

Epiphany of the Lord
Year B - January 7, 2017
Church of St. Joan of Arc, Marlton NJ
Matthew 2:1-12

Minding God

Everyone's doing the resolution dance again. If you watch the early morning news shows you will see a million suggestions. Magazines, too. All the usual stuff: lose the gut; eat right; exercise; get more sleep. Don't sleep with the ... phone.

In the old days it was don't sleep with the neighbor!

Last week I heard one reporter talk about being more "mindful" this year. My head perked up. It sounded religious.

She is going to practice "mindfulness." She admitted this was a very old thing even though it was very new to her.

Mindfulness: The *"state of active, open attention on the present. Mindfulness means living in the moment and awakening to your current experience..."*(Psychology Today)

The reporter said she is experiencing less stress.

Less stress is certainly a good thing. Maybe that's one of your resolutions this year: less stress.

I'll be honest with you. I get a bit baffled when someone, especially a Catholic, as this reporter is, "discovers" an eastern meditation technique that reduces stress and makes it sound like it's the greatest thing since sliced bread!

Here's why: you don't have to look outside of your own faith to find a stress reducer. Christianity has the best stress reducer ... and it's not a *technique*. It's a *relationship*! It's a living, breathing relationship with Jesus Christ! It's being loved now and forever! How's that for reducing stress!

Here's the thing: Christianity is rooted in "mindfulness" ... it's rooted first in a God who is "mindful" of us, present to us, aware of our needs, a God who cares for us and is involved in our lives. That's what Christmas and Epiphany celebrate: God enters our world, becomes one with us, takes on our full humanity to show us how to live fully and

freely and how to love like God loves!

The whole point of Christianity is for us to become more “mindful,” more aware of the presence of God in our lives and in those around us.

Yes, it’s a good thing to be more aware of your feelings. But you can’t stop there. It’s also great to be aware of God’s presence in your life. The Epiphany Story is all about Paying Attention to God, rather than getting stuck on Self.

In the story, Herod is all about thinking about him, protecting himself, saving himself.

But the Magi – the three kings, if you will – they pay attention to something bigger, something outside of themselves. They take a new path in life, letting God lead the way. They are not ruled by fear. They put their lives in God’s hands.

Do we see the difference?

Here’s a resolution: this year, let’s pay attention to the movement of God’s Spirit in our lives. Let’s pay attention to

how God is acting in our lives, where God is leading us.

Ask every day: how will I be present to God today, to others, to myself? What new ways will God reveal Himself to me or speak to me today? Pray: help me, O God, to be aware of your presence, of your voice, of your face ... especially where I least expect it. Every day will be an Epiphany!

Yes, of course, be present to yourself, aware of your own breathing ... but also: give thanks for the Giver of air and breath. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and the eyes of your heart to be more aware of those struggling to breath or taking their last breath.

When you are anxious and worried, sit with the God who knows you and loves you and let the Holy Spirit fill you with courage and serenity.

Following the star is a metaphor for finding and following Jesus Christ. Knowing God is with you and loves you, paying attention to God’s presence in your life is the best stress reducer you can get.