

LIVING FAITH

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD



THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY

Mt 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

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

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

TAKING THE GOSPEL HOME

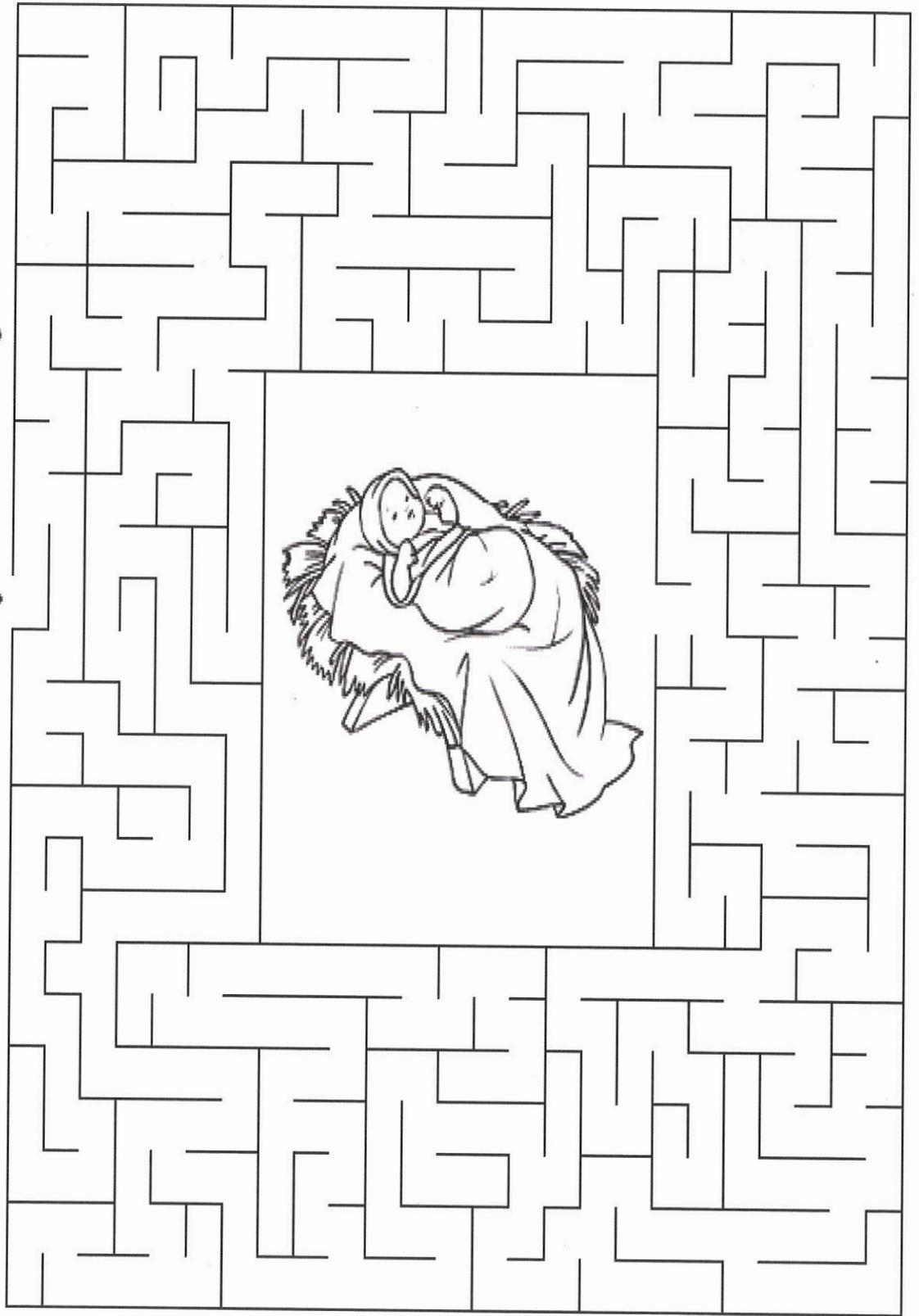
How many magi (wise people) were there? We often think that, because there were three gifts, there were three people. But that's not necessarily so! The truth is that the Gospel does not tell us how many people there were. You and I are called to be the Magi today. How? By seeking for Jesus. By recognizing Jesus wherever we find him today. By offering him our gifts.

PONDER AND DISCUSS

- Where do you meet Jesus today?
- What gifts do you have to offer to Jesus?

www.rcsj.org

A Family Maze activity: Help the Magi find their way to Baby Jesus.



'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'

THE CHURCH TEACHES

What does the word "Epiphany" mean?

"Epiphany" comes from two Greek words, meaning "to show, or to display." An epiphany is thus a time when something is shown, displayed, or manifested to an audience. In our Christian tradition, the Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the moment when Jesus, the Son of God, was revealed to all the nations.



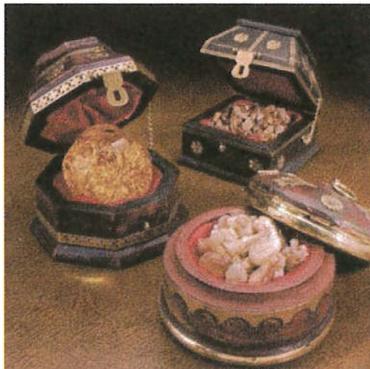
What is the feast of the Epiphany about?

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church: The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Saviour of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (*magi*) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. [CCC 528].

When is Epiphany celebrated?

This varies from country to country. In some countries, Epiphany is a holy day of obligation. Where that is the case, it is celebrated on January 6th.

In the Canada, Epiphany is not a holy day of obligation, and its celebration is transferred to the first Sunday after January 1st.



What was the star?

It is hard to know. Some question whether the star was a natural phenomenon at all, pointing out that it seems to lead the magi to Jerusalem, disappear, and then reappear and hover over the house in Bethlehem.

But this isn't what Matthew says. He does not say that the star led them to Jerusalem. They merely report that they had seen the new king's star "in the east" (Mt. 2:2; that is, back in their homeland), which is why they came to Jerusalem.

GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH

THE MAGI BROUGHT GIFTS—WHAT GIFTS DO YOU BRING?

Since the early days of Christianity, Biblical scholars and theologians have offered varying interpretations of the meaning and significance of the gold, frankincense and myrrh that the magi presented to Jesus, according to the Gospel of Matthew (2:11). These valuable items were standard gifts to honor a king or deity in the ancient world:

- gold as a precious metal,
- frankincense as perfume or incense,
- and myrrh as anointing oil.

In addition to the honour and status implied by the value of the gifts of the magi, scholars think that these three were chosen for their special spiritual symbolism about Jesus himself:

- gold representing his kingship,
- frankincense a symbol of his priestly role,
- and myrrh a prefiguring of his death and embalming

This is an interpretation made popular in the well-known Christmas carol “We Three Kings.”

WHAT ABOUT YOU?

If you had to bring gifts to Jesus today, what gifts would you bring? What gifts do you think that Jesus or His People need most? Take some time to reflect on some of the gifts that you bring today ...

