

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

January 7, 2024



Transfiguration of the Lord Parish

Saint Mary 14 Park Street + Sacred Heart 58 Church Street + Saint Mark 105 Stanley Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish

Rev. David A. Costa, Pastor
Rev. Deacon Joseph E. Regali, Parish Deacon
Sister Kathleen A. Corrigan, S.U.S.C., Pastoral Associate
Rev. Kenneth R. Sicard, O.P. & Rev. R. Gabriel Pivarnik, O.P., Weekend Assistants
Mrs. Martha O'Neill, Administrative Assistant
Mrs. Jean Howard, Business Manager
Mrs. Elaine Corvese, Director of Religious Education
Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal, Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School
Mr. Adam Turcotte, Director of Music
Mr. Miguel Peixoto, Buildings Supervisor
Mr. James Kitsock, Building Maintenance

Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School

Mrs. Lisa Serak, Principal
57 Richards Avenue,
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-3072 FAX (508) 695-9074
smsh@smsh.dfrcs.org www.smshschool.com

Saint Mary Cemetery

Mr. Jarrod Ward, Superintendent
Towne Street
North Attleborough, Massachusetts 02760
(508) 695-1173 or email ripco@comcast.net

Sacrament of Reconciliation

Saint Mary Church • Saturday 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm

Sacrament of Baptism

Baptisms are celebrated on designated Sunday afternoons at 12:30 pm, with a limit of four families at each baptism. Please contact the office at stmaryna@noozi.com for more information and available dates/locations.

Sacrament of Marriage

Marriage is usually celebrated on Saturday morning and afternoon. Please contact the Parish Office at least nine months in advance to begin preparation.

Sacrament of the Sick

Pastoral care to those in need of the sacrament of the sick is arranged through the parish office. Please call to arrange a visit.

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is offered on the first Friday of each month in **Saint Mark Church** beginning at 9:00 am and ending at 6:00 pm with Benediction.

Parish Offering

If you are attending in person, you may drop your contribution in the collection basket. You are welcome to mail your budget envelope to the parish office, at 14 Park Street, North Attleborough, MA 02760. You may also leave your envelope in the drop box located outside the parish office door, to the right on the landing. Or you can use this link for online giving:

<https://chms.ecatholic.com/guest/mafrdiocese/31>

Thank you for your ongoing support!

Weekend Masses

Saturday 4:00 pm **Saint Mary Church**
Sunday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Sunday 9:30 am **Saint Mary Church**
Sunday 11:00 am **Sacred Heart Church**

Weekday Masses

Monday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Tuesday 4:30 pm **Saint Mark Church**
Wednesday 8:00 am **Saint Mark Church**
Thursday 8:00 am Communion Service
Saint Mark Church

Links to: Transfiguration of the Lord Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/Transfiguration-of-the-Lord-Parish-North-Attleborough-106529317647894/>

YouTube at <https://tinyurl.com/ysfaxaty>

Parish Office

14 Park Street, North Attleborough,
Massachusetts 02760
Parish e-mail • stmaryna@noozi.com
Parish website • www.saintmaryna.com
Phone 508-695-6161 Fax 508-695-5248
Faith Formation • TransfigurationRelEd@gmail.com
Faith Formation • 508-695-3823
Music Ministry • transfiguration.na.music@gmail.com



January 6/7 – The Epiphany of the Lord

Saturday

4:00 pm

January 6 – Vigil (St. Mary)

Angelina & Robert Wilcox

Eleanor & Frank Golden

Sunday

8:00 am

January 7 (St. Mark)

Edward A. Rogers

Sunday

9:30 am

January 7 (St. Mary)

Robert Toole

Jeanette & Henry Dupras

Sunday

11:00 am

January 7 (Sacred Heart)

Kate & Jack McNamara

Derlyn Phillips Parenteau

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Monday

8:00 am

January 8 (St. Mark)

People of the Parish

Tuesday

4:30 pm

January 9 (St. Mark)

People of the Parish

Wednesday

8:00 am

January 10 (St. Mark)

John Morrissey

Thursday

8:00 am

January 11 (St. Mark)

