



**Blessed Sacrament Parish**  
**Homily by Father Chris Comerford**  
**January 6, 2019 The Epiphany of the Lord**

**Reading I Isaiah 60:1-6**

**Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-13**

**Reading II Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6**

**Gospel Matthew 2:1-12**

**Homily**

I love hearing how the story continues. And today we see what happens a little bit later. Traditionally we honor it on the twelfth day of Christmas. That sounds familiar, doesn't it—twelve days of Christmas. Well, today is the twelfth day of Christmas. January 6 is the day we traditionally celebrate the Epiphany. Now we celebrate it closest to this time and it happened this year to be on the same day.

And we see the wonderful signs: first the star in the sky that the wise men had to follow. Incredible that is what led them to this point. These men were clearly astrologers and they looked at these signs and saw this abnormally bright light in the sky, and they knew that they needed to follow it. I am sure they searched through all the writings they had and the surest sign of what this star would have been was the Bible. They found these writings that tell of the sign of the newborn King of the Jews, and thus they followed the star. It probably takes them to Jerusalem, the big city—but it isn't. You would think the current king of the Jews would know about the newborn King of the Jews. But what we know about Herod—we shouldn't be so surprised. The first thing we should know is that Herod was not a Jew, he was a puppet king placed there by the Roman government. So he really didn't care about people. We know that he was extremely paranoid; afraid he was going to lose his power.

There was a saying that it is better to be a "pig" in the courts of Herod, than "to be a son or daughter." He was so threatened. He killed at least two of his children, and one of his wives; he was always thinking that his power was going to be taken away. This was a horrid year going on during which this newborn king was going to be born. So he has to find out. The wise men had searched the writings and find out that Bethlehem was the place where the new king was to be born. The prophets had said so. So, Herod told the wise men, "When you find the child, come tell me so I can do him homage." We know that wasn't going to be the case. Right. We know what Herod's plan was, and he went through with it having all the male boys two years old or less in the Bethlehem area put to death. Horrible. Horrible what he did to protect his power and it didn't work. Thankfully it didn't work.

So we see the wise men find the star again and go to Bethlehem. They didn't have far to go because Bethlehem is close to Jerusalem and they find the scene. They find Mary and Joseph and the baby. What do they do? They prostrate themselves. That is laying face down on the ground in front of this child. That is the kind of respect you only give to God, or maybe a king. And the gifts—they were not gifts for a baby but wonderful signs of which Jesus will need: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold for a king, frankincense is for his divine nature, and then myrrh. Myrrh will be connected to his burial, to his death. There is so much richness here. Some are found in Mary's history in that way with the gifts. We often see that when gold, frankincense and myrrh are given together—it is part of a way to see these gifts connected to the roles Jesus will play in his life as priest, prophet and king. Incense in the priesthood. Myrrh is often associated with a prophet. And of course there is gold for the king. There is so much richness in all of this, and this is a day that is often called "Little Christmas"

Often families in the earlier days of the church would not give gifts on December 25. The gift giving was done on the Epiphany. In some cultures they still do that. It is something to think about and the gifts given to Jesus by these wise men.

The wise men do not return to Herod. They go back a different way. Also, it is a symbolic thing. They are changed, they are not the same, they do not go back the same way they came. And that is what we are called to do also. When we encounter Jesus, hopefully we are changed. We are never the same. We go back—different than we were before. The Epiphany is a great sign for us, and a manifestation. That would be a great word for a spelling bee—manifestation.

"The glory of God revealed to the world," that is what manifestation means here. Jesus is not just King of the Jews. He truly is Savior of the World. The Gentile wise men recognized this. St. Paul told us in the Second Reading: "All people are heirs to this king, not just the Jews." Good news for all of us. Let's pray that we take this message to heart.

Our Christmas season is winding down. We need to keep that joy in our hearts. We also hope to encounter our Lord every time we come to Mass, and encounter Jesus and draw close to Him. Hopefully when we go home, we go home a different way—we go home changed. We go home seeking to be more faithful toward this living God. Let's pray for this grace and his strength today.

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