

The Magi and me: Bringing gifts to Jesus

When I was young, my family had a Nativity set that I loved. As a little girl, the first thing I would do when setting up the crèche was to move the three kings clear across the room. They had a long journey to take, so I would imagine a path for them across the window ledge, along the edge of the bookshelf, through the length of the living room, then on top of the radiator and finally arriving at the manger on Epiphany. Each plaster king carried a gift to give to the “newborn king.” I loved that part: kings bringing gifts to the baby.

But these weren't just any gifts. They were precious gifts, expensive and desirable. They signified Jesus as king (gold), priest (frankincense) and Savior (myrrh). The Magi brought their very best for the baby King. And that is what we are called to do as well.

The story of the Magi is a lesson of how we are to respond to the gift of the life of Jesus. We are to put our best gifts forward in the service of God. Often, at Epiphany, we talk about stewardship – the sharing of our time, talent and treasure. The U.S. bishops remind us:

“Stewardship is not simply making donations or taking care of the building and grounds. It is a spirituality – hence a way of life – made of four parts:

- Receiving the gifts of God with gratitude
- Cultivating them responsibly
- Sharing them lovingly in justice with others
- Standing before the Lord in a spirit of accountability.”
 (“An Invitation to Help Change the World,” U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Nov. 12, 2003)

The challenge is to see stewardship as an integral part of our everyday life. God calls us to respond with love and care to the divine gift of love – just as the Magi brought gifts to the Baby on Epiphany.

So, what does that mean for those of us faithful mortals you might ask? Stewardship is not a “Church” thing; it is a “life” thing. It is organizing our day to “commit to a life of gratitude and responsibility; to thank God for his endless gifts, and then to decide what we can do to help the world” (“An Invitation to Help Change the World”).

A simple place to begin might be looking at the family calendar. How much room is there in your day to live the gifts God has given? If music is a gift God has given you, how do you make room for that gift to be celebrated and shared? If family is a gift you have been given, how much time does your calendar give to that gift? The same questions can be asked of the family budget. How does the family budget lovingly and responsibly express gratitude to God for the gifts God has given?

Ask yourself: What is my best gift? How might I use that in service of Jesus and his kingdom? Now, you and the Magi have something in common.