

## Chaplain's Bulletin January 4, 2026



Dear Folks,

As we continue to celebrate the Christmas season, we now come to Epiphany. The word epiphany means “appearance” or “manifestation.” The coming of the Magi tells us that Jesus is meant for the whole world, not just His family, town, or nation. The Magi were not of the nation of Israel but were seekers of mysteries. We have a natural hunger for mystery, but many lose track of it chasing after superficial things. The human exploration of mystery lead to many who explored new territory, studied natural phenomena, or asked ultimate questions. Like many hungers, it can be awakened by the right stimulus. Imagine being so focused on tasks that you don’t notice dinner time, but suddenly you smell (insert favorite food here) and then you have hunger pangs.

As the star drew the Magi, so we are meant to be stars to other people. That means we are to draw people to the mystery of Jesus. While we are called to be good examples so that seeing what we do people will praise God (Matthew 5:16), our central message is not that we are such wonderful people. It is about a mystery infinitely greater than we are.

Many have learned about church in a way that loses the great sense of mystery. Some think that Christianity is basically a collection of belief statements to repeat and commandments to follow. Some people have said that Christianity is basically about being a good person. This breaks my heart. They have been robbed. They have been cheated. They have been deprived of an enormous treasure and given a superficial substitute. Then the Mass would be seen as just a community gathering that gives us a good experience and a good feeling. It is a doorway to the Infinite and the ultimate. The celebrant is a failure if he is about drawing attention to himself. Liturgical musicians fail if they draw attention to the music for its own sake. The celebrant, the music and all the ritual are to draw people into the mystery that is beyond what we see. Our faith is an infinite mystery into which we enter. We encounter the central truths of reality and of life, and they can transform us to the core of our being. Imagine someone having a nuclear power plant and only using it to reheat their coffee.

When I was a young priest, an older priest told me he was “bored” with the Gospel of John. When I looked shocked, he said, “When you’ve been a priest for 35 years, you might be bored with it too.” Well, now I’ve been a priest for thirty-eight years, and have never gotten bored with the Gospel of John. In fact, the more I learn, the deeper I go, the more I study it the more amazing, the more fascinating it is. Of course, the reading that was available at that time was more about deconstructing the text than seeing deep connections. We didn’t have authors like Brant Pitre, Scott Hahn, John Bergsma and Jeff Cavins. I learned a lot of wonderful stuff in the seminary, and I will be forever grateful for my teachers and what they taught me, but there is so much more.

We are called to be seekers of mystery, and the more deeply we seek, the more we can make sense out of life, the universe, and everything.

The star beckons. If we follow, we can be a beacon to others.

Blessings,  
Fr. Jim