

The Canticle

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The Community
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The Glory of the Lord

During the time of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, the phrase “The glory of the Lord” figures prominently.

Advent began with a voice crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God . . . And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.” (Isaiah 40:3-5)



Pregnant Virgin Mary (statue from the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Melbourne, Queensland, Australia) with Advent Wreath Week 4.

The word “Glory” in the Scriptures refers to brightness, splendor, radiance; a magnificence which catches the eye; also fame, renown, and honor. The Hebrew word for Glory implies visible light, a radiance, a brilliance. The use of the word in the Hebrew Scriptures often involves movement: God’s Glory fills people and places; the Glory of God settles, rises, comes, arrives, enters...

Some of the most spectacular revelations of the glory of God in the Hebrew Scriptures are found in the story of Moses. Moses didn’t know much of anything about God, and certainly hadn’t encountered God, until that day on the mountain when he

was herding sheep and came across the burning bush that was not consumed by the flames. This was God’s glory blazing out in self-disclosure to manifest God’s presence and communicate God’s will to Moses.

Later when Moses led the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt into the wilderness of the Sinai, God’s glory was visible to the people in the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of

fire by night. Finally, when the people reached Mt. Sinai, in the words of Exodus, “The Lord said to Moses, ‘Come up to me on the mountain.’ So Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the Lord settled on Mt. Sinai... Now the glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel.” (Exodus 24:12,16-17). This is certainly God’s glory revealed in spectacular power.

When the Hebrews finished the tabernacle and placed the ark of the covenant inside with the 10 Commandments, “the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of God filled the tabernacle. “ That cloud of glory seems to have been brilliant

light, so bright that Moses could not look at it or stand before it. The Jews called this glory “Shekinah,” a non-Biblical term derived from a Hebrew verb meaning “to dwell,” emphasizing God’s presence in that shining cloud of glory.

Glory is very much a part of the Christmas season stories in Luke’s Gospel. In an arresting painting by African American artist Henry Ossawa Tanner the glory of God is revealed in the form of the angel Gabriel as a pillar of brilliant light, announcing the coming of Emmanuel, God with us. The Glory of God is certainly about the revelation of God’s power, but it is also about the revelation of God’s presence – in the ark of the covenant, in Jesus.

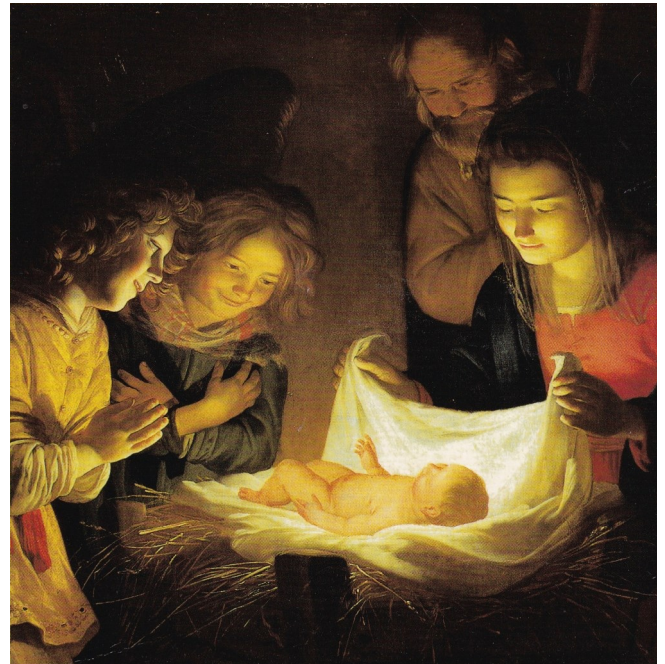


Annunciation by Henry Ossawa Tanner, American, 1859-1937

Later in the Gospel story the angel of God appears before a group of surprised and alarmed shepherds in the field one night and the glory of the Lord manifested as a great light shining around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said not to be afraid and told them of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest heaven!” Epiphany season begins with the Eastern sages who followed the light of a magnificent

star of prophecy and found themselves in that same stable in Bethlehem.

