

1-12-2024

Epiphany - 7 January 2024

Joe Tedesco

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Tedesco, Joe. "Epiphany - 7 January 2024." *Pastoral Liturgy* 54, no. 1 (2023): 1-5.

This Liturgical Resource is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pastoral Liturgy by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.





7 January 2024

The Epiphany of the Lord

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

Inspired by the gifts brought by the Magi to Jesus, the Epiphany was for many years a day of gift-giving, particularly in the Eastern Rites. In the West practice is now more commonly associated with Christmas Day. Nevertheless, today we celebrate the gift of Christ to the world. All people of every nation are invited to experience God through Jesus Christ.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the light that shines for all nations. Lord have mercy.

You are the glory of God. Christ have mercy.

You show us the Father. Lord have mercy.

First Reading

Isaiah 60:1-6

The light of God pushes all darkness away. The reading speaks of a manifestation of this light so radiant and so full of hope that the whole world would be drawn to the Lord in praise and reverence.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 71:1-2, 7-8, 10-13. R. v. 11

Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Echoing the Isaiah reading, God's people realise that the promised salvation is for all people.

Second Reading

Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

The revelation of God's grace is one destined for all. First coming to a chosen people, through Jesus Christ, now all are invited to share in this God's favour.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 2:1-12

The scene from Matthew depicts the coming of men from foreign lands seeking a new 'king of the Jews'. Their journey takes them to King Herod who, fearing a loss of his earthly kingship, begins to act out against God's very act of salvation.

Reflection

In the 1990s the Balkan region descended into a tragic war as the former Yugoslavia broke up into its more traditional regional states. I had a good friend who was Croatian and while enjoying a meal with his family, out of left field, I was asked a question by my friend's mother; "whose God is right?" It was a most perplexing question that seemed to come out of the blue in the serious but relaxed conversation over the dinner table and, quite frankly, made little theological sense. I thought to myself, how could God be wrong and, further, how does God belong to anybody in particular? I was not even sure to whom the 'who' in the simple question referred to. Confused I asked for clarification. She elaborated, "if we (meaning predominantly Catholic Croatians) have God the way we do, and they (meaning the predominantly Eastern Orthodox Serbians) have God the way they do, and we are at war, which God is right?" The question was not, "which side is God on". As troubling as that question might be, it makes more sense than the question that was put to me; "whose God is right".

I went on to answer as best I could, kindly and with respect, the flaw in the very question. I assured her there is only one God and one Jesus Christ that both traditions worship. Further, this God takes no sides and sees no winners whatsoever in humans of any creed or culture at war with each other.

Though the years have passed, the question and surrounding discussion has stayed with me. The nature of the question implied that God could belong to a particular person or people. Moreover, it expresses a collapse of a tension that is otherwise quite apt. Indeed, my God is properly my God – it expresses an intimacy and sacramentality of God who is found in personal relationships and familiar human contexts, but God is never my God alone. The event is a reminder of how we can make claim to God being 'my way and by my reckoning'. Not a God of all, but a God that belongs to me and mine.

Counter to this thinking, what today's feast celebrates is the recognition that, in the coming of Jesus, though God has come to a particular people in a particular place and time, it is a coming that is for all people of all places. All are called to find joy in the visitation of God in Christ – God does not belong exclusively to a particular person or people. What is also expressed in today's readings is how to deal with this potential to reduce God's presence to 'me and mine'.

When we look at Herod in the narrative, though he welcomes the Gentiles from the east (Magi in the Greek), he does so only to serve his own ends; that being to maintain control and to hold onto power. In the process, and despite having access to ‘all the chief priests and the scribes of the people’, he not only rejects God’s visitation but begins to actively thwart it. For Herod, God’s actions need to comply with Herod’s reckoning.

In contrast, the Magi, foreigners and not raised in the tradition of God’s chosen people, come to seek the new ‘king of the Jews’ and do so with attentiveness and humility. They find ‘delight’ in the experience, find their goal and gain wisdom along the way. When they come face to face with Jesus, they “bend their knee in homage” (Matt 2:11). Such action, outside of selected rituals, is not at all common in our contemporary society, but it has long been understood as a sign of humility and submission to a higher authority. Matthew’s Gospel no doubt includes the scene to help illustrate that Jesus is indeed the chosen one, the Messiah professed in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, it also indicates the sort of approach one should have to God’s visitation. Where the Magi bow in worship, Herod gathers his might and power to attempt to bend God’s plan to suit his – to effectively hold on to his claim as ‘king of the Jews’.

However, God does not belong to any particular office of power or authority. God does not bend God’s knee to human might. Rather, human capacity is called to bend its knee to God. The Magi do so, and Herod could have also. Unfortunately, as we cast an eye forward to the scenes that immediately follow this reading (Matt 2:16-23), all that follows Herod’s approach is death, destruction, and futility.

This brings us to another contrast found in the Gospel reading, this one between Jesus and Herod. As noted, Herod attempts to hold onto his authority by power and violence. By contrast, the invitation that God makes to ‘come and worship’ is not something done by force. That this new king is found as vulnerable as a babe and, further, if we draw on Luke’s Gospel, not even sheltered in human dwellings with only his immediate family and domesticated animals acting as his court, gives us an image of how God’s call to be worshipped is made. Not by force, not by power and not by manipulative coercion. More simply by humble invitation to seek what God is doing, to look upon this gift and find deep joy therein.



We come with gifts to adore the Lord.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

As the Magi came to place gifts before Jesus in his Bethlehem home, let us present our prayers with joyful hope before our loving God.

Petitions

Let us pray for Pope Francis and all the bishops, that they may be granted the wisdom of the Magi to lead others to Christ in a truly synodal way.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for the leaders of our world that they will be moved by wisdom to work for a negotiated peace in all areas of conflict throughout the world.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for our leaders in Australia and those in neighbouring countries, that will be supportive of one another as climate change brings challenges of floods, droughts and fire.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for those who are experiencing a time of darkness through sickness, isolation, suffering or loneliness. May the light of Christ bring salvation to all who seek him and may they be restored to their communities.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for the Christian churches in the Middle East. May the wounds of the past be healed by the celebration of Christ's birth and may peace reign in the land once more.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Let us pray for our local community. May we be enlightened by the heavenly splendour in this holiday season and reach out to offer support to those who are most in need of God's light.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

Father, we know that you hear our needs and answer our prayers. Grant them through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus, our Lord.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	CWB	CWBII	GA
A child is born in Bethlehem		612		
All the earth proclaim the Lord		611		
Christ, be our light			540	404
City of God			453	498
Earth has many a noble city		669	276	
Good Christians all, rejoice		697	261	
Joy to the world	170	728	265	295
O come, all ye faithful	167	760	267	287
Of the Father's love begotten		779	268	
Song for Epiphany			278	300
The first Nowell	169	822	280	298
We three kings of Orient are			281	299
What child is this?	165		275	

Title	S&S1	S&S2
Christ, be our light	105	
City of God	106	
Lord, every nation (Blakesley)		262
Lord, every nation (Manibusan)	70	
Your light will come, Jerusalem		295

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 71: *Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.*

	CWB	JOB	LPB	PM
Psalm 71	196	pg. 22	pg. 25	pg. 56

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Follow the Christmas star (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN Gathering, Recessional]

Song of Light (SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection]

We come to worship him (STAR)

Sing new songs of joy (FWS/CWB II) *based on Ps 97 (98)* [Gathering, Recessional]