

# 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 5, 2020



## REFLECTION

God's love transcends divisions and distinctions, but too often we are ready and willing to create a sense of "other." She looks different than I do. She is "other." His beliefs are different from mine. He is "other." We show the partiality that God does not, often without being aware of it. Distinctions, separations, walls based on fear and prejudice and misunderstanding all keep us from the oneness to which we are called. And as Christians we must have a keen awareness of what and who we are called to be.

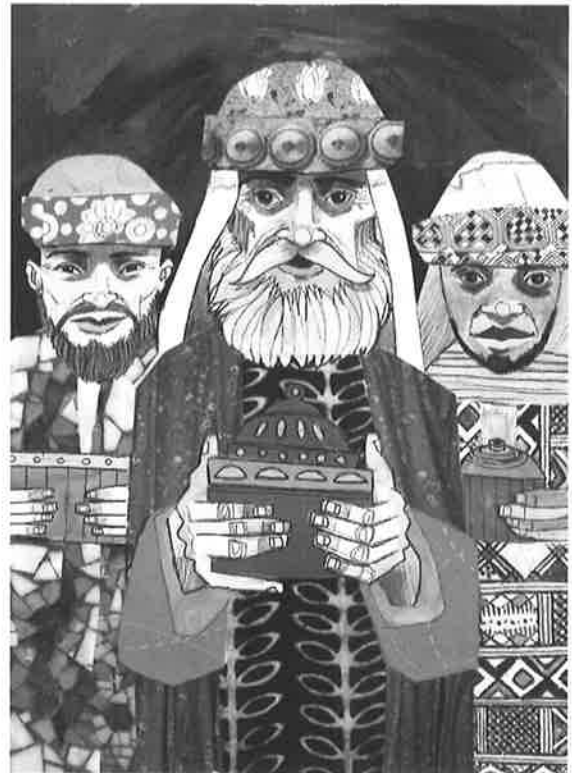
Part of knowing what and who we are called to be requires the ability to acknowledge, name, and claim our gifts and talents. Perhaps we do not want to sound self-centered or arrogant, but it is easy to downplay our abilities. However, we are called to do the exact opposite. We must reflect on our passions and interests, just as we must recognize the gifts and talents God has blessed us with. This is how we grow in our understanding of vocation.

Too often we think of vocation as a call to priesthood, religious life, married life, or the single life. While these are examples of vocations, the term vocation means much more. Simply put, one's vocation is how one uses his or her gifts to serve God and the world. We must ask ourselves, then, "What are my gifts?" and "How can I use my gifts to serve God and others?"



## ACTION

The Magi in today's Gospel present Jesus with gifts. When we truly live our vocation, we too, present Jesus with gifts. Take some time to make a list of your gifts and talents. What are you good at? What do you like doing? What makes you happy? Be proud of your gifts, and do not be afraid to be honest with yourself. As you progress through the year, continue to add gifts to your list. Take time to read your list, thank God for your gifts, and consider how you can use your gifts to make a difference in the world.



## ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Is it difficult for you to name your gifts and talents? How about naming the gifts and talents in other people? Why do you think this is the case?
- ❖ What can you do TODAY to use your gifts and talents in service of God and others?



January 5, 2020

## SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

### LECTIONARY #20ABC

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

The story of the Magi teaches us about the universality of God's love and Jesus' mission. Because they were not of Jewish descent, the Magi represent the gentile world coming to seek Jesus. In this story, we learn about the importance of seeking the Lord as well as the greatness and universality of his love for his sons and daughters.

**Q FOCUS:** *Christ, the savior of humankind, is sent so that all may believe in him.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Using the liturgical calendar, note the timing of Epiphany within Christmas Time. Discuss the feasts and solemnities that occur on the other Sundays during Christmas Time and observe the saints' days that fall near Epiphany.

### Church Teaching Connection

"The magi's coming to Jerusalem in order to pay homage to the king of the Jews shows that they seek Israel, in the messianic light of the Star of David, the one who will be king of the nations. Their coming means that pagans can discover Jesus and worship him as Son of God and Savior of the world only by turning toward the Jews . . ." (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 528; referencing Matthew 2:2, Numbers 24:17-19, Revelation 22:16, John 4:22, and Matthew 2:4-6).

