

Dear Padre,

A friend who is a fundamentalist insists Epiphany happened exactly as it says in the Bible. I say there's no way it could have. Who is right?

Catholics believe each book of the Bible needs to be appreciated according to the principles of its own literary genre. We don't look to the Gospels for modern critical history or unbiased biographical/reportorial fact-telling.

The four Gospels were written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Each Gospel writer uses human skill to craft a true story, presenting the saving mystery of our Lord's life, death, and resurrection so that readers may come to know Christ, share his life, and be saved.

Every story in the Gospels is shaped to communicate saving truth, but not every story is told as a direct "just the facts, ma'am" report of sequential events. So there is a saving sense in which, yes, the Epiphany happened exactly as it says in Matthew 2:1-12. And there is a more literal sense in which, no, the Epiphany probably did not happen exactly as it's recounted.

What is most certain is the Gospel's saving message of the birth of our true king, the light to all nations, before whom we offer homage and who, when we encounter him, will change our lives and send us home in a new path.

Fr. Matthew Allman, CSSR
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A WORD FROM Pope Francis

As we begin the New Year, may we discover anew that faith demands worship....For worship involves making an exodus from the greatest form of bondage: slavery to oneself. Worship means putting the Lord at the center, not ourselves.

EPIPHANY HOMILY, JANUARY 6, 2020

Calendar

Monday

JANUARY 4

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton,

Religious

1 Jn 3:22-4:6

Mt 4:12-17, 23-25

Tuesday

JANUARY 5

St. John Neumann,

Bishop

1 Jn 4:7-10

Mk 6:34-44

Wednesday

JANUARY 6

Christmas Weekday

1 Jn 4:11-18

Mk 6:45-52

Thursday

JANUARY 7

Christmas Weekday

1 Jn 4:19-5:4

Lk 4:14-22a

Friday

JANUARY 8

Christmas Weekday

1 Jn 5:5-13

Lk 5:12-16

Saturday

JANUARY 9

Christmas Weekday

1 Jn 5:14-21

Jn 3:22-30

Sunday

JANUARY 10

Baptism of the Lord

Is 55:1-11

1 Jn 5:1-9

Mk 1:7-11

Our Parish COMMUNITY

January 3, 2021

The Epiphany of the Lord (B)

Is 60:1-6

Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6

Mt 2:1-12

Do You See What I See?

Today's Gospel answers this question quite **definitively**: No! Not everyone saw the guiding star in the sky. Not even those who, presumably, knew the prophecy found in the reading from Isaiah. That ancient prophet announced to the people of Jerusalem: "Your light has come" (Isaiah 60:1). In fact, he promised them they would be so embraced by that light, they themselves would shine brightly with its radiance. But when the time came, not everyone saw it. Or, having seen it, they did not recognize it.

The people of Jesus' time were not ignorant of these prophecies. They knew what they meant and to whom they referred. Consequently, when the stargazers who saw the light inquired about it, those to whom they inquired knew where to send them. So what was the problem? Why were those men in Jerusalem not excited about the star? Very simply, a new king meant a rival king, and those who had power weren't eager to relinquish it.

We know that not everyone in Israel rejected Jesus. Shepherds had already thrilled at this birth. Someone in Bethlehem had opened his home to this child and his parents. Now we add to them the stargazers from another country. It seems the invitation to come to him is extended to all: political and religious leaders, the unsophisticated and marginalized, the established homeowner, the foreigners in their midst. They are all asked: "Did you see what I saw? What do you think of him?"

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA



*All from Sheba shall come
bearing gold and frankincense,
and heralding the praises of the LORD.
ISAIAH 60:6*

FOR Reflection

- How open are you to new thinking?
- God's invitation is offered to all. Is there any group of people you might have marginalized?



