

GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

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

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.'

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

REFLECTION OF POPE LEO XIV

4 January 2026

On this Second Sunday after the Nativity of the Lord, I wish first to renew my good wishes to all of you. The day after tomorrow, with the closing of the Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica, we will conclude the Jubilee of Hope. The very mystery of Christmas, in which we are still immersed, reminds us that the foundation of our hope is God's Incarnation. The Prologue of John, which the Liturgy sets before us today, recalls this

clearly: "The Word became flesh and lived among us" (Jn 1:14). Indeed, Christian hope is not based on optimistic forecasts or human calculations, but on God's decision to share our journey, so that we may never be alone as we travel through life. This is God's work: in Jesus, he became one of us, chose to remain with us, and willed to be forever God-with-us.

The coming of Jesus in the weakness of human flesh rekindles our hope. At the same time, it entrusts us with a twofold commitment: one to God and the other to our fellow human beings.

We are committed to God, for since he has become flesh, choosing our human frailty as his dwelling place, we are called to reconsider how we think about him, beginning with the flesh of Jesus, and not from an abstract doctrine. We must, therefore, constantly examine our spirituality and the ways in which we express our faith, in order to ensure that they are truly incarnate. In other words, we must be capable of contemplating, proclaiming and praying to the God who meets us in Jesus. He is not a distant deity in a perfect heaven above us, but a God who is nearby and inhabits our fragile earth, who becomes present in the faces of our brothers and sisters, and reveals himself in the circumstances of daily life.

Our commitment to all men and women must also be consistent. Since God has become one of us, every human creature is a reflection of him, bearing his image and containing a spark of his light. This calls us to recognize the inviolable dignity of every person and to offer ourselves in mutual love for one another. Moreover, the Incarnation demands a concrete commitment to the promotion of fraternity and communion. Through this commitment, solidarity becomes the criterion of all human relationships, calling us to strive for justice and peace, to care for the most fragile, and to defend the weak. God has become flesh; therefore, there is no authentic worship of God without care for humanity.

Brothers and sisters, may the joy of Christmas encourage us to continue on our journey. Let us ask the Virgin Mary to make us ever more ready to serve both God and our neighbor.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

What stood out to you from the Gospel or Reflection/Homily?



Head: What do you notice about the contrast between Herod and the Magi in their response to the birth of Jesus?



Heart: When have you experienced hope not as a feeling, but as something that changed how you saw God, others, or your own life?



Hands: After encountering Christ, the Magi chose a different way home. What might “going by a different way” look like for you in your daily choices, relationships, or priorities?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another:

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. “Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray”)
3. Offer prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others’ prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps praying the ‘Glory Be’.