

**Reflection on the Gospel– Feast of the Epiphany Year A
(Matthew 2:1-12)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

God's presence is revealed to us in many different ways: we can read the "book" of God's creation; we can search out the meaning of our dreams; we can learn from our own and others' experience; and we can be attentive to the wisdom of our sacred scriptures. A deep awareness of our place in the Earth community and our kinship with the other-than-human teaches us respect for all creation and respect for its power to lead us beyond ourselves.

Epiphany presents us with the wise ones or astrologers "from the East" who are led beyond themselves and their immediate location by the rising of a star. They form their own preliminary hypothesis and travel west to search out the meaning of this sign. Their questioning in Jerusalem about a new-born "king of the Jews" attracts the attention of the duplicitous Herod, the Roman-appointed "king of the Jews". Advised by the official interpreters of the Jewish scriptures, through the agency of Herod, they follow the star that leads them to the home of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, where they find the new born child, the incarnate Wisdom of God. The gospel does not stipulate how many wise ones or magi come to pay homage to the child who has already been named as Emmanuel, God-with-us, with the entire Earth community.

There is no indication in the story as to whether the wise ones are men or women or both. Nor are we told their number. The three earth gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh have been traditionally associated with three different characters, usually kings of diverse nationality and colour. These strangers are the first to recognise "God-with-us" in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. They also come to recognise "in a dream" the duplicity of Herod, who senses a threat to his political power from the birth of a new-born "king of the Jews". They have the good sense not to accede to Herod's request to bring him word of the newborn king. They return home "by another road".

The story-teller Matthew leaves room in the tableau for the insertion of the wise ones who will emerge through the ages. There is an invitation for us to enter into Matthew's drama, to be the wise ones, to join with those of different cultures, to engage in our own search for Wisdom, and to follow the star that leads to truth and lasting peace. There is also an invitation to be wary of those who find their positions threatened by a different sort of power, power based on vulnerability and openness to new life.