

JANUARY 2, 2022

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

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Office staffed T, W and Th, as we are able.

We continue to offer three masses each week to enable people to attend while maintaining appropriate social distancing. The Sunday 9:30 am mass continues to be live streamed on our Facebook page. We are also offering a Saturday 5:00 pm mass and a Sunday 12:00 pm (noon) mass.

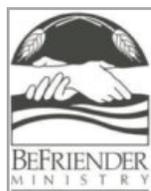
Although state capacity restrictions have been lifted and masks are not currently required, we encourage everyone to participate in ways that are safe and appropriate for them. If you wish to maintain physical distancing, the noon mass has the lightest attendance. We are gradually returning elements that have been missing during the pandemic. We recently reinstated congregational singing and ushers and are working towards the return of lectors and servers.

Fr. Joe, Fr. Jude and the staff hold you all in our prayers, and ask that you pray for us and for all the essential workers who are striving to keep things running.

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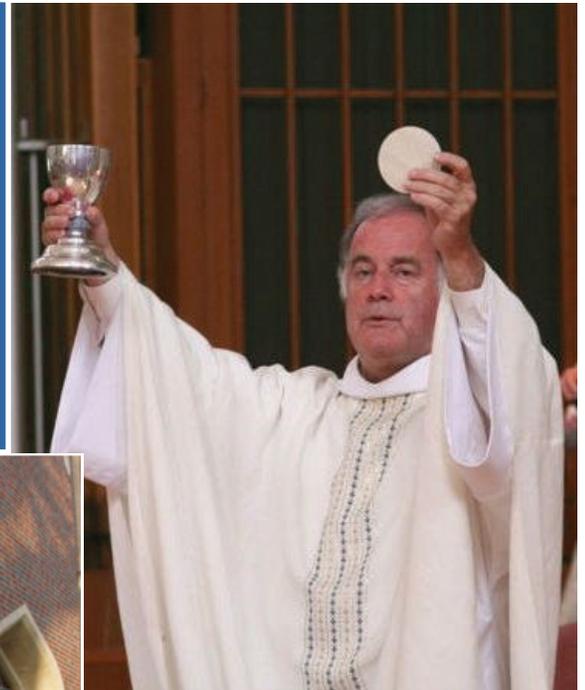
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*"We saw his star
at its rising
and have come to
do him homage."*

Matthew 2:2



*Say YES to
love and peace.
Amen! Alleluia!*



This week at St. Albert's(masses and intentions are in **BOLD** type)**Saturday, January 1 – New Year's Day**

