

Reflection - The Light of Christ

*No longer shall the sun be your light by day,
Nor the brightness of the moon shine upon you at night;
The Lord shall be your light forever,
your God shall be your glory (Is 60:19)*

The word Epiphany means “an appearance or manifestation,” especially of a deity. Our celebrations of the Epiphany shows the Magi making their way to the newborn Jesus and his family. The child “showed himself forth” to them, like a candle shows forth in the dark.

The Magi followed light from far away (Persia?), the star which led them through the darkness to the tiny yet powerful light of Christ. It is a sweet story. We rejoice.

But we do remember that darkness is at hand also, the bad kind, the smoldering human rubble found all over the world in so many countries. The Magi speak of it on their journey, as imagined by [TS Eliot](#).*

*... Then the camel men cursing and grumbling
And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,
And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,
And the cities hostile and the towns unfriendly
And the villages dirty and charging high prices:
A hard time we had of it.
At the end we preferred to travel all night,
Sleeping in snatches. ...*

And there was deeper darkness to come. The Wise Men moved, weary, into Jerusalem, and then straight into the jaws of the power-hungry, luxury-loving King Herod.

They asked a question to the Jerusalem citizens that shocked Herod greatly when it got back to him. “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage”.

Ouch. The question revealed a stunning fact. There is to be a new king instead of Herod!

Herod oiled his way to his chief priests and scribes. He ordered them to scour scripture for hints about this horror—uh, no, this holy birth. In response they announced in a dignified manner that the long-awaited Messiah, King of the Jews, will be born “in Bethlehem of Juda.”

But this is just what Herod and his offspring were: Kings of the Jews. He called the Magi to him, smiled, faked holy interest, then made his plans.

Make no mistake. At this point Herod knew clearly he was dealing with God’s own design for the world, foretold by the scriptures of the very people he was supposed to be leading. Herod made up his mind to commit an atrocity.

You know the story. The Magi had found and worshipped the tiny Christ. Herod, still in the dark, sent out troops to slaughter all boy babies of two years old or less in Bethlehem and surroundings, just to eliminate this so-called “King” (Mt 2:13-16). And, speaking of having “a hard time of it,” in Eliot’s words, Jesus’ parents had to cross the harsh desert into Egypt in order to save him.

This child was like a candle in the wind.

Why do the readings talk so much about dark night on this Epiphany, which is the very feast of the dayspring? It is a complicated question, but here is one answer.

Because God’s light only comes to us thoroughly mingled with the grubby reality of human life. Why else did he come as an infant? The Christ did not arrive to erase our troubles but to join us in them, to be a quiet light in our darkness, not a blinding replacement for the dark.

So we have to be like the Magi. We have to have our own puzzling, sleepless nights, and we have to search and search, and never ever rest until we see the light as God chose to reveal it.

* [TS Eliot](#), “The Journey of the Magi”

John Foley, SJ

St Thomas Aquinas Parish Bulletin



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Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm

Weekend Masses: Saturday Vigil Mass 5.00 pm, Sunday 8.00 am and 9.30 am
Weekday Mass: Tuesday - Saturday 9.30 am
Rosary & Devotions: Tuesday - Saturday 9.00 am
Adoration, Rosary & Chaplet: 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 7.30 - 8.30 pm
Intercession & Adoration: None until further notice
Baptisms: 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month - 10.30am and by appointment
Reconciliation: By request
Weddings: By appointment - restricted numbers
Funerals: By appointment - restricted numbers

**We will be closed
from 1.00pm
Wednesday, 23rd
December until
8.30am Tuesday,
12th January 2021**

A Poem to sit with

*They were overjoyed at seeing the star,
and on entering the house
they saw the child with Mary his mother*

Bluegrass

Hints of honeysuckle
in the air
a skunk’s slow progress
told by the trembling
of tassel grass and
pokeweed
an indigo bunting
feeding on seeding
thistle
both silk—the thistle
white
the bird electric blue
the swell of corn fields
pilings of clouds with
the sun breaking through
as Hans Christian Andersen
said on his deathbed
“Oh God, I could kiss you”

J..Janda

THE GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

*And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them,
until it came and stopped over the place where the child was*

Look!
Look up!
O Jerusalem,
here comes the world
running to walk in your light.
We are the sparkling and the dim,
the black, brown and white,
the kings and beggars,
the undocumented
and the border
agents.
Lord,
shine your light on us all.
May your star chase away every darkness
and fill us with your radiant light.
Make us your epiphanies
overflowing with love
and wonderful care for each other.

