

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



REFLECTION

Lots of attention is given to how the Magi arrive at the place where they find Jesus. They seek the newborn king of the Jews, despite being “from the east” and therefore not Jewish themselves, but likely worshippers of some other religious variety. When they find him, they offer Jesus their famous gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, which hint at Jesus’ destiny to rule as king of the universe (gold), serve as high priest forever (frankincense), and be anointed for his saving death (myrrh). Their homage is a beautiful testimony that Jesus did not come just for the Jewish people from which he descends, but for all humankind.

But now let us consider how the way the Magi returned home could be more important than how they arrived. They returned home “by another way.” Instead of reporting back to King Herod, whom they clearly respected enough to consult when they arrived, the Magi pay attention to a warning given to them in a dream and go home by a different route. Their encounter with Jesus has transformed them, and though they return home, they will never be the same.

? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Have you ever had an epiphany, one where you recognized Jesus as the one you were looking for all along?
- ❖ How have your encounters with Jesus transformed you?

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 4, 2026



ACTION

Many nativity scenes include figures of the Magi; sometimes these figures are moved closer to the Holy Family as we draw near to today’s feast, to represent their journey from afar. Just as the Magi came from an unexpected location, so too does God’s message of salvation spread to unexpected places. This week, look up images of nativity scenes from around the world. As you reflect on these pictures, consider how they demonstrate the way God’s message is for people of all ages and in all cultures. Our faith is truly catholic (which means “universal”)!



Learn some tips for sharing God’s message of salvation with others: “10 Ways to Evangelize.”
<https://ltp.org/s/evangelize>



January 4, 2026

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

Matthew's Gospel is the only one to introduce the characters of the Magi, or Wise Men, to the infancy narrative. Like Luke's inclusion of the shepherds, though, the inclusion of these "outsider" characters illustrates two important theological points that the Gospel writers wanted to communicate: Jesus came to save all people, and God's plan of salvation looks very different from what the people might have anticipated. Although the Magi were not Jewish, God allowed them to perceive the significance of Jesus' birth. Their witness encourages us to look for God in all circumstances and to trust the path he has given us to follow.

Q FOCUS: *We, like the Magi, are called to search for and give honor to Christ.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Today's solemnity of the Epiphany is traditionally celebrated on January 6, but in the dioceses of the United States, it is always transferred to the Sunday that falls between January 2 and 8. This is why it is celebrated on January 4 this year. On January 5, the Church remembers St. John Neumann, a nineteenth-century immigrant to the United States who was ordained in New York and joined the Redemptorists, a religious order focused on preaching God's Word to the poor. John was eventually

ordained as the bishop of Philadelphia, where he organized the Catholic schools at a diocesan level and ministered to the immigrant communities.

Church Teaching Connection

"From the experience of the Magi, we learn that the first 'place' where he [Jesus] loves to be sought is in *restless questioning*. The exciting adventure of these Wise Men from the East teaches us that faith is not born of our own merits, thoughts and theories. Rather, it is God's gift. His grace helps us to shake off our apathy and opens our minds to ask the important questions in life. Questions that challenge us to leave behind our presumption that everything is fine, questions that open us to what is beyond us. For the Magi, that was the beginning: the restlessness of those willing to ask questions" (Pope Francis, Homily, January 6, 2023).

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 Magi were visitors who came from far away and were inquiring about Jesus, this "newborn king of the Jews." Matthew's description of them reveals to us that they were not Jews, so they were not specifically looking for the Messiah. Their attitude toward this exciting news of a new king being born is contrasted with King Herod's reaction. Rather than celebrate this news, Herod, who ruled over the Jewish people and even asked the priests and scribes for

information about the Messiah ("the Christ"), sees it as a threat to his own power. He ends up killing all the male infants in Bethlehem who are under two years old just to try to get rid of Jesus.

► **How do we react when other people have good news? Do we celebrate with them or do our egos sometimes get in the way?**

The Magi not only traveled a great distance to find this newborn king, but they also did so with great joy and expectation. They brought precious gifts to the child. Even without believing in God's promise of the Messiah, once they encountered him, they recognized Christ's greatness: Matthew says they "prostrated themselves and did him homage." After they had visited the infant Jesus, Matthew notes that they did not go back to Herod but went home "by another way." This can be understood literally in that they used a different route to avoid Herod, but it can also be understood on a deeper, more spiritual level, alluding to the idea that they were transformed by their encounter with Christ.

► **Why do you think the Magi were so joyful and willing to share what they brought with Jesus? Do we share our joy in tangible ways with others? How? When?**

► **In what ways do we go forth "by another way" after encountering Jesus? What does that look like in our daily lives?**

The Magi are important characters in the story of Christ's nativity. They represent a group that people would not have expected to be included in God's plan of salvation. Although Luke doesn't include the Magi in his nativity story, he too includes a group of people that would not have typically been associated with God's revelation: the shepherds. With the inclusion of the Magi, Matthew shows that Jesus came for all people, not just those who were part of the Jewish tradition. With the inclusion of the shepherds, Luke shows that Jesus came to be the savior of everyone, embracing the lowliest and the poor. The Magi and shepherds represent all of us. Jesus meets us where we are, accepts and loves us, and transforms us by our encounter with him.

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 110.

The Magi remind us to continue seeking God at all times and to give him honor through our worship.

God's offer of salvation is made to all people.

Encountering Christ transforms us.

Act on the Word

Modern Day Nativity Scenes

For this activity, you will need laptops/tablets or sheets of poster board, colored pencils or markers, scissors, glue, and magazines that can be cut.

Remind the teens that in today's reflection on the Gospel, we saw how Matthew and Luke use the figures of the Magi and the shepherds to represent the fact that the salvation Jesus offers is offered to all people, rich or poor, religious or not. The Magi, coming from a people who did not know about God and the anticipated Messiah, represent people of different races and backgrounds coming to recognize Jesus. The Magi and the shepherds are characters that are typically included in nativity scenes, showing their significance in the announcement of the Good News of Christ's incarnation.

Lead the young people in a brief discussion about who they would include in their nativity scenes today. Who do they see in the world as people who have received the Good News? Who has brought the Good News to others? Who still needs to hear God's message of salvation?

After the discussion, have teens create modern day nativity scenes. They should include the essential characters of a nativity scene: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. They should also include other figures who

are typically found in nativity scenes (like Magi and shepherds) but using modern people. For the modern Magi, the teens should also depict what types of gifts would be brought to honor the newborn Christ. The young people can also include additional figures that might not have a scriptural parallel, but that they think would represent the universality of the message of salvation.

The teens can work individually or in small groups. The nativity scenes can be created digitally, using laptops or tablets and a drawing or graphic design app. They can search online for public domain images, draw their own, or use a combination of these things. Alternatively, the nativity scenes can be created using posterboard, colored pencils or markers, and images cut out from magazines. When teens are finished, have them share their nativity scenes with the large group and describe the choices they made in creating them.

Closing Prayer

*We give you honor, O Lord,
for you are the ruler of all creation
and the shepherd of every soul.
May our gratitude for the gifts
that you bestow upon us in this life
be proclaimed to the nations,
and bring everlasting joy in
your presence.
Through Christ our Lord.
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.