

From Pontiff to Pew (Wednesday Audience – Continued)

His invitation is addressed today to all of us, holy by Baptism, because God has become our companion on the journey towards true Life; to us sinners, because, forgiven, with his grace we can stand up and set off again; and finally, to us, poor and fragile, because the Lord, making our weakness his own, has redeemed it and shown us the beauty and strength of his perfect humanity (cf. Jn 1:14).

Therefore, I would like to conclude by remembering the words with which Saint Paul VI, at the end of the Jubilee of 1975, described its fundamental message. It is contained, he said, in one word: “love”. And he added, “God is Love! This is the ineffable revelation with which the Jubilee, through its teaching, its indulgence, its forgiveness and finally its peace, full of tears and joy, has sought to fill our spirit today and our lives tomorrow: God is Love! God loves me! God awaited me, and I have found him! God is mercy! God is forgiveness! God is salvation! God, yes, God is life!” (General Audience, 17 December 1975). May these thoughts accompany us in the passage from the old to the new year, and then always, in our lives.

From the Pastor’s Desk

As we have celebrated the great feast of the Epiphany this past weekend, it is my sure and certain hope that the message of the gospel rings true with all of you. On this joyous feast, all the readings underscore the welcome extended to all in God’s embrace. Isaiah speaks of how peoples from every nation will stream toward the renewed Jerusalem, all bearing their gifts and proclaiming God’s praises. The responsorial psalm likewise sings of how every nation on earth will adore God’s Anointed One. The letter to the Ephesians emphasizes that “the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (3:6). There are no second-class members and no privileges for those who had priority in the faith. All are equal comembers. The gospel recounts that exotic visitors from the East were the first to do homage to the newborn Jesus. The term “magi” originally referred to a caste of Persian priests. They were not kings themselves but served their king with skills such as interpreting dreams. In the gospel they also appear to be adept at

interpreting the movement of the stars. Following the star, they are the first Gentiles to seek and recognize Jesus, offering their precious gifts to him. In so doing, they foreshadow the way Gentiles will flock to the Christian communities, bearing gifts for mission.

The strong insistence in the letter to the Ephesians on the equal status of Gentiles, backed up with the assertion that this has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit, shows how the early Christian communities struggled to make this equality a reality. The difficulties in welcoming Gentiles have long ago been overcome, but other struggles to create egalitarian communities still face us today. On this Epiphany Sunday, our Scriptures and the inclusive practices of Jesus give us a guiding star to follow in our efforts to be inclusive and welcoming to all. Prejudices, racism, and discrimination run deep. Facing our own prejudices and working to dismantle them is a most difficult task. It can take a lifetime, but it is possible to do with the help of the Spirit, who continues to reveal that all have equal dignity and are welcome.

Christmas has been the worst of times and the best of times for me. As to the former, as you all know I was very ill over Christmas and the Feast of the Holy Family. As to the latter, out of desperation and some exhaustive research, I was able to discern the cause of my symptoms of severe muscular twitching and confusion. As it happens, I was having a reaction to the new medication that I have been taking for a month to attempt to arrest the dysfunction of my kidneys due to the cyclosporin that I must take (it is my anti-rejection medication). In any case, the medication was causing severe dehydration that I was not compensating for which in turn resulted in the aforementioned symptoms. As of now, I have stopped the medication until an alternative treatment plan can be devised. I thank you for your prayers during this time. I can tell you that it was rather frightening, and I am happy to have arrived at least at a temporary fix. I will keep you updated. Know that as always you are all in my prayers.

If you did not sign up for the VOLUNTEER DINNER on January 11th at 6:00 PM in the School Cafeteria, please call the rectory no later than the end of the business day on Tuesday, January 6th.