

Spiritual Readings for the month of January 2022

Please choose a reading and questions for reflection.

The Epiphany

Gospel: (Matthew 2:1-12)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, “Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.” When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. ...Herod sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search diligently for the child...” After their audience with the King, they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Reflection:

What happens if we would lead our life as if the star stopped on us? The answer to this question is most startling when we consider the gospel as a whole: what it means and what happens is that the only way to light and life is to die to self so that darkness can be overcome. Life has its sorrows and sufferings. It also has its joys and celebrations: the mystery of salvation has been revealed in Jesus. And in us.

Vincentian Meditation:

The Magi were searchers. They traveled by night, following a star, moving like pilgrims, struggling through deserts. That is so often the human way. Most of us grope in the darkness most of our lives. The wise men’s search revealed to them how closely light and darkness, birth and death, joy and sorrow, belief and unbelief are interlocked. It is crucial for us to recognize ourselves as searchers, as did the Magi. Our life is a journey; in which we often travel by night. In fact, the Lord’s star is visible for us only when we acknowledge the darkness. Life holds so many unanswered questions, so many unfulfilled desires. Our hearts find ultimate fulfillment only in God, whom we search for during the entire course of our lives. This is what the Magi proclaim to us very clearly.

Discussion: (Share your thoughts after a moment of silence) How has the Lord’s star been visible to you in times of questioning and darkness?

Closing Prayer

O Lord, bring light to the darkness as we search for you, let your light shine upon us.
As the star guided the Magi, may we be guided by your light and grace.
May we, like the Magi, offer you our gifts each day, as we discover you in the midst of our lives.
Amen

Vincentian Reflections – SVdPUSA

St. Vincent de Paul's Spirituality

Gospel: (Luke 4: 16-19)

Jesus came to Nazareth where he had been reared, and entering the synagogue on the sabbath as he was in the habit of doing, he stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "*The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore, he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good tidings of joy to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord.*" Rolling up the scroll he gave it back to the assistant and sat down. All in the synagogue had their eyes fixed on him. Then he began by saying to them, "*Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing.*"

Reflection:

"Vincent makes a clear explicit choice: 'All aim at loving him, but they love him in different ways: Carthusians by solitude; Capuchins by poverty; others, again, by singing his praises. But we are bound to show it by leading the people to love God and their neighbor.' The vision Vincent offers is not one of Christ as teacher, nor as healer, nor as "perfect adorer of the Father (the vision of Berulle), nor "perfect image of the divinity" (the vision of Francis de Sales), but of *Evangelizer of the poor*. Vincent's disciples are called to enter into the following of Christ in the very terms with which, in Luke's gospel, Jesus opens his public ministry: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings of joy to the poor...' In Luke's perspective, a new age is dawning. Jesus announces the good news of the kingdom to all, but especially to the poor, the weak, the lowly, the outcasts of the world."

Vincentian Meditation:

"St. Vincent's spirituality flows from his contemplation of *this Christ*. The driving force that generates both the incredible activity and the gentle contemplation of this great saint is his vision of the *Evangelizer of the Poor*. He encourages his followers to contemplate this Christ again and again. "O how happy they will be who can repeat at the hour of their death those beautiful words of Our Lord: 'He sent me to bring good news to the poor.'" (Maloney, *The Way of St. Vincent de Paul*, p.23-24)

Discussion: In what ways do you "bring good news to the poor?"

Closing Prayer:

Gentle God, renew in us the spirit of our patron St. Vincent de Paul, kindle in us the fire of your love.
Tender God, show us how to weep with those who weep, fill our hearts with compassion and love.
Creator God, you call women and men to be Vincentians,
give us eyes to see Christ in the broken and those who are poor. Amen.