

Epiphany

Reading I: Isaiah 60:1-6

Responsorial Psalm: 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

Reading II: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

[The Epiphany of the Lord | USCCB](#)



The gospel reading for the Epiphany comes from Matthew. Through the rest of the Christmas season, we read from Luke. The readings shift to include the story of the Magi. Nothing is known for sure about these wise men. There are no historical records. The key points that are certain are Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the birth in Bethlehem and the approximate dating of the birth.

The Magi may have been astrologers or those who gathered information about foreign cultures or even Jewish scholars from the Mesopotamian area. There is no indication of how many there were. The number three was offered because there are three gifts and was first discussed around the year 200. (Some medieval paintings depict a few dozen wise men.)

The message of the passage shows the lack of understanding by Herod and the scholars of the law whom they consult. This theme will be repeated as the Gospel of Matthew continues to warn others to be open to God's work even when it does not fit one's current understanding. It also highlights how God's truth is open to those who search, no matter where they begin either geographically or religiously. Thirdly, the gifts reveal something about the child. Only kings and nobles held gold. Frankincense was used only in the worship of God. Myrrh was used in burials to cover the scent of corpses. The gifts convey parts of the identity of Jesus who is King, God, and human.

Searching is part of the spiritual journey. Generally, God does not show up and say hear I am. God invites and encourages in subtle ways. There are interests, desires, experiences, and conversations that invite each person to explore, question, and listen. The journey and search of the Magi invites each person to become aware of the guiding stars (interests, desires, experiences) that focus one's attention. It encourages us to ask questions of others and to meet people along the way. Lastly, it challenges our assumptions about where one will find the answers.

The Magi set out on a journey, following a star, to an unknown destination. They followed a hope and desire within their hearts. They sought advice in Jerusalem and consulted with King Herod. In their search for a great king, they did not reject little Bethlehem as an impossible place. They pursued their journey through all the challenges encountered and were not deterred by any of the obstacles along the way. Thus, they offer guidance and inspiration for all seekers. Hold fast to the movement of God in your life. Do not allow your ego or your preconceptions to distract you from your ultimate goal in life – encountering God.

Take time to reflect on your journey in recent months and look toward the coming months.

Who or what are the stars that you are following?

Whom do you consult for guidance?

What are some of the places to which you have been led?

What gifts will you offer others in the coming months?

What help do you need from God or others to continue your journey?

The first reading is from the third part of Isaiah (56-66) near the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity. The first part imagines the return of the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem, which will be a light for the entire world. The second part images how the Gentiles will come as pilgrims and offer gifts to honor the God of Israel. These images offer background to the story of the Magi. Three things influence our understanding of the Magi based on this passage. The idea that they are Gentiles is rooted in the pilgrimage of foreigners coming to Jerusalem. The gold and frankincense gifts are imaged here. Thirdly, the camels who are not mentioned in the New Testament are drawn from this passage.

The second reading from the Letter to the Ephesians declares two important points. God's work of salvation is made real through the coming of Jesus and that it is open to all people. God's saving of all humanity was hidden and a mystery to people of the earlier centuries. In the presence and ministry of Jesus, it is made real and effective for all people.

Key themes:

Universal gift of salvation

Spiritual Journey

Christians as being light to others

Reflection questions:

How has God's work of salvation become real for you?

What challenges have you encountered in seeing God's work of salvation for particular people?

How does your life, words, or deeds help spread the light of the gospel and God's love to others?

Prayer suggestions:

For the Church: that we may be a Light to those who are searching for direction and help illuminate their path through our words and deeds of compassion and justice

For a spirit of wonder: that our hearts may be awestruck as we recognize God's gifts to us in our faith, our relationships, and our opportunities

For a spirit of hope: that, like the Wise Men, God's Light may guide us into the uncharted future, calm our fears, and help us to trust God's love and care for us

For all who are seekers: that God will lead those who are confused or searching for a new beginning onto a new path that will be filled with meaning, purpose, and wholeness