



Saint Matthew Church *The PULSE*

January 3, 2021

Detroit, Michigan



THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

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. - Mt 2:10-11

Readings for the Week of January 3, 2021

Sunday: Is 60:1-6/Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 [cf. 11]/
Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12
Monday: 1 Jn 3:22—4:6/Ps 2:7bc-8, 10-12a [8ab]/
Mt 4:12-17, 23-25
Tuesday: 1 Jn 4:7-10/Ps 72:1-2, 3-4, 7-8 [cf. 11]/
Mk 6:34-44
Wednesday: 1 Jn 4:11-18/Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13 [cf. 11]/
Mk 6:45-52
Thursday: 1 Jn 4:19—5:4/Ps 72:1-2, 14 and 15bc, 17
[cf. 11]/Lk 4:14-22a
Friday: 1 Jn 5:5-13/Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20 [12a]/
Lk 5:12-16
Saturday: 1 Jn 5:14-21/Ps 149:1-2, 3-4, 5 and 6a and 9b
[cf. 4a]/Jn 3:22-30
Next Sunday: Is 42:1-4, 6-7/Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 [11b]/
Acts 10:34-38/Mk 1:7-11 or Is 55:1-11/
Is 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 [3]/1 Jn 5:1-9/Mk 1:7-11



“Where is that thing?” mumbled Bob as he searched frantically on his dimly lit desk for the current electric bill. “I know I put it right on top of these papers this morning!” Growing in frustration and bordering on anger, he flies stuff around, moves books and opines why simple tasks need to be so hard. Enter his wife, who calmly says, “Maybe it would help if you put the

light on, dear.” The desk light goes on and lo and behold, there is the electric bill right where Bob left it earlier. All it took was a little light!

We stubbornly refuse to turn on the lights! Either we are distracted, determined, disinterested, preoccupied, stubborn, apprehensive, or all of the above. Or perhaps, we fail to do the obvious. We would rather live our lives with the dimmest of lights or even in total darkness. Why are we afraid to do something so that we can actually see? It might help us to find quicker and better answers to problems, the meaning of life, relationships, happiness, and what is ultimate truth. Yet, we stumble along, moving things from one side to the other, getting angry, feeling cheated, being unsettled, resigning ourselves to the agony of defeat once again.

“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.” The light has come into the world in the person of Jesus Christ! We no longer have to fumble in the darkness. We have been gifted with the illumination we need to see our way through things and find what we really are looking for. All these years later, however, so many are still reluctant to accept him. Perhaps they are unconvinced, disinterested, preoccupied, stubborn, apprehensive, or all of the above. Everyone has their own reason for not wanting to turn on the switch.

But there are so many answers to so many of our problems in this humble Child of Nazareth. A simple birth teaches us about God’s tender wedded relationship with humanity. It speaks to the expanse of God’s salvation across the globe, and the incarnate Divine wonders and blessings that are a part of our life moment to moment. It calls us to understand the design of world order God intended as found in the Beatitudes, the sacredness of every human life and all of creation and the meaning of things we struggle with most, like suffering and death. We have a lot of Good News to share, not just with a privileged few but with all the world. All races and creeds can receive God’s healing word. God continues to manifest himself even now! Use the light to find what you are really looking for!

Did You Know? Frankincense’s Future: Ancient Gift Endangered, Risks Depletion

From the Vatican City - The Gospel of Matthew never details how many Magi came from “the East,” but it makes it clear they traveled to pay homage to “the newborn king of the Jews” and “offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”



Beyond their great monetary value, scholars say the gifts had deep symbolic significance: gold for the Christ child’s nobility as king of the Jews; frankincense, which was burned in religious ceremonies, for his divinity; and myrrh, which was used on cuts or wounds and in the anointing of corpses to prefigure his role as healer and foretell of his death.

Both myrrh and frankincense have exceptional medicinal qualities, which would have made them a very useful and thoughtful gift for the Holy Family. At that time, infant mortality was high, and frankincense and myrrh were two of the most potent anti-microbial substances in the ancient medicine cabinet. From the Christian perspective, he’s the most important baby ever born and, of course, wouldn’t you bring that baby something to ensure he could stay healthy?

What is not healthy, however, is the future of frankincense. Highly sought after for its religious, medicinal, and household purposes, it is one of the oldest traded commodities in the world, spanning at least 5,000 years. An aromatic resin, frankincense is harvested from the “tears” that seep from cuts made to a variety of *Boswellia* tree species, which grow in the harsh, dry climates of Yemen and Oman in the Arabian Peninsula, of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sudan in East Africa, and in northwestern India.

