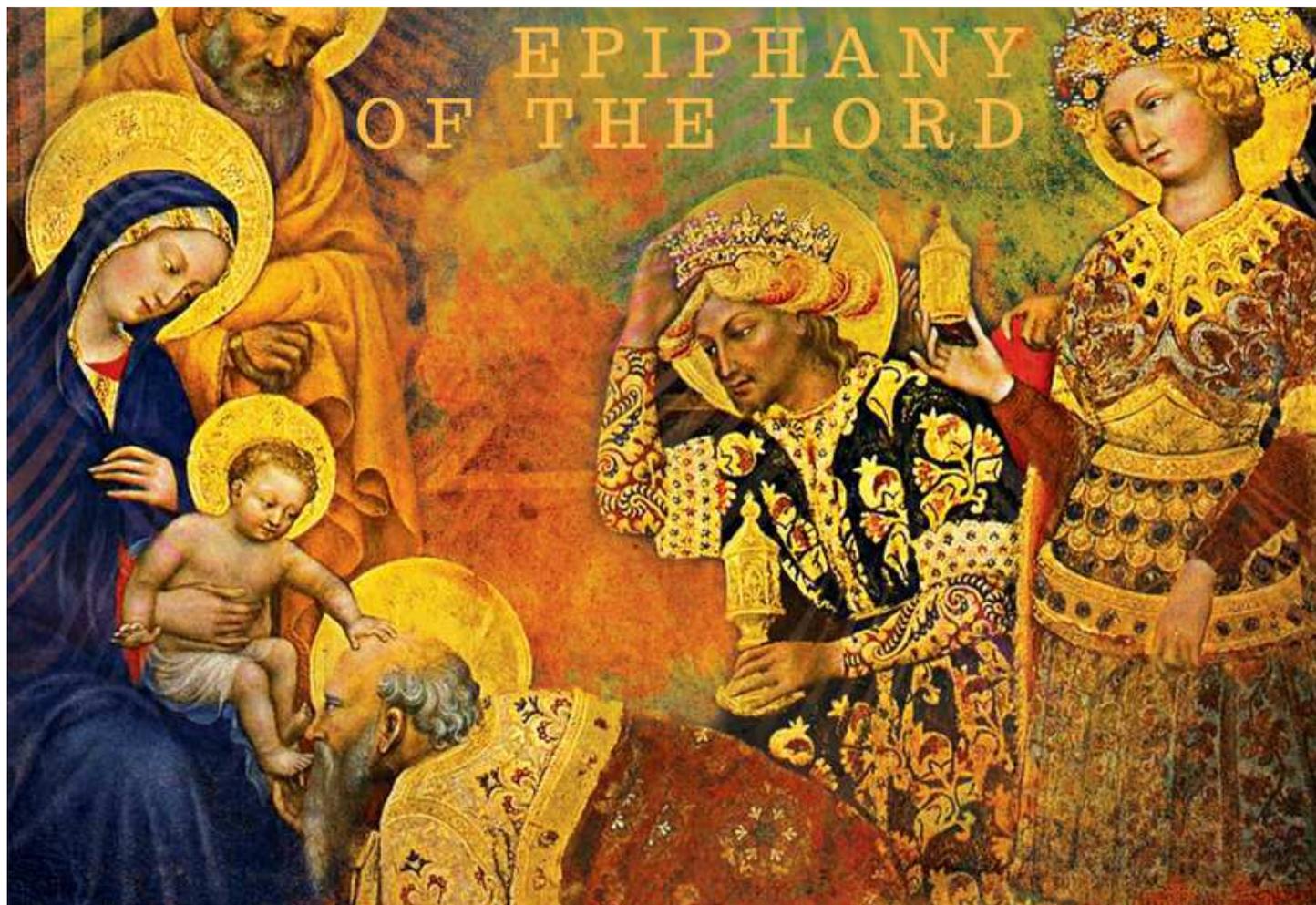


Saint Francis Xavier Parish

The Epiphany of The Lord

January 5, 2020



St. Francis Xavier Church

151 Bridge St., Narrowsburg

Masses

| | |
|------------------------|--------------|
| Saturday | 4:30pm |
| Sunday | 8:30am |
| | 11:00am |
| Daily (Tuesday-Friday) | 8:30am |
| Holydays of Obligation | As announced |

