

Sermon in poems  
Collected by Judi Geistlinger  
January 2, 2022

Epiphany 2022  
By Judi Geistlinger



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<https://www.wga.hu/frames-e.html?/html/m/memling/1early2/04notri2.html>

Epiphany 2022

We have been journeying towards home for a season now.  
*For some, it is said, you cannot go home again,  
or maybe you cannot go home the same way.*

Each year, we remember a miracle  
a gift  
an inbreaking of God to this very human world.  
God became one of us  
one like us  
to redeem us.

We lit candles not too many days ago  
lifting them high  
singing sweet and low.  
We remembered a baby born to us  
a child given us  
a government upon his shoulders.

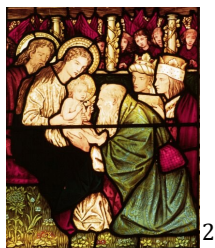
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<sup>1</sup> Adoration of the Magi by Hans Memling c.1470

Encountering this child,  
encountering this Wonderful Counselor  
this Prince of Peace  
has anything changed?

This tiny child terrified a king;  
but for sages steeped in knowledge  
awe was the only and appropriate response.  
They were changed.  
The world was changed.  
These seekers heeded the dream to do something different,  
to go home another way.

What about us?  
Can we keep doing the same thing?  
Or are we called to something new,  
something different?  
a new ministry?  
a new path?  
What has God revealed to us, this Epiphany?



### A Poem for Epiphany<sup>3</sup>

By Kate Compston,  
 O God,  
 who am I now?  
 Once, I was secure  
 in familiar territory  
 in my sense of belonging  
 unquestioning of  
 the norms of my culture  
 the assumptions built into my language  
 the values shared by my society.

But now you have called me out and away from home  
 and I do not know where you are leading.  
 I am empty, unsure, uncomfortable.  
 I have only a beckoning star to follow.

Journeying God,  
 pitch your tent with mine  
 so that I may not become deterred  
 by hardship, strangeness, doubt.  
 Show me the movement I must make  
     toward a wealth not dependent on possessions  
     toward a wisdom not based on books  
     toward a strength not bolstered by might  
     toward a God not confined to heaven  
     but scandalously earthed, poor, unrecognized...

Help me find myself  
 as I walk in others' shoes.

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<sup>2</sup> Adoration of the Magi window by Edward Burne Jones manufactured by William Morris in Trinity Church Saugerties, NY

<sup>3</sup> Kate Compston, England, 1990 from *Bread of Tomorrow: Prayers for the Church Year*.

<https://inthecoracle.org/2019/01/a-poem-for-epiphany/>



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## Epiphany<sup>5</sup> By Shannon Trenton

The Spirit comes in the ordinary, material, everyday.  
 In water.  
 In touch.  
 In names.  
 Tearing open the heavens from time to time,  
 but just as often  
 p·e·e·l·i·n·g back the corner  
 just enough to p·e·e·k  
 “Taste and see” — “sip and glimpse”  
 And then she leaves the corner loose —  
 it doesn’t go back down as tightly as before—  
 so “heaven” keeps spilling out onto ordinary things,  
*revealing* their holiness  
 an everyday Epiphany.  
 Epiphany every day.

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<sup>4</sup> Epiphany by John August Swanson

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.shannontrenton.com/epiphany-poem/> posted 1/20/21



### Isaiah 60:1-6

Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
 and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

<sup>2</sup> For darkness shall cover the earth,  
 and thick darkness the peoples;  
 but the Lord will arise upon you,  
 and his glory will appear over you.

<sup>3</sup> Nations shall come to your light,  
 and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

<sup>4</sup> Lift up your eyes and look around;  
 they all gather together, they come to you;  
 your sons shall come from far away,  
 and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

<sup>5</sup> Then you shall see and be radiant;  
 your heart shall thrill and rejoice,<sup>[a]</sup>  
 because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you,  
 the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

<sup>6</sup> A multitude of camels shall cover you,  
 the young camels of Midian and Ephah;  
 all those from Sheba shall come.  
 They shall bring gold and frankincense,  
 and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

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<sup>6</sup> Heavenly Window by Chapelle Notre-Dame-de-Grace-et-de-Toute-Joie



### Wise Women Also Came<sup>8</sup>

© Jan L. Richardson

Wise women also came.  
 The fire burned  
 in their wombs  
 long before they saw  
 the flaming star  
 in the sky.  
 They walked in shadows,  
 trusting the path  
 would open  
 under the light of the moon.

Wise women also came,  
 seeking no directions,  
 no permission  
 from any king.  
 They came  
 by their own authority,  
 their own desire,

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<sup>7</sup> *Wise Women* © Jan Richardson. janrichardson.com

<sup>8</sup> “wise women also Came” poem from *Night Visions: Searching the Shadows of Advent and Christmas* © Jan richardson. orlando, Fl: wanton gospeller Press, 2010.

their own longing.  
They came in quiet,  
spreading no rumors,  
sparking no fears  
to lead  
to innocents' slaughter,  
to their sister Rachel's  
inconsolable lamentations.

