

1-12-2024

Epiphany - 5 January 2025

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Recommended Citation

Lobo, Errol. "Epiphany - 5 January 2025." *Pastoral Liturgy* 55, no. 1 (2024): 1-5. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol55/iss1/14>

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5 January 2025

The Epiphany

Reflection by Errol Lobo

Introduction

Throughout the Christmas season, we are invited to deepen our understanding of the One whose birth we celebrate with great joy. This child is one of us, and yet more than us. He is born of Mary at Bethlehem but is also God's Son from all eternity. And today, on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, we marvel that the long-awaited Messiah of Israel is the world's Redeemer and that he has revealed his sacred face—the face of the Father's mercy—to all the nations. Christ the babe is indeed Lord of all.

Penitential Act

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

Lord Jesus, you are the Incarnation of God. Lord, have mercy.

You guide us to the Father. Christ, have mercy.

You are God-among-us. Lord, have mercy.

Collect

*O God, who on this day
revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations
by the guidance of a star,
grant in your mercy
that we, who know you already by faith,
may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory.*

The collect celebrating the revelation of the divine child to the magi is embossed with the great themes of the Christmas season. The infant is the Only Begotten Son, the Word made flesh. The scope of the revelation is boundless. Christ as revealed to the 'nations' further impresses upon us that God brings about the salvation of all humanity and all creation. This breadth is enhanced in the image of 'guidance by a star', which reminds us that all creation is open towards God. Yet the prayer itself concentrates less on the sense of guidance than on the star as a source of light. This image evokes Christ as the light of the world and calls to mind the relationship between the power of light to reveal and the event of coming to faith as an act of 'seeing'. Further the star is a light that shines in the darkness. The petition of the

prayer seeks the fulfilment of what the star has illuminated: the gift of seeing the beauty of God and experiencing the splendour of the divine glory.

Collect commentary by Gerard Moore: The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by me for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). My thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Isaiah 60:1–6

Amid the darkness all around, Isaiah speaks of the dawn of new hope. Israel's restoration is underway as the 'glory of the Lord' shines upon her. Drawn by the light, all nations of the earth will stream towards her and join in worship of Israel's saving God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 71(72):1–2, 7–8, 10–11, 12–13

Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

The prayer for Israel's anointed king is notably inclusive in its vision. He will unite all nations under his rule of justice and peace, with a special concern for the poor and needy.

Second Reading

Ephesians 3:2–3, 5–6

The soteriological significance of the Paschal Mystery is expressed as the creation of a new People of God in Christ, comprising both Jews and Gentiles who now share the same inheritance offered through faith in the Lord Jesus.

Gospel Reading

Matthew 2:1–12

Magi from the East seek out the newborn King of Israel, whose birth, they believe, has been heralded by a star. Their journey is marked by danger and deception, but guided by the scriptures and the star, they are led to Jesus. Despite the lack of signs to indicate royalty and earthly glory, they recognise the true King before them, offering Jesus their gifts and doing him homage.

Reflection

Those of us in Australia are probably well accustomed to the ethnic and cultural diversity that marks parish life here. Far from being a reality to which we must resign ourselves, it is a precious gift and profound blessing—not without its challenges for community life, but nonetheless a gift and blessing. Few other local churches could claim to have the privilege of gathering, day after day and week after week, in communities made up of brothers and sisters of so many a tribe and tongue and

people and nation. That said, if we did look around us on a Sunday morning, we might also notice that despite our great diversity, few, if any, of the other parishioners are Jewish. Perhaps it is a great tragedy that as we come together each day or each week in our largely 'Gentile' churches, this seems completely unremarkable to us.

