

**The Epiphany of the Lord – Cycle B**  
**Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception – January 7, 2018**  
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My brother has lived in the Los Angeles area for more than thirty years now, so in the course of one trip or another, I have probably visited every tourist site in Southern California. I've been to Spanish Missions and Universal Studios, to Magic Mountain and Knott's Berry Farm and Presidential Libraries. I've seen Dodger Stadium, the Coliseum, the Rose Bowl, the Santa Monica Pier, the Queen Mary and the Spruce Goose. And, yes, I've been to Hollywood. I've seen the sign, visited the Chinese Theatre and strolled down the Hollywood Boulevard Walk of Fame. That was an interesting experience. I saw the stars placed there for Bob Hope and Clark Gable, for Bette Davis and Ginger Rodgers, and even one for Elvis. But I also saw many, many others – so many names that I didn't even recognize. It seems that everyone who ever appeared in a B movie, or in a failed sitcom, or as a back-up singer on a record has their own star on Hollywood Boulevard. And they are all the same size. Each pink terrazzo star is just like the next one. So Jimmy Stewart's star is the same size as Ryan Seacrest's. It just doesn't seem right.

During the season of Advent, our season of night, we pondered the wonders of the night sky. We were invited into the desert with John the Baptist and with Jesus – to experience once again being a people in darkness who longed for the light. At Christmas we were reminded that in the person of Jesus Christ, in the wonder of the incarnation, that light has dawned upon the world. In our gospels this season, we have seen that light shared with lowly shepherds in the field and brought to Jerusalem's temple. And today, as we celebrate the Epiphany – the manifestation – of our Lord, we rejoice in the image of that one perfect star that the magi, that we are called to follow. The star of Bethlehem called out to the magi of the East – to Gentiles, to pagans, to those who were completely unaware of Israel's promised Messiah. The message of this passage from Matthew's gospel is quite simple: Jesus came to offer salvation not only to God's chosen people, but to all people of all times and all nations. The promises made to Abraham and Moses and David now belong to the world – because the brightness of that star, the brightness of the truth could never be contained in one people or in one age. In his birth in Bethlehem of Judea, Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Covenant. Today, he beckons all of us to come to him – and to allow him to fulfill all of our hopes and to satisfy all of our needs.

Yes, we too have followed that star. We have seen the Light of Christ and have come to adore him – once a week or once a month or whenever our schedule doesn't get in the way. It is not, I suggest, that we have not experienced the Light of Christ, that we have not seen the star. We have and we can testify to its beauty. Yes, Jesus' star shines brightly in our lives, but so do many, many others. Our lives, it seems, are not unlike that Hollywood Walk of Fame. Oh, Jesus has his own star to be sure. We can walk right to it and point it out to anyone who strolls by. But Jesus' star is not the only one in our life. Jesus' star must share the Boulevard with the star of our bank account and the star of our social standing, the star of our sports team and the star of our pride. Walking down the path of our lives we find the stars we have created from our search for comfort, from our self-centeredness, from our desire for acceptance. And raised as we have been in a democracy, we want all the stars to be the same size. That's only fair, isn't it? That's what Hollywood does. So Jesus' star shares equal billing with everything else that we value in our lives. If we are not careful, then the star of our faith will be lost *not* among the stars of the night sky but in the brilliant light we see too easily in our own reflection.

The magi have much to teach us. Trained in gazing at the stars, they quickly discerned a difference in the sky that first Christmas night. They saw the rising of the star of the newborn King of the Jews – and they somehow knew that it mattered. Oh, they could have jotted the new star down in their records and smiled a bit and went on with life – but seeing that one star among countless others in the night sky – they knew that they must follow. So they packed up camel and caravan and precious gifts and went forth. Regardless of whatever else was going on in their lives, they knew that the Christ must have priority – that his star was the most important star they had ever seen. Can we say the same? Is the star of Jesus one among equals for us or does he come first? Is our life so full that we will miss his star altogether? Will we gaze upon the star for a while and look away? Or, like the magi, are we willing to leave things behind in order to follow?