**Solidarity with Sisters Communal Prayer for Sunday, Jan. 3, 2021,**

 **Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord**

***For he rescues the poor when they cry out, the oppressed who have no one to help.
He shows pity to the needy and the poor and saves the lives of the poor. Ps.72,12-13***

**CHECK-IN and then mute everyone. (Betty Thompson)**

**WELCOME (Suzie De Quattro)**

Welcome, everyone!

* Introductions – people who haven’t been here before?
* Thanks to Joan and Stu Sklamm for preparing today’s communal prayer and to Stu and Reggie Ott for making our music.
* Thanks to the people who will be reading and leading us in prayer today: Mia and Tim Brown, Sylvia and Kevin Lynch, and Joan and Stu Sklamm.
* If you’d like to read on future Sundays, please get in touch.

**SETTLING IN (Suzie De Quattro)**

We are not all in the same place, but we can still be together by sharing a common breath.  So let us begin by slowly taking one collective breath together -  in and out.   With each breath let the Spirit of God settle deeper into you as your exhale tensions from your body and distractions from your mind.  In and out.   Now let’s take 3 more breaths.  One to be here…one to be together…and one to make space for what God has incarnated in you,

Now **Stu Sklamm** will lead us into our celebration of the Epiphany.

**OPENING**  **(Stu Sklamm)**

**We Three Kings of Orient Are**

We three kings of Orient are,

Bearing gifts we traverse afar

Field and fountain, moor and mountain,

Following yonder star.

O star of wonder, star of night,

Star with royal beauty bright,

Westward leading, still proceeding,

Guide us to the perfect Light.

Born a babe on Bethlehem’s plain,

Gold we bring to crown him again;

King forever, ceasing never,

Over us all to reign.

O star of wonder, star of night,

Star with royal beauty bright,

Westward leading, still proceeding,

Guide us to the perfect Light.

**GREETING (Joan Sklamm)**

Beloved Community, rejoice!

*We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.*

*(Mt 2:2) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.* Alleluia!

**All:** And all God’s people reply: Amen! Alleluia!

**CALL TO WORSHIP (Joan Sklamm)**

We come together today because it is with each other that we experience ourselves as the people of God and the body of Christ revealed to all nations at the Epiphany.  We gather to celebrate the great fact that God is in love with us. We are confident that in this next hour God will act in us and through us. We believe that God will give us light for our next step. And now **Suzie DeQuattro** will lead us in prayer

**GATHERING PRAYER (Suzie DeQuattro)**

Loving God, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become an Epiphany community that vulnerably shares each other’s burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts’ longings for the healing of our world as you rescue the poor and help the oppressed.

**Stu Sklamm** will now introduce us to today’s theme.

**INTRODUCTION TO THEME (Stu Sklamm)**

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord as The Magi from a foreign land arrive in Bethlehem, and the birth of Our Savior is then revealed to all the nations. What does that mean for our multi-cultural world in which religion, or our varied expressions of relationship with God, occurs in many very different ways?

 *(Slight pause)*

**Mia Brown** will now read from Isaiah, Chapter 60, Verses 1 to 6.

### FIRST READING, (Mia Brown) Isaiah 60:1-6

1 Arise, shine out, for your light has come, and the [glory](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5201) of [Yahweh](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6291) has risen on you.

2 Look! though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples, on you [Yahweh](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6291) is rising and over you his [glory](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5201) can be seen.

3 The nations [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) come to your light and [kings](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6650) to your dawning brightness.

4 Lift up your eyes and look around: all are assembling and coming towards you, your sons coming from far away and your daughters being carried on the hip.

5 At this sight you [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) grow radiant, your heart [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) throb and dilate, since the riches of the sea [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) flow to you, the wealth of the nations come to you;

6 camels in throngs [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) fill your streets, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; everyone in Saba [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) come, bringing gold and [incense](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6079) and proclaiming Yahweh's praises. *(Slight pause)*

**Sylvia Lynch will now** read from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 3, verses 2-3a, 5-6.

**SECOND READING (Sylvia Lynch)**  [**Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/ephesians/3?2)

Brothers and sisters:
You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace
that was given to me for your benefit,
namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation.
It was not made known to people in other generations
as it has now been revealed
to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:
that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body,
and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

 *( Slight pause)*

**Kevin Lynch** will now offer the following questions for your reflection, after which we will

pause for two minutes of silence.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Kevin Lynch)**

What is my responsibility in bringing all nations to Jesus’ light?

How do I see my role as coheir, member of the same body, and copartner in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Slide 1, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

**Stu Sklamm** will now lead us in the Alleluia.

**ALLELUIA (Stu Sklamm) Matthew 2:2**

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

**Tim Brown** will now read from Matthew’s Gospel, Chapter 2, verses 1-12.

**GOSPEL (Tim Brown) Matthew 2:1-12**

1 After [Jesus](https://www.catholic.org/clife/jesus) had been born at [Bethlehem](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=1846) in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, suddenly some wise men came to [Jerusalem](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6304) from the east 2 asking, 'Where is the infant king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.'

