

Epiphany
January 4, 2026
St. Edward's Parish

"For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." (Mt 2:2)

Friends, today we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany. The word "epiphany" generally is used to mean an 'appearance', or a 'manifestation' of something. For example, we still use the word 'epiphany' in common speech today to mean the moment when an insight suddenly appears in our mind. On today's feast, we recall the moment Christ was manifested (i.e. made known) to the first people outside of Israel, namely, the "wise men" from the East.

Who are these "wise men"? Sometimes you hear them referred to as "magi" or "kings". Not much is recorded in Scripture about who they are; however, we do observe they came from far outside of Israel, from the East, and it seems they had specialized knowledge of astronomy and religion. In the Scriptures, we see them carefully studying the stars and using what they know to discern that a king has been born for the Jews. Likely they had some form of religious prophecy of a star that would signify the birth of this king.

While we do not know a great deal about who these magi were, what we do observe is that their study of the sky, together with their philosophical or religious wisdom set them on a journey that ultimately led them to Christ. Contemplating this passage, Pope Benedict XVI commented how these wisemen can represent the movement of science and religion toward Christ (e.g. *Jesus of Nazareth—The Infancy Narratives*, pp. 92–97). That is to say that science and religious wisdom at its best sets us out on a journey that finds its fulfillment in Christ.

Many people today, unfortunately, accept the idea that science is opposed to Christian faith. However, this is not at all accurate. The Catholic faith has a very rich history of scientific discovery. Science, at its best, reveals the marvelous logic and beauty of the created world. Consequently, science points toward God, who is supremely intelligent and beautiful. Everywhere science casts its glance it finds that things make sense. From the most distant galaxies to single molecules, everything acts with perfect order and logic. It seems only reasonable, therefore, to conclude that

the universe did not emerge from random chaos but came from a source (a creator) who is logical and intelligent. Like the wisemen, the study of science can set us out on a journey towards God.

We can say something similar about religious wisdom. All that is good and true in the religions of the world can lead towards Christ. That may sound somewhat arrogant to our modern ears. Do I mean to say that Christianity is somehow the fulfillment of all religious searching? Well, yes. We believe Jesus is the complete and perfect revelation of God. Other religions may indeed have some elements of truth and goodness. These elements of truth and goodness can move us onwards in our search for God, just as it did the wise men. However, Jesus alone is the fullness of truth, and He alone is the true fulfillment of all religious searching.

Going back to the Biblical account of the wise men, we see that their pursuit of science and religious wisdom led them on a journey. However, at the end and completion of that Journey was Jesus. He is the fulfillment of all science and religion; all human questioning and all human longing finds its fulfillment in Him.

One final insight: although the wisemen were likely very intelligent, the use of their mind alone was not enough to find Jesus. They had to enter Jerusalem and consult the Scriptures. Only then could they discover where to find Jesus. They needed the divine revelation of God's word to find the way. The same is true for our modern times. Our study of science, philosophy, or religious wisdom of the world can all be starting points to set out on the search for God. However, without the divine revelation of God that comes from the Bible we will never come to the end of our journey. On this feast of the Epiphany and the beginning of this new year, let us pray that we and the whole of humanity will turn toward Jesus to find the fulfillment of our searching and study.