

# Read



Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8,  
10-11, 12-13

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

## LIVING THE WORD

# Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 6, 2019



## REFLECTION

How far would you go to spend time with Jesus? Today we remember the Magi who made a journey of epic proportions to find the infant Jesus. They put up with the hardships of traveling to see him. In the past century in communist China, soldiers, after imprisoning a priest in his rectory, broke open the tabernacle and scattered the consecrated hosts onto the floor of the church. Fortunately, the soldiers failed to notice an eleven-year-old girl quietly praying in the back of the church. After the soldiers left the church and remained outside guarding the entrance, the little girl quietly walked to the front of the church and consumed one of the hosts. For thirty-nine nights, she secretly slipped past the guards to receive the Body of Christ and to spend a holy hour in his presence. On the thirty-ninth night, she accidentally made a noise while leaving the church. A guard caught her and he tragically beat her to death with the butt of his rifle. The imprisoned priest saw this take place from the rectory window. This story inspired Venerable Archbishop Fulton Sheen to make a holy hour every single day until he died. In a country where we have religious freedom, we can so easily take Christ's presence in the Eucharist for granted. We forget that people longed for him for thousands of years, that people have given their lives to be with him, and that people have journeyed across the world for even a glimpse of

him. Christ's presence is a treasure. Today, put yourself in the shoes of the Magi and commit to journeying to that treasure.

## ACTION

The Magi were given the gift of discernment to avoid cooperating with Herod's intentions to kill Jesus. The Magi didn't reveal Jesus' whereabouts to Herod, but instead went home a different way so as to bypass Herod's palace. We can all be influenced for good or bad, and we need to take precautions not to get drawn into sinful situations. Think about a villain in a book or a movie, such as, Lord Voldemort (*Harry Potter*), Sauron (*The Lord of the Rings*), the Joker (*Batman*), or Darth Vader (*Star Wars*), and write down what they did to manipulate others. For example, did they use force or did they manipulate by lying? It's unlikely that we have a "super villain" in our lives, but we may see elements of them in ourselves and others. We can observe what the villains did to recognize what we need to do to avoid bad company.

## Watch Matthew Kelly's

*"How Does God Speak to Us?"*

as made available by the Archdiocese  
of St. Paul/Minneapolis:



[www.youtube.com  
/watch?v=X19TNCz7-H8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X19TNCz7-H8)

## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Do you act as a hero for good, or do you let yourself be manipulated for the bad? How can you be a better person? How can you change habits or behaviors that you know are not reflective of God?



January 6, 2019

# SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

## LECTIONARY #20C

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

## Prepare for the Word

*The following elements may be used by the catechist, teacher, or youth minister to prepare to facilitate today's session with teens. You may integrate this information into the reflection and discussion on today's readings.*

### Leader's Context

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. The word *Epiphany* means manifestation or revelation. In the Gospel, we hear the story of the three Wise Men (who may have been astrologers or kings). Contrast this revelation with the experience of the shepherds (poor, meek, and humble). This reminds us that God reveals or manifests himself to all nations—this is the great epiphany. People from all corners of the earth, rich and poor, men and women, children and adults, the educated and the uneducated—all peoples are children of God and loved unconditionally by a God who IS love.

**Q FOCUS:** *A light for all nations.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Christmas continues for one more week and concludes with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This week the Church honors St. Raymond of Penyafort. Born into a wealthy Spanish family, Raymond joined the Dominicans in 1222 and studied both civil and Church law. He is the patron saint of lawyers. St. Raymond presents a good opportunity to introduce students to the concept of Church law (or Canon Law).

### Church Teaching Connection

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord teaches us that God reveals himself to all nations. We received the light of Christ at our Baptism. Our baptismal responsibility then is to be the light of Christ to all we encounter. This is a very important mission for all Christians to follow and it is strengthened and nourished each time we attend Mass, hear his Word, and receive his Body and Blood in Holy Communion. Noted here is the Prayer after Communion from the Mass for the Epiphany. May this prayer be a mantra for your Christian life:

*Renewed by sacred nourishment,  
we implore your mercy, O Lord,  
that the star of your justice  
may shine always bright in our minds  
and that our true treasure may ever consist in  
confession of you.*

*Through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*

## Hear the Word

*Use this resource, a Lectionary, or a Bible to proclaim the reading. The book should be held reverently or placed on a lectern. If possible, light a candle that is placed near where the Gospel will be proclaimed. Gesture for teens to stand.*

### Gospel Acclamation

*Use the same musical setting that is used in your parish or at school Masses. Teens may help with music and proclaim the Gospel.*

*Alleluia, alleluia.*

### Gospel

*Matthew 2:1-12*

**Reader:** A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

**All:** Glory to you, O Lord.

*All make the Sign of the Cross on their forehead, lips, and heart.*

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. 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.

