

Read

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72:1-2, 7-8,
10-11, 12-13

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12



REFLECTION

The mysterious Magi are featured in today's Gospel, wise men who traveled from afar to find the baby Jesus. They wanted to honor the prophesied new king—who turned out to be a poor child in a stable! In contrast, King Herod saw this lowly infant as a threat to his own power.

This passage invites us to reflect on the difference between spiritual and earthly power. It reminds us that true power lies not in the ability to accumulate wealth or control others but in the ability to transform lives and inspire others. As Christians, we are called to follow in Jesus' footsteps and to use our spiritual gifts and talents to seek wisdom and serve others. We are called to reject the temptation to seek and cling to earthly power and instead focus on cultivating spiritual strength through prayer, worship, and service.

The Magi were some of the earliest people to seek Jesus, but King Herod tried to use them to protect his own power. Fortunately, the Magi listened to their dream and left without reporting back to Herod. May we, too, trust in the messages God sends us so that we might follow his will more closely.



QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ How are the Magi serving God, even if they aren't part of the Jewish faith and don't necessarily believe in God?
- ❖ King Herod felt threatened by the news of Jesus' birth. In what ways might Jesus' message feel threatening to those in power today?

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 5, 2025



ACTION

What voices are you listening to? Take some time to evaluate the social media content you consume. Do the accounts you follow promote consumerism, envy, and outrage? Or do they inspire you to fearless service and spiritual growth? Consider replacing divisive or manipulative content with accounts that fill your feed with messages of hope, love, and faith!



"Gotta Serve Somebody"—Bob Dylan

<https://youtu.be/wC10VWDTzmU>



January 5, 2025

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 feast of Epiphany is one of the oldest feasts of Christianity. Its origins can be found as early as the third century. For most of antiquity, including Jesus' time, stars were studied because they were believed to guide one's path. The Magi in today's Gospel saw the star in the sky and began a physical and spiritual journey to find Jesus. The Magi were not from Judea (where Bethlehem and Jerusalem are), nor were they Jews. Rather, they were most likely foreigners from the East, probably Persia, which is modern day Iran. The journey of the Magi reminds us that Jesus did not just come for the Jewish people, but for all people. Jesus is the light of the world, and his love extends to all people.

Q FOCUS: *Jesus came for all people of the world.*

Liturgical Calendar Connection

January 6 is the feast day of St. André Bessette (1845-1937). He was born in Quebec, Canada. He joined the Congregation of the Holy Cross but was asked to leave because of his bad health. A bishop convinced the community to let André stay. He was given the task of porter, or doorkeeper, of the College of Notre Dame in Québec, where he remained for forty years. Many people throughout the years claimed his prayers cured them from their

illnesses, but André refused to take credit, insisting that the healing was all from St. Joseph. His devotion to St. Joseph led him to help build a chapel, and then a church in St. Joseph's honor. St. Joseph's Oratory remains one of the biggest shrines to St. Joseph in the world. St. André's life reminds us that even though we are weak, with Christ we are strong and can do great things.

Church Teaching Connection

"The Magi mentioned in the Gospel of Matthew are a living witness to the fact that the seeds of truth are present everywhere, for they are the gift of the Creator, who calls all people to acknowledge him as good and faithful Father. The Magi represent the men and women throughout the world who are welcomed into the house of God. Before Jesus, all divisions of race, language and culture disappear: in that Child, all humanity discovers its unity" (Pope Francis, Homily, January 6, 2016).

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 from today's Gospel were most likely ancient astrologers who looked for guidance among the stars and interpreted dreams. They were not Jews but were Gentiles (non-Jews) from the east. By studying the stars, they came to the conclusion that a new king had been born and they wished to pay him homage. To give homage is to publicly

acknowledge and give honor to someone. Homage is usually given to people of note, like royalty or those who have done great things.

When King Herod heard about the Magi's quest, he sought to determine where this new king was. Herod learned from the Jewish religious leaders that the new king would be born in Bethlehem, as was written in the book of Micah, the prophet (as well as in the writings of other Old Testament prophets). Known for being violent and vindictive, Herod wanted to find the new king to destroy his competition for the throne and hold onto power.

► **What kind of king was Jesus? How are his actions different from King Herod, or other kings or leaders of the world?**

When the Magi followed the star to its resting place, they found Jesus and they bowed down to him and paid him homage. They gave him regal, expensive gifts worthy of a great king. A theological interpretation of their gifts shows us that gold represented Christ's royalty, the incense represented his divinity, and myrrh alluded to the suffering of Christ. The Magi left the Holy Family but did not return to tell Herod about their visit with Jesus. Even though they were not Jewish, and we don't know about their faith in God, the actions of the Magi demonstrate the way God can lead them along the right paths and use them as instruments for the good of others.

► **What gifts do you have to offer Jesus? How do you worship him?**

The name for this feast, Epiphany, comes from the Greek word meaning appearance or manifestation. Today we celebrate the manifestation or revelation of Jesus to the world. The promise God made to the Israelites about the Messiah has been fulfilled in the lowly birth of Jesus in the manger. Jesus is made known to all people around the world, to people of all faiths, not just to the Jews. The Magi were strangers from a different culture and religion that journeyed to Jesus. Through their witness, we learn that Jesus' kingdom goes beyond the people of Israel and welcomes all people.

In our own search for Jesus, we must look to Jesus' life for guidance and honor him with the greatest gift—the gift of ourselves. When we give ourselves to Jesus, we do him homage by putting our

faith and trust in him and following his Word. In doing so, we help to bring about the kingdom of God on earth.

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 114.

Jesus came for all people.

We are called to search for Jesus in our daily lives.

We have many gifts to offer Jesus but the greatest is the gift of ourselves.

Act on the Word

Follow That Star

For this activity, you will need paper, whiteboard or butcher paper, writing utensils, and enough copies of St. Anselm's prayer for each teen (the prayer can be found at this address: <https://ltp.org/s/anselm-prayer>).

As a large group, discuss goals and resolutions with the teens. Who has made a New Year's resolution before? Were they successful, or not? Why is it important to have goals?

After you have discussed these questions for a few minutes, make five columns on the board using the following headings: 1 YEAR, 5 YEARS, 10 YEARS, 25 YEARS, and 50 YEARS. Give the young people sheets of paper and explain to them that you want them to make the same chart on their paper and fill it in. Give them some time to list their goals for the above time increments. They will write their goals or resolutions for the next year under the first column, their goals for the next five years under the next, and so on. Even though the teens might not have any idea what they will be doing in ten or more years, encourage them to consider what type of person they want to be at that time: Someone who is involved in the parish? Someone who helps the

community? Someone who others turn to for advice? And so on.

Once the teens have had time to complete their charts, gather as a group and talk about their goals. Write a few of them on the board under each column. Then talk about their faith journey. Just like the Magi in the Gospel reading, they might not know exactly where they are going, but they will get there if they continue to follow the light of Christ throughout their lives. Some of their goals and resolutions may help them on their spiritual journey, some may not. Ask them to take a few moments to think and write down some of their faith journey goals. Once they are done, discuss as a group what some of their faith goals are and how those goals can lead them to Jesus. Also, have them consider what roadblocks or distractions they might encounter on their journey. How can they stay on track in their spiritual journey?

Once your discussion is complete, give each person a copy of St. Anselm's prayer and pray it together. Encourage them to pray this prayer throughout the year as they work toward their goals.

Closing Prayer

*Led by the light of a star, Lord God,
you guided the Magi to see your Son
and present him with their precious gifts.*

*Help us trust your path for us
so that we may always share the gifts
you have given us
for the betterment of the world.*

*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.