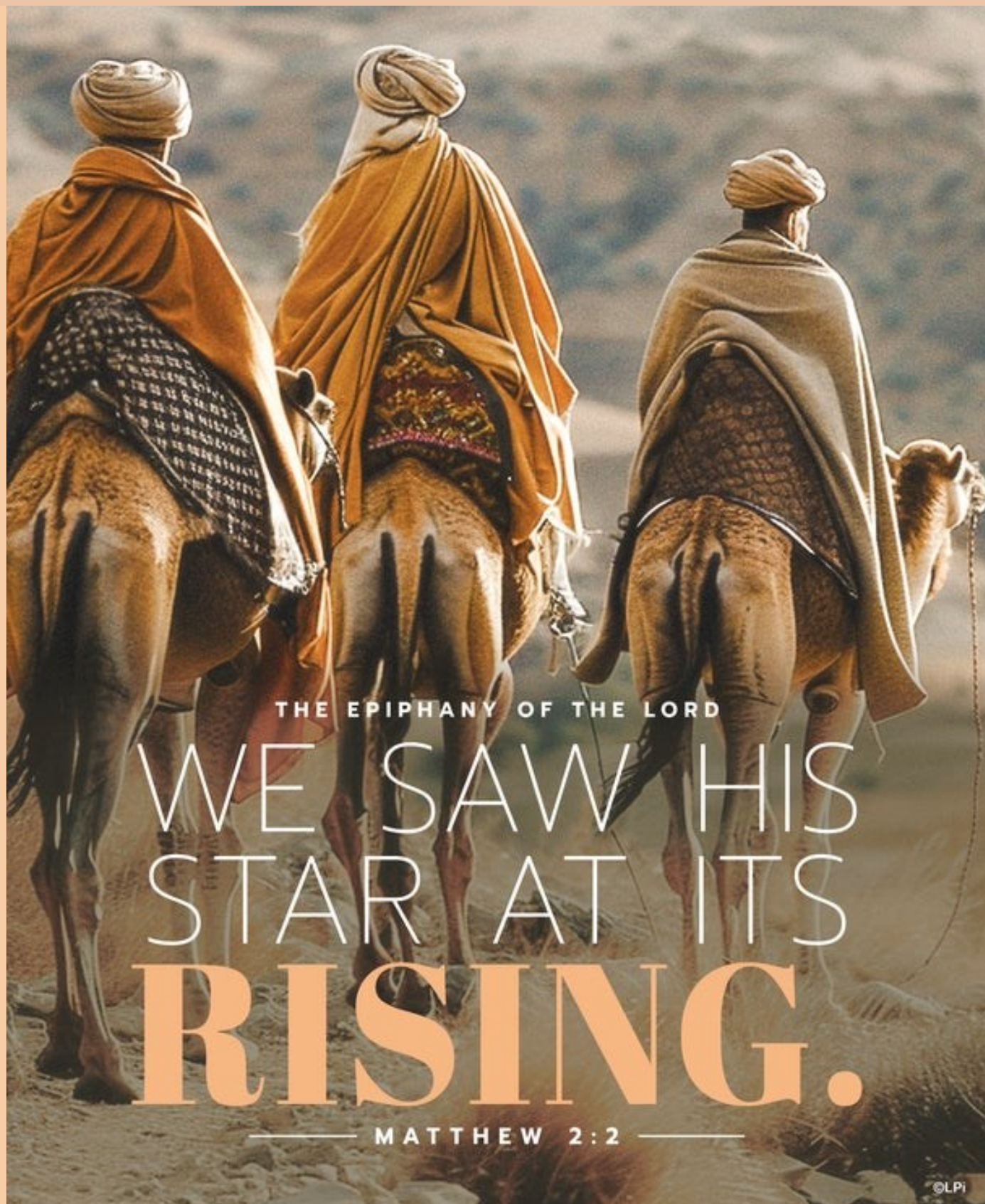


*St. Elizabeth of Hungary/St. Mark*

5700 Bear Creek Boulevard, Bear Creek, Pennsylvania 18602



THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

WE SAW HIS  
STAR AT ITS  
**RISING.**

— MATTHEW 2:2 —



## THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD / JANUARY 4, 2026

St. Elizabeth Church (E)  
5700 Bear Creek Blvd  
Bear Creek, PA 18602

St. Mark Church (M)  
1052 Bear Lake Rd  
Thornhurst, PA 18424

### *Mission Statement*

Humbly guided by the Holy Spirit, our mission is to help people:

