

St Augustine and St Mary's: Reflection and Prayers offered this week by Claire.

The Epiphany: Matthew 2.1-12 (Psalm 72. 10-15; Isa 60.1-6)

Personal Journal Entry – Christmas Day 2020: The Redwings have returned! I've looked for them all winter ... all the long dark days of Advent. Thinking maybe tomorrow ... they have been faithful in previous years – coming as Her presence to herald the Advent wait – guides to abide, to love – companions of grace.

But this year they were absent – I checked: have they not arrived yet in the UK? Yes, in some parts but absent from me – maybe I don't need them this year. Maybe I don't need a sign, a sign of your presence, your abiding, your being with. Maybe I had given up looking!

But then ... you caught my eye – 'No!' I raced for my binoculars ... there, there you are on Christmas Morn – all the more joyful for your absence! But you have come ... come now as you promised! The tears they fell. Oh, Tidings of Comfort and Joy, Comfort and Joy! Oh, Tidings of Comfort and Joy! (Claire Dawson).



The Redwings capture for me something of the joy and hope of Christmas and the Epiphany seasons. For those who have not a clue what I am talking about? The Redwing is a small thrush like bird with a white dart above its eye and red under its wings hence the name: Redwing. They migrate from Scandinavia and spend winter in the UK. Their coming heralds the coming of the light ... they have travelled 100's of miles to be present, just as the Magi travelled and journeyed to seek the One. The beating heart of the Redwing ... so fragile yet also so strong ... can also be found in the frailness and strength of the tiny baby, in which the hope of the world is made manifest.

Brightest and best
Of the suns of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness
And lend us thine aid;
Star of the east,
The horizon adorning,
Guid where our infant
Redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle
The dew drops are shining;
Low lies his head
with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him
in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch
And Saviour of all.

Epiphany celebrates the revelation of God to the world in Jesus Christ, in word and deed. We explore the implications of the Word becoming flesh 'and dwelt among us; lived among us; made his home among us; made his dwelling among us; pitched his tents among us' as various bible translations would tell us. These are all adjectives, active words reminding us of the activity of God in the world and also the continuousness of His revelation to us: the incarnation is not just a one-off event but is continually happening and revealing himself.

How we become active in the world is therefore an important message of Epiphany and is hugely challenging at this time. A time when we are so aware of the need for God's presence in the world – hope, wisdom, truth, love, healing, peace, reconciliation of Nations! And we look then at ourselves who are feeling vulnerable and wonder how we can make any difference at all in the scheme of things? In our own strength we can do and achieve very little: "when human beings

Vainly we offer
Each humble oblation,
Vainly with gifts
Would his favour secure:
Richer by far
Is the heart's adoration,
Dearer to God
Are the prayers of the poor.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

have finished, they are just beginning" (Sirach. 18.7). When we come to the end of all our resources then God can begin to reshape and mend us, heal us and restore us.

The Christian faith holds a great deal of truth and revelation for us, particular in this season: the season of the world pandemic; and the season of the Church and God's Epiphany. They are not unconnected from each other. It is as we uncover and become the partakers of God's revelation in the world that the mystery of the incarnation is truly made manifest. Asking ourselves the question of how do we show up in the world, both as individuals and also as church communities are important questions for us to consider. How can we live out our faith and respond to the Holy Spirit as She beckons us out into the world?

If we think of the Redwing and how she captures so much of the fragileness, but also the courage and strength and perseverance necessary for this Season. And how we can imagine holding her and feeling her small beating heart; how we can imagine holding the infant Christ child and feeling his heart. The necessity of our weak human hands to hold and nurture this light out into the world. The task we have is to take courage and to push open the stable door that we may carry the light out into the world.

Collect for Epiphany

*Creator of the Heavens
Who led the Magi by a star
To worship the Christ-child:
Guide and sustain us
That we may find our journeys end
In Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

***St Mary's social supermarket requires:
Cooking oil; instant coffee; UHT milk &
toilet rolls. Items can be left at St Mary's
Church reception – Thank you!***

When the song of the angels is stilled
When the star in the sky is gone
When the kings and princes are home
When the shepherds are back with their flocks
The work of Christmas begins:
 To find the lost
 To feed the hungry
 To release the prisoner
 To rebuild the nations
 To bring peace among people
And to make music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of our friend Sue Green. Sue had worked at St Mary's for nearly 20 years and we will miss her. Our prayers go to her partner Mary. We hope to be able to have some kind of memorial service is due course.

We have decided to close for public worship until it is safe to resume. Weekly reflective sheets will be sent out and a zoom service at 10.30am on Sunday mornings.

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