

LIVING FAITH

JANUARY 8, 2017

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD



ROMAN CATHOLIC
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. JOHN'S

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

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

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

REFLECTION ON THE GOSPEL

Most people think that there were three Magi, or wise people, but read this story carefully—the Gospel does not give us a number,



although there were three gifts! Today, you and I are the Magi. The journey of our lives is to seek Jesus with all of our hearts, and to offer him our gifts. Our gifts are not gold, frankincense, and myrrh—more often, our gifts are a listening ear, a friendly hand, a smile, a cup of coffee, a telephone call, or an hour of our time. When you give a cup of water to one of the least of Jesus' sisters and brothers, you give a gift to Him. What gifts have you given today?



GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

THE MAGI BROUGHT GIFTS—WHAT GIFTS DO YOU BRING?

Since the early days of Christianity, Biblical scholars and theologians have offered varying interpretations of the meaning and significance of the gold, frankincense and myrrh that the magi presented to Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew (2:11). These valuable items were standard gifts to honor a king or deity in the ancient world:

- gold as a precious metal,
- frankincense as perfume or incense,
- and myrrh as anointing oil.

In addition to the honour and status implied by the value of the gifts of the magi, scholars think that these three were chosen for their special spiritual symbolism about Jesus himself:

- gold representing his kingship,
- frankincense a symbol of his priestly role,
- and myrrh a prefiguring of his death and embalming

This is an interpretation made popular in the well-known Christmas carol “We Three Kings.”

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

If you had to bring gifts to Jesus today, what gifts would you bring? What gifts do you think that Jesus or His People need most? Take a minutes to draw or list below some of the gifts that you would bring today...



YOU ASKED...

Was Jesus really born on December 25th?



This is a great question!

No one knows the real birthday of Jesus! No date is given in the Bible, so why do we celebrate it on the 25th December? The early Christians certainly had many arguments as to when it should be celebrated!

The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on December 25th was in 336, during the time of the Roman Emperor Constantine (he was the first Christian Roman Emperor). A few years later, Pope Julius I officially declared that the birth of Jesus would be celebrated on December 25th.

There are many different traditions and theories as to why Christmas is celebrated on December 25th. A very early Christian tradition said that the day of the Annunciation (when Mary was told that she would have a very special baby, Jesus) was on March 25th - and it's still celebrated today on the 25th of March. Nine months after the 25th March is the 25th of December! March 25th was also the day some early Christians thought the world had been made, and also the day that Jesus died on when he was an adult.

December 25th might have also been chosen because the Winter Solstice and the ancient pagan Roman midwinter festivals called 'Saturnalia' and 'Dies Natalis Solis Invicti' took place in December around this date. These festivals celebrated the shortest day of the year, after which light begins to come back into the world and the days get gradually longer. It's not hard to connect this with Jesus, the Light, coming into the world, and brightening our lives and all of history. So it seems that this was a time when people already had something to celebrate, and placing the celebration of Jesus' birth at this time replaced a pagan feast with a Christian one. This is one of the ways that Christians evangelized and spread the Good News—by "Christianizing" older festivals and feasts.



Pastoral Care : The Roman Catholic Perspective

Continuing the mission of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, the Church in the Archdiocese of St. John's strives to centre its love and concern on those who need it most. From this perspective, Pastoral Care involves:

Promotion of healthy behaviours and practices, Prevention of unhealthy behaviours or practices, Care and counselling for people in crisis, Advocacy for those who are voiceless or who may not be heard, Pastoral Care is especially, but not exclusively, addressed to the elderly, the young, the imprisoned, those who suffer in mind, body or spirit, whatever their age, their families, friends and caregivers .

The Archdiocese of St. John's provides Pastoral Care to people in the following facilities: Health Sciences Centre, Janeway Children's Hospital , Her Majesty's Penitentiary, Waterford Hospital St. Clare's Mercy Home, St. Patrick's Mercy Home, St. John's Long-Term Care Facility, The Leonard A. Miller Centre, Chancellor Park, Agnes Pratt Home, St. Luke's Home, Glenbrook Lodge

Outside the city of St. John's, through its parishes, the Archdiocese provides Pastoral Care for: Placentia Hospital , Lion's Manor, Placentia Burin Peninsula Health Care Complex, Grand Bank Health Care Centre, US Memorial Hospital St. Lawrence, Blue Crest Nursing Home, Grand Bank and Various other long-term care facilities throughout the rural areas of the Archdiocese

Pastoral Care is supported each year through contributions received to the Archbishop's Appeal and Annual Dinner and Auction.