



SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD ARCHBISHOP'S CALL TO SHARE HOMILY | JANUARY 8, 2023

I The Culmination of the Christmas Narrative

Today's Feast is the culmination of the Christmas season. No other world religion believes what we believe as Christians, namely that the Creator of the Cosmos, Lord of lords and King of kings, humbles Himself to immerse Himself into our humanity. We believe not only there is a God who created the world and the entire universe, but that human beings are uniquely made in His Divine image.

Even after our first parents rebelled against God, attempting to become their own gods thus fracturing our relationship with our Creator, Our Lord continues to pursue us and desires to share in our humanity in order that we might share in His divine and eternal life. The almighty and all powerful God chose to humble Himself to be conceived in the womb of Mary and to be born in the austere circumstances of Bethlehem.

In today's Gospel, Jesus' birth in an animal shelter is contrasted with the earthly and wicked King Herod, who is panicked by the Magi's inquiry regarding the birth of a new king. Feigning a desire to welcome and give homage to the infant king, Herod asked the Magi to locate for him what he perceived to be a royal rival.

Herod epitomized our sin fractured world. His desire to clutch on to his royal power and its accompanying wealth is contrasted with the utter humility of the true King of kings. Herod had actually murdered some of his own sons fearing that they might attempt to dethrone him. Herod possessed a warped world view that desperately grasped the reins of power, mistreating those under his rule, in order to satisfy his desires for comfort and pleasure.

The Magi, on the other hand, came to worship and bring gifts to the infant, acknowledging Him as their Lord and King. When Herod's intentions are revealed to them in a dream, the Magi return home without disclosing to the evil tyrant the identity and location of the true King.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph became refugees fleeing their homeland, while Herod stooped to engage in the mass murder of children in order to eliminate any threat to his worldly power.

II Good News of God's Love

The unique good news of Christianity is a God that 1) loved us into existence, 2) created us in His divine image, 3) offered us mercy and healing of the wounds caused by our sins, and 4) has granted us the opportunity to share in His divine and eternal life. This is the greatest story ever told. It is no fairy tale. We can visit the actual places where Jesus was conceived, born, grew up, exercised His ministry, suffered, died and rose from the dead for us.

Every week at Mass, we have the opportunity to encounter Jesus, the God who took on our flesh and continues to make Himself present to us in the Blessed Sacrament under the humble appearance of unleavened bread and ordinary wine. Each week, we are invited, like the Magi, to worship and welcome into our hearts the Lord of lords and King of kings.



III God's Request

What does this God of love and mercy ask of us? Jesus asks us to honor and adore Him by loving others as He has loved us. Our Lord invites us to follow Him on the path of servant love by seeking the good of others – our family members, our fellow Christians, our neighbors, the poor and even our enemies. Who is our neighbor? Jesus tells us in the *Good Samaritan* parable. Our neighbor is the person who is most in need. The person, bruised and beaten by a sin-fractured world has a claim on our compassion and mercy.

Jesus invites us to receive the Eucharist in remembrance of Him. Our Lord also tells us that whatever we do to the least of our brothers and sisters we are actually doing to Him.

IV Call to Share 2023

Each year at this time, the Catholic community in Northeast Kansas pools our resources to care for those in need, both materially and spiritually, through the annual *Archbishop's Call to Share Campaign*.

Together as the Body of Christ, we care for the suffering Jesus encountered in the refugee and recent immigrant, the unemployed parent, the homeless man, the child threatened by abortion, the struggling single mother, the pregnant and frightened adolescent, the teen at our youth camp seeking to encounter Jesus, a child in need of foster care, the young man discerning his vocation, a couple preparing for marriage, the individual battling mental health issues, the widow on a fixed income unable to pay her utility bill, and the family with a loved one in need of hospice care.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph experienced many of the same adversities suffered by those receiving assistance from *Call to Share*. Mary and Joseph had to cope with the challenges of an unplanned pregnancy. Jesus needed a foster father. Our Lord was born poor and homeless. The Holy Family had to flee a cruel tyrant and live in a foreign and unfamiliar land. Jesus and Mary accompanied Joseph as he prepared for death. During His years of public ministry, Our Lord was homeless, lived simply and modeled poverty of spirit. Jesus was falsely accused and a victim of an unfair criminal justice system. Though religious and civil authorities knew His innocence, Our Lord was sentenced to the most humiliating and painful form of capital punishment. Jesus was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Your gift to *Call to Share* helps our Church bring the love of Jesus and the hope of His Gospel to many individuals and families who are our neighbors. Together as an Archdiocesan family, we can do what no individual or no single parish could accomplish on their own.

As a result of inflation and other economic challenges, the needs are greater than ever. I ask you to ponder the ways in which Our Lord has blessed you and then ask the Holy Spirit to guide your decision on what for you is a sacrificial gift. Consider the generosity of the Magi offering their precious gifts to the infant Jesus. What gift can you offer to the God who loved you into existence and desires for you to share eternity with Him and all the Saints? Will you choose to adore Our Lord in the way that He most desires, by loving others as Jesus has first loved us?

Thank you for your past generosity. Let us once again as an Archdiocesan family do something truly beautiful for God!