



Rise and Shine

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Year C

Isaiah 60:1-6
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
Matthew 2:1-12

GATHERING

(An unlit tall, thick, yellow candle sits on a table in the gathering place surrounded by a collection of unlit taper candles of different colors. There needs to be at least enough candles for as many members present.)

We relish being washed in the light of Christ this week so that we may rise and shine as witnesses to the graciousness of our God. Having recently explored the holiness of families, in what way might you have appreciated the holiness of your family this past week?

OPENING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of silent attention to the presence of God with them. After a couple minutes of quiet, a member of the community lights the candle and prays as follows.)

Member: Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

All: A light no darkness can extinguish.

(Leader: Father of light, unchanging God,
today you reveal to men [and women] of faith
the resplendent fact of the Word made flesh.
Your light is strong,
your love is near;
draw us beyond the limits which this world imposes
to the life where your Spirit makes all life
complete.
We ask this through Christ, our LORD.

Amen.

All:

Alternative Opening Prayer, The Sacramentary

Focus Question

- ◆ Recall a time when you encountered someone whose face was just radiant.

SCRIPTURE SHARING AND REFLECTION

(The scriptures are proclaimed aloud with a pause after each reading. Following a pause after the gospel reading, the facilitator invites members to mention a word, a phrase or an image from one of the readings that particularly struck them this week. Members then read over the commentary and consider the questions in silence for several minutes before entering into conversation.)

Commentary

Have you ever noticed what happens to folks when the sun suddenly comes out on a dreary day? The smiles, the glee on people's faces is something to behold.

At four o'clock in the afternoon on a clear day, sunlight streams into my office; it pours into the room. I am enveloped in the light. The place just glows. The day is waning and I am animated, energized.

For Isaiah, the sun is a metaphor for the grace of God, for the Lord himself. “Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you,” Isaiah announces. And with what result? “[Y]ou shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow.” The sun does marvelous things to us. The graciousness of our God does so much more. Christ’s light and love envelopes the whole globe. There is no corner where it can not reach. This feast of manifestation shows us that God’s saving will embraces us all, those of us who are already members of the body of Christ, but Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, people of every persuasion and unbelievers alike.

How God will work all that out, we do not know, but like the brilliance and warmth of the sun, God’s life animates and energizes us all. Thus it was, that magi from the east could embark on an open-hearted and persevering search for the newborn king of the Jews. Jesus, the fulfillment of human desires and the hope of Israel has his ways of drawing us all to him.

“If you want me to believe in your redeemer,” Nietzsche once said to Chris-tians, “it would help if you looked a little more redeemed.” Cynical? Yes. But his wisecrack is a reminder that Jesus’ ways of drawing all to him includes us. With Paul, we share in “the stewardship of God’s grace.” Awash in the light of Christ, we are called to rise and shine, so that God’s graciousness can be seen by all.

We witness to the graciousness of God by tending to human flourishing, by acting for the common good so that the flower of God’s justice and peace may be enjoyed by all, so that all may rise and shine with the radiance of our God.

FAITH SHARING AND INTEGRATION

- ◆ Speak of some experience when you knew that the Lord was shining on you.
- ◆ Recall a time when you had a sense that you were being an instrument of God’s grace.
- ◆ What makes “your heart throb and overflow?”
- ◆ What can you do to help justice and peace flower in your daily circumstances?

- ◆ How conscious and persevering are you about searching for God in your everyday life?
- ◆ Through what thick cloud over your life do you yearn for the light of Christ to shine?

RESPONSE IN ACTION

(The facilitator poses the question, “What does God ask of you/us in light of our sharing of life and faith this week?” After a few minutes of reflection, the facilitator invites conversation in response to the question.)

- ◆ Bring light to someone’s eyes. Gather unused prescription eyeglasses from members of the parish for donation to people in need around the world through Unite For Sight (www.uniteforsight.org).
- ◆ Set aside twenty minutes some day this week for reflection and prayer. Invite the light of Christ into your whole being. In the spirit of the magi – if you are able – prostrate yourself on the floor; if not able, then on your bed, for a couple of minutes. Offer the treasure of your life to God. Let your prayer be: **“Every nation on earth will adore you, Lord.”**
- ◆ Let light shine more efficiently. Replace your five most frequently used lights or the bulbs in them with ones that have earned the Energy Star.
- ◆ Learn about and connect to one of a wide variety of peace-making efforts going on throughout the country and around the world. Check out the Marianist Social Justice Collaborative (www.msjc.net). Under “Issue Teams,” click on “Alternatives to Violence.” Explore the multiple links to peacemaking groups. Get engaged.

SENDING FORTH AND CLOSING PRAYER

(The leader invites the community to a time of quiet. After a minute of silence, the gospel of the week is re-read by a member of the community. Following the reading, the leader poses this question to the community: “What does Christ say to you/us in hearing this gospel today?” The community pauses for a full five to seven minutes of prayerful attention to how Christ speaks to them in this gospel. After this time of silence, the leader invites members simply to mention a word or two or a brief thought that captures what they hear being said to them.)

The leader addresses the community: “Sisters, brothers, let us rise and shine.” Members form a circle with each holding one of the taper candles. The prayer continues as follows.)

Leader: Shine upon us anew, O God, with the light of Christ.

All: You are the light of the world, O Lord; a light no darkness can extinguish.

(Members then turn in place and face outward.)

Leader: Let us radiate the light of Christ in the week ahead.

All: Energize us, O Lord, to do justice and make peace.

(The candles are extinguished and returned to the table.)

