

- Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord—the manifestation of Christ to the world in the persons of these magi who seek Him out.
- The Jewish shepherds came to adore Jesus on Christmas morning, and today we remember the non-Jewish magi coming to the newborn child who is not only king of the Jews, but of everyone.
- And the magi, thus, are the “first fruits” of the harvest of all the peoples of the world who will come to witness the glory of God in Jesus...who seek the truth that comes from God, and to thus become the new Chosen People.
- As Peter would write in his first letter to Christians: “...*you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people....*” (1 Peter 2:9-10 RSV)
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- In this explicit inclusion of the non-Jewish peoples, God does not reject the Jews by any means; in fact Jesus is the fulfillment (albeit perhaps unrecognized) of their own faith and hope.
- St. Paul writes of this in Romans 11, the kernel of idea being this statement: “...*if you [non-Jews] have been cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree [a people not of God], and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree [a chosen people], how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree [the holy people of God]...they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable.*” (Romans 11:24, 28-29 RSV)
- ...for our faith is very much a Messianic Judaism—a fulfillment of the prophecies of Israel.
- Certainly all people are called to come to Christ...who is truth and the eternal God...but only God knows the heart of man. We can, and should, seek to lead others to Christ, but it is not ours to condemn.

- Yet the open arms of the love of God—ready to embrace any and all—is what St. Paul emphasizes in our second reading today...that *“the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body...”*
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  - When Jesus appears to Paul on the road of Damascus (Acts 9), and in subsequent revelation to him, Jesus shows Paul the openness of God’s love for all the people of the earth.
  - That revelation happens to Peter in a vision as well in the very next chapter of Acts (Acts 10)...and his fellow Christians, who initially criticize Peter for including non-Jews, would, after hearing about his vision, would exclaim: *“Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life.”* (Acts 11:18 RSV)
  - This inclusiveness was attested to by the prophets, but came to the fore in the teaching of Christ and the expression of the early Church...for Jesus healed not only Jews, but non-Jews as well... setting the precedent for the universality—the catholicity—of His Church.
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  - God is Father, and Jesus is Savior...not just of the Israelites, but of all peoples... represented by the wise men, just as the Jews had been represented by the shepherds who adored the infant Jesus.
  - After all, the name “Jesus” means *“God saves”* or *“God is salvation”*...and beings born in Beth-lehem, which means “house of bread”—foreshadows the Eucharist. We become a “beth-lehem”—a house of heavenly bread—the Body and Blood of Christ—whenever we receive Him...and He comes to us in the fullness of His grace and power and holiness.
  - And this is why St. Paul writes: *“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.”* (1 Corinthians 11:27-29 RSV)
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- Now, magi were types of scientists of their age—seeking truth in natural sciences, medicine, etc. Some magi were charlatans for profit, but those in our Gospel were obviously sincere searchers of truth.
  - As far as their guiding star: despite speculations, we simply don't really know. But the real guiding star was, and is, Christ...God's Eternal Word, omnipotence and divinity, born so very paradoxically as a helpless infant.
  - So, as Isaiah says in our first reading: *"Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance...your sons come from afar...bearing gold and frankincense..."* ... a prophecy our Gospel today fulfills, not only symbolically, but almost literally... emphasizing the total fulfillment of God's Word.
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  - As Pope Francis remarks, the magi represent all who sincerely seek truth...who seek God...and are willing to make the often long, arduous journey to find Him.
  - And yet, as the Gospel says of the magi...at the end of the journey and the discovery of whom they sought: *"...they were overjoyed at seeing the star."* A more literal version says: *"...they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy..."* (Matthew 2:10 RSV)
  - ...and, very notably, it then says: *"...they saw the child with Mary his mother."* Need we anything else to know of the closeness of Jesus and Mary?...of mother and her Son? When we come to Mary, Jesus is there.
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- All the world is called to come to Jesus as Son of God and Savior... to receive the promise of salvation. St. Paul writes: *"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."* (Romans 10:12-13 RSV)

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- The magi, guided by a mysterious light, find wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger the God whom the universe itself cannot contain: the Creator of Heaven and earth—asleep...a crib for His bed.
- Jesus tells us: “*I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” (John 8:12)
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- And so we ask: *Hail Holy Queen...show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. O clement, o loving, o sweet Virgin Mary.*

Reading 1

[Is 60:1-6](#)

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord shines upon you.

See, darkness covers the earth,  
and thick clouds cover the peoples;  
but upon you the LORD shines,  
and over you appears his glory.

Nations shall walk by your light,  
and kings by your shining radiance.

Raise your eyes and look about;  
they all gather and come to you:  
your sons come from afar,  
and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see,  
your heart shall throb and overflow,  
for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you,  
the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.

Caravans of camels shall fill you,  
dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;  
all from Sheba shall come  
bearing gold and frankincense,  
and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13](#)

R. (cf. 11) **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. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

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. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

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. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

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. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

Reading II

[Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace  
that was given to me for your benefit,  
namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.  
It was not made known to people in other generations  
as it has now been revealed  
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:  
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body,  
and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Gospel

[Mt 2:1-12](#)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,  
in the days of King Herod,  
behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying,  
“Where is the newborn king of the Jews?  
We saw his star at its rising  
and have come to do him homage.”  
When King Herod heard this,  
he was greatly troubled,  
and all Jerusalem with him.  
Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people,  
He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.  
They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea,  
for thus it has been written through the prophet:  
*And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
since from you shall come a ruler,  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.*”  
Then Herod called the magi secretly  
and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance.  
He sent them to Bethlehem and said,  
“Go and search diligently for the child.  
When you have found him, bring me word,  
that I too may go and do him homage.”

# Epiphany

2017

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After their audience with the king they set out.  
And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,  
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

They were overjoyed at seeing the star,

and on entering the house

they saw the child with Mary his mother.

They prostrated themselves and did him homage.

Then they opened their treasures

and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,  
they departed for their country by another way.