

## FR HUGH'S HOMILY FOR EPIPHANY 2024

Any horoscope for a Scorpio like me usually ends with a sting in the tail, as that is what scorpions have. But the one I read on Friday (I am not recommending this) said: 'You may be feeling a bit adventurous right now, perhaps the town is closing in around you, grab a friend and hop into the car and set off for the mountains or the sea. You have been working very hard. And then...For the right path to follow get a full psychic reading.' (At a price of course.)

I was tempted but I had just been to Morecambe for a meeting the day before so perhaps that covered it. There used to be a 'psychic's spot' on Radio 2 in the afternoon, and I was amazed one day to hear a woman asking if she should sell her business now, and Russel Grant said her horoscope said 'Yes,' so she agreed to do it.

Many of us don't read horoscopes, but we do have an undercurrent of superstition. Not walking under ladders, not walking on the cracks in the pavement when we were kids, footballers and their rituals before a game, avoiding saying something about the future in case it happens. (If only you hadn't said that...)

There is something within us that makes us rely on forces that we cannot control, that really have no basis at all. So are there any signs that can actually help us know what to do? In the days of the wise men astrology was an accepted way of looking at the future. (In some cultures they still read the stars for auspicious times to marry or take another important decision.) Then science was limited and there were 'forces' about that they could not understand. So for these men to follow a star was not an unreasonable thing to do when coming to an important decision or event.

Since then many astronomers and others have tried to work out whether there was a real astral event at the time, but nothing has been conclusively proved.

What was also true, then as today, is that they knew you could use the stars to guide you. They may not have known as much as us scientifically, but they were expert, (more so than today when we have GPS systems) on using the stars to guide them in the desert or at sea.

So again the idea of following a star was not unreasonable. Now for us today, supposedly so much more advanced, how do we make the decisions in our lives? How do we set off on the journeys in life that we undertake? What calls us, and what guides us?

When we look at today's story it is a great tale from antiquity. Possibly one of the most famous in world history. We see how easy it is to act it out as well at nearly every Nativity play. In the film 'Love Actually' that have lobsters and octopuses in the cast which is a little doubtful, but you cannot do without the wise men, or kings, as we often call them.

But the star is possibly the most important after Jesus himself, because the star is the way God leads the rest of the world to his Son. And that is what the wise men represent. All of us. The rest of the world.

When we look and reflect on the star, we see God using the nature God created to guide the world to his Son. There is a coming together of all creation around this young, vulnerable, poor child.

Today as we make our own decisions and set off on our own journeys we need to think very carefully, to discern, on how is God speaking to me. (Because he definitely is.) How is he calling me, and to what journey. Is it what God is asking or not?

We know that there are false trails, or things that derail us, or prevent us from following the right path, and yet there will be some way in which God is shining a path for each one of us. We may have found it. We may still be looking, we may be struggling, just as the journey of the wise men must have been difficult.

We could ask ourselves today or in this coming week, 'How is God speaking to me?'  
Where is my star?