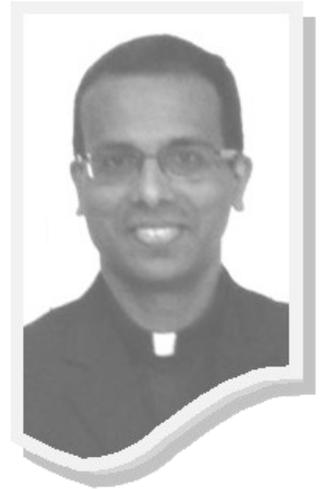




From the Pastor



They came from afar . . .

While the hustle and bustle of Christmas ends for many people on December 26th, throughout Christian history Christmas lasts much longer. The “peak” of the Christmas “season” is January 6th—Epiphany—the end of the 12 Days of Christmas. Jesus is now revealed as a light to the Gentile nations. Keep your Christmas decorations up—especially your Christmas tree and lights on—at least until this day is over. The official end of the entire Christmas season on the new liturgical calendar is the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord which is next Sunday, after which Ordinary Time begins. In the older tradition (which is still kept in the liturgical calendar of the Extraordinary Form of the Mass) “Christmastide” lasts until Candlemas, or the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Presentation of the Lord, which isn’t until February 2nd. This marked the end of a long, 40-day “Christmastide” that corresponded to the 40 days of Lent.

In the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Jesus to the Gentile world. It focuses primarily on this revelation to the Three Wise Men. In the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church, Theophany—as Epiphany is known in the East—commemorates the manifestation of Jesus’ divinity at his Baptism in the River Jordan. While the traditional date for the feast of Epiphany is January 6th (12 days after Christmas), in the United States the celebration of Epiphany is moved to the next Sunday, overlapping with the rest of the Western Church’s celebration of the Baptism of Christ. However, the meaning of the feast goes deeper. You can’t understand the Nativity without Epiphany. The revelation of Christ as the

Son of God—both as an infant and at his baptism—illuminates the mysteries of the Christmas season.

The Feast of Epiphany is a very, very early feast that predates the celebration of Christmas on the 25th. In the early Church, Christians, particularly those in the East, celebrated the advent of Christ on January 6th by commemorating Nativity, Visitation of the Magi, Baptism of Christ, and the Wedding at Cana all in one feast of the Epiphany. By the 4th Century, both Christmas and Epiphany had been set as separate feasts in some dioceses. At the Council of Tours in 567, the Church set both Christmas day and Epiphany as feast days on December 25th and January 6th, respectively, and named the 12 days between the feasts as the Christmas season. Over time, the Western Church separated the remaining feasts into their own celebrations.

As part of the liturgy of the Epiphany, it is traditional to proclaim the date of Easter and other moveable feast days to the faithful, formally reminding the Church of the importance of Easter and the resurrection to both the liturgical year and to the faith. In many parts of the world, children receive their presents on “Three Kings Day.” The Magi, who were the first Gentiles to encounter Christ, were clever, wealthy, and brave. They were willing to take the risk in order to go searching for the truth. The Magi can still be a powerful example for us today.

—Fr. Jose Thomas



Blessings given . . . Blessings received

STEWARDSHIP UPDATE Stewardship Letters mailed: 1,717
Received as of 1/3/2018: XXX

Please remember:

- ◆ Place your response in the collection basket when you attend Mass.
- ◆ Drop it off at the Parish Office at the 27th Street Church.
- ◆ Mail it in the provided envelope.
- ◆ Use online giving. Just go to the Parish Website at: stfrancisbend.org and scroll down toward the bottom, and click the “Online Giving” link. Please call the Stewardship Office if you have any questions or concerns at (541) 382-3631, Ext. 106.

