

Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]

Mystagogical Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal*

Link to Mystagogy Project on FDLC home page for free access and use: <http://www.fdlc.org>.

Mystagogical Reflections on the Collect & Prayer after Communion for Christmas Time

Table of Contents on the last page.

MYSTAGOGY ON THE MASS TEXTS FOR SUNDAYS, SOLEMNITIES, AND HOLYDAYS

"Mystagogy", simply put, is the study of mystery. For Christians, it focuses on the Paschal Mystery of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an ancient and beloved Church method for reflecting on the experiences of worship, prayer, and the Christian life.

Collect or Opening Prayer	Prayer after Communion
<p>The Collect is introduced by the words "Let us pray" and followed by a few moments of silence to allow us to quietly compose our own prayers. These are then gathered or "collected" by the Priest and offered to God through Jesus Christ.</p> <p>Catherine Combier-Donovan Archdiocese of Baltimore</p>	<p>The single purpose of the Prayer after Communion is to recapitulate in prayer every word, action, and belief that has led us to (and will soon send us from) the Eucharist fashioned (by profound sacred words and actions) and received by those gathered. Although not words of our choosing, but rather those supplied by the Church, it attempts to verbally express what we have experienced and believe.</p> <p>Father Jim Bessert Diocese of Saginaw</p>



The Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC] formed an Ad Hoc Committee for Mystagogical Reflection. The committee task is to provide help for reflecting on texts of the *Roman Missal, Third Edition*. The 2013 effort focused on the Collect or Opening Prayer for Sunday, Solemnity, and Holyday Masses. The 2014 work addressed the Prayer after Communion with implications for discipleship. This work is on the FDLC website in PDF: <http://www.fdlc.org> – click the Mystagogical Reflections button.

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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Collect:

O God, who gladden us year by year
as we await in hope for our redemption,
grant that, just as we joyfully welcome
your Only Begotten Son as our Redeemer,
we may also merit to face him confidently
when he comes again as our Judge.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

The Collect helps us to reflect on the reason – the Person – in which our hope rests. It invites us to situate the birth of Jesus into its right context – the Paschal Mystery. It was God’s plan all along that the Only Begotten Son would be born of Mary and they would “name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21 NAB).

It is the life, crucifixion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus our Redeemer which gives us the hope that we can confidently see God face to face. In the Lord’s Prayer, the Priest prays the embolism: “Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, / graciously grant peace in our days /...as we await the blessed hope / and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”

This waiting emboldens us to keep loving Christ and abiding in the One who is our hope. This is what it means to be holy as our God is holy. We are committed to living lives of faith so that when we do meet him – and, we will meet him – we will be confident and not ashamed of the lives we have lived for him and through him.

Prayer:

Yes, Lord, you gladden the hearts of your people in their Savior, Jesus the Christ. Your Son, O Lord, has done great things in our midst and we offer you our hearts, minds, and souls. May we never forget this great gift, for it is in him that we offer our worship and our praise. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Submitted by:

Rev. Mr. Royce Winters

Director of African American Ministries

Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], **Solemnity**

At the Vigil Mass

Prayer after Communion:

Grant, O Lord, we pray,
that we may draw new vigor
from celebrating the Nativity of your Only Begotten Son,
by whose heavenly mystery we receive both food and drink.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

The Incarnation of Jesus, the sacrificial Death of Jesus, and Eucharist are inseparable. Jesus' Birth and Death explain each other. For God to save the world it was necessary that divinity become human, having both flesh and blood like any other human being. When Jesus celebrated the Passover meal he took ordinary food and drink and gave to them an extraordinary new meaning as his Body and Blood. The next day, on the cross, he demonstrated that extraordinary meaning by becoming the sacrificial Lamb who shed his blood and gave his flesh as sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.

Because of its extraordinary circumstances, the Nativity of the Only Begotten Son of God is not an ordinary birth. This birth brings eternal salvation to human kind. All life is given a new hope in the promise of resurrection. This is our extraordinary new birth.

