

Epiphany is an interesting, the manifestation of the divine, God with us. It happens in unexpected ways. Michael K. Marsh share's a different kind of Epiphany moment. He writes:

I was with about twenty or twenty-five friends and family members of Phyllis. We had gathered in the columbarium (a room or building for funeral urns to be stored) for her committal; to say the prayers that would accompany her ashes being placed in the columbarium. One of her daughters was going to place the container in the columbarium. About halfway through the liturgy I uncovered the container of ashes. The daughter picked up the container and just held it for a moment. Then she kissed it. She turned and held the container for her dad and sisters to kiss. And they did. Then she looked at me and asked, "Is this ok?" "Perfect," I said. She went and stood before each person there, holding the container for them to kiss. Everyone offered a kiss. We had not discussed or planned for that. She was simply

responding to the insistence of the moment. The star had shown itself and we were following. It was an epiphany.

He goes on to say, I am not talking about epiphany in the usual sense of having a flash of insight or a sudden recognition. I don't think that's what today's gospel or this Feast of the Epiphany are about. I've come to believe that we don't have epiphanies but that they have us. That's why the magi followed the star. Something had claimed and called them. Something had ahold of them. Epiphanies are not so much those moments when we say, "Aha, I've got it!" They are, rather, moments when we say, "Aha, it's got me!"

That's what happened in the columbarium. "It" got us. I can't exactly tell you or explain what that "it" is. Maybe the most and best I can say is that "it" is whatever is happening in that moment in the name of God. "It" could be love, justice, forgiveness, compassion, beauty, joy, generosity, resurrection, strength, consolation, or a thousand other possibilities. The "it" of epiphany is not so much a thing or being – God out there somewhere, a supernatural being pushing buttons and pulling

strings. The “it” of epiphany is an action or happening that just arises. The “it” that gets us is more verb than noun.

“It” is God’s insistence in and on us. “It” is the continuing yes of Christmas. “It” is God’s soliciting, luring, inviting, evoking, wooing, asking a response from us. In the columbarium “it” was resurrection evoking and calling forth the kiss of life.

So, our question today is what is this “it” for you? How and what is God insisting in your life? (pause)

Whatever God’s insisting for you might be, whatever the “it” is in your life, “it” is God desiring, maybe even needing, to be seen, known, experienced by you. Epiphany happens at the intersection of God’s insistence and our response, and it requires both. A star that is not seen and followed is just another radiant ball of gas. A journey that has no guiding star is just another road trip. You and I give existence to God’s insistence through our actions, our words, our lives. (pause)

Mary gave existence to God’s insistence by saying, “Let it be with me according to your word.” The shepherds responded to God insistence by going “to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place.”

In today's gospel the magi say, "We observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." The women at the empty tomb responded to God's insistence by telling the disciples the good news. God is always insisting in our lives. The insisting of God happens in the ordinary conditions and everyday circumstances of our lives.

Tell me about that one you love, that love that is beyond your ability to describe or express with words. You don't know why you love. You only know that you love. And it's a love that is deeper than and beyond what you feel. You can't explain it. You only know that you will continue to give yourself to him or her "for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and cherish until [you] are parted by death." In that self-giving each day is an epiphany in which you are giving existence to God's insistence.

Do you remember the very first time you held your child or grandchild? You caressed, you kissed, you cooed, you cuddled, you radiated. Something happened. Your heart was opened and you experienced and participated in the beauty and miracle of life. You knew that somehow you were holding the sacred, the holy, the

miraculous, in your hands. It was a moment of epiphany and you gave existence to God's insistence.

Think about one of those days when nothing special happened but everything was just right. Nothing was missing. Nothing was lacking. There was a fullness and satisfaction, and you couldn't explain why. You didn't know. You only knew that you didn't want the day to end and you thought or said to yourself, "My God, this is the perfect day. Thank you." In that prayer you gave existence to God's insistence.

You have probably had days you thought you would never get through; an overwhelming situation, a divorce, the loss of a job, the death of a loved one. You couldn't imagine getting through another day or week let alone a year. You didn't know how you would do it or if you even could. But you did. You hoped against hope and you continued to show up. You were giving existence to God's insistence.

Have you ever told someone something about your life that you had never told anyone else before? It was one of those secrets that was wrapped in shame, guilt, or embarrassment and it kept you bound to the past. That other person listened without judgment. He or she didn't

laugh, condemn, or ridicule. They honored and respected you. As you talked a way forward opened up, a way you never expected or thought possible, and you knew that you were moving to a new place in your life. That was an epiphany in which God's insistence was given existence.

How about one of those times when something begins to stir in you, a deep longing, a passion? Maybe it's a concern for others, an expression of compassion, speaking out for justice, feeding the hungry. Maybe it's a vocational calling. You feel it as an energy or drive. You don't know where it will take you and you're not exactly sure what you will do. But you respond. You act. That's an epiphany in which you are giving existence to God's insistence.

The star of God's insistence is always rising in our lives. It's happening all the time. There is not a one of you here today in whom God is not insisting and hoping for a response. (pause)

What in the name of "God", is happening in your life today? I don't know what "it" is for you today, but I know this. There is a rising star waiting to be observed and followed. (pause)

God insists, and the rest is up to us. Amen.

