

The Epiphany of the Lord – January 5&6, 2019 – Reflection

“Having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.”

(Matthew 2:12)

The house where I live borders *Grove Street*, a one-way street and it's scary and startling when someone drives down that street going the opposite way. They must be strangers, I think; not from around here ... or worse, they must be up to no good.

Stores, even a people's store like Walmart, tell us at the door the right way to go: “Enter here” or “Exit here”, all the while courting our business.

WAZE, the driving directional app, tells us the way to get from point A to point B, and ways to avoid traffic tie-ups, accidents, and law enforcement ... but, if we dare disobey the satellite dictated instructions, we are upbraided as the voice shames us with its “Recalculating” scolding as if to really say, “Dummy!”

New York, with all its lights and glitter, hustle and bustle, is no better shown off than in the Theater District, Broadway, the glowing *Great White Way* of music, drama, and dreams!

Parents struggle to deal with their growing adolescent children who push the boundaries and are just itching to go off on their own. Sometimes the conflict results in standoffs and fights where,

unfortunately, in the heat of battle, words like, "It's my house, my rules ... if you don't like it, there's the door ... it's my way or the highway!"

Political pundits are always worrying about whether the country has lost its moral compass ... lost its way.

The very first followers of Jesus, perhaps taking their cue from the anonymous Magi stargazers, did not call themselves a Church. They did not even call themselves Christians. They simply referred to their movement, their belief that turned their lives around, as the Way ... the Way. However they encountered the Risen Jesus, be it on Easter at the tomb or in the upper room, or at Pentecost in the fiery outpouring of the Holy Spirit, or on the road to Damascus that knocked them off their high horse, or in hearing the stories or seeing the sick healed, or even in the breaking of the bread ... however it happened, their lives were changed, many forever. And, when they finally went back to their homes and jobs and schools and lives, it wasn't the same; they went back changed; they went back by a different Way.

St. Paul, who was one of those who encountered the Lord after the Ascension, an encounter that literally knocked him for a loop ... St. Paul wrote in his First letter to the Corinthians, "Strive (in your life) for the greater gifts ... and I will show you a still more excellent Way." A more excellent Way ... the Way of patient, kind, unboastful, faithful, hopeful, lasting love. "In the end, there are but three things that last (along the way of life), faith, hope, and love ... these three ... and the greatest of these is love."

St. John, the Beloved, tells us, "God is love, and the one who abides in love, abides in God."

If love is the Way and God is love, then how do we find our way to God? Jesus told His followers, "I AM the Way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father God except through Me."

Baptism isn't just water ... it's Jesus raising me up. Confession isn't just words ... it's Jesus welcoming me back home. Gospel isn't just words ... it's Jesus, the Word, come to turn me around. Eucharist isn't just bread ... it's Jesus come to me to carry me on the journey of a lifetime. If I say I have heard the words of Jesus, tasted the flesh of Jesus, been offered the healing of Jesus, been called to follow by Jesus ... and still return to my life as it was, the same way it's always been, well, I don't know who you heard or tasted or followed, but it wasn't Jesus.

Start out again. Follow the light of the Gospel. Hear the whisper of an invitation. Dare to dream that you could be different. Offer the gift of your life in that most improbable manger. Meet Jesus. Your life will never be the same and you'll go back to whatever you do, whoever you are, by a totally different WAY.