



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



Epiphany of the Lord, Cycle C

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Today we switch from Luke's infancy narrative to Matthew's gospel for the story of the magi. In an *epiphany* moment Gentile wise men "*observe his star at its rising, and come to pay him homage*" while Jews remain indifferent and even hostile, for "*a prophet has no honor in his own country.*" (John 4:44). This foreshadows the universal mission of Christ. As we heard from the opening chapter of John's Gospel on Christmas morning, Jesus came to his own, "*yet his own did not accept him.*"

Matthew does not elaborate on exactly who the magi were. Early Church *apocrypha* claim that they were a caste of wise men associated with astrology, the interpretation of dreams and magic. What is clear is that for Matthew they represent the Gentile nations of the world who recognize Christ as their king.

Later tradition set their number at three, a tradition passed down from the wisdom stories, "*though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. Yet a cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*" Ecclesiastes 4:12. Oral tradition called them kings and gave them names (Caspar, Balthasar and Melchior) and cast Caspar as a black man. While none of this has basis in scripture, it is generally in accord with their role in this story as representatives of the whole Gentile world.

This passage is written as a marvelous story of journey, intrigue, discovery, danger and escape. It calls for setting aside time daily throughout the week for St. Ignatius' method of contemplation, "*holy imagination.*" Using Lectio Divina, read this Gospel, and then in reflection place yourself fully with the story. Imaginative prayer is way of having your own *epiphany* by using your imagination to enter this rich Gospel story. Experience the sights and sounds of the pilgrimage of the Magi and enter with them into the presence of the baby Jesus. Ask the Lord to see him face-to-face and grow in intimacy with Him.

Epiphany of the Lord, Cycle C

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

In the time of King Herod,
after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,
wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking,
"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews
for we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.
When King Herod heard this, he was frightened,
and all Jerusalem with him;
and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people,
he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.
They told him, "*In Bethlehem of Judea.*"

For so it has been written by the prophet:

*'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'*

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men
and learned from them the exact time
when the star had appeared.

Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

*"Go and search diligently for the child;
and when you have found him,
bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."*

When they had heard the king, they set out;
and there, ahead of them,
went the star that they had seen at its rising,
until it stopped over the place where the child was.
When they saw that the star had stopped,
they were overwhelmed with joy.

On entering the house,
they saw the child with Mary his mother;
and they knelt down and paid him homage.
Then, opening their treasure chests,
they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,
they left for their own country by another road.

The Gospel of the Lord