



# BIBLE STUDY

## EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

### Year A

St. Maria Goretti and  
St. Peter Claver  
Parishes

January 8, 2017  
Volume 1, Issue 6

“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” Matthew 2: 2.

### Reading I: Isaiah 60:1-6

**HOW DO I FIND JESUS?** An epiphany is a sudden leap of understanding through an ordinary occurrence. According to Richard Rhor, O.F.M., “An epiphany is a sudden appearance, a manifestation not of something necessarily new, but of something that was up to now avoidable. An epiphany is not an experience that we can create from within, but one that we can only be open to and receive from another.” We celebrate the sudden leap of understanding of Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world on the 12th day of Christmas (now in many countries on the second Sunday after Christmas) and we call it the Epiphany, or manifestation. In the early days of the church, the Feast of the Epiphany was a sort of marquee of the liturgical year on which the Church year and its major feasts were proclaimed and sung.



“...Every nation  
on earth will  
adore you.”

In the first reading, Isaiah, the prophet, encourages the exiled and beleaguered Israelites by foretelling the glorious future of the New Jerusalem. He assures them that the darkness of exile will give way to the light of God dwelling within them once more (vv. 2-3). He predicts that the world will have an epiphany and recognize that God dwells in and among them. They will come to find God among them. He predicts that the nations will walk by the light of Israel, and the kings of the world will bring their riches in recognition of God’s presence (vv. 3-6). Midian, Ephah, and Sheba symbolize the Gentile nations that would recognize God’s presence. Midian was the home of the former rulers of the Arabian Peninsula (Gen 37:28, Gen 37:36). Ephah formed part of Midian and abounded in dromedaries and camels (Judg. 6:5). Sheba was known for its wealth. They would bring to Israel, signs of their epiphany, gold and frankincense. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Where did you find Jesus this Christmas season?

### WISE MEN

The men from the East who were led by a star to come to Palestine to worship the infant Christ (Matt 2:1,7, 16). The Greek word for wise men in this account (magoi) is rendered as astrologers where it occurs in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Dan 1:20; 2:2) and as sorcerer in its other occurrences in the New Testament (Acts 13:6, 8).

The Greek historian Herodotus, writing in the fifth century B.C., identified the Magi as a caste of Medes who had a priestly function in the Persian Empire. In the Book of Daniel the “astrologers” (magoi) are grouped with magicians, sorcerers, and Chaldeans as advisers to the court of Babylon with responsibility for interpreting dreams. The role of the star in Matthew Chapter 2 suggests a connection with astrology. These astrologers, pursuing their observations of the stars in the heavens, encountered a sign of God (Matt 24:29-30). God broke through their misguided system to make the great event known. The joy, rejoicing, worship, and gifts which mark the response of these wise men to the birth of Jesus is quite a contrast to the troubled state and murderous intent of Herod and his Jewish advisers in Jerusalem (Matt 2:1-12). (From Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

### Reading II: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

**HOW DO I FIND JESUS?** In these few verses from the Letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul talks about his own epiphany, that is, how he found Jesus. Writing from prison, he reminded the Ephesians that he was the “Apostle of the Gentiles”. He called his ministry, “the steward of God’s Grace that was given to him” (vv. 2-3). God willed that salvation would come to Jews and Gentiles through Jesus Christ. It was always God’s plan to redeem the world through the seed of Abraham, Israel. This plan was hidden and it was difficult to determine the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the face of the hostilities between them in the Old Testament.

This mystery, that the Gentiles are co-heirs, members of the body, and partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel was concealed for centuries. It was revealed to St. Paul and the apostles. St. Paul’s role was to preach the Promise of God to the Gentiles. He found Jesus by serving the Gentiles. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What is your role in God’s plan?

**Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12**

**HOW DO I FIND JESUS?** The Magi had an epiphany. An epiphany is not an experience that we can create from within, but one that we can only be open to and receive from another. God called the Magi in the midst of their occupations. The revelation of the brilliant star that graced the night sky caused an inner movement within the Magi that required them to follow the star and validate its meaning. They left their places of comfort, sought instruction from strangers, and they expected to be successful. They knew how to find Jesus.

Who were the Magi? They came from the East (v.1). The Jewish Historian Herodotus describes the Magi as once a Median tribe that became part of the Persian Empire. They attempted to overthrow the Persians but failed. From that time on, they became a tribe of priests. They became in Persia almost exactly what the Levites were in Israel. They represent the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 60:1-6, "...dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; All from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense..." (v. 6).

How did the Magi find Jesus? They sought Jesus. They were persistent in their quest. They expected to find him. 1. They sought Jesus. The Magi left their homes and risked their safety to find Jesus (vv. 1-2). Their knowledge and study prepared them for the sudden leap of understanding that they were looking for the new born King of the Jews. They risked much to find Him.

2. They were persistent in their search (vv. 3-9). They did not keep their quest a secret. They went to Israel's largest city, Jerusalem, where they confronted the murderous Herod the Great. He, along with all Jerusalem, was greatly disturbed by the quest of the Magi. Yet, the Magi asked for "the new born King of the Jews." They declared that they had seen His star and that they had come to worship Him. The Greek word for worship "προσκυνηο" (proskuneo) means total submission in English. This could have angered Herod. In the face of Herod's paranoid interrogation, the Magi persisted on their course to find Jesus.

3. The Magi expected to find Jesus (vv. 9-12). The reappearance of the star validated their expectations. Going into the house (v. 11), they found Jesus. There they opened their gifts: Gold for His Kingship; Frankincense used in worship for His Divinity; Myrrh used in burial for His humanity. The Magi found Jesus. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** If you looked today, where would you find Jesus the Christ?

**PRAY ABOUT IT!**

**Monday**

Read Isaiah 60:1-3. Greet everyone today with a New Year's Blessing.

**Tuesday**

Read Matthew 2:2. Spend thirty minutes in humble prayer for peace in the world.

**Wednesday**

Read Ephesians 3:2. What role will you play in the salvation of others?

**Thursday**

Read Ephesians 3:7. Be a minister of God's Grace by performing three acts of kindness.

**Friday**

Attend Mass and receive the Eucharist.

**The Catechism of the Catholic Church and the Epiphany**

**529** The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation. The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek in Israel, in the messianic light of the star of David, the one who will be king of the nations.

**Resources:**

*The Gospel of Matthew*, Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Commentary Notes & Study Questions, Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, Scott Hahn, Curtis Mitch, Denise Walters Ignatius Press San Francisco; p. 20-21; *The Sunday Readings Cycle C* Kevin O'Sullivan, O. F. M. Franciscan Press, Quincy University, Quincy, Ill. pp. 61-66; *Ephesians*, Ivan Havener, O.S. B., Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p.1188-1194; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year A 2017*, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S. Kathleen Harmon, S.ND. de N., Christopher W. Canlon, S. M. Liturgical Press Collegeville, Mn. pp. 32-35; *Epiphany: You Can't Go Home Again*, Richard Rhor, O.F.M. <http://www.americancatholic.org/Messenger/Jan2001/Feature3.asp>

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2017