

Sermon Notes for the Feast of Epiphany 2011

How do you get from place to place? There is an old-fashioned word for that skill: wayfaring.

Maps used to be the key. Ever arrive in an unfamiliar city without one?

Then came Mapquest and then GPS devices. Both of which are less reliable than maps!

The wise men were guided by a star. Obviously extraordinary.

Though I guess sailors and others were guided by them in more mundane ways.

Their star guided them to the Lord. And there everything changed for them.

They were overwhelmed by joy; they fell to their knees before him.

They gave him precious gifts.

They were transformed.

And suddenly they found their from place to place differently than they had before.

No more maps, no asking directions, no more stars, even.

Now they were to be guided by the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth.

Their redirection by a dream is symbolic of that.

That from now on, they'd be guided by the light of Christ and none other.

They went home by a different road, to live differently because of what they had found in Bethlehem.

So it is for all the baptized who cling to Christ.

We might find him in all sorts of ways, by our strange wayfaring systems.

But once we are his; we are not our own any longer.

We cannot live as we once lived.

Your old sense of direction is replaced by the Holy Spirit.

Your internal GPS is made new as you are reborn in him.

With the grace of Christ preventing you, you can live your life down a road of sanctification quite different from that you previously followed.

So we make our way from place to place by the light of Christ now.

TS Eliot's Journey of the Magi ends with these lines:

**"Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,
Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;**

**With a running stream and a water-mill beating the darkness,/ And three trees on the low sky,
And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.
Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,
Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver, And feet kicking the empty wine-skins.
But there was no information, and so we continued
And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon
Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.**

**All this was a long time ago, I remember,
And I would do it again, but set down
This set down
This: were we lead all that way for
Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I have seen birth and death,/ But had thought they were
different; this Birth was/ Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death./ We returned
to our places, these Kingdoms,/ But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,/ With an
alien people clutching their gods./ I should be glad of another death."**

Death; a striking image for the poet; the most profound break in our lives.

But the transition that the incarnation made in human history is indeed that profound.
To return from Christmas unchanged is to miss the point.
God has changed us and everything through the incarnation.
An old self and old world has died.

And a new one is being raised up from its ruins.