

Blessed be God who animates our lives and beckons us home by another way.

The last line of Matthew's Gospel has inspired a different translation: Home by Another Way. James Taylor has written a song with that title. Barbara Brown Taylor a book for adults and a wonderful children's book!

I have been haunted by the last lines of Matthew's gospel this week.
I have been haunted by the words: home by another way
I have been haunted by this journey inspired by a radiance we call Epiphany to which we are all invited in all our variousness...

In that haunting I have come to understand something new about the relationship between the words home, another, way and epiphany.

In that haunting I have come to know something brilliant and glorious about this sacramental moment of the maji. The sacrament of epiphany is not just the offering of gifts or even the arrival at a destination. The sacrament of the epiphany, the outward and visible sign is the entire radiant scene of adoration to mark the invisible grace of home or ultimate dwelling place with our Savior. A grace and light and power which is diametrically opposed to the power of King Herod which the wise persons rejected in the holy child's name.

Home is something I preach about often. You may recall my mentioning Henri Nouwen's book Home Tonight in which he recounts his meditations at the foot of Rembrandt's painting the Return of the Prodigal Son. Finding that place of complete assured welcome and belonging was Henri's life pursuit and he found it in a community of mentally challenged adults in L'Arche in Canada. His destination was counterintuitive; after all he had been renowned professor and priest at Notre Dame, Yale and Harvard. But not until a resident at L'Arche asked him every evening Henri are you Home tonight? Did he truly know the meaning of this return to the arms of a loving parent and membership in a beloved community.

Another or other is a word by which we are often challenged in today's world...yet Jesus again and again chooses and teaches **another** way. He preaches to and lives among the marginalized. He has a preference for the poor the hungry the oppressed. He surprises us with other views using stories of irony and paradox. He teaches us as those three wise persons did to choose the road less traveled, the road to freedom and salvation, instead of the road back to oppressive power.

This road to freedom is the Way of Jesus Christ. He beckons us to come and see. more often than not that beckoning is toward a place in our hearts instead of a physical location.

Jesus Christ is the Way the Truth and the Life...To Come to Him, to follow him, is to find home by another way than expected or convenient or planned. Every encounter with the living Christ reveals another way because a turning, a transformation, a metanoia has occurred.

The journey, like that of the maji, can be circuitous and treacherous. It can be barely trodden or slick and manicured. If the latter we Christians ought to be suspicious. We are formed in faith to know that pilgrimages are not meant to be completely comfortable; rather our journeys are meant to be uncomfortable enough for the light to enter those cracks of discomfort and vulnerability.

But also like the maji, there is something of a radiance, an illumination which guides us. Jesus is the Light of the World. Christ is the light coming into the world which penetrates darkness, complements darkness, and is never overcome by darkness.

This day we celebrate Epiphany and the word derives from the Greek epiphaniae which means to reveal. Epiphanies are sudden awakenings or revelations...here for the maji, for us, the new awareness of Christ and the Incarnation. The star, the light, the radiance shine on the child and also emanate from him.

We all come to the manger. We all then leave for home by another way. It may in the confined physical and chronological sense just be a different route or a noticing of new things along the way, an appreciation changed really.

But in a larger, stargazing God's time sense, we all go home to the place prepared for us, by another way. That way and that other home are illuminated by the light of Christ, just as we sing at an Easter Vigil when all is dark except a holy flame as the Exultet is chanted. We process with that light another way, that night and always...

Another from the way we expected, another from our neighbor's.

The home prepared for us to which we all arrive variously is the fulfillment of the Kingdom and the ultimate Oneness and Unity to which we are called. Just like the dinner bell which summons on a summer night in the neighborhood, we are all called home for the banquet.

This week David and I said good bye to a dear friend. I realized as I sat through a memorable and memory-filled liturgy that he was indeed going home, or already resting there. with a lit Cuban cigar and gin martini! He had traveled extensively in this world and pursued unique and detailed historical projects, and had gone to his resting place by a different way. He had quietly lived one of the fullest and richest lives I could imagine. He had loved and been loved dearly. all the hymns, all the prayers, the remembrances and the homily revealed his true self, illuminated his life on this earth

that we might know him in his true home always. And I left the sanctuary with a picture of the mansion which God had prepared for Him.

So it is for all of us. whether we came to the manger days ago, years ago, or are still traveling, we will be forever changed when we arrive at the place we knew as if for the first time. And then for a split second we will reject the Herod like instruction to comply with expectations and commodify the experience; we will turn turn turn and set out for home by another way.

Instead of resignation there will be rejoicing
instead of disappointment there will be wonder and gratitude
Instead of darkness the path will be radiant and illuminated by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are to go home by another way, another radiant way.

There is a light of Christ within each of us. And our journey home by another way is as much internal from head to heart, that core and spark of divinity within each of us, as it is external to some place or space. The light of Christ which overcomes any darkness which is not of God, is the light of wisdom, the light of imagination, the light of grace and love. I invite you in this new year on this day of epiphanous revelation and manifestation to rekindle this light with the sustaining power of the consecrated bread and wine. May you be so inspired by the holy radiance of our Eucharist that you travel home by another way today. And may you rest on this Sabbath truly knowing that you belong and are beloved.