People of the Parish

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January 13/14 – 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Saturday

4:00 pm

January 13 – Vigil (St. Mary)

People of the Parish

Sunday

8:00 am

January 14 (St. Mark)

Charles O'Connor

Sunday

9:30 am

January 14 (St. Mary)

Bob Schnack

Sunday

11:00 am

January 14 (Sacred Heart)

Natalie Cahill

David Parenteau

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Parish Contributions

Collection for December 23/24: \$13,854.83

Collection for Christmas: \$20,641.00

Christmas Flowers: \$3,782.00

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Tuesday Communal Rosary Schedule

Tuesday, January 9, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, January 16, 2024: Prayer & Pizza (5PM)

Tuesday, January 23, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, January 30, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, February 6, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

Tuesday, February 13, 2024: Rosary for Life (4PM)

2024 Quarter 1 Ministry Schedule



The liturgical ministry schedule which begins this weekend, January 6/7 and continues through and including March 23/24 was emailed via group email in the past week. It is also available on the parish website at www.saintmaryna.com under the “Quick links” to the right of the home page. If you did not receive the group email and would like a copy of the schedule, please contact the office and one will be sent to you. Thank you to all of our liturgical ministers for serving and enriching our parish community!



Marriage Congratulations!

Our prayerful congratulations are extended to **Mary Kate Petterson and Marc Cangiano** who were united in the Sacrament of Marriage, Friday, December 29th, in Sacred Heart Church. *May God's choicest blessings come upon you as you begin to live this sacrament of love.*

2023 Annual Appeal

It is with profound gratitude and much pride, that I write this report for the 2023 Grand Annual Appeal. Our statistics are as follows:

Total # of households contacted:	3,334
Total # of responses:	659
Total % of participation:	19.77%
Total amount donated/pledged:	\$213,602.00
Total amount paid:	\$212,127.00
Average pledge:	\$324.13
% of pledged collected:	99.31 %

While the “official” appeal period has ended, anyone wishing to make a contribution to the Annual Appeal, may do so at any time. This is especially true as we look toward end-of-year contributions for 2023 tax purposes.

Please know my sincere thanks for your tremendous generosity to Transfiguration of the Lord Parish. The trust you have shown is humbling and your support is encouraging and very much appreciated. May you know God's fullest blessings!

~Fr. Costa



January Women's Guild Meeting

The Transfiguration of the Lord Parish Women's Guild will be meeting on Tuesday, January 9, 2024 at **6:00 p.m.** in the St. Mary's Parish Center. We are really excited about our next Guild Event. Back by popular demand will be our "**Brown Bag Auction**". We guarantee that this evening will be fun-filled with lots of laughter, fun, and great friendships as we ring in the New Year. All you need to bring is a brown bag with some sort of small gift in it (please no gently used gifts). Please ensure it is sealed and/or taped up but leave a corner open so the auctioneers can peek. We will raffle all the bags off that evening and you never know what you'll get! RSVP to Debbie Fitzgibbons at debbiefitzgibbons@gmail.com or (978) 884-1945 or Karen Finocchi at finocchik@hotmail.com or (508) 320-5555.

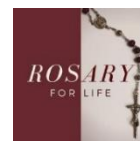


Knights of Columbus Monthly Meeting

Council #330 of the Knights of Columbus has been serving the Catholic Community of North Attleborough for 125 years. The Knights meet on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 7pm, in the St. Mary Church Hall. Please drop by on meeting nights if you'd like to learn more about the Knights. Council #330 is committed to assisting local charities that align with the values of our Faith such as the Parish, the Parish school, and Abundant Hope. Contact Jim Schromm with any questions: jim.schromm@verizon.net.

Rosary for Life

The Respect Life Committee of Transfiguration of the Lord Parish is pleased to announce that we will lead a Rosary for Life at 4:00 pm, prior to the 4:30 pm daily Mass in **Saint Mark Church** on the *first, second, fourth, and fifth Tuesday* of each month. The communal Rosary is also livestreamed for any participants who wish to join us remotely.



