

We actually don't know how many wise men there were. Oh, we sing "We Three Kings of Orient Are" and we assume that there were three because there were three gifts. But the scriptures do not say how many. Could have been two, could have been four.

We do know that they were scholars, that they studied the stars. We know that they came from the East, that is, from the east of Israel, probably from Persia which is modern-day Iran. Also, we know that, at that time, it was widely known that the Jews were waiting for a Messiah and also widely believed that a star would be connected to the birth of a significant world leader.

The wise men put two and two together. A great star had risen in the western sky, which they studied. The Jews were to the west (who were waiting for a Messiah). A great star, they believed, meant the birth of a great person. Could it be, they were asking themselves, that this star signifies the birth of the Messiah from the Jews?

You see, God used all these things to draw these wise men to Jesus. Jesus came, not just for Jews, but for the salvation of all and these wise men were to be, in God's plan, the first Gentiles, non-Jews, to receive the Lord.

"Could this be the Messiah?" they were asking themselves. "Let's find out. Let us go."

I want to point out to you that this wouldn't have been like taking a little trip to Indianapolis or something. From where they were, it would have been over a 600-mile journey, on camel back! We're probably talking about a couple months' journey, at least.

Seeking the Lord should be our attitude, especially in prayer. A paradox: we know the Lord and yet at the same time we don't know the Lord. We must continually seek Him in this life. Our prayer life should have an attitude of seeking: Rosary or daily prayers, Mass – seeking Him, seeking to know Him, and in seeking Him we find Him.

Saint Augustine said, "To fall in love with God is the greatest romance; to seek, Him the greatest adventure; to find Him, the greatest human achievement."

Let this Epiphany celebration remind us that the greatest thing we can do in our life is to seek the Lord. Never get discouraged if the journey seems long. The wise men had a long journey, but they were not disappointed. When we seek Him with all our heart, we too shall not be disappointed, for He waits to be found.

Given by Father Mark Gurtner at Our Lady of Good Hope Catholic Church, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on the Solemnity of Epiphany, 2016.