Prayer:

Lord, by your Birth, by your Cross, and by your Resurrection you have set us free. As we celebrate your Incarnation may we rejoice in the eternal love that gave extraordinary new meaning to the lives of your faithful ones.

Submitted by:

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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], Solemnity

At the Mass during the Night

Collect:

O God, who have made this most sacred night
radiant with the splendor of the true light,
grant, we pray, that we, who have known the mysteries of his light on earth,
may also delight in his gladness in heaven.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Note, and revel in, all the nuances regarding “light” in this beautiful prayer! Found in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*, and prayed in the Liturgy since the 6th century, it truly articulates what we believe about “this most sacred night”. It is in the darkness of this night – a darkness which threatens to overwhelm us in this, the very heart of winter – that the Church proclaims the “true light”. With seeming allusions to St. John’s Prologue, this prayer reminds us that the darkness cannot overcome the light, because God has made the darkness literally *radiant* in the great mystery of the Incarnation. “Radiant”, “splendor”, “mysteries of his light”, even “delight” – these words almost shine in themselves as they are peppered throughout the prayer.

“[W]ho have known the mysteries of his light on earth” is an interesting – indeed a profound – phrase. What, exactly, might these mysteries be? Would we know them? Perhaps courage in the face of despair is a “mystery of his light on earth”. Or perhaps wholeness in spite of an illness we or someone we love might suffer is a “mystery of his light on earth”. Or hope in the face of fear; or peace as a response to violence. These are all moments in our lives when we’ve known the light to pierce the darkness, to chase it away, to literally *transform* it. These are moments that Zachariah sang about, when the “dawn from on high shall break upon us and shine...”

All of this is possible precisely *because* of the Incarnation, because the Word has been made flesh and dwells among us. This is truly a reason to give thanks and praise during “this most sacred night”.

Prayer:

Blessed are you, Creator of the stars of night, for in your great love you have sent your Son, the true Light of the World, into the midst of your creation. May I never fail to know that Light as it breaks upon my life in so many ways and through so many people. Through that same Light, Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], **Solemnity**

At the Mass during the Night

Prayer after Communion:

Grant us, we pray, O Lord our God,
that we, who are gladdened by participation
in the feast of our Redeemer's Nativity,
may through an honorable way of life become worthy of union with him.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

There are so many thoughts that come to mind when one has celebrated this great Solemnity. As this prayer speaks for us some of those thoughts, how can we not be excited about continuing our celebration with others on this night that recalls the birth of Christ?

As this prayer is prayed, we are at the point of completing our participation in the Eucharistic feast and are ready to go out into the world to live our lives in reflection of him whose birth we celebrate. Our hearts have to be filled with enormous joy as we prepare to leave this gathering and be the Christ to others that will enable our union with him both here on earth and in the life to come. To paraphrase a known hymn – then how can I keep from singing his praises and sharing his love with all whom I meet?

Prayer:

O God of immense love, today we celebrate with great joy your gift to us of our Redeemer. As you did in ancient times, fill our lives with signs of your continuing concern for all peoples. Bring each of us to a place of peace where we can proclaim your love without hesitation to all whom we encounter in our daily lives. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and King. Amen.

Submitted by:

Sister Sharon Marie Stola, OSB, D.Min.

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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], **Solemnity**

At the Mass at Dawn

Collect:

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that, as we are bathed in the new radiance of your incarnate Word,
the light of faith, which illumines our minds,
may also shine through in our deeds.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

It seems fitting that this dawn of a new day, this Christmas Day, uses this newly composed prayer in the *Roman Missal* of Pope Paul VI (see Paul Turner, *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal*, © 2010, World Library Publications, p. 17).

As people of faith, we are concerned with the way the Christian heart conceives faith in order that the life-long process of conversion may begin and continue – always enriched by the spoken Word who is Christ the Lord. The Word creates faith so that we may celebrate as a sacramental people. To be “bathed in the new radiance” of the Word incarnate, the light of faith grows ever deeper in the hearts and minds of God’s Chosen People.

