

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 BY POPE FRANCIS
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On Christmas Eve we meditated on the hastening of several shepherds of the people of Israel to the grotto of Bethlehem; today, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, we remember the arrival of the Magi, who came from the Orient to adore the newborn King of the Jews and Universal Saviour and to offer Him symbolic gifts. With their act of adoration, the Magi bear witness that Jesus has come to earth to save not one people alone but all peoples. Therefore, on today’s feast our gaze broadens to the horizons of the whole world in order to celebrate the “manifestation” of the Lord to

all peoples, which is the manifestation of the love and universal salvation of God. He does not reserve his love to the privileged few, but offers it to all.

As the Creator and Father is of all people, so the Savior wants to be for all people. That is why we are called to always nourish great faith and hope for every person and his or her salvation: even those who seem far from the Lord are followed — or better yet “chased” — by his passionate love, by his faithful and also humble love. For God’s love is humble, very humble!

The Gospel account of the Magi describes their journey from the East as a journey of the spirit, as a journey toward the encounter with Christ. They are attentive to signs that indicate his presence; they are tireless in facing the trials of the search; they are courageous in deducing the implications for life that derive from encounter with the Lord. This is life: Christian life is a journey, but being attentive, tireless and courageous. A Christian journeys like this. Journey attentively, tirelessly, courageously. The experience of the Magi evokes the journey of every man and woman towards Christ. As for the Magi, so for us, to seek God means to journey — and as I said: attentive, tireless and courageous — focused on the sky and discerning in the visible sign of the star the invisible God who speaks to our hearts. The star that is able to lead every man to Jesus is the Word of God, the Word that is in the Bible, in the Gospels. The Word of God is the light that guides our journey, nourishes our faith and regenerates it. It is the Word of God that continually renews our hearts and our communities. Therefore, let us not forget to read it and meditate upon it every day, so that it may become for each like a flame that we bear inside us to illuminate our steps, as well as those of others who journey beside us, who are perhaps struggling to find the path to Christ. Always with the Word of God! The Word of God carried in your hand: a little Gospel in your pocket, purse, always to be read. Do not forget this: always with me, the Word of God!

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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



Head: What does it mean that God pursues or "chases" every person by his passionate, faithful, humble love?



Heart: Have you ever felt as if God was pursuing you? What happened and what did it feel like?



Hands: How might we, as Christians, journey "attentively, tirelessly, and courageously?" Which of these do you feel most encouraged to focus on more closely in 2024?

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'.