



Homily to be delivered by Deacon John A. Sarno on Sunday January 8, 2012  
at the 10:30 a.m. Mass at St. Catharine Roman Catholic Church in Glen Rock, New Jersey

**HOLY FAMILY (Cycle ABC)**

*Isaiah 60:1-6, 12-14; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11; 12-13; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6;*

*Matthew 2:1-12*

*The glory of the Lord shines upon you.*

*Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.*

*Now it has been revealed that the Gentiles are coheirs of the promise.*

*We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.*

Astronomers  
follow the movements  
of stars and planets  
to keep track of time.

Navigators and ancient travelers  
observed the stars  
in order to chart their location  
and their destination.

The Magi,  
the astrologers  
of our gospel reading,  
observed the stars  
in a similar fashion.

One star in particular  
led them to the Christ.

They followed a star  
that led them  
to a greater light.

They are led  
to the light of Christ.

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This light of Christ  
is good news.

We need  
neither astronomers  
nor navigators  
to tell us  
that during these days  
most time and  
most places  
are hidden in darkness.

In the Northern Hemisphere,  
particularly in the northernmost  
parts of the country,  
we spend these days surrounded  
by too much darkness.

Our days  
begin and end  
in darkness.

We leave for work  
in the dark  
and we come home  
again in the dark.

We rise before sun  
and do not settle  
in for the night  
until long after  
the sun has set.

For some people,  
that darkness  
is overwhelming.

Some people find  
that they need to spend  
part of the day  
next to  
specially prescribed lights  
so that the darkness  
does not overwhelm them.

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We spend these days  
surrounded by darkness.

Right alongside  
all of the parties and festivity  
of the season,  
so many people  
feel alone  
in the dark.

It is compounded  
if you find  
that you are spending  
these days  
before and after Christmas  
alone  
after the death  
of a loved one  
this past year.

My own family  
knows this darkness,  
with the passing  
of my mother-in-law Julianne

this time of year  
two years ago.

We know darkness.

Some of it  
is as simple  
as a child's petition  
that a night light  
be left on.

Some darkness  
is more profound.

There is a  
grandmother's fear  
that she might go blind.

There is a shadow  
of unexplained sickness  
that will not go away.

"See, darkness covers the earth,"  
Isaiah says,  
"and thick clouds cover the peoples."

We know the darkness.

Then Isaiah adds,  
“Upon you the Lord shines,  
and  
over you appears his glory.”

This is the light of Christ  
and it is good news.

We need the light of Christ  
in times and places  
of such darkness.

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Epiphany celebrates  
the light of Christ  
in our darkness.

The name Epiphany  
means literally,  
**“To shine out.”**

The magi are led  
by a star  
through the darkness

of their night.

They are led  
to a **greater light**  
that shines out  
for them.

It is the same light  
that shines out for **you**.

In the dark  
the light shines.

As the opening prayer proclaims,  
**“Your light is strong,  
your love is near.”**

In the northern plains,  
the darkness  
can be unrelenting.

As you travel  
along rural roads  
at night,  
the only break  
in the dark

is a house  
here or there  
and the light  
that comes from it.

Houses  
that are decorated  
for Christmas  
provide a particularly  
welcome and festive break  
in the dark.

The light  
that shines in the dark  
points travelers  
on their way.

Even the smallest light  
is an epiphany  
as it shines  
out in the dark.

As you continue to drive,  
you begin to anticipate  
the final break  
in the light

when you reach  
your destination  
and are surrounded by  
the light of home.

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Through  
our own darkness  
there is an epiphany.

The light of Christ  
shines out.

In the gospel reading,  
the Magi  
follow a star  
through their darkness.

They are led  
to the presence  
of a greater light.

The light  
is God's gift  
to them.

This celebration  
of the Epiphany  
proclaims  
that long before  
we could have found  
the way out  
of the darkness  
on our own,  
the light of Christ  
has come to us.

**“Rise up in splendor,  
your light has come . . .  
the glory of the Lord  
shines upon you.”**

That same light  
shines on all  
who find themselves  
and their days  
surrounded by darkness.

It is not  
just for those  
who have taken  
the first step

to try to stumble their way  
through the darkness  
and look for the light.

The light shines  
in this time  
and in this place.

It is for all of you  
and for everyone  
who has ever been  
overwhelmed  
by the darkness.

The reading from Ephesians  
highlights the fact  
that the light of Christ  
is for all.

Christ's light  
is not a  
tightly focused beam  
that shines on  
only a few.

The light

is for Jews and Gentiles  
as Ephesians sees it.

