

# 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

Have you ever looked up at the stars on a clear night? There is something special about the natural beauty of the earth. Like standing at the edge of the ocean or being at the top of a high peak and looking down on an incredible view, the beauty of this world speaks to us.

The Magi, followers of a different religion, spent their time observing nature. In an unexpected turn of events, what they saw, a star unlike any other in the sky, brought them to Jesus. As the Magi followed the star, we too can discover God in the creation that is his.

King Herod, upon hearing about this, had a completely different reaction. He chose to reject the message of grace that nature proclaimed. Though he saw the truth of what the Magi revealed, he did not want to follow it. He did not follow and worship.

Sometimes we can be like Herod. While the created world points us to God, like a beautiful cathedral drawing our eyes upwards to heaven, we still must choose to follow and worship. That choice is ours alone. Will we be like the Magi, who come and worship Jesus, or will we be like Herod, rejecting God's beautiful invitation? The choice is ours.



## QUESTIONS

- ❖ What do today's readings teach you about the Christian life?
- ❖ Where do you most notice God's presence in your life?
- ❖ What does creation teach you about the Creator?

# LIVING THE WORD

## Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 7, 2024



## ACTION

The created world is full of beauty. Take an intentional walk in nature. Notice the beauty around you. Note what you experience through your senses. What do you see, hear, smell, feel, or taste? Try to feel the ground beneath your feet and the air surrounding you. What does creation tell you about the Creator? Give thanks to God for this time outside.



*Take a moment to appreciate the beauty and vastness of God's creation in this short film. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGBQazOQfoE>*





January 7, 2024

# 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

Today's reading tells us the story of the Magi, who came from the east to bring gifts to the newborn king of the Jews. The Gospel reading gives us a juxtaposition in reactions to the news of this king (Jesus). The Magi, who are not Jews, give Jesus homage. Herod, who is a Jew, does not give honor to Jesus, but seeks to destroy him. Herod was currently ruling as king with permission from the Romans, who were the ruling force in Jerusalem. He did not want to give up this position. Although the Jewish religious leaders of the time could point to the prophesy of the coming king, we do not hear of them seeking him out in this account. We are asked to consider how we react when we encounter Christ's presence.

**Q FOCUS:** *God reveals himself to the world and invites us to encounter him daily.*

### Liturgical Calendar Connection

Even though we are a week into January, it is important to remember that Christmas Time lasts longer than just Christmas day or the few days after it. Today's Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord is the last Sunday of the Christmas season for this year. The feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which will be celebrated tomorrow, officially concludes the Church's season of Christmas Time. The various feasts and solemnities throughout Christmas Time have helped us to understand the great significance

of God becoming human, in the incarnation of Christ. As we have seen throughout the readings during this time, Jesus' humble beginnings in a manger in a small town cannot conceal his divinity and power to save.

### Church Teaching Connection

"For the Church which believes and prays, the Wise Men from the East . . . are only the beginning of a great procession which winds throughout history. . . . If we consider the fact that from the very beginning men and women of every place, of every continent, of all the different cultures, mentalities and lifestyles, have been on the way to Christ, then we can truly say that this pilgrimage and this encounter with God in the form of a Child is an epiphany of God's goodness and loving kindness for humanity (cf. [Titus] 3:4)" (Pope Benedict XVI, Homily, January 6, 2013).

## 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 does "epiphany" mean?

This word comes from a Greek word that means "manifestation" or "revelation." You might have heard it in the context of figuring something out: "I've had an epiphany!" In the context of today's celebration, it refers to the revelation of Jesus to the world. It is not a story of the Holy Family traveling and meeting

new people, but of people from far away traveling to see Jesus.

We know the Magi came from the east, but we don't know much more than that. Their tracking of the star leads us to believe they might have been some type of astrologers. It was common in that time for learned people to track the stars, which they believed signified important events, like the birth of a king. The important takeaway from their origin is that they were not Jews. They were not part of the people of Israel who professed a belief in God's promise for a messiah. They came because they saw the star and believed it would lead them to the new king of the Jews (though this doesn't mean they believed him to be the promised messiah). They were searching, and they found the Son of God.

► What was the reaction of the Magi to finding Jesus? How do you think Mary and Joseph reacted to their appearance?

In contrast to the Magi who were seeking this newborn king, and who gave him homage when they found him, Herod and the religious leaders of Jerusalem didn't go searching for this king even though it had been prophesied in their religion. Herod's request to the Magi might appear that he also wanted to worship the newborn king, but we learn later that he only wished to destroy the child, who could potentially be his political rival.

The reaction of the Magi and that of Herod are very different when the news of Jesus' birth is revealed to them. The Magi, who have no affiliation with the Jewish tradition, give honor to Christ, even if they didn't know exactly who he was. Perhaps later in life they come to believe. Herod, a Jew, was only concerned with his own interests of power. Sometimes, when Christ's presence is revealed in our lives, we don't always react with faith or recognize it as an encounter with God. But, we can learn from the Magi; we should always be open to seeking and following where God leads us.



## 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 were foreigners, but they still honored the newborn king.**

**We don't always recognize God's presence when we encounter him.**

**As Christians, we are called to follow where God leads us and act in faith.**

## Act on the Word

### Gifts for the Infant

*For this activity, you will need paper and pens.*

Share with the teens how in the midst of the presents and festivities of Christmas, it can be easy to forget how Mary and Joseph struggled just to find a place where Mary could safely deliver her baby. In the midst of our own lives, we might not pay attention to the similar struggles many families still face today to provide for an infant. Caring for a newborn is challenging, and the material needs are high, especially in the first few months of a child's life.

Invite the teens to put their faith into action by working together to put on a donation drive to collect goods for families with newborns that need support. Have them brainstorm a list of the types of goods they'd like to ask parishioners to donate. They can look online to see what items are usually requested by donation centers. Remind them that it is generally best to focus on small goods such as diapers, clothing, bottles, gift cards to stores or restaurants, and so on. Larger donations, like used furniture or car seats, can present safety risks and might be harder to transport to the families or

centers that are receiving the donated items. The teens can also design flyers, or even make an appeal at Mass for the parish to support this drive.

The youth group leader or catechist should work with the parish to determine the best place to donate these items. Depending on your own parish's circumstances, there may already be a ministry within the parish that helps parish families in need, or they might already support a local center. Make a plan to collect the goods and donate them.

Remind the teens that when we act with Christian love and charity, we are revealing God's love to the world.

### Closing Prayer

*Lord of glory,  
the Magi were the first Gentiles  
to witness your salvation.*

*Christ's saving presence has since  
spread throughout the world.*

*May we, like the Magi,  
never cease to celebrate  
the gift of salvation*

*we have received in your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ,*

*who lives and reigns with you  
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](http://www.ltp.org/lwgr). Encourage teens to attend Mass with family or friends.*