3 When King [Herod](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5721) heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. 4 He called together all the chief priests and the [scribes](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=10622) of the people, and enquired of them where the [Christ](https://www.catholic.org/clife/jesus) was to be born. 5 They told him, 'At [Bethlehem](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=1846) in Judaea, for this is what the [prophet](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=9674) wrote:

6 And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least among the leaders of Judah, for from you [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) come a leader who [will](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=12332) shepherd my people Israel.'

7 Then [Herod](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=5721) summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared 8 and sent them on to [Bethlehem](https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=1846) with the words, 'Go and find out all about the child, and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.'

9 Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And suddenly the star they had seen rising went forward and halted over the place where the child was. 10 The sight of the star filled them with delight, 11 and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him [gifts](https://www.catholic.org/shopping/?category=10) of gold and frankincense and myrrh.

12 But they were given a warning in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way. *( Slight pause)*

**Joan Sklamm** will now read a reflection for the Feast of the Epiphany of Our Lord by Marie Dennis of Catholic Women Preach.

**REFLECTION (Joan Sklamm)**

**EPIPHANY OF THE LORD** *by Marie Dennis*

### The Magi from the East arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the newborn King of the Jews? We have seen his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” Epiphany – the universal manifestation of the inbreaking reign of God. Yes, “every nation on earth will adore you”!

The pandemic is opening our eyes, helping us to recognize the centrality of relationships in our lives and the importance of community, revealing the intrinsic interconnectedness of all things. What a time this has been! It is good to be in a new year, to begin to imagine a new way of being together on this planet.

That the Good News has reached the ends of the earth - the whole earth community - feels like good news this year!....

In the global context of pandemic and climate disruption, displacement and wars fought piecemeal, glimmers of the “already” are visible worldwide. We have all seen them: the tremendous efforts of the World Food Program to avert famine and mitigate hunger as food supplies to vulnerable communities were disrupted and unemployment skyrocketed; the courageous actions of countless health care and other essential workers previously unseen and underpaid; dedicated efforts to protect from COVID19 the elderly, prisoners, those in care facilities, refugees and asylum seekers; the beauty brought by musicians playing solo on balconies to brighten deserted streets and performing whole symphonies alone/together on Zoom. These seeds, if nourished and carefully tended, may give rise to the kind of global paradigm shift that the arrival of the Magi portends.

Pope Francis invites us to an ever deepening understanding of Epiphany, of this global manifestation of the inbreaking reign of God. He repeatedly acknowledges the Good News, the presence of God in other faith traditions and “in all nations.” In the preparation of Laudato Si’, he was inspired by his brother Bartholomew, the Orthodox Patriarch, who, Francis said,  “has spoken forcefully of our need to care for creation.” In writing [Fratelli Tutti](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20201003_enciclica-fratelli-tutti.html), he was encouraged by the Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb with whom Francis declared that “God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters.” In [Querida Amazonia](http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20200202_querida-amazonia.html) he wrote about the Amazon region as “a space where God himself reveals himself and summons his sons and daughters.” In his [op ed published recently in the New York Times](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/11/26/opinion/pope-francis-covid.html?auth=login-google1tap&login=google1tap), he said, “To come out of this crisis better, we have to recover the knowledge that as a people we have a shared destination” – we are tied together by bonds of reciprocity.

As the global community struggles to respond to the crises of our time, a fundamental shift is needed from systems of exploitation and domination toward a new order of universal communion toward which this feast, this manifestation of the universal inbreaking of the reign of God points. Laudato Si’ calls it an ecological conversion, a shift to a new normal in which the infinite worth of every person is honored, the earth is healed, and the primordial unity of all beings is recognized.

The paradigm shift we humans are facing now has been “in the works” since the Magi started following that star. We know it will require unprecedented unity, unparalleled cooperation and the fullness of nonviolent love. But the future envisioned by the Magi and promised to “all the nations” is a spectacular one by which to measure to the “new post-pandemic normal” that we now need to create.

**Kevin Lynch** will now offer questions for reflection followed by two minutes of silence.

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS (Kevin Lynch)**

Pope Francis declared that God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties, and dignity and has called us to live together as brothers and sisters. As the Magi of today amidst the pandemic, what gifts will you bring to answer this call?

What do you hope would be the pre-eminent features affecting the poor and the oppressed in our new post-pandemic normal?

**SILENT REFLECTION** **(Betty:** Slide 2, time 2:00, chime, stop slide**)**

**Stu Sklamm** will now lead our sharing.

**SHARING TIME (Stu Sklamm)**

We invite you to briefly share what emerged in **your** heart this morning as you have reflected upon our reading and music. We welcome everyone who wants to speak, and we also know that the wisdom of this community includes both words shared and silent listening,

So let’s begin in silence as we gather our reflections. [Long-ish pause]

Now who would like to start our sharing? Remember to unmute yourself to speak and mute yourself again afterwards.

[Sharing]

[If there is silence more than about 30 seconds before anyone speaks:] Take whatever quiet you need before you speak.

[If there is extended silence during the sharing:] Is there anyone else who would like to share?  [Pause.]