Confessions

| | |
|----------|-------------------|
| Saturday | 4:00pm |
| | Or by appointment |

*Our Lady of the Lake Church
is closed for the winter season*

REV. DENNIS M. DINAN, PASTOR

ABBY RODDEN, PARISH SECRETARY

**OFFICE HOURS: TUESDAY-FRIDAY 10:00AM-3:00PM
OR BY APPOINTMENT**

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Dear Parish Family,

For decades, I have heard complaints from families about the difficulty to try to learn more about our faith or Tradition, for the sake of teaching their children. A problem occurs when “scholars” openly dispute and beg to differ with things taught in the Gospels and other parts of Sacred Scripture. One specific example I encountered dealt with the issue of “scholars” telling us that we have no idea who the Magi were.

Even if I answered the mother who told me about this, my answer did not satisfy me. I then questioned, “Who, exactly, were the Magi?” It motivated me to pick up a book to which Dr. Scott Hahn referred in a talk series. It was on my bookshelves for about two years. The title fascinated me: *The Star that Astonished the World*, by Ernest L. Martin, Ph.D. After reading four chapters, I realized I should simply glean some of his comprehensive explanation to share with families. I take no credit. The research between the lines below is all his.

The *Gospel of Matthew* tells us that there were men from the eastern part of the world who came to pay homage to the newborn “King of the Jews” and to present him with the customary gifts, generally accorded to new kings. The word used to describe them was “Magi.” This was a title and in the 1st century it signified that they were professional astrologers.

The ancient historian Herodotus said they were originally one of the six tribes of the Medes, a priestly caste like the Levites among the Israelites. In their early history their occupation was to provide the kings of the Medes, Persians and Babylonians with what they considered to be divine information about daily matters involving government affairs. Their role in interpreting divine matters for kings and rulers is mentioned in the Bible. In the time of King Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet Daniel became “master of the magicians [master of the Magi], astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers.” (Dan 5:11). The prophet Jeremiah mentioned that a chief authority among the Magi was called the Rab-Mag. (Jer 39:3, 13 RSV).

The prophet Daniel most likely was assigned to this high office. Perhaps the interactions of Daniel with the early Magi in Babylon might explain why those in the Magian profession expected a Jewish king to arrive near the end of the 1st century. Daniel prophesied that this would happen. Recall that Daniel prophesied the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonians destroyed it in the 6th century B.C. He also said that 490 years would pass from a command to rebuild Jerusalem until a world-embracing messianic kingdom would emerge on the earth in the region of Palestine (Dan 9:24-27).

Josephus, the Jewish historian [from the end] of the 1st century, mentioned a conviction among the Jews that this prophecy of Daniel would have its fulfillment within the 1st century. [He] said that it was shown in the “sacred writings that about that time one from their country [Judea] should become governor of the habitable earth.” (Josephus, *War* VI.313)

There can be no doubt that the Magi in Mesopotamia would have been aware of these prophetic indications among the Jews. In fact, scholars today are able to see that there was a great deal of mingling of beliefs between the Jews and the Magi at this period of time. This was because of their connections with one another since the 6th century B.C.

Even the Romans were aware of the prophecies of Daniel. Suetonius in the early 2nd century said, “A firm belief had long prevailed through the east that it was destined for the empire of the world at that time to be given to someone who should go forth from Judea.” (Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 4).

The Roman Emperor Nero was advised by one or two of his court astrologers: it was prudent for him to move his seat of

empire to Jerusalem because that city was then destined to become the capital of the world. (Suetonius, *Nero*, 40)

All of these widespread beliefs were based on the prophecies of Daniel. Since Jewish people lived in all areas of the Roman and Parthian worlds, their national aspirations would have been well known. (Josephus, *Antiquities* XI.133; *War* II.398; VII.43).