Anne Osdieck

Today’s Readings: Is 60:1-6; Eph 3:2-3 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

Entrance Antiphon: Arise, Jerusalem, and look to the East and see your children gathered from the rising to the setting of the sun.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 71:1-2, 7-8, 10-13. R. v. 11

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, Alleluia! We have seen his star in the East; and have come to adore the Lord. Alleluia!

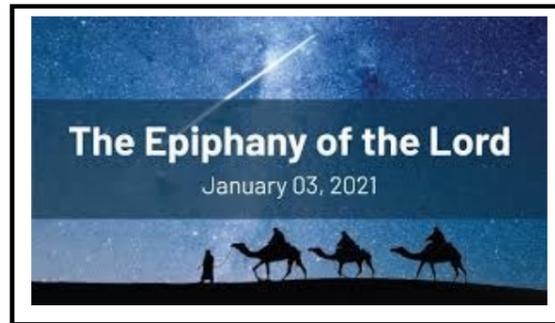
Communion Antiphon: The brightness of God illumined the holy city Jerusalem, and the nations will walk by its light.

Next Week: BAPTISM OF THE LORD Is 55:1-11; 1 Jn 5:1-9; Mk 1:7-11



Sick: Luca Hurley and all Private Intentions.

Due to the strict privacy laws, names of the deceased and sick can only be included in the Bulletin with the express permission of the immediate family. Thank you.



“Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him”.



THE FIRST READING

Isaiah 60:1-6

Rise up in splendour, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the lord shines upon you.

Morning has opened. Its gentle light spills over.
Caravans come, nations stretch to see.
Hearts open their sleepy eyes
to the radiance that you
have poured
out on
us.

Help us rise up.

Anne Osdieck

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****NEW** TAP and GO Donation Machine**

*** MAKE A CASHLESS CONTRIBUTION ***



On guidance from the Diocese we have received a new Tap and Go Donation Machine.

This is for the second planned giving collection

(You may still give via our Offertory Boxes)

SIMPLY tap on the device near the contactless logo

The machine has been pre-set at \$10.00 per transaction

First the Savour, Then the Sending

Mary treasured all these things. (Lk 2:19)

My father, a year before he died, said to me (I thought), “It’s amazing how fast the year goes by.”

It was late spring, and my term of teaching was closing out, so it was easy to agree. “Yes, I can’t believe it’s April already. I hardly know my students’ names.”

“No”, he said, “not this year. The years. I can’t believe how fast the last thirty years went.”

My mother, a few years later, offered her own observation about the passing of time. Another mother asked her, “Isn’t it wonderful, now that you have time to do all the things you want without all the demands and rush of a growing family?”

“No,” my mother said. “I would be perfectly happy to have those kids running around, especially if I could see then what I see now. But now is also good, and I’m going to appreciate it all while it’s still here.”

A sense of how God “shows” in each day, how grace is manifest in every numbered year, allows us to take possession of our moments gently as time flashes by.

We develop a richer taste for life itself, and our thanksgiving reaches deeper into our being.

Sometimes the years seem to hurtle by. There are those days when I, my parents’ child, wonder: how do I let it all get away so fast? How can I hold on to it better? How can I see it better?

Well, at least numbering the years helps. Like birthdays and the change of seasons, the marking of a New Year invites us to remembrance and recollection. We all could learn a thing or two from that old religious practice of singing the *Te Deum* on December 31: a day to thank God for all the days, a moment to bless all the moments of mind and heart, breath and sight. A time to “see” and savour.

It is our celebration of Mary, the Mother of God, who “treasured all these things and reflected on them in her heart,” that starts our new year. And the gospel tells us of shepherds who took time to approach the mystery and wondrously saw Mary and Joseph and the child. “Once they saw, they understood.”

Even the ancient feast of the Epiphany celebrates our seeing, our witnessing of the mystery that God could take our very flesh and bones. In the light of the Incarnation, with the “showing” of God in Jesus, all is changed, all human ordinariness transformed, all of the commonplace transfigured and blessed.

If we fully enter into the revelation of Christmas, if we truly savour it and thereby savour the lives we’ve been gifted with, we may find ourselves joining the long march of witnesses, sent to all times and nations, to bestow the blessing of God that the Book of Numbers gave to us: “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord’s face shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord look kindly upon you and give you peace.” (Num 6:24)

John Kavanaugh, SJ

Take a leap of faith and begin this wonderful new year by believing.

