

St Pius & St Anthony Feast of Epiphany Homily 2026 Year A Matt

Bob Dylan sings, “Seen a shooting star tonight, and I thought of you” I don’t know if the wise men sing or not, but they see a new star rise, and more than think about it, they go to meet its source – a new king, a cosmic king, not only a universal king but **a king of the universe!** This is an epiphany, not only the insight that led the wise men, to seek their maker, the living God-born Christ in Bethlehem (we should all be ‘seekers’ like them)- but God’s drawing them there, through that brightest of a celestial star that itself **signs up** to mark/celebrate, and meet this king at His birth. The star moves too, going to Bethelehm. Verse 9 says that the star ‘preceded them...until it and stopped over the place.” The star gives it homage to the Jesus, also. But those wise men more than prove their faithful enthusiasm about finding this new king, not only by the great distance traveled by them which says a lot about their voluntary sacrifice in the quest itself to seek the power behind this marvelous sight in sky, but they also come prepared with gifts of gold frankincense and myrrh. Matthew adds a detail that after their disturbing (**disorienting**) consultation with Herod, they recalibrate by **looking up** again, and Matt 2:10 says “They were overjoyed at seeing the star” (*back on fruitful track again*)

The significance of this event, that the newborn Jesus receives visitors from the far east (*tradition identifies them as coming from the other known kingdom-empires of the world- India, Persia & Arabia*) acknowledging Him as king, and bearing such gifts, this is cosmic. Jesus is not just some new tribal chief, or longed-for local leader. No, if even the stars light up and ‘move’ in his direction, this King has come to rule everything, guide everyone, all over the universe. A King of Kings – which likely is why we hear of King Herod’s involvement here (this event signifies his dethronement basically -God’s judgement against His tyranny-(His version of a ‘the writing in the sky’ about the end of his rule-refer Daniel chapter 5). Herod is no leader -He is only about worshipping Himself. He doesn’t know his people (reflected in their fear - Mt 2:3) – He doesn’t know God or God’s Scripture (he has to call the scribes for information on prophecy - Mt 2:4) and he obviously can’t build coalitions (can’t work together with wise men--they cross him, not returning as asked—can’t power-share with this *newborn upstart* prince). Herod only knows force-as we tragically learn when he later massacres the innocent trying to eliminate Jesus, as a threat to his throne (Mt 2:16-18). This Herod was known for barbaric cruelty – killed three sons & at least one wife to keep his power (Roman historian Macrobius, recorded that of all people--Emperor Augustus said about him “It is better to be Herod’s pig than his son” (Saturnalia, 2:4:11) – Sad, but True! It was safer to be born in a barn (Jesus!) than in Herod’s palace (own family).

But to highlight Jesus' cosmic rule (even over Lords of the Earth) is likely why we end up in tradition calling the wise men '**Kings**' (Matt calls them 'magi' those who study watch closely nature-astrologers or scientists! Yet that same Greek word, was also used to describe a priestly caste within the religion of Zoroastrianism (Herodotus, Histories 1.132). In the popular song, they identify as "We Three Kings" as representatives of the lands they come from, so it can't be emphasized enough that by this foreign delegation showing up to 'give gifts' and 'do homage' to the 'newborn king of the Jews' (Mat 2:2), this signifies that Jesus is marked to 'lead the world', 'governing all people' and shepherding the whole universe (Isaiah 2:2 tells us that 'all nations shall stream toward the mount of the Lord's house'). And even creation, or nature bows toward Jesus – in the Star.

Every so often, this epiphany event seems to get verification, as modern astronomers project backward based on known orbits or movements of space bodies, that yes close to Jesus' birth date (3-4 BC), there was a conjunction, alignment of the planets Saturn, Mars and Jupiter. Maybe like this past February we saw a unique (smaller sight for sure, but still unique), when the 'planetary parade' of seven planets alongside each other, became visible in one night sky, almost lined like an arrow pointing across the sky! Of course, this past year was great year for even seeing the northern lights this far south, on good nights! We notice those things!

I am sure the wise men had their eye on this special sky-light for some time- & they might've even predictively anticipated its appearance (*they seem that studious*) Now I don't want to get something started, but if you are a skywatcher too, mark your calendars. I hear that April 13, 2029 will bring us a 1 in a 1000-year stellar event. The asteroid Apophis 99942 will pass by earth, a historic close approach-- less than 20,000 miles--just a tenth of the distance to the Moon--very visible! (But if such things worry you, don't look the meaning of its name up – it means 'chaos- 'destruction' & is it a cosmic joke that April 13, 2029 - it turns out to be Friday!)

But back to those wise men: As Jesus will later teach, "Seek, and you will find" (Matt 7:7). Faith, like the wise men acting on what they saw, faith makes good happen! I think that the sacrificial seekers of the Wise Men, demonstrate that those who are ready, they will receive a revelation! Those who are prepared, will prosper in grace! The Wise Men did not just show up. They came prepared = to offer homage, and to give what they had. They brought their desire for God, their drive for more. They sought God. And they found Him. As we enter this new year, may we be more like them, searching and seeking for a deepened encounter with the living God, born among us, Jesus our shepherd-king!