

Epiphany of the Lord – Cycle A

The Epiphany of the Lord

Lectionary: 20

Reading 1 [Is 60:1-6](#)

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come,
the glory of the Lord shines upon you.
See, darkness covers the earth,
and thick clouds cover the peoples;
but upon you the LORD shines,
and over you appears his glory.
Nations shall walk by your light,
and kings by your shining radiance.
Raise your eyes and look about;
they all gather and come to you:
your sons come from afar,
and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see,
your heart shall throb and overflow,
for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you,
the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.
Caravans of camels shall fill you,
dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;
all from Sheba shall come
bearing gold and frankincense,
and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Responsorial Psalm [Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13](#)

R. (cf. 11) **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

R. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

R. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts;
the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute.
All kings shall pay him homage,
all nations shall serve him.

R. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.

He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

R. **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

Reading 2 [Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6](#)

Brothers and sisters:

You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace
that was given to me for your benefit,

Epiphany of the Lord – Cycle A

namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.
It was not made known to people in other generations
as it has now been revealed
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body,
and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Alleluia [Mt 2:2](#)

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

We saw his star at its rising
and have come to do him homage.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel [Mt 2:1-12](#)

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.

Lectionary for Mass for Use in the Dioceses of the United States, second typical edition, Copyright © 2001, 1998, 1997, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine; Psalm refrain © 1968, 1981, 1997, International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Inc. All rights reserved. Neither this work nor any part of it may be reproduced, distributed, performed or displayed in any medium, including electronic or digital, without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

Epiphany of the Lord – Cycle A

Today's readings maybe offering us a vision of our lives and especially in setting what is important. Just as we have the "overlook" stops on the Interstate Highways, or prayer chapels in the airports, we have the Epiphany as we continue the Christmas time. The Church in its wisdom seems to be saying to us, "Yes, Christmas is a big deal, and it can be overwhelming taking that enormity in". So it becomes important for us to stop and stretch our legs and look at the beauty we find around us. This enormous gift we were given by the Father - the gift of his Son and the salvation that came along with Him can be overwhelming. Today we are given another eye witness account, this time from outsiders who had more faith in a star and a legend than all of "distracted" Jerusalem had with all of the scriptures foretelling the promise of a Messiah. The signs of this event were not that obscure. Ancient Chinese documents also record the appearance of this star. Prophets such as Isaiah had written of this event many hundreds of years prior. So, just as then, we too need to pay attention and not be distracted by the noise of the season and its godless pursuits.

The author of the Isaiah reading we heard this morning should be astonishing to us as to all other hearers over the past 2700 years. Our clock driven society and lives should have picked up on this revelation about the coming of the Messiah. But even in ancient times they had the prophecy nearly 700 years prior to the event! Did the people of Israel and Judah 2000 years ago just give up the hope and got on with their own lives thinking they could do it on their own? Did they become comfortable with the way things were?

So we are given the beautiful Psalm – Psalm 72 – this morning which gives us a glimpse into what is true comfort and joy. In my household we had the experience of having our first Christmas celebration since we had our children at other than our home. We had the opportunity to find what matters as our older daughter hosted us all. There was and is a contentment and joy in the gathering of one's sons and daughters around oneself. But we also see happiness was in the air with the foretelling of riches of the sea and the nations being brought to Jerusalem as well as the comfort in the promise of a just ruler to all humanity. There is a brightness in the lives of those who witness the coming of the Lord. In fact there is the exact foretelling of the gifts of gold, frankincense, and praises of the Lord being brought to Jerusalem on camels and dromedaries from far off lands by strangers from the east. And all this gaiety was foretold 700 years prior to the event. Wow.

The prophet only missed the location of the arrival of the Messiah by 12 miles, as Bethlehem is only 12 miles south of the Old City of Jerusalem! But in today's world the city boundaries are all blurred together. Other historical texts tell us there was great excitement in the air when Jesus was born. There was conflict with the occupying enemy, the Romans, yes. And there was clandestine resistance fighting going on against the Romans and their Jewish sympathizers like Herod and government officials. But even the common folk were also looking for something better, for relief from burdensome taxes and relief from the constant pressure to be something other than good God fearing Chosen People. So we heard in the readings on Christmas the annunciation of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds. They greeted the news with joy and wonder. Wonder in the hearts of the shepherds but also with the physical light of the "Lord of All" entering His creation – this creation. So there were some people ready for the light and some from some unlikely places, maybe not many, but there were people that were not so jaded by society and events around them as to miss the entering of creation by the Creator Himself.

Epiphany of the Lord – Cycle A

As if this was not enough wonder and joy, we hear in St Paul's letter to the Ephesians all this great joy is not only for the Jews, but for all the Gentiles as well. We, just as those Gentiles of St Paul's time, also have equal claim on this great event. We too are coheirs with the Jews to salvation. What could cause any more awe, than to know this event in human history came about not only for those people who were "Chosen", but all have a path to salvation. All we need to do is have faith in the promise we hear in the gospel and cooperate with the grace that has come into our lives – and stays in our lives for all time.

It seems like we have had enough wonder and awe presented to us by the end of the Letter of St Paul. But more has been given to us this Sunday of the Epiphany in the Gospel of Matthew. This particular account is very detailed and vivid. It seems almost like someone took a picture on their cell phone camera and posted it to their face book page immediately. But on closer examination we see two diametrically opposed ways of taking the birth of our Lord into our hearts. There was that crowd in Jerusalem who were caught up in their own reality and any chance for joy and wonder is totally obscured by fear. As an example, Herod fears losing his power and position. He only hears of a rival being revealed in the scriptures. In the Gospel on the 28th of December, we heard of the consequences of his fear when he orders death for all the innocent children under two years of age. His fear obscures the prophecy that "This is the One sent by God" not by another conquering emperor. His fear locks up his heart because he likes it just the way it is. He is the cruel king of this land and no one will dare disturb his comfort. His interest in power is all consuming. The line we hear that Herod," ... was troubled and all Jerusalem with him." Is like a billboard message at the end of town... "do not disturb". But, don't confuse him with reality because reality was only as he defined it. Just as then in Jerusalem, today we have many pressures on us to see reality in the image of those with political, legal or financial power over us. But just as the magi needed to step out of town to see the star again in order to continue their quest, we too need to step out into the quiet and find the call we heard in our hearts. We need to be like the Magi and not lose our way in all the noise generated by the advertisements and realities we live with every day. Yes we too fear – we fear failure, we fear poverty, we fear disease, we fear being late, we fear not being adequate, but all this fear only succeeds in making us not able to accept life as it is presented to us. We are frozen by our fears and cannot feel the joy when it comes our way. We hold back and do not let joy live and operate in our lives.

The word "Epiphany" we are told is from the ancient Greek for "manifestation" or "striking appearance". It is the sudden realization or comprehension of the (larger) essence or meaning of something. Let us take this realization of the coming of the Christ and put it into a safe place – in our hearts. Just as we are told Mary kept all these things in her heart, we too need to make the time and contemplate the magnificent gesture – this gift of His Son - our Creator has made to us and how do we make that realization transform our hearts from living in fear to living in joy – this new year. Amen.