

# Sunday Message

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

THE WORD

Year B • 7 January 2024 • Psalter Week 1

## A GLOBAL FAMILY

MATTHEW 2:1-12



**Being different can challenge us, upset our equilibrium, make us uncomfortable.**

Thirty-five years ago, I was a young Redemptorist working in the Philippines. Sometimes in the town or in the countryside, I would be the only European around. I looked different, I drew attention, especially from children. They would stop and look. Sometimes they wanted to touch my skin, to feel the top of my nose. My hairy white arms and more aquiline nose intrigued them. It gave me a sense of what it's like to be different. An outsider.

The striking thing about Jesus was his attitude to others. Jesus was a master of welcome, generosity, accommodation, inclusion. The only people he couldn't deal with were those who thought they didn't need him - the sanctimonious and self-righteous ones. Jesus embraced everyone else, Jews like Zacchaeus who were marginalised because of their sinfulness or illness or lifestyle, as well as non-Jews, like the woman at the well, who were considered to be outside God's embrace. Prostitute, outcast, foreigner, sinner - it didn't matter to Jesus. All are part of God's family. God's Kingdom is open to everybody.

Today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany. It is a feast of manifestation. God manifests himself to the whole world. The Magi, who come from the East in search of the newborn king of the Jews, represent the non-Jewish world. Jesus is made manifest to them. His birth is good news for Jews and non-Jews alike. It is good news for everyone.

The Epiphany reminds us that Jesus is Lord of all, and all are invited to follow and to worship him, as the Magi did. There are no obstacles of race or colour to overcome, no academic or work skills qualifications to meet, no immigration quotas or visa restrictions to negotiate, no hard borders or border walls to surmount, no treacherous seas to traverse. God's kingdom is open to all. One doesn't need to have a posh address or be from a 'good' family, or have robust health or a big bank balance, or be an expert in theology or even be able to read. It doesn't matter one's age, sex, ethnicity, or gender, God's Kingdom is open to everybody.

All that's required is to come to Jesus, as the Magi did. All we need to do is listen to the word of God and keep it. ■

### DO

Visit the crib in your church. Reflect on the story of the Magi. Explain to your little ones what the story means.

### PRAY

The 'wise ones' went searching for truth and happiness and found it in Jesus. Pray that people everywhere will discover Christ as their Lord and Saviour and pay him homage.

### SAY

**"Lord, help me to seek you always.  
Keep my eyes ever focused on you.  
Amen."**

### LEARN

The feast of the Epiphany celebrates how God's Son was revealed to the world.

Jesus is the star we are called to follow. Today's feast reminds us that Jesus is Lord of all, and all are invited to follow him, as the Magi did.

## REFLECT

**W**hen the Magi follow the star to Jerusalem, they come seeking an answer to the question: "Where is the newborn king of the Jews?" At a time when populism and national and racial tensions are on the rise around the world, it is a question we need to hear now more than ever: Where is the newborn king of the Jews? Where do we see him? Do we follow him? Do we worship him?

The Magi had to search for him. They didn't discover him in a palace, among royalty, or in a mansion, among nobility. He wasn't where

they expected him to be. Instead, they found him in a shed, in the middle of nowhere, with only Mary and Joseph and a few domestic animals.

Jesus came into a world that didn't welcome him, and lived his first days in poverty and then as a refugee. The king of the Jews came into the world as an outsider, but his poverty and ordinariness didn't put off his august visitors from the East. Instead, they presented him with gifts fit for a royal. They knew who he was.

Jesus was born in poverty so that even the poorest could recognise him. The

astronomers from the East were guided to his crib so that even sophisticated outsiders could acknowledge him. The newborn came not just as king of the Jews but as Lord of all.

Today's feast challenges us to be constantly on the alert so that we will recognise Christ in all and in everything. Do you see Christ in everyone, especially the stranger, the foreigner, the other? What words do you use in speaking about the outsider? Are your words hospitable, inclusive and kind? Or are they judgemental, exclusive and cruel?

