

Read

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 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 3, 2021



REFLECTION

What are you drawn to? What grabs your attention? What inspires you to set out and do something? If our answer to these questions is anything other than the light of Jesus Christ, perhaps we need to take some inspiration from the Magi in today's Gospel. The Magi were overjoyed at seeing the star and traveled far to follow the light. Do we do the same when we encounter the light of Christ? Do we drop everything and move toward the light, basking in the glory and warmth of the star? Or do we turn our faces away from the light, possibly afraid of what the light might call us to do or become? The star that led the Magi is the same star that is alive and active today, ready to bring us closer to Christ. Do we dare follow the light?



ACTION

Who are examples of light in your own life? Take some time to write short affirmations, letting them know what they mean to you and how they are an example of light, life, and love. Don't be afraid to share your gratitude!



Watch the movie *Tangled* and pay particular attention to the role of light in the movie. How is this similar to the role of light in today's Gospel, and in your own life?



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ What is a recent epiphany you have experienced?
- ❖ How are you a beacon of Christ's light in a seemingly dark and gloomy world?



January 3, 2021

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

LECTIONARY #20ABC

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 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 celebrates the Epiphany of the Lord. The inclusion of the Magi in this Gospel account shows that God's gift of salvation, Jesus, is for everyone. The Magi were not Jewish and did not have the same longing for the coming of the Messiah that we have heard about over the past several weeks. Nevertheless, they were inspired by God to seek out this new king and honor him. This stands in stark contrast to King Herod's reaction, who wants to get rid of a potential political rival. We have a choice when we encounter Jesus: Do we honor him with the gift of ourselves, or do we reject him?

Q FOCUS: *To follow where God leads us.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

We are still in Christmas Time! We continue to sing Christmas hymns during the liturgy and see white and gold liturgical vestments and decorations. In these last days of Christmas Time, we are called to reflect on the journey of the Magi and consider how we can follow God's inspiration to help others come encounter Jesus.

Church Teaching Connection

"At the same time, the Epiphany shows to us God who in turn is on pilgrimage, a pilgrimage to man. There is not only the pilgrimage of man towards God;

God himself has set out towards us: who is Jesus, in fact, if not God who has, so to speak, come out of himself to meet humanity? It was out of love that he made himself history in our history; out of love that he came to bring us the seed of new life (cf. [John] 3: 3-6) and sow it in the furrows of our earth so that it might sprout, flower and bear fruit" (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, January 6, 2007).

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:

King Herod was interested in eliminating any threat to his power. His interest in the Magi's journey to find the new king of the Jews was purely political. While we do not live in a world where infants are mass murdered because one of them might become a rival leader (which is something Herod does after the Magi leave; see Matthew 2:16–18), we do understand the struggle for political power. People will go to great lengths to discredit others and can be very nasty to one another. It doesn't even have to be at a national or local level; it could be in our class elections or the choosing of a homecoming court. There is something about power and dominance that drives people to act in ways that they normally would not.

► How do you respond when you feel threatened?

► How would the Magi have known to follow the star and what its significance was?

The only account that we have of the Magi is the Gospel passage we hear today. Much of what we know of them comes from tradition and the way the Church has interpreted this passage. The term "magi" refers to learned or wise men. Because of their study of the sky, these men were probably astrologers and realized that a significant event was associated with the star's appearance. They were aware of Jewish prophecies, because they asked King Herod about the new king of the Jews. They were open to God's direction, because they followed the star to find Jesus.

Although King Herod's desire to find Jesus was driven by his fear of losing his power to another person, the Magi were driven by their desire to honor the newborn king. It is likely that the Magi were Gentiles, non-Jewish people who did not share in the Jewish faith. However, their presence in this Gospel passage shows us that God uses many ways to reach out to people and bring them to an encounter with Jesus.

This Gospel account of the Magi's visit to Jesus demonstrates two different reactions. The Magi were open to being guided by the Spirit to encounter Jesus. They approached him humbly, without expectations. They recognized him as a great king. On the other hand, Herod's reaction was defensive and full of fear of losing his power. We also have a choice of how to act when we encounter Jesus in our daily lives.

► What leads you to follow Christ?

The Magi were inspired by their encounter to honor Jesus and give him gifts. These three gifts given by the Magi have traditionally held a prophetic meaning. They tell us something about Jesus' life. Gold is a kingly gift while frankincense is a priestly gift. Myrrh was reserved for burial and used as an ointment on one who would die.

► How do these gifts relate to Jesus' life?

► How might we respond to Jesus in our lives this week?

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 106.

Our faith can lead us to unexpected places if we are paying attention to God's voice.

The gifts we share with the world are the gifts we share with Jesus.

Jesus came to offer salvation to all the world including non-believers, shepherds, kings, and us.

Act on the Word

Epiphany Traditions Around the World

You will need internet access to research different Epiphany traditions.

There are many different Epiphany traditions that take place throughout the world. Divide the young people into small groups and have them research some of these traditions. They may want to look up how different countries celebrate Epiphany or, if they know of a particular tradition, like a three kings' cake, they may want to research the origin of that tradition. Have each group discuss the significance of the tradition and how it relates to the solemnity we celebrate today. Do the symbols of the tradition

have religious significance? How does this tradition help the teens better understand their faith and the role of Epiphany in the Christmas season?

Have the groups share their research with the larger group. Choose one to celebrate as a group. If you can't celebrate it today, plan the celebration for next week, when the Christmas season comes to an end.

Closing Prayer

*O Lord Jesus, Christ Child,
as we celebrate the mystery of your human birth
and witness how you drew to yourself the high
and the low,
the shepherd and the king, the wise and
the unlearned,
we pray that you might draw us also to you
and make us true disciples.
You live and reign with the Father in the unity
of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.*

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. Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.