

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

In the film *Sister Act*, Whoopi Goldberg is a Las Vegas singer who witnesses a murder. She's placed in witness protection in a convent. She didn't like the idea. She didn't want to be in the convent because it wasn't exactly her lifestyle. However, during her time there one could argue that she began a journey with God. Yes, she did in fact upset the Reverend Mother many times by jazzing up choir anthems besides some other behavior that wasn't acceptable for a nun. That aside, something changed in her during her time in the convent.

One could argue that the wise men or the magi had a change of heart in their journey. It is interesting to note that the magi came from the east. During this time, people from the east were looked down upon. Warren Carter states that "the east and easterners were often perceived as drinking and brothels, and with superstition, astrology, and other fantastic or unpredictable happenings." Most likely, the magi wouldn't be taken seriously by many. They were astrologers. Their track record was hit or miss. They could make or break a ruler with their interpretation of the stars. Some viewed the magi as foolish.

The magi appear to Herod asking him where the child has been born because they have seen the star and want to pay the child homage. At this point, Herod is threatened. He asks religious leaders for their opinion. Then he asks the magi or wise men to secretly come. He wants to know when the star appeared. He also makes a contract of sorts with the magi to find the child and to come and tell him where it is.

It is at this point that the goal of the magi's journey is changed. They travel to Bethlehem and embrace Jesus. They feel God's presence and his power. Even though they were to report back to Herod, they fled after being warned in a dream.

As we know, Herod had all of the children 2 and under killed because he was threatened when the magi didn't return.

The magi embraced God's reign, not Herod's. They were changed when they encountered the Christ child.

Like the magi, as disciples we are on a journey. We all have gifts and calls to different ministries. As we grow in our relationship with Christ, we are changed.

The journey of discipleship is a lifelong journey filled with moments of discomfort and awe. Like the magi, we may begin our journey with one idea of what needs to be accomplished and along the way we may encounter God's presence and call that leads us in an unexpected direction.

Discipleship leads us to a deeper relationship with Christ. Along our journey God calls each and every one of us to use our gifts and talents to do ministry. We are all gifted and called by God.

We are all disciples on a journey. Think for a moment...what is your best gift or talent? This gift or talent may be something that may not be extraordinary. It may be something that we do

on a daily basis without thinking about it. For example, some of us are good with numbers, others of us are talented musicians, others are compassionate, and others are bright and full of wit. How might we use our God given gifts to show God's love to others?

We have gifts, not necessarily gold, frankincense, and myrrh to honor God. We are all equipped with gifts to use in our daily lives, not just in church.

Being a disciple is a way of life. It is a journey that pushes us outside of our comfort zones. It's a journey that deepens our relationship with Christ. As disciples we love God, we love others, and we serve others.

As we journey through life we love God by worshipping and praising him. We love others by participating in groups. These groups may be made up of people who are in the same walk of life or have a similar interest. The people in these groups may be family members, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ. Lastly, we serve others. We do ministry together to show God's love and care to all people.

As disciples we are on a lifelong journey with God as our guide.

The peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.