



CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION

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January 2, 2022 Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord

Today, while much of the world marks the new beginning of the calendar year, the Church commemorates the great solemnity of the Mother of God.

What does this mean?

That the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of God means that the child—conceived in her womb by the power of the Holy Spirit, carried in her body for nine months, and born into this world—is God. As such, this celebration highlights the pivotal truth of the Church's Faith: that God has, in Jesus Christ, accepted a human nature, chosen to be born into this world as we have all been born into this world, and has lived a real, human life.

In doing so, God has accepted the full implication of what it means to be human, including the experiences of suffering and death.

"Why" God did this is what the Scriptures are all about—from start to finish, from Genesis to Revelation. In fact, the Bible is not just some kind of spiritual "self-help" book or just a collection of ancient literature; the Bible is the story of why God accepts a human nature in Christ.

Integral to the "why" of God living, like us, a real, human life is the story of a particular people: the people of Israel. God chooses Israel centuries before he reveals himself in Christ and invites them to prepare themselves to be the means by which he would reveal himself to the world in an extraordinary way. Israel, throughout the long ages of its history, glimpses what God will do (that he will become a man), but when this revelation finally happens, the people of Israel are taken by surprise.

The significance of Israel is highlighted today in the testimony of the Gospel of Luke that insists that the child Jesus is circumcised. Remember, circumcision was the sign that Israel had been set apart from other peoples and nations for a particular purpose. In Christ, that purpose is revealed: Israel is the means by which God will

reveal himself in the world. And the means by which God does this is by becoming an Israelite himself: being born into an Israelite family, learning its culture and customs, speaking its language, and living its unique way of life.

God's relationship with Israel is as such that it can be likened to a mark as permanent, and at times as painful, as that of circumcision. This is seen in all its terrifying intensity in the Cross.

Why Israel? This decision on God's part is mysterious.

The "how" of God accepting a human nature is an absolute mystery. It is a revelation that, while it can be appreciated and believed, can never be fully explained. That the Blessed Virgin Mary is called Mother of God is not pious boilerplate, a kind of title by which we honor the woman who is the mother of Jesus Christ.

To testify that the Blessed Virgin Mary is the Mother of God is simultaneously a statement about her and a statement about Christ. On the one hand, it highlights the identity and mission of the Blessed Virgin Mary, an identity and mission that is absolutely singular and unique. No one else is or will ever be the Mother of God. No one else knows Christ as God in the manner that the Blessed Virgin Mary did.

God chose her in such a way that he does not choose us. God made the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary something that our lives will never be. There are points of contact between her experience and our

**The Parish Office will be closed from
Monday, December 27th thru Monday,
January 3, 2022.**

own. She is fully and completely human, like we are. She is not divine. Nor does she, as a result of her unique identity and mission, turn into some kind of divine being. She is like us, but there is something so radically different about her identity and mission that while we can love her, we cannot fully understand her. She is a mystery.
So it is with her Divine Son.

When we identify the Blessed Virgin Mary as the Mother of God, the emphasis is only secondarily on her; it is primarily about Christ. Mary being referred to as the Mother of God tells us that Jesus Christ is God and was always God. Christ did not “turn” into God, and calling Christ God is not just some kind of projection by which we make Jesus of Nazareth someone very important. That Jesus is really and truly is God is a fact. God accepting a human nature in Christ and living a real, human life is not just a story we tell that is all symbol, myth and legend; it is all true and it really happened.

Now, you might be waiting at this point for the “lesson”—a point of contact between the testimony I have given and your experience. We are accustomed to think that preaching must always deliver a lesson, but in this case, if there is a lesson, it is that God will always exceed human expectations and will do so in ways that are absolutely extravagant. What God had done and will do will not fit neatly into our categories of understanding, nor will he be bound by what we think he should do.

What God will deliver to us are mysteries, and it is through these mysteries that we will be able to see and, even in our own limited way, understand who God is and what he asks of us. But even as this happens, what is given to us is not a way of figuring God out. The Incarnation of God in Christ is the singular and privileged way by which God reveals himself to the world. We see in Christ with the greatest clarity possible who God is and what he is all about.

This clarity of vision is made possible by God because it is in the radiance of his own life and love that he reveals himself in Christ. What we see in Christ is a mystery.

And that is the lesson: God has, in Christ, accepted a human nature and lived a real human life. It is this mysterious revelation that the Church, like Christ’s Mother, the Mother of God, contemplates and treasures on this day, and all the days of the year.

