



## EPIPHANIES

*By Marilyn Sharpe*

January 6<sup>th</sup> is the day the church celebrates Epiphany, commemorating the coming of the Magi to Bethlehem to worship the infant Jesus. What an unlikely scenario – scholars from the East, bringing gifts fit for a king, following a star and astrological predictions, challenged by the jealous and unscrupulous King Herod, arriving to find the son of a peasant couple, falling down to worship this unlikely king! Elderly Anna and Simeon, present in the temple when Joseph and Mary brought the infant Jesus to be dedicated, through the Holy Spirit, recognized this baby as God’s redemption and salvation. This is the story of the entire season of Epiphany – people in unlikely settings, times, and places see Jesus, and through a knowledge not their own, recognize Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God, the Savior of the world.

Now, 2,000 years later, the Holy Spirit still works through unlikely people in improbable places to recognize Jesus in daily life. Where have you met this Jesus? Are you on the lookout? Often, it is our children who help us with these sightings of the holy, in the midst of the mundane.

Trevor turned four in mid August two years ago. His mother came in to a class I was teaching that day with his story. Too excited to sleep, Trevor was up before the sun and woke his mom. She wrapped him in a quilt and they sat on the patio, waiting for the sunrise. When the sun crested the eastern horizon, Trevor gasped and turned to his mother. “Mom,” he exclaimed, “How did Jesus know that orange is my best color?” A meteorologist could have explained the color, but it took a four year old to declare the intimate presence of Jesus in his life! Epiphany!

Twenty years ago this month, our six year old neighbor was diagnosed with leukemia, placed in intensive care, battling for his life. His brother was with another family. His parents spent virtually all of their time at the hospital. A friend and I cleaned their home and I volunteered to do their laundry. There was only a tiny pile of dirty clothes. No one was home to generate laundry. I returned home to face a virtual haystack of dirty clothes in my laundry room. I remember picking up my nine year old son’s muddy jeans, hugging them to me, and thanking God for the gift of children healthy enough to dirty clothes. To this day, I have never viewed laundry in the same way. It is no longer a chore I dread, but an opportunity to give thanks for God’s gift of health and daily joys that mark a life together in Christ. Epiphany!

Can we help the children we love to see the holy in the ordinary? Can we uncover the epiphanies all around us? Can we create a culture of gratitude, and with the psalmist declare, “O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.” Ps. 107:1

### FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. At bedtime, recount all the things for which you are grateful in a prayer of thanks.
2. At dinner, give each family member two tealight candles. Light the first, naming a person who has been the light of Christ to them this week. Light the second, naming one person for whom we have been the light of Christ.
3. Send all the kids on a hunt to find evidence in unlikely places of the things for which we can thank God, like dirty dishes, too much food in the fridge, mud on the floor, toys strewn around, or laundry piling up. Gather, share, and thank God.
4. Say thank you to one another for those countless daily gifts, like a ride to school, hot coffee, wet towel hung up to dry, help carrying in groceries, cleaning up toys.
5. Cradle your child’s face in your hands, and say, “I see the face of Jesus in you.” What a blessing.