

Mary Mother of Jesus Inclusive Catholic Community

**Liturgy to Celebrate the Expression of God's Universal
Love Through Jesus: Epiphany
January 7, 2023**

**Presiders: Mary Theresa Streck & Kathryn Shea
Readers: Pat & Bob Ferkenhoff
Prayer Leader: Lee Breyer**

Music Minister: Linda Lee Miller

IT Team: Cheryl Brandi and Peg Bowen

Theme: *"The Light Within is the Light in Everything"*



Welcome and Gathering

Kathryn: Welcome to our Zoom liturgy at Mary Mother of Jesus, an inclusive Catholic Community where all are welcome.

-We invite you to pray the liturgy and respond where it says "All."

-All participants will be muted during the liturgy except for the presiders and readers.

-Please have bread and wine/juice nearby as we pray our Eucharistic prayer.

**Whoever you are,
Wherever you are,
Just as you are,**

You are welcome at this table. (*Integral Christianity by Paul Smith*)

Let us now take a few minutes to collect ourselves as we prepare to focus our minds and our hearts on our knowledge that we are all one, brought together at this time to transform ourselves and our world through love; love for our Holy One, love for our neighbors, love for ourselves, and love for our planet. Let us begin our liturgy by expressing this love through song.

Opening Prayer

Mary T: May the light which illuminates hearts and opens the eyes of our spirits - The light of creation which lifts the burdens of the past; The light of justice which reveals the true face of the present; the light of love which is the fire of compassion, the sentinel-light which helps our feet find pathways of true peace warm you, and purify you, and abide with you all-ways. ALL: Amen

Gathering Song: All Are Welcome.

<https://youtu.be/qRcdtSrHzp0>

Rite of Transformation

Lee: We pause now to remember the times we have not born fruit in caring for self and others. Take a moment to recall one missed opportunity, one broken or damaged relationship. (Pause briefly and extend your hand over your heart)

ALL: As we ask for and receive forgiveness, we open our hearts to Infinite Love embracing and healing us. Let it be <https://youtu.be/udjH7EON5IYso>, Alleluia!

Gloria: Glory to God by Marty Haugen

<https://youtu.be/udjH7EON5IY>

Liturgy of the Word

Pat F: First Reading (from the book of the prophet Isaiah)

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of God shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick clouds cover the peoples; but, upon you God shines, and over you appears God's glory.

Nations shall walk by your light, and world leaders by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from far away, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses. Then, you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of earth and sea shall be emptied out before you, And the nations of the earth shall come with riches, proclaiming the praises of god!

Bob F: Second Reading - The Light at the Center of Every Cell

From The Rebirthing of God: Christianity's Struggle for New Beginnings by John Philip Newell

Mary Oliver is one of the great prophets of Light in our modern world. She speaks of “the light at the center of every cell.” It is not just a feature of life that may or may not be present in different people, places, and creatures. It is the essence of life, the center from which all things have their being.

Oliver’s sense that the Light is “at the center of every cell,” and that it is everything, is similar to the vision of the early Celtic prophet John Scotus Eriugena in the ninth century, who said that the Light of God is the “Essence of all things.” Everything originates in the Light of God. If somehow that Light were extracted from the universe, all things would cease to exist. God is the Light that flows through all things. It is like a subterranean river running deep in the folds of the universe. Without it there would be no life.

Eriugena teaches that because the Light of God is the “Essence of all things,” everything should be regarded as a theophany, a showing or revealing of the Divine. The deeper we move in relation to any created thing, the closer we come to the “divine brilliance” at the heart of life. “It is not hard to understand where God’s body is,” says Mary Oliver. “It is everywhere and everything.”

This is the connection at the heart of the Christian message: looking to the Glory at the center of life in such a way that the whole of life is seen to be suffused with that same Light. This is what the story of the nativity of the Christ Child does. The sacredness of the Christ Child, born of the marriage between heaven and earth, reveals the sacredness of the universe, conceived by the union of spirit and matter.

