



Bringing Home the Word

The Epiphany of the Lord (C)

January 5, 2025

Your Light Has Come!

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Many traditional religions have in some way ascribed divinity to light—they claim either that light emanates from a god or that light itself is divine. This is probably because light is a primal necessity, essential for life. We find such thinking in today’s readings.

“Your light has come” (Isaiah 60:1), says today’s Old Testament reading. This is Isaiah’s glorious message for the people of Jerusalem. The city had been destroyed; the people were scattered; the future looked bleak. This message must have filled the people with hope. Not only does light bring them hope, but the

light actually streams from their God. It is the Lord who shines, bestowing his radiance upon them. This light is filled with promise.

The story of the Magi is not meant primarily for children who delight in moving figurines of the three kings a bit closer to the stable every day. This is an adult story about inner darkness and enlightenment. The strangers, ignorant of ancient Israel’s traditions, were able to read the signs of the times. Because of their openness, they found the Light of the World. The learned men of Jerusalem were well schooled in the ancient promises, for they knew where to send the strangers. However, they felt threatened by these signs. They closed their minds and hearts to any omens that might imperil their positions of privilege. They had a chance to benefit from this new light, but they turned their backs on it. †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 60:1–6

Nations shall walk by your light, / kings by the radiance of your dawning.

Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6

[T]he Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus.

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.



The story of the Magi is an adult story about inner darkness and enlightenment.

A Word from Pope Francis

Where did it originate, this spirit of healthy restlessness that led [the Magi] to set out on their journey? It was born of *desire*.... With no exaggeration, we can say that we are what we desire. For it is our desires that enlarge our gaze and drive our lives forward...beyond the fear of becoming involved and serving others and the common good.

HOMILY, ROME, JANUARY 6, 2022



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What truth, or “epiphany,” that is waiting to be revealed frightens me?
- What can I do this year to draw closer to others and to God?

Living in the Light of God

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

Each day is an epiphany. We live in the light of God, who created us. We are redeemed in the light of Jesus, who poured out his life for the sake of sinful humanity. We are empowered to be the light of God for others by the gift of the Holy Spirit. Each day is an opportunity to open our hearts to let the light of God shine through us. Our light shines brightly when we choose to celebrate life and to share goodness, compassion, peace, and love with others.

Epiphany means living in the light of God and bringing the light of God to all the dark places in our families, communities, nation, and world. Epiphany challenges every Christian to be the light of love to unloving people, the light of forgiveness in unforgiving



situations, the light of kindness in a climate of incivility, and the light of understanding in the face of invincible ignorance. We are the glory of God in the world. We are the epiphanies who can make a difference in people's lives.

Ponder: Where do I need to let my light shine?

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.

Practice: Today, I will have a positive attitude and look for the good in others. †

From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas* by Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney, Liguori Publications (819407). Visit Liguori.org for other books in the series.

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Advent Longing: Day-by-Day Reflections for Personal Growth" by Rev. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

Inside the Christmas story are smaller narratives, each one rich. One is the story of the three Wise Men at the beginning of chapter 2 of the Gospel of Matthew, where we read of the powerful contrast that exists between the reaction of the Wise Men and King Herod to the birth of Jesus. What's the lesson for us? Can we bless new life that threatens us? Like the Wise Men, can we lay our gifts at the feet of the young and move toward anonymity and eventual death, content that the world is in good hands, even if they aren't our own? The Wise Men did that for Jesus.

Catholic Update—a subscription newsletter published eleven times a year—explores Church tradition and teaching on contemporary topics. Liguori.org • 800-325-9521.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, so that the dark corners of the world may awaken to your light and love, we pray: Be born in us, be born in our world.


The Redemptorists

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 4:14–22a
Friday, Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 5:5–13 / Lk 5:12–16
Saturday, Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 5:14–21 / Jn 3:22–30

Bringing Home
the Word 

January 5, 2025

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Bringing Home the Word

The Baptism of the Lord (C)
January 12, 2025

Taking Up Christ's Ministry

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Before the Second Vatican Council, *ministry* was considered by many to be a Protestant word, and the religious leader who did it was called a *minister*. Catholics had priests and bishops who received and administered sacraments. Religious women did the Church's work in schools and hospitals. The council turned our understanding of Church ministry inside out. We've come to realize that with baptism—not ordination or religious profession—comes the responsibility of ministry. Catholics and Protestants alike understand that their

commitment to justice and peace is a genuine ministry that seeks to establish God's reign in our world.