## 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:*

Matthew's account of the Gospel is the only one of the four evangelist's accounts to tell the story of the Magi. In Matthew's account, we find the Holy Family, humbly lodging in Bethlehem. Jesus, who would have looked like any other baby boy in Bethlehem, and his humble parents, would have seemed like every other family in the town. So typical was this little family, anyone who witnessed them would not have immediately guessed how unique and special they were! The Magi, however, had not yet met Jesus but knew already that he would become a man who would change the world. The Magi sought the child Jesus, traveling very far (their travels began in the East). These men were star readers, and had ascertained through the heavens

that new king was to be born. The Magi were not Jewish, so their tradition did not include the prophetic writings that prepared the Jewish people for a Messiah.

When the Magi, traditionally known as Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar, inquired about a king being born in Judah, the local people told them about the prophecy and the three made their way to Jesus, who was in Bethlehem. The men were called to seek Jesus, and they heeded the call. They spent their time on a journey that may have, to some, appeared foolish or even outlandish. Still, the Magi sought Jesus, and when they found him, paid homage to him.

► **Can you imagine looking for a newly born king, and discover that he is humble and poor?**

What a message of God's great love for the poor our Lord's humble life gave!

In many ways, the Magi represent all of us gathered here today. Jesus was born from the chosen people, the ancient Jews. He was promised to them, and the people waited for him for centuries. All people, not just the Jewish people, needed to be saved from their sins. Although Jesus came through the line of David and was promised to the Jewish people, the presence of the Magi illustrates the universality of Jesus' mission on earth. Jesus came for all people, and God desires for all people to come to him. Through this story, Matthew's account of the Gospel makes clear that all people, not just the Jewish people, are called to Jesus. In this story, we learn about the vastness of God's incalculable love for us. This love is not confined to one person, or one group of people; this love is for all of human creation.

As we know, the Magi sought Christ. They traveled many miles, and they didn't lose sight of their journey—they were looking for the new king. Like the Magi we too are called to seek Christ. Although we will likely not use camels and travel across great expanses to search for him, we are called to seek him.

► **How is it that we seek Christ today?**

We can seek him in his Word—for when his Word is proclaimed, he is present. We can seek him in the Eucharist—participating at Mass and receiving Holy Communion. We can seek Christ by living in

the way he taught us to live, and searching out those who he taught us to serve. We can seek Christ in each other, because all peoples are created in the image and likeness of God and Christ dwells within them. We can seek Christ in solitude, in quiet prayer.

## 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.*

**How do you seek Christ? Is it ever difficult to seek him, and how do you address such challenges?**

**Where do you mostly clearly feel God's presence, and how do you respond to God's presence?**

**Sometimes, despite seeking the Lord, we may feel empty or that God is not present. Does not feeling God's presence mean he is not there?**

**How do you respond to feelings of spiritual emptiness?**

## Act on the Word

### The Wise Seek the Lord

Divided into small groups, ask the young people to form lists of people they know who seek Christ in their lives. Ask them to specifically detail how they see these individuals seek our Lord. Specifically have the students answer a few questions about these people and how their seeking God affects them.

- ▶ How does seeking Christ affect the way a person interacts with others?
- ▶ How does seeking Christ affect the way a person cares for others?
- ▶ How does seeking Christ affect the choices they make in life?

Ask each student to think of a saint that he or she greatly admires, and ask the same questions.

## Teens Seeking Jesus—a Unique Time of Life

In the same small groups, facilitate discussion about what it means to seek Jesus. Some topics to include are the following:

- ✧ What it means to seek Christ.
- ✧ How we seek Christ in prayer and in action.
- ✧ How it feels to seek Christ.
- ✧ What happens when we feel alone as we seek Christ.
- ✧ What happens when our seeking Christ brings us to unpopular beliefs or decisions.
- ✧ How seeking Christ changes as young people mature.

## Closing Prayer

*Lord Jesus Christ,  
Light of the Nations, shine on us!  
May your light shine in our words and actions,  
that others may be drawn to you and acknowledge  
you as Lord.  
You live and reign 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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*