



I am sure that you have probably heard some version of the joke that if the three wise men had been women, they would have arrived on time for Christmas since they would have stopped and asked for directions rather than getting lost, and they would have brought useful gifts to Mary and Joseph such as diapers, baby wipes, and a warm baby blanket rather than gold, frankincense, and myrrh. I have seen the *Radio City Christmas Show* several times and I still tear up when the wise men arrive to the strains of *We Three Kings* and kneel and adore the infant Jesus Christ.

Did you get any gold, frankincense or myrrh for Christmas? What was the best present you received this Christmas? Certainly, I am so very grateful for the many gifts and presents that I received from parishioners, including Irish holy water and sugar free chocolate. A dear friend gave me a very expensive pair of gloves; they are so costly that I am afraid to use them since I have about 20 single unmatched gloves in my closet. The only things I lose more than gloves are reading glasses.

My friend suggested that I get a clip like little children wear that attach the gloves to my coat. I am a bit too proud for that.

I think, unless you got that Lexus for Christmas with the red ribbon on it that we see so often in commercials, I think we would say the best gift of Christmas, other than the birth of Jesus, was to share the days with family and friend whom we love. In our English language, at least in proper Brooklynese, it seems impossible to distinguish the difference between *presents* (gifts given) and *presence* which is being with being in the company of others. The wise men give presents to Jesus, but their true gift they gave was their presence to Jesus after they had made an arduous journey from afar to be with Jesus and to recognize him as the Son of God. Their presence at the stable shows that God is for all people, of every nationality and background.

Presence. You are present here at this Holy Eucharist. You come to be with God in a very profound way. You and I hear his word in the Scriptures. Jesus leads us to his Father through the power of the Holy Spirit at this Mass and at every Mass. We enter the divinity by receiving the body and blood of Jesus. God is always present to us. In the wonders of nature, in our relationships with one another, in the other sacraments, and in the ordinary moments of life. The word we have heard so often during this Christmas season is *Emmanuel*: it is a name for God that means *God with us*. Father, Son and Holy Spirit, our Triune God is always with us, in good times and bad, but there is profound presence of God in the Mass that is different than all the other experiences of God. To be at Mass is to be with Jesus in his dying and rising.

When we are not celebrating Mass here at St. Martin's, there continues to be a profound presence of God here in this Church and in every Catholic Church since Christ is present in the tabernacle where we reverently keep the consecrated hosts. The red sanctuary candle burns night and day to say that Jesus is present in the Holy Eucharist. We bow to the altar, since although it a sacred place of offering, it is still a man-made object. We genuflect in adoration to the tabernacle because we are worshipping God.

All prayer, whether said on the Long Island Expressway for traffic to pass, for a Jet victory as I sit on the couch. (I fear God may be Patriot fan), in the waiting room of a hospital, or as part of morning jog. We can pray anywhere, and we should. Yet,

there is something special about praying in Church because Christ is present in a very special way in the tabernacle. In the Church's long tradition, there are times when the consecrated host is placed in what is called a *monstrance*, a Latin word which means *to show*. This liturgical practice is done to help believers have an even more focused attentiveness to Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. This is called Eucharistic adoration.

Several parishioners have approached me and asked me if we could have a regular time of Eucharistic adoration, so like the wise men of today's Gospel, we can be with Jesus in a very special way. **So, on each Tuesday, we will place the Blessed Sacrament in front of the tabernacle in our prayer area from 3:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.** We invite you to spend a few minutes with Jesus. You can just sit and chat with him, say the rosary, read a spiritual book, or just rest in his presence. In an incredible noisy world, it is a gift you can yourself. The Blessed Sacrament does not have to in the monstrance to do this and you can visit anytime when the church is open by coming through the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. So, give yourself a great present as this New Year begins, to be present to the God who so loves you. Mother Teresa, a great lover of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament said this: *the time you spend with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth.*