5:00 pm mass Patrick Carter †

Sunday, January 2 – Epiphany

9:30 am mass Mike Watowa †

12:00 pm mass Michael Ester †

Monday, January 3

8:15 am Marge Kadlec †

Tuesday, January 4

8:15 am Helen Stumpf †

9:00 am Staff meeting

Wednesday, January 5**Thursday, January 6**

8:15 am Ben Wilkie †

12:00 pm Crafts & conversation, Social Hall

Friday, January 7

8:15 am Ray Enz †

Saturday, January 8

5:00 pm mass Patrick Carter †

Sunday, January 9

9:30 am mass Fr. Robert Keane †

11:00 am Faith Formation for children and youth resumes

12:00 pm mass Joan Ellison †

Readings: week of January 2, 2022**Sunday:** Is 60:1-6/Ps 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13 [cf.11]/Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6/Mt 2:1-12**Monday:** 1 Jn 3:22–4:6/Ps 2:7bc-8, 10-12a/Mt 4:12-17, 23-25**Tuesday:** 1 Jn 4:7-10/Ps 72:1-2, 3-4, 7-8/Mk 6:34-44**Wednesday:** 1 Jn 4:11-18/Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13/Mk 6:45-52**Thursday:** 1 Jn 4:19–5:4/Ps 72:1-2, 14 and 15bc, 17/Lk 4:14-22a**Friday:** 1 Jn 5:5-13/Ps 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20/Lk 5:12-16**Saturday:** 1 Jn 5:14-21/Ps 149:1-2, 3-4, 5 and 6a and 9b/Jn 3:22-30Next Sunday: Is 42:1-4, 6-7/Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 [11b]/Acts 10:34-38/Lk 3:15-16, 21-22
or, Is 40:1-5, 9-11/Ps 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30 [1]/Ti 2:11-14; 3:4-7/Lk 3:15-16, 21-22* **We will continue to offer three Masses** each weekend for as long as the Sunday noon mass remains popular/practical. We also continue to livestream the 9:30 AM liturgy.* **The general dispensation from the Sunday and Holy Day obligation has been lifted.** The dispensation remains available to people at high risk of developing serious illness and for people who care for such individuals. Anyone with symptoms or recent exposure to COVID-19 must still remain at home for the safety of all.* **Morning masses in the chapel have resumed at 8:15 am, with the rosary at 8:00 am.** As in the pre-pandemic past, weekday masses will be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The East door off the back parking lot will be open for weekday masses, along with the elevator entrance.* **Use of the front center church doors continues to be encouraged for weekend masses, along with the elevator entrance.*** **There are no seating restrictions.** Please respect the desires of those who wish to maintain some physical separation. Hand sanitizer is available. The Sunday 12 noon mass offers the most spaced seating.★ **Masks are strongly encouraged** for all people over the age of two. The CDC recommends that all people wear masks indoors in areas with high transmission rates of covid-19. Currently Hennepin County significantly exceeds the threshold for high transmission. Masks should cover both nose and mouth. We have disposable and cloth masks available near the entrance to the church.* **We invite you to join us in song.** The hymnals are in the pews.* **Give the Sign of Peace** to those near you in ways others appear comfortable with.

Please make sure to
 have any financial gifts
 you make to St. Albert's
*(that you want to be able to
 claim on your 2021 taxes)*
 to us by
Friday, December 31, 2021.

Thank you!

“Sorry, there is no room in the inn, but would you like to come in for a drink?”

The Christmas pageant was in progress and Joseph, along with his wife Mary who was with child, had not yet found a place to stay in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary, as well as the other members of the cast, were third graders in a local Catholic parish grammar school. The outline of the Christmas play was adapted from the Gospel of St. Luke (2:4-7):

“Joseph went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to the town of Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of King David. Joseph went there because he was descendent of David. He went to register with Mary, who was promised in marriage to him. She was pregnant, and while they were in Bethlehem, the time came for her to have her baby. She gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, since there was no room for them to stay in the local inn.”

The young boy playing the local innkeeper had only one line of dialogue in the script: “Sorry, there is no room in the inn.” However, feeling sorry for Joseph and Mary he improvised: “Sorry there is no room in the inn, but would you like to come in for a drink?” The ad-lib line received roars of laughter from the audience much to the chagrin of the innkeeper’s parents.

The impulse for hospitality is the real secret of Christmas. Addressing the needs of family and friends, Christmas parties have traditionally proliferated in homes and in workplaces, with people exchanging presents and well wishes. Finding ways to generously reach out to others who might be in impossible situations and offering them a modicum of hope becomes the basis for compassion. Yes, it is hard to pass a bellringer for the Salvation Army or a street person asking for alms. As we generously donate to food shelves or shelters for the homeless, the real spirit of Christmas manifests itself in hospitable acts of charity. As God invited us into the Kingdom of Heaven with the gift of the Incarnation, we too are invited to host the stranger, the indigent, the marginalized and the immigrant. Remembering that America was once the host to your family and mine, we must maintain openness to those who seek asylum and freedom. Searching for the right metaphor to describe the United States or the Catholic Church, whether it is a melting pot or a stir-fry, the characteristic of hospitality will be the spice that will season us and draw us together amid our differences and fears. We cannot afford to be strangers to one another. Christmas provides an avenue of hospitality, generosity, and a model for unity. The coming of the New Year challenges us to practice what we preach.

The improvised line, “But would you like to come in for a drink,” did not solve the homeless situation for Joseph and Mary, but it did offer hospitality and a genuine empathic response of “gift giving.” Sometimes the best moments of hope arrive in small packages or gestures of good will. The heart of empathy resides in the willingness of one person to experience the feelings or thoughts of another person and, even though there is no solution or quick fix available, a depth of caring and hope is exchanged.

