

— STREET PSALMS —

# ADVENT

DEVOTIONAL

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street  
psalms

Excerpts from **Meal From Below**

By Kris Roche and Scott Dewey

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# Introduction

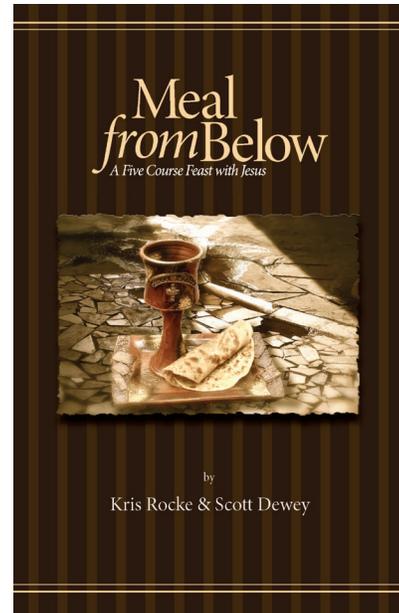
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This Advent devotional has been excerpted from **Meal From Below—A Five Course Feast With Jesus**, in which we explore the Eucharist as a spirituality of mission and what it means to be formed and shaped by the Jesus Meal.

Street Psalms believes that we are transformed at the same level we are created - relationally. That is the core of our work and the genius of the Incarnation. Cities are transformed relationally, usually from the bottom up, with loving hands laid on bent bodies mixed with the sweet fragrance of grace.

That's the Incarnation, revealed in Jesus. It's the reason we do what we do. It's God's "yes" to the world and love with skin on it. Dostoyevsky said, "Beauty will save the world." It's true. I know nothing more beautiful than Word made flesh, and it's our reason for developing incarnational leaders.

This Advent season, we also hope you'll consider some kind of relational investment in your city. Keep it simple. Call that person you've been thinking about and have coffee, even if you're not quite sure why. Be open and vulnerable, but only go as far as your joy will take you. Our cities need joy-filled, relational seekers of beauty who love their cities into greatness. The sweet fragrance of grace will rise up. That's the story of our work. That's the Gospel.



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## Eucharist: The Five Course Meal

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**FIRST COURSE: TAKEN**—We are taken into the loving hands of God. We feast on God’s love as the foundation of all life and transformation. All of creation is taken into the love that is its Source.



**SECOND COURSE: BLESSED**—In the loving hands of God, we are blessed. We drink deeply of the Incarnation as the blessing of God’s presence in the world.



**THIRD COURSE: BROKEN**—We are broken in and through the love of God. We taste God’s own experience of suffering on the cross, and how that experience radically transforms death into life.



**FOURTH COURSE: GIVEN**—As broken ones, we are given to a broken world. We savor life inside of the resurrection and its gift to the world.



**FIFTH COURSE: SPOKEN**—We digest the living Word that speaks all of life into existence.

# Born From Below

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## REALITY

*Eliberto, the leader of our missional community in San Salvador, once accepted an invitation to preach at an outreach center for alcoholics and drug addicts. When he got up to preach, he began weeping and was not able to say anything he had prepared. All he could do was ask the people that were gathered there to pray for him because in his brokenness he had nothing to give. The drunks and addicts encircled him, laid their hands on his bent over body, and began to pray. Eliberto described how he nearly vomited from the rancid smell of body odor and alcohol, but was then suddenly overwhelmed by a sweet fragrance that took his breath away. “I smelled grace for the first time in my life,” he said, “and it was magnificent.”*

## REFLECTION

“As we enter the first week of Advent, we ask for the grace to remain awake to the great miracle of our faith—“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). We pray with Isaiah that God would “tear open the heavens and come down” (Isa. 64:1). It is true that our salvation comes “from above” in the sense that it comes from God, but this gift from above is always experienced “from below,” and this is the mystery of the Incarnation.

The Incarnation reveals what has been hidden since the foundations of the world (Matt. 13:35)—that God is always lovingly coming to us in and through the concrete realities of everyday life, even—especially—in the harsh realities. This is the very thing we least expect. As a result, “the world knew him not...and his own received him not” (John 1:10-11).

The world’s blindness should not surprise us. After all, who among us is not surprised by the counter-intuitive, ever-descending Gospel of Jesus? Who is not astonished when Jesus sets up camp in the most unlikely places, and reveals God’s love hidden under layers of fear, guilt, and shame?

