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Our Lady Queen of Peace

As we consider the three Magi gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, I ask us to consider three gospel gifts of light, homage, and hope.

### Light

My brother and sister-in-law have done a pretty good job of decorating my nephew Tommy's bedroom. In fact, they have involved him a good deal in the project. There is the Wiggle's poster with all of its primary colors and the zoo animal theme. As he ages, there is a growing number of techno-toys: a radio and microphone player. There are a few religious images: the cross and a statue of Baby Jesus' Mommy. There is even a few pictures of his favorite people. And, the all time highlight: A big boy bed built as a race car! But, Tommy's favorite thing in his room is none of these. It is a simple \$1.99 light bulb that plugs into his wall. It is his night light, and he can't live without it.

Neither can we.

This is the heart of today's feast: Light pokes through the darkness, and our lives are changed.

Isaiah could not be clearer:

“Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Your heart shall throb and overflow.”

The darkness of the Israelites was strong and thick. This prophecy comes to them as they are returning to the land from which they had been exiled. They didn't know what they were going back to. They were tired of their slavery, and they are angry at their captivity. But there was hope in their hearts from their freedom. This gave them light. And the light led them.

The Israelites hated and feared the darkness of their lives, and Isaiah assured them of the light. Four-year-old Tommy is afraid of the dark, and his parents plugged in a night light. We live in some darkness, and our God gives us the light that is Christ.

We fear the darkness of failure. The doubts of our futures. We fear aging or death or the break-up or the brokenness of our relationships. We are traumatized by the war and poverty. We are crippled by our insecurities, our depressions, and the difficulties of our daily lives.

Yes, darkness frightens us, but we know that the sun will rise and the fears will not be permanent. And, in the darkness there is some light shining for us. Let us turn to poetry.

## **WINTER SUNSET by Jennifer Lynn Woodruff**

The sky is blue and rose tonight  
The clouds paint trails across the sun  
The dark comes swiftly down the road  
And all the day is left undone.

These are the colors that I claimed  
The blue for darkness, pain, and loss  
The rose for joys as yet unborn  
And blossoming at countless cost;

These are the choices that we make  
Here in the shadow of the night  
To know our ambiguity  
And yet to live into the light

Not know when the light will come  
Nor what will blossom from the pain  
Of roads that cannot be gone down  
And days that will not come again.

This last stanza frames well our effort to make Christmas and Epiphany daily events. We want the night light, we want the pain and fear of the darkness to end, for we see better in the light.

The good news of this feast is that light does come to us. But darkness does not entirely disappear. Jesus is present to us, yet so are the challenges and pains of our lives. They just don't dominate us, blind us, prevent us from moving on.

The Magi moved on by following the light. It had to be challenging. Fighting, conflicts, hardships. Yet, they kept on going to do homage to Jesus.

### Homage

Homage comes for the word for human and humble.

Our patron, St. Francis de Sales speaks well to homage in his advice on humility. "Honors, dignities, and rank are like saffron, which thrives best and grows most plentifully when trodden under foot. It is no honor to be handsome if a man prizes himself for it; if beauty is to have good grace, it should be unstudied. Learning dishonors us when it inflates our minds and degenerates into mere pedantry. If we are demanding about rank, place, and title, then we not only expose our qualities to examination, judgment, and condemnation but make all of them base and contemptible. Just as honor is an excellent thing, when given to us freely, so also it becomes base when demanded, sought after, and asked for" (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, Part III, Chapter 4).

In our journeys and walking through life, we see Christ, we meet Christ. We experience Christ presence within us. What's more, we see it in others.

To do homage these days is to give honor. The honor that is ours because we are all human. Wonderfully human. Like Jesus and Mary and Joseph, the homeless holy family. How can we give homage to people who live in our house, the White House, a crack house, the house next door, no house, or the house that crumbled in the wake of a hurricane or tsunami. Every last human deserves our homage and needs it. We are called to incense them, for they have the divinity of Christ within them. So do we.

### Hope

Very simply, the journey that we travel—like the journey of the Magi—is a rough rode. We get lost, we might dislike or even divorce our traveling partners one way or another. Sometimes we even take alternate routes or change courses, and this is fine with the Lord. So long as we keep on moving toward the light. The Magi's destination was not the manger. This was just a stop along the way that changed their lives, for they went home a different way.

Our destination is home. We make many stops along the way. We get detoured tremendously. Today, we rejoice for we have sufficient light, the light of Christ, to guide us. What's more, we have the confidence that we are worthy to travel, for God has done us homage in placing divinity before us and within us.

May joy and light of this Christmas season give us hope to live this year the way we shall live our eternal lives: In the presence of God!