years old.” And so her birthday is a thing of legend. But, what is remarkable about Joan of Arc “was her faith, her unswerving dedication to her cause and, above all, her astounding bravery.” (Nancy Goldstone)

Here are two examples – the Magi and Joan of Arc – for us in the 21st Century ... two examples of remarkable courage against unbelievable odds to seek out the Messiah and to serve His cause ... in the face of possible death and disgrace. We would do will to follow their example.

QUOTE:

“Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” – Winston S. Churchill

PRAYER:

Gracious Lord, there are examples all around of us of individual no different than us who have and are laying their life on the line for the sake of the King and His Kingdom. Give us the courage to follow their example and live a life worthy of the Gospel! Amen

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