The relentless miracle of our faith is that God seems to enjoy sneaking up quietly from behind, revealing himself in the most earthy and natural ways. It was God's delight to be formed in the darkness of Mary's womb and be born bitterly yet beautifully like the rest of us. God is born from within our own experience, which is, ironically, the very thing that we find most difficult to inhabit or accept. We are forever running from and neglecting the deepest mysteries of our human lives—missing the truth that our humanness itself bears the gift of our salvation. As Paula D'Arcy observes, God comes to us disguised as our lives. God comes most naturally through broken people and broken places as well as our own broken experience to say, "I am here!" This is the way of the Lord.

To see God above, we must be born from below. God shows us that this is possible in everyday human experience. God becomes real to us in the most natural and unassuming ways that we might learn not only to love God, but to love, trust, and accept our own human lives more fully. God typically resists the spectacular appearance, knowing how prone we are to deny and escape these earthen vessels in favor of some heavenly vision. That is why T. S. Eliot claimed that the Incarnation is always in the "unattended moment."

### **DISCERNMENT**

As we enter Advent, we pray for the grace to stay awake to our own lives, attend to the "unattended moment," and be born again—from below. As you pray this week, focus on the first movement of the Examen—Presence. What part of this prayer comes easily to you? What part do you struggle with? In what way, specifically, are you in need of the miracle of the Incarnation in your life? What is the common ground that you find hard to accept as holy ground?

### **ACTION**

Candles are a central symbol used during Advent, representing "God with us" as the "Light of the World." Find a time to light a candle during the course of your ordinary activities of the week, rather than as a special event. It might accompany you doing the dishes, paying the bills, working at the office, or practicing your trade. Give special attention to the mystery of the Incarnation in our everyday lives.

# The Word Vulnerable

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## REALITY

*I just heard that Willy got arrested again; selling drugs in the park, apparently. He tried to run from the cops, but fell and broke his leg. It seems like he has spent most of the years since graduating from high school incarcerated. I used to have clear judgments about young men like Willy. But Willy complicates the question for me because he is a really nice young man—one of our family’s favorite people. We delight in him every time he comes to our door. I can’t figure out why it is so difficult for him to “do right.” I so wish I had the power to make straight the path of his life.*

## REFLECTION

In the second week of Advent, we hear afresh the words of the prophets John the Baptist and Isaiah: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Matt. 3:3). According to this vision, “every valley will be filled and every mountain and hill made low, the crooked straight and the rough ways made smooth and all flesh shall see the salvation of God” (Luke 3:5). The imagery of ancient road building through inhospitable wilderness terrain evokes scenes of great movements of earth and stone. The roads were subject to natural forces, but were sustained over time by human toil and attention.

Such preparation requires upheaval. The prophets recognize the massive upheaval that God’s Word induces and calls forth from humanity. It is not always obvious in the moment, but when viewed from the long arc of history, we see God’s Word at work in the world doing “abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:21). And this is happening now!

The process by which all this is accomplished is easily missed because the massive transformations that are happening in our midst are being accomplished in the most understated and counterintuitive way. Transformation is achieved not through might but through weakness. The power of a vulnerable life is its openness to the inevitable risks that life carries. To walk in this kind of vulnerability requires

a primal trust that even John the Baptist found difficult to accept (Luke 7:20-23). New life is sowed in vulnerability, brought forth in vulnerability, and sustained in vulnerability. This is our power against which nothing can stand.

Unfortunately, the modern religious experience tends to mirror the journey of the ego. It starts big and ends small. The Gospel journey is the inverse of the ego journey. It starts small and ends big (Matt. 13:31-33). The Gospel waxes as our egos wane, so that at the end of our lives, we are free to bear witness to the massive upheaval of God's transforming love in ways we thought impossible at the beginning. What was sowed in vulnerability is harvested in the power of the Gospel itself—the power that is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). This is the way of the Lord.

### **DISCERNMENT**

In our daily prayer, we let the voices of the prophets have the first word of Invocation (to call upon): “Prepare the way of the Lord.” Consider this week the voices of the prophets as you pray. How do their voices shape your life? Can you identify a few of the small seeds of revolution that were sown in your life that are now beginning to sprout? Who sowed them and how? How are you nurturing these seeds? What does it feel like to be part of a revolution?

### **ACTION**

Light an Advent candle this week in honor of the great revolutions in history that free the oppressed. Commit the words of Luke 3:3-6 to memory.