Prayer:

O God, open the hearts and minds of all people this morning. Nurture the bedding of soil in hearts and minds so that the seeds of faith bursting forth from the incarnate Word will take root and bloom in full light of daily deeds through Christ our Lord.

Submitted by:
M. Peggy Lovrien
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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], **Solemnity**

At the Mass at Dawn

Prayer after Communion:

Grant us, Lord, as we honor with joyful devotion
the Nativity of your Son,
that we may come to know with fullness of faith
the hidden depths of this mystery
and to love them ever more and more.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

From its first appearance in the *Gelasian Sacramentary* of the 7th century, this prayer has remained in use down to our day and our Missal with only minor changes (see Paul Turner, *Pastoral Companion to the Roman Missal*, © 2010, World Library Publications, p. 144).

As we make this prayer after receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, we are reminded that, though we are celebrating his birth, we recognize this is only the beginning of our salvation. We plumb the “hidden depths” of so great a mystery as we recall the earthly life of Jesus.

Through the Gospels proclaimed in the coming liturgical year, the progression from birth to death to resurrection are all part of this mystery of love that we celebrate in this yearly remembrance of the Incarnation. Let us ever remember that we become whom we just received.

Prayer:

O God, Creator of all, because of the birth of Jesus, your Son, we look forward to celebrating the whole mystery of Christ, our salvation, in this coming liturgical year. Amidst the many gifts of this season, may we be thankful for the greatest gift of this day, the gift of your love for us, through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
Fr. Duane Wachowiak
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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], **Solemnity**

At the Mass during the Day

Collect:

O God, who wonderfully created the dignity of human nature
and still more wonderfully restored it,
grant, we pray,
that we may share in the divinity of Christ,
who humbled himself to share in our humanity.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

On this Christmas Day, we celebrate the Incarnation of Jesus, the Word made flesh. We remember that God so loved the world that he sent his only Son to walk among us, to dispel the darkness of the world, and restore it to its proper order.

The Collect prepares us to hear the Gospel of the day. The Collect reminds us that God created us wonderfully in his own image, and even though humanity has fallen, we have been wonderfully restored to God's own likeness by Christ's Incarnation, his becoming one of us. In a similar way, John's Gospel speaks to us about the Word made flesh, the Word that restores a world darkened by sin to a world bathed in the light of Christ.

We give thanks this day for the Incarnation, for Jesus' willingness to humble himself to become one of us. We rejoice in great hope of the transformation of our world, praying that all humanity recognize the light that Christ brings to us.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, you are the Word that walks among us. Be light for our world, be light for our minds and hearts that we may be restored to our true nature and share in the divine life of God.

Submitted by:
Karen Kane
Director of the Worship Office
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December 25

THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], **Solemnity**

At the Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

Grant, O merciful God,
that, just as the Savior of the world, born this day,
is the author of divine generation for us,
so he may be the giver even of immortality.
Who lives and reigns for ever and ever.

Reflection:

There is cause for great joy on the dawn of Christmas Day! Once again we hear of shepherds who hastened to Bethlehem. We rejoice with them to see an infant in a manger whose birth was announced by an angel, “A savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord” (Luke 2:11). On this holy morning of the nativity, we, too, want to tell everyone what we have seen and heard about this child, praising God for the sacred and selfless gift of his Son.

With Mary we ponder in our hearts the depths of this great mystery – the Incarnation. How can this be that the Son of God, Second Person of the Holy Trinity, comes to us in human form, as a most vulnerable newborn baby? “Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself” (Philippians, 2:7-8).

With eyes of faith we enter even greater mystery in that today Christ is born anew within the Bethlehem of our hearts. Our warm and willing hearts respond with ever more love for Christ, for others, and for God’s creation. In the words of St. Ignatius in his *Spiritual Exercises*, “Here it will be to ask for an interior knowledge of our Lord, who became human for me, that I may love him more intensely and follow him more closely” (*Spiritual Exercises*, n. 104).