The light has come  
and reached into  
the farthest corners  
of the world.

It shines wherever darkness  
has settled on people.

It is the strong light  
and nearness of Christ's love  
shining out  
for all and for you.

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The Magi were led  
by the light  
of a star  
and they were led  
to a **greater light**,  
the **light of Jesus Christ**.

In response  
to the light of Christ  
that shone for them  
they offered their gifts:  
gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Now  
that the greater light,  
the light of Christ  
shines in **our lives**,  
**what shall we offer?**

Christina Rosetti's poem,  
"In the Bleak Mid-Winter,"  
hints at **our own offering**.

Rosetti ponders  
the gift of Jesus Christ  
and wonders  
what she might  
be able to offer.

"If I were a shepherd,  
I would bring a lamb;  
If I were a wise man,

I would do my part;  
Yet what I can  
I give him,  
**Give my heart.**”

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I would like to close  
with some food  
for thought on  
The Star of Bethlehem.

Scholars debate whether  
the Star of Bethlehem  
is a legend  
created by the early church  
or a miracle  
that marked  
the advent of Christ.

Is it possible  
that the Star of Bethlehem  
was a real, astronomical event?

My wife and I watched  
a fascinating documentary  
on EWTN (the Global Catholic Network)  
called **The Star of Bethlehem**

produced by Stephen McEveety  
(who also produced - The Passion of the Christ)  
addressing this question.

This documentary explores  
the exciting truth of scripture  
and reveals the evidence  
for God's existence  
as seen in the stars above.

In this documentary,  
presenter Rick Larson  
walks through Biblical  
and historical clues  
revealing the incredible significance  
of this celestial event  
as well as the vastness  
of God's creativity.

An attorney and legal professor,  
Larson has spent eight years  
devoted to showing  
how he believes  
astronomical events  
in the years 3 and 2 B.C.  
fulfill the Bible's description

of the star the Magi followed  
to find the young Jesus.

The documentary concludes  
with Larson asking the question:

**What does this mean?**

Larson answers by saying:

I believe it means  
the Messiah has come.

Our Messiah was announced in the sky.

It is possible for us  
to have reconciliation  
with the perfect God  
because of the Messiah sacrifice.

We just have to accept that.

Larson continues:

It might mean even more than that.

Because if we found the star,  
and a reasonable person  
could conclude that we have,  
well then the star  
was part of the natural order.

The solar system  
is like a great clock,  
it is mathematically precise.

We know exactly  
what it looked like

thousands of years ago,  
and if the star  
was part of that,  
great clockwork solar system  
in the universe,  
that means it was a clockwork star,  
and that to me is almost overwhelming,  
because that means  
from the very moment  
that God flung the world into existence,  
he had to know, exactly when  
he would enter the human race as a man,  
and when the Messiah  
would expire on the cross,  
because he marked them  
in the stars  
from before time.

EWTN presented this program  
as an example of the many efforts  
over the centuries  
to find a providential explanation  
for the star of Bethlehem.

Such efforts do not exclude  
the obvious possibility

of a strictly miraculous origin  
for the star which  
*“came to rest over the place  
where the child lay”*. MT 2:9

The Star of Bethlehem documentary  
is available on DVD [\[show cover\]](#).



Details can be found on the website  
[www.bethlehemstar.net](http://www.bethlehemstar.net).



“(A)nd on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Mt 2:11).

**January 3, 2010**

**The Epiphany of the Lord**

**Lectionary: 20**

[Reading 1](#)  
[Responsorial Psalm](#)  
[Reading 2](#)  
[Gospel](#)

**Reading I**

[Is 60:1-6](#)

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.

### **Responsorial Psalm**

[Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13.](#)

(cf. 11) **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.

**Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

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.

**Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

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.

**Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

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.

**Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

### **Reading II**

[Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6](#)

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

### [Mt 2:1-12](#)

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?

**We saw his star at its rising  
and have come to do him homage.”**

When King Herod heard this,  
he was greatly troubled,  
and all Jerusalem with him.

Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people,  
He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born.

They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea,  
for thus it has been written through the prophet:

*And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
since from you shall come a ruler,  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.”*

**Then Herod called the magi secretly  
and ascertained from them the time of the star’s appearance.**

He sent them to Bethlehem and said,  
“Go and search diligently for the child.

When you have found him, bring me word,  
that I too may go and do him homage.”

After their audience with the king they set out.

And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,  
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.

**They were overjoyed at seeing the star,  
and on entering the house**

**they saw the child with Mary his mother.**

**They prostrated themselves and did him homage.**

Then they opened their treasures

and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod,  
they departed for their country by another way.