Many interpreters believe that the account of Jesus' baptism points to the inauguration of his own ministry. The theology expressed is certainly Trinitarian (the Voice, Jesus identified as Son, and the Dove). However, the revelation of his true identity occurs as he begins preaching and healing. Some say his baptism was meant to strengthen him as he began his public life. Others believe it was meant to strengthen his disciples.

Today, we maintain that by baptism, we are all children of God. Vatican II has enlightened us as to what this really means. Pope Francis has reminded us that by virtue of our baptism, we are missionary disciples (see *Evangelii Gaudium*, 120). In other words, as disciples, we follow Jesus, learning from him. As missionaries, we go out to spread his Good News to others. It is now for us to take up the ministry where he left off, to be faithful servants with whom God is well pleased. †

Pope Francis has reminded us that by virtue of our baptism, we are missionary disciples.

A Word from Pope Francis

Prayer opens the heaven: it gives life oxygen; it gives a breath of fresh air even in the midst of breathlessness and lets us see things from a broader perspective. Above all, it enables us to have the same experience of Jesus by the Jordan: it makes us feel like beloved children of the Father.

ANGELUS, ROME, JANUARY 9, 2022



Sunday Readings

**Isaiah 42:1–4, 6–7 or
Isaiah 40:1–5, 9–11**

I, the LORD, have called you for justice, / I have grasped you by the hand.

**Acts 10:34–38 or
Titus 2:11–14; 3:4–7**

He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

Luke 3:15–16, 21–22

[John said,] "I am baptizing you with water, but...he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How am I living the life of a baptized child of God?
- What more should I do to reflect God's love?

Baptism Makes Us God's Instruments

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

Baptism unites people from all nations into God's flock. In this flock, many suffering children need our immediate attention and care. We learn about these children—many of whom are close to death—in newspapers and magazines and on TV documentaries. In Africa, where there is widespread famine and drought, little children cry out for food and drink. In Haiti, where there is widespread HIV/AIDS, orphaned babies are desperate for medical resources. In the Middle East, where conflict and violence coexist, frightened, displaced children search for safety, security, and peace. In the United States, where everyone has the right to a good education, poor, illiterate children want to learn to read and succeed in life.

All over the world, there are motherless



and fatherless children, homeless and abandoned children, and children dying of famine, disease, violence, and war. These vulnerable children are God's lambs in need of a shepherd's care. They need committed, compassionate persons to feed them, to gather them, to carry

them, and to lead them to a place of safety, security, and peace. In baptism, we are configured to Christ, the Good Shepherd. Our baptism makes each of us God's instruments of compassion, love, and peace. The Spirit of God empowers us to use the gifts God has given us to work for justice, to help rebuild broken lives, and to offer people hope.

Ponder: Who in my life needs a shepherd's care?

Prayer: Lord, give me a shepherd's heart so that I can show your love and compassion to someone in need.

Practice: Today, I will make others aware of the plight of children living in poverty and make a commitment to do my part to eradicate global poverty. †

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "21 Days of Self-Care with Biblical Inspiration" by Paige Byrne Shortal

The Gospel tells us to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Self-care is not selfish. "Selfish" people are solely self-focused. Self-care ultimately benefits others as well as ourselves. Self-care is what we do when we follow the flight attendant's instructions and place the oxygen mask over our own nose and mouth before we do so for our children or anyone else. We cannot serve others if we are gasping for breath. And that is how too many people live—hurried, anxious, and gasping for breath.... Please remember that we have in Jesus a Savior who understands, who sympathizes with our weakness, and who knows what it is to be tired, hungry, sad, afraid, and lonely (see Hebrews 4:15–16). None of us is alone.

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PRAYER

Father God, open our ears to hear your voice, our minds to know your truth, our hearts to embrace those you call us to love, we pray. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 13–18

Monday, Weekday:

Heb 1:1–6 / Mk 1:14–20

Tuesday, Weekday:

Heb 2:5–12 / Mk 1:21–28

Wednesday, Weekday:

Heb 2:14–18 / Mk 1:29–39

Thursday, Weekday:


Heb 3:7–14 / Mk 1:40–45

Friday, St. Anthony:

Heb 4:1–5, 11 / Mk 2:1–12

Saturday, Weekday:

Heb 4:12–16 / Mk 2:13–17

Bringing Home
the **Word** 

January 12, 2025

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Bringing Home the Word †

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

January 19, 2025

What's New?

