

# 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 2, 2022



## REFLECTION

How often do you gaze at the stars? These big balls of gas sit light-years away from earth. On clear nights, we can look up at the sky and see stars for miles. Scientists estimate there are some 300 billion stars in the Milky Way galaxy alone.

Especially before GPS devices, people counted on stars to point them in the right direction. Stars also offer a sense of centeredness. Looking up at the night sky prompts big questions: Where am I in relationship to this gigantic universe? What is my role? To whom do I belong? The Magi in today's Gospel may have asked similar questions as they followed the star to the child, Jesus. They could not have known how this young babe would change the course of human history. All they knew was the deep joy that radiated through their beings when they saw the star light up.

Together with the whole of creation, the Magi rejoiced at the birth of a king—the king. The king to whom we all belong, the one who gives our lives meaning and purpose, the one who orders our days and blesses our years. Let us search for him as the Magi did, and follow him wholeheartedly.



## ACTION

Bundle up if need be and lay out under the stars for a bit tonight. What better way to celebrate the Epiphany than to see what the Magi saw: a night full of stars, light amidst the darkness? The natural world has so much to teach us about God. Spend time tonight looking for the constellations. Can you find the Big Dipper or Orion?



Check out this short video, "A Hundred Million Stars in Three Minutes," a close-up view of a small part of the Andromeda galaxy.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4VX6Nh6YLYk>

## ? QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ We are all on a journey, like the Magi were many years ago. What journey are you on right now?
- ❖ Where is God at work in your journey?



January 2, 2022

# 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 story of the Magi is an important part of the Christmas season. It is more than just their popularity in the retelling of the Christmas story, their appearance in crèche scenes, and songs that describe their journey. The inclusion of the Magi in the story of Christ's birth demonstrates how Jesus came for all people, not just for his own people. The Magi were not from Bethlehem or even from the Holy Land. They were not Jewish. The Magi were from the east, and they traveled a great distance to meet the holy child. The journey of the Magi also remind us that we too should seek Jesus.

**Q FOCUS:** *We are called to seek Jesus.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

This week the Church remembers St. Elizabeth Ann Seton on January 4. She is an American saint who died in 1821. Convert, mother, teacher, woman religious, and order founder, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton lived an extraordinary life of faith and charity. She cared for children and famously provided them with solid educations. St. André Bessette, who is remembered on January 6, lived through a great deal of rejection in his life, but persevered in his faith and maintained tremendous devotion to St. Joseph. Like St. André Bessette, we too are called to keep our eyes

on what really matters: a faithful life dedicated to Jesus and his teachings.

### Church Teaching Connection

The role of the Magi, as people who honored and paid homage to the Christ child even though they were not of the Jewish religion, reminds us that God's salvation is offered to all people. This wide-reaching offer of salvation is grounded in our belief that all people were created in the image and likeness of God. We are called to treat others with the dignity they deserve as human persons. The Church teaches that "[w]e cannot truly pray to God the Father of all if we treat any people as other than sisters and brothers, for all are created in God's image. People's relation to God the Father and their relation to other women and men are so dependent on each other that the Scripture says 'they who do not love, do not know God' (1 Jn 4:8)" (*Nostra aetate*, 5).

## 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:*

In the story of the Magi, we see several themes emerge about Jesus, the political world into which he was born, and the place of Gentiles (a term used in by the Jews to describe non-Jewish peoples) in God’s family. As the Gospel opens we hear about Magi from the east. These Gentiles were likely from Persia, and they had ascertained from astrological studies that a new king—the King of the Jews—had

been born, and they wished to honor him. Herod, the king of Judea, did not want any competition for his crown, so he attempted to discover the whereabouts of this new king. Herod’s actions seem to echo those of Pharaoh in the Old Testament, who ordered the death of all male infants born to the Israelites, because he did not want the Israelites to grow in number and eventually oppose him (see Exodus 1). Like Pharaoh, Herod desired to protect what he believed was his own; Pharaoh wished to keep the Hebrew slaves, and Herod wished to keep himself king. Both of these brutal men stopped at nothing to maintain power and control over others.

