

Epiphany Sunday!

Epiphany is January 6th, and this is Epiphany Sunday. At Epiphany we remember the wise men who brought their gifts to the Christ child and worshiped him. Their coming is important because they were from outside the Jewish community, yet they saw the signs of the coming of the Messiah and followed those signs to the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. They were the first to understand that Jesus was the light that came to the whole world and that his coming meant the definition of who God's people are, was changed forever. With the coming of Jesus, God's people include all those who seek Him and follow His star.

A new year always brings a chance to follow Jesus' star anew. Each year starts with the hope of unlimited possibilities and the promise of opportunities to live as Jesus calls us to. Sometimes we lose sight of Jesus' light when pitfalls, challenges, or our own egos get in our way. If we also forget that Jesus came for everyone, and wants us to work together as we seek his light and his peace, we may lose sight of the insights and gifts others can bring to our efforts to follow Jesus. Pray for the gifts of an open mind and a willing heart as you seek to follow the star this year.

Remember in Prayer:

- **Those dealing with winter storms & cold weather** – especially those with no shelter. Remember the west coast which is facing severe flooding & mudslides.
- **Those recovering from other earthquakes** – especially the deadly one in Indonesia. There were 40 earthquakes in the world on Wednesday – 16 of them in the U.S. Most have not been major, but some have caused damage. (U.S. Geological Survey)
- **Iran** –peaceful protests against the extreme Islamic government, & their violent repression continues. At least 516 protestors have been killed & at least 19,000 have been arrested according to human rights groups in Iran. The government will not release official numbers.
- **China** – The government has dropped its COVID rules. Now, new COVID cases & deaths are skyrocketing & overwhelming their medical system. The government is responding by no longer reporting case or death numbers. The possibility of developing new variants with so many new cases is serious.
- **Ukraine where war continues** – attacks against Ukrainian civilians are cutting power, heat, & water in the midst of winter. Many people are trying to survive under very dangerous & difficult conditions.
- **Somalia** – severe food insecurity continues. Drought & violence have displaced millions.
- **Victims of Gun Violence** – Already in January, 437 people have died in gun violence including 18 children. 380 people have been injured including 44 children. 264 of the deaths are suicides. There have already been 8 mass shootings – 5 of them on January 1st. In these mass shootings, 5 people have died & 33 people have been injured. (Gun Violence Archive statistics)
- **The continuing COVID Pandemic & the 'Tripledemic'** (COVID, RSV virus & flu). COVID case numbers are climbing. Cases of RSV have dropped & flu cases are starting to; however, holiday gatherings may cause a surge in all three. New variants, now circulating, are the most contagious yet. 2,500 people (including 90 in Ohio) are dying every day of COVID. The number of cases of strep A infection among children is also growing. **A number of diseases** (measles, polio, etc.) which have been under control or nearly eliminated are back because children are not getting their regular vaccines.



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