Jews in the 1st century respected the Magi. The Jewish philosopher by the name of Philo, who lived in Alexandria, Egypt during the time of Jesus, spoke of the Magi with warm praise. Philo said they were men who gave themselves to the study of the laws of nature and that they contemplated on the divine perfections. To Philo they were worthy of being counselors of kings. (Philo, *Quo. Probus Liber*, 74).

The main occupation of the Magi was their interpretation of things they considered divine. They principally dealt with the evaluation of dreams, visions and astronomical signs. Astrological interpretation was of special importance to them. The temple of Belus in the city of Babylon was in their care. In particular, they were advisors to kings and princes.

Though Herod would have had his own court astrologers, he must have paid particular attention to what the respected Magian professionals from the east had to say about a newborn Jewish king. Their interpretations were especially sought out by prominent people because of the Magian influence in the royal courts of the east. In fact, the Magi were in such high regard in Parthia that some even became kings. Even the Magi who came to Jesus were also considered as being “princes” or “kings” in some early accounts. But when the Magi came to Jerusalem, they arrived to do homage to the new Jewish king and to give gifts to him. In the next century, Tiridates of the order of the Magi did the same thing when he visited the emperor Nero. It is no wonder that the arrival of such Magi caused great interest to Herod and Jerusalem.

In explaining to King Herod why they came to do homage to the new Jewish king, the Magi said, “We saw his star....” The Greek denotes it wasn’t merely “in the east” that the Magi observed it. [So, our version of Matthew’s Gospel is accurate: “We saw his star at its rising” (Mt 2:2) or “when it rose.”]

Scholars realize that the Greek words employed by Matthew to record this event were the ordinary ones then used in Greek literature to describe the regular rising of the stars or planets. The plain meaning of the words suggest that the Magi had witnessed a “star” rise above the eastern horizon when making their normal pre-dawn observations of the heavens.

It was *one* “star” that intrigued them, though it must have been in some unusual relationship or aspect with other celestial bodies. The Magi were so impressed that they made their long, difficult journey to Jerusalem with costly gifts to present to the new king. After hearing their account, King Herod and all Jerusalem were equally persuaded that the “star” was significant.

Herod would have been aware of the outstanding celestial displays that had occurred from May 3 B.C. to August 2 B.C. His own court astrologers would certainly have given him their interpretations of these remarkable signs. But Herod wanted more information. Since the various nations and racial groups had different standards for astrological interpretations, Herod would have wanted to know the Magian version of what the signs were indicating.

Herod and all Jerusalem would hardly have been troubled by what they considered impostors. But if the Magi had come from the court of the Parthian kings who employed Magi in the religious affairs of their government, or from the respected

Magian colleges of the east, it would have been a different matter in the view of Herod and the Jewish authorities.

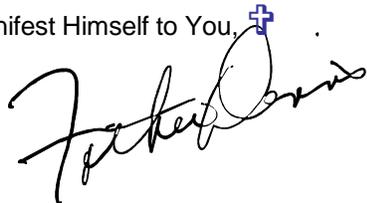
The Magi left him in no doubt about *their* interpretations. They were so certain of their evaluations that they made a long journey to Jerusalem to give rich gifts to the newborn king. So important was this child to them that they even came as well to give him homage. This meant that they recognized the newborn as a personage of special significance. This is what Matthew in the New Testament related.

Like the Romans sixty years before, Herod was so convinced of the interpretations of the Magi that he killed the boy babies in and around Bethlehem to prevent this newborn "king" from being reared to adulthood. Herod was astonished by the appearance of this "star" and he was persuaded that the "Star of the Magi" was significant and important.

What did they see? First, remember: the position of the planets and stars can be calculated with accuracy back through history. Remember also some of the many celestial Messianic references found in Scripture that would have been known at that time: "A star shall advance from Jacob, and a staff shall rise from Israel" (Num 24:17) "Judah, like a lion's whelp, you have grown up on prey, my son. He crouches like a lion ... the king of beasts ... the scepter shall never depart from Judah" (Gen 49:9-10). "The lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev 5:5). "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright morning star" (Rev 22:16).

