

**THE EPIPHANY 2019**  
**SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH**  
**FATHER CRAIG LOONEY**  
**EPHESIANS 3.1 St. MATTHEW 2.1**



Gold...Frankincense and Myrrh...treasures offered to King Jesus...who was born in a stable...not in a palace.

Gold was as valuable to people in ancient times as it is today. King Solomon possessed vast quantities of Gold. Jesus...is our King.

Frankincense is the sap taken from an unattractive but hardy tree and allowed to harden. Incense was offered to God on a special incense altar in the Temple in Jerusalem...and it is offered to God in Church Jesus...is our God.

Myrrh is also a resin. Harvested from a thorny bush...it was used to make an ointment to anoint dead bodies...and had medicinal qualities. Jesus was given a mixture of wine and myrrh as he hung on the cross...Jesus our King and our God died for us.

*Epiphany* is the season we talk about the *striking appearances* Jesus makes...revealing to us who he is. The Epiphany is the natural extension of Christmas...when Jesus made his first striking appearance...not with blazing lights...but with humility...a fragile baby born in a stable in Bethlehem.

The account of the Magi's visit to Bethlehem is found only in Matthew's Gospel. They are not called "kings"...they are called "wise men" from the East. They were guided to Bethlehem by a bright shining star.

The word *Magi* comes from the Greek *magos* and means *magician*. They may have been priests of Zoroastrianism, the religion of the ancient Persian Empire, which is still practiced by about two million people in the world today.

These were no Las Vegas showmen pulling rabbits out of hats and making people disappear into thin air...tricks we associate with magicians today. These were men of great wisdom and knowledge who studied the stars...the Magi should be thought of as religious astronomers and astrologers.

It's often said God makes himself known to us in ways we understand. Angels made the

birth of Jesus known to shepherds and sang "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom he is pleased!" Shepherds understood angels and paid attention to their message of joy and hope.

God made himself known to the Gentile...non-Jewish Magi...by the striking appearance of a bright shining star. The wise men understood stars and started their long journey with eager anticipation. They were well-educated men who would have had access to the Hebrew Bible. There had been a Jewish presence in Ancient Persia for at least 800 years before the birth of Jesus. Perhaps they were familiar with the passage from Numbers..."And I see the nation of Israel. A king, like a bright star, will arise in that nation. Like a comet he will come from Israel".

The gifts the Magi brought with them were their treasures and were the best they had to offer King Jesus. God has given us the greatest treasure he has...his Son Jesus. We too have a treasure we want to see shine as a beacon for many years to come...Saint Joseph Parish.

Our parish faces significant challenges during 2019. Meeting those challenges will only be possible through the generosity of its parishioners. God has given us other treasures...our life, our health, our food, our money. God lets us keep 90% of our money...he asks we return 10% to him...not too much to ask considering what he has done for us.

The Magi were the first non-Jews Holy Scripture tells us witnessed God's plan for bringing all people to himself through Jesus. Saint Paul writes the Good News is for everyone to hear...God's blessings are available to all who wish to take advantage of what he offers.

How can we thank God for giving us such as treasure as Jesus? Attend Mass...give generously...pray for growth...love God and our neighbors. We want our parish and our lives to be *striking appearances* for Jesus...waiting with hope and expectation for his return...surrounded by clouds and bright white light.

And what a striking appearance that will be!