Prayer:

Gracious God, you gift us with the incarnation of your Son, the eternal Word made flesh; may we follow his example of love and obedience always.

Submitted by:
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The Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas],
or, if there is no Sunday, December 30.

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, **Feast**

Collect:

O God, who were pleased to give us
the shining example of the Holy Family,
graciously grant that we may imitate them
in practicing the virtues of family life and in the bonds of charity,
and so, in the joy of your house,
delight one day in eternal rewards.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Feast was instituted by Pope Leo XIII in 1893 and was made a universal Feast by Pope Benedict XV in 1921. Before the reforms of the Second Vatican Council this Feast was celebrated on the First Sunday after Epiphany.

The Collect emphasizes the example of the Holy Family as worthy of our imitation. It calls for the practicing of the virtues of family life with charity. Likewise by living these days with the joy of the home of the Holy Family, we may delight one day in the joy of heaven.

God is thanked for giving us the example of the Holy Family. We ask him to grant us the grace to imitate the very essence and joy of that family and that holy home which both reflects and is a participation in the very life of heaven. We are challenged to live that example for our own sanctification and for the evangelization of all families.

Prayer:

May our families be true examples of the Holy Family such that our homes, and all who live there, may truly be a domestic church, a small community which reflects the very heavenly abode of all the Angels and Saints.

Submitted by:
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The Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas], or, if there is no Sunday,
December 30.

THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, **Feast**

Prayer after Communion:

Bring those you refresh with this heavenly Sacrament,
most merciful Father,
to imitate constantly the example of the Holy Family,
so that, after the trials of this world,
we may share their company for ever.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

The food and drink that refreshes us! After a long or difficult day, a lengthy period of work, what most refreshes you? What satisfies? What gives you strength to carry on?

As we hear this Prayer after Communion today, we are invited into the mystery of the family life of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Perhaps some of the images from today's scriptures, especially Colossians, will come to mind: compassion, kindness, humility.... [Although the reading is assigned to Year A, it may be used in any Year in place of the reading for Year B and Year C.] We can be sure that these virtues were evident in the family life in the household at Nazareth.

Like all Prayers after Communion, we are invited here to action, to conversion of heart having just encountered Christ in Communion. We can be sure that this food and drink for our journey of faith will provide refreshment as we continue on our pilgrim way. This journey will lead us ultimately to a communion of life in the Holy Trinity and in union with the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Prayer:

God of the journey, you guide your family, the Church, along the path of salvation. Help us to remain faithful in word and in deed to the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. May our worship today strengthen us to witness to the Gospel we cherish. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Submitted by:
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January 1

The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas]

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Collect:

O God, who through the fruitful virginity of Blessed Mary
bestowed on the human race
the grace of eternal salvation,
grant, we pray,
that we may experience the intercession of her,
through whom we were found worthy
to receive the author of life,
our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This Collect (Opening Prayer) reflects the Church's rich devotion to the Blessed Mother. We celebrate that devotion with ancient hymn texts that are regularly part of our prayer life: *Ave Maria*, *Salve Regina*, *Alma Redemptoris Mater*. In all of them Mary is our advocate. Hers is the fruitful womb. Through her intercessions we hope for our salvation.

This Collect is taken from the Roman Breviary (now the Liturgy of the Hours). It ended *Alma Redemptoris Mater* sung at the end of Night Prayer from Christmas Eve until the Purification (now the Presentation of the Lord).

Praying this prayer during Christmas Time adds to our understanding of the Incarnation. The Lord took on flesh so that he could experience, as do we, the suffering of death. But, Incarnation leads to Resurrection and thus we have a hope that transcends death. This is the blessing of the fruit of Mary's womb. This is the gift of the author of life.

Prayer:

Lord, through the intercession of Mary we raise our hearts to you. Strengthen us that we may be truly worthy of your gifts of life and salvation.

