

Sunday, 4 January 2026 – Second Sunday of Christmas/Epiphany

The word “epiphany” (from the Greek *epiphaneia* or *theophaneia*) means “appearance” or “manifestation” of God, and has roots in the word for sunrise or dawn. In ancient times, an epiphany meant either a visible manifestation of a god or the solemn visit of a ruler venerated as a god.

For Christians, Christmas marks the coming of God to us; Epiphany celebrates the appearance of the Lord in the midst of humanity. The Christmas stories of the birth of Immanuel declare the divine entry; Epiphany extols the revelation of God to the world in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

<https://pcusa.org/about-pcusa/agencies-entities/interim-unified-agency/ministry-areas/theology-worship/worship/christian-year/epiphany>

Prelude

Maurice Duruflé (1902-1986) was a meticulous composer, constantly revising his music, which resulted in a smaller output of compositions than many of his contemporaries. This perfectionism resulted in pieces of the highest quality, which are held in high regard in the organ literature. His shortest composition for the organ, this prelude was composed in 1962 and is based on the Gregorian plainsong sung at the introit on Epiphany.

Offertory Anthem

Christmas Joy is based on the poem *The Work of Christmas* by Howard Thurman. The Reverend Howard Thurman (1899-1981) was a prominent religious leader in the social justice and civil rights movements. He served as dean of Rankin Chapel at Howard University from 1932-1944 and as dean of Marsh Chapel at Boston University from 1953-1965.

<https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/now-the-work-of-christmas-begins/>

Postlude

This jubilant setting of *In You is Gladness* is found in the “New Year” section in Bach’s *Orgelbüchlein* (Little Organ Book), a collection of 46 chorale preludes. Bach’s original plan was to include 164 chorale preludes in this collection spanning the liturgical year. The chorales in this collection were composed between 1708-1714, when Bach was living and working in Weimar, Germany.