~ Through prayer and worship, discover God's desire to be in a relationship with us ~ Discover and develop the gifts and talents God has bestowed on each person ~ Share our faith in Jesus Christ through a welcoming community, beautiful liturgy and ongoing faith formation ~ Be of service to one another, to the communities in which we live and especially to those in need. ~

#### SERVED BY

Rev. Rawel Toppo  
Administrator  
rawelt81@gmail.com

Rev. Anthony M. Urban  
Pastor Emeritus

Rev. William J. Karle  
Pastor Emeritus

#### PARISH WEBSITE

Churchofstelizabethstmark.org

#### FIND US ON FACEBOOK



The Roman Catholic Community  
of St Elizabeth of Hungary and  
St. Mark



#### WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Monday-Wednesday, Friday 9:00AM  
(E)

First Fridays — Adoration after Mass—  
12Noon (E)

#### Weekend Masses

Saturday 4:00PM (M)

Saturday 6:00PM (E)

Sunday 8:30AM (M)

Sunday 10:30AM (E)

#### SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

St. Mark's Church—1/2 hr before all  
Masses

St. Elizabeth's Church —1/2 hr before  
all Masses

~ or anytime by appointment ~

#### OFFICE STAFF

Amanda Proch  
Business Manager  
stelizabethbearcreek@  
outlook.com

Mer Rish  
Office Secretary  
Director of Music & Liturgy  
stelimar@ptd.net

#### OFFICE HOURS / PHONE

Tuesday & Wednesday  
9AM—3PM

Phone.....570-472-3061

Fax.....570-472-3503

#### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Emily Bell  
Renee Sipple

Directors of Religious Education  
saintelizabethccd@gmail.com

## DAILY TV MASS

WARMING FAITHFUL HEARTS

Cathedral of St Peter in Scranton, available on  
CTV: Catholic Television of the  
Diocese of Scranton.

Weekdays 12:10p.m., 3:30p.m. and 7:00p.m.

Weekends, Saturday Vigil Mass 5:30 p.m. and  
rebroadcast on Sunday morning at 10:00a.m.

#### STEWARDSHIP

Dec 28, 2025

Weekly \$2338.00

Online \$878.00

\$3216.00

Diocesan -\$00

**TOTAL \$3216.00**

Christmas \$5426.00

*Thank you for your continued generosity.*

# Eucharistic Celebration

Saturday, January 3, 2026 — Sunday, January 11, 2026

## Sat, JAN 3

4:00pm (M) For the Souls in Purgatory

6:00pm (E) Pearl Brzycki  
*Joseph & Marcia Boris*

## Sun, JAN 4 THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

8:30am (M) Helen & Mario Barbini  
*Charlie & Elaine Morehead*

10:30am (E) Roseann Hartwigsen  
*Judy Pomento*

## Mon, JAN 5

9:00am (E) John "Jack" Kelly  
*AJ Auto Center Employees*

## Tues, JAN 6

9:00am (E) Robert Hoban  
*Judy Pomento*

## Wed, JAN 7

9:00am (E) James Lininger  
*Morning Mass Friends*

## Thurs, JAN 8

9:00am (E) NO MASS

## Fri, JAN 9

9:00am (E) Ann Conway  
*Joan Steidle & Family*

## Sat, JAN 10

4:00pm (M) John "Jack" Kelly  
*The DeScipio Family*

6:00pm (E) Gary Walker  
*Steve & Mer Rish*

## Sun, JAN 11 THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

8:30am (M) For the Parishioners

10:30am (E) Ryan Schmutte  
*Theodore & Diane Haas*



This week we pray for our sick, elderly and homebound parishioners and friends, especially...