"Adopt-A-Family" ✨ An Advent Project



Please accept our sincere appreciation for your consistent generosity to the Adopt-A-Family project. Although many are struggling, so many families found ways to again be most generous to this effort. This year we provided for families who were especially in need of our collective love and support. Because of your unselfish assistance, we provided clothing for the children and parents. There were also books, games and the typical trappings of Christmas. In addition, we were able to provide assistance for utility bills and will be able to support some with assistance during the year. The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Transfiguration Parish provided enough food and goodies for all and delivered all the gifts just before Christmas. The success of this project is such an expression of love from all who sacrifice so that others may experience the wonderful magic that comes with this very blessed season of the year. May God Bless us all now and in the New Year.

Most gratefully, *Debbie Fitzgibbons and Betty Poirier*,
Adopt-A-Family Committee Members

Knights of Columbus Coat Drive: Thank You!



Thank you to all who donated to this year's drive! All donations will be given to the SVDP Clothing Center in Attleboro, which distributes clothing for free to those helped by our SVDP conferences here in North Attleborough and the surrounding communities. God bless you for your help.

Winter Storm Mass Policy



As we face the unpredictable New England winter season, I share our Winter Storm Mass Policy.

Sunday Mass

Should there be significant snowfall or extreme ice conditions on a weekend, especially if we have been warned or "encouraged" to stay off the roads, weekend Masses will be celebrated **ONLY** at Saint Mark Church. We will follow the usual Mass times, but all Masses will be moved to Stanley Street because (1) I live on that property and the Dominicans would not be driving from Providence to be with us, and (2) only one property will need to be plowed and shoveled in time for Mass. Please note: when we are told to stay off the roads because it is too dangerous to travel due to weather conditions, any Mass obligation does not hold. **STAY HOME** for your safety and the safety of others. The Lord certainly understands!

Daily Mass

When school is canceled or delayed due to winter weather, the daily Mass is also canceled. If the delay is on a Tuesday, we will have Mass on Tuesday afternoon. If there is an early dismissal of school due to winter weather on a Tuesday, the daily Mass on Tuesday afternoon is canceled.

I hope these directives are clear. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation. If you have any questions, please call the parish office.

Transfiguration of the Lord Parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society



Inspired by Gospel values, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, a Catholic lay organization, leads women and men to join to grow spiritually by offering person-to-person service to those who are in need or are suffering, in the tradition of its founder, Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, and patron, St. Vincent de Paul. The Society meets on the 2nd Thursday of the month in the parish hall in Saint Mary Church. Please join us!

Call for Assistance:

If you need assistance, please call the help line for our parish Saint Vincent de Paul Society. They can offer information about the types of assistance available. Please call 508-212-4755 for help or more information.

January 15: Pax Christi Event

The Pax Christi local group that meets at LaSalette Shrine will host an Interfaith Prayer Service for Global Peace on Martin Luther King Day, Monday, January 15th, 2024, at **11:00 am** at The National Shrine of Our Lady of La Salette, 947 Park St. in Attleboro MA. In this reflective service, we will come together to pray for peace and harmony in our fragile world. All are welcome to participate. For more information, email leawoodstar@yahoo.com.



Transfiguration of the Lord Respect Life Group Abundant Hope Baby Bottle Drive:



Please support Abundant Hope Pregnancy Resource Center by joining us in our Baby Bottle Drive. Please take a bottle **this** weekend and return it during the weekend of **Jan 20/21** with change, cash or a check (please make payable to Abundant Hope) with your most generous donation to help support young women and families in our community. In 2023, Abundant Hope helped over 1000 women with free services thanks to your generous donations!

Monthly Meeting:

The next meeting of the Respect Life Group will take place on Thursday, **February 1, 2024 at 6:30 pm in Sacred Heart Church's Library**. We hope to see you there!

Faith Formation Program 2023-2024

Director of Religious Education ~ Mrs. Elaine Corvese
508-695-3823; transfigurationreled@gmail.com

Faith Formation Office hours:
Monday – Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Class Schedule:

January 7th: **Grades 1 & 2**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

January 7th: **Grade 9**, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

January 8th: **Grade 7**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

January 21st: **Grades 1 & 2**, 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.
(following the 8:00 a.m. Mass)

January 21st: **Grade 9**, 6:00 – 7:30 p.m.