These trees are in severe decline, and one species in particular, the *Boswellia papyrifera*, which grows in conflict-rife regions of Ethiopia and Sudan, risks going extinct in the next 50 years, says the head of the *Save Frankincense* project. A study published last year in the journal, *Nature Sustainability*, predicted frankincense resin production would be halved in the next 20 years.

The Catholic Church is a major consumer of frankincense since incense has an important place in its liturgies. Dried gum grains are burned over hot coals in a censer or thurible to incense the altar, the book of Gospels, offertory gifts, sacred images, and the people participating in the Mass, with the smoke symbolizing sanctification, purification, and the prayers of the faithful rising up toward God. Billowing upward, the smoke draws people’s gaze with it to remind them of heaven, and the incense aroma is the reminder of the transcendence of the Mass.

Burning frankincense also activates different channels in the brain to alleviate anxiety or depression, according to researchers from Johns Hopkins University and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. “It promotes a feeling of connection and spiritual enlightenment which is why burning frankincense has been an integral part of many different religious rites and rituals for millennia,” said organismal biologist and frankincense researcher, Stephen Johnson.

Religions have a very important role to play in helping not just to preserve but to regenerate frankincense sources and support harvesters. It is absolutely possible for us to take care of trees, take care of harvesters, take care of their communities, and take care of ourselves. Everybody involved in the supply chain should benefit, he said in a recent interview.

After years of working in Somalia and developing ethical and sustainable harvesting standards, Mr. Johnson said he decided to establish his own business and projects that show what regenerative supply chains look like.

Continued on Page Three

St. Matthew Parish ~ Happenings

Wednesday, January 6, 6 pm - Father Novelly's Class for RCIA, St. Clare of Montefalco Church

Tuesday, January 12, 6 pm - Parish Council Meeting, Church Auditorium

Did You Know?

Frankincense's Future: Ancient Gift Endangered, Risks Depletion (Cont'd)

Regeneration tries to leave ecosystems, communities and plants better off by using profits to support research, conservation and community development and by making sure harvesting communities have access to fair prices and greater opportunities. This new way of doing business has to happen now. Ten years from now, it will be too late.

Most existing trees are the last of their generation, with no young trees taking their place, and over-tapping trees hurts their ability to regenerate, stay healthy and survive. Conflicts and climate changes worsen already harsh conditions, and local communities are under great pressure to clear the land to grow crops for survival. Also, grazing cattle love to chew on the tender baby leaves of new growth.

Frankincense buyers, including Catholic churches and the essential oil industry, must demand transparency and traceability in the source of the resins and accountability in making sure harvesters are paid fairly. "We have the ability to go directly to the source, to talk to the actual harvesters, and to employ technologies that allow us to track products all along the supply chain and make sure that is all being done ethically and in a way that allows the trees and the communities to flourish," said Mr. Johnson.

Without such controls, the industry is very open to corruption and/or decline; and, it's not helping the people on the ground, it's not helping the companies that want to do the right thing, and it doesn't help the consumers who don't want to be killing trees or hurting communities, or being complicit in something that isn't sustainable.

"We need the Catholic Church to step in, said one of the researchers, to promote regenerative supply chains and tree growing with programs to adopt trees and help struggling nurseries, even on a parish, school, or individual level. It is a direction that aligns with Pope Francis' call for caring for creation. It was always felt that if he knew really what was happening with frankincense, he would get involved. That is something near and dear to us all.



A Family Perspective

by Bud Ozar

The Magi in today's Gospel were led to Jesus by a star. Who are the stars your children follow? Don't let it be the tabloid stars. Resolve in this New Year to be the guiding star in the life of your children.

CSA Minute ~ Sharing Christ



Please remember to respond to your invitation to pledge to the Catholic Services Appeal. Our parish benefits from your pledges and payments. Repeat the Success! Double the Participation! Thank you!



Prayer for Epiphany

Dear Jesus,
as You led the Three Kings to You
by the light of a star,
please draw us ever closer to You
by the light of Faith.
Help us to desire You as ardently
as they did.

Give us the grace to overcome
all the obstacles that
keep us far from You.
May we, like them,
have something to give You
when we appear before You. Amen.

Wise Men See God in the Simple Things

If you're on social media, you have probably seen a meme going around that features this quote: "God has a plan for your life. The enemy has a plan for your life. Be ready for both. Just be wise enough to know which one to battle and which one to embrace."

There were certainly two competing plans for the Magi: God's and Herod's. And, wise as they supposedly were, it wasn't entirely easy for the Magi to discern which was which.

After all, Herod posed as a friend. He offered the Magi hospitality and kindness. Though the Gospel doesn't say so, he probably flattered them and appealed to every moral weakness he could observe in them. In his palace, they must have felt great physical comfort — rest and tables of plenty on what was an otherwise long and treacherous journey.