Noreen Catani Amico,

Laurie Ayre, Ginny Corcoran, Richard Emmert,  
Lea Furlong, Kevin Gardner, Bernard Hendrzak,  
Erin Himes, Jake Johnson, Joseph Kachurak,  
Patrick Kildea, Michael Lilienthal,  
Mollie Litchman, Carolyn Palencar,  
Donald Scharf, Mary Soos, Byran Stanton,  
Verna Stavish, John Tucker, Rev. Anthony Urban,  
Hank Walker, Loretta Washick, Michelle Welebob

*Please notify office when names should be*

## Lady Royals

# BINGO

### Holy Redeemer Girls Basketball

Join us for an afternoon of Bingo and Raffles!  
Bingo prizes will include cash and gift cards  
All proceeds will benefit the  
Holy Redeemer Girls Basketball Team.

**JANUARY 11, 2026**  
DOORS OPEN AT 1 PM  
BINGO BEGINS AT 2 PM

St Maria Goretti Church  
42 Redwood Dr,  
Wilkes Barre Pa 18702

Tickets are \$25 Presale and \$30 at the door  
Use this QR to make a payment,  
Drop your check at the Holy Redeemer Main Office  
or give to your favorite Lady Royal!

QUESTIONS TO 570-650-7915

*Mass Intentions (\$10.00) are now available for the 2026 year. Please book early to reserve your special dates.*



*Also, the Sanctuary Candle (\$10.00) and the Bread and Wine (\$20.00) are available at both Churches for your loved one's intentions.*



**The best Christmas gift isn't found under a tree or wrapped in pretty bows, but was found lying in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes.**







**John Nepomucene Neumann** (March 28, 1811– January 5, 1860) was a Bohemian-born American prelate of the Catholic Church.

Neumann was born on March 18, 1811, and was baptized in the village church on the same day. He began his education in the town school when he was 6, and was a studious and hardworking child, whose mother called him "my little bibliomaniac" for his love of books and reading. Neumann spoke German at home and at school, and was only passably acquainted in his childhood with Czech.

At age 10, Neumann's parents told him they were prepared to allow him to continue his studies after grammar school, whereas most boys of that time would soon have to begin work. In the autumn of 1823, Neumann passed the entrance examination with distinction for a school in Budweis which was operated by the Piarist Fathers.

Neumann entered the school in a class of 103 students, of whom less than fifty ultimately completed the six-year course. Neumann was disappointed with the course's slow pace in his first years and thought he might easily have been able to advance to the third year, but this was not allowed. Neumann's grades suffered in the fourth year. Neumann's father, observing that he seemed to have lost interest in his studies, initially encouraged him to stay home and choose a trade. Still, his mother and his sister Veronica pressured him to persevere in his studies. After doing so, Neumann began two years of study in philosophy under the Cistercian monks of Hohenfurth Abbey.

Upon graduating from the philosophical course in the late summer of 1831, Neumann was faced with becoming a physician, a lawyer, or a priest. Neumann was initially inclined to study medicine. His mother, however, sensing that his real desire was to be a priest, encouraged him to apply to the seminary, and so, he entered the seminary of the Diocese of Budweis on November 1, 1831.

In his second year studying theology, Neumann began to read the reports on the need for priests in the United States, especially to serve the German-speaking communities there. Neumann departed for America on the morning of February 8, 1836. He initially intended to go to Philadelphia but was rerouted to New York.

He was ordained at St. Patrick's Old Cathedral to the subdiaconate on June 19, the diaconate on Friday, June 24, and the priesthood on June 25 of 1836. After his ordination, Neumann was assigned to assist in serving recent German immigrants in the Buffalo area.

