



Come and See!

Week of January 4, 2026, Epiphany

The Word...

Then you shall be radiant at what you see,
your heart shall throb and overflow,
for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you,
the wealth of nations shall be brought to you.
Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;
all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense,
and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.
(from Is 60: 1-6)

Pondering the Word...

Scholars say Matthew, whose audience was primarily Jewish Christians, bases the gospel story of the Magi on this passage from Isaiah. But Isaiah speaks of the gold of kings and the frankincense of deity. Where is the myrrh, the anointing oil signifying death? We hear the Holy Family receive all three gifts from the travelers. Not only do they accept Jesus as God and King, but they also accept his humanity, the temporary nature of his bodily existence. As we live in Christ as our God and King, so too we accept death, both of our mortal bodies and of the disappointments and trials we encounter each day.

Living the Word...

It's been several years since I've shared this beautiful prayer, so here it is again for your reflection as we begin this new year (the author is unknown).

CHRISTMAS

The story goes that it was this night 2000 years ago
that wise people from all over the world began to see a new star.
A light that has been shining since, attracting people from all over the world.
The story goes that it was this night 2000 years ago
that some took their gold—their talents, blessed moments, and friends;
that others took myrrh—their mishaps, their stress, and their falling out with others;
and that still others took their incense—the prayers rising up from their lives
to bring them to the Child newly born.
The story goes that it was this night 2000 years ago
that they came together where the star stood beckoning them
to a newborn babe who collected their gifts—
the gold, the myrrh, and the incense—
strengthening, healing, and accepting them.
Just as he will accept the gold, the myrrh, and the incense
in the life of each one of us. Alleluia. Amen.

Personal Reflections and Ideas...

Mon, Jan 5: *“Why are the nations aroused, and the peoples murmur vain things? Kings of the earth take their stand, and princes conspire together against the Lord and against his anointed.... And now, O you kings, pay mind, be chastened you rulers of the earth (Ps 2:1-2, 10, Hebrew translation).* I’ve added the first lines of Psalm 2 to illustrate “the envelope structure” of several psalms, and as commentary on the current state of earthly political affairs: lots of conspiring against God’s anointed! **Provision: Listen. Pay attention.** I use the Feast of the Epiphany — what I call “The Feast of Paying Attention” — to set a theme for us during ordinary time. What I hear from the Spirit is that we need to pay better attention to the word of God. We need to listen...really listen...with open ears and hearts, putting aside our assumptions and worldviews. And we need to listen to what we hear from the “kings of the earth.” How do their words compare to God’s word? I’ll be asking you the same question Jesus often asks the disciples: “What is your opinion?” Listen in prayer before you give Jesus your answer.

Tue, Jan 6: *When Jesus saw the vast crowd, his heart was moved with pity for them...he began to teach them many things (Mk 6:34-44).* What “things” do you think Jesus is teaching the people? The scribes and Pharisees teach the letter of the law and preach strict obedience to both God’s law and Roman law. They walk a fine, often contradictory line between these two. There’s not much room for the spirit of the law: compassion and love. **Provision: Listen for the “spirit” in what you hear.** Jesus teaches God’s love and mercy. When you listen to or read news of the world, ask yourself: Do I hear compassion in this? (And don’t forget our New Year’s resolution: counter unloving, unmerciful news with a prayer for peace.)

Wed, Jan 7: *“God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in them ... There is no fear in love... so one who fears is not yet perfect in love” (1 Jn 4:11-18).* Well, I guess this means we are far from perfect — as if we didn’t know! — because fear seems to be the buzz word for these times. Bombs and wars and ICE raids, floods and other natural disasters cause real, mortal fear for so many worldwide. Leaders stoke fear to bring about their nationalistic ideologies. Fear and love cannot co-exist. **Provision: Fight fear with love and hope.** We just celebrated the Incarnation, the feast of hope. We focused on looking for incarnational mysticism in the world around us. Now, it’s our turn to be the source of that mystery. Be a bearer of the light of love and hope today.

Thu, Jan 8: *“Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth (Lk 4:14-22).* And we know the congregation turns violent when his next words are not so gracious! *“The Scriptures can often offend, but they are not meant to offend. They are meant to challenge. They only offend us if we do not want to be challenged” (Walter Modrys, S.J.).* **Provision: Pay attention to Scripture that challenges or offends you.** As long as you put yourself in God’s presence and ask for the true wisdom of the Spirit, Scripture that confuses or challenges you can often hold insights you are meant to receive (realizing of course, that some passages are contextual to the time they were written). Ask a trusted spiritual friend or guide to help you uncover what the Spirit is saying. Then, test it out. What have you learned?

Fri, Jan 9: *Great crowds assembled to listen to him and to be cured of their ailments (Lk 5:12-16).* The Spirit’s sense of humor is alive and well today. When I read this, I thought of those ads about coming to listen to a marketing pitch for timeshares or whatever. The hook was that you’d get a TV or something if you sat through the whole presentation. Call me a skeptic, but how many in the great crowds sit there listening to Jesus just so they have a chance to be cured? How many of us sit in church not really listening just so we can check the box? **Provision: Listen. The cure might just be in what you hear.** If this has happened to you, you know what I am talking about. If not, listen. God’s word comes swiftly and can stop you in your tracks. Pay attention.

Sat, Jan 1: *“Children, be on your guard against idols” (1 Jn 5:14-21).* *“The best man, who stands and listens for him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom’s voice” (Jn 3:22-30).* In John’s letter, he adds what seems to be a postscript: Be careful. Don’t idolize people or things that are not the Word himself. True ministers of the word listen to and delight in God’s Word. They must decrease, not increase. **Provision: Pay attention.** Earlier this week, John admonishes us to *“test the spirits to see whether they belong to God.”* Go back to Tuesday’s provision. Ministerial power can be a dangerous thing. Always consult your informed conscience and ask yourself: does what I am hearing or reading or supporting reflect the primacy of God?