January 22nd: **Grade 8**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

January 29th: **Grade 5**, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Second Grade Parent meeting will be held on Sunday, January 21, 2024 at 9:15 a.m. at Saint Mark Church. Important information regarding the Sacraments of First Reconciliation and First Holy Communion will be discussed.



Ninth grade parent and candidate meeting to be held on Sunday, January 21, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at Saint Mark Church. Important information regarding the sacrament of Confirmation will be discussed.



Please see website: saintmaryna.com for the 2023-2024 calendar for all grades. Faith Formation classes are held at Saint Mark Church hall in Attleboro Falls.

Cancellation of classes: In the event of cancellation of classes due to inclement weather, the Faith Formation Office will notify parents/guardians by email and the cancellation notice will also be on the answering machine of the Faith Formation office at 508-695-3823. Please note: if the North Attleboro School Department cancels school, Faith Formation classes are automatically canceled.

Please Pray for our Deceased:

H. William "Bill" Donnelly

Denise Giers

Carol A. Onoyan



*Eternal rest grant unto our beloved dead, O Lord.
Let perpetual light shine upon them.*

BAPTISM



This Monday, January 8th, we observe the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. Please remember all those who have been baptized in our parish over the past year:

Jamaya Elizabeth Tisbay Freeman, Madison Everly Hamilton, Samantha Noel Curley, Charlotte Frances Hillard, Keegan Patrick McLaughlin, Gabriella Maria Custodio, Tatum John Foster, Declan Alexander Garza, Ariya Ann Kelly, Norah Mae MacKenzie, Mateo Paulo Mendes, Aoife Mary Norris, Margaret Grace Lanetti, Alexandra Kate Keenan, Grayson Christopher Markey, Rose Shea Riley, Everett James Luca, Avery Marie Lucia, Julianna Belle Schoenewolff, Matthew James Castonguay, Weston James Gartman, Cecelia Ann Birch, Layla Maria Finocchi, Axel Carlos Lopes Gomes, Ashley Victoria Lopes Gomes, Abigail Elizabeth Flynn, Penelope Layne Demers, Felicity Dean Krafka, Jackson Daly Persechini, Vivian Dahlia Zeng, Ava James Blase, Joseph Michael Genovese, Lainey Elizabeth Moroney, Ellie Rose O'Neill, Charlee Jean Servant, Cora Michael O'Donoghue, John Joseph Farroba, Lily Mae Schofield, Jack Ramsay Webb, Fionn Trevor Comerford, Olive Grace Fitton, Jameson Jarrett Mooney, and Finley Eileen Tainsh

Our prayerful best wishes are extended to all of our parishioners who celebrated the Sacrament of Baptism in 2023, and to their families and sponsors.



Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School Open House:

We cordially invite you to explore more about our school during our **Open House** on **Sunday, January 21, 12:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.** This event welcomes current SMSH families, as well as new and prospective families. We look forward to seeing you there!

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Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School Alumni:

Did you, your child, grandchild or other relative graduate from St. Mary's School, Sacred Heart School or Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School? If so, please go to the Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School website www.smshschool.com and under the Alumni tab fill in the form on reconnect with SMSH. We appreciate your support in this important part of our school's history!

SAINTS

SAINT MARY-SACRED HEART

SMSH Saints - Where are they now?



Mary Kate Petterson has truly made Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School part of her story. She entered Saint Mary-Sacred Heart in the fall of 1999 as a kindergartener. She loved school and as a fifth grader in 2005, inspired by all the exceptional teachers at SMSH, Mary Kate decided she too would become a teacher. After graduating from SMSH in 2008, she went on to Bishop Feehan High School. She continued to work toward her goal of becoming a teacher by volunteering in the faith formation program at Sacred Heart Church and doing her senior service at SMSH.

