



CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Epiphany Sunday, January 3, 2021

The Greatest Conjunction Matthew 2:1-12

2:1 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,

2:2 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."

2:3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;

2:4 and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

2:5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

2:6 '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.'"

2:7 Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

2:8 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."

2:9 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.

2:10 When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

2:11 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.

2:12 And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

The “Great Conjunction” also called the “Christmas Star” was on December 21, 2020 and still visible in many parts of the world for some days afterward. On this day, Jupiter and Saturn came closest together than they have in 400 years. It is predicted that it will not occur again until March 15, 2080. Some have speculated that this could have been the heavenly phenomenon which led the magi to the Christ child. Whether it was or not is less important. The “great conjunction” of more importance is the coming together of the magi’s search and the Christ child’s glory. When that “great conjunction” happened, it was time to celebrate! And celebrate the magi did—kneeling down and offering their gifts.

2020 has been darker than a hundred midnights for so many. Many have found themselves searching for answers, cures, comfort, peace, and reassurance. Others have been searching for purpose, work, security, and justice. Their journeys may be long. The nights may be cold.

We have a tendency to rush to December 25th. We put all our energy into Christmas Day and abandon the twelve days of the Christmas Season. The wise men journeyed and searched; they got there to Jesus and his parents a good time after his birth; but, despite the length of time and the delay, they got there and they encountered the light of Christ and God’s great glory.

Did you find in 2020 that for which you were searching? Do not give up! Search, seek, follow God’s call even in 2021. Epiphany comes on January 6th liturgically. It reminds us that God’s revelation does come. It may not come when we want it or how we want it or through whom we expect it. Yet God is faithful to answer and reveal. The revelation of Christ meets and answers our search and longing. This is the greatest conjunction! This is reason to be overwhelmed with joy!

TALK: Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)—Reflecting on the scripture. For what are you searching? What epiphany or revelation are you seeking?

PRAY:

Lord of All Nations,

We longed to see your face, to hear your voice, to perceive your presence. We kept the faith, and reached out in prayer; but, too often, we failed to find you. And then, one day in time, you placed yourself within reach in the person of a child as vulnerable as any of us. King and peasant beheld you—man and woman, slave and free, Jew and Gentile, for you had come for all. “Epiphany,” we called it. A living manifestation of the God we call upon. We have since known other epiphanies. We have met you in the faces of our brothers, the grace of our sisters, the hand that reaches out, the heart that weeps for the other, in the strength of one who protects, in the gentleness of one who forgives. We have seen your face. We have heard your voice. We have perceived your presence. As broken as we are, as scared and hollowed and sinful, may others see something of you in us. May they hear the sound of your voice. May you be revealed to all nations, all peoples on earth, and may epiphanies abound. Be born in us, O Lord. AMEN

Adapted from: <https://www.crs.org/resource-center/one-day-time-prayer-epiphany>

ACT:

1. Based on your reflections from the TALK section, find one concrete way to begin or continue your search for revelation in 2021. This Christmastide and Season after the Epiphany, do what you can; help others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, and wearing face covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

3. Advent/Christmas Daily Devotional from the AME, AMEZ, and CME Departments of Christian Education (Kindle version):

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B08M6FGLHC?pf_rd_r=VVMNB09AMKMDNH1EDGJS&pf_rd_p=40eb7df6-3345-4945-93b1-96c5bd9a116d

4. Check out the liturgical color calendar: <https://ameced.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Liturgical-Colors-2021.pdf>

Song:

Fairest Lord Jesus
AMEC Hymnal, #95

1. Fair-est Lord Je-sus, Rul-er of all na-ture,
O Thou of God and man the Son,
Thee will I cher-ish,
Thee will I hon-or,
Thou, my soul's glo-ry, joy, and crown.
2. Fair are the mead-ows,
Fair-er still the wood-lands,
Robed in the bloom-ing garb of spring:
Je-sus is fair-er,
Je-sus is pur-er,
Who makes the woe-ful heart to sing.
3. Fair is the sun-shine, Fair-er still the moon-light,
And all the twink-ling star-ry host:
Je-sus shines bright-er,
Je-sus shines pur-er,
Than all the an-gels heaven can boast.
4. Beau-ti-ful Sav-ior!
Lord of the na-tions!
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glo-ry and hon-or,

Praise, ad-o-ra-tion,
Now and for-ev-er-more be Thine! Amen.

Alternative Arrangement: Fairest Lord Jesus: <https://youtu.be/EIDYW1OZfMk>

Alternative Song: *Behold the Star* performed by Tuskegee Institute Choir arranged and conducted by William Dalton: https://youtu.be/QTy_vNJzeg4

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place an Advent wreath (with the Christ candle in the middle), bible, and special symbols or material/fabric (white or gold would be appropriate) to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.