



Bringing Home the Word

The Epiphany of the Lord (C)

January 2, 2022

Herod Was Correct

By Fr. Mark Haydu, LC

King Herod, the most powerful man in the region, was greatly troubled to hear about the birth of a king. Why would a reigning king fear a little child? Perhaps because he believed if word spread that a future messiah had been born, the Jews would be harder to control. They were easier to dominate when they were without hope, without a leader.

Herod was correct. Wise men from the East looking for the King of the Jews fulfilled prophecies that foretold all nations would come to Israel looking for a messianic leader.

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

When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

Herod was also troubled because, if indeed this newborn was a king, he had a pretender and a competitor right under his royal nose. King Herod was correct again.

Although Jesus did not pretend to overthrow the Romans, he did come with authority and would upend the existing order. Jesus would preach to the heart and demand that no one sit on that throne except God his Father.

The painter, Pseudo Domenico di Michelino, in *Adoration of the Kings*, presents the arrival of the Magi as a procession of vassals showing homage to their king. Kneeling, bowing, and standing erect with gifts in hand, authorities from far away are reverencing the newborn royalty who sits on Mother Mary's lap. His royal hall is the hillside, his scepter a baby finger, his royal family is Joseph and Mary.

These Gentile kings were the first to do what all of creation and all of history have been doing since then—bending their knee to the King of the Universe. Herod was right to worry. +

Jesus would preach to the heart and demand that no one sit on that throne except God his Father.

A Word from Pope Francis

[The Lord] is our light: a light that does not dazzle but accompanies and bestows a unique joy. This light is for everyone, and it calls each one of us.... At the beginning of each day we can welcome this invitation: arise, shine, and follow today—among the many shooting stars in the world—the bright star of Jesus!

—Angelus on Epiphany Sunday,
January 6, 2017



REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- Does Jesus' authority and care give me security?
- Do I seek earthly securities aside from what treasures he offers me: his will, protection, and grace?

The Richness of God's Vision

By Kathleen M. Basi

As a child, my sisters and I used to pray this prayer every night: "I love you, Jesus, Infant Jesus, meek and mild; make me a good, obedient child."

The word *obedience* rubs most modern audiences the wrong way. We tend to associate it with a lack of critical thinking—with the creation of blind, unquestioning automatons. If we don't understand why we believe what we believe, our faith has no foundation. We risk being derailed by the slightest challenge.

It's true that an unquestioned faith is an immature faith. On the other hand, not everything can be understood. What are the words "thy will be done" if not an acknowledgment that forces are at work beyond our comprehension? "Thy will be done" is our assent—our prayer of obedience. By living through the things we don't understand, we often gain wisdom and insight illuminating what once seemed incomprehensible.

I think about myself during the first few years of my marriage. We had followed the rules and never questioned the Church's teachings on sexuality. We were doing everything "right," and yet we could not conceive. Yes, there were medical issues, but they weren't severe enough to explain why God "allowed" the frustration of the desire he had placed within us to continue. Obedience left a bad taste in our mouths.

We spent several thousand dollars to adopt, only to be further delayed by



international politics. We prayed, we grieved, we wrestled with the words "thy will be done." Only when we reached the top of the waiting list did we conceive at last.

It didn't make sense. Why would God put us through so much if he intended all along to give us biological children?

When our second child was born, finally, everything fell into place. She has Down syndrome. And the reality is that no matter what we said in public, neither of us were truly open to parenting a child with a disability. But we had spent seven years learning to accept God's will for us. We had continued to be faithful and, yes, obedient, even when it didn't make sense. All that suffering prepared

us to accept and even embrace a different future than we had envisioned for our family. That vision, it turns out, is richer than ours ever was. We understand God and Christian discipleship in a way we never would have otherwise.

Obedience shouldn't be blind. We can and should wrestle with difficult questions, just as Jacob wrestled with the angel. Still, not everything has to make sense. Our job is to follow, even though we can't always see where we're going... yet. +

*By living through the things
we don't understand,
we often gain wisdom
and insight.*

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 3–8

Monday, Christmas Weekday:
1 Jn 3:22–4:6 / Mt 4:12–17, 23–25
Tuesday, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton:
1 Jn 4:7–10 / Mk 6:34–44
Wednesday, St. John Neumann:
1 Jn 4:11–18 / Mk 6:45–52

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