



# Bringing Home the Word

*The Epiphany of the Lord (A)*  
January 5, 2020

## Wise Humility

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

An amazing thing happens in today's Gospel: Representatives from the farthest ends of the earth follow a heavenly light and end in a humble cave in Bethlehem.

The Wise Men first consult with King Herod, Galilee's civil authority. He checks with the high priest and rabbis to determine when and where the Messiah is to be born. The Jewish leadership is able to read the Scriptures and give Herod and the Wise Men all the information they need. Yet only the Eastern travelers go to adore the Lord.

The priest and lawyers lack faith to see in those Scriptures a fulfillment of their hopes, while King Herod is blinded to Christ's salvific mission and moved by a will to power, as the killing of the Innocents will make clear. They all have ears to hear and eyes to see but few pay heed to the signs of the times.

The Wise Men from the East, merely following their study of the stars and asking help from others, travel months in search of Jesus. Raphael's painting *Adoration of the Magi* shows the moment when they finally find what they have been looking for. The band of travelers—complete with horses, guards, and royalty—arrives at a broken-down stall. One of the Wise Men kneels, removes his crown, and offers Jesus his treasure. This small gesture shows an internal attitude that Herod and the chief priests were missing: the humility to lay aside power, wealth, and status to bend the knee before the king born in their midst. +

## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 60:1–6

Arise! Shine, for your light has come, / the glory of the LORD has dawned upon you.

### Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6

The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

### Matthew 2:1–12

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

*The priests, lawyers,  
and King Herod  
all have ears to hear  
and eyes to see,  
but few pay heed.*

## A Word from Pope Francis

Do we know how to dream, to long for God, ...or do we let ourselves be swept along by life, like dry branches before the wind? The Magi were not content with just getting by, with keeping afloat. They understood that to truly live, we need a lofty goal and we need to keep looking up.

—Epiphany homily, January 6, 2018



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Am I willing to humbly accept Jesus for who he is: the Son of God?
- From what must I detach myself in order to accept Jesus more fully?

# God Calls Us to His Banquet Because He Loves Us

By Richard Rohr, OFM

God does not love us because we deserve it but because we need it. Does that sound startling? It shouldn't. If there is one prime idea in the Bible, it is God's undeserved love for what he has created. There is no accounting for God's love. It is not earned. There is nothing we can do to attain it or lose it. All we can do is surrender to it, trust it, and let it flow through us.

The main difference in this world is not between those who are worthy of God's love and those who are not. We are all unworthy to various degrees. The major difference is between those who know and enjoy God's love and those who don't. God doesn't love us because we are good. We are good because God loves us. That is a major transformation of consciousness! It moves us from life as an obstacle course to life as a banquet to be eaten and shared.

This truth may make us uncomfortable, especially if we think in terms of a merit system where we can change God's feelings about us by doing good or evil. We can't absorb this good news through conventional thinking, but rather the gospel must eliminate our attitudes of merit, reward, and punishment.

Before conversion, we often view God

as a parent who controls, punishes, and rewards according to legitimate criteria. But God's love doesn't work that way. We can never keep our side of the bargain or be good enough. But that does not keep God from loving us.



## Covenant of Love

This is what makes the Bible extraordinary and different from other literature. It conveys the great, central theme of grace: God's unearned favor is his steadfast covenant of love. The merit system has been destroyed forever!

Human love depends upon the merits of something or someone. Is a person worthy of my love? Is he or she attractive? We are attracted to something or someone for reasons. Goodness, beauty may be among them. That's the only way we know how to love. God's love, however, is different because the object does not determine it. It is determined by the subject, by God's self. By loving us, God is being true to God's self—not working out some arithmetic about our degree of worthiness.

Perhaps nowhere in the Bible do we see God's covenant love manifested more than in the recurring theme of the free but resented banquet. For example, in one parable a king sends his servants to call everyone to a wedding feast, a symbol of loving union. But one by one,

the invited guests make excuses. They are not interested.

The master becomes furious and sends out his servants again, this time into the main roads to invite anyone, bad or good. The banquet hall is finally filled—not with the “worthy” but with the willing!

## God's Inclusiveness

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus invokes banquet symbolism on many occasions. Along with the little child, it seems to be his primary metaphor. He eats with sinners, invites outcasts to share a meal, does not wash his hands or the food, and allows a woman to dine at a symposium for men. He always expands the meaning of the table, even breaking social conventions to communicate the hospitality and inclusivity of God.

If we're grateful and confident in God's grace, we will spend our lives trying to give back to others what has been so graciously given to us and invite all of God's children to God's table. +



*Lord, your light gives us strength and shows us the way to God. Remove my blindness that I may see the light of goodness, peace, and love within myself and others.*

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*,  
Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

January 6–11

**Monday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 3:22–4:6 / Mt 4:12–17, 23–25

**Tuesday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 4:7–10 / Mk 6:34–44

**Wednesday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 4:11–18 / Mk 6:45–52

**Thursday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 4:19–5:4 / Lk 4:14–22

**Friday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 5:5–13 / Lk 5:12–16

**Saturday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 5:14–21 / Jn 3:22–30