



St. Mary Magdala Spiritual Center is the ministry center of The Community of the Cross, an intentional community of Christians affiliated with the Orthodox-Catholic Church of America. ALL ARE WELCOME



St. Mary Magdala Spiritual Center

## FIRST SUNDAY

January 2018, Vol 12, Issue 1

2800 Rolston Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46825

Inside This Issue:

- P 1. Wise Women?
- P 2. A Few Words on Epiphany
- P 3. A Coffee with God
- P3. Remember in your prayers
- P 3. Clergy for January
- P 4. Readings for Jan
- P 4. Our Crisis Shelter is Running Low on Supplies

### Sunday Liturgy

10:00 AM

2800 Rolston Street  
Fort Wayne

All are Welcome!

### CONTACTS:

+John 260-615-0156  
jfn3253@aol.com

Cliff+ 260-433-1971  
c.polubinsky@gmail.com

Jim+ 260-302-2093  
Jim.Brigl@gmail.com

Charlene/+ 260-341-2110  
RorickC@frontier.com

### WISE WOMEN? ICON IN THE UPPER LEFT CORNER

BridgeBuilding Images has this commentary on the icon above: *Wise women throughout time and in every culture know themselves to be seekers and seers of the Divine. In Janet McKenzie's interpretation of the Magi, women around the world find an image of the Epiphany that includes and validates their encounters with the One Who Saves, celebrated here in the powerful, protective and tender manifestation of a mother and her child, embraced and nurtured by a loving community. Here is global inclusiveness and a vision of mutuality and interdependence – the giving and receiving of the three gifts essential to life itself: presence, love and daily bread. Epiphany proclaims again and anew: Christ for all people. God's favor extends to all!*

We always have referred to the visitors from the East as Three Wise Men, Three Kings, and have even given them names (Kaspar or Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar - usually). Yet scripture simply refers to them in the Greek as "magi" - astrologers. Note, this is not astronomers but astrologers. Astronomers study the stars and know them by name (nomos); astrologers study the stars and make sense from the movement of the stars (logos = meaning). Remember, this would represent a foreign religion to the Jews. I like very much the way that *The Message* translates Matthew 2:1-2:

*2 1-2 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem village, Judah territory— this was during Herod's kingship—a band of scholars arrived in Jerusalem from the East. They asked around, "Where can we find and pay homage to the newborn King of the Jews? We observed a star in the eastern sky that signaled his birth. We're on pilgrimage to worship him."*

"A band of scholars" - wow, no wonder Herod was afraid, and all of Jerusalem with him. Whether historical fact or historical fiction, the message of this wonderful story of the visit of the magi focuses directly on the powerful people of the empire's response to the birth of Jesus - fear and trembling and total surprise. They are caught off guard because they couldn't fathom a king (or anyone really important) being born to someone outside their royal families. The forces of the empire are challenged by this new king who apparently was born without proper introduction to them. How could this be? Are they not the most important people in the world. Doesn't the world just revolve around them? Apparently not, so they are informed by this "band of scholars" - some of whom may well have been women.

These kind of moments in the gospels emphasize the real challenge of Jesus' birth. It was not to the empire that he was born; not to the power structure.

Jesus came to the poor, the outcast, those who worked hard to survive in a hostile world, tyrannized and oppressed by powerful forces that attempted to suck the humanity and life itself from their very souls.

As Mary's prayer, the Magnificat, sums it up, paraphrased so well by the Canticum of the Turning, "My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the fires of your justice burn. Wipe away all tears for the dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn."

"Epiphany" is a process, not just a one-day happening - a process of manifestation, showing forth, demonstrating God's presence among us. God is here. God is within us. God is within our neighbors and even our enemies. Spread the news.

+John

## **A FEW WORDS ON EPIPHANY**

Archbishop Peter (Bob) Zahrt, Ret.

In Ireland, Epiphany is called "Little Christmas," or "Women's Christmas," a day of celebration (with wine, a nod to the miracle at Cana), rest, and companionship for the women who had done all that food preparation and other tasks on Christmas. In Manitou Springs, Colorado, Epiphany is observed more playfully and is quite a spectacle with dressing up, and contests for distance and creative ways to hurl a fruitcake at the "Great Fruitcake Toss."

Surprisingly for we Americans, who have turned our cultural spotlight on Christmas Day and the weeks leading up to it, Epiphany is a really big deal in many countries across the globe. Festivals. Gift-giving (in Italy, a character named Befana brings gifts to children, the legend being that she missed joining the Magi, so each year delivers surprises to children). Blessings. In many countries, Epiphany is the time when pastors begin the annual cycle of visiting homes for a house blessing. It is expected that the blessings will be completed before the start of Lent.

In Poland, this day is marked by quite literally marking above doorways with chalk. "K+M+B" plus the year, the letters representing the

traditional names of the magi: Kasper, Melchior, and Balthazar. King cakes are popular in several countries, such as Portugal, as the day marks the beginning of Mardi Gras, leading up to Fat Tuesday. In most locations, attention is given to food—substantial and familiar comfort foods, or special treats like fruit cakes and king cakes.

In Romania, there are horse races, with the local priest sprinkling holy water over the horses, and often on people who ask for a blessing. And a Romanian belief is that if a girl falls on ice, or better yet, falls into water, she will be married in the new year. Importantly, all these manners of observing Epiphany signal not just the silly impulse in people (creativity and festivity are good) but also the feast is an important moment in the life of communities.

