

Feast of Faith

The Liturgy of Emmanuel

The assembly has gathered from near and far, on foot, by bus, by car, by subway, singly and by twos and threes: single people, couples, families. Now that movement is ritualized and made visible in the liturgy's entrance procession.

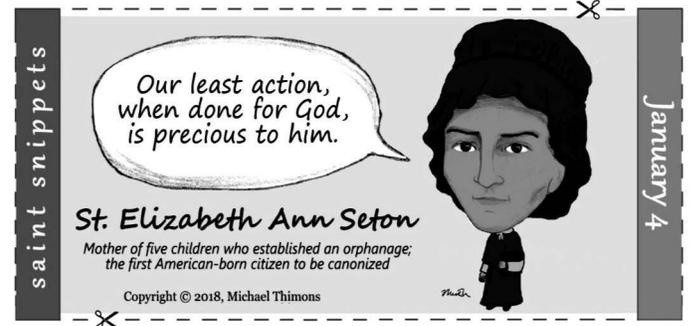
We are not alone on this journey; Christ is with us. The procession is led by the cross, with the image of Christ upon it. Candles, signs of a living presence, are carried around the cross. Candles also accompany the Book of the Gospels, another sign of Emmanuel, God-with-us. The priest presider is likewise a sign of Christ's presence in our assembly; he will act in persona Christi, in the person of Christ, who presides at every Eucharist.

As the procession begins, we stand and sing together in our first act as a community. The joining of our voices begins to turn many into one. The songs we sing range from ancient chants to contemporary hymns, but they have the same purpose, to foster our unity and turn our thoughts to the mysteries we gather to celebrate. We may feel that we can't sing well, but "Christ always invites us to enter into song, to rise above our own preoccupations, and to give our entire selves to the hymn of his Paschal Sacrifice" (USCCB, Sing to the Lord, 14).

—Corinna Laughlin, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.

Readings for the Week

- Monday:** 1 Jn 3:22 — 4:6; Ps 2:7bc-8, 10-12a; Mt 4:12-17, 23-25
- Tuesday:** 1 Jn 4:7-10; Ps 72:1-4, 7-8; Mk 6:34-44
- Wednesday:** 1 Jn 4:11-18; Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13; Mk 6:45-52
- Thursday:** 1 Jn 4:19 — 5:4; Ps 72: 1-2, 14, 15bc, 17; Lk 4:14-22a
- Friday:** 1 Jn 5:5-13; Ps 147:12-15, 19-20; Lk 5:12-16
- Saturday:** 1 Jn 5:14-21; Ps 149:1-6a, 9b; Jn 3:22-30
- Sunday:** Is 42:1-4, 6-7 or Is 55:1-11; Ps 29:1-4, 3, 9-10 or Is 12:2-3, 4bcd-6; Acts 10:34-38 or 1 Jn 5:1-9; Mk 1:7-11



Saints and Special Observances

- Sunday:** The Epiphany of the Lord; National Migration Week
- Monday:** St. Elizabeth Ann Seton
- Tuesday:** St. John Neumann
- Wednesday:** St. André Bessette
- Thursday:** St. Raymond of Penyafort; Julian Calendar Christmas

Today's Readings

First Reading — Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! The Lord shines upon you and the glory of the Lord appears over you (Isaiah 60:1-6).

Psalm — Lord, every nation on earth will adore you (Psalm 72).

Second Reading — The Gentiles are coheirs, copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel (Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6).

Gospel — Magi from the east arrived, looking for the newborn king of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-12).

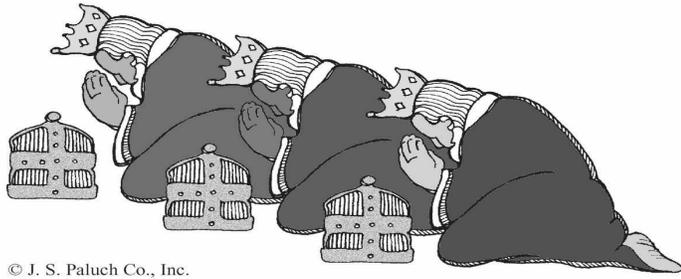
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Promise Fulfilled

Isaiah reminds the people of God that the land shall be restored to their possession, they shall rejoice to see their people return from the bondage of exile, and they shall be a light to the nations. In other words, through the people of Israel, the Savior shall come to all people who seek God with a sincere heart. This brings joy and the radiance of God's glory to all the world and to all people everywhere. Through the fidelity of the people of God, and through God's fidelity to them, all people shall become God's children and rejoice in the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel.

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The Epiphany of the Lord January 3, 2021

All kings shall pay him homage,
all nations shall serve him.

—Psalm 72:11

The Epiphany of the Lord Little Drummer Boy

Did you know that the only reason we say that there were three wise men is that they brought three gifts? The Bible never says their number or their names. The gifts tell us about the givers. And these special gifts--gold, frankincense, and myrrh--tell us much.

When one king visited or sent an ambassador to another, he would give a gift of gold to show that he acknowledged the kingship of the other. So the first gift of the wise men tells us they recognized Jesus as King. The second gift is a type of incense, which was used in Jesus' time to worship God. So this gift shows the wise men paying homage to Jesus' divinity. The gift of myrrh is oil used to anoint the dying. It reminds us of Jesus suffering and death on the cross.

