



GOSPEL GOSSIP

Epiphany Sunday

Sunday January 5 2025

**'We observed his star at its rising
and have come to pay him homage.'**

Matthew 2. 2

The story of the Magi, the wise men's, visit to the infant Christ for so many people completes the Christmas story. After a suitable time, the Crib is put away and all its figures, including those of the wise men, are packed away safely until next Christmas, and normal life finally resumes. However, the story of the Magi, like that of the shepherds, show that Christmas is only the start of the real story – the story of God's direct intervention within the human race. Epiphany is a season, not a day. It is a season wherein God reveals himself to us in many ways, sometimes described as the 'three miracles', the first of which is the revelation of Jesus by the star that led the wise men.

The wise men were just that – wise men. They knew the lore of old and were alert to any sign that there might be truth in what others may dismiss as fairy stories. So, intercepted by Herod, they told him plainly that had seen his (the King's) star at its rising and have come to pay him homage. Their perseverance was rewarded; they found the infant King, and gave him those fitting gifts that declared Jesus' kingship, his divinity and his future suffering.

As 2025 begins, we need to ask ourselves if we are alert to new possibilities, new revelations. It may be that we are so familiar with the Christmas story that it has become just that, a story and a period of celebration in an otherwise bleak time of the year. Yet Jesus is constantly being revealed to us all in so many ways, ways which we can recognise were we open to seeing them. Perhaps we need to look at these 'three miracles' of Epiphany and see how they still can move us to the manger of Christ today.

Stars are attractive, and they are never threatening. They break up the darkness of the night. In the Jewish tradition, the appearance of the first star heralds the new day, not the sunrise. Before radar, they guided ships at sea, and so they are true guides, even today. Stars, however, can take on different forms for us. The stars that guide us are often the stars of ambition, greed, self or even family. These are the things that come to determine who we are and what we are, and very often they are stars that detract us from Jesus, not attract us to him. We need to consider what are the guiding influences in our lives, what are the beliefs by which we lead them, and whether they lead us God-ward or not.

In the birth of Jesus, God is reaching out to us. Do we see him, in his new-born Son? Do we leave the star to shine on others, and deny the light that can illumine our lives? And if we recognise and accept God's calling to us in love, do we treat it like an unwanted Christmas gift: give it away, exchange it, or put it out of sight? The way we can truthfully answer that is by our response. Through the Magi's gifts, they made a declaration of faith in who and what Jesus was. They paid him homage. Do we pay Jesus homage, and do our gifts truly reflect who and what he is, or are they merely convenient and costless trinkets?