

# Epiphany Homily Year C St Pius & St Anthony (2024)

I saw a Christmas card that displayed the Wise Men coming over a mountain and the card read, “The Wise **still** Seek Him” So we ourselves would be wise to never stop seeking & searching for deeper relationship to the Christ-child Jesus. And we can start on this feast of Epiphany, by focusing on those ‘journeying pilgrims’ of the Wise Men. Those men of faith, searching for their savior, Jesus. What strikes me most about them, is that 1) they were **willing to sacrifice** to find Him (*they didn’t just crawl out of bed one morning and say, ‘What you want do today guys, how about traveling to who knows where -Judea!’*), 2) they had been looking for something more, for a while (for them to notice this new largest star in the sky, they had to be charting the night sky for some time) and 3) they came ready to meet their God (those extravagant gifts already in hand). The Wise Men are great examples of what true ‘followers’ & seekers are! They are in it for eternity! So, we can be motivated to do a little more ‘seeking’ ourselves by their witness.

I want to take this Epiphany occasion to mention a little announcement about this special Jubilee year we have just entered (& we will be hearing a lot more about it as the year unfolds). On Christmas Eve Pope Francis opened the special Holy Door at the Vatican, to welcome in all pilgrims, to kick off the Jubilee Year of Hope! Jubilees always have a pilgrimage component – blessing the journey effort, to holy spaces in order to receive special graces. In our long view church history calendar, it is customary to have such special years every quarter of a century. So, here we are 2025! Maybe you wish to go to St Peter’s, but also we have designated Pilgrimage Churches much closer to home here.. They are: St. Stephen Cathedral, St. Romuald Parish, Hardinsburg, St. Leo, Murray St Francis de Sales Parish, Paducah, Marian Shrine at St. Joseph, Bowling Green & Holy Redeemer Parish, Beaver Dam. To receive the special graces indulgence, a person simply has to make the journey, celebrate reconciliation(confession-week before or after), celebrate mass, and pray in solidarity with the Holy Father’s intentions. But, Pope Francis mentions that if it is not possible to make the journey physically to a designated pilgrimage site, then “a charitable act/work of mercy such as *visiting the sick, elderly, or prisoner counts*” (*or feed hungry, house homeless etc*). *What I love about this allowance that the Pope is granting that such a work of service for neighbor qualifies as an ‘journey encounter with God’ (‘what you do for the least brother or sister, you are doing to Christ! Matt 25:40)*

*Visit a poor neighbor to receive grace, just as you visit a cathedral! So to everyone, Happy Holy Year of Hope!*

But back to the Wise Men in our epiphany gospel on their journey! Here are a couple of interesting “Whys” (questions for us to consider a moment) after hearing this account of their visit to Jesus, Mary & Joseph from Matthew 2:1-12 today.

- 1) Why do we say there are three of them when the reading doesn't say that?”
- 2) Why do we call them kings, when the reading doesn't say that?
- 3) Why do we say they came on Jan 6 or 12 days after birth, when the reading doesn't say that?

**First** why do we say ‘Three’ Wise Men? The verse (Matt 2:1) uses the word ‘magoi’ which is plural, as is seen when they say “We saw his star.....” so there is more than one for sure, and since there are ‘three gifts presented so why not, three wise men one each for gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Also there was a great visit scene from Genesis 18 when Abraham gets a holy visit from three angelic figures (or were the three actual God-Trinity?)

**Secondly** also, why do we call them ‘kings’? Well, ‘magoi’ indicates the high standing of them as studious scholars, aware of history and who take serious note of the sky, as well as being people of means (wealth) to take up this luxury of travel and offer such exorbitant gifts. But also prophecy of Psalm 72:10 says ‘kings of Tarshish and Sheba’, bring gifts-giving homage to God’s chosen ruler as their own too. Similarly, 1 Kings 10:2 tells of Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon, bringing gifts of 1) spices, 2) gold, and 3) precious stones (*Isaiah 60:6 specifically mentions caravans bringing gifts to God of frankincense and gold.*)

And **Thirdly**, why do we say they came Jan 6 or ‘12 days’ after Dec 25?

This detail of dating the event is a little more complex. It starts from the discrepancy between Luke and Matthew’s accounts. Luke gives the impression of Jesus’ birth in the out of the way place (‘laid in manger because no room at inn’ Luke 2:7, so we get the impression of the night, in temporary lodging, manger connotes animals around, maybe barn, stable, shed, cave?) So that is Jesus’ birth night (manger detail), but when the Magi meet who they called ‘newborn King’ Savior Jesus in Mt 2:2, when they meet him, present gifts and bow doing homage in Matt 2:11 it says “entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother” So this must be little later, to be a house-more permanent housing (after the traveling census crowds thin out Luke 2:3-4). But the whole Dec 25 date comes from an early church tradition written about by Tertullian (200 AD) repeated by St Augustine (300’s) that ***Jesus dies on the same date as his conception***

(leaves world in death on same day as his conception into world) 14<sup>th</sup> day of Nisan which was March 25 that years (so born 9 months later dec 25!)  
*Of course, an east-west debate arose early though about whether the 14<sup>th</sup> day of Hebrew Nisan west was same as 14<sup>th</sup> day of 1<sup>st</sup> spring month east (making it April 6?? Therefore, debate is it March 25 or April-and none months from then Dec 25 or Jan 6?*

*But I clearly see the symbolic point/meaning of Jesus conception into our world, being mirrored as the same day as his death- Jesus is God's Alpha and Omega, so his humbling for us as God entering our world, mirrors his humbling for us leaving our world- Jesus experienced human nature with us, birth to death! I see the significance symbolically-there's no argument.*

“Seek, and you will find (Matt 7:7). Faith makes it happen!

But above all, on this Feast of the Epiphany, the message for us is that those who are ready they receive a revelation! The prepared will prosper in grace.

The Wise Men did not just show up. They came ready. They brought their desire to encounter God, their drive for more, their deep longing to acknowledge the living God. They seek God. And they find Him. May we be more like them as we enter this year of journey ourselves, this Jubilee Year of Hope!