Alleluia (Eightfold): by Jan Phillips

<https://youtu.be/IC4nbwmQDVw>

Bob F: Gospel Reading: (from Matthew’s account of the good news)

After Jesus' birth in Bethlehem during the reign of King Herod, astrologers from the east arrived one day in Jerusalem inquiring, "Where is your newborn leader? We have observed his star at its rising, and have come to acknowledge him." At this news, King Herod and all his court became greatly disturbed. He summoned all the wise ones from the people, and

asked where God's anointed was to be born. "In Bethlehem of Judea," they informed him. "Here is what the prophet has written: 'And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the leaders, since from you shall come one who is to shepherd my people, Israel.' Herod called the astrologers aside and found out from them the exact time of the star's appearance. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, after having instructed them: "Go and get detailed information about the child. When you have discovered something, report your findings to me, so that I may go and acknowledge him, too." After their audience with the king, they set out. The star which they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and entering the house, found the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and honored him. Then they opened their coffers and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. They received a message in a dream not to return to Herod, so they returned to their own country by another route.

Homily/Community Sharing – Mary T

Today we are celebrating the liturgical feast of Epiphany. You have heard the story of the Magi told year after year. Astrologers from a foreign land follow a star that leads them to the Christ child.

In the book *The First Christmas*, authors and scripture scholars John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg write about Jesus' birth narratives in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke not as history or fables but as parables. Parables are about meaning and the whole issue of factuality does not affect the truthfulness of the parable.

So, the best way to understand the birth stories is to ask the question: What do these stories mean and not get sidetracked about whether they historically happened as written. It is also important to take these stories back into their first century context and when we do, we find that they are as relevant now as they were then. The stories were anti-imperial in the first century and they are anti-imperial now.

Let's look at the Magi parable through first century eyes. Herod the Great was a ruthless king who was employed by the ruthless Roman Empire. He held firm to his position by any means necessary even if it meant killing his own people. The astrologers, on the other hand, were foreigners from Persia (modern day Iran), and were seekers of the truth relying on the Divine Light to find the Christ Child, the visible expression of God-With-Us.

As we in the 21st Century ponder the story of the Magi, what meaning do we make that aligns with the anti-imperial theme? Do we align with peace through violence or do we choose the hopeful alternative of peace through justice where everyone gets a fair share of God's earth as God's children? That is the good news of Christmas.

Are we like the Magi, relying on our own inner Divine Light to see the Divine Light as the essence of all things where everyone and everything is a theophany, a revealing of the Divine.

Can we see with the heart the divine connection not only with our loved ones, our neighbors, our tribe, but the foreigner, the immigrant, the oppressed, all creatures, the environment? All of these are at risk of violence in an empire that seeks domination by any means necessary.

What are your thoughts about the Magi parable or any of today's Readings?

Communal Statement of Faith

Lee: We believe in the Holy One, a divine mystery beyond all definition and rational understanding, the heart of all that has ever existed, that exists now, or that ever will exist.

We believe in Jesus, messenger of God's Word, bringer of God's healing, heart of God's compassion, bright star in the firmament of God's prophets, mystics, and saints.

We believe that we are called to follow Jesus as a vehicle of God's love, a source of God's wisdom and truth, and an instrument of God's peace in the world.

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,
The life of God that is our innermost life,
The breath of God moving in our being,
The depth of God living in each of us.**

We believe that God's kin-dom is here and now, stretched out all around us for those with eyes to see it, hearts to receive it, and hands to make it happen.

Prayers of and for the Community

Joan M: We now bring our prayer intentions to the Table.

Our response is: ALL: Your light answers our every need.

We pray for all suffering from natural disasters all over the world, that they not lose hope and that they feel the light of your love. R

We pray for the people of Ukraine and Russia that they may live in peace without fear and that goodness and sanity will fill the hearts and minds of those that would cause them harm. R

We pray that our government puts children above guns, power, and greed. R

We pray for our MMOJ intentions on our community prayer list. R

And for what else do we pray? Begin with, "I bring to the table."

Our response is: ALL: Your light answers our every need.

Holy Mystery may we respond to the needs of our sisters and brothers in loving prayer and solidarity. Amen

Liturgy of the Eucharist

Mary T: O Holy One, you have been called by many names by many people in the centuries of our planet's life. Yet, no name truly defines you or describes you. We celebrate you as the marvelous, loving energy of life who caused us and our world to be. We celebrate you as the Source of light and life and love, and we celebrate your presence and all-ways care.

Pat F: Please join in praying the Eucharistic prayer together, (written by Jay Murnane).

We speak out words of joy and gratitude, for you are the source of universes and swirling galaxies, and what we know about you is light. You are the source of our world - all the wonders of air, and earth, and fire, and water - and what we know about you is life. You are the source and sustaining energy of the original communion, and every expression of that communion throughout our world, and what we know of you is love.

