

SOLEMNITY OF THE
EPIPHANY



Matthew 2:1-12

1 After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. **2** ‘Where is the infant king of the Jews?’ they asked. ‘We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.’ **3** When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. **4** He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. **5** ‘At Bethlehem in Judaea,’ they told him, ‘for this is what the prophet wrote: **6** 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.’

7 Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, **8** 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.’ **9** 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. **10** The sight of the star filled them with delight, **11** 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. **12** But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

Other readings: Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalm 72 (71) Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6

The story of the magi carries with it an extraordinary richness. In it the evangelist teaches us about the mission of the Son of God. Jesus is ‘made manifest’ (epiphany = manifestation) as Messiah not only for his own people, but for those who come ‘from the east’, for all the peoples of the earth. At the same time this is the Messiah heralded by the prophets. The Scriptures are fulfilled.

This Messiah is born into danger, as the cruel tyrant, known to history as ‘Herod the Great’, is the first to threaten his life. The gift of myrrh alludes to the death he is to suffer. The presentation of gifts from the peoples of the world completes the Christmas scene. The magi represent the nations, but also the age-old quest among the peoples of the earth for true wisdom. This wisdom is found in Christ.

What lies at the heart of the epiphany story?

How is Matthew preparing us for later events in the gospel story?

Let us rejoice with the peoples of the whole world that God’s love has been revealed in the birth of Jesus.

We pray for a growing solidarity with those all over the world who suffer.