

## Reflection for the Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

*“We Three Kings of Orient are; Bearing gifts we traverse afar.”*

The song “We Three Kings” is familiar to many of us, and this song is closely identified with the Solemnity of the Epiphany of our Lord, which we celebrate today. This song was written by John Henry Hopkins Jr. in the year 1857. At the time that he composed the carol, Hopkins served as the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. It is only in the Gospel of Matthew that the Magi or Wise Men from the East are mentioned. The Gospel of Luke mentions the shepherds in the field keeping night watch over their flock. The Gospels of Mark and John do not cover the birth of Jesus they start their Gospels with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Matthew and Luke saw a need to share information about the birth of Jesus, for they knew that as people were informed about how and where the birth took place, they would have a better understanding of God’s plan of salvation for all humanity. Traditionally the shepherds who came to see Jesus the night he was born are seen as representing the fact that Jesus came to fulfill God’s covenant with God’s chosen people. The three wise men are seen as a reminder that Jesus came for all people and all ages.

The lyrics of the song “*We Three Kings,*” reminds us as does our Gospel reading this Sunday that the wise man from the East had seen an amazing site in the night sky and this prompted them to seek out the newborn King. We can turn to the Gospel of Luke and see that the shepherds keeping night watch in the field, reacted in a similar way when the Angels came to them and informed them of a newborn King lying in a manger, they went to see the great sight. Be it Shepherds or Kings, be it the Gospel of Matthew or the Gospel of Luke there is a message for us as followers of Jesus Christ in the way that these men reacted to the news of a newborn King. They did not just receive the news and decided that this information had nothing to do with them and their lives. Nor did they receive the news and take a more hands-off approach sending a note of congratulations to our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph on the birth of Jesus Christ. Rather they chose to be engaged in what was taking place and became full participants in God’s salvific plan. To this day over two thousand years later we remember the fact that shepherds in the field and magi from the east came to do homage to the newborn King. Their presence at the nativity informs us that the Christ child came into the world for all people and all ages. We can and should conclude that the magi and the shepherds had very limited knowledge of who this newborn King was. But that was not the case with our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph. Both our Blessed Mother and St. Joseph were informed by God be it through an angel or a dream that this child to be born is the Son of God the Messiah, that the world was been waiting for.

Our Blessed Mother, unlike other parents, knew from her conversation with the Angel Gabriel, what name her child was to have and what he would do in this world. This is not the case with all other parents as they hold their infant in their arms, so for most parents it is a wonderful mystery the path their child will take in this world. Something a parent can naturally wonder about as they hold their child in their arms, and as they watch them grow with the passing of each year. The song “*Mary, did you know,*” taps into the natural curiosity that all parents and all families have about their little one growing up. I think it is common for Parents to look for signs as to what their child will be and do when they are adults. I am sure all parents

want their children to be healthy, and even more importantly to have an open heart to God. In a 2021 interview with Mark Lowry on TBN, the author of the song "*Mary did you know,*" pointed out that he wrote the song originally as a monologue between two songs for a Christmas play that he had been asked to create for his Church. This was in 1984, and Mark Lowry was 26 years old. Later he turned the monologue into the lyrics that would become the song "*Mary, did you know,*" and Buddy Greene created the music for the song in 1991.

You and I can be inspired by our Blessed Mother, but we are not her nor will we ever be. Our relationship with God will always be different than the relationship our Blessed Mother has with God. But on this Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord, the Magi from the east can and should remind us that Christ came into the world for all peoples and all ages. Like the three Kings we can respond and follow the light of Christ in this world and in the next. At the end of the day may we take a moment and look to the night sky, and may we see what the wise men saw in the same night sky that compelled them to leave everything and follow a star at its rising. God has and always will until the end of time be working in the world and inviting us to be a part of His salvific plan for humanity. May we see with eyes of faith so that we are able to see beyond the physical and clearly see the star in the night sky and know that God is working in the world.