

## **Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2022: The Epiphany**

Meditation January 23, 2022

Every year, Christians from a different host country choose the theme and prepare draft texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The theme for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2022 was selected by the Middle East Council of Churches and originates from the churches in Lebanon. Present times in Lebanon are extremely difficult and economically disastrous. All this, combined with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, have made the situation quite stressful. The power of prayer in solidarity with those who suffer is a demonstration of Christian unity and a sign of communion.

The theme, taken from the second chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew, is the Epiphany. I will share with you some thoughts presented to us by the Christians in Lebanon. These days the Church recalls the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem, highlighting God's invitation to all of humanity to a new covenant in the Incarnation of Christ.

In Matthew 2, we read that *"Ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising."* Again and again, the scriptures tell us how the Lord God walks with God's people, protects them, and watches over them day and night. In all our journeying through life, we can be confident that God protects us not to slip or fall. Even in the greatest darkness, Christ is the guiding light for all nations, the glory of God in the world, the source of divine life, sealing a new covenant in His blood.

The way ahead into unity with one another, and so into closer union with Christ, is not always clear. In our earnest attempts to build unity amongst ourselves, it is all too easy to lose sight of this fundamental message of the scriptures: God does not abandon His people even in their failures and divisiveness. As the story of the Magi reminds us, God guides people of all kinds, with the light of the star, to where Christ, the light of the world, is to be found.

God sends the Holy Spirit whose light enables us to see with the eyes of faith the truth of the divine Child, and the call to unity and reconciliation of all things in Him. It is this Spirit that leads us from darkness and tragedy into Christ's light and life.

May God increase our hope in Him and let us know at all times that He is walking with us, watching over us. May God open our eyes and encourage us in our faith, so that we may confess that Jesus is Lord, and worship and rejoice in him as the Magi did in Bethlehem.

In our daily journey to Bethlehem, the city of bread, we contemplate the wise men who came to pay homage to the Christ Child. We read that the Wise men brought extremely expensive gifts to Jesus. They opened their treasures, and offered the new-born king their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Later Jesus said: *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”*. (Matthew 6:21) What gifts have we prepared to offer the King who comes to illuminate our lives and lead us to the grace of unity? We know that God does not want our riches and burnt offerings, but rather that His power works through our poverty. Let us then prepare for Him the gift of a heart full of love. Kneeling in worship requires hearts that are contrite for the sin that divides us and obedient to the One we serve. This obedience revives, heals and reconciles everything that is broken or wounded in us, around us, and among us as Christians.