

The Epiphany 2008
8:00

For the glory of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
Amen.

Happy Epiphany!

The word Epiphany means manifestation.

Today we celebrate the manifestation of God among us.

The Epiphany is a major feast day in the church, when we celebrate the magi arriving at the manger to behold the holy family, and to bring to Jesus gifts.

We at St. Peter's are building a parish family.

To build a family is a deep desire of our humanity.

And Church family can be like our family of origin, or like the family we didn't have, but wanted.

Church families contain the highest pleasures and deepest sorrows of being human and together.

Each church family is unique, with its own traditions and stories.

Anyone who says church is boring, has never really belonged to a church!

Church life is anything but boring!

There can be a deep sense of belonging and purpose and love within our church families.

Our church families are such a gift from God, aren't they?

In this day and age, there's a debate about what makes up a family.

It's a hot topic.

Some say that there's only one proscribed way to have family.

Some feel so strongly about what it means to be family that they have actually left the family called the Episcopal Church.

Professor Dierdre Good of General Seminary has a new book out entitled "Jesus' Family Values."

Ronald had her come and do a wonderful adult forum here not long ago.

In it she explores in depth Jesus' take on what it means to be family, and most importantly, how to be a part of Jesus' family.

Jesus, throughout his earthly ministry was always building families.

When he was born he made a family of Mary and Joseph, his adopted father.

When the light of the Epiphany shone he made a family of the rich and the poor when he brought together the Magi and the manger.

From the beginning he challenged the conventions of the day on what it meant to be family.

Luke tells us Jesus ditched his mother and father at the age of 12, and when they finally find him in the Temple three days later, his mother says to him,

“Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.”

He said to them, “Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my father’s house?”

When his ministry starts to heat up, Matthew tells us his mother and brothers come to speak to him.

And what does Jesus say?

“Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers!

For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

He made new families wherever he went.

And making family was the last thing he did on his earthly ministry.

While on the cross John tells us that “Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.”

Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”

Not too long ago, I was asked to baptize a young boy of the age of 5.

He had been in several foster homes, and his adoptive father told me he had been abused.

A homosexual couple had adopted the boy, and come to church for the baptism after the adoption was finalized.

I have to tell you that deep in my heart I had some misgivings.

Yes, I thought, I've never really had a problem with gay marriage, for I believe that my gay brothers and sisters should have the same dignity and beauty of marriage and commitment as I do.

I was clear that what I objected to most was promiscuity of both gay and straight people outside of marriage.

But this?

Raising a boy as a same sex couple?

I met them on the front steps of the Church and God gave me an Epiphany.

The little boy looked up into his father's eyes and said,

“After I'm baptized, does this mean I'm yours for ever and ever daddy?”

And the father said, “Yes, son, this means you are mine for ever and ever.”

We are Christ's forever and ever, and in him we have found our family and our home.

Like the Magi, we have made the long journey to be here and bring their gifts.

And they have found Christ here, and your doors open.

It's exciting, isn't it, to think about whom God is calling this very moment to come and join your family?

For church is the only place I know of that exists primarily for the person who has not yet arrived.

On the eve of the Epiphany, we thank you God for the blessing of this new parish family, and we pray you help them be a loving family that reaches out in the love of Christ to all.

Amen.