

Epiphany 2009

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Did anyone receive a GPS for Christmas this year? If you did, you're in luck. The GPS is one of the most useful of the new technologies available. Do you know what a GPS is? It stands for Global Positioning Satellite and it is a great navigational tool. With a GPS you input your starting address and then input your destination. You're still in the driver's seat but now you have a voice from above who tells you how to get where you want to go. It's especially helpful if you don't have someone reading directions to you from a map and even more essential if you don't really know where you're going! Having gotten lost on frequent occasions I'm always grateful when I can borrow a friend's GPS. One of the neatest functions of the GPS however is if you take another route than the one that the voice from above has told you to take, she finds a new route immediately with the word "Recalculating."

Why all this about the GPS? I suppose you could think of the Star in the Gospel today as the original GPS. It directs and guides the magi, these "star-gazers" on their way. Had they had a contemporary GPS they might have perched it on the hump of the camel (or is it a dromedary that has one hump?) and inputted "newborn king of the Jews" and they would have been on their way. But being people of their own time, their GPS, their guiding light would have to be the brilliant light of the star that would lead them. Now since they were seeking a newborn king they assumed that the star would lead them to a palace, a place fit for royalty. But in fact, this ancient GPS had its own way of saying "Recalculating." After their encounter with Herod, the King, the star would lead them not to a palace, nor to a manger, but to a home where they would find Mary, Joseph and the new born child, Jesus. This was not the expected destination. They would have to do their own "recalculating" as they realized in a moment of epiphany that they were witnesses to the showing forth of God's presence in their midst.

And so they were awe-struck, star-struck, falling flat on their faces, prostrating themselves before the awesome reality of divinity in the beauty and vulnerability of a newborn child. Somehow they knew that they had arrived! They had struck it rich as they offered their riches to the newborn child. Gold, a gift for a king, Incense a gift for the divine, myrrh a gift for... burial (a presaging of events to come).

It might be nice to have a star to guide us on our journey, or a GPS voice to tell us when we have made a wrong turn and will do the recalculating for us. But life is not like that. We do lose our way. We do take wrong turns. We often are searching for something or someone only to discover that what we thought was the destination just wasn't the right one. But even if we are not quite sure where we are going or how we are going to get there, the star we have to guide us is God's Holy Spirit, showing us the way, leading and guiding us. And if we trust the Spirit, she will always say "Recalculating."