

Serving Berlin's English-speaking Catholic Community since 1957



Catholic Community

Member of the English-Speaking Mission

Youth Mass: 1st Friday at TBD in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel

Sundays at 10 a.m. in the main Sanctuary

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Office Hours: Mondays and Thursdays 10:00-12:00

January 3rd, 2020, The Epiphany of the Lord

Welcome to our 10 am Mass at All Saints. Our Celebrant today is Fr. Sylvester Ajunwa

- Music: Johannes Wrembek, Benilda de la Cruz, Anna Dziechciarz, Johannes Ploog, Ryan Quiming
- Lector: Johannes Ploog • Greeter: Heide Doblhofer • Altar Servers: Michael Oshin •
- Designated collection: All Saints •

First Reading (Is 60:1-6)

Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! 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, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.

Then you shall be radiant at what you see, your heart shall throb and overflow, for the riches of the sea shall be emptied out before you, the wealth of nations shall be brought to you. Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the LORD.

Second Reading (Eph 3:2-3, 5-6)

Brothers and sisters: You have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for your benefit, namely, that the mystery was made known to me by revelation. It was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that the Gentiles are coheirs, members of the same body, and copartners in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

Gospel (Mk 2:1-12)

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king, they set out.

And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

Christmas is where God comes into our lives (Homily of Fr. Felber, December 25th, 2020)

Unusual circumstances under which we celebrate Christmas this year. We will hardly forget them. But this year's circumstances fit better with the biblical Christmas tales than the glitter and thrill we put around this feast. This year's circumstances can also be a chance for us to get closer to the real content of the feast.

Many people celebrate Christmas this year in unusual places under unusual circumstances. In this experience they are closer to the protagonists of the Christmas stories, closer to Mary, Joseph, the angels and shepherds than in other years. When God enters a person's life, it usually happens in an unusual way. "When is Christmas?" children usually ask. In 2020 we have to change this question. Many wonder: "Where is Christmas? Where can we celebrate Christmas this year?" The travel restrictions prevent quite a few from celebrating Christmas with their family. Visitor restrictions prevent many from visiting loved ones and celebrating with them in hospitals or nursing homes. Some have tested positive or had to go into quarantine as contact persons and, at best, can catch something about Christmas on television. Some people have no choice but to celebrate the Christmas service on television.

I am happy that we can celebrate Christmas here in all Saints, but after this Eucharist: *Where* do you celebrate Christmas? *How* do you celebrate Christmas? Is that still Christmas? What can we expect from a Christmas like this?

In this unusual situation we are not that far from the original Christmas, which the evangelists tell us about in Luke or in Matthew. Mary and Joseph will have imagined their stay in Bethlehem differently. Not even in nightmares will they have imagined that they would have to make do with a stable for the birth of their child. Around Christmas, many old biblical stories are recalled in our church services. Stories which report that God came into the lives of men and women unexpectedly and very differently from what they wished for. When God comes into our lives, it is definitely unusual for us. All of these stories have one thing in common: You cannot produce a meeting with God. It happens or doesn't happen. Meeting God happened to these people, it occurred, it was given to them.

In 2020, more than in other years, we had to acknowledge one thing: we cannot do or force everything *that* we would like and *how* we would like it to be. The pandemic happened to us and we had to give in to the circumstances. We cannot make and force Christmas either. This year, we are experiencing this in a particularly striking way. It is easy to get the impression that if we do everything right, if we prepare everything well, then we will have a good Christmas. As much as we have prepared for Christmas, no one can actually *make* the Christmas feast *happen*. Christmas happens to you, it occurs, it is given to us, it is a gift for us: the encounter with loved ones, the fact that we experience them happy or that we are happy ourselves, the joy in their eyes and in the eyes of the children are given to us like a gift.

The same is true for the encounter with the divine, when God comes close to us, when God comes into our lives, when we experience that God is present: this we cannot force, we cannot make it happen, it is given to us. In the Christmas story we were introduced to **Joseph and Mary**: in all the events surrounding the birth of their child, they had to learn to accept that God is going very unusual ways to realize his plans. I can imagine that they have experienced anger, disappointment, despair, felt at the edge of their strength. Nevertheless, when their child was born, not only was the Savior of the world, the Redeemer of humanity, born, but above all God came into their lives. In the newborn child they came into contact with God and the mystery of life.

We are also told about **angels**. They proclaim the good news of God becoming one of us. Angels give a religious interpretation to simple human events. Few hear their voices and only a few get their good news.

What the angels tell the **shepherds** about the child applies equally to us. We wonder how quickly the shepherds grasp all these mysterious connections. The shepherds have an advantage over us. The shepherds live in such simple circumstances that they are so close to the truths of the fundamental realities of life. With our complex perceptions we are much further away from these realities of life. The shepherds are simply open to the religious dimension of what they see and perceive and this way experience an encounter with God that happens to them, occurs, is given.

Christmas 2020 can also be an opportunity for us despite all adversities. Most of us experience Christmas in unusual circumstances, and many in unusual places too. Wherever we are, God can enter our lives in any place and at any time. We can meet God in the form of a child in the manger. We can meet God in an encounter with people through whom God touches us, through whom God says: "**Do not be afraid! I am there, in the middle of your life, wherever I meet you.**"

Designated collections are for special purposes in the Archdiocese of Berlin and are transferred in full. **However, in agreement with the Archdiocese, All Saints receives no financial support, so we are completely dependent upon your donations.** Please continue to donate to All Saints by using the **WHITE ENVELOPES** stamped "**ALL SAINTS FUND**" and/or transferring your donation to the Pax-Bank account written below. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT! • *Friends of All Saints e.V.*, IBAN: DE15 3706 0193 6001 6690 18, BIC: GENODED1PAX**