

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

The Epiphany of the Lord

Gospel Word

Matthew 2:1–12

The word *epiphany* means manifestation. The Magi were led by a star to meet the Creator of the universe. Underlying this feast in the persons of the Magi is the celebration of the manifestation of God's presence to and for all people. In the Gospel Nativity stories up to this time, Jesus had been made known to Jewish people who were hoping and praying for a messiah. The Wise Men however were not Jewish. In contemporary times, they would more than likely have been called astronomers. They were "from the east." The region east of Palestine was known for its scientific awareness. It's also the birth-place of astrology. The civilization of this region was advanced for its time. The people of the East had developed a society that used water more effectively. They had built dams and reservoirs that allowed them to have some control of nature's uncertain ways. They used the stars to help them keep exact time and were able then to organize themselves and their technology more efficiently.

So when Matthew mentions "Magi from the East," people knew these were not ordinary wanderers, but seekers of the deeper truth about life. (They were not kings.) They were "wise" in the ways of the world. And they were led to Christ by means of the heavens, which they were quite adept at interpreting. So part of the story is that all creation, including the heavens above, are playing their role in bringing people to Jesus. The implication in today's Gospel reading is that Jesus was not only the "King of the Jews," but also the Lord of the entire universe.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

The whole purpose of the Incarnation was *to make known* to us the mystery of God's life among us. God comes to save us. It was probably not easy for Matthew's Jewish community to hear this story. They probably had to struggle with its meaning. What is God telling them in this manifestation? Is it true they are not the only ones to be saved?

To hear or read or even pray about the fact that foreigners and even enemies are named by God as coheirs and copartners in his plan for salvation is one thing. To live, pray, worship and love alongside one another is something else. But it is the message at the heart of this Gospel reading. It is meant not just for Matthew's community but for us today. Think about that. Who are "the enemies" today? The foreigners? Are we willing, as a community and as individuals, to reach out and welcome them? To accept their gifts and to share faith with them?

One-line Prayer

Lord of the universe, help us to notice you in the many ways you come to us each day. Amen.

Connecting With the Sunday Readings

The Epiphany of the Lord

The Magi were led by a star to meet the Creator of the universe. The word *epiphany* means manifestation. The feast celebrates the manifestation of God's presence to and for all people. In the Nativity stories, Jesus has been made manifest to mostly Jewish people who have the hope of a messiah. The Wise Men were not Jewish. They were "from the east." In contemporary times, they would most likely be called astronomers. The region east of Palestine was known for its scientific awareness. It's also the birthplace of astrology. Their civilization was advanced for that time. The people of the East developed a society that used water more effectively. They built dams and reservoirs that allowed them to have more control of nature's uncertain conditions. They used the stars to help them keep exact time, and were able then to organize themselves and their technology more efficiently.

So when Matthew mentions "Magi from the East," people would know that these were not ordinary wanderers, but seekers of the deeper truths of life. (They were not kings.) They were "wise" in the ways of the world. And they were led to Christ by means of the heavens, which they were quite adept at interpreting. So part of the story is that all creation, including the heavens above, plays a role in bringing people to Jesus. The implication in today's Gospel reading is that Jesus was not only the "King of the Jews," but also as the Lord of the entire universe.

A Gospel Word for the Home

Matthew 2:1-12

The whole purpose of the Incarnation was to make known to us the mystery of God's life among us. God comes to save us. Throughout history, God uses various means to do this. Sometimes God uses "sign and wonders" to frame the revelation of the deep truths that form the foundation of our faith. All creation groans as if in labor (to use an image from Saint Paul) to bring forth God's Plan and Kingdom. The Epiphany highlights one of these wonders, the star that led the Magi to Jesus. And the three men from the east were wise enough to recognize its importance.

They brought Jesus gifts, but more importantly, they brought themselves. Part of the tone of this story is that their journey to find him was long, arduous, and dangerous. Travel back in those days was always filled with difficulties, but in this story they also traveled under the gaze of the despicable Herod. In a sense, we are all like the Magi, constantly in search of the deeper truth of our life. They were given direction by the star. We are also given our own stars, and we give to the Lord as they did through grateful actions of worship and praise.

Parent Survival

The saintly Pope Paul VI introduced the process of evangelization to the Catholic Church. When writing about family, he stated that not only do parents evangelize their children, but children evangelize their parents. A down to earth description of evangelization is the communication of the Good News, the Gospel message of God's love, mercy, and forgiveness. Evangelization usually takes place between people, thus as the Pope suggests, between parents and children.

So here's the assignment. Think of times when your children evangelized you? Think of when you were inspired by them to see God and God's work in their midst. When did your children play the role of "stars" leading you closer to God in your home? Perhaps there were times when they exhibited surprising generosity, or when they forgave you for your shortcomings. Maybe it was when they gave you a hug when you really needed it. God can be quite creative in bringing people closer to him.

Car or Meal Talk

Talk about the Magi's story and discuss what the Magi might have said to Mary and Joseph when they finally saw the Christ Child.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

One-Line Prayer

God the Holy Spirit, help us notice you in the many ways you are present with us each day. Amen.