



LIVING THE GOSPEL

The Epiphany of The Lord January 5th 2025

Theme: ""Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?""

Gathering Prayer

All: O God, who on this day revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations by the guidance of a star, grant in your mercy that we, who know you already by faith, may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Exploring the Word

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

¹ 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, ² "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." ³ When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. ⁵ They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: ⁶ "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."" ⁷ Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; ⁸ 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." ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; ¹¹ 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. ¹² And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.

Gospel Focus

The magi rely on an interesting mix of information to find Jesus. Their study of astronomy reveals to them that a new star has risen, and they are rendered dependent on the expertise of others and the sacred texts of a foreign land. This points them to Bethlehem, where Herod assumes they will still need to "search diligently" in order to find the one they seek. But the star again takes over, leading them more precisely to the very house where Jesus is staying with his mother. Our paths to God are also convoluted. We may be dependent on others to hear God's voice. But we can be

assured that God desires us to know Christ more fully and is thus always with us and guiding us ever onward in our journey.

Gospel Reflection

A favorite game of children of all ages is hide-and-seek. There is a certain thrill in thinking that one can become momentarily invisible to the seeker. Then come the peals of delight and surprise when the hiding place is discovered and once again, one's whereabouts are clearly known. Today's feast centers on the hiddenness of God's plan having been revealed to all, without discrimination. For Jew and Gentile alike, God's love bursts forth like a light that pierces the darkness, like a child's squeals of delight when found. There is no hiding from this wondrous gift as it reaches to the ends of the earth.

There is a tradition in Latin America and in Hispanic communities in the United States that on *El Día de los Reyes*, "the Day of the Kings," a small plastic baby Jesus is hidden in a cake baked specially for the feast day. The figurine is nestled within the dough, signifying the efforts to hide the child Jesus from the evil intentions of King Herod. As the cake is cut, the slicing knife represents the danger posed to the infant Jesus by the cruel king.

In some places the tradition is that whoever gets the piece of cake with the figurine is obliged to host the next family gathering on February 2, the feast of the Presentation. In other places, the one who finds the baby Jesus in his or her portion receives an array of gifts from those present. These traditions make tangible both the danger inherent in the revelation of the Christ and the excitement of the hidden designs of God become manifest.

In the gospel, the danger is most palpable as the exotic visitors from the East wisely discern the true king who has been revealed, in contrast to Rome's puppet king, who wants to engage in a sinister version of hide-and-seek. Herod tries to get the magi to "search diligently for the child" and then bring Herod word when they find him. However, the plan is foiled when a divine warning in a dream directs the magi to return to their country in another way.

These visitors from an unknown land also cause us to reflect on the gifts that come to us in hidden ways from those we regard as strangers. Their odd dress, different coloured skin, and unintelligent tongue immediately put us on our guard. Those who are different are often a source of fear for us, but in today's gospel, they are friends, coheirs to the promise, and the first to recognize the hidden plans of God. In the gospel narrative, these extraordinary visitors appear only briefly. Would we welcome such strangers who reveal the hidden Holy One in our midst if they were to stay?

Old/New Testament and CCC links

First Reading — Isaiah 60:1-6

¹ Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. ² For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. ³ And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. ⁴ Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far, and your daughters shall be carried in the arms. ⁵ Then you shall see and be radiant, your heart shall thrill and rejoice; because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. ⁶ A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

Responsorial Reading — Ps 84:2-3, 5-6, 9-10

R: Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king's son; he shall govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment. **(R)**

Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon be no more. May he rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. **(R)**

The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts; the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute. All kings shall pay him homage, all nations shall serve him. **(R)**

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has no one to help him. He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor he shall save. **(R)**

Second Reading — Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6

²...assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. ...⁵ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; ⁶ that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Catechism of The Catholic Church

439. Many Jews and even certain Gentiles who shared their hope recognized in Jesus the fundamental attributes of the messianic "Son of David", promised by God to Israel.(Cf Mt 2:2; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9.15) Jesus accepted his rightful title of Messiah, though with some reserve because it was understood by some of his contemporaries in too human a sense, as essentially political.(Cf. Jn 4:25-26; 6:15; 11:27; Mt 22:41-46; Lk 24:21)

486. The Father's only Son, conceived as man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, is "Christ", that is to say, anointed by the Holy Spirit, from the beginning of his human existence, though the manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively: to the shepherds, to the magi, to John the Baptist, to the disciples.(Cf. Mt 1:20; 2:1-12; Lk 1:35; 2:8-20; Jn 1:3 1-34; 2:11) Thus the whole life of Jesus Christ will make manifest "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power."(Acts 10:38)

528. The *Epiphany* is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (*magi*) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee.(Mt 2:1; cf. LH, Epiphany, Evening Prayer II, Antiphon at the Cantic of Mary) In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations.(Cf Mt 2:2; Num 24:17-19; Rev 22:16) Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning towards the Jews and receiving from them the messianic promise as contained in the Old Testament.(Cf Jn 4 22; Mt 2:4-6) The

Epiphany shows that "the full number of the nations" now takes its "place in the family of the patriarchs", and acquires *Israelitica dignitas*(St. Leo the Great, Sermo 3 in epiphania Domini 1-3, 5: PL 54, 242; LH, Epiphany, OR; Roman Missal, Easter Vigil 26, Prayer after the third reading) (is made "worthy of the heritage of Israel").

724. In Mary, the Holy Spirit *manifests* the Son of the Father, now become the Son of the Virgin. She is the burning bush of the definitive theophany. Filled with the Holy Spirit she makes the Word visible in the humility of his flesh. It is to the poor and the first representatives of the gentiles that she makes him known.(Cf. Lk 1:15-19; Mt 2:11)

Sharing and Discussion

1. Who are the magi in today's context, and what is their importance to the birth of Jesus?
2. What does it mean to be "governed" by Jesus?
3. Having found the babe, the gift of the Father, and knowing the babe willingly became the gift of salvation through his death, burial and resurrection, what will you do with him?

Closing Prayer

All: God of creation, you call to us through the radiance of the sun and the stars to fashion our lives after that of your son Jesus, the light of the world. Hear and grant our prayers through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Leader: May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.