Spirituality
Pencil Preaching



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“Darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears God’s glory” (Isaiah 60:2).

Epiphany of the Lord

Is 60:1-6; Ps 72; Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6; Mt 2:1-12

First came shepherds of low estate, the poorest of the poor. Then kings, wise and powerful, arrive from the gentile nations to see this child of Israel, foretold in the prophecies of other world cultures and religions. The whole spectrum of humanity is represented at the humble locus of revelation. Light has pierced the darkness of human understanding. Come to the light and see what God has in store for the world.

The forces that would oppose God's will are roiled and alerted to this threat to their exclusive claims on power. Herod, the fourth king, plays a part in telling us how important this revelation really is. Everything is about to change.

The drama of the arrival of the Son of God in the world and in the flesh, unfolds in the Epiphany, which means “manifestation,” the brilliant uncovering of the meaning of an event, in this case, the event of the Incarnation. God, the unapproachable and unknowable Other, is now among us, one of us.

All paths of human inquiry into the meaning of life converge here, the dream of philosophers and the brilliant prize of all religious inquiry. The two central questions: “What is God?” and “Who are we?” have the same answer. God is the mystery at the core of human identity. To pursue the depth of meaning in your personal life is to uncover the face of God, the source of your own image and likeness looking back at you with love. To pursue God through asceticism, study, good works and ritual worship lead us full circle to the mystery of every human person, and the poorest and weakest among us are affirmed as possessing the dignity of God. Everyone is neighbor, brother and sister, and is to be received as such.

The implications of this revelation are inescapable and staggering. There is no mystical path to God except through the neighborhood of human solidarity and compassion. There is no true religion that does not pursue justice and oppose oppression. That God appears among us in the poor, at the margins, commanding the pilgrimage of kings, scholars and shepherds to kneel in worship, is the basis for both religion and humanitarian idealism. Care for one another and the pursuit of God through science or theology are the same effort.

Though falling in the afterglow of Christmas, the feast of the Epiphany is a very big celebration in our liturgy and in our Christian lives. Light shines in our hearts and minds so we can understand and be moved to live the mystery of God among us in our everyday lives, words and activities. Each of us receives a light today that will

guide us into the coming year, a lamp unto our feet that is sure and a gift we bring to others still in the shadows, at the margins, waiting for their dignity to be affirmed and served.

The star of Bethlehem rises over the battlefields of Ukraine, at the borders and upon fragile boats on the seas carrying the desperate hopes of pilgrims begging to live. It shines in the night sky over our Capitol and the weary struggle for control in the temple of democracy. It appears in every human heart to summon us to love. It reveals the secret of our existence and destiny: To love one another is to uncover the face of God and our own true selves.