

# EPIPHANY

by **J. T. Ledbetter**

In James Joyce's brilliant story *PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN*, Stephen Dedalus takes a walk on a lonely beach and sees, in the distance, a young woman wading in the water, her skirts tucked up, as the moonlit water swirls around her legs. It was an epiphanic moment. Stephen Dedalus' world was changed forever. His life was illuminated.

In the story, we are never quite sure what the epiphany meant to and for him, but we are sure it was one of the most important images in his life. The epiphanic moment is just that: a moment. But it is a moment that transfixes the person forever in that spectral light. It is not necessary that the stamp of that moment be visible on the forehead or perhaps, Dimmsdale-like, inside the shirt, next to the heart.

Such are epiphanies. Our lives are built around such moments but we rarely see them for what they are: a baby's smile as he or she falls asleep in our arms; a first communion, with the sanctuary candles becoming angel's eyes; the sound of the lock when the last child (probably child no longer) turns and we know all the chicks are accounted for and safe.

Such moments we treasure and tuck into our heart-of-hearts and go on with our lives as if we actually did control our destinies and our happiness. We seldom speak of them because we know words would only get in the way. But we know. We have seen. We have felt.

In the season the Church calls Epiphany we see, and know, and feel. It is the season of becoming. It is a shock of recognition that needs few rods, though we happily pour them out in song and prayers. It is that time of year when we once again see the green burst of life in the cradle and in our hearts. It is life to us and for us. In that moonlit cradle we watch our past and present and future brighten, and the sound of the lock turning in our hearts brings us that inner peace because we know we are safe in the love of Him who sent His son Jesus to be our moment of glad grace. It is this we live for. It is this we love. It is the Epiphany that is most us.

God be praised!