

Publication Date: December 31, 2024

Reflection Date: January 5, 2025 - [The Epiphany of the Lord](#)

Overjoyed at the Star

Photo by yavorzhelyazkov via Pixabay

As the Church prepares to celebrate the [Epiphany of the Lord](#), it is worth considering what an epiphany is. This colloquial [definition](#) of epiphany from the Cambridge Dictionary transfixed me: “a moment when you suddenly feel that you understand, or suddenly become conscious of, something that is very important to you; a powerful religious experience.”



The story of the powerful religious experience of the Magi at Bethlehem is so moving. They are “overjoyed” at the appearance of the star and willingly “open their treasures” to offer precious gifts to the babe. The Magis’ experience calls to mind the effect on St. Francis of his famous encounter with lepers, as told in *The Testament* (1226): “And the Lord Himself led me among them and I showed mercy to them. And when I left them, what had seemed bitter to me was turned into sweetness of soul and body. And afterwards I delayed a little and left the world.”

In the case of the Magi as well as that of Francis, the epiphany is an overwhelming sense of the goodness and beauty of God, suddenly manifested not in a magnificent temple but in unpropitious circumstances: a baby born in poverty in a Judean backwater town, people suffering from a disfiguring disease and living as outcasts. But those externals do not matter at all, as the person experiencing the epiphany suddenly sees the divine light beaming forth, permeating our everyday reality.

What also strikes me is that these epiphanies bring about a natural progression; a powerful experience of God’s presence and love leads to an eagerness to give generously back to God. The Magi offer their splendid and impractical gifts (what to give the newborn king who has everything?). While we do not know whether they continued to give after their discreet exit from Herod’s kingdom, T.S. Eliot imagines in [Journey of the Magi](#) that the birth of Jesus affected them profoundly: “We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, but no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, with an alien people clutching their gods.”

We know much more about Francis, who gave up the world he knew and turned over his life to God. This giving manifested itself in a profound life of prayer as well as deep care for the lepers and other marginalized people. Psalm 72, part of the Epiphany readings, says that a wise and just ruler guided by God, “shall rescue the poor when he cries out, and the afflicted when he has

no one to help him. He shall have pity for the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor he shall save.”

When I think back on the small epiphanies I have experienced, this experience rings true. An infilling with the love of God leads naturally and inevitably to an outpouring of love for God and a desire to show love for all that God has created.

As we begin this new year, I pray that each of you will experience such an epiphany and will pour your love forth in many demonstrations of care for all God's people and His wondrous creation. To pray for our country and all who live here as a new U.S. administration and Congress take office, please consider joining me and a wonderful array of speakers at our fourth annual Faith in Democracy Interfaith Prayer Vigil on the feast of the Epiphany, Sunday January 5 at 3:30 pm ET, in person on the National Mall and live streamed. [Register here.](#)

Michele Dunne OFS

FAN Executive Director

Suggested petition:

For the grace to be open to seeing the love and beauty of God in our world and each other, we pray.

For the strength to respond generously to God's love in this new year by showing love for His people and creation, we pray.

Suggested action:

Pull together a group of friends to watch the Jan. 5 Interfaith Prayer Vigil and pray for our country; or join us in person if you are near DC.

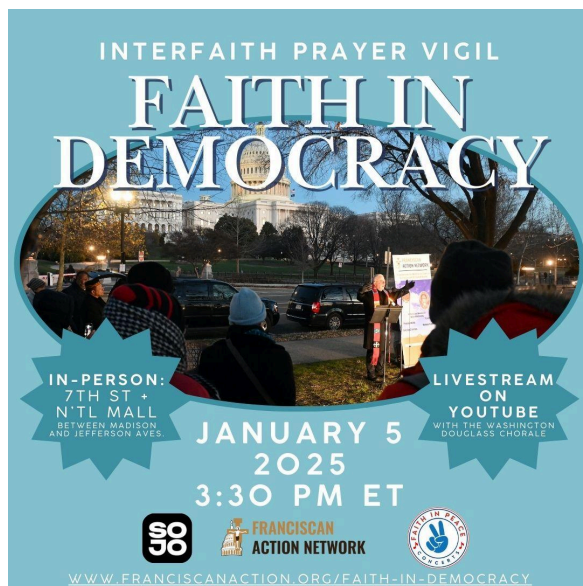
Prayer:

**Lord God of heaven and earth,
you revealed your only-begotten Son to every nation
by the guidance of a star.
Bless this nation and all who inhabit it.
Fill us with the light of Christ,
that our concern for others may reflect your love.
May Christ Jesus dwell with us, keep us from all harm,
and make us one in mind and heart, now and forever.**

Amen.

