

EPIPHANY: IN FAITH WE PROCLAIM GOD'S LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE

**The Epiphany of Our Lord
January 6, 2007**

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

By Another Road

*New Star Appears in the Sky ... Visitors From Afar Seek Infant King ...
Judean Monarch Deeply Troubled ... Travelers Warned to Return by Another Road*

Any of these could serve as headlines if today's news reporters were to relate the events recorded in the first twelve verses of chapter two of Matthew's Gospel. And in conventional journalistic style, the first two verses provide us with a strong lead-in – giving us the basic facts and telling us who, what, when, where, and why.

But still we may wonder, just who were these “wise men from the east” led by a star in search of a child “born to be king of the Jews?” Identified in Greek as *magoi*, they may have been astrologers who came from Babylon, Persia, or Arabia. A sign in the heavens initiated their quest for meaning – a quest that led these wise and learned men to the one who would be “greater than Solomon” (Matthew 12:42). By all accounts, they were Gentiles and, according to Matthew's Gospel, were the first to pay homage to the child king.

The Church's celebration of the Magi's visit ushers in the season of Epiphany, a Greek term that means “manifestation” or “appearance.” The season points us to God's love for all the world as revealed or manifested in Christ Jesus and foreshadows Jesus' command to go “to the people of all nations and make them my disciples” (Matthew 28:19). As stated in Ephesians 3:6 (*CEV*), “Because of Jesus Christ, the good news has given the Gentiles a share in the promises that God gave to the Jews. God has also let Gentiles be part of the same body.” Epiphany invites everyone to receive God's precious gift of inclusive love as made known to us in God's beloved Son, Jesus.

The gospel text is rich in symbols and allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures. In pagan culture, a star signaled the birth of a new ruler; the messianic hope is kindled with the appearance of a “star out of Jacob” (Numbers 24:17). The gifts of the Magi echo Psalm 72:10, 11, 15 and Isaiah 60:6. And their quest first brings them to the court of King Herod in Jerusalem, where Herod's chief priests and teachers of the Law of Moses quote the prophet Micah (5:2) that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

These “wise men from the east,” these Gentiles, refer to Jesus with reverence as the “king of the Jews” – words that, ironically, will be said years later (at the time of Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion) by other pagans, the Roman soldiers who mock Jesus, and Pilate, the governor of Judea (see Matthew 27:11, 29, 37). After finding the newborn king, the Magi are warned in a dream not to return to Herod but to return home by another road. As they returned home, one wonders -- did they share the good news with those they encountered? What unexpected opportunities or “other roads” does God reveal to us? How do we share the good news of God’s inclusive love for all people?

Jesus himself traveled by another road. Though he was a king, he chose the path of a humble servant and, by his suffering and death on a cross and his glorious resurrection, prepared a highway for us where “the redeemed shall walk” (Isaiah 35:9, *NRSV*). Let us follow Jesus and arise and shine, for our light has come!

This Reflection for the Epiphany of Our Lord was prepared by Barbara Bernstengel, who serves on the staff of the American Bible Society as Director of the Education Unit in the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship.

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This day we remember, give thanks, and pray for God’s love that has been revealed to all people through God’s Son, Jesus. Just as the wise men were led by a star, may we be led by faith to worship Jesus, the newborn king, and know God’s presence in our lives.

Activity Corner: “Prayer Star”

Supplies needed: 2 sheets of construction paper (yellow and any other color); 5-point star pattern; scissors; pen or markers; small brass fastener.

Trace the star pattern on a sheet of 8-1/2 x 11 yellow construction paper. In the center of the star, write the words “Jesus, Our Light, Has Come!” In each of the five points, write “Family and Friends,” “Church,” “Community,” “Country,” “World.” Make a small hole in the center of the star and fasten it to another sheet of construction paper. Along the top of the background sheet, write “We Remember to Pray For ...” Using the star for your daily prayer and devotion, turn the star so that one of the points is directed to the top of the page and use what is written in the point as the focus. Turn the star each day so that all five points have been used throughout the week. At the end of your prayer and devotion time, invite a member of your household to read Psalm 72:18,19. At the end of the reading, invite everyone to respond: **ARISE, SHINE! OUR LIGHT HAS COME!**