

Connecting with the Sunday Readings

The Epiphany of the Lord

Gospel Word

Matthew 2:1–12

The word *epiphany* means manifestation. The Magi were led by a star to meet the Creator of the universe. Underlying this feast in the persons of the Magi is the celebration of the manifestation of God's presence to and for all people. In the Gospel Nativity stories up to this time, Jesus had been made known to Jewish people who were hoping and praying for a messiah. The Wise Men however were not Jewish. In contemporary times, they would more than likely have been called astronomers. They were "from the east." The region east of Palestine was known for its scientific awareness. It's also the birth-place of astrology. The civilization of this region was advanced for its time. The people of the East had developed a society that used water more effectively. They had built dams and reservoirs that allowed them to have some control of nature's uncertain ways. They used the stars to help them keep exact time and were able then to organize themselves and their technology more efficiently.

So when Matthew mentions "Magi from the East," people knew these were not ordinary wanderers, but seekers of the deeper truth about life. (They were not kings.) They were "wise" in the ways of the world. And they were led to Christ by means of the heavens, which they were quite adept at interpreting. So part of the story is that all creation, including the heavens above, are playing their role in bringing people to Jesus. The implication in today's Gospel reading is that Jesus was not only the "King of the Jews," but also the Lord of the entire universe.

-by David Thomas, PhD, Co-Director, The Bethany Family Institute

Living the Word

The whole purpose of the Incarnation was *to make known* to us the mystery of God's life among us. God comes to save us. It was probably not easy for Matthew's Jewish community to hear this story. They probably had to struggle with its meaning. What is God telling them in this manifestation? Is it true they are not the only ones to be saved?

To hear or read or even pray about the fact that foreigners and even enemies are named by God as coheirs and copartners in his plan for salvation is one thing. To live, pray, worship and love alongside one another is something else. But it is the message at the heart of this Gospel reading. It is meant not just for Matthew's community but for us today. Think about that. Who are "the enemies" today? The foreigners? Are we willing, as a community and as individuals, to reach out and welcome them? To accept their gifts and to share faith with them?

One-line Prayer

Lord of the universe, help us to notice you in the many ways you come to us each day. Amen.