(Adapted from USCCB, [Blessing of the Home and Household on Epiphany](#))

4th Annual “Faith in Democracy” Interfaith Vigil



On **Sunday, January 5, 2025, at 3:30 pm ET/12:30 pm PT**, join FAN for our **fourth annual "Faith in Democracy" Interfaith Prayer Vigil**, a powerful moment of prayer, reflection, and unity as our newly elected officials take office. This hybrid event, taking place both **in person at the National Mall in front of the US Capitol** and via **livestream**, is a call for peace, democracy, and resolving our differences without violence.

We will be joined by faith leaders and believers who will share sacred texts that highlight the importance of peace and democratic values. Together, we will pray for a future where democracy is upheld and every voice is heard.

We invite you to stand with us, whether in person or virtually, as we pray for a peaceful, inclusive democracy. [Learn more here.](#) **Click below to register.**

Button: [Register here](#)

Save the Date: Urban Heat Island Disparities in Richmond, VA



[Register here](#) for our next environmental justice webinar on **January 15, 2025 at 7 pm ET/4pm PT**. Our event will feature advocates from local organizations, such as Virginia Interfaith Power and Light, speaking on the heat island effects on communities of color and/or low wealth in the Richmond, VA area, what they are doing to mitigate this heating, and how you can help. [Register here to join us!](#)

Make a difference for FAN before the year ends!

As we conclude this Advent season and welcome the New Year, we invite you to join Franciscan Action Network in advancing peace, justice, and nonviolence—guided by the values of St. Francis and St. Clare.

[Button: Donate Today](#)

Your contribution will help us advocate for human dignity, climate justice, and peace. Together, we'll work to advance U.S. public policies rooted in the Gospel and Franciscan values throughout 2025.

Every dollar matters. Thank you for partnering with us to make a difference.



Immigration Information Sheet

FAN staff have put together a sheet with information about mythbusting, knowing your rights, what you can do, and resources regarding immigration. It will be regularly updated as information changes.

BUTTON: [See the document here](#)

Please reach out to [Eileen DeGuire](#) or [Sr. Marie Lucey](#) if you have any more questions!

Racial Justice Circles with the Srs. of St. Francis

The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia's Dismantling Racial Discrimination Committee invites you to join their Racial Justice Circles, a free five-part Zoom series exploring racism and antiracism through education and authentic dialogue.

The sessions will take place on Sundays: January 5, 12, 19, 26, and February 2, 2025, from 5:00–6:30 PM ET / 2:00–3:30 PM PT. Trained facilitators will guide discussions on topics such as the history of racism, bias and privilege, and systemic racism.

DISMANTLING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION COMMITTEE PRESENTS:


Racial Justice Circles: Honest Conversations about Racism

The program consists of five 90-minute Zoom sessions and requires participation in all five sessions.

Sessions will be held from 5-6:30 P.M. EST on January 5, January 12, January 19, January 26, and February 2, 2025.

Sessions will be conducted by trained facilitators.

We want to inspire, educate, and create opportunities for authentic dialogue that will move us to action.



The series will conclude with a call to action to inspire change.

[Register here](#)

Franciscan Justice Circle Updates

In the New Year are you looking for an opportunity that helps you to walk the talk of the gospel message? Our [Franciscan Justice Circles](#) (FJC) are local affinity groups throughout the country in which Franciscan-hearted people come together to deepen their spirituality and channel their values into action for justice, peace, integrity of creation, and human dignity.

There are many FJC gatherings scheduled this month:

Virtual FJC (limited mobility): Thurs. Jan. 2 at 11:00 am PST / 2:00 pm EST over zoom

Cleveland Area FJC: Tues. Jan. 7 at 7:15 pm EST over zoom

Kansas FJC: Tues. Jan. 7 at 7:00 pm CST over zoom

New Mexico FJC: Tues. Jan. 7 at 7:00 pm MST over zoom

Monthly National FJC call: Wed. Jan. 8 at 1:00 pm PST / 4:00 pm EST over zoom

Cincinnati Area FJC: Wed. Jan. 8 at 7:00 pm EST over zoom

Rochester, NY FJC: Thurs. Jan. 9 at 3:30 pm EST over zoom

SoCal FJC: Thurs. Jan. 9 at 6:00 pm PST over zoom

Washington, DC - Area FJC: Sat. Jan. 11 at 10:00 am EST In Person

For information about joining or forming a Franciscan Justice Circle, please contact Nora Pfeiffer at FJCinfo@franciscanaction.org.