► **What does our faith teach us about power and control? What do we know about the gift of free will?**

Jesus’ kingship was a different sort than the politically driven ones of Herod and Pharaoh. Nevertheless, even creation proclaimed the great event, with the Magi noticing the difference in the stars and seeking the new king. They traveled a long distance to honor him, though they didn’t know him, and they did not embrace the faith into which Jesus was born. The fact that the Magi weren’t Jewish but they sought Jesus and came to honor him is prominent aspect of this story.

The story of the Magi helps us to learn more about particular aspects of our faith. First, although Jesus was born into Judaism, his incarnation (and the salvation he offers) is for all people, not just for the Jewish people. The Gentiles, or non-Jewish people, have the chance to become a part of God’s chosen people. Secondly, the actions of the Magi remind us that even if we feel far away from God, or that we are not part of God’s family, we should seek Jesus. We are called to seek Jesus in all things, and in all aspects of our lives.

► **How do we seek the Lord in our daily lives?**

Even though the magi had no religious obligation or devotion to Jesus, they paid attention to the warnings given to them in a dream to not go back and tell Herod the information he wanted to know. By doing this, they worked to protect Jesus and his family from the death that Herod had planned for all the male babies and toddlers of the region. Even though they were Gentiles, the Magi had an important role

in the beginning of Jesus' life. God can use any person to help accomplish his acts of love and mercy. We just have to be open to listening to him and putting his desires ahead of our own.

## 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.*

**The Magi were Gentiles who came from far away.**

**Jesus was known to those from another faith outside his own land.**

**We are called to be like the Magi and seek Jesus.**

## Act on the Word

### Protecting Life by Seeing Jesus in Others

*For this activity, you will need paper, pens, a list of saints who are pro-life (see suggestions in the activity below), and material on the lives of the saints or internet access.*

The Magi sought a newborn King of the Jews, and upon finding him they were met with an ordinary looking family consisting of a mother, father, and baby boy. They had no halos, and no riches that identified the awesome identity of the young boy or the specialness of his holy parents. The Magi saw the extraordinary in what appeared to be very ordinary. In their defiance of Herod, the Magi decided to protect the young Jesus and his parents; in this way, the Magi showed tremendous respect for the lives of others.

This activity will help us take a closer look at how we foster a pro-life culture. What does it mean to be a pro-life people? Why does being pro-life matter? What saints have taken pro-life stances? In the world today we hear, see, and witness a culture that can at times be hostile to life. Certainly elective abortion is the most familiar topic; it is something we hear about at Mass, in school, and in politics. Other life topics exist in our society too though—how do we treat teen mothers and single mothers? Moreover, how do we

support them? How are the disabled treated in our communities, and how are the lives of the elderly given due respect? How do we see Jesus in the lives of these particular groups? The question we ask today is this: what does it mean to respect life?

Divide the young people into small groups. Have each group choose a pro-life saint, individual, or group to research. Some of these figures include St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Mother Teresa, monasteries that raised and educated orphaned or abandoned children throughout the Church's history, St. Gianna, Dorothy Day, and the Blessed Virgin Mary. Using the internet or materials you prepared ahead of time, have the small groups research their chosen figure. Each group should discuss how this person or organization is seeking Jesus in their ministry. How is their service to a particular demographic an expression of their faith? In what concrete ways have they shown respect and care for human life? How did they honor the lives of those who could not advocate for themselves? What are ways the teens can apply these practices in their own life? After giving the small groups time to learn about their chosen figure, have them share with the larger group what they learned.

## Closing Prayer

*Creator of the stars of night,  
whom all the children of Abraham worship,  
open our eyes to your presence where we  
least expect to find you.*

*Help us to look up to your heavens and out  
to creation,*

*so that Christ can shepherd and lead  
all peoples to you.*

*We ask this 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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*