

# THE HOLY EUCHARIST

## January 6, 2004

### Feast of the Epiphany<sup>1</sup>

#### THE GATHERING

Celebrant: We are created to communicate and share  
all the gifts we have received from God.

We are created to share ourselves ...  
to pour forth everything we possess,  
whether in our bodies or our souls.

~ Meister Eckhart

#### SILENCE

#### CALL TO WORSHIP

Celebrant: Let us celebrate God's glory around us,  
and the light of Christ within us!

Voice 1: Arise, shine, for your light has come,  
and the glory of God has dawned upon us.

Voice 2: For shadows cover the earth,  
and deep gloom enshrouds the peoples.

Voice 1: But over you, God will rise,  
and God's glory will appear upon you.

Voice 2: You are the light of the world.

Celebrant: Then you shall be radiant,  
your hearts shall thrill and rejoice!

All: Christ will be our everlasting light;  
and God will be our glory!

#### A READING      *From Marianne Williamson's A Return to Love*

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing

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<sup>1</sup> Used with permission of Seekers Church in Washington, D.C. Epiphany 2004 Worship Service [<http://www.seekerschurch.org/liturgies/200401.htm>] and Communion Liturgy [<http://www.seekerschurch.org/liturgies/communion2002.htm>]. Adapted by Stephanie Spellers.

enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it is in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.<sup>2</sup>

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**THE GOSPEL:**            *Matthew 2:1-12*

The Holy Gospel of our Savior Jesus Christ, according to Matthew.  
**Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,  
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;  
for from you shall come a ruler  
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

**HOMILY OR COMMUNITY REFLECTION ON THE WORD OF GOD**

**THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**<sup>3</sup>

We pray now for the needs of the church, the world and all those in need, knowing that God is able to bring light to any darkness, and to transfigure any circumstance into a moment for blessing.

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<sup>2</sup> Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love: Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Based on Epiphany prayers in *Celebrate God's Presence: The United Church of Canada's Book of Services* (Etobicoke, Ontario: United Church Publishing House, 2000), 132-134. Adapted, including new responses for leader and people, by Stephanie Spellers.

Gracious God, empower the church throughout the world in its life and witness. Break down the barriers that divide, so that, united in your truth and love, the church may confess your name, share one baptism, sit at one table, and serve you with one accord.

Light of the world.

**Be known to us.**

Guide the rulers of the nations. Move them to set aside their fear, greed, and vain ambition. Inspire them to strive for justice and peace, so that all your children may be free.

Light of the world.

**Be known to us.**

Hear the cries of those who are hungry, homeless and suffering, those near and those far. Give those of us who consume most of the earth's resources the will to reorder our lives, so that all may have their rightful share of food, care, shelter and fullness of life.

Light of the world.

**Be known to us.**

Look with compassion on all who suffer illness and distress, especially those we name now, either silently or aloud. Support them with your love and lead us to be healers to all we encounter, in the name of Christ.

Light of the world.

**Be known to us.**

With thanksgiving, we remember those saints who bore witness to your light. Allow us to persevere in faith, mercy and love and at the end of our lives to behold your glory.

Light of the world.

**Be known to us.**

Celebrant: O God, in your loving purpose, answer our prayers and fulfill our hopes. By your grace, grant us the will and the wisdom to make this world new, and all for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior and our Light. **Amen.**

#### **THE CONFESSION**

Leader: We crouch and hide, afraid to lift up our eyes  
and see the radiance around us.

All: We stumble in the shadows of fears;  
we hold tight to the curtains that block our vision.

Leader: We refuse to discern the light within ourselves,  
or the light within each other.

All: We are dull and tarnished,  
our small flames sputtering and untended.

Celebrant: The people who walked in darkness

have seen a great light.  
We are the light of the world.

All: Amen.

### **THE PEACE**

The peace of Christ be always with you.  
**And also with you.**

*Members of the community greet one another with the sign of peace.*

### **THE HOLY COMMUNION**

Celebrant: We gather now as one body, joined around the table.  
Here we celebrate God's presence among us,  
united in Christ's spirit, broken and whole all at once;

All: Nourished and hungry, loved and loving, sinner and forgiven;  
we make one circle of knowing, believing, rejoicing, being,  
as God lights and rests among us.

Celebrant: This is the table of the Heavenly Feast,  
the joyful celebration of the people of God.  
Christ invites everyone to eat the bread of life,  
to drink the cup of the new covenant.

Voice 1: Jesus said, "I am the bread of life.  
They who come to me shall never hunger;  
they who believe in me shall never thirst."

Voice 2: In the beginning, God provided every plant yielding seed  
and every tree with seed in its fruit for food.

Voice 1: When the Israelites were in the wilderness,  
God fed them with miraculous food.

Voice 2: When the crowds were hungry, Jesus fed over five thousand  
with two fish and five loaves of bread.

All: When two were walking towards Emmaus,  
they recognized the Anointed One as they broke bread together.

Celebrant: On the night of his arrest, Jesus took bread,  
and after giving thanks to God, broke it and said,  
"This is my body which is for you; do this remembering me."

After supper, Jesus took the cup and said,  
"This is the cup of the new covenant;  
whenever you drink it, do this remembering me."

All: God of abundance and mercy,  
We give joyful thanks for your eternal love

and healing presence in our celebration of bread and wine.  
Bless these gifts that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.  
And bless us that we may attend faithfully to our call to be your servants  
with each other and throughout the world.  
Amen.

Celebrant: And now, as our Savior Jesus Christ taught us, we pray ...

All: Eternal Spirit: Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and all that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all, creation resonates  
with celebration of your nameless name.

Let justice and mercy flood the earth;  
let all creation harmonize in your imagination;  
and let us recognize that every thought and thing belongs to you.

With the bread we need for today, feed us;  
in the hurts we absorb from each other  
and those we inflict on others, forgive us;  
in times of test and temptation, stand with us;  
from the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you alone are creating our universe, now and forever.  
Amen.

*The Celebrant breaks the consecrated bread. A period of silence is kept.*

Wise and gracious God, you spread a table before us;  
nourish your people with the word of life and the bread of heaven.<sup>4</sup>  
**Amen.**

*All partake of the meal.*

## **THE BLESSING**

The light has splintered our darkness.  
Let it shine through us as God's gift to the world.  
And may the blessing of God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,  
be with you and remain with you, this day and forever.  
**Amen.**

## **THE DISMISSAL**

Leader: Go forth into the world rejoicing in the light and power of the Spirit.  
All: Thanks be to God!

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<sup>4</sup> From the Church of England's *Common Worship: Prayers at the Preparation of the Table*  
(<http://www.cofe.anglican.org/worship/liturgy/commonworship/texts/hc/preptable.html>).