



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



The Epiphany of the Lord, Cycle A

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"...there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was." Matt 2:9

This Sunday we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, where Matthew lays out his overall purpose for his Gospel. That is to demonstrate that all prophecies about the promised Messiah have been fulfilled in the birth of Jesus.

On this day, God's only Begotten Son is revealed to the nations by the guiding star. In the light of faith, we reflect on God's mercy so that we, too, might be brought to behold the beauty of His glory. Indeed, our faith in Christ is well placed!

As told in the ancient prophecies, the humble town of Bethlehem, city of King David's ancestor, Ruth, would be the Messiah's birthplace. Gentiles from foreign lands would acknowledge his birth and be guided by the miraculous lining up of the star over the place where the child was; and splendid gifts would be offered to this Messiah.

Reflect on the contrast between the earthly splendor of Jerusalem and the lowliness of Bethlehem. Like the Holy Family, our Christian Pilgrimage is not to be accompanied by soft berths and pampered lodging. Visualize Herod's malicious jealousy in contrast with the worshipful humility of the magi from the east. In this early chapter of Matthew's Gospel, the stage is set for conflict, drama and the tension between good and evil that God's manifestation in Christ implies for the world. Foreshadowed is the inevitable sacrificial death of this "newborn king."

The acceptance of the magi gentiles hints at the eventual Christian mission that will flow out to all the great centers of the Mediterranean world that follow shortly after Pentecost. Reflecting on this helps us see that the magi being drawn to the Christ Child is not arbitrary. Rather, it is the epiphany moment for us showing the hand of God at work. This is our destiny. God holds past, present and future together in the precise alignment of the heavenly star at His earthly place of birth. As the star hovers above the Child, the inbreaking of the heavens flow downward to His earthly abode -- conjoined, symmetrical and balanced. As we raise our minds and hearts we are left stammering in awe, without doubt, that God is the author of the life of Jesus.

In holy quietude, we join these magi in being overwhelmed with joy. We are present with the magi as they offer gifts of gold that symbolizes humanity; frankincense that acknowledges the divinity of Christ; and myrrh, the ointment used in embalming, that foreshadows Jesus' redemptive death. In this moment we, in turn, are gifted with the fulfillment of all human desire surrounded by the Sacred Heart of Jesus and infused with His mercy.

Lord, every nation on earth will adore you! (Psalm 72)

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