

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.

A REFLECTION BY POPE BENEDICT XVI

6 January 2008 (Excerpt)

Today we joyfully celebrate the Epiphany of the Lord, his manifestation to the peoples of the entire world, represented by the Magi who came from the East to render homage to the King of the Jews. Observing the heavenly phenomena, these mysterious personages had seen a new star and, instructed by the ancient prophets as well, they recognised in it the sign of the Messiah's birth, a descendant of David (cf. Mt 2: 1-12). From its initial appearance, therefore, the light of Christ began to attract to himself the people "with whom he is pleased" (Lk 2: 14), of every tongue, people and culture. It is the power of the Holy Spirit that moves hearts and minds to seek truth, beauty, justice, peace. It is what the Servant of God John

Paul II affirmed in the Encyclical *Fides et Ratio*: "men and women are on a journey of discovery which is humanly unstoppable - a search for the truth and a search for a person to whom they might entrust themselves" (n. 33). The Magi found both of these realities in the Child of Bethlehem.

Men and women of every generation need on their pilgrim journey to be directed: what star can we therefore follow? After coming to rest "over the place where the child was" (Mt 2: 9), the purpose of the star that guided the Magi ended, but its spiritual light is always present in the Word of the Gospel, which is still able today to guide every person to Jesus. This same Word, which is none other than the reflection of Christ, true man and true God, is authoritatively echoed by the Church for every well-disposed heart. The Church too, therefore, carries out the mission of the star for humanity. But something of the sort could be said of each Christian, called to illuminate the path of the brethren by word and example of life. How important it is that we Christians are faithful to our vocation! Every authentic believer is always travelling his own personal itinerary of faith, and at the same time, with the little light that he carries within himself, can and must be a help to those alongside him, and even help the one for whom finding the way that leads to Christ is difficult.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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



Head: What “stars” — people, moments, or experiences — have helped guide you closer to Jesus? How do you understand Pope Benedict’s idea that every Christian is called to be a light for others?



Heart: When have you felt the joy or peace of finding Jesus after a time of searching?



Hands: What practical way could you share the light of Christ this week — through kindness, faith conversation, or service? How might our parish become more like the star of Bethlehem, drawing others toward Jesus through love and witness?

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 (for example, “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.’