

In the Gospel the three Magi brought Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These were all gifts that represented characteristics of Jesus Christ. The gold was a symbol that Jesus was King. The Frankincense which was used for prayers in the ancient world was illustrating Jesus as our Priest. And the myrrh which was used for healing was a sign of the pain and suffering that Jesus would endure as he died for our sins.

When we look at the meaning of these gifts we can see that they are more than they appear to be. It's the story of these wise three that gave me something to ponder about- what are the gifts that I have received during my years at Augustana College? I see many of my friends here today and it reminds me of the Christ-like gifts you've given me: comfort, patience, forgiveness, guidance, and compassion. The best part is those gifts aren't for one-time use only. You can keep giving those gifts.

I want to share with you today three special people and their gifts, they're like my own three magi. These three have been central to in my time here at Augustana. The first two are no longer living so their gifts are preserved in my memory of them and hopefully after my message you will think of them too.

The first is my friend Jenna Van Buren. If it hadn't been for a fatal car accident the summer before her sophomore here at Augie I'm sure she'd be looking up at me right now from the seats you sit in now. You make life-long friendships during your first year of surviving college and on those harder days of school when a smile was all I needed, that's when Jenna would poke her head into my room. If I could sum up her humor in one word it would be "meow." Jenna had a knack for using funny cat sounds, jokes, jingles, and pictures to make me giggle. What a wonderful Christ-like gift she had given her friends, the gift of **joy**.

The second person is Dr. Dan Swets. We've all heard the story and felt the silence of his absence. I'll be the first to say its unfair for such a young and brilliant professor to leave us so suddenly. I can remember on syllabus day he always made sure to tell us in a very serious voice "Now, over every break I assign a very important assignment. And you have to report back on that assignment." At this point my heart rate is up because as every student knows the bigger the assignment the earlier its announced in class and this was the first day! But do you know what that assignment was.... It was to take a break! I'll never forget the relief I felt and my anticipation for the next big break because I was confident I could ace that assignment. Swets knew the value of spending time with family and friends. Just as Jesus asked us to rest on the Sabbath, Swets was giving us the gift of **rest**.

My third wise was known in college as the fro-man because of his humongous mound of curly hair on his head, his brothers still call him Bo-Diddly, and his friends call him "KP", but for me he's Daddy-O. In the middle of my freshman year I found out that my dad had been diagnosed with frontal temporal dementia. He wasn't even 50 yet, that didn't seem fair. The gift from my dad's illness took the longest for me to grasp because I thought this was God taking not God slipping into someone else. I thought I lost the love I had for my father because all of the qualities I treasured the most-- his courage, his guidance, and his support-- was gone. But what I found was that with patience and a heaping of faith his courage turned into my courage to not be afraid of God's plan. His guidance had turned into my guidance and I was the one leading a good example, and his support turned into my unwavering support for him. I learned how to **love** all over again. Now isn't that the greatest gift?

So with these gifts I can see that distant star. And just like the Magi followed it to their destination I hope to follow that bright and shining star with a little patience and a heaping of faith as I end my time here at Augustana College.