Submitted by:
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January 1

The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas]

SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD

Prayer after Communion:

We have received this heavenly Sacrament with joy, O Lord:
grant, we pray,
that it may lead us to eternal life,
for we rejoice to proclaim the blessed ever-Virgin Mary
Mother of your Son and Mother of the Church.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

Prior to Vatican Council II, this feast did not exist. This Solemnity was new to the post-Vatican II Missal and so was the composition of this prayer.

In this prayer, we come to the Lord with grateful hearts, for we have been fed by the Word of God and have dined at the table of the Lord. We pray that our participation in this heavenly Sacrament will lead us to eternal life. If, however, the reception is to lead us, then we must be prepared to follow.

Mary, first disciple, Mother of God and of the Church, is a reminder to us that we continue the mission of Jesus, the mission of the Church beyond the building in which we gather. We encounter Christ in the Eucharist so that through us others can encounter Christ in the world.

Prayer:

Loving Father,
give us courage like Mary to follow you and to proclaim your goodness.
Help us to be faithful disciples today and always.
Please show us how. Amen.

Submitted by:
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[In the Diocese of the United States]
Sunday between January 2 and January 8
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, **Solemnity**
At the Vigil Mass

Collect:

May the splendor of your majesty, O Lord, we pray,
shed its light upon our hearts,
that we may pass through the shadows of this world
and reach the brightness of our eternal home.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

The Collect enjoins us to recognize and see with faith the glory God has shed upon his people in the majesty of his Son, Jesus the Christ. Not only are we called to see it but we are invited to open our hearts to its transforming power. One of the challenges of developing a personal relationship with God is it can become a God-and-me relationship. It becomes so comfortable that we lose sight of God's majesty. Yet, when our eyes are opened to see God's glory, we bow in humility, in reverence, and in awe of the One who spoke and it came to be.

God asks Job, "Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding....And who shut within doors the sea, when it burst forth from the womb?" Job answers, "Look, I am of little account; what can I answer you?" (See Job 38:4 and 8: 40:4 NAB.)

There are moments in our lives when we get a glimpse of God's glory. All we can do is fall to our knees and praise God! Yes, we sing: "to the only God, our savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord be glory, majesty, power, and authority from ages past, now and for ages to come. Amen (Jude 25 NAB).

Prayer:

Almighty, and ever-living God, you are present in all things. Your light shines upon all you have created so that all may know that there is no other God like you. Let your light, O God, illumine our minds and hearts, so that we may tell the world about a God who has done great things! Amen.

Submitted by:
Rev. Mr. Royce Winters
Director of African American Ministries
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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[In the Diocese of the United States]
Sunday between January 2 and January 8
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, **Solemnity**
At the Vigil Mass

Prayer after Communion:

Renewed by sacred nourishment,
we implore your mercy, O Lord,
that the star of your justice
may shine always bright in our minds
and that our true treasure may ever consist in our confession of you.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

As with the other liturgical celebrations of the Christmas cycle, the central element of this Solemnity is the birth of Christ. The Word made flesh came once to us at Bethlehem yet is present in the sacred nourishment referred to in this Prayer after Communion. There are no barriers preventing our being in the presence of the Holy One except our self-imposed blindness. Thus, on this feast of revelation, we implore God's mercy which tempers justice, Christ's bright star in every human heart, to illuminate the path to holiness of life. This is the true treasure of living by the light of Christ, guiding our confession which is displayed in words and in deeds that are fruitful and just.

It is one thing to pray for guidance and another to accept the guidance offered. A conscious desire to be attentive to the grace of inspiration is the unspoken implication of this simple but evocative Epiphany prayer.

Prayer:

O God, enough with the shadows that blind your people!
Open a way for us when there is no way;
and, by the light of your Son,
guide us to our true homeland,
fulfilled at last with the joy of your presence for ever and ever. Amen.

