

6 Epiphany: February 16, 2014

About the Season after Epiphany

Each of church's two "green seasons," the seasons after Epiphany (January 6 to Ash Wednesday), and Pentecost (The Day of Pentecost to the First Sunday in Advent), begins with a Principal Feast of the Church. They are called "green seasons" because their liturgical color is green and their emphasis is on spiritual growth.

The name Epiphany is inspired by the Greek word "*epiphany*" meaning revelation or showing forth. The Sundays after the Epiphany highlight Christ's revelation as the Savior of the world, and Scripture readings from the lectionary for this season proclaim Jesus Christ as Messiah and Lord for Jews and Gentiles.

The season opens with Feast of the Epiphany (January 6) marking the journey of the Magi to Bethlehem to honor the Christ child. The last Sunday after Epiphany celebrates Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain top where he encounters Moses and Elijah and hears the voice of God. During the season after Epiphany, Christians are called to grow in their understanding of the Baptismal Covenant while promising to "proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ" (BCP, p. 305).

While both seasons emphasize growing in faith, there are distinct differences between Epiphany and Pentecost. Epiphany concentrates on examples of God's self-revelation to people and emphasizes the unique revelation of Jesus Christ as Immanuel, or God with us, for the entire world. Pentecost stresses growth as a follower of Jesus in the "knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ" (*II Peter 3:18*).

About Today's Gospel

When Jesus says, "You have heard it said ... but I say to you ..." it's a safe bet that he's about to turn the status quo upside down. As Gretchen Wolff Prichard explains in today's Sunday Paper, the ancient rabbinic tradition was to "build a fence around the law." We know what this means because our children force us into this process all the time! If we can't play in the living room, can we color in there? Walk through it? Walk through it barefoot? Jesus cuts through all the layers and gets straight to the heart of the matter. "You know the Bible says 'Don't ever kill anyone.' But I say to you, 'Don't hurt anybody, even with words.'" Jesus is demanding that we have a new kind of goodness. He says we must fill our hearts with God's love, so there is no room for hatred, anger and resentment. We must actively practice forgiveness. Sharing God's love is a habit – a habit that will free our hearts for the light of Christ to shine into the deepest, darkest corners.

We've talked a lot in the Family Service this Epiphany about darkness in our hearts. We've said that's where the light of Christ comes to shine, and that's where we are to shine our lights in the world. As parents, we have the opportunity to teach our children love, respect and forgiveness. Not with any lesson plan, but with what we demonstrate in our own actions. [Here's an extreme example](#) I saw this week on the internet.