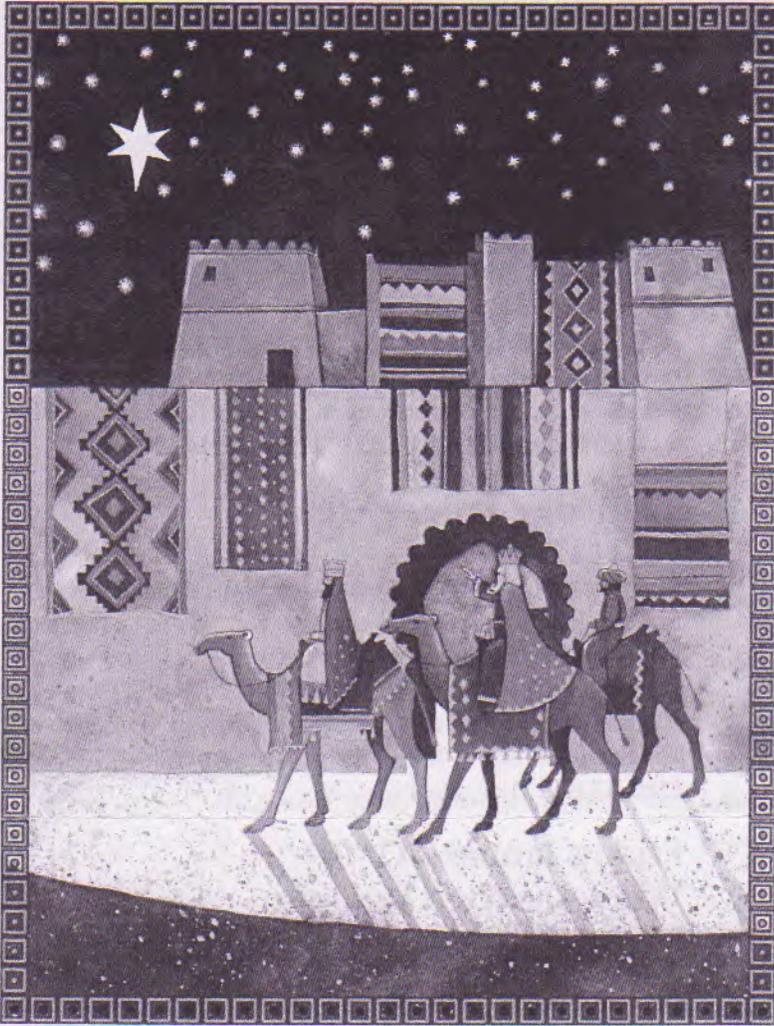


# Epiphany of the Lord



## Send Us a Star

God our Protector,  
you who guided the magi by a star  
to the infant Christ in Bethlehem,  
give us a clear sense of direction.  
When we wander  
among murderous Herods,  
and cannot distinguish the powerful  
from the truly meaningful,  
send us your revealing light  
so that we might bring others  
to your Son.  
We ask this through the same Christ  
our Lord. Amen.

Sunday, January 6, 2013  
Following a Star



Today's Readings: Isaiah 60:1–6; Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 10–11, 12–13 (see 11); Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6; Matthew 2:1–12. The best meditation on today's readings might come from looking in silence at a night sky full of stars. That setting seems central to the Scripture. The magi were probably astrologists who knew the popular belief that each person has a star that appears at his or her birth. They risked following one, to an unlikely home in Bethlehem—a trip that appears scandalous to more “practical” people. But their precarious venture becomes the source of deep joy.

The night sky image is also rooted in Hebrew tradition: God promised Abraham descendants numerous as the stars. Something within us longs for the pure beauty of the star. And Isaiah promises that we, too, will be radiant: “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.”

During a season when sunshine is limited for North Americans, today's readings brim with light. They counter the dark paranoia of Herod, shared by his people: “He was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him.” What do they dread? This baby born to poverty in an obscure village? They must sense a power they do not understand.

To all appearances, Herod's wealth and power, a murderous army at his beck and call, sharply contrasts with the vulnerability of the infant Christ. Yet we know that while Herod's influence is confined to a small patch of turf, Jesus' authority is universal. By showing the Gentiles worshipping him first, Matthew stresses that Jesus comes to *all* people. While the foreign visitors are overjoyed, Jesus' own people, the insiders, seem hostile or unaware. What assumptions could we insiders rethink? What stars are shining in our skies?



## This Week at Home

### Monday January 7

#### Optional Memorial, Saint Raymond of Penyafort

Patron of lawyers, Raymond taught philosophy, then earned law degrees. He joined the Dominicans, became the pope's confessor, and catalogued church decrees. After being appointed a bishop, he became ill and resigned. All he wanted was a little peace, but at 63, he was elected head of his order. Finally, at age 100, he retired. As a faithful disciple of Jesus, Raymond brought light to people who sat in darkness. Today's Readings: 1 John 3:22—4:6; Psalm 2:7bc-8, 10-12a (8ab); Matthew 4:12-17, 23-25.

### Tuesday January 8

#### Hounded by Crowds

Quick—with which phrase in today's Gospel do you instinctively identify: "he had compassion for them," or "send them away"? We all want to think we're filled with compassion. But often we're annoyed by unexpected intrusions. Remember the context: Jesus invites his disciples to a quiet place to recover. They leave by boat, but, in the charming King James translation, the crowd "outwent them"—as if you escaped for a quiet retreat and discovered the world's most irritating neighbor in your room. See tomorrow's reading for the resolution. Today's Readings: 1 John 4:7-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 3-4, 7-8 (see 11); Mark 6:34-44.

### Wednesday, January 9

#### All Is Forgiven

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus attending to peoples' physical needs, feeding them first. Then he knows he must dismiss the crowd and withdraw for prayer. That pattern throughout his life, alternating action and reflection, fed his ministry. But when he senses his friends' distress on the water, he comes to them. Apparently he has forgiven their exasperated, "send them

away." If we identified with that dismissal yesterday, Jesus must see behind it our heartbreak, illness, or fatigue. Whatever storms we face, he crosses them. Today's Readings: 1 John 4:11-18; Psalm 72:1-2, 10, 12-13 (see 11); Mark 6:45-52.

### Thursday, January 10

#### Focal Point

In today's Gospel, "The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him." Do we focus on Jesus with the same intensity we do sports results, stock market, or electronic gadgets? How might we make time today to take in his dramatic announcement by simply placing ourselves in his presence? Today's Readings: 1 John 4:19—5:4; Psalm 72:1-2, 14 and 15bc, 17 (see 11); Luke 4:14-22a.

### Friday, January 11

#### Whole-hearted Healing

In today's Gospel, we hear the heartfelt plea of a leper: "Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean," and Jesus' earnest response: "I do choose. Be made clean." In what part of your life would you like to hear Jesus say that? Today's Readings: 1 John 5:5-13; Psalm 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20 (12a); Luke 5:12-16.

### Saturday, January 12

#### The Selfless Bridegroom

In today's Gospel, John the Baptist describes himself as the friend of Jesus, the bridegroom. John rejoices with his friend in his abundant blessing. We also learn that John is baptizing near Salim, "because water was abundant there." Water symbolism courses through the Fourth Gospel, suggesting that we stand within the deep river of God's mercy. That security must prompt John's utterly selfless response to disputing disciples. Can we do that when someone else gets the promotion, the award, the family's praise? Today's Readings: 1 John 5:14-21; Psalm 149:1-2, 3-4, 5 and 6a and 9b (see 4a); John 3:22-30.



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Keeping the Seasons

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