

Scripture Study

The Epiphany of the Lord—Cycle ABC



Opening prayer

Isaiah 60:1-6

(Psalm 72:1-2,7-8,10-13)

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Overview of the Gospel:

- The word “Epiphany” means an appearance, especially of a king or other important person. The Feast of the Epiphany marks the appearance of the Messiah to the Gentiles (non-Jews) represented by the Magi. It is also celebrated as the twelfth day of Christmas, marking the end of that liturgical season, and the beginning of the liturgical season of Ordinary time.
- The Magi, astrologers or sages from the east, come to Jerusalem seeking “the newborn king of the Jews” after seeing “his star at its rising” (verse 2). The Magi, being non-Jews, are often seen as representative of the Gentile (non-Jewish) nations that will eventually come to faith in the Jewish Messiah, Jesus Christ (see the Second Reading).
- Herod, the reigning king of Judea, was a paranoid and violent ruler who was known to put to death any and all threats to his throne (including several wives and children). He pretends to help the Magi as a means to destroy this new rival.
- Despite Herod’s schemes, the Magi are able to find and worship the newborn King in safety, though Herod’s fury later will have tragic results (see Mt 2:13-18).

Questions:

- Why was it important for Jesus to be born in the city of David, Bethlehem, a name which means “house of bread” (verses 4-6; Micah 5:1-3; 2 Samuel 5:2)?
- What is the tone of the First Reading from the prophet Isaiah and of the Responsorial Psalm? Where do you see their fulfillment in the visit of the Magi to the Holy Family?
- What do the star, the Magi, the gifts, the homage, the hostility and the various prophecies teach about the significance of Jesus?
- Since the Magi were pagan astrologers, why would they leave everything to follow that star? In your journey toward God, how are you like the Magi? Unlike them? Have you had to leave anything to follow Jesus?
- Note the responses of the Magi upon finding Jesus. How are they similar to the response that Christians make to Jesus, including before the Blessed Sacrament?
- What is the “gold, frankincense, and myrrh” in your life? How have you offered this to Jesus?

Catechism of the Catholic Church: §§ 528, 486, 724

Closing prayer

Like the Magi, we have discovered a star—a light and guide in the sky of our soul. “We have seen his star in the east and have come to worship him.” We have had the same experience. We too noticed a new light shining in our soul and growing increasingly brighter. It was a desire to live a fully Christian life, a keenness to take God seriously. St. Josemaria Escriva

Remember to read and meditate on the daily Mass readings found in the bulletin!

"They fell down and worshiped Jesus"

Scripture: *Matthew 2:1-12*

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.'" Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him bring me word, that I too may come and worship him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.



Meditation: If Jesus truly is who he claims to be, the eternal Son of God and Savior of the world, then why is he not recognized by everyone who hears his word and sees his works? John the Evangelist states that when Jesus came into the world *the world knew him not and his own people received him not* (John 1:10-11). Jesus was born in obscurity. Only the lowly shepherds recognized him at his birth. Some wise men also found their way to Bethlehem to pay homage to the newborn King of Israel. These men were not Israelites, but foreigners. They likely had read and discussed the Messianic prophecies and were anxious to see when this Messianic King would appear. God led them by means of an extraordinary star across the desert to the little town where Jesus was born. In their thirst for the knowledge of God, they willingly left everything, their home and country, in pursuit of that quest. In their diligent search they were led to the source of true knowledge – to Jesus Christ, the Light and Wisdom of God. When they found the newborn King they humbly worshiped him and gave him gifts fitting for a king.

What fueled their search for the Messianic King? Faith in the promise of God to send a Redeemer, a King who would establish God's reign of peace and righteousness. Faith is an entirely free gift that God makes to us. It is through the help of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and opens the eyes of the mind that we are able to understand, accept, and believe the truth which God reveals to us. In faith, the human will and intellect cooperate with grace. *"Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace"* (Thomas Aquinas).

To know and to encounter Jesus Christ is to know God personally. In the encounter of the wise men with Jesus we see the plan of God to give his only Son as King and Savior, not just for the Jewish people but for all the nations as well. The Lord Jesus came that both Jew and Gentile might find true and lasting peace with God. Let us pray today that Jew and Gentile alike will find the Lord and Savior on their journey of life. Do you bring the light of Jesus Christ to those you meet through the witness of your life and testimony?

"Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for bringing salvation to all the nations. May the gospel of salvation be proclaimed to every nation today and to every person on the face of the earth. Help me to be a good witness of the joy of the gospel to all I meet."