Lee: Grateful for your covenant with us, which extends to us the heritage of light and life and love, we gather in a circle of hopeful openness, joined with all living creatures, and we sing:

Holy, Holy, Holy by Karen Drucker

<https://youtu.be/nTewBnxBy30>

Lee: All of what we can ever say about you is revealed in the harmony of nature all around us, and in all right-relations. We have been taught that it can be found within us and among us, as well. We gratefully recall all your visionaries and wise ones throughout our history, in so many traditions, who have taught us of all that we are capable of being, who have reflected your light in their lives of wisdom and tenderness.

Kathryn: We are thankful for what Jesus expressed for all the world in the simplicity of his human-ness: that you are the very truth of love, and that we are to be love's vehicles and love's troubadours.

Kathryn and ALL: On the night before he died, so that he and all of us could really live, Jesus gathered for the Seder supper with his friends. Like the least of household servants, he washed their tired and dusty feet, so that they would never forget him and his work. Back again at the table, he lifted the Passover loaf, spoke the grace, and offered it to them: Take and eat; this is my very self.

Mary T and ALL: Then he took the Cup of Blessing, spoke the grace, and offered them the wine: Take and drink of the covenant made new again through my life, for you and for all the world, that all oppression may cease. Whenever you do this, you re-member me.

There can indeed be light if we are willing to re-member, and not forget. For light will come from our struggle to be wise, and courageous, and true to our vision. There can be light if we are passionately doing the work of justice and right-relations, working skillfully to eliminate the shadow-illusion of separateness so that we can live together well and peace-fully.

Bob F: We will learn to trust you, ourselves, and all of creation. And with that trust, we will open ourselves and our small circles, until they are as wide as your own love, and as warm and bright as your own light, as Jesus showed us. It is through him, with him, in him, in communion with your enlightening Spirit, that all which is yours is acknowledged as yours, Creator-God, now and all-ways and forever.

Great Amen: Linda Lee Miller

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dy76fpfkNsg>

Kathryn: Let us pray together the prayer of Jesus:

You, the breath and life of all, Create, through your light, a heart-shrine within us, and your wisdom guides us, as oneness guides every-thing. Your one desire then becomes ours, as in all light, so in all forms. You grant what we need each day, in bread and insight. You loosen the cords of faults binding us, as we release the strands we hold of one another's faults. You guide us away from the deception of illusion; You guide us towards response at the moment of truth. To you belongs the wisdom, the life which creates and causes-to-be, the song that beautifies all, renewing itself forever. And we say yes!

Let us now share communion saying, "We are the light of the world."

Communion Song: Epiphany Song by Melissa McCrory

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hppm1PUYInY>

Prayer after Communion

Pat F: Oh Holy One, we go forth in our calling to serve and committed to our own spiritual transformation so that we might work together to transform our earth to one of peace, equality, and justice for all. Timeless One, Your eternal love wraps courage around us as we enter into your invitation to bring your Light and your Peace into our hurting world. Your ageless presence draws us to you as we step forward, ready to embrace where you lead us. Your sustaining peace rests within our every heartbeat and accompanies us into the unknown future. We have no fear. We are forever grateful to live in your presence and your love.

All: Amen.

Community Blessing (please raise your hands in blessing)

Mary T: God grants the gifts of strength and courage to all who work to bring light, and create a world of compassion and peace. The living light which is God's life magnifies the good within your heart of love and within the center of every living creature.

Kathryn: God extends to you, as gift, vision and wisdom, truth and understanding, laughter, mercy, and creativity: You are called, consecrated,

and sent forth with Spirit into this world for the fulfillment of creation, and the kin-ship of all life! ALL: Amen!

All: As we go now in peace, God's own peace be with you each and all, all-ways!

Closing Song: The Rebel Jesus by Jackson Browne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZO3O2FhKqEc>

This liturgy was written by Jay Murnane and adapted by Mary Theresa Streck and Kathryn Shea. We are forever grateful to have walked this Earth with Jay and to receive his many gifts and talents.

If you would like to add your intercession to our MMOJ Community Prayers book,

Please send an email to jmeehan515@aol.com

If you would like to invite another person to attend our liturgy please refer them to

www.marymotherofJesus.org where the day's liturgy is found. Zoom instructions are also included there.