Computations, now used in planetariums, show that, on August 12th, 3 B.C., Jupiter rose as a morning star above the eastern horizon which soon came into conjunction with Venus. This was the beginning of a journey in which six conjunctions of Jupiter with other planets and the "royal star" Regulus, in Leo (the Lion, the constellation of Judah), would take place. On September 14th, 3 B.C., moved to unite with Regulus (this was repeated two more times). The result, on August 27th, 2 B.C., would be the visual planetary union of Mars, Venus (the Mother), and Mercury (the Messenger) with Jupiter. Jupiter would soon leave the "massing" and continue in its westward motion. It would have been visible to the Magi each morning, as it "went ahead of them" ["preceded them" (Mt 2:9)]. Once on the same elliptical path as the Earth, it would have "appeared" to have stopped or seemed "stationary" for about six days. On December 25th, 2 B.C., Jupiter would have "stopped" (Mt 2:9) precisely over Bethlehem (68° above the southern horizon) and could have been witnessed from Jerusalem. A remarkable circumstance is that when Jupiter (*the King planet*), was visibly "stationary," it would have appeared to an observer to have stopped in the abdomen (womb) region of the constellation Virgo (*the Virgin*). Jesus would have been approximately two years old now (born early 3 B.C.). Herod therefore chose those boys two and under to be slaughtered.

May He Manifest Himself to You. ✝



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Next week's Second Collection supports the Catholic Communication campaign.

This campaign connects people with Christ in the United States and developing countries around the world through the internet, television, radio, and print media.

Fully 50% of the money collected remains here in The Archdiocese of New York to fund local communications efforts.

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Thank you for your generosity!

The 2020 Mass Intention Book is now OPEN.

Please note

The Prayer lists on the last page of the bulletin will be cleared at the end of the month. Please write your prayer intentions on the new lists on the back table of the church, and they will be listed in the bulletin.

Thank you!

Mass Intentions

Saturday, January 4th

SFX 4:30pm - Carol Ann Pagnozzi
Requested by Paul Pagnozzi

Sunday, January 5th

(NO MASS at OLL)

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family
SFX 11:00am - Dick & Helen Guttzeit
Requested by Janice Hauser

Monday, January 6th

NO MASS

Tuesday, January 7th

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family

Wednesday, January 8th

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family

Thursday, January 9th

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family

Friday, January 10th

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family

Saturday, January 11th

SFX 4:30pm - Available or Our Parish Family

Sunday, January 12th

(NO MASS at OLL)

SFX 8:30am - Available or Our Parish Family
SFX 11:00am - George Ritz
Requested by Janice Hauser

Collections

December 28/29, 2019

First Collection

St. Francis Xavier \$1,220.00

Other (Heat)

St. Francis Xavier \$120.00

Total

\$1,340.00

Thank you!

Collections

December 31, 2019/January 1, 2020

Holiday Collection

St. Francis Xavier \$421.00

Other (Heat/Christmas)

St. Francis Xavier \$80.00

Two special Christmas Gifts

St. Francis Xavier \$1,500.00 EACH

Total

\$3,501.00

Thank you!

Readings



Isaiah 60:1-6

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Please Pray for our Parish Family

For the Sick: Christina Hubert, Lydia Newton, Jane Cutita, Bonnie Feeler, Judy Tufo, Connie Moser, Elizabeth Stoddard, Pam Kocher, Vincent Gentile, Peter O'Leary Jr., Jessica Hartley, Dorothy Schlegel, Henrietta Pierce, Ella Dorothy Neidert, Ed Coates, Howard Van Jones, Dolores Nelson, Emerson "Bucky" Misner

For the Deceased: Mary Weiden, Muriel Maers, Stan Rembish, Eugene Harrison, Terry McCarthy, John Werner, Lillian Yacino, James Lingle, Patricia Lyons, Peggy Lee Romano, Emory Robert Kaub, Muriel F. Edwards, Andrew Casimir, Barbara Walter, John Hartley, Eileen Dempsey, Christopher Kells, Rita & Arthur Holmes, Kathleen Jamieson, Stanley Javitz

For those Serving in the Military: Justin Warnick, Joseph A. Choffo IV, Carmen Hamstrom, Joseph R. Gonzalez