

**Homily Outline for the Solemnity of the Epiphany
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois**

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- I. My dear Priests, Deacons, and brothers and sisters in Christ:
 - A. TV news anchors on Christmas day asking each other: “Did you get what you wanted for Christmas?”
 1. This is the opposite of what the question should be: “Did you *give* what you wanted for Christmas?”
 2. Christmas is about *giving*, not *getting*!
 - B. The first “Santa Claus” was St. Nicholas, 4th century Bishop in Asia Minor in what is known today as the country of Turkey.
 1. Custom in those days of the father of the bride giving a dowry.
 2. A poor father with 3 daughters could not afford to give a dowry when each of them got engaged to be married.
 3. Bishop Nicholas secretly brought bags of gold to the poor man’s house each time to provide a dowry for the poor man’s daughters.
 4. The man saw Bishop Nicholas the 3rd time, which is how we know it was he who gave the gifts.
 5. As we continue the Christmas season, it is a good time for us to reflect on our gift-giving.

II. Today the Church celebrates the Solemnity of the Epiphany. The journey of the wise men to Bethlehem is a journey made in answer to God's call and in hope of finding the One for whom they were looking.

A. The Three Kings/Magi/Wise Men may be considered as "Pilgrims of Hope" (cf. Jubilee Year 2025 theme mentioned last week).

1. Hope is the virtue of trusting that your expectations for something good will be fulfilled.
2. The Solemnity of the Epiphany celebrates three things: manifestation of the Messiah, giving of gifts, and worshipping God.

B. We are called to make Christ manifest in our lives in what we say and do.

1. Example of Notre Dame quarterback Riley Leonard in TV interview following victory over Georgia: when asked on ESPN about the victory, Leonard answered, "First and foremost, I want to thank my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Without Him, I wouldn't be here. We wouldn't be here."
2. On another occasion he said, ""When I go to bed at night, I'm not thinking, 'How many touchdown passes did I throw?' 'Did we win or lose?' I'm thinking, 'Did I better my relationship with Jesus Christ?' 'Did I treat my girlfriend with respect?' 'Did I call my parents?'"

3. Do we make Christ manifest in our lives?

C. The Three Kings brought gifts to Jesus: "They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Matthew 2:1-12).

1. What gifts do we bring to Jesus and His Church?
2. Not just “end of the year giving.” Ash Wednesday is March 5. We can already be thinking about our Lenten almsgiving.
3. Not just monetary gifts; do we share the gift of faith with others?

D. The Three Kings worshipped Jesus.

1. We are called to worship Our Lord at Mass every Sunday.
2. The fact that you came here today for Mass in this heavy snowstorm shows that you take this obligation quite seriously!

III. On this Solemnity of the Epiphany, may we renew our commitment to manifest the Messiah in our lives, give gifts to God and to those in need, and worship Jesus as Our Lord and Savior, which we do now in this Eucharist.

IV. May God give us this grace. Amen.