

Epiphany

January 3, 2021

St. Patrick

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**“O star of wonder, star of night...Guide us to thy perfect light!”**

*This* Epiphany, we’re searching. Last Tuesday, hundreds of cars lined up around Lindenwood Christian Church at Union and Parkway. Word had seeped out, and by means of social media, folks learned that the Covid-19 vaccine was being given there not only to first responders but to anyone over 65. Cars waited in line for two hours. Only then they were told that the vaccine was only for first responders.

We’re searching *this* Epiphany. More than 350,000 have died from the coronavirus. Fear has set up shop, and hope seems to be fading within some of us. We’re searching for safety from an invisible enemy.

As one person put it, God gets an “F” in fairness this past year.

In this season of Christmas—so terribly different from last Christmas when wearing a mask would have been unthinkable, ludicrous; on *this* Epiphany: how do I speak of God in the midst of such unimaginable illness, danger and death?

In hospitals when I visit the sick I find that I have a phrase I often use with the sick in their vulnerability and weakness (I picked it up from one of my mentors, the late Father Milton Guthrie.): **“The Lord loves you.”** This week, as I waited in the lobby of a hospital to see someone in ICU, and was told I couldn’t, I’ve found myself muttering to God: “You’re not making your case as a loving God easier.”

It was the first words from the Scriptures which we heard this Epiphany Sunday: **“Arise, shine, for your light has come!”** Those words bellowed forth from God’s prophet to a people who had spent a lifetime in exile, and coming out of the tunnel of despair, hoping for light at the end of the tunnel, they returned to their homeland, their beloved Jerusalem. Everything lay in ruins, and they could see no light on the other side of the tunnel, no hope.

**“Arise, shine, for your light has come!”** God’s glory isn’t going to come from faraway. Instead, God’s word pinpoints *us*, as it did the chosen people back in the darkest days of the sixth century, B.C.: **“You arise. You shine forth!”** (1)

In one of his Epiphany homilies, Pope Francis taught that the Magi “were guided by an inner restlessness” (2). The Magi made a long search for the One whom

their hearts longed for. This Epiphany, we may well be called to make the search *within* ourselves, in the ruins within which lacks hope. And there, St. Patrick's, we'll find the Messiah who comes to us this Christmas season where we least expect to find him—in the midst of our inner wasteland.

The long hours in our homes—often alone, or only with loved ones confined with us: Friends, turn off the noise that we choose to make a racket only to silence our “inner restlessness.” Instead, make the Magi journey *within*. There, like the Magi, we'll find our Messiah, our Jesus, where we least expect to find him—in the midst of our inner wasteland.

“**You** arise. **You** shine forth, for your light has come!” That's the promise of God's Word this Epiphany. Transformation, along with hope, are an inside job (3). Within ourselves, and with those closest with us—yes, *within* we can adore the Messiah, and “be clothed in God who is light, day by day, until we are fully clothed in Jesus” (4).

Yes, St. Patrick's, transformation, along with hope, are an inside job. “**You arise. You shine forth, for your light has come.**”

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(1) See Alex Camille, “How Dare We Hope?” in *Give Us This Day—January 2021* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020), pp. 46-47.

(2) Pope Francis, Epiphany homily, 2017 @vatican.va.

(3) Camille, *Ibid.*, pg. 47.

(4) Pope Francis, *Ibid.*

*General Intercessions*

*Epiphany 2021*

**For the Church, that we might remain faithful in our search for the Christ and offer him homage by the witness of our lives; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For our Diocese of West Tennessee, on the 50th anniversary of our founding on the Epiphany Feast: that the light of Christ might renew and heal us; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For those who, like the Magi, search for the truth; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For the healing of those with Covid-19; for those receiving the vaccine and for their protection; and for our care in protecting others from the virus we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For all who are suffering from the cold; and, for the most vulnerable among us, especially the homeless, the ill, the forgotten, and the elderly; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For the promise of eternal life to all who have died with hope, especially those who have died from Covid-19; we pray to you, O Lord—**

