

Today we celebrate the Solemnity of The Epiphany of The Lord.

In this celebration, there is a certain significance in who is remembered, the **Three Wise Men** and the **King of the Jews**.

First let's consider the Wise Men. They are also known as "the Three Kings," or "the Magi." The designation of "kings" in our tradition, although not a designation from the Gospels, comes from the correlation of the prophecy of Isaiah in our First Reading today:

**"Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance." (Is 60:3)** Where it is also said that they would **"come from afar,"** and that those who would come to the Lord would be **"bearing gold and frankincense."**

The other two designations, "Wise Men" and "Magi," are related. In the singular, Webster's Dictionary says that "Magi were members of a hereditary priestly class among the ancient Medes and Persians whose doctrines included belief in astrology."

In their study of the heavens they found a unique and undocumented star. As Magi, they saw the movement of this star and followed it. Why did they follow it? We do know, from their announcement to Herod, that they came to see "the newborn king of the Jews."

Now, astrology alone would not give them this information. It is not until we overlay the designation of "Wise Men" upon "Magi," that we can reason that their field of study was broader than astrology. Such wise men of the East studied many ancient texts in their search for wisdom. Within that assortment of texts would be the Jewish scriptures. There they would have discovered the prophecy of Isaiah in our first reading and/or a similar passage from the story of Tobit:

**“A bright light will shine to the limits of the earth.  
Many nations will come to you from afar,  
And inhabitants of all the ends of the earth to your holy name,  
Bearing in their hands gifts for the King of heaven.” (Tobit 13:11)**

There is also a correlation of Daniel’s prophecy concerning the “time” of the arrival of the Messiah.

The reason for the journey of the Wise Men/Magi, therefore, originated in the relation of the newly discovered star and the messages they found in scripture. They embarked on their journey to see **“the newborn king of the Jews because they saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.”**

In this beautiful passage from Matthew, we find the beginning of the journey of the Wise Men, **“his star at its rising,”** and their return journey, **“they departed for their country by another way.”** In this beginning and their departure, we also have the analogy of the Christian life.

There are three parts to this story and analogy: seeking... finding what we seek and the return to our life **“by another way,”** or conversion.

It is not until our heart turns to a vision beyond earthly things that we begin to anticipate real comfort and potential rest.

After this consideration of the Wise Men of the Epiphany story, we should also consider what an epiphany is. Turning to Webster’s dictionary, we find that it defines “epiphany” as *“an appearance or revelatory manifestation of a divine being or a god.”* But it also defines it as a *“sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something;”* and *“an intuitive grasp of reality through something usually simple and striking.”*

With these definitions in mind, the manifestation of the divine, a sudden perception of the essential nature of something, we find the epiphany of the Lord in other places in the Gospels.

The Epiphany event of the visit of the Three Wise Men, is the manifestation of the Messiah among us, *but most importantly it is the revelation of the Messiah to the Gentiles, to “all nations” as Isaiah puts it.*

The Three Wise Men were from the east and not from within the Jewish population; they were Gentiles, so they are representative of the Gentile nations. St. Paul reminds us of the significance of this in today's second reading: **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 co-partners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.** This is echoed in our response to the psalm today **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

There is also the epiphany of the Baptism of the Lord, where a voice from heaven came down saying, **“This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased.”** This reveals Jesus as the Son of God. We also recognize the Wedding at Cana as an epiphany event, where Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine. This first miracle **“revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.”** (cf. Jn 2:1-11) Along with these three events celebrated liturgically, we could add The Transfiguration, where His divinity shines through His humanity.

Next week we will celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, which will bring the Christmas Season to an end, and we will enter Ordinary Time. As the Lord went forth from His Baptism to His Gospel mission, we will go forth into our ordinary lives. Ordinary, maybe, but a life **“by another way”** to follow Jesus Christ as His mission continues in us.