

2026_01_04 Homily
The Epiphany of the Lord
<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010426.cfm>

Jesus is born in Bethlehem. Who are the first people who hear about his nativity? Ironically, an angel announces that the Savior of the World is among us first to simple, immoral, poor, and vulnerable shepherds. People who didn't have any kind of deep formation in Scripture. They are the first visitors who come to the manger to adore the Savior of the world. Today, the Gospel tells us that some kings, or magi, also received a message about Jesus's birth. These magi are astrologers, people who gaze at the stars to find prophecies and signs in the sky. They had been seeing a curious star rising and leading them toward the land of Jesus. And there is irony in this story as well: Astrology, stargazing, trying to get some hidden message from the stars is specifically condemned in scripture. (Deuteronomy 18: 10-12). And for God's chosen people, wisdom comes from scripture, not from the stars.

So these magi represent the outsiders of Israel. They have not heard the Bible; they don't have knowledge about God's promises. They don't belong to the people of Israel. In fact, they are engaging in a specifically immoral activity: Gazing at the stars and trying to figure out the future. And the irony of God's plan continues. The baby of Bethlehem attracted first, not the experts on the Scriptures, not the priests who serve in the temple. Shepherds and the magi bend the knee to worship and to offer their gifts to the new King. Something luminous and wonderful occurs. The baby of Bethlehem has come to extend God's love even beyond God's chosen ones.

My brothers and sisters, this is the mystery of the Epiphany: Through Jesus, God's mercy is extended to all people, everywhere. And this mystery still is difficult for some to comprehend. Some people think that they are chosen for mercy while others must be excluded. Grouping people into categories of any sort, it is prejudice. Prejudice is also a theme that the Epiphany confronts. Prejudice is a lazy way of looking at the world. It is lazy because we don't have to take time to learn an individual's particular qualities or characteristics. We think we know him or her already, because after all, all those people behave in this or that way.

God has extended his mercy to all people equally. This mercy is given to us as individuals: Not as part of a specific group. We who have received mercy, are called to

extend mercy to others, all others, seeing each person as a child of God, not as a member of a group.

Who were these wise men? Pagans? Astrologers? That is not important to God. He created them all in his image and likeness. Each one of them is an individual who wants to worship the King. The Epiphany of the Lord reminds us of this truth: Every single person is made in the image and likeness of God. That is what truly matters. Jesus' kingdom is beyond the bounds of any culture, nation or social group. His Kingdom knows no borders. Today's celebration encourages us to welcome each other with Christian brotherly love, but in a special way we are to welcome those who come from different areas of the world, those who don't speak our languages, and those who have never been in church before: They come here because they are attracted by the same God born in Bethlehem.

Jesus welcomes into God's family, all the peoples of the world. Jesus's love has no limits or boundaries, or preferences: The extended arms of Baby Jesus in the manger are the same arms He extended on the cross. He came to take us back into the Father's arms. This celebration of the Epiphany discloses for us the mystery of a God who became one of us, to welcome us all into His Kingdom of justice and love. We all are God's beloved children. God's chosen people is not a nation anymore: God's chosen people are all those who seek to worship His Son Jesus Christ. The mystery of the Epiphany reveals an inclusive and loving God who wants to be God with us all. And today, as we venerate the relics of the Mexican Martyrs, Let's pray for the end of violence and persecution in our world: May the sacrifice of these holy men be a reminder for us that only through the ways of justice, dialogue and reconciliation, the world can have true and everlasting peace.

The Universal Prayer
The Epiphany of the Lord
Sunday 4th of January 2026

Celebrant:

Led by the star, the wise men found and worshipped the Christ Child. Led by faith, we too have found the Christ, and in this Eucharist, we worship him.

1. May the light of Christ purify the Church and bring forgiveness to all.

We pray to the Lord.

2. May the light of Christ renew our world in lasting peace across the Holy Land, between Ukraine and Russia and in every other place where there is violence.

We pray to the Lord.

3. May the light of Christ bring hope to all people of faith, so that they can worship freely and be respected as loyal citizens.

We pray to the Lord.

4. May the light of Christ which led foreigners to Bethlehem radiate to all nations on earth.

We pray to the Lord.

5. May the light of Christ inflame us all with zeal for worship and service,

We pray to the Lord.

6. May the light of Christ bring courage, patience and acceptance to the sick, distressed and dying.

We pray to the Lord.

7. May the light of Christ shine eternally upon the departed and be their joy forever.

We pray to the Lord.

Celebrant:

God of love, may your justice and the fullness of peace flourish in our time, so that all people may pay homage to you. Through Christ our Lord.