The first Christians, who were predominantly Jewish, however, wrestled tremendously with this issue. The letter to the Ephesians makes a startling claim; one heard every year on the Solemnity of the Epiphany, but often lost on us. A 'mystery', it says, has finally been revealed in Christ; that Jews and Gentiles share the same inheritance, that they are members of the one body, and that they receive the same promise in Jesus Christ. All well and good for the Gentiles perhaps, but any good and upright Israelite listening to it would have been well within their rights to ask: really? Israel had indeed suffered tremendously at the hands of foreign nations, but the issue ran much deeper. What about God's covenantal promises to Israel? Wasn't Israel, as the people of God, meant to remain distinct from the nations? There are, after all, passages in the scriptures that clearly instruct the Jewish people to do so. There is even a time when, under the priest Ezra, Israel is commanded to banish all foreign spouses from the land. There are stories in which those who intermingled with foreigners are put to violent deaths; the biblical authors portraying the murderers as heroes worthy of commendation for their zeal. Did not fellowship with Gentiles, then, threaten Israel's identity and election?

Yet, through all the vicissitudes of Israel's history and the biblical texts, there is also a voice—the voice of God's Spirit—that never ceases to remind God's people that their covenant-partner is, at the very same time, Creator of all people; a Creator who passionately loves all of creation and whose ultimate purposes are life and salvation, not doom and destruction. It is a voice, we might say borrowing some words from Pope Francis, that never ceases to say, *Todos! Todos! Todos!* [Meaning all, or everyone in Spanish]. Indeed, Israel's prophets will eventually announce that God's salvation will go forth to all nations, to all peoples. That 'wideness' of divine mercy is what we hear Isaiah announce in the first reading. Even as the prophet, following a series of national calamities, foretells the restoration of Israel, he speaks of all nations being gathered under the praise of Israel's God, all peoples of the world being blessed through God's redemption of Israel. Confounding as it may have seemed, Isaiah affirms that Israel's Redeemer is saviour of the entire world—even those nations that waged war against Israel, that destroyed its Temple, that brutally killed members of its royal family, that forced Israel into exile in a foreign land. God's purposes will not be fulfilled until salvation goes forth from Zion to all creation, and all nations are drawn together by the love of God within a single fold, a single worldwide family.

Isaiah's prophecy is filled up with new meaning as the Magi, who are non-Jews, are led by the star to the child of Bethlehem. In their journey, we already catch a glimpse of his vision being realised: the nations streaming to offer their gifts to the God of Israel. As Christians, certainly, we profess that the 'new-born King' to whom the Magi pay their homage is the embodiment of Israel's God, the face of the Father's love for all nations, for all people. He is the Son around whom God creates a new human

family of both Jews and Gentiles. He is the Christ in whose Body and Blood we have communion. He himself is the 'mystery' whose epiphany we celebrate; God revealed to us in the humanity of the Son. And our celebration invites us to journey in the footsteps of those Magi, offering our own fragile lives before the Christ-child, filled with wonder and gratitude at the immensity and wideness of God's love for all people; for us who have come to share in Israel's blessings. But even more, we are called to share that love with others, especially those who need to be assured of that love, those who long to hear the Good News of salvation, those who have so often been excluded and forgotten. We are called to listen afresh to the Spirit's voice which cries '*Todos! Todos! Todos!*', and in doing so, to become the stars that shine before the men and women of our own day, leading them to that perfect light, the true and kindly light that enlightens all people, who is Christ Jesus, our Lord.



*The glory of God
shines upon you.*

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

Formed by the Lord as a priestly people and called to offer supplications on behalf of the world, let us now bring our prayers and petitions to the God of boundless grace revealed to us in Christ Jesus.

Petitions

For God's holy people: that attentive to the signs of the times in the light of faith, we may become credible witnesses to the Lord Jesus in our own day.

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

For peace in the world, especially in the Holy Land: that the Lord will change the hearts of those whose decisions and actions unleash so much suffering and misery in our world today.

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

For those who seek the truth in sincerity of heart: that they too may recognise in the Christ-child the fulfilment of all human longing and desire.

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

For those who face exclusion and prejudice: that they will find welcome and acceptance within the community of Christ's disciples.

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

For pilgrims and travellers: that the Lord will protect them in their journeys and bring them to their destinations in peace and tranquillity.

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

For all the faithful departed: that they may find eternal rest and comfort within God's own life and love.

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

Conclusion

Listen graciously to the supplications of your people, O God, and in your mercy draw all peoples to the knowledge and love of your Son, who is Lord for ever and ever through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

The Epiphany, Year C (5 January 2025)

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	JOBB	LPB	PM 1
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]