The Lord of all welcomes all. ■

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON**

Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come; and kingship is in his grasp, and power and dominion.

**GLORIA**

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,  
we bless you,  
we adore you,  
we glorify you,  
we give you thanks for your great glory,  
Lord God, heavenly King,  
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,  
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,  
you take away the sins of the world,  
have mercy on us;  
you take away the sins of the world,  
receive our prayer;  
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,  
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,  
you alone are the Lord,  
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,  
with the Holy Spirit,  
in the glory of God the Father.  
Amen.

**COLLECT**

O God, who on this day revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations by the guidance of a star, grant in your mercy, that we, who know you already by faith, may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

**FIRST READING**

Isaiah 60:1-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.  
Arise, shine out, Jerusalem, for your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord is rising on you,  
though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples.  
Above you the Lord now rises and above you his glory appears.  
The nations come to your light and kings to your dawning brightness.  
Lift up your eyes and look round:  
all are assembling and coming towards you,  
your sons from far away and your daughters being tenderly carried.  
At this sight you will grow radiant,  
your heart throbbing and full;  
since the riches of the sea will flow to you,  
the wealth of the nations come to you;  
camels in throngs will cover you,  
and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;  
everyone in Sheba will come,  
bringing gold and incense and singing the praise of the Lord.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**PSALM**

Psalm 71 (72):1-2,7-8,10-13

Response:  
All nations shall fall prostrate before you,  
O Lord.

- O God, give your judgement to the king, to a king's son your justice, that he may judge your people in justice and your poor in right judgement. (R.)
- In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails. He shall rule from sea to sea, from the Great River to earth's bounds. (R.)
- The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts shall pay him tribute. The kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring him gifts. Before him all kings shall fall prostrate, all nations shall serve him. (R.)
- For he shall save the poor when they cry and the needy who are helpless. He will have pity on the weak and save the lives of the poor. (R.)

**SECOND READING**

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.  
You have probably heard how I have been entrusted by God with the grace he meant for you, and that it was by a revelation that I was given the knowledge of the mystery. This mystery that has now been revealed through the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets was unknown to any men in past generations; it means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body, and that the same promise has been made to them, in Jesus Christ, through the gospel.  
The word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
We saw his star as it rose  
and have come to do the Lord homage.  
Alleluia!

**GOSPEL**

Matthew 2:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.  
After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 'At Bethlehem in Judaea,' they told him 'for this is what the prophet wrote:  
And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,  
for out of you will come a leader who will shepherd my people Israel.'  
Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. 'Go and find out all about the child,' he said 'and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with

delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.  
The Gospel of the Lord.  
Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

**PROFESSION OF FAITH**

I believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.  
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the Only Begotten Son of God,  
born of the Father before all ages.  
God from God, Light from Light,  
true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, consubstantial with  
the Father;  
through him all things were made.  
For us men and for our salvation  
he came down from heaven,  
(all bow during the next three lines)  
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the  
Virgin Mary,  
and became man.  
For our sake he was crucified under  
Pontius Pilate,  
he suffered death and was buried,  
and rose again on the third day  
in accordance with the Scriptures.  
He ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory  
to judge the living and the dead  
and his kingdom will have no end.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,  
the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is adored  
and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
I believe in one, holy, catholic and  
apostolic Church.  
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness  
of sins  
and I look forward to the resurrection of the  
dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

**PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS**

Look with favour, Lord, we pray,  
on these gifts of your Church,  
in which are offered now not gold or  
frankincense or myrrh,  
but he who by them is proclaimed,  
sacrificed and received, Jesus Christ.  
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON**

We have seen his star in the East,  
and have come with gifts to adore the Lord.

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord,  
always and everywhere,  
that we may perceive with clear sight  
and revere with true affection  
the mystery in which you have willed us to  
participate.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.