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 Altar Society President, Nanette Rice 355-7676
 Tom Bachman, Grand Knight 640-8259
 Prayer Line Starters, Allison Bushek 355-1696
 & Nanette Rice 355-7676

MASS INTENTIONS FOR THE WEEK

Monday, Jan. 4 8:00 a.m. LaVera Strecker
Tuesday, Jan. 5 8:00 a.m. For our Country
Thursday, Jan. 7 6:00 p.m. Guebelles' Grandchildren
Friday, Jan. 8 8:00 a.m. Special Intention
Saturday, Jan. 9 4:00 p.m. For the Parishes' People
Sunday, Jan. 10 9:00 a.m. Pastor's Intention

January 2, 4:00 p.m. Tom Bachman
 January 3, 9:00 a.m. Karen Burden
 January 9, 4:00 p.m. Gwen Waechter
 January 10, 9:00 a.m. Julie Kaps
 January 16, 4:00 p.m. Debbie Frederick
 January 17, 9:00 a.m. K of C Member
 January 23, 4:00 p.m. Tom Bachman
 January 24, 9:00 a.m. Mike Broeckelman

Thank you so much for your ministry!



VOCATION VIEW

God is not made manifest in magnificence, but in the small and the ordinary. Use your talents to manifest God's ever faithful love for His people. (Is. 60:1-6)

STEWARDSHIP THOUGHT

The three wise men who came from the East to pay homage to the infant Jesus brought Him rich gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh as part of their worship. What gifts have I brought to this celebration to offer to the newborn Savior?

A FEW WORDS FROM THE PASTOR



MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR !

My friends, the Church keeps the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord today. The Epiphany is one of three great feasts of the Church in which Jesus is revealed to the world. Sometimes I wish that God would act as he did in the past, that he would provide us with our own incredible stories of faith, like the Magi who go to great lengths to follow a star and help us find our God. Why doesn't God do that for us like he did long ago? But then I wonder, Who's to say he doesn't? One of the great traps we can fall into is believing that God doesn't act like he used to, doesn't reveal himself to us as he did in the past.

And yet, the great truth of the Incarnation is that God doesn't just "pop-in" once in a while, or reveal himself to us once in a while, or do something miraculous once in a while. Rather, God came to us in the person of Jesus two thousand years ago --- and never left. He's still with us --- loving us, guiding us, revealing himself to us, saving us --- all those same things from the past --- even providing us with our own Magi.

Who are they? They are men and women who:

See the good in every person.

Find hope in difficult circumstances.

Embrace the messiness of life rather than run from it.

Regard helping someone as a gift, not a burden.

Believe that tomorrow can be better than today. The Magi teach us to see God where we least expect him. May we strive to see what they see, not only in a crib, but around every corner and in every person. Magi in this time and place? Maybe that's exactly who God is calling us to be.

Thank you so much for your love, generous gifts and cards filled with festive words of hope and joy, and especially your prayers to me this Christmas! I have been blessed and honored to work in these wonderful parishes with so many down to earth awesome people. May, Mary-the Mother of the Lord and our Mother, watch over you and embrace you all in her loving arms. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to each and everyone! Fr. Peter Tran

COLLECTION for December 27, 2020: Envelopes: \$1,000.00; Loose: \$154.15; Online Giving: \$5,247.47; Total \$6,401.62; Average Weekly Expense: \$1,989.55. Income over/under (+4,412.07) *Thank you so much to our faithful stewards for supporting our parish, diocese, and worldwide Church.*

JANUARY CLASSES –CONFIRMATION & FIRST COMMUNION

Confirmation: January 3,10, 17,24,& 31 — First Communion: January 6,13,20, & 27

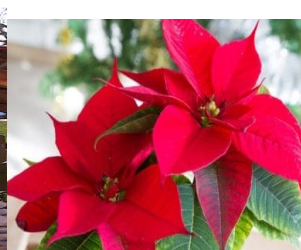
Please keep our First Communion and Confirmation students, their parents, and their catechists in your prayers for their safety and perseverance in faith.

THANK YOU Our church was decorated for Christmas on December 15 by many volunteers who share their time and talents. We would like to say “THANK YOU” all who helped decorate the church for Christmas this year.

CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS We will be taking down Christmas decorations on Monday, January 11 at 5:30 p.m. Your help would be appreciated. Thank you.

