

It Seemed Irrational

Scripture Background

This information isn't meant to be read aloud, but as background for the leader. If helpful, share some of it in conversation with the group.

The Feast of the Epiphany, traditionally celebrated on January 6, is a very ancient holiday, celebrated even before Christmas became a regular Christian observance. Although the Epiphany is not widely celebrated outside of Mass in the United States, in some countries it is a public holiday and it is the day when friends and family members exchange gifts. The feast celebrates the magi arriving in Bethlehem and worshipping the newborn Jesus. The connection between the first reading from Isaiah and the Gospel could not be more clear. Matthew picks up on Isaiah's prophecy of a guiding light (the star), travelers coming from afar (the magi), and extravagant gifts (gold and frankincense) to show that Jesus is the promised savior.

Opening Prayer

Pray the following aloud together, beginning with the Sign of the Cross:

+ In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

God of Light and God of Darkness,
thank you for this chance to slow down
and listen to your Word for us.

Open our eyes, ears, minds, and our hearts
so that we experience how you are alive and active in our lives today.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 2:1-12

Ask someone to read this passage aloud, then pause for a minute of silence.

Ask: What struck you about this reading or the liturgy this week?

Allow for sharing. Move on to the next section once the sharing has died down.

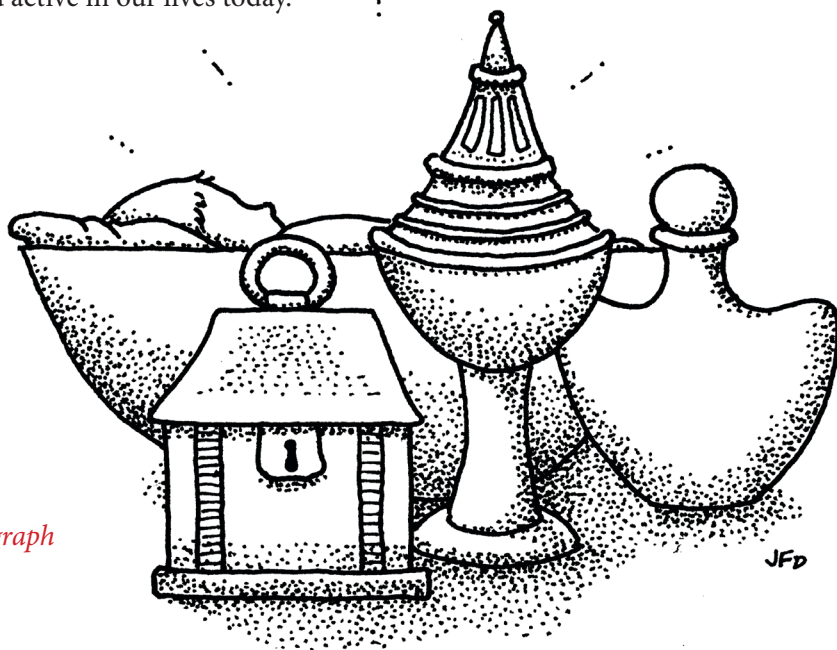
Reflections on the Reading

Invite each person in the circle to read one paragraph aloud:

January 4, 2026 • Year A

Epiphany of the Lord

- ▶ Isaiah 60:1-6 • Glory of the new Zion
- ▶ Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6 • Commission to preach God's plan
- ▶ Matthew 2:1-12 • The visit of the magi



The story of the magi following the star to Bethlehem to find the baby Jesus is one of the most heartwarming parts of the Christmas story. The Greek word for the foreign visitors is best translated “magi” (referring to a certain class of Persian priests), although in popular understanding they are sometimes called the “Three Kings” or the “Three Wise Men.” Whoever they were, they are an example to us of great courage and trust. They willingly left their home countries to travel an unknown distance in search of a newborn child they knew nothing about. They packed expensive gifts (a dangerous and courageous act when traveling overland in those days) and met with the most powerful man in the country, King Herod, on their quest to find the baby.

When they found the baby in an unassuming little town with an ordinary family, their hearts told them they were in the right place and they were overjoyed. The humble surroundings didn’t stop them from worshiping the little child and then offering their lavish gifts to him. After that, they dared to listen to their dreams and defy the King, thereby protecting the vulnerable child. Probably none of what they did seemed rational to those around them, but because they followed an inner guidance, we still celebrate their journey today.

Questions for Discussion

Read each question aloud, one at a time, followed by time for sharing.

- ① The Feast of the Epiphany is a bigger celebration in some countries than Christmas Day. Does your family have any Epiphany traditions? If not, is there some way you can begin marking it as a special occasion?
- ② Do you know someone who has done something to follow his/her heart which seemed completely irrational at the time but turned out for good? Please share.
- ③ When have you followed your intuition/inner guidance/the Holy Spirit even though it went against cultural or family norms? How did it bear fruit?

Closing Prayer

Pray the following aloud together:

Lord, may what we have heard and reflected on today inspire us to go out from here to be better disciples in our daily lives.

May we be a blessing to all those we encounter this coming week.

Amen.