

Homily for the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord  
St. Joseph's Neier January 4-5, 2014  
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Central Idea: What kind of seeker will you be? Will you be someone interested in finding light or darkness?

*"Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising  
and have come to do him homage."  
When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled. . .*

Don't believe the hype.

If you have been listening to the news lately, you have been hearing some rather disturbing things coming out of North Korea. The leader of that country, a madman by the name of Kim Jung Un, has been consolidating his power of late. Apparently, Un's uncle was attempting to wrest some power from him and was executed. According to an unconfirmed report, he was killed in a manner that is utterly unspeakable, so I won't say it.

I will say, I don't believe the hype.

But what is fascinating is that in the year 2014 we are willing to believe anything and everything about North Korea. Why? Well, first the leaders of that sad country have proven to be more than just a little bit nutty. The posturing, the posing and the utter "love" of the populace to a man is all somewhat disturbing. He's a little chubby man with a bad haircut and he is treated like he is the reincarnation of all four of the Beatles. Second, the land is filled with utter secrecy and concealment. We see only what Kim wants us to see. Third, they have had a history of brutality and bizarre executions. So we will believe anything.

As I said I don't believe the uncle was executed as the report says, but there is a picture on the internet that is equally disturbing about the North Korean leader. It shows him on a ski lift. Why is this disturbing? Here is the story. Kim went to school in Switzerland and developed a love of skiing. (who knew?) So he wants to build a ski resort in North Korea called Masik Pass. The only problem is, they don't have the technology to build ski lifts. (side note: they are trying to build atomic bombs, but they cannot build ski lifts?) So they go to all these firms in Europe to build their ski lifts. Unfortunately for Kim, they all have sanctions about selling stuff to the North Koreans. Even neutral Switzerland won't do it. North Korea issued this statement: "This is an intolerable mockery of the social system and the people of the DPRK and a *serious human rights abuse* that politicizes sports and discriminates against the Koreans."

What is crazy is that most North Koreans are starving, and would never even be able to get close to Masik Pass let alone afford being able to ski there.

I mention all of this because Kim Jung Un reminds me a King Herod in our gospel. They are both men of incredible dreams and serious, serious paranoia. There are some people who cannot believe that Herod would worry about a child born in the middle of nowhere, but I think history shows that tyrants, in their obsessions, in their fears, in their suspicions, can convince themselves of all sorts of strange and brutal things.

And, if we are honest, on a smaller hopefully less vile and wicked level, we can be like Herod and Kim Jung Un. We can have our obsessions, we can have our fears, we can have our unreasonable and irrational moments. We seek, not truth, but consolidation of power.

Today, the feast of the Epiphany we are challenged to look at the way we seek God, seek Christ, seek life. Will we be drawn into the darkness, into the madness? Or will we, like the magi of old, seek life, seek light, seek hope? To put it simply, what are we seeking in our lives? Are we seeking the way of Herod or the wise men? How do we judge this?

Two quick ideas.

One, are we seeking what we alone want, or are we seeking what is best for others? There is a certain amount of self interest that we are allowed in our lives, but that only works to a point. Once things become all about us, all about our needs, all about our desires, all about our wishes; we become lost, and more importantly, we become lonely. I am not sure if there is a hard and fast dividing line between legitimate self interest and selfishness, and that is what makes life so difficult. We need to continue to look at this and balance our needs with the needs of others.

Two, seekers are open to wherever the Spirit of God leads them. The magi probably did not begin looking for a little child born into poverty. They probably had a different notion at the start. But God led them to where they needed to go. This is not to say that you should not have a goal, not have any aspirations, but it is funny how life sometimes takes twists and turns. As someone once said: if you want to make God laugh, tell him what your plans are. Tyrants see only one way, only one path, only one purpose and it is theirs.

We are all seekers along the way, we are all the magi of old. The question we ponder today is simply this: what are we looking for? Are we seeking consolidation of power, or the goodness of God? Are we seeking death or life? Are we seeking light or darkness? Are we seeking to do what is best for others or are we looking for a ski lift to nowhere?