Upon graduating from Feehan in 2012, Mary Kate furthered her education and dedication to service at Assumption College in Worcester. While there, she made the decision to teach in urban settings, hoping to continue to serve those in need, most especially immigrant families new to our country. Mary Kate graduated magna cum laude from Assumption College in 2016 and continued her education in the Urban Catholic Teacher Corps at Boston College. While earning a degree from BC, Mary Kate worked full-time teaching first grade at Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy in Lower Mills (Dorchester). SMSH was evident in every aspect of her teaching! From marshmallow feet to helping her little ones go down stairs one foot at a time, she fostered independence in her students just as all her wonderful SMSH teachers had done for her. In 2018, with her M.Ed. from Boston College completed, Mary Kate went to work in Boston Public Schools and earned another teaching license in ESL (English as a Second Language).

Mary Kate and her husband, Marc, live in Walpole and are members of Blessed Sacrament Church. Now teaching ESL in Norwood Public Schools, Mary Kate works each day with young newcomers to our country with an open heart and the promise of the very best education and support she can provide in the same ways her Saint Mary-Sacred Heart School teachers did for her.

Contact us at www.smshschool.com and enroll your student today!

Saint of the Week: St. Marguerite Bourgeoys

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys was born in Troyes, France in 1620, and died in Montreal in 1700. She is renowned for her work, her spirituality, and her impact on society and the Church in North America.

As one of the older girls of a devout Catholic middle class family, St. Marguerite had to assume the responsibility for the household when her mother died. At the age of twenty, she had a conversion experience during a religious procession that profoundly influenced her future mission and focused her values. She felt singled out by the Blessed Virgin, and in response she joined a local group of women who gathered to do charitable work as an extension of a cloister in Troyes. St. Marguerite served as leader of this extern group, and as her service taught the children in the poor section of town. In 1653, Paul de Maisonneuve, founder of Montreal, passed through Troyes and invited St. Marguerite to join him in Ville Marie as a lay teacher, to instruct the children of the colonists and of the Native Americans. In June 1653, she sailed from Nantes on a three-month voyage to the New World.

St. Marguerite became the official guardian to the “filles du roi”, young orphan girls sent by the monarch to establish new families. She lodged them in her own home, served as a matchmaker, and prepared them for their new life as pioneers. Her signature appears as a witness on many of the early marriage contracts in Montreal. As a result of these activities she was affectionately referred to as “the Mother of the Colony”. St. Marguerite made three trips back to France to recruit other women to join her in her work of education and to obtain civil approbation from the king.

St. Marguerite's apostolic spirituality was a special gift to the Church. She was a woman of action in her time and left a mark on the history of Montreal and education in Canada. She was a woman of faith and deeply committed to the service of the Gospels. She was personally motivated by the missionary journeying of Mary in service to her cousin, Elizabeth, and desired to form a group of uncloistered women who would imitate Mary in this mystery of the Visitation. St. Marguerite had an exceptional and practical love of God and neighbor. She had a great desire to serve the Church in its most local form, the parish. She exhorted her extern congregation of educators to be “daughters of the parish” – to worship with the people and use the local church as a source of spiritual nourishment.

Her Congregation received Church approbation in 1698 and at that time pronounced vows as uncloistered religious. Today the Congregation de Notre Dame numbers 2600 sisters in North America, Japan, Latin America, and the Cameroons in service to the people of God in the spirit of the Visitation. Marguerite's religious community served for many years in the Diocese of Providence in parish schools and at St. Mary Academy of the Visitation on Broadway in Providence. Two members of this community served in the Catholic Schools Office of our own Diocese in the 1980's and 90's. The US province headquarters is located in Fairfield, Connecticut.

St. Marguerite Bourgeoys

Feast Day: January 12th



“God is not satisfied if we preserve the love we owe our neighbor; we must preserve our neighbor in the love he ought to have for us.”

-St. Marguerite Bourgeoys (January 12th)

Baptismal Preparation Classes Have Resumed



Parents requesting the baptism of their child should be registered members of the parish who attend weekend Mass here at Transfiguration of the Lord Parish on a weekly basis. Please pick up and complete one of the Parish Census forms if you have not already registered with the parish. If this is your first Baptism here at Transfiguration Parish, parents are asked to attend a brief baptismal preparation session. The next session will be held on Sunday, **January 14 at 12:30 pm** in the **Sacred Heart Meeting Room**. Advanced registration is required. Please call Martha at the parish office or email at stmaryna@noozi.com for more information.



