



Bringing Home the Word +

The Epiphany of the Lord | January 7, 2018

Come See the Christ Child

By Mary Katharine Deeley

Mary Chapin Carpenter's wonderful Christmas carol "Come Darkness, Come Light" calls all people, regardless of their situation or where they are in their faith, to come see the Christ Child. All are welcome to see that love has come to earth and to bring whatever they have to the Child who waits for them in a manger.

Whenever I hear this song, I'm moved to tears by its simplicity. For reasons of which I'm not entirely sure, I'm reminded of the beginning section of John's Gospel, which lays out so beautifully the coming

of Christ to earth. "Through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race," John narrates. Later he tells us, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us."

What is our response? Do we come as the song invites us? Do we hold back, afraid that it's too late for us? Do we listen to the siren songs of other gods, who whisper that they have the key to our happiness?

Today's readings are an invitation to know ourselves as children of God, to know the hope of his call to us, and to know that this light cannot be overcome by any darkness the world has to offer.

The rush of the holidays is behind us, and a new year has begun. We have a little breathing space. In our liturgical calendar, though, the Christmas season is still with us.

There is still time to come, by whatever means we're able, and give our lives over to Christ. +

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

Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ.

Matthew 2:1-12

Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

*All are welcome
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has come to earth*

A Word From Pope Francis

Continue to overcome apathy, offering a Christian response to the social and political anxieties, which are arising in various parts of the world. I ask you to be builders of the world, to work for a better world.... Don't be observers, but immerse yourself in the reality of life, as Jesus did.

—Vigil, July 27, 2013



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do I trust that Jesus wants to and can reach any soul, no matter how far away?
- Will you renew your prayer and gentle testimony to invite those who are still searching?



By Richard Rohr, OFM

Many of us have been privileged to be present with someone on his or her deathbed. In this setting we are concerned about listening to every word the person is saying—and about choosing our own words carefully. It is with this degree of reverence that we should approach the Bible: with humility.

Biblical language is more poetry than prose. It doesn't so much describe events historically as it seeks to lead us into those experiences. We can change words, but an experience changes us. Good biblical interpretation finds the balance between words that get us started, and encounters that are beyond words.

At the transfiguration (Matthew 17), Jesus appears to several disciples, his face shining "like the sun" and clothes "white as light." Afterward, Jesus cautions them: "Do not tell the vision..." In this example we observe the spiritual tradition balancing darkness and light, presence and absence, speaking and silence, seeing everything so well that we don't need to see anything in particular.

Reverencing the Bible

The Bible repeatedly finds the balance between knowing and not knowing, between using words and having humility about words. To read the Bible well, we should appreciate the balance and allow the Spirit to stir its meaning for us. But for most of us in the contemporary West, it is an uphill struggle. We prefer to read the Bible literally and to turn to it for precise answers to questions.

Need for Grounding

Ours is a time of such change that the human psyche struggles to handle it all. Recent terrorist attacks and political turmoil have shaken us deeply. No wonder many of us look to certitudes for grounding. Subconsciously, we seek to make God our private property by taking the Bible literally, reading it from our own perspective and cultural interpretation. When we do this, we lapse into a kind of rigid time capsule that does not enlighten us. God gives us just enough light for the next faith-filled step, never a blueprint for our lifetime.

The "Jesus Seminar" offers an example. Here scholars combed through New Testament texts in an effort to determine if Jesus said this or that and did or didn't use certain precise words. When we take that approach, more is lost than gained. We risk moving out of sacred space and trivializing what we might have experienced. We risk declaring victory before we have even struggled. We settle the dust by giving

ourselves answers, when the raised dust might have revealed the right questions.

Journey of Faith

Though we often wish it were so, the biblical God is not a cure-all, a cosmic answer man or woman. The God living inside of history uses it and suffers from it, gives us truths on which we can rely. But he doesn't give us all the answers. In fact, God leads us through the dilemma of our lives and invites us into a daring journey of faith. God always comes to us disguised as our lives.

The Bible offers hope, but not an escape from life. It is in life that we meet God. So very little in life is ever resolved or solved, settled or answered. There is only the crisis itself, the struggle. Our need for an answer leads us toward eternal life. God calls us to stay in the struggle—still wanting to know, but as people of faith being willing not to know. All because we can trust the One who knows all. +

PRAYER

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 8-13

Mon. Baptism of the Lord: Is 42:1-4, 6-7
or Is 55:1-11 / Acts 10:34-38
or 1 Jn 5:1-9 / Mk 1:7-11

Tue. Weekday: 1 Sm 1:9-20 / Mk 1:21-28

Wed. Weekday: 1 Sm 3:1-10, 19-20 /
Mk 1:29-39

Thu. Weekday: 1 Sm 4:1-11 / Mk 1:40-45

Fri. Weekday: 1 Sm 8:4-7, 10-22a /
Mk 2:1-12

Sat. Weekday: 1 Sm 9:1-4, 17-19; 10:1a /
Mk 2:13-17