**Reader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**All:** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

*Everyone may be seated.*

## Reflect on the Word

*When beginning the reflection and discussion about today’s readings, first refer to the handout for today. Ask teens what they learned about themselves and about Christian discipleship from performing the action for the week and journaling. Ask teens about the readings of the day: What struck them? What do they think the readings mean? How do the readings affect their own lives? Then begin the following reflection (the reflection includes references to the other readings; since only the Gospel was proclaimed at this session, you may need to recap the stories for the teens):*

► Have you heard the word *epiphany* before?

The word *epiphany* is often defined as that aha moment when things finally come together and make sense. Well, the Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord is a great aha moment! Epiphany marks the time when the Magi (kings, sages, or astronomers) came from far away lands to meet the Son of God. They followed the light—the star—and arrived at this place with special gifts for the Christ Child.

The First Reading speaks of light, splendor, and radiance. Phrases such as “Nations shall walk by your light, / and kings by your shining radiance” and “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” seem to tell what is to come! The excitement in this reading is palpable! Of course, the opening line “Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, / the glory of the Lord shines up on you!” sets the stage for a sigh of relief—the long anticipated help and support the Israelites were longing for had arrived! (Of course, it is clear that they were not expecting this relief to come in the form of a helpless baby!)

The Responsorial Psalm recognizes that this child is for *all* people. It is not accidental that the Christmas story from Luke (heard at Midnight Mass) includes shepherds (those seen at that time as the lowest of the low in society) and the text heard today from Matthew includes kings (those who were recognized as mighty, intelligent, and powerful). God has broken into our world for all people!

► What does it mean to you to realize that God loves (and saves) all people?

The story of salvation that is heard in the First Reading, Responsorial Psalm, and Second Reading reaches its climax with the Gospel account. King Herod inquires about this newborn “King” so many haven spoken of. Herod was worried that this newborn King might usurp his own power. Herod considered himself to be the *only* king of the land; he felt threatened. He orders the three Magi (kings, sages, astrologers) to search for the child. They do as they are instructed and follow the star until they reach the place where the child lay. They present him with special gifts (gifts that foreshadow the death and Resurrection of Christ). When the Magi left the child, they were warned in a dream not to

return to Herod. In order to protect Jesus, the Magi listened to the warning and returned home “by another way.”

These three words are quite important and significant for our own life of faith. Of course, practically, since the Magi would not “turn in” the child to Herod, they needed to protect themselves by avoiding Herod. It was a safety issue both for themselves and the child. But on a deeper level, it can be argued that through their encounter with the Christ Child, they were changed. They were no longer the people they were before. They were different. And so returning home “by another way” points to the fact that their lives, from this point on, would be different as they would share the light of Christ that they themselves encountered. Not only were they concerned for the child’s safety but their very selves were changed! They seem to have experienced a great aha moment.

- ▶ Are you different for having “met” Jesus?
- ▶ What have been your aha moments of faith?

## Wrapping It Up

*Consider these points to conclude the discussion and reflection. Integrate the thoughts and ideas that surfaced during the discussion as well as the “Church Teaching Connection” on page 114.*

**God came for all people, for shepherds and kings.**

**All who encounter Jesus are changed by him.**

**Just as the kings returned “by another way,” we too are called to see things in another light (through the lens of Jesus).**

# Act on the Word

## Be a Light in the World

Ask teens:

- ▶ How does your faith change you into a better person?
- ▶ How are your daily decisions affected by your faith?
- ▶ What would be different if you did not have a relationship with Jesus?
- ▶ If you do not consider yourself as having a relationship with Jesus, what might be different if you were open to one?
- ▶ How can you bring the light of Jesus to others this week?

God revealed himself to the shepherds and the Magi; all of them were changed. But, this revelation was unique since the shepherds and the Magi each had their own experience with God’s revelation.

Ask teens:

- ▶ Is there only one way for you to share the message of Jesus?
- ▶ What is one way you can share that message this week?
- ▶ As a group, create a depiction of groups that are seen as the “Shepherds” and “Kings” of your community (parish, town, state, nation) and brainstorm ways you can actually begin to bridge the gap between the two by sharing resources, volunteering, raising money, and so on.

## Closing Prayer

*Close with the prayer found on page 114.*

## For Next Sunday

*To help teens prepare for next Sunday’s Mass, print, email, or share on a blog or social media the handout found on the next page. The JPG and PDF files are available at [www.ltp.org/lwgr](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends. Remind teens that next Sunday is the last day of Christmas Time.*