

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come;
and kingship is in his grasp, and power and
dominion.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

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,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 60:1-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.
Arise, shine out Jerusalem, for your light has
come,
the glory of the Lord is rising on you,
though night still covers the earth
and darkness the peoples.
Above you the Lord now rises
and above you his glory appears.
The nations come to your light
and kings to your dawning brightness.
Lift up your eyes and look round:
all are assembling and coming towards you,
your sons from far away
and daughters being tenderly carried.
At this sight you will grow radiant,
your heart throbbing and full;
since the riches of the sea will flow to you;
the wealth of the nations come to you;
camels in throngs will cover you,
and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;
everyone in Sheba will come,
bringing gold and incense
and singing the praise of the Lord.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Ps 71

Response:
All nations shall fall prostrate before you,
O Lord.

1. O God, give your judgement to the king,
to a king's son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgement. (R.)
2. In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to earth's bounds. (R.)
3. The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts
shall pay him tribute.
The kings of Sheba and Seba
shall bring him gifts.
Before him all kings shall fall prostrate,
all nations shall serve him. (R.)
4. For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who are helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of the poor. (R.)

SECOND READING Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the
Ephesians.

You have probably heard how I have been
entrusted by God with the grace he meant
for you, and that it was by a revelation that
I was given the knowledge of the mystery.
This mystery that has now been revealed
through the Spirit to his holy apostles and
prophets was unknown to any men in past
generations; it means that pagans now share
the same inheritance, that they are parts of
the same body, and that the same promise
has been made to them, in Christ Jesus,
through the gospel.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!
We saw his star as it rose
and have come to do the Lord homage.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in
Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some
wise men came to Jerusalem from the east.
"Where is the infant king of the Jews?" they
asked. "We saw his star as it rose and have
come to do him homage." When King Herod
heard this he was perturbed, and so was the
whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the
chief priests and the scribes of the people,
and enquired of them where the Christ was to
be born. "At Bethlehem in Judaea," they told
him "for this is what the prophet wrote:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
you are by no means least among the
leaders of Judah,
for out of you will come a leader
who will shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod summoned the wise men to
see him privately. He asked them the exact
date on which the star had appeared, and
sent them on to Bethlehem. "Go and find
out all about the child," he said "and when
you have found him, let me know, so that I
too may go and do him homage." Having
listened to what the king had to say, they set
out. And there in front of them was the star
they had seen rising; it went forward and
halted over the place where the child was.
The sight of the star filled them with delight,

and going into the house they saw the child
with his mother Mary, and falling to their
knees they did him homage. Then, opening
their treasures, they offered him gifts of
gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they
were warned in a dream not to go back to
Herod, and returned to their own country by
a different way.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with
the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
(all bow during the next three lines)

and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the
Virgin Mary,
and became man.

For our sake he was crucified under
Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord,
the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored
and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

I believe in one, holy, catholic and
apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness
of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the
dead
and the life of the world to come. Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favour, Lord, we pray,
on these gifts of your Church,
in which are offered now not gold or
frankincense or myrrh,
but he who by them is proclaimed,
sacrificed and received, Jesus Christ.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

We have seen his star in the East,
and have come with gifts to adore the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord,
always and everywhere,
that we may perceive with clear sight
and revere with true affection
the mystery in which you have willed us to
participate.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

FAR EAST AND MIDDLE EAST

(MATTHEW 2:1-12)



Only Matthew recounts the visit of the Magi. These are an unnumbered group of scholars from the East, who have been led to Jerusalem by a natural event, the unexpected appearance of a star.

In several secular cultures, this indicated the birth of a significant person who would influence human history. For Matthew's Jewish members of the Christian community, it would remind them of the prophecy that *a star will rise from Jacob*. As Gentiles, they have only natural revelation to suggest what is really happening: they have to come to Jerusalem to consult those familiar with the Scriptural word of God to help them complete their search.

Their question about *the King of the Jews* reflects the later charge on the cross: we might remember that the Infancy Narratives state the themes which will be developed in the later Gospel narratives: an important motif in Matthew is the inclusion of non-Jewish converts to the Christian community, represented here by the Magi.

Bethlehem is the city of *David*, the ideal (and idealized) king of the Jewish nation. Herod was not an Israelite king, so any mention of *King of the Jews* would be a threat to him and his authority, which explains his desire to find out the location of the child.

At Bethlehem, the Magi enter the house of Joseph and Mary and worship the child Jesus. They present three symbolic gifts, which tell something of the nature of Jesus, that he is *king* (gold), *divine Son of God* (incense) and *will die and be buried* (myrrh).

Finally, the motif of *dream* returns. Joseph has been guided in this way throughout the story: now God guides the Magi in their homeward journey. ■

REFLECT

There has been, in recent years, an alarming increase in nationalist sentiment in many countries. We might reflect, on this feast of the Epiphany on the difference between *patriotism* and *nationalism*.

Patriotism is a justifiable pride in our own people's history and culture. It emphasizes the positive aspects of what our nation is and stands for: it sees how we relate to other national groups in terms of diplomacy, trade, language and so on. It sees our nation as one among equals.

Nationalism is a negative emotion: it sees our nation as superior to others; consequently, members of other nations are inferior to ourselves and so can be treated as such. Many of the present tragedies, international, national and personal, at the present time, can be traced back to this attitude.

The feast of the Epiphany calls us to embrace all human beings, irrespective of race, colour or creed as equals in the sight of God. The Magi are often represented in our cribs as European, African and Asian. Our Eucharistic celebrations should also be a living crib, reflecting the diversity of God's creation and God's children. The Church is the People of God in all its national diversity, humanity and personal differences. The glorious feast of the Epiphany encourages us to acknowledge and celebrate this. ■

LEARN

The Magi were scholars from the Far East, people probably who studied the stars and other natural phenomena.

Matthew mentions *three gifts*, not *three individuals* who brought them.

The Epiphany feast emphasizes the universal nature of the People of God, the Church. meditates upon it and puts it into practice.

DO

Visit the Epiphany crib in your parish church or set out separately the Magi figures in your home crib set. Reflect on what this tells you about your parish community and the Church in general.

SAY

All people are parts of the same body and share the same promise through Christ Jesus.
(see Ephesians 3:6)