Saint Padre Pio once said:

“A thousand years of enjoying human glory is not worth even an hour spent sweetly communing with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.”

Please join us at **Saint Mark church** on Friday, **February 2nd**, beginning at 9:00 a.m. and ending at 6:00 p.m. with Benediction. Remember, as we share in the work of Redemption, so will we be rewarded with our own redemption.

For more information call Joanne Regali (508-643-3821) or Arlene Hall (508-801-2243). Please leave a message if the call is not answered immediately.

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord - January 7, 2024

READINGS FOR THE WEEK



First Reading

A reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the LORD shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.



Responsorial Psalm

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

O God, with your judgment endow the king,
and with your justice, the king's son;
He shall govern your people with justice
and your afflicted ones with judgment.

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Justice shall flower in his days,
and profound peace, till the moon be no more.
May he rule from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts;
the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute.
All kings shall pay him homage,
all nations shall serve him.

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

For he shall rescue the poor when he cries out,
and the afflicted when he has no one to help him.
He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor;
the lives of the poor he shall save.

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Second Reading

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Ephesians

Brothers and sisters:

You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

*We saw his star at its rising
and have come to do him homage.*

R. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

† A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
Glory to you, O Lord.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: *And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel.*" Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.



THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Givers and Receivers:

Today's liturgy celebrates the marvelous magnanimity of God. We hear the familiar story of the child Jesus receiving gifts, but we are the ones who are gifted. For our part, we must be like the magi and not only be open to the gift but be willing to go after it, even in the dead of winter.

Comment:

The prophet Isaiah sings the song of Israel's great return from exile. Jerusalem pulses with great and splendid light. Jerusalem is irresistible; it draws those who are far off as a light draws the moth. Everyone from vulnerable nursing mothers to the powerful kings moves toward Jerusalem. The city itself is urged simply to look up and behold that this is truly so.

The places Isaiah names are places where the Jewish people had scattered. The sons and daughters of Ishmael and Esau, first named in Genesis 25, are the first to come from Midian and Ephah and Sheba. An exotic picture is set before us. These royal and rich peoples come in caravans of camels. They come bearing gifts fit for royalty—gold and frankincense.

The second reading takes this great return one step further. It was Paul who first understood that God's salvation in Jesus was available to Jews and Gentiles alike. Those who came to the new Jerusalem, the Church, came from the ends of the earth. One of the mysteries at the heart of God's dealing with Israel was that salvation is meant for the whole world. Israel was to announce and bring salvation to the very ends of the earth. This was embedded in its Scriptures and made manifest in Jesus. Paul insists in his letter to the church at Ephesus that in Christ Jesus Jews and Gentiles together share the same body, possess the same inheritance, receive the same promise, and share in the good news.

Matthew takes great pains throughout this Gospel to connect the Old Testament with the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The first two chapters of his Gospel are filled with allusions to the Jewish Scriptures. The genealogy that opens this Gospel reveals its intention to set forth a testament to Jesus as fulfillment of God's promise. We learn he is born of a virgin; he is "God with us"; he is from Nazareth. Now, the magi focus on the prophecy from Micah, which identifies a great king from Bethlehem.

The magi, those great seekers, stand for all who come to faith in Christ Jesus. In the Near Orient, the star was a sign of some kind of divinity. The unique star sighted by the magi focused their attention and set them on their journey. The Greek word *epiphaneia* signifies the manifestation or appearance of a god or of divine intervention. The term also applied to the appearance of kings. The magi meant to find out about this new god or king. They began their arduous journey bearing rich gifts. They were in turn richly rewarded.

Reflection:

Pilgrims know they are in a geographical place and have a family and friends, a job, a collection of possessions. But they do not exactly feel at home. Something is missing; an itch needs scratching. So, pilgrims set out in search of what is missing. They do not necessarily wander the earth. They do not even have to leave home, actually. But they search, and they search purposefully. They follow their lights—insight and the advice, guidance, and direction of those they trust.