On February 5, 1852, the Holy See appointed Neumann the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia. His predecessor in that office, Francis Kenrick (who had become Archbishop of Baltimore), presided over the consecration on March 28, and Bishop Bernard O'Reilly assisted. The consecration was held in St. Alphonsus Church, Baltimore.

During Neumann's administration, new parish churches were completed at the rate of nearly one per month. To encourage savings and to support the financial needs of the Catholic community in Philadelphia, he directed the creation of a mutual savings bank, Beneficial Bank, in 1853. Neumann was particularly committed to providing educational opportunities to immigrant children. He became the first bishop to organize a diocesan school system, as Catholic parents wanted their children taught in the Catholic tradition. They feared Protestant influence and discrimination in public schools. Under his administration, the number of parochial schools in his diocese increased from one to 200. His 1852 catechisms became standard texts.

While doing errands on Thursday, January 5, 1860, Neumann collapsed and died of a heart attack. He was 48 years old. He was buried, per his request, at St. Peter's Church beneath the undercroft floor directly below the high altar.

The cause for Neumann's beatification was formally opened on 15 December 1896, granting him the title of Servant of God. Neumann was declared venerable by Pope Benedict XV on December 11, 1921. He was beatified by Pope Paul VI during the Second Vatican Council on October 13, 1963, and was canonized by that same pope on June 19, 1977. His feast days are January 5, the date of his death on the Roman calendar for the church in the United States of America, and June 19 in the Czech Republic. He is the only male US citizen to be named a saint.



# Worship & Meditation

## Readings for the week of January 4, 2026

### Sunday:

Is 60:1-6/Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13/  
Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12

### Monday:

1 Jn 3:22-4:6/Ps 2:7bc-8, 10-12a/  
Mt 4:12-17, 23-25

### Tuesday:

1 Jn 4:7-10/Ps 72:1-2, 3-4, 7-8/  
Mk 6:34-44

### Wednesday:

1 Jn 4:11-18/Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13/  
Mk 6:45-52

### Thursday:

1 Jn 4:19-5:4/Ps 72:1-2, 14 and 15bc, 17/  
Lk 4:14-22a

### Friday:

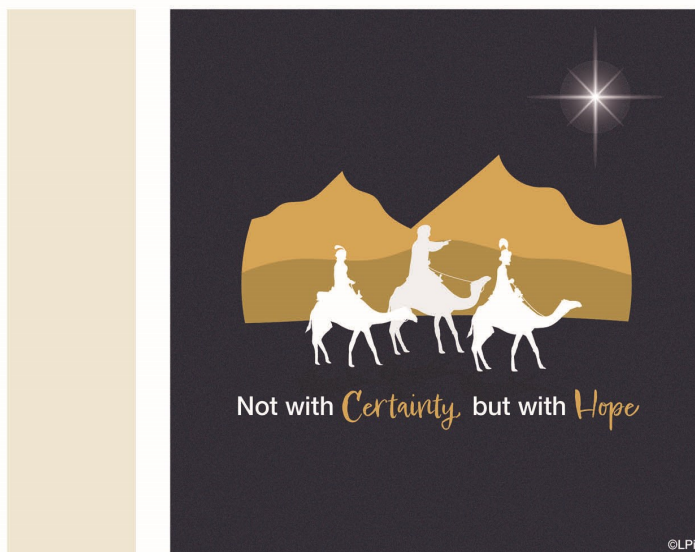
1 Jn 5:5-13/Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20/  
Lk 5:12-16

### Saturday:

1 Jn 5:14-21/Ps 149:1-2, 3-4, 5 and 6a and  
9b/Jn 3:22-30

### Next Sunday:

Is 42:1-4, 6-7/Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10/  
Acts 10:34-38/Mt 3:13-17



## Gospel Meditation

### Encourage Deeper Understanding of Scripture

When I was 22, I went on a pilgrimage to Rome for the Jubilee Year of 2000. I was traveling light with just a backpack, one blue shirt and black pants, little money, and no Italian. I had a few close friends and one goal: to reach the Eternal City. Despite the challenges and deprivations, I felt alive in a way I had never known before.

