

**“They were overjoyed at seeing the star.”**

(There’s that word “joy” again!)

I’m not going to ask for a show of hands, but if I did, I bet most hands would go up – if I were to ask how many have been to EPCOT Center next to Disney’s Magic Kingdom in Orlando, Florida. What I didn’t know, or perhaps didn’t remember, is that EPCOT is an acronym. It stands for Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow. When Walt Disney conceived the vision, he intended it to be a model city comprised of citizens from all over the world whose goal it would be to live and work together, complementing each other, in peace. Walt Disney died before his vision got off the drawing board, and the Walt Disney Company decided that it didn’t want to be in the business of running a town, so Disney’s EPCOT vision was never realized. It became instead a Disney Theme Park.

I begin with this image not because so many Wisconsinites were just recently in Orlando, or because it’s a popular resort destination during these frigid days up north. I bring it up because the original EPCOT was a vision – the vision of a man who was able to see, in his mind’s eye, things others never imagined, a man who believed that his vision could be realized. And that’s what we’re dealing with in today’s liturgy: we’re dealing with a vision.

Five hundred years before Christ was born, Isaiah – author of today’s first reading – had a vision. It was the vision of a New Jerusalem – the old one having been destroyed by the Babylonians. It was the vision of a new city, new homes, new temple, a new center

of spiritual life for the Israelites. It was a vision, as Isaiah describes, where God would disperse the darkness and thick clouds of their shame and sinfulness, and allow the divine glory to shine upon them. More than that, this new day and this new beginning were not meant solely for the Israelite people. Through them, all the peoples of the earth would be drawn to God. “All the communities of the earth will find blessing in you.” Essentially, it was the vision of a world where all people would live and work together, complementing each other, in peace.

In today’s Gospel, Matthew sees the coming of Jesus in flesh and blood, in time and space, as the beginning of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s vision. The gift-bearing Magi from the East represent all the non-Jews, for whom the Christ has also come. They are the caravan of nations who have also been invited to live in the light of God’s peace and salvation. This is why the Magi were overjoyed at seeing the star: they knew this was the beginning of the realization of a great vision. They had found the one whom they sought, the one who was the fulfillment of all human longings, the one who could show all people the way to live in peace and love. And the gifts they gave prove that they knew exactly who the child was: the gold symbolizing humanity, the frankincense acknowledging divinity, and the myrrh foreshadowing the child’s suffering and death.

All people of good will work today to bring the vision of Isaiah, the vision of the Magi, the vision of Jesus, to reality – the vision where all the people of the world live and work together, complementing each other, in peace.

It's true that most of our lives don't have an impact on the world stage. We're not brokers of national contracts or negotiators of peace between nations. But every single one of us is called by God's Word today to have the vision of Isaiah; and every single one of us has immense power to make that vision a reality in our own lives; and that's the beginning of the fulfillment of the vision.

Henry Ford is reputed to have said: "Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success." When that happens, we too will be overjoyed!