



**Jeremiah 31:7-14; John 1:1-5.10-14
Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (January 5, 2025)**

The longest night of the year has passed, but while the light is increasing, it remains so incremental it appears as though the darkness outside is stubborn and persistent: it can surely influence our mood since it looks like it is prevailing. Doesn't life at times feel like a long stream of bad news? From politics to the economy, from personal health to affordable housing, from the destruction and displacement caused by war to climate catastrophes, the outlook can be quite depressing. No wonder we feel emotionally discouraged and depleted. There seems to be not enough beauty and good news in the world to balance the onslaught of negativity.

In such moments, it is easy to mourn and lament, to cry and despair. In those moments, we fear for our children and their children. We fail to find words of encouragement and hope as we wonder what kind of world they'll be living in. Sometimes, the light at the end of the tunnel seems so far away and so small, and the darkness can feel overwhelming and oppressive. One wonders where one can find breathing space and hope and be renewed.

In a world of darkness there is good news: Light is available. One doesn't need to turn it on. It's already on because God is Light.

God's Light is available to all and is in us all! It might be dimmed and in need of liberation and fresh expression: impediments need to be removed for the light to come through. Spending time in nature, becoming aware of the beauty of creation, being open to awe, wonderment, meditation, silent retreats, contemplative prayer: all these things reconnect us with our center, where Light resides. We are not the Source of Light. We simply reflect the Light.¹ What is lived inside is a treasure to be enjoyed and shared with the world outside.

Maintaining a sense of awe and curiosity connects us with the desire to love. Somebody said: **“Wonder is the wellspring of love...Wonder is where love begins, but the failure to wonder is the beginning of violence.”**² A dark world is a world without love, where Truth is ignored, abused, manipulated, and misconstrued, and the relationships among people and with the rest of the creatures of the world are exploited and damaged.

When Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” he meant for us to befriend that light, let it illumine our inner self and live accordingly.³

Jesus pointed to that truth when he said: **“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid.”**⁴ A spark of that Light, a ray of that Light is in us from birth. Look inside yourself. Can you see it? Does it bring a smile to your face? Then, bring that smile to the world. Mirror to the world the Light that you see, the Joy that you feel.

¹ John 1:6-9

² Valerie Kaur, See No Stranger, 10-11

³ John 12:13

⁴ Matthews 5:13-14; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Peter 2:9

The incarnation of the Word was not God's Plan B after creation went sour. Christ didn't come to fix what was broken. Christ came to complete God's creation. The incarnation was already part of God's creative plan. With it, God intended for the world to see what God had in mind and where the world was heading. With the incarnation God gave us have an opportunity to collaborate with God as friends in the shaping of something beautiful. Incarnation, redemption, and sanctification are all part of God's creative plan.

The epiphany reveals a God who wants to connect with us in a deep and meaningful way, and for that purpose God is ready to become vulnerable, inclusive, generous, patient, hopeful, respectful.

After looking at what we have done with the creation God has entrusted to us, God seems to say: "I am surprised at what you understood of what I meant. What you are doing is not exactly what I had in mind. I wouldn't do what you did with what I gave you. I accept what you can give now and am willing to wait for you to find healthier ways to express yourself. I cry when I see pain and tragedy, and can't wait for you to change course and repair the broken relationships."

I bet the people who saw the destruction of Jerusalem, those who were stolen from their land, forced into exile to Babylon, and lived as strangers in a strange land were not in their skin when they heard Jeremiah reveal to them God's comforting words. Through the prophet, the Lord encouraged the people to sing aloud, shout, proclaim, give praise, and pray for their redemption from a foreign conqueror and for their salvation and return from a distant land.

But what would be the motivation for their exuberant behavior? Why should they respond in such a jubilant way?

God quickly announced: “See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth” the blind, the lame, the pregnant, the young and the old, the desolate and the vulnerable, the scorned and the abused: all the ignored and marginalized shall return home and will have their hopes restored. The Lord will protect and guide the people like a shepherd the flock. The hard road back will feel like a smooth and safe path until they reach Zion where a great feast of abundance will await them. “And they shall be radiant over the goodness of the Lord.” They will know that the Lord fulfills promises.

God is going to do that with all of us: there is a home that awaits us⁵ and the beginning of the journey toward it starts in our heart.

The word epiphany means “reveal.” This festival celebrates that, in Jesus, God is revealed to all people. In Jesus, God is revealed to all nations, all peoples of all sorts.⁶

With the Feast of the Epiphany the Church celebrates the truth that God is the source of Light and in God’s Light our eyes are opened. We see reality as it is.⁷ In God’s Light we see the truth and the truth makes us free.⁸ That truth is the Light of the world.⁹ Let’s return to that Light.

Amen.

⁵ John 14:2

⁶ Isaiah 51:4

⁷ Psalm 36:9

⁸ John 8:31-32

⁹ John 1:4-5; 8:12