

LIVING FAITH

SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY

JANUARY 7, 2023



THE GOSPEL FOR TODAY--MATTHEW 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." '



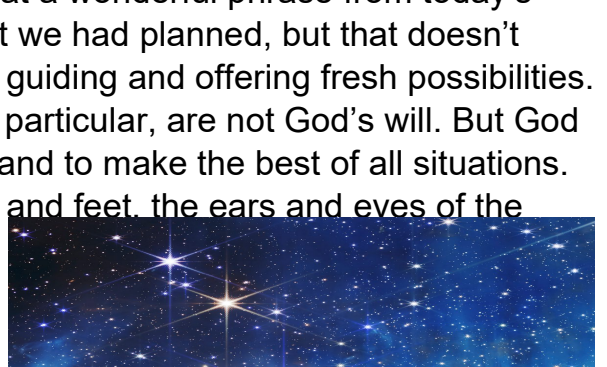
Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, 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.

REFLECTING ON THE GOSPEL

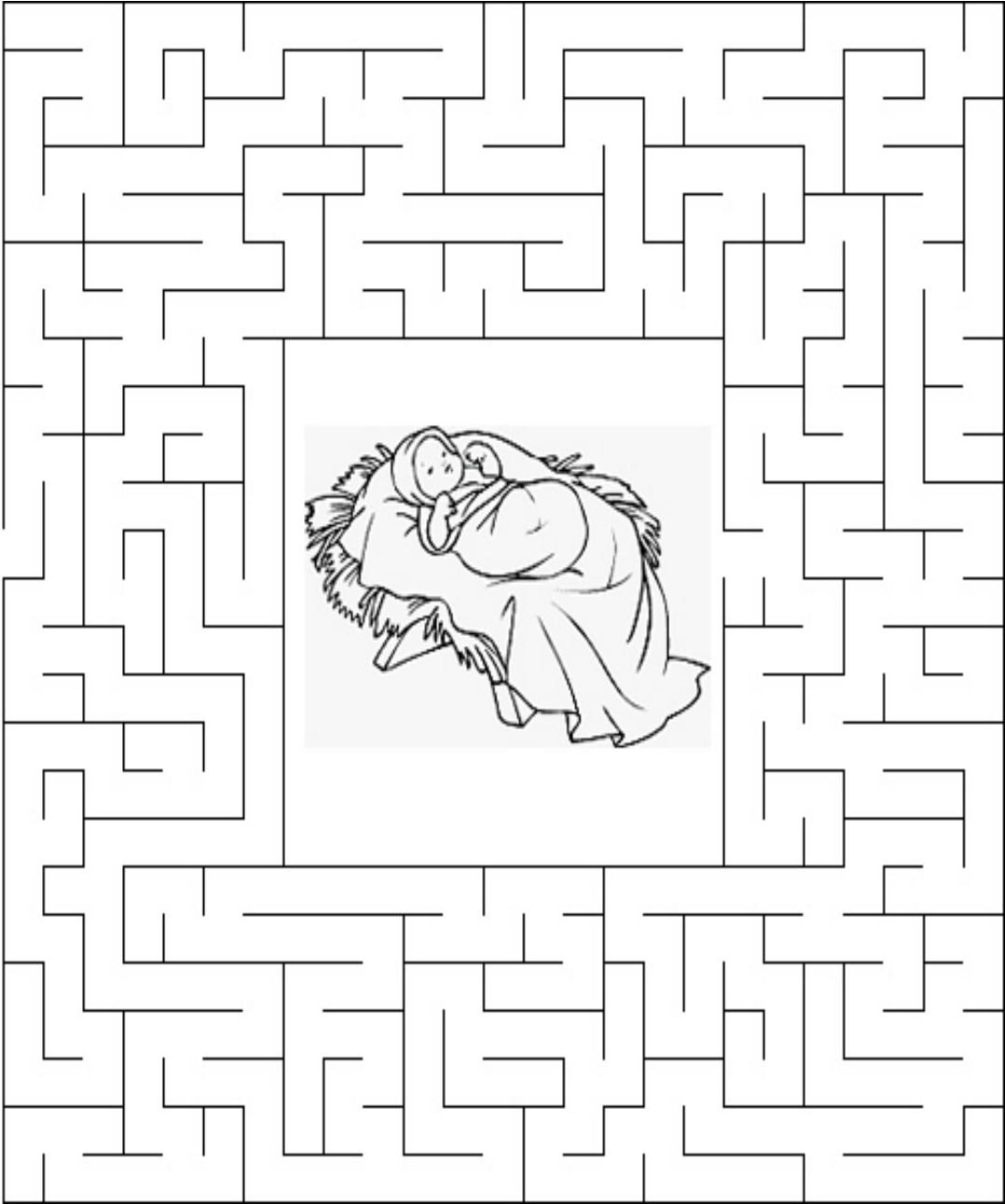
"They left for their own country by another road..." What a wonderful phrase from today's Gospel! Sometimes, things don't work out the way that we had planned, but that doesn't mean that God is absent. In fact, God is always there, guiding and offering fresh possibilities. God does not will the bad stuff. Illness and tragedy, in particular, are not God's will. But God is always there for us, helping us to find another way, and to make the best of all situations. How is God present? Most often, God uses the hands and feet, the ears and eyes of the people around us.

TALKING WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

- Can you think of a time when something didn't go as you had planned? How did you deal with the change of plans?
- Can you think of a time when the results of a change of plans turned out even better than you would have dreamed possible? Tell the story to someone else today.



The Wise Men Maze



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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 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.

TO THINK AND TALK ABOUT...

What gift can you give to somebody else today?

Who needs the gift that you bring today?

What do you think is one of the greatest needs of people in the world around you?

REFUGEES AND MIGRANT PEOPLE IN OUR WORLD TODAY

How can Christians respond?



The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) tells us that today, there are more than **89.3 million forcibly displaced people worldwide.**

This includes:

- 21.3 million refugees- more than double the 10.5 million a decade ago (41% are under 18 years old)
- 4.6 million asylum seekers
- 53.2 million internally displaced people

Did you know that...

- Every day, 37,000 people are forced to leave their homes because of conflict and persecution
- 69% of refugees come from just 5 countries: Syria, Venezuela, Afghanistan, South Sudan or Myanmar
- Because of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, 7 million people have been internally displaced in Ukraine, and 6 million have become refugees in other countries
- As of March 2022, only 1 per cent of the 10.9 billion administered doses of Covid-19 vaccines worldwide have been given in low-income countries. This means that 2.8 billion people around the world are still waiting to get their first shot
- Climate change is becoming a huge factor influencing the forced migration of people

A FAMILY OF REFUGEES

With the threatened persecution of King Herod, the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph became refugees. They fled into the neighbouring country of Egypt, and only went home to Nazareth when Herod had died, and the danger was past.

WHAT IS CANADA DOING?

The Canadian refugee system has two main parts:

- the Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program, for people who need protection from outside Canada and
- the In-Canada Asylum Program for people making refugee protection claims from within Canada
- 128,121 Ukrainian refugees arrived in Canada in 2022
- Since 2016, Canada has welcomed 15,475 Afghan refugees
- Since 2018, Canada has welcomed over 73,000 Syrian refugees

To find out more, go to [unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org).

