

Homily for Tony Brown's Funeral



We chose this Gospel of the Feast of the Epiphany for today's liturgy because it relates to brother Tony, who held some things in common with these Wise Men from the East. The Magi were Stargazers and Determined Seekers, who by means of God's Star and God's Word, were rewarded for their persistent seeking, with the finding and meeting of the Christ Child in Bethlehem, whom they wished to offer their homage and their gifts. Already long ago the Psalmist wrote, "that from heaven the Lord looks down on the people of this earth; to see if any are wise; if any seek God" and then he added, that "all who actively do seek God would lack no blessings.

Saint Benedict was very fond of the story of the Wise Men from the East, and believed, that one of the most important signs of a genuine monastic vocation was: that a monk prefers nothing to Jesus Christ, and seeks him daily, with persistence and determination; in himself and others; in the scriptures, the liturgy and creation: in short in everything and everywhere. This search is of course a response to God's seeking us in the first place, without which our search could not even have begun.

Brother Tony was such a faithful seeker to the very end of his life and like these wise men from the East was fascinated by the stars, which were for him a means to the end. They spoke to him not only of God, who made them all by the breath of his mouth but these stars also spoke to him of human beings and of their different behaviours. Often in conversation he brought up the 12 star-signs, one each assigned to the 12 months of the year and he explained with conviction, how these celestial phenomena affect us, depending under which star sign we were born.

The stars seemed to have assisted Tony in his own search for God and also seemed to have helped him in self-understanding and in the understanding of others, enabling him in his own quiet way to serve the community and the guests with great regularity and kindness. This spiritual development was gradual and took place first of all in his own family and later continued in the Marist Teaching Brothers. However in the context of his teaching career Tony discovered, that he was more suitable for the contemplative life. This is not uncommon; because our Order has a good number of monks and Nuns who started their religious life, their religious journey, in active religious Congregations and then later transferred to a Contemplative Order, such as ours.

In 1995 Tony continued his search for God in Kopua Monastery and was happy and content here for over 25 years. Although he did take the religious life seriously, yet he had plenty of common sense and was down to earth. He had also a good sense of humor, that can be gleaned from his picture on your hand-out, where he is holding a glass of wine, which he very much enjoyed on festive occasions.

We very much feel the loss of our Brother Tony, but on the other hand feel happy for him too, as after all these years of faith-filled seeking and serving here below, and with his health deteriorating, he is now beyond the stars with his Lord, the bright Morning Star and seeing Him as he is. May he rest in peace.