

AMAZING STARS

Homily by Hung Pham, Priests of the Sacred Heart

Mt 2:1-2,9-11:

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."

After their audience with the king, they set out. "And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother."

Have you ever been seen stargazing? Do you know how many stars are in the universe? It was the luckiest chance for me to take part in the science pilgrimage trip with Sacred Heart Seminary & School of Theology seminarians in Tucson, Arizona, in March 2019. I learned so many things, such as stargazing, black holes, the milky way... Especially, I learned about Fr. Kino, who was a Jesuit, who was one of the early explorers of the desert in Arizona. And about Br. Guy, who is a Jesuit, and gave us a presentation about faith and science. Stargazing has always amazed me because there are so many stars in the universe; more stargazing, the more beautiful the star is. Therefore, this trip makes me realize that the world is so beautiful.

Two thousand years ago, the Magi followed the star to lead and guide them to the baby Jesus. They followed the star, and they met Jesus who is the king of the universe. The star started the Magi on the journey and guided them to the truth who is Jesus. It is a story of the journey of our lives and of delight to draw us closer to Jesus. The star is Jesus, and He is the light, the truth, and the way. Following the star means to follow Jesus. Sometimes, we get lost when the star seems dim. The star is dim because we are in a time of trouble and this trouble blocks out the star. We can't see the star with our evil thoughts like Herod who tried to kill baby Jesus. We can't see the star if we are trying to do evil. We can see the star if we are open to listening to the Word of God, such as the star of help, the star of prayer, the star of love, or the star of support. Jesus is the star to guide us to the truth. We should be grateful for our stars because we are called to be stars to be a

guide for others. We should not hesitate to guide for others because the more we guide for others, the more God guides us.

There are many stars in the universe. Dr. Brenda Frye, who was one of our speakers, mentioned that the life cycle of a star can span billions of years. Some stars shine more brightly than others or live longer than others depending on their mass. We tried stargazing every night, and we tried to figure out the names of the stars. There are dozens of constellations. Dr. Shippee, who is a professor at Sacred Heart, showed us how to identify Ursa Major and Ursa Minor. It is not so easy to identify the constellations because there are so many stars in the universe; it is much easier if someone helps us to identify them. Likewise, we need someone to guide and lead us on our journey.

“God took Abraham outside and said: Look up at the sky and count the stars, if you can” (Gen 15:5). God told Abraham to look up and count the stars above. Of course, it was impossible for Abraham to count the stars. “God determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name” (Ps 147:4). It is impossible for human beings to count the stars because it is absolutely beyond our capacity. God knows each star and names them. Should this surprise us? Today, I look at the stars in the universe, and I say how wonderful God creates the world. The more we know of the universe, the more beautiful and amazing it is. In other words, the more we know God, the more amazing He is. We should look at the stars in a way that will draw us closer to Jesus. We should appreciate and be thankful for God who creates this beautiful and amazing world. So, letting God shines through us in our lives, and we should guide and lead for others on their journey.