Then when Mary and Joseph took the 8-day-old baby to the Temple to be circumcised (the Feast of the Holy Name Jan 1), they encountered the aged Simeon who had been promised a sight of God’s Messiah before his death. Upon seeing the baby Jesus he burst into prayer: “My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.” And thus Simeon hails the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, the dawning of the Morning Star—two of the light-filled titles used for Jesus Christ. Many of the paintings of the Holy family show the baby Jesus as the source of the light reflecting off the faces of the people around him.



Adoration of the Baby by Gerrit van Honthorst, Dutch, 1592-1654

It is in the man Jesus that God’s glory is most perfectly manifested. According to John’s Gospel, Jesus possessed equal glory with the Father before the world came to be. When Jesus dwelt among us on earth, those who saw his glory recognized it for what it was: “the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” That glory was veiled by human flesh throughout his earthly life,

but one incredible day the veil was pulled aside on the mountain in the story of the Transfiguration which concludes the season of Epiphany. In this story, Jesus is seen in a vision by Peter, James, and John as a figure glowing brightly, reminiscent of Moses whose face shone after each encounter with God on the Mountain. All other revelations of God's glory grow dim in the light of this manifestation of God in Jesus Christ who is "the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being." (Hebrews 1:3)

The glory revealed in the Transfiguration culminates in the resurrection. Many years ago, I saw a movie, "The Greatest Story Ever Told," and the scene at dawn on the third day after the crucifixion is still vivid in my mind. The filmmakers captured the light beams from the rising sun as they raced straight along the tops of walls and the edges of roofs. When I heard the scripture passage "make straight in the desert a highway for our God and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed", this scene from the film is what I saw in my mind—the glorious brilliance of God racing across the desert, racing across the rooftops, racing across 2000 years of time to bring the good news of God's presence with us.

Just as the radiant light that filled the Jewish tabernacle was the visible manifestation of God's glory, so was Jesus Christ. He is the Shekinah glory of God because he is God in the flesh. "It is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of the darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," as Paul says to the Corinthians.

Paul uses the Greek word for glory, "doxa" as in doxology, 96 times in his letters. Remember that Paul's conversion consisted of a truly dramatic revelation of Christ's glory. Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians when suddenly his way was blocked by a radiant vision of the glorious Risen Lord. The radiance was so intense that Saul was blinded by the experience. Understandably, this dramatic encounter with the glorified Christ shaped Paul's understanding of who Jesus was. For Paul Christ was "the Lord of Glory."

The final image I will share is an "Art as Meditation" project from several years ago inspired by the wonderful mosaic above the entrance to St. Gregory of Nyssa Church in San Francisco, in which Mary is depicted as the burning bush that was not consumed by the glory of God within her. This is a glorious image of Mary, the Theotokis, "the God bearer." It is also a reminder to us of what we are all called to be. The patron of our order, St. Francis of Assisi, said "We all are Christ's mothers when we carry him about in our heart and person by means of love and clear and sincere conscience, and we give birth to him by means of our holy actions."



The revelation of the glory of God, the presence of God among us, Emmanuel, God with Us, requires a response. We respond to God's glory with worship, as did Mary Magdalene in the garden at the feet of the Risen Lord. We respond by holy living. Jesus said, "By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." (John 15:8). And he also said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." (Matt. 5:16) To glorify God means to bring God's innate glory to light, to expose it, to make it known through the quality of our lives.

Paul tells us that as we focus our attention on God's glory as it is revealed to us in Christ Jesus, we become progressively more like Jesus: "All of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another." (2 Cor 3:18).

Merry Christmas, Blessed Holy Name, Glorious Epiphany, Happy New Year!

Pamela Clare, CSF

The Canticle

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The Canticle
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The Glory of the Lord

Companions in Franciscan Spirituality Ten-Day Residential Immersion Program.

We are hoping to begin this program again after 3 years of cancelations due to Covid 19.

Holy Week and Easter Friday evening March 31 through Sunday evening April 9, 2023

Share our life of prayer, study, and ministry. Participate in foot massage with unhoused and poor neighbors on Maundy Thursday. (Training included).

Summer July 14-23, 2023

Francistide September 29-October 8, 2023

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Sr. Jean making cookies for the Christmas celebration for our homeless neighbors at Martin de Porres House of Hospitality.



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