# The Word Anointed

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## REALITY

*Raised in a culture of gang violence, Alicia was sexually abused throughout her childhood and abandoned by almost every authority figure in her life. She swore that would never happen to any of her children. Last night she learned that her four-year old daughter was molested by a family member. Instead of resorting to violence (as she was raised to do), she cried out to Jesus, called the police, and is choosing to trust God, Child Protective Services, and the local courts to bring justice. Alicia's decision to trust these "authorities" is a colossal act of faith that we are hoping will be rewarded.*

## REFLECTION

In the third week of Advent, we again hear the voice of the prophet Isaiah:

*The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor.*

**ISAIAH 61:1-2**

We pray this text as a benediction in our daily prayer. It is a central reminder of who we are and why we exist as a community. It sits at the center. It is in our bones. It burns in our hearts.

Jesus reaches for these words in his first sermon (Luke 4). It was a sermon that ignited his public ministry in dramatic fashion—a sermon that called forth the deepest desires of his people. It was also a sermon that exposed the greatest fears of people, particularly those in power. The combination was explosive. In the end, those who heard his first sermon ran him out of the synagogue and tried to kill him. Jesus' anointing not only announced liberation and signaled the slow but sure end of oppression, it also surfaced the hidden violence that perpetuated oppression among the congregation that day.

Simeon must have seen such a day coming when he blessed the infant Jesus and his parents in the temple:

*And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”*

**LUKE 2:34-35**

Liberation has always been costly, especially to those who usher it in. Liberation runs in two directions at once—it looses the chains of injustice, but it also provokes the hidden mechanisms that inflict injustice. Good News awakens the angels as well as the demons. That’s how it works. That’s why if we do not have a gospel powerful enough to expose violence and absorb the violence it awakens, then liberation is just one more way of perpetuating injustice and violence. If liberators do not have the capacity to absorb and transform violence, they will in turn transmit it to new victims.

The anointing to preach Good News to the poor frees both the oppressed and the oppressor by courageously and mercifully surfacing the thing that binds them together; that is, the mutually defeating relationship constituted in violence. A liberated soul is a pierced soul, one that has experienced the piercing of its own violence, and one that has experienced the piercing of grace. The liberated soul is secure and at peace, held in mercy by the graceful One—Jesus, the Prince of Peace. This is our anointing.

### **DISCERNMENT**

Each week in our daily prayer, we end with the words of Luke 4:18-19. It is our anointing. What about this anointing draws you, scares you, or gives you life? Notice that we address the Spirit as She. How does this affect the way you pray and receive the anointing?

### **ACTION**

Light an Advent candle in honor of those who are forced to live under oppression. Visit or write a friend in prison. Commit Luke 4:18-19 to memory.

# The Word at Home

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## REALITY

*The pastor caught Oscar stowed away in the church building after hours and noticed the smell of tobacco. In the most casual way, Oscar admitted that he had been using the Bible as rolling paper for his cigarettes. He had smoked the first three chapters of Ezekiel. It was the most use that Bible had seen in years.*

## REFLECTION

In the fourth week of Advent, we are called even deeper into the mystery of the Incarnation—“The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14).

The Incarnation of the Word is indeed a revelation, a dawning of light “for those walking in darkness” (Isaiah 9:2). But what is being revealed, and what has arrived? Certainly not the invention of some new reality—as if God has been absent among us and now has shown up. The Incarnation is not so much about the relocation of God as it is about the relocation of humanity’s understanding of God. The Incarnation is calling us to something that was always there but we couldn’t see.

The unimaginable mystery of the Incarnation is that God is not the foreigner that we thought he was. “God is at home,” Meister Eckhart said. “We are in the far country.” As it turns out, God is quite at home here and always has been. We are the strangers in our own land. The One we thought was the Great Outsider turns out to be the Ultimate Insider. It is we who live on the outside of our own existence, not God. The Incarnation invites us to make the journey home within our home.

In a story recounted in the book of 2 Samuel, God’s Word comes to King David through the prophet Nathan. God corrects David’s misguided assumption that it is David’s job to build God a house. “Are you the one to build me a house to live in?” (2 Sam. 7:5). God is trying to help David understand that God is at home in this world in a way that cannot be housed by David’s efforts. God lives a free, dynamic, unending, and ever new existence that cannot be housed in anything other than the home of authentic relationship. God goes on to say that if anyone needs a house, it’s not God.

