

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

January 28, 2024

Gathering Hymn: "We three kings," verses 2-4

Hymnal #128

**2. Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
gold I bring to crown him again,
King forever, ceasing never,
over us all to reign. [Refrain]**

***Refrain: O star of wonder, star of light,
star with royal beauty bright,
westward leading, still proceeding,
guide us to thy perfect light.***

**3. Frankincense to offer have I;
incense owns a Deity nigh;
prayer and praising gladly raising,
worship him, God Most high. [Refrain]**

**4. Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
breathes a life of gathering gloom;
sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
sealed in the stone-cold tomb. [Refrain]**

The Confession & Absolution

Officiant

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to set forth God's praise, to hear the holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind for worship, let us with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins against God and our neighbors.

A substantial silence for reflection is kept.

Officiant You raise the dead to life in the Spirit:
 Lord, have mercy.

People **Lord, have mercy.**

Officiant You bring pardon and peace to the broken in heart:
Christ, have mercy.

People **Christ, have mercy.**

Officiant You make one by your Spirit the torn and divided:
Lord, have mercy.

People **Lord, have mercy.**

Officiant May the almighty and merciful God grant us pardon and remission of all our
sins, renewal of life, and the grace and comfort of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The Invitatory and Psalter

Officiant Lord, open our lips.

People **And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.**
Glory to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

Officiant Rise, O shine, for your light has come! For, look, darkness covers the earth, and
gloom enshrouds the peoples; but the glory of the LORD has dawned upon us.

Song of Faith: Psalm III

Alleluia! I will give thanks to you, O God, with my whole heart,*
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

Great are your deeds, O God; *
they are studied by all who delight in them.

Your work is full of majesty and splendor,*
and your righteousness endures for ever.

You make your marvelous works to be remembered;*
you are gracious and full of compassion.

You give food to those who fear you;*
you are ever mindful of your covenant.

You have shown your people the power of your works *
in giving them the lands of the nations.

The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice;*
all your commandments are sure.

They stand fast for ever and ever,*
because they are done in truth and equity.

You sent redemption to your people; you commanded your covenant for ever;*
holy and awesome is your Name.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom;*
those who act accordingly have a good understanding;
God's praise endures for ever.

Glory to the holy and undivided Trinity, one God;
As it was in the beginning, is now and will be forever. Amen.

The Epiphany Pageant

PARTS

MARY (*possibly with a baby doll or stuffed animal for Jesus*)

JOSEPH

GOLDIE

FRANK

MERISSA

READER (Mt 2:1-2. 8-11):

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Magi came from the east. They asked, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We’ve seen his star in the east, and we’ve come to honor him.” King Herod sent them to Bethlehem, so they set out; and look, the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, a sign of wealth and status; frankincense, a sign of religious authority and leadership; and myrrh, which was used to treat wounds and also to help preserve dead bodies.

JOSEPH We definitely need diapers.

MARY And some bigger clothes. He’s growing fast.

JOSEPH Can’t you get those at the thrift store? Stuff is so expensive here.

MARY Let’s just look, while we’re here? We need some more applesauce pouches, too.

JOSEPH Okay, okay. I don’t know why he can’t just eat applesauce with a spoon. He’s almost two.

GOLDIE Oh! Oh, LOOK at that baby. He’s JUST DARLING.

MARY Thank you so much!

GOLDIE (*effusive*) Honestly, my DEAR, he’s simply the CUTEST I’ve ever seen. His little *cheeks*! His beautiful eyes! Oh, but his shirt is all stained!

JOSEPH Yeah, you know, it’s hard to keep babies clean....

GOLDIE Well, I’ll buy him some new things. I’ll be his special Aunt Goldie - that’s my name, Goldie Richards - and I’ll just get him a few little things. A child like that needs the best of everything. No expense spared for this special little guy. I think I just walked past a bluetooth-enabled baby swing... and I know I saw a smart bassinet for only \$1700....

MARY That’s very kind, but he’s far too old for baby swings and bassinets.

GOLDIE Oh, of COURSE he is, he’s a GREAT BIG BOY, isn’t he? So handsome! So strong! I know what he needs. How about the Flybar Blaster Bumper Powered Ride-On Car? That’s only

\$300. Or the Powered Pony Ride-On Toy, for just \$500! He'll love that. He simply has to have one!

MARY You're very kind but we really can't accept...

JOSEPH (*interrupting*) Could you maybe just help us with some diapers?

GOLDIE (*not listening*) Or they have the most gorgeous rainbow arc play set made of 100% vegan leather with a cushy, solid foam interior.

MARY He does like bright colors...

GOLDIE Oh, it's not bright colors, dear; that wouldn't match your decor. It's all in lovely muted shades of beige. But it's only \$319; I'll throw it in. I'll meet you at the checkout! I hope you've got a nice large vehicle... Toodle-oo!

JOSEPH What just happened?

FRANK Hello hello! What have we here! A young family and a very, very fine young man!

JOSEPH Yes, we like him.

FRANK It's not a matter of liking, my friend; it's a matter of recognizing *quality* and *potential*. My name's Frank - Frank Incense - and this kid is going places. I can see it already. He's going to be somebody really important. Maybe a senator... or a CEO... or both!

MARY Lord, have mercy!

FRANK Or... an influencer! That's where the money is these days. Those are the real movers and shakers. But the kid needs the look. They've got some suits back in the kids' clothing section - jacket and pants in a nice navy blue - I'll run back and grab one. Maybe a red tie...

JOSEPH He's two; he doesn't wear suits.

