

Bulletin Column: Epiphany of the Lord
Matthew 2:1-12, January 3, 2021
Submitted by Dr. Rosemary Murphy

Editor's Note: As we enter 2021 and a new liturgical cycle, we pause to recall the purpose of these Bulletin Columns. Over two years ago, Father Bob invited any interested parishioner to submit a reflection on the Sunday scriptures for the Bulletin. The columns were to enhance personal prayer by keeping the messages of the Sunday readings before us throughout the week. They would help parishioners savor and remember the beauty of God's word and its relevance for finding God's will in life situations in the week ahead. For the past two years, Fessahaye Mebrahtu, Rich Melcher and I have experienced an abundance of joy in offering these reflections. In a new year of God's blessings, we are grateful for how the Spirit has guided our writings and hope that parishioners have found them spiritually beneficial. With gratitude to our former pastor, Father Bob, and our current pastor, Father Arthur, and to parishioner-readers, we continue the columns in 2021.

A Royal Victory

The initial mood of Matthew's account of the Visit of the Magi is one of rejoicing with "extremely great joy," (2:10). Still from the very beginning of this gospel, there is the tension of the cross. It makes our reflection bittersweet to see how much the beloved Son of God and his earthly parents were called to sacrifice so that believers, in any age, could find the Christ, pay him homage, and rejoice in his presence.

Scripture scholars tell us that while the Gospel of Matthew was written for Jewish Christians, its content points to the importance of welcoming and including the Gentiles in early Christian communities. Devout Jews of the time would have recognized in Matthew's account the parallels between the birth of the Messiah and that of Moses (Exodus 2:1-10). This continuity would confirm their recognition of Jesus as the Christ, the fulfillment of ancestral prophecy, and their long-awaited king. However, Jewish Christians were not the only people to benefit from the Messiah's appearance.

At the end of Matthew's Gospel, we hear the command of the Risen Lord to "make disciples of all the nations" (28:19). Magi, foreigners from the east, were non-Jews and had an important role in representing outsiders. Foreigners though they were, they divined from the position of a star (perhaps a supernova), that they were in presence of the one "born king of the Jews" (2:2). Their actions—falling

downs on their knees, paying homage, and offering gifts—would have clearly affirmed that this child was indeed of royal lineage and was the king of the Jews.

Because Herod was *appointed* king of the Jews by the Romans, one *born* king was a great threat to his status—a civil and political threat that led directly to the crucifixion. Written over his head on the cross was, “Jesus Christ, King of the Jews (Matt 27:37). However, the charge for crucifixion was actually Jesus’ title, royal birthright, and power. Today, Jesus, Emanuel, “God is with us, is our Sovereign King. In our liturgical song we salute him as Victor, Ruler, Lord and Redeemer to whom we bring homage with thanks and adoration.

Let our reflection this week be of praise and adoration. Let our discipleship example be one of inclusivity of all who are different than we are—remembering how our King, from his cross, welcomed and took with him into paradise the foreigners, the repentant, the outliers and gave them a place in his Father’s house right next to his faithful disciples.