Instead, it's Israel who needs a house and God offers to build it himself: "The LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house" (2 Sam. 7:11).

Similarly, in Scripture's final vision of reality, we are reminded again of the great reversal of the Incarnation: "See the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God" (Rev. 21:3). This is the mystery of the Incarnation. In Christ, heaven has always been coming to earth. In Christ, God has always dwelt among us as one who is perfectly suited to the land that we find so strange. The place that so much other-worldly religion tempts us to forsake as foreign is the very place that God occupies as home—so that we can too.

### **DISCERNMENT**

In our Examen prayer, we confess our wound of blindness. This week consider with gratitude how the light of God's incarnated presence is dawning in your life and making itself at home. When you survey your life and your community, where is it easy to see God's glory, where is it hard? In what ways does this awareness invite you to see your home with new eyes? Read Isaiah 6:3, and commit it to memory.

### **ACTION**

Light a candle this week in honor of all those who feel homeless. If possible, spend even a brief but attentive time with someone in your city without a home.

# The Word Revealed

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## REALITY

*The crowd cheered for each of the 23 graduates who earned their master's degree in Nairobi. They soaked it in and deservedly so, but when Moses's name was announced something special happened. The place erupted with a collective energy that swept over the gathering. The burst of energy was led by a group of kids from the slum of Mathare whom Moses had loved so well. It was a joy to witness, but at some point the cheers ceased to be about Moses alone. It was about each of the graduates and their families who had sacrificed so much to earn their degree. God seemed to be squeezing God's glory into one tiny space, in one tiny moment, through one tiny gathering on this great big planet. For those few moments, Moses became a mirror that reflected God's grace to all of us.*

## REFLECTION

Joy is the purest form of gratitude, and gratitude is the most genuine gift we can give to God. The secret of our salvation lies in Jesus who is the joy of our desiring. Joy is at the heart of things hidden since the foundation of the earth (Matt. 13:35). Today (Christmas) we celebrate that revelation. We are living inside a great mystery. We are already inside the joy that we so desperately long for—the joy of our salvation. Yes, this is the miracle we celebrate today.

Joy can be noticed, celebrated, honored, enjoyed, or even refused, but it cannot be had or possessed. It is not an object. It is the subject and the secret of our life in Christ. All attempts to own it will prove impossible, and our attempt to do the impossible is damnation, is hell!

Christmas is the reminder that joy is not so much in us, as we are in it. The One who is born to us, gives birth to us, and turns out to be the One in whom we move and have our being. As the scriptures affirm, we are “in Christ” and “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11).

Seeing and celebrating Jesus at Christmas is like seeing the Milky Way galaxy on a clear night. We are looking at something as though it were a reality outside of us when, in fact, we are on the inside of that which we are seeing. This is the miracle we celebrate today! We are looking at the life that is hidden to us and in us. We are on the inside of that which we long for—Immanuel, God with us.

Until we come to see ourselves within God's joy, who is Jesus, we will forever be trying to manufacture our own—and doing so at great cost to ourselves and those around us. In this light, we consider the words of William Blake:

*He who bends to himself a joy  
doth the winged life destroy  
but he who kisses the joy as it flies  
lives in eternity's sunrise<sup>3</sup>*

### **DISCERNMENT**

As you pray this week, give special attention again to the second movement of the Examen—Gratitude. Notice that we have primarily focused on the first two movements of the Examen thus far in the Meal. What does it mean that “our deepest desire is God's delight?” In what way is “our greatest longing already yes?” Consider your relationship to your own desires. What have you been taught and internalized about desires. Do you experience them as invitations or condemnations? What are your desires teaching you? How are you risking on your desires?

### **ACTION**

Celebrate a Christmas meal with friends and family, and carve out time to rest. Allow yourself to be the object of God's desire and delight.

<sup>3</sup> William Blake, “Eternity.”