Wise women also came,  
and they brought  
useful gifts:  
water for labor's washing,  
fire for warm illumination,  
a blanket for swaddling.

Wise women also came,  
at least three of them,  
holding Mary in the labor,  
crying out with her  
in the birth pangs,  
breathing ancient blessings  
into her ear.

Wise women also came,  
and they went,  
as wise women always do,  
home a different way.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2008/12/30/inviting-epiphany/>



10

### **Journey of the Magi**

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

A cold coming we had of it,  
 Just the worst time of the year  
 For a journey, and such a long journey:  
 The ways deep and the weather sharp,  
 The very dead of winter.  
 And the camels galled, sore-footed, refractory,  
 Lying down in the melting snow.  
 There were times when we regretted  
 The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
 And the silken girls bringing sherbet.  
 Then the camel men cursing and grumbling  
 And running away, and wanting their liquor and women,  
 And the night-fires going out, and the lack of shelters,  
 And the cities dirty and the towns unfriendly  
 And the villages dirty and charging high prices:  
 A hard time we had of it.  
 At the end we preferred to travel all night,  
 Sleeping in snatches,  
 With the voices singing in our ears, saying  
 That this was all folly.

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<sup>10</sup> Rembrandt, Adoration of the Magi (public domain)

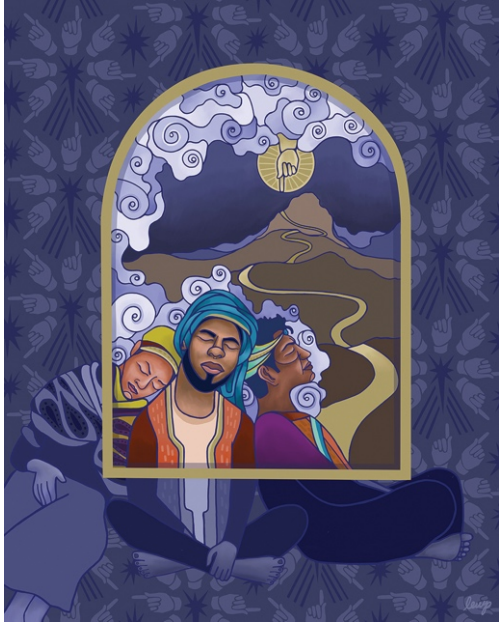


Then at dawn we came down to a temperate valley,  
 Wet, below the snow line, smelling of vegetation;  
 With a running stream and a water mill beating the darkness,  
 And three trees on the low sky,  
 And an old white horse galloped away in the meadow.  
 Then we came to a tavern with vine-leaves over the lintel,  
 Six hands at an open door dicing for pieces of silver,  
 And feet kicking the empty wineskins.  
 But there was no information, and so we continued  
 And arrived at evening, not a moment too soon  
 Finding the place; it was (you may say) satisfactory.

All this was a long time ago, I remember,  
 And I would do it again, but set down  
 This set down  
 This: were we led all that way for  
 Birth or Death? There was a Birth, certainly,  
 We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,  
 But had thought they were different; this Birth was  
 Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.  
 We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,  
 But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,  
 With an alien people clutching their gods.  
 I should be glad of another death.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Journey of the Magi, by T.S. Elliott in Collected Poems, 1909-1962



12

Muscle Memory<sup>13</sup>  
by Rev. Sarah Speed

Going home is a form of muscle memory.  
Start the car.  
Turn on the lights.  
Turn left,  
turn right.  
Pass the big oak tree  
and the empty school yard.  
Look for the house with the light on.  
Look for the house with the open door.  
Look for the house that says, “Welcome home.”  
You’ll know when you’ve arrived—  
that’s the thing about muscle memory.

But I am learning things of love,  
and home is not home unless all are welcomed,  
and muscle memory is not justice unless all are safe.  
So I’m asking—  
can we start the car

<sup>12</sup> Wise Men’s Dreams by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

<sup>13</sup> Prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

and get totally lost  
chasing what is right  
far off on the horizon?

Can we drive off the road  
and get a flat tire  
if it means paving the way  
for justice and truth?

Can we circle the trees  
and miss the school yard completely  
if this new way home  
includes space for grace?

Can we waste our time  
driving in circles  
if it gives us time  
to add people to the car?

I am learning,  
muscle memory and faith  
are not one and the same.

So I am asking,  
Will you start the car?  
Will you turn on the lights?  
Will you take a deep breath?

It might be time to get lost.  
It might be time to find a new way home.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org