When do you feel most alive? I'd wager it's not when you're most comfortable or surrounded by stuff. Rather, it's when your life is aimed at something great; when you're on a meaningful and challenging journey with good friends.

That's the image the Magi give us in today's Gospel. They set out from the East not with certainty, but with hope. They study the signs, discipline their attention, and journey together, offering the best they have when they find the newborn King.

The Church gives us their story at the start of the year to reawaken something in us. We are not meant to drift. We're meant to journey as pilgrims. The Jubilee Year of 2025 may have ended, but our pilgrimage has not. Like the magi, the closer we get to Christ, the more alive we become.

— Father John Muir



# Weekly Prayer

## Sunday's Readings

### First Reading:

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord shines upon you. (Is 60:1)

### Psalm:

Lord, every nation on earth will adore you. (Ps 72)

### Second Reading:

It was not made known to people in other generations  
as it has now been revealed  
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:  
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body.  
(Eph 3:5-6)

### Gospel:

"Where is the newborn king of the Jews?  
We saw his star at its rising  
and have come to do him homage." (Mt 2:2)

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.  
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## Live The Liturgy Inspiration of the Week

The journey of the Magi reflects how treacherous our Christian life on earth can be. Always, evil works against us — Satan lays traps. He sows confusion. May we, like the Magi, recognize the will of God as our guiding star.

## Observances for the week of January 4, 2026

**Sunday:** The Epiphany of the Lord  
**Monday:** St. John Neumann, Bishop  
**Tuesday:** St. André Bessette, Religious  
**Wednesday:** St. Raymond of Penyafort, Priest  
**Next Sunday:** The Baptism of the Lord



## Virtues, Explained!

The virtue of love seeks the good of the other, a reflection of the love of God who created us for this very purpose. In practicing this virtue, we express the fullness of our identities as sons and daughters of God. In true Christian love, we find freedom.

## Epiphany Blessing

Dear God,  
It was You who inspired the Magi  
to follow the star to find You.  
Inspire us to seek You, as well.  
Bless our homes and families this  
season, make them places where  
we can encounter You through  
prayer and community.  
Amen.

# Liturgical Life

## (PRACTICING) CATHOLIC

**Mini Reflection:** Of all the stars you could follow, which one does the voice — that one deep within you — tell you to chase? Point to it. And go forth.

**The Stars We Follow**  
Everyone follows a star.

It is human nature to seek. If we are rich, we want to be richer. If we are smart, we want to be smarter. If we are powerful, we want to be more powerful.

We cannot stay in one place, so to speak — to say, “I am what I am, I have what I have, and it is enough.” Even the very act of maintaining a status quo, be it health or wealth or spiritual goodness, requires action. It requires effort. It requires movement. This is human nature. There is nothing wrong with it. When we stop seeking, we die.

But what are we looking for? Where are we going?

I often wonder if the Magi knew what they were seeking — really, truly knew. They were seeking “the newborn king of the Jews,” yes, but did they understand who he was? *What* he was? I don’t see how they could have. They were wise men, but they were not prophets. They simply knew this was an endeavor they had to undertake. They knew it in their souls.

There really is very little that we know for certain about the Magi. We don’t know how many of them there were. We don’t know their religion. We don’t know where they came from. All we know for certain is that they listened to a voice they heard deep within themselves. And, heeding that voice, they went forth.

And what did they find? They found what we all seek, even if, foolishly, we seek it in riches or power.

They found the face of the Child.

So tell me this. Of all the stars you could follow, which one does the voice — that one deep within you— tell you to chase?

Point to it. And go forth.

— Colleen Jurkiewicz Dorman

## Why do we do that? Catholic Life Explained

### Question:

Magi, Three Kings, Three Wise Men... who were they?

