

The Epiphany of the Lord – January 4, 2026 – Good Shepherd Parish

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Psalms: Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

R. (cf. 11) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

R. (cf. 11) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

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.

R. (cf. 11) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts;
the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute.
All kings shall pay him homage,
all nations shall serve him.

R. (cf. 11) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

R. (cf. 11) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Brothers and sisters: You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.



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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.

As you listen to the gospel be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

The Wise Men, or “Magi,” cross into one more kingdom in their long journey. Courteously they visit the monarch of that kingdom, not knowing he was the infamous Herod. I suppose every amenity took place: formal welcome, diplomatic overdo, huge meals, fine drinks. Such excesses must take place, even in a commonplace kingdom. Finally, when the moment arrives, our Magi pose the question that is so much on their minds. “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have read the signs and know of his birth.” They trust Herod for the truth, since, obviously, this infant will be the next in line, replacing Herod. What seems like a sincere question strikes terror into the Herodian heart. So he maintains his diplomatic balance, temporizing with a promise to find the answer, and skillfully ends the meeting for that night. But, within him are the words, *Newborn King? No, no, no! I AM THE KING! My lineage is the answer to this menacing child.* Herod’s insides shout for him to do something! *Do something!* He goes to the chief priests and scribes. He charms them with a seemingly idle interest, an “honest” question. Do you experts, busy studying day and night, do you know anything about the predicted Messiah figure we used to hope for? If he were to be born today, I wonder, where might that be? “In Bethlehem of Judea,” they respond, “where the great King David was born.” These experts know the scriptures well, as Herod does not. The Messiah will be David’s successor, shepherd of the people Israel, fulfillment of everything the Jewish people have awaited for centuries. The Herodian head swirls. At last he forms a plan. Kill him.

Herod will identify the town to these Magi and they will search out and find the baby for him! He makes his way across the halls and utters the words: “Bethlehem is the place! The child is in Bethlehem! All you have to do is find him. Oh, and of course, let me know where he is. Why? So that I too may do him homage.” Death is the homage Herod has in mind. His lust for power will banish the command of love, in order for him to stay in control. He is most willing to compete directly even with God and with Christ. He is accepting in advance the same deal Satan will offer to Jesus in the desert thirty years later. “You can control the whole world, if you will only fall down and worship me. Help me defeat God.” Satan was a power-monger too. The funny thing is that, for Jesus, “power” is not at all the same thing Herod and Satan are grabbing for. They want to become bigger and bigger, to out-stretch infinity. But his goal is to become less and less, to become transparent, just as love is. Heavy selfish greed cannot demolish this heavenly plan, but it surely can seem to. To Herod it certainly seems to. The child’s weakness demonstrates what God has in mind as an answer to evil: tender, unfearing openness to love. In our sinfulness, we scoff at such a plan. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus will never win out, will they? Evil will triumph in the end, won’t it? The cross will do what Herod could not, but that Satan could. Will it? Check out Christmas!

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

1. The First Reading says that, even though darkness covered the earth, still, light and glory came to Jerusalem. Are you aware of God’s light and glory? What about God’s actions in your life?
2. Paul says that a revelation was given him by the Spirit. He said that Christ’s life was too great to be limited to its starting place. His life was for all generations and not only the Jews but the Gentiles as well. All are “coheirs, members of the same body. Did the star’s light shine on each and every person, precious and irreplaceable in God’s eyes? Does this mean that we all need one other?
3. What is the main contrast between Jerusalem and Bethlehem? Between Herod and the Magi? What does this tell you about places and people God chooses? At the end of this Gospel story Joseph, Mary and Jesus ended up running from Herod. Who are the modern “Herods” who sow death in the world today?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

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. Amen

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Prayer to St. Michael

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle. Be our defense against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen