

# THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

## LECTIONARY #20

### READING I Isaiah 60:1-6

#### 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.

Isaiah = Ī-ZAY-uh

You are reading poetry that conveys joy enough to celebrate the end of war, the coronation of a king, and the cure of a dread disease.

Each couplet repeats or develops in the second line what was said in the first. This characteristic of biblical poetry adds texture and color. Enjoy the repetitions and increase energy from the first line to the second. Dark and gloom give way to light! IMagine the countless visitors, from paupers to royalty, who have traveled to this land that Isaiah extols. Isaiah addresses Jerusalem as if it were a person. Let your tone convey that intimacy.

Now, it is we, Christ's Body, who must radiate the light of his glory.

"Dromedaries" are single-humped camels.

Midian = MID-ee-uhn

Ephah = EE-fah

Sheba = SHEE-buh

"Gold and frankincense" will echo again in today's Gospel. The reading ends as it began, praising God.

**READING I** Isaiah offers the people hope as they rebuild after the exile, and he paints a marvelous picture of a new Jerusalem, resplendent with a pilgrimage of peoples who "have gathered, come to you"—to Jerusalem—earlier humiliated, now radiant with joy, because the Lord dawns in her and "his glory shall appear upon you." The prophet combines the exaltation of Jerusalem and her universal destiny. God's light shining upon it, within it, makes the city light for the nations. The exiles begin to return; countless people stream toward the city; an

abundance of good things flows in for their benefit. Jerusalem, bearing the marks of Babylon's devastation, is really a poor reality for all the wealth described. God's power has a predilection for the weak and the small. The prophet focuses on the theological city of Jerusalem, home to all peoples. He personifies Jerusalem as a woman who radiates light, while darkness and clouds envelop other nations. Jerusalem, like a mother, gladly welcomes all people as her returning children.

**READING II** The image of the ideal king preserved by the chosen people becomes God's plan for the realization of the hopes of all creation to unite all peoples. The author expresses the breadth of this unity by coining words with the prefix *syn* – ("together" or "co-"). The Gentiles are now "co-heirs" with the Jews, members of the same body ("co-bodies"), "partners" in the promise. The reign is more marvelous than people imagined. Ephesians presents revelation as a unifying process initiated by the Father, realized by Jesus Christ, and developed by the Spirit in the

For meditation and context:

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 (11)

**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.

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.

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.

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.

READING II Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

**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**.

GOSPEL Matthew 2:1-12

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew**

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**?"

The language here is somewhat obscure. Paul is declaring that he was given a special "revelation," but what that is won't be shared until the end of the text.

What was revealed to Paul was also kept hidden from former generations. Stress the role of the Spirit in enlightening the "apostles and prophets."

Here we have the truth formerly hidden but now revealed! You tell us four things: Gentiles are "coheirs," "members," and "copartners," and it's the "gospel" that makes that possible.

This is a suspenseful story of menace averted through God's providence. Don't rush the important details that provide the story's context.

They've traveled far based solely on the testimony of a star.

Church. The Father initiates the plan of salvation, and he has entrusted to the apostle "the stewardship of God's of grace . . . for your benefit," which is ultimately "the mystery . . . which has now been revealed by the Spirit." Gentiles are joint heirs of the inheritance, members of the same body and beneficiaries of Jesus' promise.

**GOSPEL** The evangelist tells of a star that appears in the night, disappears, and then reappears. He tells of a dream that warns the Magi of the danger of returning to their homeland by the same

route. A star and a dream. What is more tenuous than a dream or a star upon which to fix a project of life? After the angel of the Annunciation and the dream of Joseph, God's wonders continue, so we can fix our faith on the one who comes, on the basis of the testimony of a guiding star and a dream. God addresses humanity, even as God respects human freedom. The signs God sends have a character of light and clarity but, at the same time, of subtlety. Throughout the Gospels, from the Annunciation to the Resurrection, there is always room for uncertainty and the chal-

lenge of faith. What would the Apostle Thomas answer to the report of the Bethlehem star, he who said, "If I do not put my finger in the wound of the nails, if I do not put my hand in the wound open in his side, I will not believe"? Yes, God reveals himself with fine distinction, but we still need an individual to welcome and offer him shelter.

The report of the Magi instructs us. How can wise women and men abandon everything—safety, home, and comfort—and set out on the road to who-knows-where, expose themselves to dangers and