

## Friday (C.S.Lewis)

It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. An 'impersonal God' - well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads, better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. But God himself, alive, pulling at the other end of the cord—that is another matter. There comes a point when people who have been dabbling in religion ('Man's search for God!') suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found him? We never meant it to come to *that!* Worse still, supposing he found us?

## Scripture (Eph. 3:8-12)

*I, who am the least of all God's holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything. The purpose of this was, that now, through the Church, the principalities and ruling forces should learn how many-sided god's wisdom is, according to the plan which he had formed from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

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*"Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades."*

Pope Francis

## Feast of the Epiphany

### **Joining the Wise Men's Offertory procession**

*When the Magi saw the new star rising, they understood that a new king had been born, one who, as their knowledge of the signs in the stars revealed, was of great significance to all the earth. The response of these wise and influential men was to set off on the long journey to search him out. Their words to Herod, "we have come to do him homage", show they wanted to acknowledge this new king's superiority and to give him reverence; the gifts they set off with, symbols of the wealth and power, show that they weren't coming just to learn what they could to bring back for their benefit: they intend to put what they have at his disposal.*

*In the context of Isaiah's prophecy, (Is.60:1-6) the parallel between the Magi and all the gentile nations responding to the revelation of God's glory and being drawn to it, bringing their wealth and power making it available to rebuild God's heavenly city, i.e. to build God's Kingdom on earth, emphasises that something new and decisive is happening as God's promises are fulfilled.*

*It is worth my while taking time to read these passages slowly to savour the sense of joy and power which goes with the revelation of God's glory. No wonder the people are told to 'Rejoice' and to 'shine out' as all nations bring their wealth to serve the 'dawning brightness'. It is also worth me taking seriously my rather hesitant response when I realise these commands are also meant for me. In the cold light of the rather dreary January mornings, returning to work after all the Christmas lights have been put away and the familiar backdrop of news of division, violence and suffering in the world resumes, do I take the talk of glory shining and God's Kingdom being built seriously? If I can sense the joy, and the power in church but not on Monday morning in work or in 'the world' which seems to be still in darkness, I am not being joyful or hopeful: I am treating the revelation of God as a pleasant but unattainable ideal.*

*This is not how St. Paul treated it, (Ephesians 3) when he talks about the grace he was given 'by the workings of his power'. This power was not one which came and 'sorted it all out' and changed the world in an instant; it made him a 'servant of the Gospel'.*

*Interestingly, in putting themselves at the service of the new king, the Magi had to make two journeys: the first one was a long, and no doubt difficult, physical journey from 'the east'. In going first to Herod, their assumption must have been that the new king would be where the power was, only to learn that they were in the wrong place. The second journey was only about 5 miles, but required a much bigger step –from power to humility. When they fall on their knees in homage before the child and his mother, (I suspect they were not used to giving reverence to children or women in their courts), but they were not demeaning themselves, they were putting themselves at the disposal of a greater king. And this fills them with delight!*

*Herod, meanwhile, had been unable to make this journey. After so many years of building his power by political astuteness and brutal repression, he was unable to give it up; he could not allow anyone to become greater than him.*

*The differing responses of Herod and the Magi to the revelation of Jesus in the world offer me the choice of responses. I either make the short trip from church back into 'the world' as a servant of the Gospel, offering my weekdays, or I stifle it in the pew by restricting God to when I am in church or praying. It is either / or. Martin Bennett*

## **Monday (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)**

An image needs a living object, and a copy can only be formed from a model. Either man forms himself on the god of his own invention, or the true and living God moulds the human form into his image. There must be a complete transformation, but how is it to be affected? Since fallen man cannot rediscover and assimilate the form of God, the only way is for God to take the form of man and come to him. The Son of God who dwelt in the form of God the Father, lay aside that form. He has become like us so that we should be like him. And in the incarnation, the whole human race recovers the dignity of the image of God. In his own person, Christ restored the image of God in all that bears a human form.

## **Scripture (Matthew 2:1-2,7-12)**

*After Jesus had been born, suddenly some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east asking ‘Where is the infant king of the Jews?’ Having listened to what king Herod 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. The sight of the star filled them with delight, 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 of gold, frankincense and myrrh.*

## **Tuesday (2nd Vatican Council, ‘Revelation’)**

Then, after speaking in many places and varied ways through the prophets, God last of all in these days has spoken to us by his son. For he sent his son, the Eternal Word, who enlightens all, so that he might dwell among us and tell us the innermost realities about God. Jesus Christ, therefore, speaks the words of God and completes the work of salvation which his Father gave him to do. To see Jesus is to see his Father.

## **Scripture (Hebrews 1:1-3)**

*At many moments in the past and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets; but in our time, the final days, he has spoken to us in the person of his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things and through whom he made the ages. He is the reflection of God’s glory and bears the impress of God’s own being, sustaining all things by his powerful command; and now that he has purged sins away, he has taken his seat at the right hand of the divine Majesty on high.*

## **Wednesday (Pope Leo the Great)**

In the person of Jesus Christ, humility was embraced by majesty, weakness by strength, mortality by eternity. And in order to pay the debt of our condition, the invulnerable nature was united to a passing nature. The ‘self-emptying’ by which he who is invisible rendered himself visible and the Creator and Lord of all chose to be mortal, was a condescension of pity, not a loss of power. So he who made the human race while remaining ‘in the form of God’ was the same one who was made human ‘in the form of a servant’. Just as the ‘form of God’ does not take away the ‘form of a servant’, so the ‘form of a servant’ does not detract from the ‘form of God’.

## **Scripture (Colossians 1:13-16,18-19)**

*It is he who has rescued us from the ruling force of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son that he loves, and in him we enjoy our freedom, the forgiveness of sin. He is the image of the unseen God, the first-born of all creation, for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible, thrones, ruling forces, sovereignties, powers – all things were created through him and for him. He is the beginning, the first- born from the dead, so that he should be supreme in every way; because God wanted all fullness to be found in him and through him to reconcile all things to him.*

## **Thursday (Martin Luther King)**

There is so much frustration in the world because we have relied on gods rather than God. We have genuflected before the god of science, only to find that it has given the atomic bomb, producing fears and anxieties that science can never mitigate. We have worshipped the god of pleasure, only to discover that thrills play out and sensations are short lived. We have bowed before the god of money only to learn that in a world of possible depressions, money is a rather uncertain deity. These transitory gods are not able to save or bring happiness to the human heart. Only God is able. It is faith in him that we must rediscover.

## **Scripture (2Cor. 4:3-6)**

*If our gospel seems to be veiled at all, it is so to those on their way to destruction, the unbelievers whose minds have been blinded by the god of this world, so that they cannot see shining the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. It is not ourselves that we are proclaiming, but Christ Jesus as the Lord. It is God who said ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ that has shone into our hearts to enlighten them with the knowledge of God’s glory, the glory on the face of Christ.*