

The First Noel

The Epiphany of God

And again Isaiah says,
“There shall come the root of Jesse....
In him will the Gentiles hope.”
—Romans 15:12—



Old Orchard Church
January 4, 2009 — 10:15 to 11:45 a.m.

Celebrating the Revealing of God's Light to the World in Jesus

And the Baptism of Emma Valeriya Powers

**Blessed be Mary's Child,
This infant obscure,
For it is he who is drawing together
One New Humanity in the world,
The redeemed in every place
Who trust him and call on his name.**

**Blessed be God who reveals his Light
To the Gentile nations lost in their own confusions;
Blessed be God who defeats the powers of evil
Raised up to destroy this Child and his offspring.**

**Thanks be to God that in this Savior-baby,
The chaos and rebellion of Eden begins to be undone,
And peace and goodness become possible again.
Thanks be to God for his indescribable Gift.**

Alleluia!



Today's Scripture

Old Testament Lesson: Isaiah 60:1-7

Gospel Reading: Romans 15:5-13

The Ministry of the Word

Teaching of the People of God:

A Time for Open Praise

Cover art: *Visit of the Magi*. Painting by Hsu San Ch'un. Nanking, China (circa 1926). The three Magi honoring Christ symbolize the three traditional religions of China: Buddhism (the kneeling monk); Confucianism (extreme right); and Taoism (in center, with bottle).

When Opposing God Feels Sensible

HEROD is the most elaborate character in this little play and it is important that we should get the right idea about him. We must forget the traditional picture of a semi-lunatic monster, "out-heroding Herod" and "raging on the pageant and in the street." This man was not called "Herod the Great" for nothing. He is 70 years old, and already dying of an agonizing disease, but he is the wreck of a very great man. Everything he says about himself [in this play] is true. He *did* keep Judaea at peace for thirty years after it had been torn to pieces by religious factions, and he *did* leave it prosperous; he was betrayed by every one he loved, and his nephews *did* try to poison him. He was a brilliant soldier and politician, and, as far as the country was concerned, no more cruel and unenlightened than other Eastern princes of his time. But his private life was one long horror of jealousy, suspicion, and bloodshed. He never got over the death of [his wife] Mariamne, whom he had loved passionately, and had executed in a frenzy of personal jealousy (unfounded) and of political suspicion (perfectly well founded). Nor could he ever get over the knowledge that the strict Jews despised him for being an Edomite (a descendant of Esau) and not a true Israelite of the House of Jacob. He sat lightly to the Jewish religion, allowing pagan temples in his outlying provinces; though he built the great Temple of Jerusalem and enriched it magnificently. The Roman Eagle which he put up there infuriated the Pharisees, because it suggested that the Jewish religion was subordinate to the Roman State. Stories are told of Herod's personal courage and of his sense of humor. He was crafty, false, and suspicious, and had a vile temper; but he was a genius in his way. Caesar knew that Herod was the one man who could be trusted to keep Judaea in order; and Herod knew that if order was not kept, Judaea would be deprived of her last vestiges of independence. On the death of Herod this did in fact happen, and Judaea was put under the direct control of a Roman governor. Herod was, in fact, very much in the position of an Indian Maharajah, exercising sovereignty within the British Raj—(like many of them, he introduced a good deal of European culture into his province, and sent his grandsons to college in Rome, as they send theirs to Oxford). Thus his being "troubled" by the threat of a Jewish Messiah, and steps he took to suppress the menace were, from the political point of view, perfectly well justified.

From *The Man Born To Be King*, by Dorothy Sayers (1943)



We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly—and in a circle, at the end of worship. A word of direction is given, and with this everyone stands and moves to the walls. The cup is passed in two forms: in a chalice and then in small individual cups. You are free to choose.

And as this is the Supper of the Lord Christ, please listen to the instructions we give as to what qualifies a visitor to participate. **But whether you intend to take communion or not, please join us in the circle.**
