

Reflection by Sister Roxanne Seifert

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The Epiphany of the Lord



What's in a name?

“ . . . [T]hey opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11).

I have long been fascinated by the meaning of names and remember sitting on the sofa poring over the meanings of names in a section of the family Bible. Aware that my dad's name, Myron, means *myrrh*, today's gospel summoned me to learn more. What is myrrh? Why did the magi from the east give it as gift? What insights can Dad's name provide at this moment in history?

Derived from the Greek, *μυρον* (myron) means myrrh, fragrant oil.

This fragrant oil was one of the gifts presented by the Magi when they visited Jesus and his parents. Along with gold and frankincense, myrrh was a gift worthy of royalty. Christian sources suggest these gifts were symbolic of Jesus' future—gold, a gift for the King of the Jews; frankincense representative of his divinity; and myrrh, a gift that recognized his humanity. We see the use of myrrh at Jesus' crucifixion where he was given “wine drugged with myrrh” (Mk 15:23) and at his death. It was used to embalm him at his burial (Jn 19:39). To recap, the gifts symbolized Jesus life, death and resurrection. He was God made flesh, experiencing the same human development stages, emotions and pains that we do.

Yesterday was Dad's 88th birthday. It could be said that he is fragrant—sometimes a nice fragrance and sometimes not; but he is gentle and strong, witty and wise, loving and just. For me, he is similar to the man I imagine the historical Jesus to have become. These qualities have assisted me in embracing the God of our ancestors and the beauty of the magi following the bright star.

We will never know why his parents named him Myron. It is doubtful they named him based upon the etymology of his name. And while it should be no epiphany that mortality is our reality, each passing year deepens the treasured awareness of the gift he is. Like the gift of myrrh given by the magi, he is a gift of God.

Whatever your given name, you too are a treasured gift from God, made in God's image. In the coming year, may the Bright Star that led the magi, lead you to an epiphany of unending hope and joy.

*Brilliant One,
Help us recognize your presence in every person we encounter
in the newborn child and the elderly woman,
in the joyful friend and the annoying coworker,
in the wealthy one and in the beggar.
As you led the magi,
lead us to the Light of Christ.
Amen!*

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