



January 11, 2023  
A Note from Pastor April

**Dear Friends,**

I wasn't always into poetry. I am learning to appreciate its gifts more as time passes, especially the kind of poetry that speaks plainly and clearly, and gives me space to listen to what lies within the words for me.

This past Sunday, we read a poem in worship by one of my favorite writers, Jan Richardson. It was a poem written for **Epiphany**, which falls 12 days after Christmas.

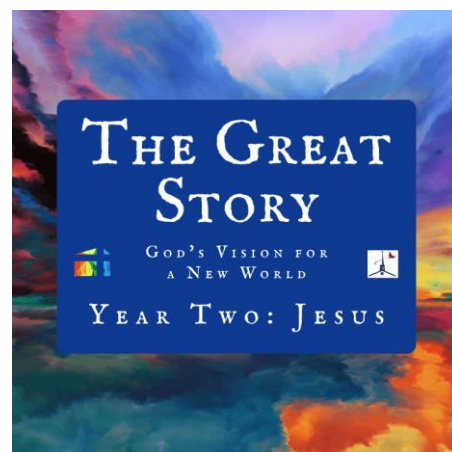
On Epiphany, we remember the story of the Magi and the invitation to awaken and perceive the presence of God here in our world. They saw a star... What will we see?

In Ireland, there has been a long tradition of Epiphany being a time after the busy Christmas season to slow down, rest, and reflect.

They began calling this "Women's Christmas," a time when the women would set down their domestic chores and gather to celebrate, reflect, and rest.

**Each year, Jan invites all of us, men and women alike, to take this start to the season, slow down, set down our work, and listen to the movement of the spirit.**

As we begin Year 2 of **The Great Story** and dive into the Gospel of Matthew and the story of Jesus, it's a good time to pause and prepare our hearts for what God may offer us this year.



I share Jan's poem from Sunday with you again in this letter to give you more space to sit with it and meditate on what it is inviting us into.

If you find this to be a meaningful exercise, you might consider downloading Jan's **Epiphany/Women's Christmas Retreat booklet** online. It's free to download, though she gives you the option of making a donation to an organization doing good work against human trafficking. (<https://sanctuaryofwomen.com/womenschristmas.html>)

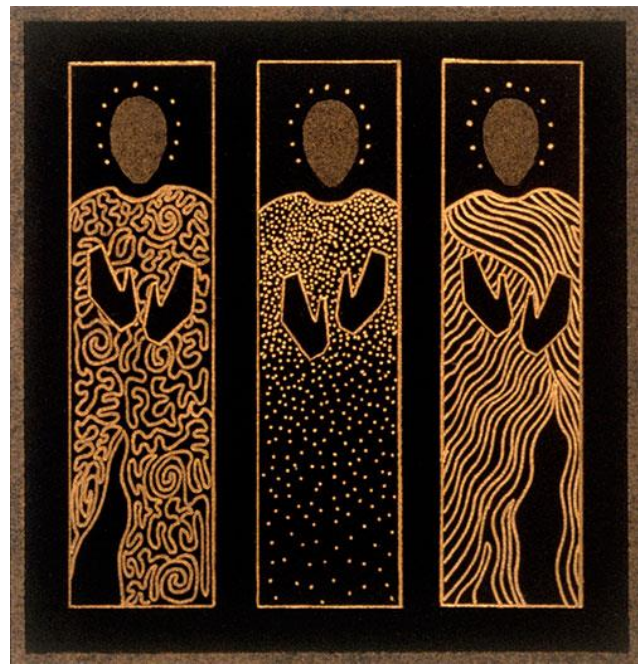
Either way... may you find some space to awaken, slow down, and perceive the good work of God in our world right now. Maybe even glance at the stars?

## Where the Map Begins

This is not  
any map you know.  
Forget longitude.  
Forget latitude.  
Do not think  
of distances  
or of plotting  
the most direct route.  
Astrolabe, sextant, compass:  
these will not help you here.

This is the map  
that begins with a star.  
This is the chart  
that starts with fire,  
with blazing,  
with an ancient light  
that has outlasted  
generations, empires,  
cultures, wars.

Look starward once,  
then look away.  
Close your eyes  
and see how the map  
begins to blossom  
behind your lids,  
how it constellates,  
its lines stretching out  
from where you stand.



You cannot see it all,  
cannot divine the way  
it will turn and spiral,  
cannot perceive how  
the road you walk  
will lead you finally inside,  
through the labyrinth  
of your own heart  
and belly  
and lungs.

But step out  
and you will know  
what the wise who traveled  
this path before you  
knew:  
the treasure in this map  
is buried not at journey's end  
but at its beginning.

—Jan Richardson  
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