By Fr. Steve Grunow, Word on Fire Ministries

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

January 1, 2022, Mary, Holy Mother of God

O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary bestowed on the human race the grace of eternal salvation, grant, we pray, that we may experience the intercession of her, through whom we were found worthy to receive the author of life,
our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen

Reflection question:

What can I take to the Blessed Virgin Mary in prayer this week?

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The Epiphany of the Lord

Gifts are everywhere at this time of year. Christmas gifts. Hostess gifts. Hidden gifts. Wrong-size gifts. Unexpected gifts. Unwanted gifts. Unreciprocated gifts. And in today's readings we hear about even more gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But we know intuitively (or, one hopes, eventually!) that gifts are symbols of something much deeper and less tangible. The gift of God's Son is, of course, at the heart of our Christmas festivities. We are not--and never--alone, because "God is with us." (Thus the name Emmanuel.) But wait, that's not all! The liturgy reminds us over and over that this is a "holy exchange." As Christ came to share in our humanity, we come to share in his divinity. The full significance of that mystery is a gift we have yet to unwrap completely.

WHAT KIND OF GOD IS THIS?
Christmas is a season of abundance.

Christmas cookies and carols. Parties and presents. Mangers and mistletoe. The same is true in our church. Within a period of nine days we celebrate Christmas, the Holy Family, Mary Mother of God, and today the Solemnity of the Epiphany. Truly an embarrassment of liturgical riches. (And we are not finished yet!) However, for many people, Christmas is already over. Trees litter the curbside or make their way back to the attic. Presents are put away or returned. We prepare to go back to school or work. But as Christians we have barely dipped our toes into the profound mystery of a God who walks among us. What kind of a God is this whose kingdom is not limited by our borders, fears, expectations, or imaginations? Today's psalm reminds us, "Lord, every nation on earth will adore you." Diversity and inclusion are not new to God's agenda.

A Gift for the Wise Men

A rather liberal priest was teasing one of the women of the parish, asking, "How do we know the Wise Men weren't Wise Women?" She answered, "If they were, they'd have brought bottles, diapers, and a bassinet, instead of gold, frankincense, and myrrh." The gifts, of course, are symbols of who Jesus is: a king who is both God and human. And I wonder what our gifts to the Lord say about our faith in him. Remember the song about the little drummer boy, who had no gift to bring but his ability to play the drum? It can remind us that a person who gives all they have, no matter how little it seems, is the most generous. So what do we bring to the newborn King? I can give my time by coming to church for the feast of Epiphany and actually paying attention. Just making the effort to listen to the words of scripture, to hear what God may be trying to tell me, could be a great gift. Or I could bring someone in our family, or a friend, who doesn't go to church very much. Now let's not forget the meaning of "epiphany." In ancient times it meant the appearance or manifestation of a divine being. Maybe a way to celebrate the Epiphany is to reflect on how God has been made known to me. Simple things, like a hug from a friend or an answered prayer, or major events like a wedding, the birth of a child, or a funeral, can all be ways to experience the Lord. The Wise Men received the gift of an

JANUARY 1—JANUARY 8, 2022

****We Remember at the Eucharist****

Saturday 1

10:00am.

4:30pm

Sunday 2

8:00am

10:00 am Robert Chabre+

12:00 noon.

Monday 3

8:15a.m. Jozeppi DiSantis Riccomi (Living)
Joseph Brady (Birthday)

Tuesday 4

8:15a.m. Lori Guest+

Wednesday 5

8:15a.m. Respect for the Dignity of Life

Thursday 6

10:00am Assumption School Children

Friday 7

8:15am

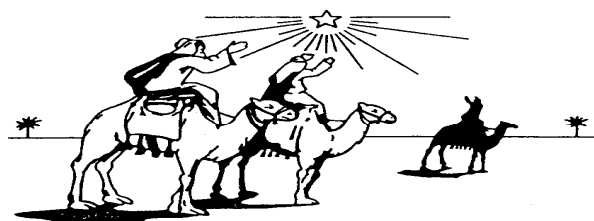
Saturday 8

8:15am

4:30pm

Please remember the Church of the Assumption in your will.

epiphany by following a star. May the light of Christ lead you to him also. Tom Schmidt, Copyright (c) J. S. Paluch



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THANK YOU for your generosity!

Sunday Collection

Week of December 19 2021

\$4,287.00

Maintenance Fund

\$897.00

Week of December 26, 2021

Available January 8, 2021

Weekly Goal \$7,000

Please pray for all those who are ill especially: Mary Melton, and Eric Bertelsen

513057

Attention: Martha

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Message:

Please send 250 bulletins