



Readings for the Feast of the Epiphany

FIRST READING

A reading from the Prophet Isaiah

60:1-6

Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.
For behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and thick darkness the peoples;
but the LORD will arise upon you,
and his glory will be seen upon you.
And nations shall come to your light,
and kings to the brightness of your rising.
Lift up your eyes all round, and see;
they all gather together, they come to you;
your sons shall come from afar,
and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.
Then you shall see and be radiant;
your heart shall thrill and exult,
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to
you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold and frankincense,
and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

Responsorial Psalm

Ps. 71:1-2,7-8,10-13. *R/. cf.v.11*

**R/. All nations shall fall prostrate before you,
O Lord.**

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/.**

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/.**

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/.**

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

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

3: 2-3, 5-6

Brothers and sisters: I assume that you have heard
of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to
me for you, how the mystery was made known to me
by revelation, which was not made known to the sons
of men in other generations as it has now been
revealed to his holy Apostles and prophets by the
Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow
heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of
the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

The word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

The Lord be with you. *And with your Spirit.*
A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.
Glory to you, O Lord.

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in
the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from
the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who
has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star
when it rose and have come to worship him.' When
Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all
Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief
priests and scribes of the people, he enquired of them
where the Christ was to be born. They told him, 'In
Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet:

"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel." '

Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and
ascertained from them what time the star had
appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,
'Go and search diligently for the child, and when you
have found him, bring me word, that I too may come
and worship him.' After listening to the king, they
went on their way. 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. When they
saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.
And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary
his mother, and they fell down and worshipped 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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



The Epiphany of the Lord - 5th January 2025

The Word of God

“We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.”

The Epiphany of Jesus, his revelation to the world, was accompanied by the offering of three gifts, each of which symbolized a different aspect of the saviour who is both human and divine.

Frankincense, used to make sweetly fragrant incense, is offered in worship to Jesus, the Son of God, the eternal Word of the Father who is adored with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Gold is offered to Jesus the King of the human race, the summit of creation.

Myrrh, which is used for embalming and in making incense, is offered to the Saviour of the world who suffered and died for the salvation of all.

Epiphany means ‘manifestation’. Jesus perfected revelation by manifesting himself: through his words and deeds, his signs and wonders, but especially through his death and glorious resurrection from the dead and the final sending of the Spirit of truth.

Today’s feast celebrates the whole working out of the Incarnation in subsequent history, the abiding presence of the God made man among his brothers and sisters.



The Magi



The feast of the Epiphany was adopted in the Western church from the 4th century. The gospel calls the men from the East who visited the Christ child μάγοι (magoi) meaning sage, wise or learned. They are first referred to as kings by the theologian Tertullian (160-220) who calls them *ferē reges* ('almost kings' - because of their noble calling, representing the Gentiles paying homage to Christ and no doubt reflecting the Old Testament reference to kings in Psalm 71 ('The kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring him gifts') which is used at the Mass of the Epiphany). The gospel does not say how many Magi there were; this tradition seems to have started with the theologian Origen (185-254) who assumes there must have been three kings because there were three gifts (gold, frankincense and myrrh).

The first pictorial representation of the three wise men is found in the catacombs of Priscilla dating from the 2nd century.

The three kings seem to have been given names in the 6th century: Caspar (Kaspar or Gaspar), Melchior and Balthasar. They were venerated as saints in the middle ages and the cathedral at Milan claimed to have their relics, brought from the imperial city of Constantinople in the 5th century. These relics were taken to Germany by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa in 1162 and are now enshrined in Cologne Cathedral.

A Prayer for Epiphany

O God
Who by a star
guided the wise men to the worship of your Son
we pray you to lead to yourself
the wise and great of every land
that unto you every knee may bow,
and every thought be brought into captivity
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.