

It may well fall under the rubric of family folklore, but my family remains insistent that, many years ago, we were literally just a few feet from finding the Saint Paul Winter Carnival Medallion. We had the right park, even the right portion of the correct park. The story goes that one of the kids got cold and started complaining. The family packed up the station wagon and headed home. The medallion was found shortly after where we were. But as the saying goes, “Closeness only counts in horseshoes...”

Sometimes our searching comes up a little short, not always for a lack of effort. In our Gospel today, Herod sent the Magi to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child.” As we gather to celebrate the solemnity of the Epiphany, we can easily become enthralled with the details of the story and rightfully so. It is captivating to be sure.

At the same time, even a broken clock is right twice each day. Herod had ulterior motives, barely hidden as he makes his request of the Magi. But he was correct in telling them that they would need to search diligently for the child, as there were no outward signs of his divinity or majesty.

Do we follow their example, do we search for the Lord? Oftentimes, our faith is weaker than we may like it to be and it causes us to wonder. Why do we have periods of fervor that alternate with periods of acedia, or spiritual laziness? It is a valid question, but I do believe that if we are honest, we will acknowledge a lack of diligence on our part plays a role.

“Diligent” is an apt word. Taken from the Latin root *diligere*, it means at once “to select, pick, love, value, esteem, take delight in.” It is all those things, and to be diligent means that our search is one based in love. The one whom we love is well worth the search. The search for the medallion was simply a diversion, a late afternoon outing for a young family.

The search for the Lord is the most consequential one upon which we will ever embark. It entails at times an arduous search. Do we expect a faith in which the search for the Lord is easy? Where in Scriptures was that search ever promised to be a simple one? And so what do we do? Too many give up the search, or do so only half-heartedly. They make enough of an effort so that they do not feel too guilty, but make no sustained effort to grow in faith.

There is a tradition in Italy on January 6, based upon the legend of *La Befana*—a rather grumpy old woman who travels through Italy leaving gifts on the Eve of Epiphany, searching for the Christ Child. The folklore says that while attending to her daily duties, the Magi stopped by on their way to find the Child Jesus. She was too busy and declined their invitation to join them. Not long afterwards, she regretted her decision, and decided to join the search. In Italian folklore, she is still searching to this day.

We need to seize the opportunity when it presents itself. *La Befana* used her daily chores as her excuse. She simply could not pull herself away to go to diligently seek the Lord. A poor excuse, especially since very few enjoy doing household chores. But what will be our excuse? Are things too busy at work, are we trying to finish our degree, does basketball practice take too long? As soon as the kids are out of the house and off to college, then we will have time, right? Our list could go on and on.

Our Catechism wisely teaches us that the search for God is written into our hearts. Early on in the Catechism, Section One, Chapter One we read: “The desire for God is written in the human heart, because man is created by God and for God; and God never ceases to draw man to himself...”<sup>1</sup> It continues in that same section, noting that although we can forget or reject the Lord, God “never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness.”

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<sup>1</sup> Catechism of the Catholic Church, para. # 27

This search demands of us “every effort of intellect, a sound will, ‘an upright heart’, as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God.”<sup>2</sup>

If you have not yet made a New Year’s resolution of a spiritual nature, I urge you to do so today. It is not at all too late. Make this a year marked by your diligent and consistent search for the Lord. Jesus may be found in every tabernacle in a Catholic Church, where our Eucharistic Lord waits for you. Consider signing up for Eucharistic Adoration. We offer it here four days per week.

“The Wise Men followed the star, and thus came to Jesus, to the great Light which enlightens everyone coming into this world (cf. *Jn* 1:9). As pilgrims of faith, the Wise Men themselves became stars shining in the firmament of history and they show us the way.”<sup>3</sup> Their diligent search ended by meeting and accepting the Lord. Let us too diligently search, doing our part to honor the Newborn King. I close with this prayer entitled *The Prayer of St. Benedict*:

O gracious and holy Father, give us wisdom to perceive you, intelligence to understand you, diligence to seek you, patience to wait for you, eyes to behold you, a heart to meditate upon you, and a life to proclaim you, through the power of the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., para # 30

<sup>3</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, Homily for Epiphany, 6 January 2013, Rome

<sup>4</sup> Prayer attributed to St. Benedict of Nursia, though lacking proper historical attribution