### Answer:

We sing songs, give gifts, and move three mysterious men into our manger scenes. There’s a rich heritage in the Catholic Church of celebrating the magi, but their origins are steeped in mystery. The original Greek calls these men *magoi*. The word is translated elsewhere in Scripture to mean “magician,” but a similar word was used in ancient history to describe an entirely different set of people altogether. In what is now modern-day Iran, the ruling empire had a wealthy priestly caste known as the Magi. At the time of Christ, the Magi formed one of the ruling councils of the Parthian Empire. These priests interpreted dreams and read the stars to anticipate major events that could affect the fortunes of the empire.

We’re not exactly sure where the magi of the Gospels traveled from. Matthew simply says “the east.” History tells us that the ancient regions of Persia, Assyria, and Babylon all had a magi priesthood at the time of Christ. Whichever region they hailed from, they likely traveled over one thousand miles over the course of several months to arrive at the Holy Family. Unfortunately for the classic song, there is no concrete evidence these men were themselves kings, though they did bear gifts “from afar” at the prompting of their astronomical calculations.



Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."  
- Mt 2:1b-2

Excerpts from the Lectionary for Mass ©2001, 1998, 1970 CCD.

## Questions of the Week

Invite Parishioners to Reflect and Respond to Scripture

### First Reading:

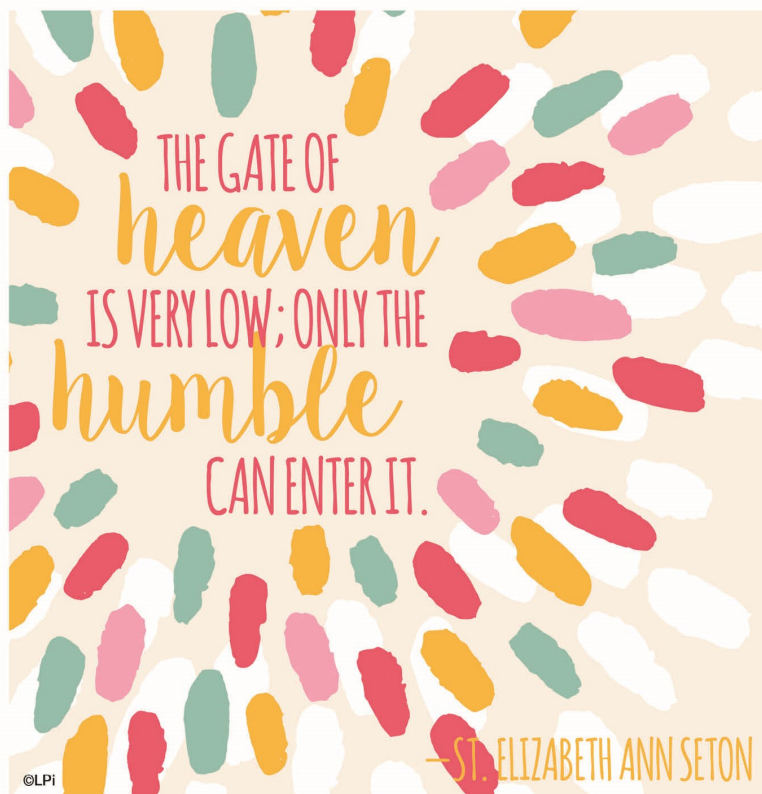
Isaiah prophesies a coming of age when the glory of the Lord would shine upon Israel and their hearts would throb with joy. Can you share an experience that brought you deep joy and happiness?

### Second Reading:

Paul tells the Ephesians that the Holy Spirit revealed to him that all believers in Jesus (Jew and Gentile alike) were coheirs and members of the same body. Have you ever felt like an outsider who was welcomed by others?

### Gospel:

In the story of the birth of Jesus, Matthew contrasts the fear and concern of King Herod with the joy and praise of the Magi. What feelings does the season of Christmas evoke for you?







