

**Homily ~The Epiphany of the Lord & Thanks giving Mass for the Silver Jubilee of  
Priesthood of Fr. Bobby John Malancharuvil, January 4, 2026.**

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, the feast of God's *manifestation*. The word *Epiphany* means revelation - God showing Himself to the world. Our God is not distant or hidden; He reveals Himself in ways both extraordinary and very ordinary and very often, He reveals His will when we least expect it.

Today, with deep gratitude, I celebrate my Silver Jubilee of Priesthood, and I rejoice to do so here in the Silver State of America, with you, the beloved Community of Our Lady of Snows. I see this moment itself as an epiphany - a reminder that God has been faithfully guiding my life for the past 25 years, often in quiet and surprising ways.

In today's Gospel, we meet the Magi - foreigners and seekers. They were not part of Israel, yet they were attentive to the signs of God. They followed a star, not knowing exactly where it would lead, but trusting that God was guiding them. That trust led them to kneel before a Child - Jesus, the King of kings. Through them, Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled: "*Nations shall walk by your light.*" As Saint Paul tells us, salvation is God's gift to all, without exception.

The Gospel also shows us three responses to Christ; Herod felt threatened and resisted Him. The scribes knew the Scriptures but remained indifferent. The Magi sought, found, and adored.

Dear friends, my own priestly vocation has much in common with the journey of the Magi - a journey of seeking, hesitation, surprise, and finally surrender.

I was blessed to be born into a deeply Catholic family, the Pakalomattom Malancharuvil family, with a strong faith heritage tracing back to St. Thomas the Apostle, who brought the Gospel to India in the first century itself. Our fore fathers received baptism directly from him, still we keep the lineage. Our family was rich in vocations - Major Archbishops, Archbishops, Bishops, many Priests, and Religious Sisters. I am proud to say that St. Alphonsa, the first Saint from India belongs to our family. Faith was in the air we breathed.

Yet, as a child, I was not bold or confident. I was a very shy boy, even afraid to serve at the altar. The sanctuary felt like the *Holy of Holies*, and I was hesitant to step near it. Still, I never missed Masses or Catechism classes, I was awarded every year for full attendance for both and by God's grace, I always tried to be faithful.

When the time came to think about my future, priesthood was not my plan. Since our family had many vocations, they decided to make a change that I should become a medical doctor, and I agreed partially. My path seemed clear - until God placed a "star" in my life in the form of a friend.

At the age of 15, just after finishing school, one of my friends wanted to attend a vocation camp in Trivandrum, the capital of Kerala, one of the States in India, to become a priest. He didn't know the city and how to go, but I had relatives there and often spent my holidays there. Therefore, he insisted that I accompany him. I agreed, not because I was interested in priesthood, but because I wanted to roam around the city while he is attending the camp.

However, at the very entrance of the seminary, everything changed. My friend suddenly began to cry, saying he was scared and alone, seeing no familiar faces. Just to calm down him, I agreed to enter the camp with him. During the sessions, I was hardly attentive. During breaks, I was more interested in plucking tender mangoes from the trees and eating them with salt than listening to the talks.

After five days, the organizers distributed application forms to join the seminary. I collected one for my friend - but then he shocked me by saying, "*I don't want to join.*" I was so angry. Because of him, I felt I had lost an entire week of my vacation.

Out of frustration - and perhaps guided by the Holy Spirit, without knowing it - I filled out the application for myself. I was sure they would reject me, having seen my playful behavior. However, God's plans are not our plans. I received a call letter from the Seminary for an interview. I went unprepared, hoping to fail. But once again, God surprised me. I cleared the interview then I was accepted into the seminary, and my formation began - at the age of 15.

Like the Magi, I had set out on one path, but God led me on another way.

After 11 years of formation, I was ordained a Priest on December 26, 2000, in the Great Jubilee Year by His Beatitude Cyril Baselios, my uncle himself. He then, was the Major Archbishop of the Syro Malankara Catholic Church, one of the Oriental Churches and a best friend of Bishop Straling, the former bishop of Reno; through that connection, we have many Priests here in Reno from India.

Over these 25 years, while performing my priestly service, God has blessed me to continue my studies; studied more than 10 languages, I could have 4 Master Degrees, including Licentiate in Canon Law from Rome and a Doctorate in administration from Europe itself. I had opportunities to serve in many countries, to begin many Catholic educational and charity institutions in India. I could grow through joys and challenges, and above all, to experience His mercy daily.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Magi did not just follow a star - they became witnesses. Today, on this feast of Epiphany and on this Jubilee Thanksgiving Mass Day, I thank God who is everything in my life, I remember with gratitude my parents, brother and family, kith & kin and the formators. In a special way, I thank you, the people of Our Lady of Snows, for your love, support, and prayers till today. Hope it will continue in the future.

As we continue this Eucharist, let us offer Christ our lives anew - the gold of our love, the frankincense of our prayer, and the myrrh of our humility. May we return home by another way, changed by our encounter with Christ. Moreover, may our lives shine as small stars, guiding others to Jesus.