

Sometime in the not too distant past, I was on the road to a distant city and happened to be tuned in to CBC radio for the benefit of a little distraction as the miles crept slowly by. On that particular day they were running repeat broadcasts of previously aired interviews, and the one I happened to catch was one that shone a spotlight on the concept of humility.... an admittedly strange topic for in-depth reporting, but CBC hit a home run with this one. Of course, in the few minutes that I have here, I won't do it justice at all and I'm not really going to trybut a couple of points from that interview stuck with me and are cause for some deeper reflection on this Feast of the Epiphany.

When we hear the word humility, the journalist said, we tend to think that it equates to being passive, or meek, or self-effacing, perhaps in a tendency to underplay or understate our gifts and abilities.... and said further that humility is one of those qualities that we hold up as an ideal human trait, but perhaps don't really understand in all its richness and depth. And then the show went on to examine the quality of humility as seen through the eyes of various traditions and cultures down through the ages.

As a person who thinks of humility as a virtue but had never really thought too deeply about it, the conversation, which then turned to our **own** cultural reality, was a real eye-opener. What the journalist went on to address is the individualism and ego-centrism of our own culture: that is, the reality that now as perhaps at no other time in recent history, people (especially but not exclusively North Americans) tend to believe that the world revolves around **ourselves** individually, and communally. Another way to say this is that we are perceived as having a skewed sense of our own self-importance; that is, we believe that **our** needs and wants are paramount and everyone else's are secondary; and how **humility**, by contrast, is the deep understanding that there is an inter-connectedness and interdependence within all life, in which we are an admittedly small but nonetheless important part.

Humility, then, is the recognition that life is bigger than we are; that the gift of life presupposes mutual responsibility and accountability; that we all have a part to play; and further, that rather than denying or containing our God-given skills and perspectives and talents, we have the obligation to share and use them, and use them well. This means that the person with a deep sense of humility approaches life with thankfulness, with a willingness to participate, to go where the Spirit leads, and to live in a kind of holy wonder and anticipation and trust at what the next bend in the road will reveal...and not only that, but also to have the flexibility to 'go home by another way' when the situation demands it.

Well, perhaps you're beginning to make the connection with the story of the Eastern sages, whose visit to the young Jesus we heard told again today... a lovely romantic story filled with intrigue and mystery, but which in its final analysis means much more on a symbolic level than a literal one.... because, let's face it, if we think it's about three guys jumping on camels and traveling 1500 miles to deliver incense to a baby, or if we get caught up in the inevitable debate about whether the star actually existed, then as far as I'm concerned anyway, we've really missed the storyteller's point.

What captures **my** attention in this whole wonderful story is the notion that the wise men, using their skills as astrologers, followed a hunch and embarked on a quest that ultimately led them face to face with God incarnate. The message is all in their willingness to set out on a journey, to follow a star, and see where it would take them. It's all in their willingness to be surprised in this exercise called life, to take a risk, and to be open to possibility. And the payoff is, in today's world, just as in the story, God is still revealed to those who seek.... not simply to those believed to be "wise", but to those with enough humility to recognize that the quest properly belongs to us all.

To me, the truth of the story of Epiphany is simply this: we may have to follow our own unique road to reach him, and he may be waiting for us in unlikely places, but Jesus **IS** there to be found.... in our families, friends and neighbours; in those we love and in those we fear and perhaps even in those we dislike; in the unloved and the unlovable; in the big events which shake our planet, and in the daily mundane details of our lives; in silence and in celebration..... and not just once, but every single day, he is waiting to be manifested to those with eyes to see and hearts to accept.

Lord of all who seek, grant us the humility of open minds and enquiring hearts, that we may know you, and know joy, where and when you are revealed to us. For this we pray and together say, Amen.