

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

What is an epiphany? The Greek roots of the word mean something like “shining forth.” This feast celebrates the “shining forth” or revelation of Christ’s coming to the entire world (as represented by the Magi). The Magi were Persian astrologers and royal advisors who believed they could find insight and wisdom into the designs of the universe by studying the patterns in the created world.

The Magi were prepared by signs and study, but the last step to faith takes something more. Despite his apparent belief that the prophecies referred to an actual messiah, Herod still could not see past his own worldly ambition and expectations. As seekers, the Magi were attentive to God’s prompting, wherever it might lead. To be a seeker is to cede control of the timing and destination of your journey to God. The journey begins when God has prepared it—but the Magi were chosen because they were open and ready. Are we?

QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today’s readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ The Magi studied and prepared for years before encountering Christ. How can you prepare to recognize God’s work in your life?
- ❖ What do we do when God doesn’t show himself the way we expect?

LIVING THE WORD

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 8, 2023

ACTION

St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta described her vocation as truly seeking and seeing God in all people, at all times, and in all places. Her seeking led her to serve sick and dying homeless people, finding Christ by serving the poor directly, person to person. Ask Jesus to open your eyes to see and serve him this week through those in need in your community. Participate in a parish outreach program or sit with a lonely classmate, and be ready to see Christ “shine forth” in every interaction.

Check out this brief biography of Mother Teresa:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEZGjL1akt0>





January 8, 2023

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

The liturgical season of Christmas Time ends with today's solemnity of the Epiphany. "Solemnity" means a celebration of highest importance and "epiphany" comes from a Greek word meaning divine manifestation or revelation. Today we celebrate how the fullness of God's revelation came in the person of Jesus Christ for the whole world. Today's Gospel, found only in Matthew's account of the nativity, highlights this incredible revelation through the visit of the Magi. As outsiders to the faith, the Magi are Gentiles, and therein, represent the whole of the non-Jewish world. That the fullness of God's revelation happened with such an unlikely group highlights that the savior of the world comes not just for believers, but for all who seek with a sincere heart.

Q FOCUS: *God is the light of the world, found by all who seek him with a sincere heart.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

Epiphany marks the end of the liturgical season of Christmas Time. On Monday (January 9), we will celebrate the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. This marks both the beginning of the public life and ministry of Jesus in the Gospels and the beginning of Ordinary Time in the Church's liturgical year. The word "ordinary" is derived from the Latin *ordinalis*,

which means "numbered in order." In other words, each Sunday in Ordinary Time is literally numbered, in order. The colors of vestments change to green, a color that symbolizes growth, as we explore the life, ministry, and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Church Teaching Connection

"God is light and he can be found also by those who seek him with a sincere heart. An image of this seeking can be seen in the Magi, who were led to Bethlehem by the star (cf. Mt 2:1-12). For them God's light appeared as a journey to be undertaken, a star which led them on a path of discovery. The star is a sign of God's patience with our eyes which need to grow accustomed to his brightness. . . . Anyone who sets off on the path of doing good to others is already drawing near to God, is already sustained by his help, for it is characteristic of the divine light to brighten our eyes whenever we walk towards the fullness of love" (*Lumen fidei*, 35).

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:

► What do you think people mean when they say they had "an epiphany"?

In common usage, "an epiphany" refers to a sudden insight or intuitively understanding something's meaning. The earliest understanding of the word, however, was specifically linked to the divine—a

manifestation or appearance of the glory of God, where divine truth is revealed. In the story of the Magi, clearly the birth of Jesus Christ is that manifestation of the glory of God.

► What are some other events in the Gospels (or in the Old Testament) where humankind witnesses a manifestation of the glory of God?

In today's Gospel, we follow the Magi, foreigners, nonbelievers, and outsiders to the faith, who have been given a sign in the form of a rising star.

Think about the times in your life when you have looked for a sign, or perhaps even asked God for a sign to help guide you.

The interesting thing about signs is that you have to be both open to seeing them and willing to follow them. Otherwise, it's pretty easy to ignore or dismiss them as a random coincidence.

► What has been your own experience with signs? Why do you think people ignore or dismiss them?

The Magi know this isn't just any star; there is something significant that draws them toward it. They must have done their research, because even as non-Israelites, they somehow know enough to ask specific questions.

► If the chief priests and scribes knew Scripture enough to precisely identify the right answer, why do you think they didn't respond to this same sign? What might they be seeking?

As outsiders to the faith, the Magi would be considered the people least likely to seek and find the promised messiah, yet there they are. The experts, on the other hand, seem to be so content in their knowledge and positions of power that they have forgotten the purpose of their faith and religious practices: to be in relationship with God.

► Can you identify some characters in the Gospels who, like Mary and Joseph, both practice their faith and live out their relationship with God?

► Who do you know in real life that models lived faith?

The Magi are willing to be guided by the light. Throughout Scripture, light has been a metaphor for the presence of divine goodness and truth. Today we celebrate that God comes to all who seek him

with a sincere heart. We see that sincerity in the Magi's response of overwhelming joy, respect, and generosity.

► **What does it mean to seek Christ today?**

In what ways do you seek Christ?

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 102.

Like the Magi, be willing to be guided by the light.

Like the Magi, seek the light with a sincere heart.

Like the Magi, respond to God with joy, respect, and generosity.

Act on the Word

Guiding Light

For this activity, you will need to make copies of a large outline of a star, reminiscent of the one which guided the Magi, along with something to write with for each participant. If possible, also distribute colored pencils or crayons so that those who benefit from creative reflection can more fully enter the experience.

Invite the teens to contemplate who or what guides them. As people of faith, we obviously hope that the light of God is what guides us. However, like the scribes and chief priests, sometimes we know what the answer is, but we don't seek the goodness and truth of God with a sincere heart. Worse, like King Herod who was guided by the desire for power and fear, sometimes what we find ourselves prioritizing falls outside of the light, in the darkness.

Draw everyone's attention to the copy of the star in front of them. Inside the star, the teens should write down any people, places, or things that help guide them toward the goodness and truth of God. Outside the star, make note of those people, places, or things that pull them into darkness.

Have the teens spread out and complete this while playing some meditative music. If they need

help getting started, provide some of the following reflection questions:

- ✧ What guides your decision making in school, in academics, in activities or interactions with peers or adults?
- ✧ What priorities influence whom you are friends with and why?
- ✧ What guides your actions or attitudes with family members at home?
- ✧ What priorities influence what you wear and how you spend your money?
- ✧ What guides how you choose to spend your free time?

After some time has passed, have the teens look at those things that pull them into the darkness. Draw an arrow from each of those things to the light. Along each arrow, have them compose their own informal prayers to God asking for whatever grace is needed to bring that area into the light. As time permits, invite the young people to share their thoughts and insights on this reflection.

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
today you are revealed as the Light of
the world
and the savior of all humankind.
May your light, passed on to us on the
day of our baptism,
continue to shine brightly so that,
seeing the good we do in your name,
people will give praise to the Father,
for you live and reign with God the Father
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
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.