Wellspring
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January 4, 2026

Brothers and Sisters,

Today, we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. The Gospel reading of today's mass (Mathew 2:1-12) describes the visit of the magi from the East, who traveled to Judah and to Bethlehem, in search of the newborn king of the Jews, whose star they had followed since it's rising. With this coming of the magi from the east, who were gentile astrologers, the good news of salvation was revealed to all nations, as prophesied by Isaiah (Isaiah 60:1-6, first reading of today's mass). This is an affirmation and a revelation of God's concern and love for all people and not limited to a few chosen people. The feast of Epiphany reminds us of the universality of redemption and salvation. Celebration of Epiphany challenges us to emulate that same universal spirit in all our dealings and relationships with one another.

Our Gospel reading today speaks of the Magi, three wise persons, who followed the star they saw rising. The star brought them to a baby in a manger in the small insignificant town of Bethlehem. They brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh from their country – gifts fit for a king, the best from their countries. Saint John Chrysostom tells us, "By gold the power of a king is signified, by frankincense the honor of God, by myrrh the burial of the body; and accordingly they offer Him gold as King, frankincense as God, myrrh as Man."

Saint Peter Chrysologus says, "Today the Magi gaze in deep wonder at what they see: heaven on earth, earth in heaven, man in God, God in man, one whom the whole universe cannot contain now enclosed in a tiny body. As they look, they believe and do not question, as their symbolic gifts bear witness: incense for God, gold for a king, myrrh for one who is to die."

The Magi brought the best from their country and the very best – the gift of themselves. Their long journey, the detours that they had to make and the risk they took - were all part of the gift! Real "gift-giving" is giving of ourselves – not things we possess, not the talents we have, not our knowledge and experience, not things tangible – but those intangible, enduring, invisible, immeasurable and eternal aspects of who we are in all the richest, the most profound and the deepest part of our life.

The Magi's gifts were not just the things they brought. They were costly because they were sacrificial – the long journey, the hardship on the road, making new choices for their return journey, etc. were all part of their gifts. The gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh represented the purpose of their journey. The Gospel reading of our mass today (Mathew 2:1-12) tells us that the magi came to pay homage, to honor and worship the new-born king, "We have seen

his star in the East, and have come to worship him." Worship is the end and goal of their journey. When they arrived in Bethlehem, "they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him." We must never lose this sense of worship and if we do, we lose our direction in the Christian life, which is a journey towards the Lord, not towards ourselves. The real gift of the magi was their "worship" and not the things they brought.

The late Pope Francis says, "Worship is an act of love that changes our lives. It is to do what the Magi did. To bring gold to the Lord and to tell him that nothing is more precious than he is. To offer him incense and to tell him that only in union with him can our lives rise up to heaven. To present him with myrrh, balm for the bruised and wounded, and to promise him that we will aid our marginalized and suffering neighbors, in whom he himself is present." Pope Francis challenges all of us to reflect on whether or not we are Christians who worship. Many Christians pray but they do not worship, he says. We must find time to worship. Worship must be an integral part of daily routines. In worshiping, we too will discover, like the Magi, the meaning of our journey and experience "great joy" as the Magi did, says Pope Francis.

Most of us are used to praying, attending mass and participating in other liturgical celebrations. We do not often talk about worship. William Temple (1881-1944), Archbishop of Canterbury, says, "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God." This captures the essential meaning of worship.

One day, the disciples of Jesus asked him to teach them to pray as John the Baptist and the Rabbis taught their disciples. Jesus taught them to worship the Father first before praying and asking for favors. Jesus said, "This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven." Worship first and then pray. Worship is praising the name of God and seeking his will and purpose. Worship is surrender of our will to God's will and bringing our will into harmony with God's will.

Real faith demands worship. Worship is saying, "Father, holy be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done." Worship means putting the Lord first and letting him be at the center of life. It means giving things their rightful place and giving God the first place. Worship means making God's plan more important than our personal plans and projects. To worship is to seek God's will and purpose and surrender our will to His will.

I want to encourage you to take a few moments each day of this week to be still and to reflect on how your day has been. Reflect on how you have been worshiping, how worshiping has been a part of your daily routines and how you have been seeking God's will and purpose.

God bless you and your family.

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Scroll down to read the reflections on the Scripture readings of todays' mass….

