Have you seen the stars lately? Probably not this morning with the fog. But not all stars are in the sky. Sometimes the stars are inside us. Today we meet star travelers — the wise men – the Magi – as they follow a star to the crib of Jesus.

What star is this they see? Allow me to point out a few things you might not have noticed in the familiar story of the Magi:

First, in the account from the Gospel of Matthew we hear today, it doesn’t say “three” wise men. It doesn’t say how many there are. It could be three or thirty.

Second, they don’t have names. Legend gives them names, but not the Bible.

Third, and most important of all, only the Magi see the star. No one else. Just the Magi.

King Herod doesn’t see the star. He has to ask the Magi to report back about where the star leads. But they wisely don’t tell him, so Herod never sees the star.

Nor is there any historical record of such a star. Many have speculated over the centuries that it was a comet, or a meteor, or something unusual in the sky.

But no one saw sees the star except these travelers from the East crossing the desert. The star probably doesn’t look anything like the star streaking across the front of a Hallmark card.

I like to think the star is inside them.

And that, I believe, is precisely the point of this story. These pilgrims follow their star by faith and faith alone.

They do not know where the star is leading, or where are going, who they will meet, or how their journey will come out.

But they go anyway.

The star of their inner faith brings them to crib of the newborn Christ. Faith is hard to define, though many try. The biblical letter to the Hebrews, by an unknown author, puts it this way: “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”
Things hoped for, things not seen. Destinations uncertain, outcomes hoped for. Stars that no one else but you see.

The Bible is chock full of stories of people following their inner star to unknown destinations:

Abraham immigrates to Canaan; Jacob wrestles on a riverbank with God who he cannot see; Moses leads his people out of Egypt and through the wilderness; Jesus walks to Jerusalem and the Cross.

All of them have doubts along the way. But they go anyway. They follow the inner star of their faith shining inside them.

Sometimes we search for a star and see it when we least expect it. And sometimes the star finds us.

These stars are divine gifts from God, holy gifts of faith waiting for us to discover.

What star have you seen lately inside you? Have you looked lately for a star? We are not passive observers. We are participants. We have many opportunities in life to see and follow our stars.

I once heard a talk by a National Geographic photographer by the name of Dewitt Jones. He told of how he was always “looking for the right answer” when framing his shots. He was always looking for the perfect shot, and he went to the ends of the earth to find it.

He constantly asked, “Do I have the right angle? The right lens? The right focus? Am I in exactly the right place?”

Then he realized something.

All of his photographs are the “right answer.” He compared this to faith: God gives us more than one angle, more than one perspective, more than one focus, more than one right place, more than one right answer.

It is as if God is continually saying: “Here, try this answer. No? Ok, how about this answer? Let me try again. Here is another right answer.”

Or, to put this another way: God is always showing us a star. Have you seen it? No? How about this star? If we don’t see the star this time, there will be another star, and another star, and another.

God does not have a single “plan” for us but many plans, many right answers, many stars.

Saint Paul’s Letter to the Ephesians gets at the same concept. He writes of how “the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known.”

God’s wisdom — God’s rich variety of right answers — is more infinite than the stars in the sky.
Saint Paul’s wants us to see the rich variety of God’s wisdom and see the stars within us. He writes letters — lots of letters — with practical advice on how to find God’s wisdom. Yes, some of the letters are tedious. But for Paul, the test of whether wisdom is truly of God is whether it is based on faith, hope and love.

It really comes down to this simple test: Faith, hope and love.

I mention this especially today because there is so much in our world, and in our life, that can seem beyond our control.

Politics in Washington; wars in the Middle East and tension with Iran is certainly weighing heavily on our nation and the world. Wildfires in Australia – and fires close to home — seem so beyond our control.

And for some, there are personal health struggles, relationship challenges, job stresses – all can seem beyond our control.

It is especially in times of uncertainty — times like this — when we need to look for the stars within us, and follow with faith, hope and love.

What right answers – what stars — are waiting for you to see? What stars are waiting for you to follow?

Have you seen the stars lately?

We have a lifetime ahead of us to look. AMEN