

Ephipany
January 3, 2009

In the Christmas story we are told that the first people to hear the good news of Jesus' birth are the shepherds, lowly people in the hills around Bethlehem who, like Jesus, have little to shelter them in the night. The respectable people of Bethlehem, who had no room for Joseph and Mary, have no idea of the wondrous event taking place in their town.

In the Epiphany story we are told that the first people to recognize and worship Jesus are not the religious leaders of Jerusalem, but Gentiles with open minds and hearts, who saw and followed signs from the heavens.

Implicit in these stories is a caution to those of us who consider ourselves religious. It is easy to become smug or complacent. It is tempting, when we are "respectable" to become self-satisfied and think we are superior. We have a tendency to get so involved in ritual and symbol that we miss the reality of the incarnate God Who stands before us.

We have so much to learn from the stories of this season. For one thing, God is most readily apparent to those who humbly can acknowledge how very much they need a Savior and who long for deliverance. Those who are too comfortable with God are worshipping too small a god, usually their own image in a mirror. Sincere worshipers must be like the Magi, willing to keep searching for God with great effort and faith, and then, when finding God in unexpected places, bow down in worship and self-giving.

Our God is an awesome God. No church or temple can fully contain God. God smiles at us through the face of a child...and has written His name in the stars. We can only bow in wonder and adoration.

God bless you.
Fr. Pat