So what gifts do we have for Jesus? Maybe we can take a hint from the wise men. If we acknowledge Jesus as king, maybe a better gift than gold would be to pledge our obedience to him. Each day we can promise to live our vocation as best we can, to love those around us, and forgive those who hurt us.

A better way than burning incense to pay homage to Jesus' divinity is to take time to pray throughout the day. Some people are able to attend daily Mass, others spend time in adoration before the Eucharist, or even a few minutes of their lunch break to say the rosary.

As for the gift of myrrh, we can give Jesus the crosses we bear each day. When we accept suffering in our lives, especially that caused by our sins, we give ourselves to Jesus as he gave himself for us on the cross. The song "Little Drummer Boy" reminds us that the best gift is not necessarily the most expensive. Instead, it is the simple gift that only we can give. Let Epiphany remind us to offer our lives to Jesus each day.

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The Holy Star

O Father, may that holy star grow every year more bright
And send its glorious beams afar to fill the world with
light.

—William Cullen Bryant

Gentleness

Feelings are everywhere—be gentle.

—J. Masai

Treasures From Our Tradition

Before long, people will be throwing Mardi Gras beads in the streets of New Orleans—purple, gold, and green. A few will be in on the secret: the colors of the beads are derived from the gifts of the magi. Gold for wealth, purple for power, green for good health. The gifts are also a key to the identity of the Christ Child: the incense for God; the gold for a king; the myrrh, fragrant burial ointment for one who comes to die.

Centuries ago, today's feast bore the heavy burden of celebrating all the manifestations of Christ's identity: the birth of Jesus, the coming of the magi, the baptism of the Lord, the wedding feast at Cana. It was too much for one day. Fortunately the one day has blossomed into a whole season of grateful celebration, stretching behind us into Advent, and ahead of us into the Baptism of the Lord and to Christ's coming again in glory. Tonight, be sure to light the Christmas lights, and gather at the crèche for a favorite carol and a prayer.

—James Field, Copyright © J. S. Paluch Co.



THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

JANUARY 3, 2021

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

Matthew 2:9

IN A NUTSHELL

When I tell a story, I have a friend who prefers the “nutshell version” first. After that she’ll listen to me ramble, but she wants to know the main point right off the bat. When reading and hearing Sunday scriptures one may often find the nutshell by looking at the responsorial psalm or the Gospel acclamation. From Psalm 72 we hear “Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.” The verse for the Gospel acclamation is Matthew 2:2 “We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” As a weary world, we need to see the light, to follow with our actions and our words. This is the same hope that is echoed in Isaiah 60:2 “See, darkness covers the earth, / and thick clouds cover the peoples; / but upon you the LORD shines, / and over you appears his glory.” Don’t give up, friends. You must shine!

SEARCHING

In Matthew’s Gospel today we see two extremely different perspectives, two different reasons for searching for Jesus. In some ways, this resembles the polarization of our nation in today’s time. What one group sees as good for the nation, those with opposing views think will wreck the country. The Magi were astrologers who saw a vision in the sky and were trying to find a way to follow it and discover the new king of the Jews. Herod heard about this king, and his reaction was dark and negative. He saw the birth of such a king as a threat to his power as the Roman leader of the country and wanted the Magi to pass on to him what they knew about this Christ child. Similarly, on a more personal level, we can either feel threatened or excited by changes that may come, depending on our perspective.

GIVING HOMAGE

In our minds, it is easy to mix up bits and pieces from Luke’s account of the shepherds coming to see Jesus in the stable and the story of the magi. Clearly, it has taken the magi time to get here, and the reading speaks of them coming to the house where the star led them. Nevertheless, they “prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures . . .”

How do we do this? Do we continue looking for Jesus, even if takes a while and he is not where we expect to see him? Are we paying attention to the signs showing us the way? What gifts do we have with which to pay him homage? After seeing him, the Magi were warned in a dream not to go back the way they came. But if we have seen the Christ child, how can we go back to where we were? We must continue to respond to God’s call to move forward and grow in our lives. We must seek the right and just path and turn away from the “Herods” and inherent evils in our life.

Nutshell: Seek God. Pay homage. Amen.

TODAY’S READINGS

Isaiah 60:1-6
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

Prayer of the Faithful

God's arms are opened wide in welcome to all who seek salvation. Let us bring to God the needs of all the world.

For Christians throughout the world as they work to manifest God's love in the midst of hardship, apathy, and persecution, let us pray to the Lord.

For all the nations of the world, the richest and the poorest, to learn work together for the common good of all people, especially during this time of the pandemic, let us pray to the Lord.

For those who earnestly seek for signs of God's movement in their lives, and for our community to encourage and welcome them, let us pray to the Lord.

For those who study the stars of the universe or the microbes on the Earth, or in other ways seek to unlock the secrets of God's creation for the benefit of all humanity, especially those working for treatments and vaccines for COVID-19, let us pray to the Lord.

For all newborn children, signs of hope for the world, and for their parents and families, let us pray to the Lord.

For all those who are sick, for all who suffer from COVID-19, and for all who have died, especially N., N., and N., let us pray to the Lord.

For all the prayers that we hold in the silence of our hearts; for all our intentions spoken and unspoken, let us pray to the Lord.

**O Lord of light,
today you have revealed to the world your saving love.
Hear these our prayers
and grant them in the name of your Son,
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**