The Epiphany of the Lord

January 4, 2026

Today the Magi gaze in deep wonder at what they see:
heaven on earth, earth in heaven, man in God, God in man,
one whom the whole universe cannot contain now enclosed in a tiny body.
As they look, they believe and do not question, as their symbolic gifts bear witness:
incense for God, gold for a king, myrrh for one who is to die.
(Peter Chrysologus)

Collect

O God, who on this day
revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations
by the guidance of a star,
grant in your mercy
that we, who know you already by faith,
may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Serenity is not freedom from the storm, but peace amid the storm.

Isaiah 60:1-6

The Israelites lived in spiritual, social and political darkness for a period of forty years in exile in Babylon. The period of exile was coming to a close and the darkness was going to be dispelled by the radiant light of God's glory and forgiveness. So the prophet says, "Rise up.....your light has come"……. Israel was going to return to their own home land…...the light of God's glory would shine……..the exiles would be forgiven, reconciled with God and restored to their own land. As they continue their journey home, they will become light to other nations.

The prophet envisioned residents of Midian, Ephah and Sheba walking by the light of God's glory that was manifested in the people of God. Israel's light would also illumine the way for the nations, allowing all the Gentiles to see and travel toward God. On their journey home, the exiles would indeed be traveling epiphanies, through whom others would learn of God's goodness.

Just as the remnant Israel returning from exile became a "light," an "epiphany" for other nations, the church must become a "light," an "epiphany" and the church will never be unless we become signs of God's goodness, light and love in the world.

Psalm 72

Justice shall flower in his days,
And profound peace till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
And from the River to the ends of the earth……

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Jews regarded Gentiles as unclean, unholy and worthless in God's eyes. In this excerpt, the author of Ephesians describes the equal status of Jews and Gentiles in Christ as a "mystery" being revealed through him. The author says that Gentiles and Jews are co-heirs, members of the same body and sharers of the promises of God. This was Isaiah's vision of universal salvation (first reading), being fully realized in Jesus.

Pray for a broader, clearer and cosmic vision of the freedom and salvation offered to us in and through Jesus.

Matthew 2:1-12

This excerpt from Mathew's Gospel describes the visit of the magi from the East, who traveled to Judah and to Bethlehem, in search of the newborn king of the Jews, whose star they had followed since it's rising. With this coming of the magi from the east, who were gentile astrologers, the good news of salvation has been revealed to all nations, as prophesied by Isaiah in the first reading. This is an affirmation and a revelation of God's concern and love for people as cosmic and not limited to a few chosen people. The feast of Epiphany which we celebrate today reminds us of the universality of redemption and salvation. Our celebration today challenges us to emulate that same universal spirit in all our dealings and relationships with one another.

Each of us must become a witness to God's presence in the world… God's Light, Truth, Life, Love... witnessed in compassion, mercy, joy, justice, peace, and all that is of God and from God. Baptized in the name of the Triune God, we must become "little lights" within the great light - little words within the divine "WORD". Then we shall be as Jesus was, living epiphanies traveling through life, manifesting without measure or discrimination, the caring goodness of God to all.

Saint of the day, January 4 – St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and 14 other saints are remembered this day.

Elizabeth Ann Seton was born on August 28, 1774 in New York City. Her parents were wealthy and well-educated Episcopalians. They believed in helping the poor and taught Elizabeth to do so from the time she was a small child. She married a successful businessman and had five healthy children. She found time to do important volunteer work and founded the Society for the Relief of Poor Widows with small children.

By the time she was thirty years old, her husband lost his business, grew seriously ill and died. Then two of her daughters died too. She did not give up! She just worked harder and prayed harder! During her husband's illness, encouragements from her Catholic friends brought her comfort. She decided to become a catholic and in doing so lost the support of her wealthy family. Now she was a single parent with five children to care for. She did not give up! She just worked harder and prayed harder! She died on January 4, 1821 in Emmitsburg, MD.

She became a teacher and opened the FIRST American Catholic school and then opened the FIRST American orphanage and then founded the FIRST American Order of nuns, the Sisters of Charity. Finally, she also became the FIRST "born-in-America" to be canonized a saint!

Fr. Gus Tharappel, msfs

Love is the epiphany of God in our poverty.
(Thomas Merton)