CHRISTMAS FLOWER DONATIONS Thank to all who generously contributed to the Christmas Flower this year. Thanks to All and God Bless!

In MEMORY/IN HONOR OF...



Family Member—Req. by Karen Burden

Berning & McKinney Families—Reg. by Steve & Debbie Berning

Elizabeth Hughes, David & Michelle Bergkamp, Keather Vittetau, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Scchrufner, Anna & Wilfred Bergkamp—Reg. by Alvin & Suellen Berkamp

Loren & Elenora Laane Family, Clem & RoseMarie Guebelle Family, Urb & Pauline Steinke Family –Req. by Steve & Marge Lane

The Rice & Cahoj Families—Req. by Stan & Nan Rice; and An Anonymous Cash Donation.

UNDERSTANDING THE GOSPEL OF THE WEEK (Matthew 2: 1-12)

The magi In the fifth century BC the Greek historian Herodotus wrote that the magi, originally from Medes, exercised a priestly role. They also prophesied and interpreted dreams. In truth, we don't know for sure who they were. Our uncertainty about the identity of the magi enhances the wonder and drama of their visit.

The star Matthew presents the magi as being able to interpret celestial events. At the time of Jesus, many people believed that the appearance of a star, a comet, or a planet was a sign. In this case, the star signified that a future king had been born. Some biblical scholars also see a connection to the pagan prophet Balaam. He described as a star advancing from Jacob someone who would defeat the enemies of Israel (Numbers 24:17).

Kings As current king of the Jews, Herod is shaken by the news that a potential usurper has been born. The negative reaction of all Jerusalem (v.3) points ahead to the ultimate rejection of Jesus, as does Herod's attempt to kill the child (v.16f). The magi, meanwhile, offer the child gifts as was customary when visiting a monarch. These gifts recall the prophecy from our first reading.

Homage When entering the presence of a ruler, it was customary to prostrate oneself or to bow down (v.11). The magi's obeisance foreshadows the worship of Jesus as Son of God (28:17). Their homage also points ahead to Jesus' command to his followers to make disciples of all nations (28:19). The magi represent the Gentiles who will be receptive to the story of Jesus. <https://oursundayreadings>

THE STORY OF MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

Mary's divine motherhood broadens the Christmas spotlight. Mary has an important role to play in the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. She consents to God's invitation conveyed by the angel (Luke 1:26-38). Elizabeth proclaims: “Most blessed are you among women and blessed is the *fruit of your womb*. And how does this happen to me, that *the mother of my Lord* should come to me?” (Luke 1:42-43, emphasis added). Mary's role as mother of God places her in a unique position in God's redemptive plan. Without naming Mary, Paul asserts that “God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4:4). Paul's further statement that “God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out ‘Abba, Father!’” helps us realize that Mary is mother to all the brothers and sisters of Jesus. Some theologians also insist that Mary's motherhood of Jesus is an important element in God's creative plan. God's “first” thought in creating was Jesus. Jesus, the incarnate Word, is the one who could give God perfect love and worship on behalf of all creation. As Jesus was “first” in God's mind, Mary was “second” insofar as she was chosen from all eternity to be his mother. The precise title “Mother of God” goes back at least to the third or fourth century. In the Greek form *Theotokos* (God-bearer), it became the touchstone of the Church's teaching about the Incarnation. The Council of Ephesus in 431 insisted that the holy Fathers were right in calling the holy virgin *Theotokos*. At the end of this particular session, crowds of people marched through the street shouting: “Praised be the *Theotokos!*” The tradition reaches to our own day. In its chapter on Mary's role in the Church, Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church* calls Mary “Mother of God” 12 times. Other themes come together at today's celebration. It is the Octave of Christmas: Our remembrance of Mary's divine motherhood injects a further note of Christmas joy. It is a day of prayer for world peace: Mary is the mother of the Prince of Peace. It is the first day of a new year: Mary continues to bring new life to her children—who are also God's children.

