



# Bringing Home the Word

*The Epiphany of the Lord (B)*

January 3, 2021

## Reaching Far and Wide

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

In Vincent Malo's painting, *The Adoration of the Magi*, a mysterious scene barely comes to light before us. Are we inside or outside of a Roman portico? What is going on in the background? The central scene clearly shows the Child Jesus perched in the Virgin's arms and surrounded by swaddling clothes. A glow emanates from the Child that enlightens the three Wise Men processing toward Jesus. Their whole caravan chaotically crowds around and strains to see the king they have come to worship.

A dalmatian wanders behind while a camel appears in the backlighting with a knowing smirk. The Ethiopian

sage sympathetically stares out from the center of the painting and seemingly asks us if we understand the significance of their travels.

The arrival of these astronomers from the East sends a very important message for all of us at Mass today. Jesus is the light of the whole world, and all peoples—no matter how far or how lost—are invited by his attractive and saving light. This light came to the Chosen People and will be fully consumed in Jerusalem as Isaiah prophesies. Yet he will proclaim that all peoples are invited to be members of the same family and coheirs to the treasures of God's love and mercy. Faith in him and acceptance of his gospel truth is all he asks. So, no matter how far you or anyone you know seems from Jesus and his truth, he loves them and wants them around his table to experience his love. +

## Sunday Readings

### **Isaiah 60:1–6**

Arise! Shine, for your light has come, the glory of the LORD has dawned upon you.

### **Ephesians 3:2–3a, 5–6**

The Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus.

### **Matthew 2:1–12**

They opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

*Jesus is the light of the whole world, and to all peoples—no matter how far away or how lost.*

## A Word from Pope Francis

As we begin the New Year, may we discover anew that faith demands worship... For worship involves making an exodus from the greatest form of bondage: slavery to oneself. Worship means putting the Lord at the center, not ourselves.

—Epiphany Homily, January 6, 2020



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Do you trust that Jesus wants to and can reach any soul, no matter how far away?
- Will you renew your prayer and gentle testimony to invite those who are still searching?

# Resolutions of Faith

By Kathleen M. Basi

It's a new year. What will you do to live your faith in 2021?

New Year's seems tailor-made for changing for the better. Sometimes it's weight loss or exercise; at other times, we look to our spiritual life, vowing to set aside daily prayer time or regularly go to reconciliation. But goals are fleeting; as motivation falters, good intentions fall by the wayside. Some people have become so jaded they don't even bother anymore.

Resolutions require us to abandon old patterns and institute new ones—to turn our backs on our former ways and seek renewal. If that sounds like spiritual exercise, that's because it is. Actions become habits for a reason. To undo them requires ongoing sacrifice, and for that we need God's help. But it seems so trivial to call in God to help us lose weight. Diet and exercise have nothing to do with faith, right?

Not so fast. The central truth behind St. John Paul II's theology of the body is that as beings with both a body and a soul, our divine purpose is to reflect God's love for the world in the way we use our bodies. In our work, in the way we treat our bodies, even in our most intimate relationships, we are called to love as God loves—fully and sacrificially. Otherwise, we're not really living our faith. We're just playing pretend.

To go to daily Mass is good; to take what we learn there and do something with it is better. To read Scripture every



morning is good; to allow the word to burrow down and needle our souls until we have to get up and act on it is better. Even a diet can be a spiritual exercise, if it's undertaken out of respect for the gift of the body we've been given.

None of us can change for the better on the strength of our own will. We need God walking hand in hand with us, holding us accountable and reminding us why it matters. When we're used to turning to God again and again throughout the day—even for something as trivial as a diet—it bleeds into other areas of our life too. The sacred fuses with the secular, and we truly become beings who (as the *Baltimore Catechism*

said) show God's goodness by knowing, loving, and serving him in this world.

It's a new year. What will you do to live your faith? +

*To read Scripture every morning is good; to allow the word to burrow down and needle our souls until we have to get up and act on it is better.*

**PRAYER**

*Lord, your light gives us strength and shows us the way to God. Remove my blindness that I may see the light of goodness, peace, and love within myself and others.*

—From *Joyful Meditations for Every Day of Advent and the 12 Days of Christmas*, Rev. Warren J. Savage and Mary Ann McSweeney

## WEEKDAY READINGS

January 4–9

**Monday**, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton:  
1 Jn 3:22–4:6 / Mt 4:12–17, 23–25


**Tuesday**, St. John Neumann:  
1 Jn 4:7–10 / Mk 6:34–44

**Wednesday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 4:11–18 / Mk 6:45–52

**Thursday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 4:19–5:4 / Lk 4:14–22

**Friday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 5:5–13 / Lk 5:12–16

**Saturday**, Christmas Weekday:  
1 Jn 5:14–21 / Jn 3:22–30

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