

Vesper reflection

January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017

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A thousand pin pricks of light illuminate the deep desert sky, but the Magi see only one. A maverick star appearing from far beyond the edge of the known calls to them. Pay attention, it seems to say. Something wonderful is about to happen.

Urged on by the lure of this **strange** attractor, they travel long and far, the **journey** shrouded in the obscurity of their own inner darkness. Why them, they wonder. Why now?

They have nothing to go on but a profound awareness that in some mysterious way, love is at work in the world.

And then, suddenly, in an unexpected place, in a place where animals shelter, they experience a great epiphany: the **gift of a presence**, a sleeping child in the arms of his loving mother. No words are spoken, **Love alone is the language** that connects them.

They offer the swaddled babe their treasures, gold, frankincense, myrrh: gifts befitting a royal person.

And we ask:

**How is it that a child this child, is at the heart of the mystery called salvation?**

A new day dawns as the magi journey homeward, forever changed by their encounter with the holy one.

... And **their** story becomes ours: **Love is the journey** we all take when we see his light and accept the gift of his presence.

Millennia pass.

Other manifestations of God's gracious presence reveal themselves.

In a Maryland valley filled with **the promise** of new beginnings, Elizabeth Seton and her companion Sisters of Charity accept the challenge to bring God's love to a **place of poverty and desperation**.

**It is 1817**. The cries of orphaned children in far off New York reach their ears, move their hearts, **impell** them to action.

Three members of the newly formed Company of Charity are chosen **for** the journey north.

**Sisters Rose, Cecilia, Felicity** had long since felt the call of a **love, inventive to infinity**. They will put that love to the test in a cold and often hostile **city**. They lean on the providence of God.

'Only do your best, as you have always done,' Elizabeth urges them, 'and leave the rest to our dear God.'

And, **as** did the magi of old, they arrive bearing gifts: the **capacity** to love without counting the cost, the **skill** of carefully husbanding meager resources, the **joy** of saying the 'yes' that makes all things possible.

They are compelled by a fierce, compassionate urgency to **embrace** the children for whom home has been the city street, or heartless almshouse, for whom 'mother' is a distant memory, and **nurture** them in all the ways that will give them a sense of their inherent dignity and worth as beloved children of God.

**Every child** is Christ to them; they will abandon no one. All are welcome at their table of belonging.

And **Jesus Christ**, the morning star which guided the sages of old, will shed his peaceful light on all their undertakings.

**We look back in awe. Who could have imagined the multitude of good that will come from such humble beginnings?**

**It is 2017;** a new century has dawned, a new millennium.

The sisters are still here. We have cast our lot with the people of NY, and have never looked back.

And from generation to generation two lessons Elizabeth Seton instilled in the early community have become part of the fabric of our being:

First, that our reason for coming, and staying, has never been just about the work, the ministries.

Far more, it's about our **mission**- the driving force of **love made visible** to all in need, **a love that is both affective and effective, a love that is at the heart of everything we do, and are...**

And second, that collaboration is a vital, life-giving part of our identity. We rely on the insights and wisdom of those who have **partnered** with us, supporting but also challenging all we have undertaken over the years.

**Because you're still here**, too: associates, companions, our federation sisters, priests and brothers, colleagues, co-workers, benefactors, volunteers, family, friends, all of you bringing new insights to demanding situations, sharing with us your enthusiasm and passion for the mission.

We are reminded that in 1817 it was Robert Fox, Francis Cooper, and Cornelius Heaney, Catholic New Yorkers and their families, who pleaded with the Bishop to send for the sisters of charity, trusting that their presence would bring light and life to the children God's most favored children,

Tonight, then, on this great feast of Epiphany- **our** feast- we begin a year-long celebration of a journey 200 years in the making.

We choose again to meet our grace, as Elizabeth Seton would say, on a path we have named gratitude. And gratitude is our only response for all that has been, and for whatever, in God's providence, is to come.

We, too, heirs of the promise made long ago, have become bearers of light.