

January 5, 2025 – Epiphany Sunday
“THE JOURNEY, THE STOPS ALONG THE WAY AND THE
DESTINATION” by Pastor Julio Romero

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

It is often said that life is not about the destination but about the journey. However, in the case of the Wise Men or Magi, I would argue that their life was indeed about the destination—the moment in Bethlehem when they encountered and worshipped God in the form of the baby Jesus. But, as we all know, we are all on a journey, and before we reach our destination, there are many stops along the way.

The story of the Wise Men is also about those stops. Their journey to Bethlehem involved many stops, but the light of the star continued to guide them. One significant stop was in Jerusalem, where they met King Herod. However, that was not their final destination.

The story of the Wise Men is full of mystery, with God's hand evident throughout. It begins with the appearance of a star, which they followed without knowing exactly where it would lead them. All they knew was that the star was a sign announcing the birth of a King—not just any king, but the King of kings.

They were certain that wherever the star stopped, that would be their destination. Somehow, they had learned from the Scriptures that this new King would be born among the Jewish people. So, when they arrived in Jerusalem, they went directly to King Herod's palace.

It makes sense, doesn't it? If a king were to be born, surely it would be in a royal palace. But God had other plans. The star did not stop over Herod's palace in Jerusalem but led them to Bethlehem—a humble place, perhaps the home of a shepherd or a peasant family.

We can describe the remarkable journey of the Wise Men as one of faith, conviction, determination, and trust. They trusted in the prophecy of the Savior's birth, believed in the sign of the star, and had the faith to follow it to meet the Savior. They were drawn into one of God's greatest mysteries: the mystery of the Incarnation. And they were determined to do whatever it took to reach the place where the child was.

So certain and determined were these Wise Men to find the baby Jesus that they even brought gifts: gold, myrrh, and frankincense.

This is why the story of the Wise Men, people who studied the stars, is the gospel lesson for "Epiphany Sunday." As we know, Epiphany means "Manifestation," which can be defined as the revelation of something that was hidden, suddenly brought to light for us to see. Epiphany also means "to give light" or "to shine upon."

The invisible God, the Creator of life and the universe, was revealed to these Wise Men in the face of a baby. The star shone upon Him, and He brought light into the world—the kind of light that no darkness can overcome.

These three kings, foreigners to both Herod and the people of Jerusalem but known to God, were given the honor of witnessing God manifest in human flesh. They would have missed this revelation, this manifestation of God, if they had not believed in the sign of the star, if they had not had faith in the prophecy of the Holy Scriptures, or if they had not been determined to follow the star on their journey. They would have missed their appointment with God if they lacked the conviction to go wherever the star led them.

There was another group invited to meet the Savior: the shepherds. For them, the journey was much shorter. Their only stop was the manger—a brief journey to see the face of God in the face of a baby. The stories of the shepherds and the Wise Men show that for some, the journey to see God's light and manifestation is a long one, while for others it is short.

And what about us? How is our life journey going? How many places have we stopped along the way that changed our direction? Have we seen the manifestation and light of God in those moments? Have we recognized God's providence in our journey, leading us to where we are today?

These are questions the Wise Men found answers to when they arrived in Bethlehem. They discovered those answers in the star, in their dreams, in the Holy Scriptures, in the many stops along the way, and ultimately in the face of the baby they worshipped. All along their journey, they were protected, guided, and provided for. Their entire journey unfolded according to God's providence.

The word "Providence" is made up of two parts:

- "Pro," meaning "before," and
 - "Video," meaning "to see."
- Thus, "Providence" simply means "to see beforehand."

When we speak of God's providence, we are acknowledging that God "sees before" and plans accordingly.

Like the wise men, we are on a journey to meet God. However, just as the wise men could not rely on their own logic or reason to find Him, neither can we. The only way is through God's providence, along with our faith, trust in God, determination, and conviction that He has a plan for us. We must trust that, at all times, we are exactly where God wants us to be. Without these qualities—faith, trust, determination, and conviction—we may end up in the wrong place and miss out on God's mystery, revelation, and light.

Let's remember that God appeared in a manger as a baby, but many did not recognize Him. He healed lepers, fed thousands with five loaves of bread and two fish, gave sight to the blind, and raised the dead—but still, many did not recognize it was God. Why? Because He was a carpenter, a simple man, not the figure of worldly power and glory that people had hoped for in the Messiah, the Savior.

In the Gospel, God asks us to find Him in the poor, the thirsty, the hungry, the stranger, and our neighbors.

As we journey through life, let's do so with faith, trust, determination, and conviction, knowing we are on course to meet God. And while we journey, let's have the faith, the trust, the determination and conviction to stay on course, trusting in God's light and providence, which protect, guide, and provide for us. **Amen.**