Submitted by:
Fr. Tom Ranzino
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Director of Office of Worship
Diocese of Baton Rouge

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**Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions [FDLC]
Mystagogical Reflection on Texts of the *Roman Missal***

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[In the Dioceses of the United States]
Sunday between January 2 and January 8
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, **Solemnity**
At the Mass during the Day

Collect:

O God, who on this day
revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations
by the guidance of a star,
grant in your mercy
that we, who know you already by faith,
may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

This is a very old prayer included in the *Hadrian Sacramentary*. It has been used on Epiphany since the latter part of the eighth century. This prayer and this feast expand that the revelation of God is not to just the followers with Jewish roots but to all those beyond the borders, that is, to all the nations.

This prayer admits that the Son of God, born human like us [in all things but sin], is given to everyone. The Latin word “gentibus”, translated “to the nations”, is the same word used in the Second Vatican Council Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church. Its Latin title is “Ad gentes” because it begins with those words that translate “To the nations”.

There is any number of bright stars, new fads, popular figures ready to lead us. But they may guide us to places we should not go. This prayer and this Epiphany show us, manifest to us that there is a luminous One alone, the Only Begotten Son, who is worthy to guide us. We know him by faith. And in that relationship, we follow him to live and work and be among the nations. No one is excluded from our fellowship.

Prayer:

Help us grasp the full meaning, O God, that your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is given not just to the baptized, not just to us, but to all. Help us behave like everyone is your son and daughter and thus our sister and brother.

Submitted by:
Eliot Kapitan
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[In the Diocese of the United States]
Sunday between January 2 and January 8
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, **Solemnity**
At the Mass during the Day

Prayer after Communion:

Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord,
always and everywhere,
that we may perceive with clear sight
and revere with true affection
the mystery in which you have willed us to participate.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This Prayer after Communion for this Mass during the day admits the birth of the Savior, who is the presence of Light which dispels the dark gloom of sinful humanity. This is God's true gift, a once and for all event in Bethlehem which continues to interpret the ages until this very day.

We pray that same Light goes before us, this heavenly light, the stuff of brilliance, given in an age which delivers darkness as a suspicious gift. We ask not for cheap light, but heavenly light from the Spirit of God, so that we may see and understand what we see, dismissing suspicious gifts and desiring God's true gift, costly entrance into the Mystery, that is, the Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. This is the bright darkness which unfolds in living through ever deepening spirals of life and death, death and life. The secret of life itself.

Prayer:

Cast your heavenly light before us, O Christ,
that we may see clearly the path of life
and have courage to follow you without fear. Amen.

Submitted by:
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Sunday after the Epiphany of the Lord
THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, **Feast**

A
Collect:

Almighty ever-living God,
who, when Christ had been baptized in the River Jordan
and as the Holy Spirit descended upon him,
solemnly declared him your beloved Son,
grant that your children by adoption,
reborn of water and the Holy Spirit,
may always be well pleasing to you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

There is a lot of imagery captured in this prayer! Your ears will need to be readied to hear and comprehend all that is being said in this prayer.

First, the prayer recalls for us the image of Jesus being baptized in the River Jordan. We also recall that the Holy Spirit descended upon him and God said, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” Finally, we pray that we, God’s children by adoption, God’s children who have been reborn of the water and the Spirit, be pleasing in God’s sight. Really, the prayer is quite simple. We are asking that our lives, baptized into Christ, be pleasing to God.

Not always do the Collects reflect the Gospel of the day, but this one clearly refers us to the Feast we celebrate and the Gospel proclaimed. This prayer can lead us to appreciate the importance of our Baptism. Through Baptism into Christ, God has adopted us as his own. We belong to God!

Prayer:

Lord God, we give you thanks for adopting us as your children through the waters of Baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit. Strengthen us to live our baptismal calling that we may indeed live according to your will.

Submitted by:
Karen Kane
Director of the Worship Office
Archdiocese of Cincinnati

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Sunday after the Epiphany of the Lord
THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, **Feast**

Or B:

Collect:

O God, whose Only Begotten Son
has appeared in our very flesh,
grant, we pray, that we may be inwardly transformed
through him whom we recognize as outwardly like ourselves.
Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.