(WWW.franciscanmedia.org)

COVID-19 VACCINES ‘MORALLY ACCEPTABLE’ WHEN NO ALTERNATIVES ARE AVAILABLE (by Courtney Mares)

Vatican City, Dec 21, 2020 / 10:50 am MT (CNA)

The Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith stated Monday that it is “morally acceptable” to receive COVID-19 vaccines produced using cell lines from aborted fetuses when no alternative is available.

In a note issued Dec. 21, the CDF said that in countries where vaccines without ethical problems are unavailable to physicians and patients -- or where their distribution is more difficult due to special storage or transport conditions -- it is “morally acceptable to receive Covid-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.”

This does not in any way imply a legitimization of the grave evil of the practice of abortion or that there is a moral endorsement of the use of cell lines proceeding from aborted fetuses, the Vatican congregation said.

As COVID-19 vaccines begin to be distributed in some countries, questions have arisen regarding the connection of these vaccines to aborted fetal cell lines.

The mRNA vaccines developed by Moderna and Pfizer are not produced with aborted fetal cell lines, although aborted fetal cells were used in tests during the early states of vaccine design.

Three other leading vaccine candidates developed by AstraZeneca with Oxford University, Johnson & Johnson, and Novavax, are all produced using aborted fetal cell lines.

The CDF said that it had received multiple requests for guidance regarding the Covid-19 vaccines, “which in the course of research and production, employed cell lines drawn from tissue obtained from two abortions that occurred in the last century.”

It noted that there had been “diverse and sometimes conflicting” messages made in the media by bishops and Catholic organizations.

The CDF’s statement, approved by Pope Francis on Dec. 17, went on to say that the spread of the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 poses a grave danger and therefore the moral duty to avoid the remote passive material cooperation is not obligatory.

“It must therefore be considered that, in such a case, all vaccinations recognized as clinically safe and effective can be used in good conscience with the certain knowledge that the use of such vaccines does not constitute formal cooperation with the abortion from which the cells used in production of the vaccines derive,” the CDF said in the note signed by its head, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, and secretary, Archbishop Giacomo Morandi.

The Vatican congregation encouraged pharmaceutical companies and governmental health agencies to “produce, approve, distribute and offer ethically acceptable vaccines that do not create problems of conscience for either health care providers or the people to be vaccinated.”

“In fact, the licit use of such vaccines does not and should not in any way imply that there is a moral endorsement of the use of cell lines proceeding from aborted fetuses,” the note stated.

The CDF also stated that vaccination “must be voluntary,” while noting that those who refuse to receive vaccines produced with cell lines from aborted fetuses for reasons of conscience “must do their utmost to avoid ... becoming vehicles for the transmission of the infectious agent.”

“In particular, they must avoid any risk to the health of those who cannot be vaccinated for medical or other reasons, and who are the most vulnerable.

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD BLESS THIS NEW YEAR OF GRACE

Some things are worth taking the time to do. After enduring the manifold burdens of this past year, few of us will need persuading that the annual Epiphany Blessing of the Home is a ritual worth investing in. Gather your housemates if living with others. Download a home blessing ritual or create one yourself, using symbols especially meaningful to your participants. Which household items became especially significant during the pandemic and call for a special blessing? A cloth mask, a bar of soap, and Netflix may be featured as items of peculiar yet holy purpose in this year’s rites everywhere. (Prepare the Word)

SOLEMNIDAD DE LA EPIFANÍA DEL SEÑOR BENDECIR ESTE NUEVO AÑO DE GRACIA

Vale la pena tomarse el tiempo para hacer algunas cosas. Después de soportar las numerosas cargas de este último año, pocos necesitaremos convencernos de que la Bendición Anual de Epifanía del Hogar es un ritual en el que vale la pena creer. Reúne a tus compañeros si vives con otras personas. Descarga un ritual de bendición del hogar o crea uno tú mismo, usando símbolos especialmente significativos para los participantes. ¿Qué artículos del hogar se volvieron especialmente importantes durante la pandemia y requieren una bendición especial? Una máscara de tela, una pastilla de jabón y Netflix pueden aparecer como artículos con un propósito particular pero sagrado en los ritos de este año en todas partes.