## Significance of the Epiphany

The term "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word meaning "manifestation" or "appearance." This feast day highlights several key events in the life of Jesus that reveal His divine nature and mission to the world. The most prominent event celebrated on this day is the visit of the Magi, also known as the Wise Men or Three Kings, who traveled from the East to pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews.

## Biblical Context

*When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way (Mt 2:1-12).*

## The Magi

The Magi "raise their eyes" and set out on a journey, going where it was logical to "seek" a king; in a palace. Their arrival creates a bit of turmoil, so much so that King Herod convokes the priests and pharisees, the experts in Sacred Scripture. They "know" that the Messiah would be born in "Bethlehem". But their "knowing" does not go beyond. It has nothing to do with their lives, their experience. They remain stuck. They do not "get up"; they remain safe and comfortable in the palace. The Magi arrive from afar; the priests and pharisees are already near, yet they are blinded by their knowledge, by their certainties, by their privileged positions.... It seems that God reveals Himself to those who do not bask in their own light, to those who do not seek the lime-light of notoriety.



### The crisis

The Magi set out again following the star, but at a certain point they no longer see it. So strong had their certainty been that the newborn King would be in the palace – a certainty that had momentarily dazzled their eyes to the point that they lost their way. But then, accepting the fact that they had been mistaken, they “convert” themselves, and the star reappears, guiding them toward their goal. This is a beautiful and important passage because it makes us understand that the drama of the human person is never that of falling, of making a mistake, but of giving up after falling. Like the Magi, who were searchers of truth, we sometimes or often risk allowing ourselves to be dazzled by our own convictions to the point of losing our way. Today, we are taught not to be afraid to question our own certainties and conclusions because a true “creature” knows how to accept their mistakes and continue their journey. Our hearts have great desires, they thirst for justice and truth, for joy and hope. To follow the star is to follow these same lofty, noble, just, beautiful desires that enter the heart and are capable of moving us through life, of setting us on our journey knowing how to face hardships, risks and defeats, just as the Magi did.

### The encounter with the Child, the King

When our search is energized by truth, then we find what we are seeking, even if it comes from a “*Child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger*” (Lk. 2:12). This passage is interesting. It is not enough to “seek” if our hearts are not pure, if they are not free from prejudice, if they are not guided by sentiments of truth.

Herod wants to adore the Child, but we know that his desire was twisted (cf. Mt. 2:16: “*Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men ... he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under*”; Lk. 9:9: “*He sought to see him*”, he was curious because of Jesus’ miracles). Engulfed by fear and uncertainty, imprisoned so by power, Herod was not able to see in that Child what He really was, and so he allowed himself to be taken over by the fear that the Child was a dangerous competitor.

### Epiphany manifests Jesus and our hearts

Epiphany not only manifests Jesus, the Son of God, but also reveals our hearts. It shows us that the Savior can be welcomed (as happened with the shepherds and the Magi) and rejected (as happened with King Herod). Let’s not hide the fact that there are aspects of “the magi” and aspects of “King Herod” in each of us. There’s a part of us already ready to set out on the journey, to know and understand, to grow and improve, to surpass ourselves. But there is also a Herod always ready to destroy our dreams and hopes. A Herod, always ready to massacre, lurks behind our desire for what is good, beautiful and right, not wanting us to find “the Child” who can change our lives. The Magi teach us that life is a journey and that we are invited to live it as Jesus did, while the Herods of this world delude and flatter us into believing that success and power are necessary in order to exist.

### The gifts

Gold and incense recall the gifts of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon, a reference we find in the Responsorial Psalm (Ps. 72). Gold represents Jesus’ kingship; incense, His divinity; myrrh, His humanity since it was a substance that was used to sprinkle over the bodies of the dead. The light of the star always leads to an act of adoration, of bowing before the mystery that has drawn near. It leads to giving, but even more, to self-giving. It is precisely this act of “self-giving” that stops many from allowing themselves to be attracted to Jesus because it leads to the fear of losing a position, comfort, security, privileges, thus hindering them from a change of life and conversion.