Reflection:

Flesh and blood. The same flesh and blood. There are ancestral traits, certain mannerisms, figures of speech, and outward appearances that draw and bind us to those with whom we share the same flesh and blood. We treat them as family – because they are. And so we call God’s Only Begotten Son our brother. He shares our very flesh and blood; and we his.

To say that the Son of God “has appeared” has no connotation of pretend or apparition (that is heresy). We do say that this Son “has appeared in our very flesh” because it is true and he is real. Look to the Nicene Creed: Only Begotten...born of the Father...true God...not made...consubstantial...was incarnate. Flesh and blood.

The marvelous truth is that God in Christ and every human share the same flesh. The sacramental truth is that, in Baptism, and because of it, we pray that our “insides” are transformed to also “look” like that Only Begotten Son.

It is significant that on this Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, the last day of Christmas Time, the season for attending to the birth of Christ and his manifestation to all the nations – we focus our thought and prayer on those with whom we share the same flesh and blood. On Christ. On everyone else.

Prayer:

O God of Christ our brother,
transform us to be like him
in every way, shape, and form.

Submitted by:
Eliot Kapitan
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Sunday after the Epiphany of the Lord
THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, **Feast**

Prayer after Communion:

Nourished with these sacred gifts,
we humbly entreat your mercy, O Lord,
that, faithfully listening to your Only Begotten Son,
we may be your children in name and in truth.
Through Christ our Lord.

Reflection:

This feast draws Christmastide to a close; in it we prolong the epiphany of the God-man to the world. Jesus – Creator of All, Splendor of the Father, King of Kings – submits to being baptized...what is assumed can then be redeemed.

We are all adopted children of God: our Baptism makes it so. Yet Jesus is God's Son in a wholly different way – as one who is "begotten". Far from being just a theological abstraction, Jesus is the Son of God from before all time. Each Christmas Day we hear about the Word that was "in the beginning", who was with, and who WAS God.

Jesus' Sonship makes it possible for us to truly be children of God. This prayer following Communion asks that God will strengthen the "family ties" begun in Baptism by this sharing in the family meal, these "sacred gifts" – the Eucharist.

When we base our lives on God's command to listen to his Son Jesus – in the Word proclaimed in the Scriptures, in the life of the Church, in the experiences and wisdom of others grounded in God's Spirit – we will be God's children, not just in name, but also in truth.

Prayer:

God our Father, may your children always listen to the words of your Son, so that we who have been anointed with the oil of gladness may always bring your good news – in name and in truth – to the whole world.

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Over the course of the year
the Church celebrates the whole mystery of Christ,
from the Incarnation to Pentecost Day
and the days of waiting for the Advent of the Lord.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 17

Christmas Time

After the annual celebration of the Paschal Mystery, the Church has no more ancient custom than celebrating the memorial of the Nativity of the Lord and of his first manifestations, and this takes place in Christmas Time.

Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar [UNLYC], no. 32

Sundays	Date	Pages
THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD [CHRISTMAS], Solemnity	December 25 Holyday of Obligation	
• At the Vigil Mass		02-03
• At the Mass during the Night		04-05
• At the Mass at Dawn		06-07
• At the Mass during the Day		08-09
The Sunday within the Octave of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas], or, if there is no Sunday, December 30. THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, Feast		10-11
The Octave Day of the Nativity of the Lord [Christmas] SOLEMNITY OF MARY, THE HOLY MOTHER OF GOD	January 1 Holyday of Obligation	12-13
[In the Diocese of the United States] Sunday between January 2 and January 8 THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD, Solemnity	Sunday January	
• At the Vigil Mass		14-15
• At the Mass during the Day		16-17
Sunday after the Epiphany of the Lord THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, Feast • When Epiphany is the 7 th or 8 th , Baptism of the Lord is transferred to the Monday following Epiphany		18-21