[Stop by about 11:20.]

Thank you.

Now **Sylvia Lynch** will lead us in prayer.

**PRAYERS OF THE COMMUNITY(Sylvia Lynch)**

Humbly mindful of God’s mercy, promises, and powerful, transforming love, now let us pray for ourselves, our brothers and sisters, and for the good of all the nations to whom Jesus has been revealed. Our response will be, **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

* For the leaders of the many world religions, that they may learn from one another and find success in addressing together the many challenges in our world, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For the good health, safety, and well-being of families and those who have no family, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For the wisdom to heed the advice of our scientists, researchers, and doctors regarding Covid-19 and for the equitable dissemination of a safe, effective, accessible, and affordable Covid-19 vaccine, let us pray**. Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For the citizens and leaders of our divided nation, that we be blessed with courage, humility, honesty, integrity, compassion, responsibility, and respect for all in our communities, including those among us who have come from other countries. Let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For our country, that we may experience a peaceful transition of power, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**
* For the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and their member organizations as they implement programs to address systemic racism and white privilege, guide their communities through the difficult process of adjusting to declining membership and continue their service for the life of the world, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer**.
* For the many missionaries who serve in the United States and in other countries, that they may find welcoming communities who help them adjust to the different cultures and societies, let us pray. **Loving God, hear our prayer.**

For what else shall we pray? Please unmute yourself to speak, and mute yourself afterwards.

(Shared prayers)

Loving God, we place all of our prayers, those spoken and those unspoken, into your loving care. We will do all that we can to put our prayers into action – while entrusting the outcome to you. Amen.

**OFFERTORY (Mia Brown)**

As Pope Francis has said, prayer isn't about closing oneself in a room with God "to put makeup on your soul — that's not prayer, that's fake praying; to pray is to face God and allow yourself to be sent by him to help a brother or sister. The proving ground for prayer is concrete love for one's neighbor.”

Let us now take time to name within ourselves something we will offer as coheirs and copartners in the promise of Christ through the gospel. [Pause.]

In thanksgiving for the presence and power of Jesus Christ, and in unity with the Holy Spirit, let us pray. God of abundance, we commit to sharing our time, talents, and treasures with our neighbors so we may be a light and a witness to the transforming love of Jesus Christ. Amen.

**CELEBRATION OF COMMUNION(Kevin Lynch)**

O Great Love, we are humbled and emboldened

to know that you trust us to be your body in this world.

We are part of that body as we let go of all that separates us from you,

and as we embrace one another and your entire creation with merciful love.

We give you thanks for your presence in us. [Pause.]

We remember the night before Jesus died.

At dinner with friends, Jesus knew all that would soon be asked of them,

and, loving them to the end, Jesus showed them how to care for each other

as they went out into the world.

First Jesus washed their feet.

Then he looked at what was in front of them, the bread and the cup,

gifts of the earth and work of human hands, and blessed them.

So let us, too, invite God right now into what is front and center in our lives

knowing that God will indeed enter what we offer – and bless it. [Pause.]

Let us invite God into ourselves so that we become God’s living presence in the world. [Pause.]

Holy One, you transform us as you nourish us here.

May we nourish others with your presence.

Amen.

**OUR FATHER (Tim Brown)**

Now let us join our hearts as if we could join our hands to pray in harmony with Christians throughout the world in the words that Jesus gave us:

***All (muted):*** Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread

and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,

and do not let us fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil

for the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

**FINAL BLESSING (Stu Sklamm)**

While we keep ourselves muted, let us reach out our hands and bless each other:



**Reggie Ott** will now lead us in our closing song.

**CLOSING SONG –** **(Reggie Ott)**

**Songs of Thankfulness and Praise***by**Jakob Hintz (1622-1702)*

Songs of thankfulness and praise,

Jesus, Lord, to you we raise,

Manifested by the star,

To the sages from afar;

Branch of royal David’s stem

In your birth at Bethlehem;

Anthems be to you addressed,

God in flesh made manifest.

Manifest at Jordan’s stream,

Prophet, priest, and king supreme;

And at Cana, wedding guest,

In your Godhead manifest;

Manifest in pow’r divine,

Changing water into wine;

Anthems be to you addressed,

God in flesh made manifest.

**RESOURCES:**

**First Reading:** [**Daily Reading for Sunday, January 3rd, 2021 - Bible - Catholic Online**](https://www.catholic.org/bible/daily_reading/?select_date=2021-01-03) **(New Jerusalem Bible)**

**Second Reading:** [**https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010321.cfm**](https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010321.cfm)

**Gospel:** [**Daily Reading for Sunday, January 3rd, 2021 - Bible - Catholic Online**](https://www.catholic.org/bible/daily_reading/?select_date=2021-01-03) **(Jerusalem Bible)**

**Reflection:** [**Epiphany of the Lord: Jan 03, 2021 (catholicwomenpreach.org)**](https://www.catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/01032021)

**Blessing:** [**http://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/english/p00013.htm**](http://www.catholicdoors.com/prayers/english/p00013.htm)