

Matthew 2: 1-12

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 Epiphany of the Lord

Year B

6th January 2021



Gold is the gift for a king. Seneca tells us that in Parthia it was the custom that no one could ever approach the king without a gift. And gold, the king of metals, is the fit gift for a king of men. So then Jesus was 'the man born to be King.' But he was to reign, not by force, but by love; and he was to rule over our hearts, not from a throne, but from a cross. We do well to remember that Jesus Christ is King. We can never meet Jesus as an equal. We must always meet him on terms of complete submission and complete surrender.

Frankincense is the gift for a priest. It was in the temple worship and at the temple sacrifices that the sweet perfume of frankincense was used. The function of a priest is to open the way to God for all. The Latin word for priest is *pontifex*, which means a bridge builder. The priest is the man who builds a bridge between us and God. This is what Jesus did. He opened the way to the presence of God; he made it possible for all to enter into the very presence of God.

Myrrh is the gift for one who is to die. Myrrh was used to embalm the bodies of the dead. Jesus came into the world to die. Jesus came into the world to live for us, and, in the end to die for us. He came to give for all his life and his death.

Gold for a king, frankincense for a priest, myrrh for one who was to die – these were the gifts of the wise men, and, even at the cradle of Christ, they foretold that he was to be the true king, the perfect high priest, and in the end the supreme Saviour of all.

(W. Barclay – The Gospel of Matthew)

Opening Prayer

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.

Isaiah 60: 1-6

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 your 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.

Psalm 71(72): 1-2, 7-8, 10-13

O God, give your judgment to the king, to a king's son your justice, that he may judge your people in justice and your poor in right judgement.

*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.*

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.
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.*

Ephesians 3: 2-3, 5-6

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 Jesus Christ, through the gospel.



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

(Gospel overleaf)

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.

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.

