

***The Epiphany of the Lord***  
***January 8, 2023***  
***Year of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Ark of the New Covenant***

*“They were **overjoyed** at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. (Matthew 2:10-11)*

Saint Matthew records the wise men were “overjoyed” as they witnessed the star which would inevitably lead them to find the child. The star served as a guide leading them toward the object of their quest; the completion of their goal. If we are honest, I think all present would be envious of their fortunate situation. Imagine having the celestial assistance of this heavenly GPS to guide us toward that which would satisfy our innermost desire. No more fumbling around in the darkness of doubt and questions. We just look toward the stars and our way is assured. Yet, before we don sackcloth, arising from our position to take a seat in ashes while weeping and lamenting our plight, allow me to pose a thought for your consideration. The thought is this—we too are in the same position. We too have a star which guides our way to our innermost desire. However, many may not know what they truly desire with their innermost being and, starting from a place of uncertainty, are hindered in seeing the star which lights their way. Let us consider these points as the focus of our reflection for today.

We must begin by defining what it is that we desire. In a word, I propose to you that our innermost desire is found in—Happiness. Every person who is or was desires to be happy. The happiness we seek most is not defined as an emotional response. Happiness is more than laughing, although laughing can be a physical manifestation of happiness. Happiness is more. It is total acceptance; it is completeness.

For generations, mankind has sought that object/person/idea which will satisfy our desire for happiness. The tragedy of the life of man is, quoting the old Country & Western song, we most likely find ourselves “Looking for Love in all the Wrong Places.” As we age, we begin to understand that the goal of our desire for happiness is not found in the material world. No matter what a person procures in their life, they still desire something more. This happens because material things only satisfy for a particular moment or time. Once the despair of never attaining our goal resurfaces, then we decide that the goal of happiness must now be found on a non-material plane. However, this too will leave our souls dry. Consider this example, knowledge or virtue are non-material things we seek to possess. If one were to gain knowledge or virtue, would one be satisfied? I would say that no matter how much knowledge or virtue we may attain in our lives, we would always still want more. Just because a thing is not a material item, it does not mean that thing will satisfy our desire for true, lasting happiness. So, what will?

To answer this question, we must first accept that man, throughout history, has a common desire to attain happiness. Therefore, the goal of happiness must be both timeless (achievable at any time) and universal (achievable by any person). Only a thing which meets these two criteria can fully satisfy our desire for happiness. Only God can fulfill our desire. Our happiness can only be complete when we see God face to face. And this is what the wisemen we able to do. They were able to see the goal of their desire for happiness as they offered their gifts to the child Jesus.

As concerns our star which will guide our way to Jesus, you are already a part of that answer. You are sitting in it as a member of it—the Catholic Church. Jesus Christ, Himself, founded our Catholic Church and placed His Holy Spirit as its spiritual head and guide to lead man to find that happiness which he seeks, which he has always sought, which he will always seek. The Catholic Church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, reminds us that lasting happiness cannot be found in this world despite our best efforts. It can only be attained in the next. It is through our desire to attain complete/eternal happiness in the next life, that we seek to see it lived out in this life. Gifted with our free will, we may continue to go through this life still seeking something which will satisfy our need, our desire for happiness. Or, we can choose to conform our wills to His Will, live our Catholic faith to the best of our earthly abilities, rely upon His grace to fill up what is lacking within our flawed natures, and find that true, lasting happiness which only God can provide. The wise men could have easily chosen to abandon the guidance of the star at any point in their journey. We call them wise for they did not. May future generations call us wise as well for following the guidance Jesus has provided within His Catholic Church.