

THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER



January 9, 2022

EPIPHANY

just the beginning

by Drew Downs

Epiphany was one of the earliest feasts of the church. But it has long lived a double life.

Originating in the East, Epiphany marked the Baptism of Jesus. It was adopted a century later in the West, to honor the arrival of the Wisemen.

Both contexts are interesting, though I suspect we're a bit literal with our response

to them, however. They both evoke a beginning. One to Jesus's earthly ministry. The other to the Jesus's connection to the wider world.

Folding it into the end of Christmas, we might find it easy to miss the point. That this moment, the beginning of the Jesus Event, is just the beginning. That everything starts here. And *now*, things **really** start to get interesting.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Winter 2022

WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

The Epiphany Proclamation

Dear friends in Christ, the glory of the Lord has shone upon us, and shall ever be manifest among us, until the day of his return. Through the rhythms of times and seasons let us celebrate the mysteries of salvation. Let us recall the year's culmination, the Paschal Triduum of the Lord: his last supper, his crucifixion, his burial, and his rising celebrated between the evening of **the fourteenth day of April and the evening of the sixteenth day of April.**

Each Easter – as on each Sunday – the Holy Church makes present the great and saving deed by which Christ has for ever conquered sin and death. From Easter are reckoned all the days we keep holy. Ash Wednesday, the beginning of Lent, will occur on the **second day of March.** The Ascension of the Lord will be commemorated on the **twenty-sixth day of May.** Pentecost, the joyful conclusion of the season of Easter, will be celebrated on **the fifth day of June.** And, this year the First Sunday of Advent will be on **the twenty-seventh day of November.**

Likewise the pilgrim Church proclaims the passover of Christ in the feasts of the holy Mother of God, in the feasts of the Apostles and Saints, and in the commemoration of the faithful departed.

To Jesus Christ, who was, who is, and who is to come, Lord of time and history, be endless praise, for ever and ever. Amen.

Drew

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Winter 2022

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

The First Sunday after the Epiphany

January 9, 2022

Collect

Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting.

Amen.

Reading

From Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

"And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.""

Reflection

The Gospel of Mark begins with the story of Jesus's baptism. Matthew and Luke offer the birth stories and give us a glimpse of the world that Jesus was born into. But other than his infancy (and a strange moment when Jesus turns twelve), the story of Jesus really begins here.

The ancient church made sure the people understood this as the beginning. They made baptism central to the life of faith: a moment of turning from old ways and toward this new way with Christ at the center.

It seems that over time, our priorities have shifted. We've made Christmas and Holy Week the tentpoles of our faith tradition.

AFTER THE EPIPHANY

Sometimes it seems like this has come at a cost. A cost of missing the Epiphany and the baptism as the real **start** to the story because it serves as the start of our story.

This is not to say that our lives *before* baptism are irrelevant. Much the opposite, in fact. The sense of call, especially among adults to *receive* baptism is a genuine and certain encounter with God. *This* does not discount *that*.

What it *does* point to, however, is the beginning of a **new** life of faith. It is death. And it is rebirth. It is an end to one life and a beginning to a new one. And this is something we always celebrate.

When the voice of God speaks to Jesus and says "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased" we can't help but wonder *what* is so pleasing! What has he done to *deserve* God's pleasure? Was it something before, which invalidates this as a beginning? Is it pleasure in his being baptized by John? What is so pleasing?

We can't know for sure, but I suspect that this isn't a merited affirmation but a generous one. God looks upon this child of God and says "you, in your youth, please me."

This is not the same as saying we are to remain in the prelude to our story; this life of faith. Remaining unchanged by the grace of God in the blessing of our createdness. No, we are called to live into a changed life by the one who changes.

And this calling, into change, is *because* we are blessed, loved, and wonderfully made. So we can start again, with a clean slate, to love the world. Because nothing pleases God more than new beginnings and opportunities to create something fresh, vibrant, and abundantly new.

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