# The Word in the Temple

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## REALITY

*Our church stairwell is an unofficial neighborhood sanctuary. It serves as a public toilet, a clandestine location from which drug addicts break in and steal quick sale items. It provides asylum for suburban addicts to hide after encounters with drug dealers that have taken a violent twist. The homeless sometimes find the stairwell to be a great place for a nap or a good night's rest. Others see it as a comfortable spot to simply drink a beer, smoke a Black and Mild in peace, do their drugs, or turn a trick. Similar sanctuaries are scattered throughout the city of Camden, often publicized as the poorest, most violent city in North America. I can't help but wonder if it would be a little less poor and violent if we frequented these sanctuaries more often.*

## REFLECTION

We've had a week to digest the Nativity Feast. The magic of Christmas finds its way into even the most resistant of souls because it comes so unobtrusively and with such openness, vulnerability, and without the slightest demand. Our souls leap almost involuntarily in the presence of the Incarnation. In it, we see our true selves mirrored in the true One who comes to greet us with complete delight.

This week in the story of our faith, we join Simeon in the temple. With Simeon, our souls leap for joy as we hold Jesus in our hands. To hold the One who holds us is the mystery of this day. It is no accident that Simeon is in the temple, which is the sacred center of his people. It is the place where God is worshipped, infusing life with new meaning, but it is also the place that represents all the ways we use God to sanctify our deceptions.

In holding salvation, Simeon rejoices and realizes he is now free to depart. When we find ourselves in the presence of God, life as we know it, with all our striving, is no longer necessary. While some of us strive by grasping for what we cannot obtain, others strive by withholding what we fear to lose. It is the same thing. In Christ, we are not only free to live, but also free to die. This is what Simeon teaches us.

Persuaded by unbounded goodness, Simeon then turns to Joseph and Mary and helps them understand that the gift he holds in his hands will cause the rise and fall of many—and will even pierce their own souls. Salvation is free, but it is never easy to accept, especially for a fearful humanity clinging to its own wounds. There is no salvation without the piercing. What is being pierced is not the true essence of who we are—God has nothing but blessing for the true self. One way to understand what Simeon called “piercing” is to recognize what happens when Jesus begins to touch the wounds that have come to define us in such deceptive and destructive ways. These wounds go deep and are usually formed at such an early age that we hardly recognize them, or we’ve organized our lives to protect them and avoid them. They rule us at deep levels.

Jesus comes to free us from our habitual, addictive, over-identification with our own wounds—whether real or imagined. Such freedom first feels like a piercing and it scares the hell out of us. How else are we to explain the “rising and falling”?

Allow me (Kris writing here) to speak a bit more personally to make the point. As the youngest of four kids, one of my great wounds is the wound of powerlessness or at least the perception of being powerless. My perceived inability to affect change and get what I want has created an overinflated impulse to force, manipulate or cajole my way into getting what I fear I would not get otherwise. These behaviors are ruled by fears that lay beneath the surface of my consciousness. They are habitual. I am Jacob in this regard. He is my patron saint. The “piercing” is the awakening of this wound in ways that help me recognize how I have let this wound run my life. More often than not, there is the feeling of absolute terror at the thought of giving up my well-crafted strategies to protect the wound. Who will protect me if I don’t? When Jesus touches this wound in me, and gently but firmly calls me to live free of the wound, it feels very much like a piercing—perhaps worse, a crucifixion.

Like Kris (Scott speaking here), my family experience shaped my own experience of woundedness. As the oldest of ten children, I developed a powerful sense of responsibility, or at least perceived responsibility, that persists to this day. I didn’t get into much trouble, and when I did, I worked almost frantically to justify my actions. More often, I tried to keep others out of trouble or harm. One ordinary night at home as a boy, I happened to hear my sister in the next bedroom gasping. She was

suffering a major seizure, and stopped breathing. She was okay in the end, but the cause was unclear. For months and even years, I awakened each night and sat in the hallway, listening for anything unusual about my sister's breathing as she slept. Much later as a young man, I moved overseas to work among the poorest of the poor in an Asian slum. Amid the shacks in the squalor of open sewers, mothers would bring me their dying babies and beg me to save them. I was overwhelmed, aghast and grief-stricken that I could not. I began to unravel, crushed by the hopelessness I had given my life to alleviate.

But Jesus comes to remind us that we are not our wounds! This is our salvation. Yes, our wounds may shape us and, yes, we may have come up with perfectly reasonable strategies in our life to survive them, but we are not our wounds and we do not have to live lives that are run by them. This dynamic is true at a personal level, and even within communities and nations. We are free in Christ.