But if the Magi were honest with themselves, I'll bet they would have admitted that, regardless of Herod's charm, they felt a gnawing sense of doubt while in his presence. When they looked upon the Christ Child, born in a stable without any of the comforts of the world or protections of wealth, they probably felt the opposite. They probably felt safe.

The Magi were lucky enough to have the right plan spelled out for them in a dream, but for the rest of us, it's enough to remember this: God's plan is often the one that leads us to places of great simplicity, great humility and great love. Let's have the wisdom to view power with suspicion, and innocence with admiration.

ST. MATTHEW'S PARISH DIRECTORY

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Joe Balistreri ~ *Saturday Organist*
David Troiano ~ *Weekday Organist*

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WEEKEND/WEEKDAY MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday	4:30 p.m.
Sunday	10:00 a.m.
Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday	9:00 a.m.
Reconciliation	By Appointment
Holydays	9:00 a.m. 7:00 p.m.

In your prayers...

Please remember those in our parish and in our families who are sick or in need of our prayers.

Madeline O'Neill	Bill Solomon
Sebastiano Stellino	Eloise Parker
Joe Petrylka	Herb and Jeanne Damman
Roger Sharpe	Doreen Redman
Nenette Ferreria	Sarah Wagner
Anthony Mastronardi	Steve Czapski, Jr.
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Glenda Johnson	Albert Fajardo
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Jo Marie Nardi	Marie Kane
David Beaupre	Mike Dulapa
Kenneth Beaupre	Mike and Linda Holster
Anthony Crimauco	Irene McCann
Rosemary Schoolcraft	
Tiffany Gelle	
Robert Stark	
Pauline Williams	

Ministers, Lectors, and Servers

LECTORS

SERVERS

Saturday, January 9, 2021, 4:30 p.m.

Julie Smith

Lauren Smith

Sunday, January 10, 2021, 10:00 a.m.

Bill Ridella

Lauren Gross
Julia Zuerblis

Mass Schedule

Saturday, January 2 - Vigil: Feast of the Epiphany

4:30 p.m. - Susan Murray Thoits

Sunday, January 3 - Feast of the Epiphany

10:00 a.m. - Judy Stark

Monday, January 4 - St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, Religious

Tuesday, January 5 - St. John Neumann, Bishop

9:00 a.m. - For the Poor and Needy in our Community

Wednesday, January 6 - St. Andre Bessette, Religious

9:00 a.m. - For the Sick, Suffering, and Dying

Thursday, January 7 - St. Raymond of Penafort, Priest

Friday, January 8 -

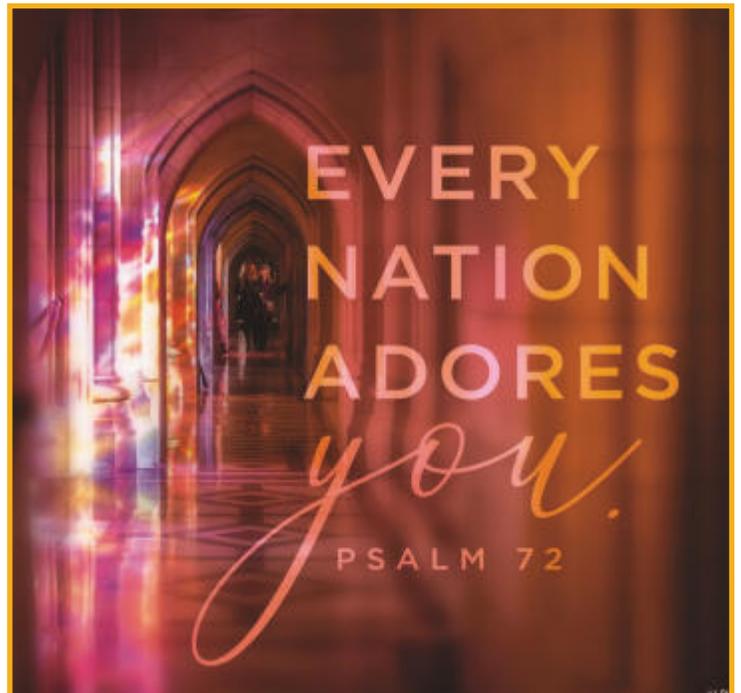
9:00 a.m. - For an End to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Saturday, January 9 - Vigil: Baptism of the Lord

4:30 p.m. - For the People of St. Matthew Parish

Sunday, January 10 - Baptism of the Lord

10:00 a.m. - Judy Stark, Zilinski Family



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