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Christian Perspectives ? journeying with precious gifts

We use the term ?Epiphany,? for January 6, the last of 12 days of Christmas celebration. It comes from the Greek word meaning ?to reveal.? The light from a star revealed to the magi a child who was a gift to the world and who would himself be called ?the light of the world.? (Matthew 2.1-12)

This week, I've thought about how the magi story parallels our own life journeys, and epiphanies.

The magi travelled at night with only that point of light in the sky to guide them. We cannot see even a minute into our future so, in a sense, we travel in darkness too.

The wise ones observed, studied, and made up a hypothesis about what the star meant. They could only test their hypothesis by stepping out in faith, setting out on their journey, trusting the path that their guiding light made for them.

We do the same on our life journeys. We develop understandings about how things work, hypotheses about what is right and how things should be. Then we too step out in faith say our truth and act on it.

There must have been hardships along the way for the magi. They had to cross deserts and mountain ranges and pass through foreign countries. They did not know how long their journey would take or who or what they would meet around the next corner. It took courage and resourcefulness to keep on going.

We have our own dark times, deserts to cross and mountains to climb. Sometimes we wonder how we will be able to go on. We need courage and resourcefulness for our life journeys.

When the wise men found the palace of the Hebrew king, they thought they had arrived at their destination. But it turned out to be the wrong place. They expected a divine king but found only a disgruntled elderly politician. Eventually, they did find the child but he was being raised in humble circumstances by poor parents. Were they confused and disappointed? Their expectations had to change dramatically. Again they needed divine guidance. This time direction came in a dream rather than by the light of a star.

We too experience times when we believe we have arrived. We may feel successful, at peace, as though all is right with our world and we have finally figured things out. This state never seems to last. It is shocking how quickly changes in direction may be required. We expect one thing and find another. We can feel lost for awhile. But if we look and listen and pray for signs, they come ? sometimes in dreams or sometimes with special messengers ? and we too ?return home by a different route? than what we had expected.

We all journey with precious gifts: gifts we have received from others along the journey; and, gifts that are uniquely our own that, when given, make a better world.

An Epiphany Blessing

If you could see the journey whole you might never undertake it; might never dare the first step that propels you from the place you have known toward the place you know not.

Call it one of the mercies of the road: that we see it only by stages as it opens before us, as it comes into our keeping step by single step.

There is nothing for it but to go and by our going take the vows the pilgrim takes: to be faithful to the next step; to rely on more than the map; to heed the signposts of intuition and dream; to follow the star that only you will recognize; to keep an open eye for the wonders that attend the path; to press on beyond distractions, beyond fatigue, beyond what would tempt you from the way.

There are vows that only you will know; the secret promises for your particular path and the new ones you will need to make when the road is revealed by turns you could not have foreseen.

Keep them, break them, make them again: each promise becomes part of the path; each choice creates the road that will take you to the place where at last you will kneel to offer the gift most needed ? the gift that only you can give ? before turning to go home by another way.

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Wishing you the gifts the Christ offers ? hope, peace, joy and love ? in 2016 and beyond.

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