We are slowly working our way out of the Christmas season. Today’s feast, The Epiphany of the Lord, is the decisive factor for the “reason for the season. Strongly associated with this feast is the arrival of the Magi (the traditional wise Gentiles who paid a “home visit” to The Holy Family and brought gifts). Their desire to worship (adore) the newborn king is seen as a fulfillment of the Prophet Isaiah’s prediction (60:1-6): “*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Lift your eyes and look around you. All those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold, frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.*” In today’s gospel, Matthew (2:1-12) mentions the fulfillment of the prophecy: “*In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking: Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage. When they saw the star had stopped over the place where the child was, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the manger, they saw the child with Mary his mother;*

they knelt and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.”

The word “epiphany” means the manifestation of something previously hidden, and the revelation of the “hidden treasure,” the birth of the Messiah, is the drama associated with the feast. The incident of the Magi is recounted only in the gospel of Matthew, but it has become an invitation to recognize the universality of salvation for all people. The “outsiders” (Gentiles) would be the first to adore Jesus and carry the “good news” to far away kingdoms. Historically, the feast of the Epiphany was the original celebration of God’s presence on earth and included both the birth and baptism of Jesus. The celebration of Christmas as a “manifestation event” would emerge much later in the liturgical calendar of the Western Church.

The traditional story of the Magi and their incredible journey was immortalized in T. S. Eliot’s poem, “The Journey of the Magi.” However, long before the publication of Eliot’s poem in 1927, the imaginations of the early Christians were engaged with drawings of the Magi found in the second century catacombs of Rome. Depicted in art over the centuries, the Magi morphed from “wise men of the East” into “three kings” named Melchior, Gaspar and Balthasar who bore specific gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Even though the relics of the Three Wise Men arrived very mysteriously in the Cathedral of Cologne in 1162, the historical truth of the Magi is doubtful. However, the story does provide a basis for the “ecumenical mission” of the Messiah. The Magi became metaphors of the “outside world” of believers seeking the Messiah. The Feast of the Epiphany teaches that the light of God’s revelation of the birth of Jesus (Incarnation) abolished the darkness of sin and opened the world to salvation. Harkening back to an old bumper sticker I once saw, “God loves everyone. No exceptions!”, the Feast challenges those self-righteous religious isolationists who try to limit God’s invitation to salvation. In the second reading for today’s feast, St. Paul’s letter to the Ephesians (3:2-6), Paul emphatically expresses this ecumenical theme: “*Gentiles have become our fellow heirs, members of the same body, and share in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.*”

Christmas is over. Mounds of wrapping paper and boxes of have found their way to the trash containers. The gift exchanges have been completed and many wonder what they will do with all the socks they received. I would not mind if people “regifted” me their gold, but the frankincense and myrrh you can keep. While the real gift of Christmas is salvation, I would be miffed if the ritual of gift giving were shelved. The delight of remembering others with cards and presents brings with it a bond of friendship and the assurance of love. Intertwined with the gift giving is a spirit of generosity and hospitality. The Magi got it right. They risked everything in search of what they thought was missing in their lives and, in bringing gifts they received the biggest gift of all, namely the assurance of acceptance and salvation.

It is time for all of us to find ways of being less exclusive in our language and in practices. While it might seem that there is “no room in the inn” right now, we must find ways to risk being hospitable despite our fears of scarcity. To “invite others in for a drink” might very well become a proper metaphor until we can figure out a solution for the real problem. In the Corporal Works of Mercy (Matthew 25:35-40), Jesus assured us that if we risked “giving drink to the thirsty, food to the hungry, clothes to the naked, shelter to the homeless, comfort to the sick, visits to the imprisoned and burial for the dead,” we would be welcome in the Kingdom of God. Indeed, for the New Year we need an ongoing attitude of gratitude and radical hospitality. The question persists: will there be room in your inn for the birth of Jesus to take place in the world once again?

Peace in the New Year, Fr. Joe Gillespie, O.P.



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