Epiphany is a layered feast, to be sure. We celebrate the visit of the Magi, yes, of course. But in Orthodoxy, the feast also directs us to the Baptism of the Lord in the River Jordan. And it starts us on our way to the cross. In many Orthodox communities, bodies of living water are blessed on this feast. In Macedonia, bishops or priests will toss a cross into a lake or river, and young men jump in and swim to retrieve it. Such plunges have spread to other nations, even winter-cold Russia. Who knew that the Polar Bear Plunge had roots in Christian belief?

For us, Epiphany is almost always the closing-out of Christmas. A lesser feast because by now we've tired of trees, wreaths, ribbons, colored lights, and the carols of the holiday. But there's more to Epiphany.

The feast is, according to the wisdom of Orthodox writers, a Trinitarian feast. Remember that Epiphany also marks the Lord's baptism, and as he submitted to baptism by John, the Father and the Spirit appeared.. When else does scripture note this phenomenon? Only one other occasion, at the Transfiguration.

In my life, I've come to experience Epiphany neither as the end of a season or the beginning of the time before Lent, but as a taking note of changing. There is a bit more light, and with the arrival of plant and flower catalogues we know that spring is just around the corner. The world

turns, slowly and majestically. No great feasts will intrude into the time betwixt Epiphany and Lent, but low-keyed events will continue to mark the turning of the world and the unfolding of time. Candlemas, St Blasé, even St Patrick day (usually in Lent, but always with a dispensation for play)—surely for us a feast of Spring as anything else, eh?

On the Merry-Go-Round we call church and faith, Epiphany can have it all. Wine for souls fatigued by work. Nourishing bread, festive bread, king cake, to make the quotidian extraordinary, even royal. Cold wintery water, blessed and changed into life-givingness. And even a cross. Blessing water with a cross transforms the water as we are transformed by the cross blessing we receive many times. Even accidents, such as falling into water, may have a good outcome for us. The life of faith, the circle of time, the anchor of place. All touched by the Trinitarian God who surely delights in the myriad expressions of humankind's enthusiasm for the Merry-Go-Round.

### **A COFFEE WITH GOD**

One of our OCCA deacon applicants has started a daily meditation online, very short and to the point. It's called "A Coffee with God" and comes in your email daily. His name is Jose Castro and he lives in San Francisco area. Jose works with young people in his parish and also with those in jail and those who live on the streets. If you'd like to sign up for his daily meditation, his email is [jvc1965@gmail.com](mailto:jvc1965@gmail.com). Just let Jose know you'd like to be added to his email list for A Coffee with God. I enjoy them and thought maybe you would also.

### **REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS**

Pray for all those experiencing the intense cold and instense storms this winter. While the fires of California seem to be diminishing, we are now beseiged throughout the country with extreme cold.

Pray for all people in those places that are experiencing or have experienced violence, destruction or any other events causing suffering.

Please remember Jim Tobolski in your prayers. He is at Mayo this week to get another opinion on his cancer. Remember all those in our parish and community who are sick. Pray for their recovery and renewed strength.

Remember all of the Church in your prayers, each of

us is struggling with something. We all have challenges as we go on our journeys.

Pray for those who have asked us to pray for them. Pray for those who are unemployed or under employed, for those who are lonely and alone.

Pray most of all for justice - justice would prevent so much of the misery and problems that we face in our world and in our communities.

Pray for a sense of outrage at the violence, greed and waste in our world.

Honor the earth, the waters and the sky and do what you can to stop pollution.

Pray for an end to genocide, apartheid and the displacement of people from their lands all over the globe. Let go of any form of racism, sexism, homophobia, agism and other forms of hatred and bigotry.

Pray that we may all grow stronger to be able to witness to the true Gospel message, a message of good news that God is Love and we who love God love our neighbor - God is here and we are one - all else is failing.

### **CLERGY FOR JANUARY**

Jan 7	Jim+
Jan 14	+John
Jan 21	Cliff+
Jan 28	Jim+
Feb 4	+John

## READINGS FOR JANUARY

### First Sunday of Advent December 3, 2017

Isaiah 64:1-9  
1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19  
Mark 13:24-37

### Third Sunday after the Epiphany January 21, 2018

Jonah 3:1-5, 10  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Psalm 62:5-12  
Mark 1:14-20

### Epiphany of the Lord January 6, 2018

Isaiah 60:1-6  
10-14 Ephesians 3:1-12

Psalm 72:1-7,  
Matthew 2:1-12

### Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany January 28, 2018

Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Psalm 111  
Mark 1:21-28

### Second Sunday after the Epiphany January 14, 2018

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18  
John 1:43-51

### Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 4, 2018

Isaiah 40:21-31  
1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Psalm 147:1-11, 20c  
Mark 1:29-39

---

## Our Crisis Shelter is running low on critical supplies

With the colder weather women who had previously been sleeping in their cars to get away from abusers at home, are now coming to the YWCA Northeast Indiana Crisis Shelter. Our Shelter is currently over capacity, and we are running critically low on supplies. Please help us with a donation of any of the items on our list. Please remember we can only accept new items. Help make a difference in someone's life today!

Our business hours are Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. We are located at 5920 Decatur Road, Fort Wayne IN 46816. Thank you for your support.

Body Soap/Wash	Wash Cloths
Deodorant	Towels
Lrg. size diapers/pullups	Pots/Pans
Ethnic Hair Products	Silverware
Laundry Soap	Twin Size Sheets Pillows

#### Warm weather clothing:

Sweats  
Sweaters  
Socks  
Jeans

For more information call Erin Johnson,  
Development Manager  
(260) 424-4908, ext. 227

