

# Sister Frances Mary's Ceremony

January 8, 2006

Reading: Isaiah 60: 1-6

Evening Prayer

Preacher: *Sister Gloria Marie Jones*

*Rise up in splendor, Jerusalem! Your light has come, the glory of the Lord shines upon you. See, darkness covers the earth, and thick clouds cover the peoples; but upon you the Lord shines, and over you appears his glory. Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance. Raise your eyes and look about; they all gather and come to you: your sons come from afar, and your daughters in the arms of their nurses.*

We gather on this wondrous feast of Epiphany, so rich in symbols, profound in its message to us!

Epiphany is about

...A mysterious Star that stirs hope and invites a response,

...light piercing through the darkness and leading the way through obscure paths

...Dreams and journeys fulfilled in faith

...the Meeting of diverse worlds at the foot of a crib in a manger, drawn simply by the birth of a child

...Gifts given, gifts received

...Life quests completed or perhaps just begun.

The words of Isaiah capture so powerfully the spirit of this feast.

They are words first spoken at a time of darkness and desolation for the Israelites

who were just beginning to return from their Babylonian exile.

In exile, they had been stripped of the life they had known and they returned to a devastated homeland. The world they treasured was gone. And yet the ONE they treasured was still very much with them!

To wake them up to this truth, Isaiah proclaims:

“Rise up in splendor...your light has come...the glory of the Lord shines upon you...raise your eyes and look about!”

The treasure is with you!

Epiphany reminds us to OPEN our eyes and our hearts... that we might not miss the birthing that has happened... that is happening in our very midst.

This year we have been stretched and challenged to trust in the truth of our God's coming even in the midst of natural disasters and the continued violence of war. We have met our God in unexpected loss as well as in our deepening bonds with our Sisters, bonds that cross political boundaries and cultures. The Light is indeed with us, always drawing us into new relationships, greater oneness realized through our reconciliation with each other and with this sacred earth of ours.

And today our Epiphany celebration takes on fuller joy as we gather with our Sister Frances Mary to celebrate her response in faith to the star that has been guiding her heart and that has led her back to Mission San Jose. Just like the journeys of the Israelites and the Magi, faith journeys seldom have straight paths. Straight paths are not the promise of God's Word. God's fidelity IS the promise, the gift. And God's fidelity always leads us to greater life and love.

We give thanks, Frances Mary, that God's Spirit has led you back to us. The birthing anew of your Dominican vocation is blessing for all of us!

May the promise of this Epiphany be source of hope and courage for you and each of us!

And now the REAL preaching will happen, as our Sister Frances Mary renews her vows!