



The Epiphany of the Lord January 3, 2016

*We saw his star at its rising and
have come to do him homage.*

—Matthew 2:2



Pastor's Column

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Everyone Is Created by God and Deserving of Love

On this Feast of Epiphany in the year 1929, an 18-year-old woman arrived by train in the capital of the Bengal State in British India. Raised in comfort in Eastern Europe, this bright, young woman was to spend the next 20 years of her life as a Sister of Loretto, teaching geography to wealthy high school girls in the capital's suburbs.

In 1949, at the age of 38, this same woman felt a powerful call from God to spend her life serving the dying and the poorest of the poor. She asked the local bishop for permission to found a religious order whose only ministry would be to the poor and the dying.

When the bishop heard of the request, he laughed: "Why, I knew her when she was a novice and she couldn't even light the candles on the altar. And now she expects me to give her permission to found a religious order?" But the bishop eventually gave in and agreed.

In her lifetime, Mother Teresa of Calcutta had treated over 50,000 dying people. Her order, the Missionaries of Charity, today counts over 1,600 sisters in more than 60 countries around the world. She was honored by presidents and applauded by prime ministers. 50 years after she set foot India, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mother Teresa's vision of the ministry of Jesus Christ, our sharing in that ministry as Christ's embrace of today's world, is simple but challenging. She once described it this way: "Everyone is created by God and deserving of love. It does not matter if the person is male or female, Moslem, Christian or Jew. It does not matter the person's race or nationality. All that matters is that the person is created by God and deserves love. My sisters are there simply to give love."

It seems fitting that Mother Teresa entered upon her life of ministry in India on the Feast of the Epiphany because the vision she developed is exactly the vision of this feast, described in today's readings. The Epiphany proclaims that everyone is created by God and deserving of love. The person's race, religion, nationality, or sexual orientation does not matter.

All that matters is that this creature of God deserves love. And we—the arms of Jesus that now embrace the world—are simply here to give love.

The Epiphany vision, as phrased by Mother Teresa, is simple, challenging and utterly profound: Everyone is created by God and deserves love. Everyone—male, female, Moslem, Jew, Buddhist, atheist, agnostic, black, white, yellow, brown, gay, straight. Everyone—people who are clumsy in their social graces, people who are imprisoned, thieves and murderers, rapists and abusers, even Democrats and Republicans!

Because we Christians are Christ's embrace of the world, we are here simply to give love.

F. Mike