

# THE THREE WISE MEN

January 3, 2021

Solemnity of the  
Epiphany of the Lord



**O**n Epiphany (traditionally observed on January 6, but transferred in most dioceses in the United States to the Sunday after January 1) we celebrate the well-loved story of the three wise men (also known as the three kings) who came from the East to find Jesus after his birth.

St. Matthew doesn't give us a lot of information about the magi. He doesn't even tell us how many there were, or refer to them as kings! These details only came with later reflection by the Church. For instance,

the prophet Isaiah prophesies that kings will follow the light of God and bring gifts of gold and frankincense (Isaiah 60:4-6), while the Psalmist depicts kings of other nations bearing

recognition of his kingly nature; frankincense was used in offering sacrifices, and so speaks to Jesus' divinity and priesthood; and myrrh, a perfume used in embalming, anticipates Jesus' suffering and death.

The Magi represent the world of the gentiles and are the first non-Jews to recognize Jesus as the messiah. St. Matthew wants us to

understand that Jesus fulfills not only the promises made to the Jewish people through the Law and the Prophets, but extends the love and mercy of God to all nations. Through baptism we are brought into a new nation — God's own kingdom — which does not

"WHERE IS THE NEWBORN KING OF THE JEWS? WE SAW HIS STAR AT ITS RISING AND HAVE COME TO DO HIM HOMAGE."

:: Matthew 2:2

gifts to the royal son and doing him homage (Psalm 72. It's easy to see how the early Christians saw the magi in these stories and began to refer to them as kings.

The gifts they bring tell us something about who this child Jesus will be. Gold is in



Watch the video:  
[youtu.be/4GDZ7mZ1Jts](https://youtu.be/4GDZ7mZ1Jts)



discriminate on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, or socio-economic status.

The invitation to the Kingdom is extended to everyone. As the “seed and beginning” of the Kingdom (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 541), the Church also opens her doors to all people who seek God and strive to do his will. In this way the magi help us see how we must always be ready to welcome others into our communities and our parishes.

“IN THE MAGI, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NEIGHBORING PAGAN RELIGIONS, THE GOSPEL SEES THE FIRST-FRUIITS OF THE NATIONS, WHO WELCOME THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION THROUGH THE INCARNATION.”

:: *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 525

### Family Discussion Questions

1. Despite his humble surroundings the wise men recognized Jesus as the messiah. How has Jesus appeared to you in surprising and unexpected ways?
2. What gifts (prayers, sacrifices, etc.) have you brought to Jesus in your life?
3. How can your family reach out to others and extend Christ’s love and mercy to those who may not recognize him?

### Family Challenge

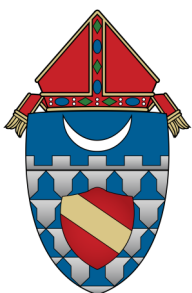
Bless your home! [Download this traditional house blessing](#) for Epiphany, grab some chalk, and pray together as a family that God may bless and keep your home this coming year.

### Additional Videos

- The Meaning of the Gifts of the Magi: [youtu.be/ttUQ0mq46L4](https://youtu.be/ttUQ0mq46L4)
- The Wise Men in Search of the King: [youtu.be/3vnIUHWd9pY](https://youtu.be/3vnIUHWd9pY)

### Other Resources

- [\*The Story of the Three Wise Kings\*](#) illustrated by Tomie dePaola (Putnam Publishing Group, 1983)
- [\*Start With Jesus: How Everyday Disciples will Renew the Church\*](#) by Julianne Stanz (Loyola Press, 2019)



Scripture texts in this work are taken from the *New American Bible, revised edition* © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Washington, D.C. and are used by permission of the copyright owner. All Rights Reserved. No part of the New American Bible may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the copyright owner.

English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* copyright © 1994, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—Libreria Editrice Vaticana. English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church: Modifications from the Editio Typica* © 1997, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops—Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

DIOCESE OF LAFAYETTE-IN-INDIANA  
[www.do-in.org/catechesis](http://www.do-in.org/catechesis) ♦ [facebook.com/diolafin](https://facebook.com/diolafin)

The ministries of the Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana are supported by generous contributions to the Catholic Ministries Appeal.