Let me begin by filling in the rest of the story in Matthew’s infancy narrative. After the magi return home, Joseph is warned in a dream about the danger Herod poses for his son, so the holy family flees to Egypt. Herod commands the slaughter of the innocents. Upon Herod’s death, once again in a dream, Joseph learns it is safe to return to Nazareth.

Take the whole of Matthew’s infancy narrative, what he tells us about the birth of Jesus, the visit of the magi, Herod, and it becomes clear. Matthew is drawing out for us important connections to the Old Testament, to help us realize Jesus’s continuity with the OT, and those first chapters of salvation history. Matthew is also teaching us who Jesus is, why we should come to him, and who Jesus is for the world.

Jesus is a great prophet, a new Moses: a wicked king wants to destroy him, he escapes, then returns. Hear the echoes of the story of Moses from the 1st two chapters of Exodus?

Jesus is a fulfillment of prophecies about David’s dynasty: the star rising in the East echoes Balaam’s prophesy in Numbers. Note as well, Balaam was from afar, a Gentile.

Jesus is the one who will fulfill prophecies from Isaiah about Gentiles finding salvation and streaming to Jerusalem: that pilgrimage begins with the Magi.

Matthew even hints, through Herod’s desire to kill Jesus, at the passion: Jesus’s victory will come through suffering, and giving his life for all.

Today let me focus specifically on the magi. Matthew doesn’t call them kings, but magi … others wove the story in such a way as to put crowns on their heads, likely influenced by what we just heard in Isaiah. But magi, Matthew’s term, were in essence those who studied nature, studied the sky: astrologers, the precursor of astronomers; let’s call them early scientists.

So just how did the Magi, these strangers from the East, these proto-scientists find the child Jesus?

The first half of the answer is obviously: They saw his star at its rising. But Matthew makes it very clear that that wasn’t enough to do the trick. Studying the night skies, they saw the star, realized it had a significance, and concluded that a newborn King had been born to the Jews. But to locate the child, they had to head to Jerusalem to inquire where. Without consulting those leaders familiar with the scriptures, finding Jesus would have been impossible. In short, it took both the study of nature: the night sky and the star, and the study of God’s revelation: the prophets, the scriptures.

So what is Matthew teaching us? For just a moment, let me move the infant Jesus from the creche to the center of the sanctuary.
The light of science, the study nature, unraveling the wonders of the world we live in, this amazing world created by God, filled with clues to lead us to God … Studied carefully, it can shed light on Jesus, from this side: the star, prominent in many creches; in our case, an actual spot light. Sirach, other Wisdom books in the Old Testament, the psalms, even the Acts of the Apostles and St. Paul speak of finding God in the wonder of nature.

From this side, where the Bible is proclaimed: the study of Revelation - what God has made known to us through great holy people: prophets, the evangelists, St. Paul. Those who study the science of theology. In short, the scriptures, also shine light on Jesus, so we can distinguish more about him.

Science /// Scripture, both are valuable tools that led the magi to Jesus, and can lead us to him today as well.

Many scientists do discover God as they examine the intricacies of the universe we live in, even though a few like to dismiss the idea of God and revelation, and try to fly with one wing.

Many believers do discover God by delving into revelation, and it often can help them value even more highly the insights and wisdom science can add, even though some can feel threatened by science.

I find in Matthew’s story of the magi some great wisdom; how science and scripture can complement each other in leading us to Christ.

Having moved Jesus where I have, I can’t help adding two other spot lights, two, maybe three sources of Epiphany.

The sacraments: our altar, experiencing sacraments, entering into the world of sacrament --and the community of believers, and our experiences of Christ in our day to day life.

Epiphany means discovering God, God made manifest, revealed.

It can happen through nature, and science, the study of nature.

It can happen through the study of the scriptures

It can happen through celebrating and experiencing the sacraments.

It can happen when we begin to share with one another where and how we have experienced the Lord.

Christ reveals to us that we can even discover God, and see God in a different light through our suffering. (pointing to crucifix over sanctuary)

Revelation, science, sacraments, community, suffering and redemption each can sharpen our understanding of Jesus as God incarnate, choosing to dwell among us. Put them all together, and then we begin to know the fullness of Christ.

In this new year …. Do we treasure in our heart what each light can offer us, or do we sometimes misuse one to dismiss another, rather than letting them complement one another?
How will we each reap what nature and science, scripture, sacraments, community and even suffering can reveal to us about Christ?

Let’s pray about it, and pray that the star, the scripture, the sacraments and Christian community, the cross will all be guiding lights, leading us to the fullness of the gift God gives to us in His Son.

To use the title of a book that is now familiar after Christmas here at St. Louis, this may be a year to Rediscover Jesus.