

LOOKING TO SUNDAY®

Sunday, January 5, 2025

The Epiphany of the Lord

This email, entitled Looking to Sunday®, focuses on one or more of the scripture readings for the coming Sunday. It prepares readers to hear God's Word at Mass and it offers a point of reflection to consider in the days leading to Sunday. Looking to Sunday is written by Father Tom Iwanowski.

Looking to Sunday has been published for more than sixteen years.

A DESTINATION EVENT

Destination events have become increasingly popular. That is particularly the case when it comes to weddings. Rather than getting married in their local area, some couples decide to celebrate their marriage in a distant location known for its beauty, idyllic charm, cultural significance, or perhaps its connection to the ancestry of the bride or groom.

Attending a destination wedding requires a significant commitment of money, time, and effort on the part of the guests. They must arrange transportation to and from the location, book accommodations for several days, secure time off from work, procure necessary travel documents, budget money for meals and miscellaneous expenses, and provide an appropriate gift to the couple.

In this Sunday's Gospel (Matthew 2:1-12), we hear about the magi who received an invitation to a destination event that did not involve a wedding but rather the birth of a child.

They received this invitation not in written or verbal form but rather through a shining star in the sky that announced the birth of a new Jewish king. As they told Herod, "We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."

These magi "from the east" travelled a great distance to reach the destination indicated by the star. Though their exact starting point is not known, it had to be hundreds of miles away since their journey took considerable time. Matthew tells us that the star led the magi to a house in Bethlehem where "on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother." Jesus had grown and was no longer an infant lying in a manger.

Furthermore, when Herod decided to eliminate this "newborn king" who might threaten his power, he ordered his soldiers to kill the boys in Bethlehem up to the age of two. Herod chose that age "in accordance with the time he had ascertained from the magi" (Matthew 2:16). This implies the magi may have been travelling for many months, even up to two years, for this "destination event" that we celebrate on the Feast of the Epiphany.

When the magi encountered Jesus, they offered him the gifts they had carried with them. These gifts hinted at the identity of the child who was the goal of their journey. There was gold for one of kingly status, frankincense for one who was worthy of worship, and myrrh for one who would face death.

Like those magi, we too have been invited to a destination event, one that will take place at the end of our lives when we come before the Lord. As we journey to that final moment, we also need to keep moving forward in our faith, hope, and love so that we will be ready to offer the Lord the gift of holy lives.

Each Sunday when we come to Mass, we prepare for that final destination encounter. Each week, we journey to our parish church where we meet the Lord and respond to his invitation to hear his Word and share his life in the Eucharist.

Destination events are increasingly popular but the one that is most important is the destination event where, like the magi of old, we come face to face with the Lord.

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Happy New Year!

May You Truly Experience the Peace and Presence of the Lord in 2025!