

Lectionary Texts for December 31, 2023 • *Epiphany Sunday* - Year B
Isaiah 60:1-6 • Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14 • Ephesians 3:1-12 • Matthew 2:1-12



Matthew 2:1-12

Angel's Warning to the Three Wise Men, 1220-1240

Stone relief sculpture, Western exterior

Amiens Cathedral, Amiens, France

Matthew 2:12 —“And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.”

From the Vulgate translation of the Greek New Testament, the “architect” or “designer” of this cathedral in the 13th century recognized the significance of this single verse of Matthew and enshrined it in this stone carving. For eight centuries it has withstood rain, winds, snow, and freezing weather, and yet the three kings and the angel are still clearly delineated.

Amiens, France, is about 75 miles north of Paris. The cathedral was built between 1220 and c. 1270 — a remarkably short period of time for a Gothic cathedral — and is a classic example of the High Gothic style of Gothic architecture. The builders worked to “reach for the heavens” and bring in more light, resulting in the largest cathedral in France, large enough to contain two cathedrals the size of Notre Dame of Paris. (See page 4.)

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Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1981, it has lost much of its original stained glass but is renowned for the quality and quantity of early 13th-century Gothic sculpture in the main west façade.

— *Art curated and narrative provided by Norman Mahan
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Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to a king's son.

May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice.

May the mountains yield prosperity for the people, and the hills, in righteousness.

May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor.

May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations.

May he be like rain that falls on the mown grass, like showers that water the earth.

In his days may righteousness flourish and peace abound, until the moon is no more.

May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.

For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

Ephesians 3:1-12

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — for surely you have already heard of the commission of God’s grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ.

In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace that was given me by the working of his power.

Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

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.’”

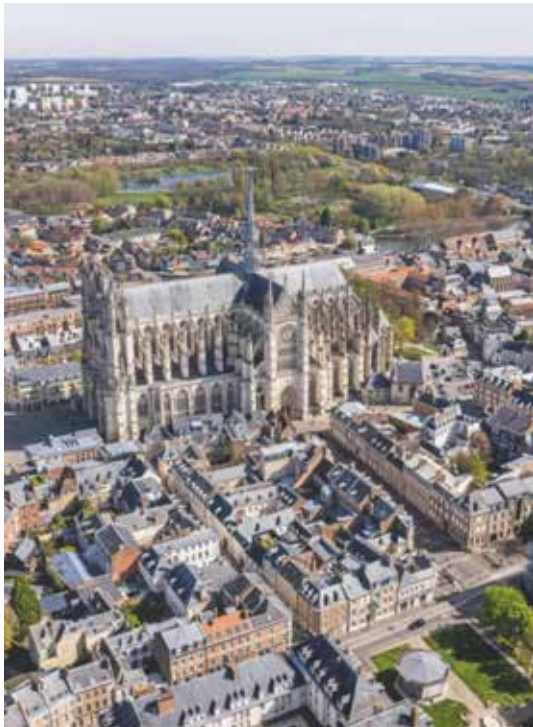
Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

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.



Two perspectives of the Amiens Cathedral, Amiens, France