

Year B – Epiphany of the Lord – January 7, 2024

“Your light has come”

Three readings

OPENING PRAYER (Psalm 72)

Leader: The Lord delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

All: God has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the oppressed.

Leader: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things.

**All: Blessed be God’s glorious name forever;
may God’s glory fill the whole earth**

First Reading -- Isaiah 60:1-6

This piece of mystical poetry overflows with promise. Isaiah’s vision is that of a huge gathering of peoples and nations around a new light seems to be radiating from God’s own heart. Isaiah promises a new heart for all people, a new centre for humanity, a new universal meaning of the temple and Jerusalem.

1. Why do you think Isaiah stresses this radiating vision so strongly?
2. When and how do we as God's chosen ones lose sight of this kind of inclusive and renewing God?
3. How does your heart react to Isaiah’s promising vision: do you feel joyful anticipation, skepticism, disbelief, hurt from crushed dreams? Are you energized, renewed, or critical?

Second Reading -- Ephesians 3:2-6

The apostle Paul desires intensely that others share his enthusiasm for bringing the Good News to the gentiles. For Paul, it is abundantly clear that the news of the risen Lord is for all people.

1. Who in our culture is the “gentile?”
2. How can we communicate Paul’s radical inclusiveness to those who feel left out?

Gospel -- Matthew 2:1-12

This well-known passage from Matthew’s infancy narrative compares and contrasts the openness of the wise men, the “outsiders,” with the power-hungry and suspicious King Herod, a Jewish leader, and therefore, an “insider.” The powers of light and of darkness, the energy for good found in dreams and the brute power of oppression and force, an open universal perspective and a closed defensive and self-serving isolation -- all these are clearly contrasted here.

1. What, in the wise men's experience, communicated there was something special about this birth?
2. How did God's revelation to the wise men challenge the assumptions of Jewish beliefs?
3. In your experience, how do “insiders” (i.e. those inside the church) display Herod-like characteristics and how do “outsiders” display openness and faith in God?

LIVING THE WORD

Which part of God's Word today challenges me/us this coming week?

PRAYING THE WORD

Intercession: That we may have a new heart and an open spirit as we reflect on
and evaluate the life of our parish community we pray to the Lord.

Intercessions concluded with the Our Father

Closing Prayer:

Leader O God, comforter of refugees and outsiders

Help us to welcome you in the stranger,

**All: To embrace you in the weak and vulnerable,
And to serve you in all the children around us.**

Leader: Be patient with us, Lord, as you grow and expand
Our hearts, our visions, our spirits.

**All: We make this prayer in the name of the One
Who came to us as a baby, a refugee, an outcast,
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Leader: Let us offer each other a sign of peace.