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

Few parties are more enjoyable than a wedding celebration. While the elegance of the flowers and the extravagance of the food and beverages captivate our senses, the real excitement is the love and promise of newness. New relationships are forged, a new family is created, and there's the possibility of new life. No wonder the relationship between God and God's people is often described in marriage imagery, as we see in today's first reading.

This Old Testament passage is post-exilic. The alienation from God is over; the people and God are now reconciled. Much of the language suggests relationship: no longer forsaken or desolate, but now

a delight and espoused (see Isaiah 62:4). Despite having been betrayed, God's mercy has transformed the nation back to its virginal state: "As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you" (62:5). This newness is something to celebrate.

The messianic character of the Cana story has long been recognized. All the newness I mentioned earlier is there, but newness now pertains to the entire community of believers and not simply to the marriage couple, who have no idea what is happening. An important detail of this story is the nature of the wine. What was originally water for ceremonial cleansing was transformed into wine, the quality of which was outstanding. This imagery tells us that there is a messianic banquet awaiting us, one that celebrates our intimate union with God. The joy we experience then will be intoxicating. †

Sunday Readings

Isaiah 62:1-5

As a bridegroom rejoices in his bride / so shall your God rejoice in you.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit...

John 2:1-11

Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.



***The promise of newness
now pertains to the entire
community of believers
and not simply to the
marriage couple.***

A Word from Pope Francis

Today, let us try to rummage through our memories, looking for *signs* that the Lord accomplished in my life...
When did I feel the Lord nearer?
When did I feel his tenderness and his compassion? ... May she, the Mother who is always attentive as at Cana, help us treasure the signs of God's presence in our lives.

ANGELUS, ROME, JANUARY 16, 2022



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS REFLECTION

- How has God blessed me throughout my life?
- How is God blessing me today?

Using Our Gifts for God's Work

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

Paul is appealing to the hearts of the people to live in harmony with one another and to work together for the common good. Paul reminds the church at Corinth that they are no longer members of the material world, but members of the spiritual community of God. Paul's challenge was getting the Christian community to think and act in light of their spiritual reality.

Conflict and division are present in the Church today. Many in the Church find it difficult to remain focused on the works of God in the midst of an increasingly secularized world. We need to remember that we are members of the spiritual community of God. In this community we find equality, unity, mutual love, and peace. Our life with God must



be reflected in the way we think and act in the world for the common good of all people. The work of God must be the work of Christians scattered throughout the world. No human gift is less than or greater than another. The Spirit works in

and through every gift to bring about love and unity in the world. All the works of the Church must reflect the compassion of Jesus, the humble servant of God. Every activity carried out by the people of God is activated by the Spirit to accomplish the will of God on Earth. All the gifts, services, and activities of the people of God must be used to build a civilization of love, peace, and compassion.

Ponder: What world am I living in at the moment?

Prayer: Lord, send your Spirit and empower me to use my gifts and talents for the common good of all people.

Practice: Today I will be an instrument of peace and reconciliation. †

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "An Examen for Married Couples" by Fr. Michael Champagne, CJC

What is an examen? An examen is the practice of prayerfully evaluating one's thoughts, words, and actions in the light of faith, giving thanks when the day goes well and asking for forgiveness and grace when we need to do better. About this valuable practice, Pope Francis says, "Before ending the day, stop a moment. What happened? Not in the newspapers, not in life: what happened in my heart? Was my heart attentive? Did it grow? Did it go through everything unaware? What happened in my heart?... There is the Holy Spirit. Learning to read what happened during the day in the book of our heart. Do it: it will take just two minutes, but it will do you good, I assure you."

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PRAYER

God of abundance,
inspire those with more
to share with those who
have less and do so
with a grateful, joyful
heart. We pray in Jesus'
name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 20–25

Monday, Weekday:
Heb 5:1–10 / Mk 2:18–22


Tuesday, St. Agnes:
Heb 6:10–20 / Mk 2:23–28

Wednesday, Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children:
Heb 7:1–3, 15–17 / Mk 3:1–6

Thursday, Weekday:
Heb 7:25—8:6 / Mk 3:7–12

Friday, St. Francis de Sales:
Heb 8:6–13 / Mk 3:13–19

Saturday, Conversion of St. Paul:
Acts 22:3–16 or Acts 9:1–22 /
Mk 16:15–18

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January 19, 2025

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Bringing Home the Word

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)
January 26, 2025

Fulfilled in Your Hearing

Sr. Dianne Bergant, CSA

When we hear that phrase, we might be inclined to think of prophecy. However, today's readings suggest something a bit different. True, in today's gospel, Jesus states that he is the fulfillment of the promise made by the prophet Isaiah. However, the way that passage was fulfilled by Jesus was not the way his hearers expected. The passage seems to promise a change in society, where there will be no more poor or prisoners. The people expected a political change that would overthrow Roman control. Jesus' application was

quite different. The fulfillment of that prophecy included a new and often radical way of understanding society. In other words, Jesus revealed the true meaning of the prophecy.

