

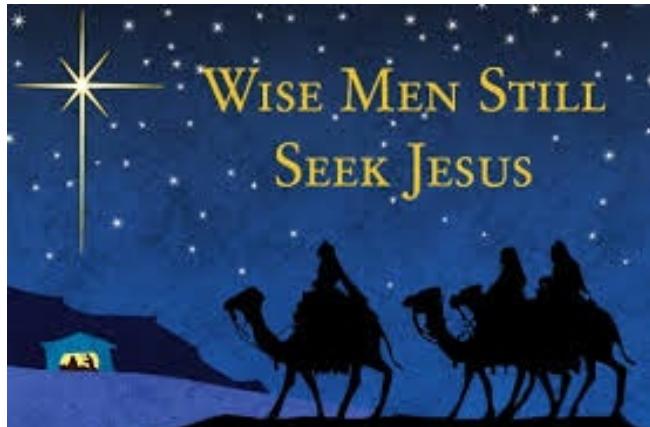
Reflections for January 2026

The Philosophy of Christ's Birth – by Gary Konopka, Lecturer

The philosophy of Christ's birth centers on the Incarnation (God becoming flesh) through the Virgin Birth, signifying God's direct intervention for humanity's salvation, uniting divine and human natures, and establishing Jesus as the sinless Messiah, a "God-man" whose humble, miraculous beginning contrasts with worldly power to show redemption comes through God's grace, not human effort. It's a foundational doctrine, explaining how Jesus could be both fully God and fully human, capable of redeeming humanity from sin.

The Solemnity of the Epiphany – by Archbishop William E. Lori, Supreme Chaplain

On Sunday, January 4, we celebrate the Solemnity of the Epiphany of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is that moment in salvation history when the Christ – who is "God from God, light from light, true God from true God" – is revealed, as the fulfillment of all that God had promised to his people Israel, and as the true light which enlightens everyone coming into the world, and more than that, as the One who is the light of the world. Thus did Isaiah prophesy about the Child hidden in a cave at Bethlehem: "Nations [said he] shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance." Those searching for the light, those seeking the Truth, he prophesies, will be drawn from afar by the Child who is Son of God and Son of Mary. Let us therefore allow the mystery of the Epiphany to illuminate our heart and to guide our steps into a future full of hope.



The Magi v. Herod

In the Gospel reading from St. Matthew, the Magi seem to arrive in Judea suddenly, as if they spotted the star in the night sky, dropped everything and came to investigate. In fact, the Magi had spent their lives diligently and sincerely searching for the Truth. In doing so, they were not trying to make a name for themselves or to satisfy their curiosity. They had no desire to subordinate the truth to ambition or worldly desire. They were searching for the Truth so that they could entrust themselves to it. When they found what they were searching for, they came in adoration. They opened their gifts of gold – gold for the King of kings, frankincense – for they worshipped the

newborn Child as God, and myrrh to foretell Jesus' saving death and burial. In opening their gifts, they opened their minds and hearts to the light of faith – opened them in adoration, in praise and thanksgiving, in humility and love.



Photo at left: Archbishop William E. Lori, Archbishop of Baltimore and Supreme Chaplain of the Knights of Columbus.

In this, they represent untold numbers of women and men who have searched for the Truth, and when they found it, entrusted themselves to it. I might mention St. Ignatius of Loyola who encountered the Lord as he lay recovering from a wound – and thereupon gathered around himself a Society, the Society of

Jesus, to proclaim the Name above every other name. Or I might mention Edith Stein, a brilliant Jewish philosopher and convert. In the early 20th century, she discovered in Christ the light for which she searched, entered the Church, and became a discalced Carmelite nun taking the name of St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. In 1943, she was martyred at Auschwitz – doubly a target of Nazi terrorism because of her Jewish heritage and her Christian faith. Both Ignatius and St. Theresa Benedicta are examples of those who searched for the Lord and gave themselves wholly to the Truth without ulterior motives but only because they were drawn to the Light of lights. Therefore, let us not say that the story of the Magi is a bit of biblical piety without reference or bearing upon our lives! The light of the faith shines brightly and still calls us, even as it called the Magi, to worship the Lord in spirit and truth, and in so doing to find our true joy, our dignity, and indeed our destiny one day to share fully in the eternal brightness of God's Triune glory.

And let the tragic figure of King Herod be a salutary warning for us. When the Wise Men saw the star in the East, they came from afar in search of the Christ-child to do him homage. If Herod had gone up on the terrace of his palace, he too would have seen the night sky bright with the glory of God. If his heart were open to the truth, he too would have searched for the meaning of the stars. Instead, he chose to entomb himself in his own illusions of power and grandeur. When news of a newborn King reached him, he was disturbed and immediately began to plot how he might do away with him. Far from searching for the truth, Herod was afraid of it because he was an unjust ruler who exercised power only for his own benefit, and therefore, could not tolerate a rival, even an Infant lying in a manger. The wise and learned Magi must have sensed Herod's utter self-centeredness and, therefore, were disposed to the message they received to avoid meeting him again. Let Herod stand for those who use religion for their own ambitions, those who instrumentalize the faith for political or economic gain, those who put on the faith when it suits their own petty goals and pettier illusions. If it is the Truth for which we are searching, we can apprehend it only on its own terms, not ours. In the end, we do not capture truth. It overtakes us. God surprises us with joy.

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

The King whom Herod mistook as an earthly rival came, not to exercise political or military power, but to be our Shepherd. He came to gather us and indeed the whole world in the fertile pastures of his love. Those pastures are not the rolling hills of some mythical land, some utopia or another, but rather the green pastures of his merciful heart where you and I can graze in safety and “grow in age and grace”. If we have come in search of the light, if we have come to seek the Truth, we may find it here, hidden in the Eucharist, hidden in the form of bread and wine. Our Truth, our light, our good grazing ground is found in the Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Christ whom we both adore and receive, just as the Magi adored and received the Child whom they encountered in the arms of Mary, his Mother. So too, may we seek and find the Christ in the heart of our Mother, the Church, and finding him, let us adore him in the Eucharist and receive him with faith.