### **DISCERNMENT**

As you are present with God in prayer this week, be mindful of the salvation you hold—and that holds you. Notice how small and vulnerable it is. How is the Christ child piercing you as well as freeing you from your wounds? Pay particular attention to the third movement of the Examen, where we pray for the gift of the Spirit “who gives us courage and compassion.” As you pray, remember that the Spirit is the Advocate and Defender—the Paraclete, the one who is interceding on your behalf (Rom. 8:26). She is “easing the fear and anxiety that blinds us and binds us to our false selves.” Can you hear the Spirit inviting you to name a well-intentioned defense strategy that has complicated your life and the lives of those you love?

### **ACTION**

Invite a deeply trusted friend or loved one to help you name at least one wound in your life and the carefully crafted strategies you have developed to protect it. Now see if you can identify stressors in your life that activate your defense strategies. Simply naming this will ease its powerful grip.

# The Magi and the Baptism

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## REALITY

*We entered a militarized neighborhood in San Salvador called “La Iberia” where we sat down with the family of a young gang member named Julio who, 17 days after surrendering his life to Christ, had been stabbed 125 times. It was the one year anniversary of his killing. We felt called to give the family our undivided attention, as his mother, his siblings, his wife, and his young children showed us pictures and told us stories through laughter and tears. They spoke of the 17 days that they had lived with a transformed Julio and the incredible fruit that had been born in his life for such a short time.*

## REFLECTION

This week we celebrate Epiphany (January 6) and the baptism of Jesus (around January 8). What do these events say to our souls? How is God’s love transforming us as we meditate on these events?

Epiphany is the celebration of the wise men who came to honor Jesus. They likely came from Babylon, or what is modern day Iraq—the people who had invaded Israel and held the Jews captive. The prophet Jeremiah instructed the embittered Jews who were exiled in Babylon and held against their will:

*Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf; for in its welfare, you will have welfare.*

**JEREMIAH 29:7**

At least a few Jews must have heeded God’s instruction to bless their enemies, and at least a few Babylonians must have received it. Or perhaps its message was delivered reluctantly, like Jonah’s message to the Ninevites, but delivered nonetheless. Either way, we must conclude that these stories were internalized by a small minority of Babylonians and passed down from generation to generation. They eventually found their way into the hearts of the wise men who responded. Like salmon returning

upstream to the place that gave them life, the magi found their way to Jesus.

Herod internalized a different story. Herod was threatened by Jesus's arrival and tried to enlist the magi in his plot to kill Jesus. Herod was not simply an insecure puppet king. He was an Edomite, a descendant from the line of Esau. Esau had a brother named Jacob, whom he despised. Jesus descended from Jacob. The bitter quarrel between Esau and Jacob was passed down from generation to generation. Herod must have internalized the enmity between the brothers in the same way that the wise men internalized the blessing.

Blessing and curse—which stories do we internalize? What legacy do we pass on? This week we confront the voices that have shaped us—voices of blessing and curse.

*Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*

**MARK 1:10-11**

Baptism—our bath—is the burial of the curse and the rising of the blessing. Our false self is formed in curse and our true self is formed in blessing. In this sense, baptism is the death of all that isn't and the resurrection of all that is.

In reflecting on Jesus' baptism, Paul said,

*Therefore we [the false self] have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we [the true self] too might walk in newness of life.*

**ROMANS 6:4**

And again Paul says,

*For we [the false self] have died, and our life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life is revealed, then we [the true self] also will be revealed with him in glory.*

**COLOSSIANS 3:3-4**

This is why Epiphany and Baptism are closely linked. In light of Epiphany, we remember our baptismal vows. We renounce the deceiver and the fear and death that are his ways. We renounce the curses of those who harm us and accept the

blessings of the One who loves us. All that is false is buried with Christ, so that all that is true will rise with Christ in the unending love, grace and mercy of our God.

### **DISCERNMENT**

As you pray this week, reflect on the particular words of blessing and curse you have internalized in your life. The third movement of the Examen invites us to take inventory of our soul, or to “examine our conscience” as Ignatius taught. If we are to healthfully confess the true nature of our wounds, we must learn to see the world not as a battleground, but as playground in which all of life is being re-created in love. We must know the truth of this prayer if we are to navigate the blessings and curses that mark our souls. As you pray this week, what curses are you being asked to leave beneath the waters of baptism? What blessing are you being invited to receive?

### **ACTION**

Fast from war-related imagery this week. No violent TV, internet, books, radio news stories, or other media. Go to a playground somewhere in the city, and let recreation and play be your prayer.

**SEE AND  
CELEBRATE  
GOOD NEWS  
IN HARD PLACES**