

In the Name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Intro

We don't always get a Second Sunday after Christmas, and so on this on this 10th Day of Christmas we hear once again the story of the Magi and the gifts they bring to the Christ Child.

I. Magi

A. Do you ever wonder where the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas comes from?

1. Of course the main reason is to celebrate God's great gift to us – Jesus.

2. And in celebrating this gift, we like the Magi, bring gifts.

3. As we heard in the Gospel, the Magi brought gifts to Jesus.

4. And each of these gifts in turn represent an aspect of Jesus' life and ministry:

- Gold – the gift for a King

- Frankincense – the gift for a Priest or a Deity

- and Myrrh – the gift for one who will die.

5. And so these Magi bring their gifts and in so doing show symbolically who this child will become while giving something of themselves.

6. And in our own way, we too give something of ourselves in the gifts we give to one another – and our hopes, dreams, and love for the person to whom the gift is intended.

7. But today, I'd like to tell you about another GIFT GIVER and how she touches the lives of those who receive gifts from her.

II. La Befana

A. The story goes that **Befana** was an old woman who was a fastidious housekeeper – she had the tidiest house in the village.

1. Now, it came to pass, the Magi in their journey came to **Befana's** village and asked her for directions as to where the Son of God was, as they had seen his star in the sky.

2. She said she did not know but offered the three strangers hospitality for the night in her humble but cozy cottage.

3. The next morning the Magi invited her to join them on the journey to find the Christ child.

4. But **Befana** was already busy tidying up the house and said she couldn't possibly leave everything and go with the Magi, she had so much to do.

5. Later on, after the Magi had departed, **Befana** had a change of heart and decided she would like to see this special baby after all.

6. So, she quickly filled a basket with food and gifts for Jesus and a broom to help the new mother clean and set off alone after the Magi to find the special baby.

7. But she was unable to catch up to the Magi and could not find the Christ Child.

8. So **Befana** continues to travel to this very day, searching for the Christ Child and bringing gifts and treats to children.

B. The Legend continues that on Epiphany Eve, January 5th, the children of Italy leave out their shoes or hang up stockings for **Befana** to fill.

1. The old tattered and soot-covered **Befana** flies through the air on her broomstick and swoops down chimneys to deliver candy and presents to children who have been good during the year, and lumps of coal for those who have fallen short.

2. And knowing that children can't be perfect all year-round, most children find a mixture of both with a special *black rock candy* called "*carbone*" left along with their gifts.

3. And since **Befana** is an excellent housekeeper, people believe that she always sweeps the floor before leaving the house.

4. Some trust that the sweeping means doing away with the problems of the year – so let's hope **Befana** is busy with her broom this year.

5. It is also held that if anyone sees **Befana** they get a thump from her broomstick because she does not wish to be seen;

- and it helps keep the children in bed during the night.

6. And although **Befana** has yet to succeed on her mission, she still gives gifts to children because all of them have Jesus in them.

III. Yearn and Search for God

A. And so like **Befana**, like the **Magi**, we too bring OUR gifts that we offer to one another and to the Christ Child.

1. And in a way, the **Magi** and **Befana** represent all of us, and our yearning and searching for God.

2. For we too yearn and seek for God and God's love in our lives.

- All of us have needs that only God's love can fill.

3. And when WE find God in Jesus – and allow God's love to fill our needs, to comfort our pain – we then can offer our GIFTS – the gifts of OURSELVES.

- The gifts that Jesus puts to work in us helping others by sharing the love of God in our lives.

4. What is that MOST PRECIOUS GIFT – that gift you offer to Jesus this Christmastide and every day – the gift that Jesus can use in you?

B. What is that gift that YOU bring?

1. How can you share that special gift here at St. Columba's or elsewhere in the community?

2. How can you work through this time of pandemic to make God's love evident in these difficult times?

3. During this time of "safer at home" how can we reach out to others?

4. And once this time is past, how can we work together to recreate the community of Saint Columba's and get back to work again?

5. What do you yearn for as you search for God?

6. What is the gift you bring?

7. And how can this yearning and your gift work together in making life new this Christmastide and into the future?

Let Us Pray

O God our Father, as You led the Magi to your Son by the light of a star; draw us ever closer to You by the light of faith. Help us to search for You as ardently as they did. Give us the grace to overcome the obstacles that keep us far from You. And may we, like them, offer you our greatest gifts to use in Your service; all this we pray, through the same Jesus Christ, Our Lord. **Amen.**