

The Epiphany of the Lord *January 6, 2019*

“After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.” (Matthew 2:9)

If I may refer back to Saint Anthony of the Desert whom I used as the inspiration of our New Year’s Day reflection, he offered his followers an example which I believe could be quite helpful as our parish family begins this new year. His example (I updated): “An artist does not begin their creation without first visualizing the finished project in their mind.” This makes a great deal of sense when we consider how great works of art and architecture came into being. Using this example, let us ask ourselves two questions: (1) “How do I see myself by the end of 2019?” and (2) “How do I see our parish by the end of 2019?”

How do I see myself by the end of 2019? Will I be . . . [insert whatever you chose to work upon]? For the answer to this question, we must first begin with an honest reflection of who we are at this moment in our lives. After this reflection, many of us will realize that so many of our answers are summed up with one word - discipline. We need to further develop and strengthen self-discipline. How can this be accomplished? Saint Anthony offers his followers, and us, two ways: by controlling our stomachs and our tongues. When Anthony used the word stomach, he was not particularly referring to weight loss. He was referring to our “Appetites”. In Christian Spirituality, the appetite is a word used to refer to our “longings”. We may often find that our “longings” do not always coincide with what God desires for our lives. What is it that I truly long for? A simple answer should be eternal rest with God. However, are my actions helping me to achieve this? If I long to be with God for all eternity, then my actions should reflect this. If my actions are betraying this longing, then I need to discipline my life. When considering the tongue, we must examine how we speak with and about others. The apostle James reminded us of this in his letter: *“With it [our tongue] we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings who are made in the likeness of God. From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. This need not be so, my brothers.”* (James 3:9-10) All of us, I am sure, could find some areas to reflect upon concerning these two things.

How do I see our parish by the end of 2019? Do we want a vibrant parish full of holy men and women? Do we want a parish filled with prayerful young families? Do we want more beneficial programs for our youth? Whatever our question maybe, the answer to this is also very simple. We need to invite more people to join with us in our parish. In reality, more people means the possibility of more opportunities for future growth as a parish family. Are we doing our part to invite others to worship with us? Remember the words of Jesus to His disciples as He prepared for His Ascension to the Father: *“Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . .”* (Matthew 28:19) My friends, this was not a mere suggestion.

Many individuals made resolutions to begin this new year. Let us join with them. We will commit ourselves to two resolutions; one as an individual and one as a parish family. We will resolve to discipline ourselves in our longings and our speech. We will resolve ourselves to invite one person at a minimum each month to join with us in our parish. If we choose to live by these two resolutions, then I believe we will become a dynamic Catholic individual and pray in a spiritually vibrant parish. It is my hope that you and I will take to heart these two resolutions and not allow them to pass unnoticed from one ear to the next. May God bless you and our parish in this coming new year.