



“And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way” St. Matthew 2:11-12 (The Holy Gospel for the Epiphany Of Our Lord, January 6, Series C).

The Wise Men from the East had come to Jerusalem looking for the “King of the Jews.” Herod was troubled at the news and seeking counsel from the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked where the Christ was to be born. He was told that He would be born in Bethlehem of Judea from the prophecy of Micah. Herod then asked the Wise Men to return to him so that he could worship the Savior which he did not intend to do. God's protection is evident in this Gospel, from “The Epiphany of Our Lord.” Once the Wise Men found the Child with His mother, they offered their worship to Him and after giving their treasures to Him, they returned to their home by a different route having been warned in a dream by God's certain intervention.

The word “Epiphany” means “manifestation” that is, the revealing of Christ to the Gentiles and to all the world which is the reason **“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” St. John 1:14.** The season of Epiphany, within the Church Year is the celebration of Jesus coming into human flesh that we would behold His glory.

The lessons for the Epiphany season, teach God's truth in His Word about the revealing or manifestation of Christ for all people. By tradition, the Wise Men from the East were thought to be the first of the Gentiles brought to faith giving Christ their worship and adoration as **St Matthew 2:11-12** attests. The visit of the Wise Men is also remembered during the Epiphany season as representing all believers from the Gentile world, since God's Son is sent for all people. **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” St. John 3:16.** If indeed, the Wise Men were the first Gentiles to worship the Christ, so also, they are not the last as the book of Isaiah teaches **“Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising” Isaiah 60:3.** The Gospel of Christ our Savior continues to spread throughout the world; the Word not returning to God void but accomplishing His purpose (**Isaiah 55:10-11**).

Consider also, how the Wise Men had been led by the star, then stopped in Jerusalem to inquire where the Savior would be born. In this case, we see their “human logic” that a King would be born in Jerusalem. Then Herod summons those men who were the authorities on the Old Testament Scriptures as to the place the Messiah was to be born. Herod does this with evil intent, planning to deceive the Wise Men, so that he can kill Jesus. But God's Word guides them to go to Bethlehem when they left Herod, **“And behold, the star that they had seen when it rose went before them until it came to rest over the place where the child was” St. Matthew 2:9b.** God's Word guides us today, even as it guided the Wise Men when Herod tried to deceive them into returning to him so that he could carry out his evil intentions. God's Word gave the Wise Men the truth, first in revealing the Savior then in leading them to return home by a different route.

The gifts presented to the Christ Child are gold, and this suggests royalty for a King, for Jesus was the King of the Jews. Frankincense symbolizes the smoke rising to the heavens, representing the prayers of the people to our God in heaven. Myrrh is a symbol of the human nature of Jesus pointing to His suffering and death on the cross. Myrrh was also used in the burial process, clearly pointing to Jesus in the tomb after His death. Nicodemus brings myrrh and aloes and bound the body of Jesus when they laid Him in the tomb for burial as stated in **St. John 19:39.**

The custom of the time was to honor important people by giving them gifts. The Wise Men honor the Savior by presenting Him with the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Yet, while our Savior was presented with these expensive gifts giving honor to Him; it is us as sinners who receive the greatest gift, that of the promised Messiah, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Sometimes Epiphany is called “The Christmas of The Gentiles” as God reveals His love for all in giving the promised Messiah. God's promises made and God's promises kept in Christ, that is, GRACE: “God's Riches At Christ's Expense.”

O God, by the leading of a star You made known Your only-begotten Son to the Gentiles. Lead us, who know You by faith, to enjoy in heaven the fullness of Your Divine presence; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

A Blessed Epiphany to all.

In Christ, Pastor Ahrendt