FRANK It's never too early to start dressing for the job you want! What about a computer? Does he have a computer?

JOSEPH I don't have a computer.

FRANK I'll pick up him up a starter. They have a 14 inch Lenovo for \$200. And a cell phone - you've got to have a cell phone, these days. Hmm, what else? They sell a decent ring light over in the tech section... that'll be useful when he starts building his brand online. I'll just grab a few things and meet you at the checkout! Ciao!!

MARY (Sighs) Let's just find the diapers and get out of here.

JOSEPH Okay. The applesauce pouches should be over this way...

MERISSA OOOOOH! OOOOH... that BABY....That CHILD. May I touch him? I MUST touch him.

MARY Uh, we don't usually let strangers touch...

MERISSA His ENERGY... it's just so intense. So POWERFUL.And yet... clouded.There's a - a shadow, a negativity.What's his astrological sign?

JOSEPH I couldn't tell you.

MERISSA Maybe some energy work, to cleanse his aura. My name is Merissa, I'm a certified practitioner... I could do it for you for a discounted rate - no, for free; he's very special, I can tell.That's why he's attracting this negative energy - because his energy is so powerful and pure -

MARY You're very kind, but we need to finish our shopping. He'll start getting fussy soon.

MERISSA Wait - let me do a quick tarot reading. Just one card - just a glimpse of his future path... *Pulls out card. Looks dismayed...* Oh. Oh, dear.

JOSEPH Does that card say ... DEATH?

MERISSA Well, that IS the Death card, but that doesn't necessarily mean LITERAL death.Typically it implies an end, like the end of a relationship or a chapter in life... which can be very freeing... also death can mean renewal, and new life... so it could be GOOD, really...

JOSEPH Listen, you're upsetting my wife.We're going to keep shopping, OK?

MERISSA Shopping - yes - this place isn't ideal but they have some things that would help. I think I saw some crystals... and they carry a good acai berry cleanse...

MARY We are not giving our baby a cleanse.

MERISSA At least let me buy you some organic snacks. He needs to be very pure, very natural, to follow his path, I can tell.You can't contaminate his precious body with chemicals...

JOSEPH We could use a box of diapers...

MERISSA Oh, no, you don't want diapers on him.All that plastic and artificial gel next to his perfect skin! But they've got some good scented candles over there... there's a nice Ashwood and Palo Santo... I'll just pick up a few things and meet you at the checkout, OK? Byeee!

JOSEPH Well, that was all a load of nonsense.

MARY It was. And yet... I wonder. I do think things will be hard for him, somehow.And I do think he'll grow up to be someone who matters. But not a CEO or a politician...

JOSEPH An influencer?

MARY Maybe.

JOSEPH Don't worry about it right now, Mary. He's got plenty of time to grow up. Right now he's just our baby boy.

MARY Yes. Let's just buy some diapers and applesauce, and go home.

Shared Reflection

The Prayers

Officiant We now continue in prayer. You may wish to bow your head, open your hands, or prepare your body for prayer in some other way.

Officiant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Officiant Now, let us pray as God's beloved children, using the prayer Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

The Prayers of the People

Send prayer requests to to prayers@stdunstans.com.

Officiant Let us continue in prayer. We will hold up our needs and blessings to God. You can speak your prayers out loud, type them into the Chat area, or hold them in your heart. As you are able, please hold others' prayer requests before God in your heart as well.

Officiant Let us pray for all churches and their leaders, and for all God's people everywhere.
The people may offer their prayers aloud.

Officiant Let us pray for all those in authority.
The people may offer their prayers aloud.

Officiant Let us pray for all nations and peoples.
The people may offer their prayers aloud.

- Officiant* Let us pray for the earth and the whole created order.
The people may offer their prayers aloud.
- Officiant* Let us pray for our local communities.
The people may offer their prayers aloud.
- Officiant* Let us pray for those in any need or trouble, especially those on our parish prayer list:
.... You are invited to name others in need of prayer, and to hold up your own struggles
to the light of God's love.
The people may offer additional names.
- Officiant* Let us pray for all who have died, and for those who mourn.
The people may offer additional names.
- Officiant* Let us pray for our common life and work as God's people.
The people may offer their prayers aloud.

The Collect of the Day

Officiant

Let us pray. Radiant Morning Star, you are both guidance and mystery. Visit our rest with disturbing dreams, and our journeys with strange companions. Grace us with the hospitality to open our hearts and homes to visitors filled with unfamiliar wisdom bearing profound and unusual gifts. **Amen.**

The Officiant may read one of the following Collects as well:

A Collect for Peace

O God, it is your will to hold both heaven and earth in a single peace. Let the design of your great love shine on the waste of our wraths and sorrows, and give peace to your Church, peace among nations, peace in our homes, and peace in our hearts. **Amen.**

A Collect for Grace

Lord God, almighty and everlasting One, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A Collect for Guidance

Loving Creator, in you we live and move and have our being: We humbly pray you so to guide and govern us by your Holy Spirit, that in all the cares and occupations of our life we may not forget you, but may remember that we are ever walking in your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Sharing of Blessings

Officiant Does anyone have any blessings or celebrations to share with the assembly today?

The Peace

Officiant The peace of the Lord be always with you!

All **And also with you!**
Officiant Let us speak Christ's peace to one another. ...

Announcements

The Blessing & Dismissal

Officiant May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ shine in our hearts and fill our lives with joy and peace; and the blessing of God Almighty, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, be upon you and remain with you always. **Amen!**

Officiant Let us bless the Lord.
People **Thanks be to God!**