

## **The Epiphany of the Lord** (Wednesday this week: 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021)

Jesus came to save people of every nation, and today we celebrate the mysterious visitors from far distant lands who came seeking the Christ child. In our own different ways, we are all on a journey, all searching, all in need of God.

### **Isaiah 60:1-6**

The prophet foretells the manifestation of God's glory to the whole world. People who do not yet know God, will be drawn, joyfully, to the light of truth.

### **Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6**

Jesus is mystery made known, and through God's generosity the apostles are entrusted to share that good news with Jews and Gentiles alike.

### **Matthew 2:1-12**

Mysterious visitors from the east come seeking the long-prophesied king of the Jews. Though Herod deceives them, they are led to the Christ child by a star.



**"WE SAW HIS STAR AT ITS RISING  
AND HAVE COME TO DO HIM HOMAGE"**

Matthew wrote his gospel for a Jewish audience to show that Jesus was the fulfilment of their longings for a Messiah. He also wanted to show that God's salvation would reach "to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6). Matthew communicated this intention by having gentiles (Greek, *ethnos*) coming to visit the Holy Family in Bethlehem. These "wise men" (Greek: *magi*, astrologers) believed that a new star signalled the birth of a new ruler, and they had "observed his star at its rising."

The magi came from the East, where the sun rises, and the star guided them to Jesus, the true light that was to come into the world. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked King Herod the Great where they could find the new-born king of the Jews. Herod's advisers told him that the prophet Micah foretold the birth of a Messiah in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David and where David was also anointed king. Fearing that this child would be a threat to his throne, Herod sent the magi to search for the new-born king on the pretence that he wanted to offer him homage.

The star lit the way to the Christ child and Mary his mother. The magi offered the child Jesus gifts; gifts that showed

his kingship (gold),  
priesthood (frankincense) and  
his saving death (myrrh, used in anointing the dead).

The magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they returned "by another way."

We are all invited to discover the Lord; however, after encountering Christ we can never return to our old ways. We've got to travel in a different direction -- the path that leads to Jesus.



**"WE SAW HIS STAR AND HAVE COME TO DO THE KING HOMAGE."**

The word "epiphany" means 'a manifestation' or 'an appearance of a supernatural being'. Because the magi brought three gifts, legend made them "three kings," and they were given the names of Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar.

In the East, this Season of Christmas is called the 'Time of Manifestation', or Showing. Today is the 'Feast of the Manifestation', or the Showing of the Saviour to the whole world, to all nations.

The Wise Men travel from the East. We see, in them, all the nations besides the people of Israel being welcomed at the New Temple of the New Covenant - the new born child in the manger.

A look at the Psalm response shows this: "**All nations shall fall prostrate before you, O Lord.**" The same is true of the key word in the second reading: "**Revelation**".

For the people of Israel this was their Messiah, come to restore their fortunes. By this feast, we proclaim God's plan was to extend his salvation to men and women of every nation, of every time and every place - including us. In many ways this is our Christmas Feast, when we celebrate the Good News of the Saviour's birth revealed at last to us.