Such reapplication is even clearer in the first reading. Nehemiah, the Jewish leader of those who had returned from Babylonian exile, gathered all the community together, read the Law, and then reapplied it for them.

Reapplication is often necessary, because what might have been a helpful way of understanding something in our faith under some circumstances might be impractical, even inappropriate, in others. For example, to pray for an end to war is important, but to do nothing to work for peace changes how we understand prayer. Circumstances often change as we go through life. Reapplication of our faith acknowledges this and searches for ways that faith can continue to address those changing circumstances. Faithful reapplication always keeps our religious tradition alive and meaningful. †

Sunday Readings

Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10

Ezra read clearly from the book of the law of God, interpreting it so that all could understand what was read.

**1 Corinthians 12:12-30 or
1 Corinthians 12:12-14, 27**

As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ.

Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor.

***Jesus is the fulfillment
of the promise made by
the prophet Isaiah.***

A Word from Pope Francis

I would like to make a suggestion. On the Sundays of this liturgical year, the Gospel of Luke, the gospel of mercy, is proclaimed. Why not also read it personally, all of it, one small passage each day? A short passage. Let us familiarize ourselves with the gospel. It will bring us the newness and joy of God!

ANGELUS, ROME, JANUARY 23, 2022



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- How do I bring my faith to everyday situations?
- On what occasions might I forget to act like a disciple of Jesus?

Living as a Christian in Community

Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

When parents in the neighborhood do not work together to instill in their children a sense of love and respect for others, hatred of others prevails. When teachers do not work together to create a positive learning environment, children and youth become indifferent to the search for knowledge and truth. When law-enforcement officers do not work together to uphold the law, people in the community begin to administer their own brand of justice. When healthcare professionals do not work together to care for the sick and poor, people's lives are put at risk. When members of the business community do not work together to create networks of support, the quality of life diminishes. When Christian religious leaders do not work together to give a common witness



to the Gospel of Jesus, people begin to lose faith and hope in God.

All who are baptized receive the Spirit of God's love and belong to the one body of Christ. We have been given the Spirit of God's love to work together to build a community of love. The mission of the

Christian community is to use its resources to eradicate the evil of racism in the world, eliminate all forms of violence, and give testimony to the gospel of peace and nonviolence. Being a member of the body of Christ is not a luxury but a responsibility to be embraced and lived. When Christians work together in accordance with the Spirit of God's love, life becomes more peaceful, fruitful, and loving for all people.

Ponder: How do I live the responsibility of being a follower of Christ?

Prayer: Lord, you created all people equal. Open my eyes to recognize the dignity of all people and my heart to love unconditionally.

Practice: Today, I will reflect on the meaning of my baptism. †

Wisdom from Catholic UPDATE

From "Polarization: Stop Labeling—Start Listening" by Rev. Thomas M. Santa, CSsR

When we find ourselves polarized, mired deep in our own opinions and judgments, no matter how objectively "right" we may be, we have chosen the path of refusing to listen. When we refuse to listen compassionately and generously, not only to the arguments and the questions but also to the deeper truth people may reveal when they feel heard, we miss the opportunity to live more fully, to flourish, and to grow into the people we were created to be.... If we indulge in a passionate response without permitting ourselves the time to listen, we can only hope to understand part of the truth—sometimes a very small part indeed—and we deprive ourselves, and the community, of the fullness waiting to be revealed.

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PRAYER

Ever-present God, give us the grace to remember your love and care for us when we are faced with difficulties and uncertainty. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Redemptorists

WEEKDAY READINGS

January 27—February 1

Monday, Weekday:

Heb 9:15, 24–28 / Mk 3:22–30

Tuesday, St. Thomas Aquinas:

Heb 10:1–10 / Mk 3:31–35

Wednesday, Weekday:

Heb 10:11–18 / Mk 4:1–20

Thursday, Weekday:


Heb 10:19–25 / Mk 4:21–25

Friday, St. John Bosco:

Heb 10:32–39 / Mk 4:26–34

Saturday, Weekday:

Heb 11:1–2, 8–19 / Mk 4:35–41

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