

New Beginnings ~ January 3, 2010

Matthew 2:1-12

Welcome to the New Year- that of 2010. It is already January 3 and many of us are still pondering our resolutions or goals for the upcoming year. I saw a little news story while in Wisconsin about resolutions. One young woman said that the first of the year was the “only time” to decide to change one’s life through resolving to do things differently. I don’t agree with that, I believe we can change things whenever we have the will to do so. But it, seems, that having a set date helps many of us make some changes, even if only for a little while.

It is estimated that about 2 % of us will abide by our resolutions for the entire year. It seems that, as much as we might say we would like to integrate “new beginnings” into our lives, when it comes right down to it, we often discover that we would prefer to follow our same old patterns and remain in our same old ruts. It’s comfortable and safe to stay the same and it simply requires too much of us to change.

Those who will succeed in keeping their resolutions are those most disappointed with certain aspects of their lives. Others who might succeed are those who have dreamed dreams and contemplated a new, better way of living and moving and having their beings. We might decide to live healthier lives, to open ourselves to new relationships, or, to renew some that have been allowed to die, to think of changing our careers or even where we live. The possibilities are endless and we are never too old to change, just too fearful or, even, too lazy to try. Whether we manage to keep resolutions or not, just considering ways in which we might change our lives for the better is a very positive step.

Epiphany is celebrated on January 6. It marks the time in our story of the birth of Jesus when the three wise men, after traveling great distances found the child. Most who study the Bible agree that this event would have taken place long after his birth and that Jesus would have been a toddler at the time.

The significance of the story of the wise men coming from foreign lands, is that the story of Jesus was not destined to be contained in a limited area of the known world. It was to be disseminated to all four corners of the earth.

In many places in the gospels Jesus is quoted as saying that his mission was to “the lost sheep of Israel.” But, as time went on, and as the authors of our gospels heard the story over and over again, a wider audience was acknowledged. The message was intended for all those who had ears and who could hear.

For the wise men in our story a new beginning took place when their quest led them to the place Jesus was living. We are told they were astrologers who had combed the heavens for signs of the coming of one who would save the world from a time of confusion and despair. When a bright conjunction of planets appeared in the sky they believed the time had come and they were compelled to try and find the person heralded by its appearance. It took courage faith and hope to set out and keep going never knowing when or where their journey might end.

We, too, are called to take journeys of our own of a spiritual nature. We don't have a bright star to guide us but we do have the story before us. We need to dare to have the courage, faith and hope to put the basic principles of life we find in the story of the life and teachings of Jesus into practice. While we may travel in a community of faith, each of us journeys on his or her own. My way of traveling cannot or will not be the same as your own. We all come from different places in life with different needs and desires. But while the steps in the journey are not the same, the goal is. It is to reveal, through the living of our lives, as did those wise men of old, the qualities of love, forgiveness, joy and peace. The qualities of life that Jesus told us are the most essential. Amen