**2 Christmas 2025 ~ Holy Baptism**

 Tomorrow, January 6th is the Feast of the Epiphany, the day, among other things, on which we remember the visit of the so called Wise Men to Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They were “magi” or astrologer slash astronomers probably from somewhere around Persia, modern-day Iran.

 We’re used to seeing them in crèche scenes with the shepherds and angels in Bethlehem. The fact is it would have taken considerable time for the Magi to organize a caravan and travel to Jerusalem. They would have crossed the mountains from Persia into Iraq, followed the Euphrates River north, up into Syria, and then through Lebanon to Israel. That would be about 1200 miles, over two months of travel time, with camels traveling twenty miles a day.

 Plus, *after* seeing the star, the Magi had to figure out what it meant, which could have taken weeks or months of research. These were not crackpot magicians, but would have been considered scientists in their day. And then, they needed to organize their travel, plus the actual travel time. So, we’re looking at anywhere from three months to maybe a year or more.

 So, the *earliest* the Magi could have come was about three months after Jesus’ birth. What’s the latest they may have arrived? The Bible uses the Greek word *brephos* when referring to Jesus in Luke 2, the night He was born. *Brephos* means either a newborn or a preborn baby. In Matthew 2, when the magi visit, the word *paidion* is used for Jesus, which means a small child. It *can* mean an infant, but typically not a newborn.

 Herod, you’ll recall, had asked the Magi when they first saw the star. He ordered his men to kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem *two years of age or younger*, based on the timing the magi had given him. Thus, we can conclude that Jesus was between the age of three months at the earliest and two years at the latest when the Magi came. Probably somewhere in the middle, say nine months to a year old.

 There is someone here in the room this morning who happens to be 9 months old. Luca Anthony Laganelli. Luca will be baptized shortly into Christ’s One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Body of Christ. He will join all the baptized as children of God and inheritors of the Light. Baptism is, at it were, the ordination to the laity, the lay order of the Church. To be ordained is to be set apart for a purpose. Today Lucas is being set apart for God’s purpose.

 In our Book of Common Prayer Catechism section on the Ministry this is what we discover:

Q. Who are the ministers of the Church?

A. The ministers of the Church are the laypersons, bishops, priests and deacons.

 Did you notice that? The laypersons are listed first in order. When I was a kid, the bishops, priests and deacons were considered first in order. Thank the Lord that has changed! It’s you, including Luca, who are first in order. The Catechism continues”

Q. What is the ministry of the laity?

A. The ministry of lay persons is to represent Christ and his Church; to bear witness to him wherever they may be; and, according to the gifts given them, to carry on Christ’s work of reconciliation in the world; and to take their place in the life, worship, and governance of the Church.

There it is—Jesus’s vision. I am not **the** minister of the Church; **we** are all the ministers of the Church. As a priest, I have certain limited functions that we could get into with more time, but the point is that we’re all in the same boat with the same calling to love and serve the Lord.

 When I look at Luca, I see Jesus at age nine months, in need of the love and nurture of his parents, relatives and friends in order to grow into who he was created to be in the full stature of Christ. When I look at Luca, I see the hope of the Church extending through his life into the next several generations. And when I look at Luca, I see a little light shining in an often dark world.

 One of the saints of old is credited with saying *Many are the light beams from one light.* Our one light is Jesus. We are one in Christ. We’ll light a candle to be placed on the altar during Eucharist, signifying that Luca is the newest light beam of the One Light Jesus.

 And finally, I heard about a child who was pondering some stained glass windows of various saints in a Gothic church during a recent service exclaim to her parents, “I get it! A saint is a person the light shines through!" Indeed. May the light of Christ shine beautifully and powerfully through Luca all the days of his life, and unto the ages of ages!

**May it be so!**