The magi were pilgrims—traveling pilgrims. But another character in this story, Herod, was firmly ensconced in his home place. He liked his position of power and meant to keep it. He didn't want any usurpers. He wanted only to know what was necessary to keep that power. He was not looking for anything else.

The magi, those pilgrims and seekers, finally descended from the East into a temperate valley and to the unlikely village of Bethlehem. They found their spiritual home there. When they entered the humble home of the Holy Family, they found their gift, their reward, their souls' longing. They knew it and expressed it in their gifts befitting royalty—gold and frankincense—and the added gift that hinted at mortality, myrrh. They quietly slipped by the boundaries of the country and returned to their homeland by a new route. And their souls also knew a new way.

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Reflections for the Week beginning Sunday, January 7, 2024



Invest time each week to
expand your vocabulary and
deepen your faith.

07 January 2024

WORD OF THE WEEK

Preparation of the Gifts

\pre-pə-'rā-shən |
'gifts\

The set of ceremonial actions at Mass preceding the Eucharistic Prayer and Holy Communion. Includes dressing of the altar; bringing forward the bread and wine; and the community's personal sacrifices taken up in the collection. Formerly called the Offertory. The community offers a song of praise for all these gifts as the priest washes his hands in a purification rite.

Pronunciation: <https://tinyurl.com/Take5-preparation-gifts>

CONTEXT

The **Preparation of the Gifts** allows time for the preparation of our hearts. Like the Magi bearing gifts and doing homage to Majesty, we bring our gifts and our praise to the Table.
—Father Paul Boudreau

God has first blessed us with the gift of creation. Humans take those gifts given, wheat and grapes, and, using our creativity, make bread and wine. Then, we bring those gifts we have received and labored over to present them at the Altar/Table that they might be transformed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Finally, we receive them back in Communion. The procession of the **Gifts** says, in essence, "Behold the gifts God has given us!"
—Father Roc O'Connor, S.J.

WHY IT MATTERS

We take great care preparing other festive tables for our most cherished gatherings. Could we do less for the table where the Real Presence of Christ will be made tangible for us?

From the General Instructions of the Roman Missal: The altar or Lord's table, which is the center of the whole Liturgy of the Eucharist, is made ready. . . . The offerings are then brought forward. It is a praiseworthy practice for the bread and wine to be presented by the faithful (73).

RELATED WORDS

Corporal | purificator | Missal | Chalice

QUESTION OF THE WEEK

Is Epiphany about giving or getting gifts?

"We three kings of Orient are/ bearing gifts we traverse afar." Nowhere in the gospels does it claim there are three kings. They are magi, hereditary priests of the ancient Medes and Persians. At least the carol gets one thing right: this wise group does bear gifts. Gold symbolizes wealth and power. Frankincense, used in prayer, represents the divine Presence. Myrrh prepares bodies for burial. It's an ominous sign that would make a startling gift. . . . But they were appropriate honors for the King of the Universe, the Divine Son, and the crucified Lord.

We also bear Jesus gifts at every Eucharist: bread, wine, and our financial sacrifice. "Made by human hands," these gifts are transformed and returned to us as the Body and Blood of Christ, and then redistributed for those in need.

More gifts come to us by way of this shared Table. Grace pours out on the assembly. Grace forgives sin, and rescues us from every evil. This is one gift you don't want to put at the bottom of a closet.

—Alice Camille, from *Questions Catholics Ask* <https://tinyurl.com/QCA-presentation-gifts>

REFLECTION OF THE WEEK

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (JANUARY 7)

Remember our migrant roots

America was once renowned as the land where people could come to breathe freely. Scripture reminds us of the considerable gifts that migrant people bring with them. Whether king or commoner, each person offers what they have to make the community more dynamic.

READINGS: saiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12 (20 <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010724.cfm>). "Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you."

FAITH IN ACTION

Let's welcome the newcomer and remember that the infant Jesus was once a migrant, too.



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