

The Epiphany of the Lord – January 6, 2019 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 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.

Psalms: 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. (cf. 11) 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. (cf. 11) 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. (cf. 11) 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. (cf. 11) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 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, 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.

Gospel: Matthew 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.



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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel,
defend us in battle.
Be our defense against the wickedness and
snares of the Devil.
May God rebuke him, we humbly pray,
and do thou, O Prince
of the heavenly hosts,
by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan,
and all the evil spirits,
who prowl about the world
seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

The Wise Men (*Magi*) took their long journey into one more kingdom. Courteous, they visit its monarch, not realizing that he was the infamous Herod. Every amenity took place, I suppose: formal welcome, diplomatic over-do, huge meals, fine drinks. Excesses. Finally, when the moment arrived, the *Magi* posed their innocent question, something like this: So, where is this newborn king of the Jews? We have read the signs and know of his birth. They rely on Herod for truth, since, obviously, such an infant would be Herod's next-in-line. But this question turns Herod's heart upside down. He maintained diplomatic balance, temporizing, promising to find an answer, and finally, skillfully, ending the meeting for that night. But with insides in turmoil. *Newborn King? No, no, no! I am the king!* My lineage is the only answer to such a usurper. Do something, *do something!* But what? Ah, seek out your chief priests and scribes! He does. He charms them with his version of a simple question, an idle interest. Do you experts, busy studying day and night, know anything about the long-predicted Messiah figure we used to hope for? If he were born today, I wonder where his birthplace would be? Without hesitation, they reply, "in Bethlehem of Judea, where the great King David was born!" These experts knew scriptures well, as Herod did not. The newborn Messiah would be David's successor, shepherd of the people Israel, fulfillment of everything the Jewish people had awaited for centuries. The Herodian head swirls. Can you picture it? At last he forms a plan. Kill him.

Herod will tell the *Magi* the place to look and they will search out the baby, giving Herod the locale and ... the kill! He makes his way across his halls, and utters, approximately, the following words: Bethlehem is the place he will be born! Somewhere around Bethlehem! All you have to do is find him. Oh, and of course, let me know so that I may do him homage too! Herod's lust for power has to banish love in favor of control. He has to compete, even with God, even with God's Christ. This is the same offer, notice, that Satan will give to Jesus thirty years later in the desert. You can control the whole world, if you will only fall down and worship me. Help me defeat God. What Herod and Satan are grabbing for is in no way related to what Jesus lived and died for. For their part, they wanted to become bigger and bigger, to stretch out to infinity. Jesus wanted to become less and less, to become transparent, just as love is. Heavy, selfish greed could demolish such a heavenly plan, couldn't it? It surely could seem to. For Herod it certainly did seem to. The Christmas child's weakness formed the only answer to such evil. It showed what God had in mind. Tender, fearless openness to love. In our sinfulness, we tend to scoff at such an idea. A Holy Family could never win out, could it? Evil will triumph in the end, won't it? The cross can do what Herod could not, but what Satan could. Won't it? Maybe. Or maybe not. Do you or I have the courage to go with love and find out?

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. Though darkness covered the earth, light and glory came to Jerusalem, says the First Reading. Are you aware of God's light and glory in your life?
2. In the second reading, just what was this mystery that Paul said "was made known to me by revelation"? How does God's Grace enter in?
3. God sent the Magi a message and they rode their camels across the known world. What would cause you to put forth this kind of effort? What made the search worth it for them?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

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