

- Today we celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord—the manifestation of Christ—the Messiah—to the world in the persons of these magi who seek Him out.
- But before the magi came, St. Luke records in his Gospel that first of all the angel host appeared to the shepherds in the field much more gloriously than even the magi's star—the very night of Jesus' birth—to announce the coming of the Savior...indicating God's love for the poor, the humble and the lowly, because shepherds were some of the poorest and lowliest of the land.
- Imagine a 24/7 job out in the fields...365 days a year—cold, heat, rain, dust, wind...it didn't matter...for little more than something to eat...with little more shelter than your cloak. Think about that the next time you complain about your pay, your working or living conditions.

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- Much is made of the guiding star...the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh—precious and expensive gifts which DO fulfill the prophecy from Isaiah in our first reading, and DO signify Jesus' status as priest (frankincense), prophet and king (gold)...the myrrh representing His future saving death, for myrrh was used in funeral rites.
 - But those things are rather extraneous to the main point of the Epiphany—signs pointing to a greater truth, which is:
 - ...that these non-Jewish (Gentile) magi (“wise men”) come to the newborn child and represent all people...and so Jesus is not only king and savior of the Jews, but of the whole world...to all seeking the truth that comes only from God, and such truth-seekers become the new Chosen People.
 - As St. Paul writes in our 2nd reading today—which he attests that he received by revelation: “...*the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.*”

- And so, as Peter would write in his first letter to all faithful 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)

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- This explicit inclusion of the non-Jewish peoples does not mean rejection of the Jews by any means; in fact Jesus is the fulfillment (albeit unrecognized) of their own faith and hope.
 - St. Paul writes of this in Romans 11, the essential kernel 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)
 - ...for the Jews are, as many popes have called them, our “*elder brothers in faith*”...and our Christian faith is very much a type of Messianic Judaism—a fulfillment of the prophecies of Israel.
 - We, of course, do not discard the Jewish scriptures and law that were before Christ, but rather the Gospels and New Testament build upon them and complete them.
 - Jesus Himself affirms: “*Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.*” (Matthew 5:17-18)

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- 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, try to lead others to Christ because He is eternal truth and life, but it is not for us to condemn others...as Paul reminds us:

“Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls.” (Romans 14:4)

- So, we like the good gardener, sow the seed and cultivate as best we can...but, in the end, it is God who gives the growth, by watering the seed with His grace.
- This does not mean we don't warn in charity those who are doing things objectively against the teaching of God...and thus are endangering their souls. But always with tact and charity.
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- God is Father, and Jesus is Savior...not just of the Israelites, but of all people... represented by the wise men, just as the Jews had been represented by the Jewish shepherds who adored the infant Jesus.
- After all, the name “Jesus” means “*God saves*” or “*God is salvation*...”...not of one nation or people, but of the world...for those who accept Him.

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- Herod—a Jew—had the fundamental and common fault of unbridled worldly ambition...and thus He tried to destroy the true Good, as such ambition often does...for, as Jesus tells us, we cannot love both God and mammon.
 - Likewise, at various points in our lives, we will have to choose Herod's palace at Jerusalem, or the stable of Bethlehem. We see which the wise men chose.
 - Pope Francis remarked that 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 thus wise men and women choose the stable even today... for Herod and his palace is dust and ashes, but that little babe, lying in a manger, is the God whom the universe itself cannot contain—the Creator of the Heavens and earth, who gives eternal life to those who sincerely seek Him.

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."
After their audience with the king they set out.

Epiphany

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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.