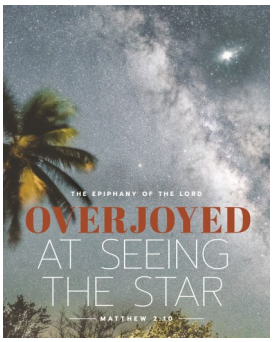
# Star of Wonder






Before *Star Wars* captured my imagination as a kid at a drive-in under a starry sky, I was already fascinated by the night sky. When I was a young child visiting my grandparents farm in rural Iowa, free from any light pollution, they showed me how I could use the scoop of the Big Dipper to guide me to the Little Dipper. And a milky swath arced across the dome of night, providing the reason for the name of our galaxy. The wonder was so strong that it almost made me want to be an astronaut, but I was already convinced of my destiny to be a veterinarian.

The stars may not have changed my destiny, but as we celebrate Epiphany Sunday, we commemorate how one unusually bright star opened up human history, not just for the magi-astrologers who followed it, but for all nations and generations who would follow after. The word *epiphany* means manifestation or revelation, and the baby's stable that was illuminated by the light of an itinerant star would ultimately manifest the wisdom of God's plan of salvation. The gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh together foreshadow that Christ would offer up His life for us through the Paschal Mystery – His passion, death, and resurrection. And that transforms us.

When we encounter the truth of who Jesus Christ is, whether revealed to us in the manger, in the sacraments, or on the cross, it is a truth that changes us. Our life is redirected from slavery to sin towards freedom in grace, from attachments to earthly things to a longing for heavenly gifts. This is what is symbolized when the Wise Men return to their homes by another route. As we learn in the Gospel reading, "king" Herod did not want to do the Christchild homage, but rather do Him harm. The magi, warned in a dream, returned home by a different route. More significant than evading a cruel tyrant, it symbolized their conversion of heart. The Star of Bethlehem led them to discover the Light of the World in the manger, and in that encounter, celestial light and heavenly wisdom began to dwell in their hearts. It changed them forever.

As we contemplate the story of the Magi in this Christmas season, do we allow it to touch our hearts and guide our lives in a new way? On Christmas Eve, our wonderful choir sang *Silent Night* as a post-Communion meditation hymn. The lights of the church were dimmed, and the newborn light of Heaven glowed in the stable. Many people shared how moved they were – the invitation is to live out of that experience. The Magi, too, were twice moved. First by the light of a star, and the second time by the Light of the World. May your celebration of Epiphany Sunday inspire you to see Christ's light and love revealed to you in a way that expands faith in your soul.