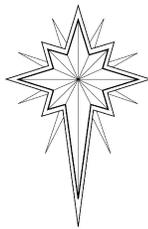


**This message was given by Kate on Epiphany Sunday. It urges us to believe in our own star that calls us to believe in ourselves and find a way to offer our true gifts. It is based on the scripture Matthew 2:1-12 and is called “Your Star Still Burns.”**

I did something rather out of character while visiting my friend Julie in Wisconsin for New Year’s. I asked her if I could take home something hanging right on her living room wall. Now it was nothing extravagant, in fact, here it is...this star, which she said was purchased years ago in Walgreens or someplace like that. Now, Julie’s home is absolutely beautiful and when decorated for Christmas it looks like a log country inn out of a magazine. I love going there. But not so much for the beauty, as for the sense of peace that comes over me when I am there. So, one very early morning as she was out teaching a yoga class, I was longing to take that peace home with me, and I looked up, and there was the star. So, I asked her for it. And she, being Julie, was happy to give it to me.

Then on Friday, while driving from Joel’s dad’s in Fond du Lac to Milwaukee to catch our plane, we were led the whole way by one brilliant star. We couldn’t see any others in the sky, and as the morning brightened it stayed with us. Whenever the road turned, it seemed to be there!



By the time we got home, I felt immersed in the story of Epiphany, akin to the wise ones who followed the star. The turbulence we hit between New York and Portland was our version of Herod, and every beautiful baby we encountered in the terminal shined with the light of Christ. You know me by now – I read events in life and wonders of nature much as I read the scriptures – looking for what God is telling me through them. As venerated a theologian as St.

Augustine said, “Some people, in order to discover God, read books. But there is a great book: the very appearance of created things. Look above you! Look below you! Read it. God, whom you want to discover, never wrote that book with ink. Instead, [God] set before your eyes the things that He had made. Can you ask for a louder voice than that?” So, I figure I am in good company.

The story of Epiphany is one in which creation and the scriptures come together, in the appearance and the meaning of the star. The magi attended to the star, were guided by the star, stayed with the star, until it brought them into the presence of the holy child which “overwhelmed them” with joy!

Have **you** ever wished that **you were directed by a star**, that there was no question what your next move would be, or what turn you should take, because that star would be there guiding you with every step? Your star would take you immediately to that place of overwhelming joy, straight into the presence of the holy, where you could without fear or hesitation offer **all of your gifts**, give everything you have to that moment!

In some cultures, it is believed that with every new child is born that child’s star. The star would be with him or her through their lives. That is the story these cultures tell to assure each child of their worth, their purpose in the wider universe, which, of course, is the **deeper truth** of the matter.

We have the story of the Epiphany. The story of a journey, the following of the star, that leads to joy, to the offering of gifts, to the presence of God. What is the deep truth here? I think part of it has to do with human desire to be

on the right path, to take a kind of holy quest, which, despite all obstacles, our own individual Herods, leads us exactly where we need to go. And that for each of us, **there is a star**, a light to follow. But, like the magi who had their ancient charts and predictions, we too need to attend to wisdom offered us by the scriptures, creation, our present-day guides, and our deepest intuitions that keep us reaching for the light.

Sadly, many of us get stuck in the turbulence, are turned off-course by the Herods who do not have our interest at heart. Some of us don't believe in our own sacred journey, have somehow received the message that our lives are nothing special, that there is no greater purpose for them. Our Herod may have come to us early in life, armed with his own agenda, leaving us to wonder and grope in the dark. Some of us feel we are **too old** to keep on the road, that we've gone as far as we can go, and that God has nothing more in store for us. Our Herod comes in the form of a culture that sees vitality only in the young and has not honored the deep vitality of an old and much-traveled soul.

But let me tell you – I don't care how young or how old you are, how discouraged or how lost, how travel-worn, **your star still burns**. Perhaps it is time to do an about-face. To look in another direction. You still have precious gifts to give. And you will not find the Christ or know overwhelming joy of the magi, if you do not get to offer them.

I sat with a woman not long ago who has been ill for some time. She is old and tired. She asked me **why**, why does she still have to be here? I looked at her beautiful face, and thought of all of the wisdom I have gleaned from her, and said, "I don't really know, but I know I am happy to have you here." Today, I want to say to her that **her star still burns**. As long as there is life, there is a journey to be on and gifts to offer. Isn't this the Epiphany message we need to give our

young as well? Each one has a star to follow, one that leads to a place of joy, a deep experience of God, and the opportunity to give their gifts to the world. They must never stop seeking that star or following it whenever the light appears.

As I look back upon the morning at Julies's and my desire to abscond with that star, I now can see what it was about. I wanted to remember, to feel the peace that comes with knowing, that **my star still burns**. That I still have a journey to take and important gifts to offer. That no matter how many Herods I encounter, the light of Christ will continue to draw me. There is joy, not only at the end, but in each step, each movement toward God's presence.

My star still burns. And so does yours. Each of us has a star to follow. It will lead us on until **all our gifts are given**, and then we, we will become one with its light! What joy! Amen.

