About the Artist Hendarto

Hendarto was born in 1951, the son of a military officer in Bandung, Java. He grew up in the tradition of Javan Islam and converted to Catholicism in the early 1980s. His talent for drawing became clear from a very young age. He started studying architecture but did not complete his studies. Instead, he turned to free-lancing as an artist. His means of expression are extremely varied. He uses batik techniques, ceramics, wood and has used them as a stepping-stone to painting.

Since he became a Catholic, Hendarto has also woven Christian motifs into his works. These pictures take a long period to develop. Before getting down to the actual painting process, he spends time in intensive reflection and finding his own access to the motif through e.g. meditation. His works are thus expressions of personal faith. At the same time, they contain elements of Muslim mysticism. Hendarto lives in Yogyakarta.
“Epiphany – that is my birthday. Its theological content fits beautifully: my life is bathed in the light of the One who is revealed in the world.”
Prof. Dr. Martin Hein, bishop of the Evangelical Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck

“THE WORLD SETS OFF ANEW”

Epiphany - A Festival between a manifestation and an eye-opener

Epiphany is the oldest church festival of the church to be enshrined in a calendar. The church celebrated the “Festival of Epiphany” on 6 January as early as c. 300 - first in the East, and then in the West.

The Greek word “Epiphanias” is an ambivalent concept. It means manifestation / enlightenment / revelation. Biblical reading cluster around the Feast of Epiphany that make one thing clear: God is revealed in Jesus. That is the point of the story of Jesus’ baptism in the Jordan. The heavens open up, a dove and a voice appear and the people around John the Baptist are amazed. They have never experienced anything like that.

Or the story of the wedding at Cana: Jesus turns water into wine. Such a miracle is only possible for the ONE who is more, and other, than just a human being.

The story of the Wise Men from the East is also wonderful: they set off on a long journey in order to admire the new-born child. A star reveals to them the child’s divine nature. They follow this star to the little town of Bethlehem and the eye-opener could not be greater: the divine child is lying in a bare stable!

Epiphany – The world is on the move

The birth of Jesus fell during the rule of the Roman emperor Augustus. This emperor extended Roman rule further than all his predecessors. It was no accident that he strove to conquer territory in all directions. He wanted to rise to become lord of the whole world – or in the Greek language of the time, to lord it over the oikoumene (the whole inhabited earth).

The Wise Men from the East took the risk at the time to cross borders, travel through countries, overcome language barriers. Why? In order to find out who is the light of the world, by which we can guide our own values, attitudes and actions. To discover who is the true lord of all empires and who can bring peace on earth.

In popular piety the “wise men” (Mt 2) became “three kings”. However, these three kings to this day stand for what the manifestation of the child can achieve - it can make people set off, leave familiar things behind, cross cultural and social borders, take risks and travel together, seek clarity and something great and sustaining for their own lives.

Epiphany – on the way towards justice and peace
The wise men dared to make encounters in a foreign land and with strangers. They were exposed to persecution by King Herod, a pawn of the Roman Empire. They found an amazing and elementary truth, God and humankind in a child in the manger, *supplied with what we need for life – food, clothing, a root over his head and the love of human beings.* For the wise men, the splendid Emperor Augustus was only a pale reflection of the true light. Just as in icon painting, which always starts from a golden grounding, the child in the humble manger radiated the glory of God to the wise men. Literally tiny, but with a great effect, God’s story of justice and peace began in the midst of the powerful Roman Empire.

The story of the three wise men is a mission story and long before the history of modern missions. It is the story of God’s mission. The story of God with Jesus Christ is not limited to Palestine or the Middle East. It has significance for the whole world. People in all cultures and countries are united when they look to the manger: they recognise God in a vulnerable child.

Churches from North, South, East and West come together in the EMS fellowship. Let us all act like the three wise men and set out on our way. Let us overcome borders in minds and hearts, encounter one another and Christ. Amazingly and ever anew. On the way towards justice and peace.

*Sabine Müller-Langsdorf*

The picture shows the strong influence of batik (waxing and dyeing) methods. Batik is part of Indonesia’s cultural heritage. Indonesians still wear batik clothes on many occasions. For example, people go to work in batik shirts and dresses on Fridays and also wear them for official ceremonies. The three kings are dressed in traditional Javan style, with their chests bare.

The deep blue sky suggests the Indonesian climate. In Indonesia there are only two seasons: the dry and the rainy season. The batik star shows the kings the way; its light is also a source of wisdom and hope.

*Welman Boba*

The Javan people in Indonesia believe in the idea of the “Ratu Adil”, the “just queen”, whom God has sent to free the people from suffering and oppression by the rulers. She is modest and wise. She will raise up the poor and lowly, and make the country prosperous, peaceful and just.

Javans are confident that the Ratu Adil will come soon. The signs are clear: huge natural disasters, such as floods, forest fires, earthquakes and epidemics. Further, there are massive social disasters, like wars, violence and brutality. According to mystic Javanese belief, Ratu Adil will come when the *Lintang Kemukus* (comet) appears in the morning sky.

The coming of the just queen is a story often told at weddings or festivals of thanksgiving through the art of shadow puppets. On Hendarto’s picture we see the three kings drawn as Wayang figures. Unlike in the biblical account, here they are not strangers but normal citizens, who have been banned by the rulers. They believe that Jesus is the just queen. Look at that shooting star - that is the sign! Jesus, the just queen, rules like a woman who lovingly protects and cares for her children. She leads justly and without using force. She stands up for the poor and oppressed. She brings prosperity, peace and liberation for despoiled nature and the whole of humankind.
Now we are no longer waiting for Ratu Adil. She has already been born. She is with us. The shooting star is her symbol. Let us follow this star.

Junita Lasut

The clothes worn by the wise men correspond to the “dressing up” im wayang orang, a traditional form of theatre that includes puppets. So the costumes clearly show that the figures come from the cultural context of Java. They also reveal the noble origin of the individuals, their wisdom and knowledge.

The earth on which the three kings are travelling is drawn to look as though they are on a snakeskin. The snake (Naga) has a tail. It is calm and does not disturb or threaten anyone. Yet it is the symbol of a dangerous, malicious animal and comes from the environment of subterranean divinities.

The riders are Javanese kings. In their age and on their way to their goal they are not in danger, because they are following the star. It assures them of rest and rescue and shows the way to Jesus.

For me the question is why the painter chose camels for the kings to ride. They do not exist in Java. It would make more sense to depict horses, cattle and water buffaloes which are common in Indonesia and are often ridden.

Untung Kartawijaya

Ideas for the Sermon

Becoming a fellow heir. What could be better?
Epiphany brings strangers into the Christ event

The Misa Criolla (Creole Mass) of the Argentine composer Ariel Ramirez was one of the first masses embraced by the indigenous peoples of Argentina 50 years ago. Composed in 1964, it became a major work of Latin American sacred music. Ariel Ramirez had travelled through post-war Europe in the early 1950s. He was profoundly moved by the encounter with two German nuns who had smuggled food to detainees in a concentration camp during the Nazi period. This was his first piece of sacred music, composed to thank all those people who had supported him during his years of travel through Europe and had shared their life stories with him.

Encounters can change a life forever. The same applies to the encounter of the three wise men with the child in Bethlehem. They set off, travel through foreign parts and return home transformed.

The three of them are drawn into a story that that is unfamiliar to them. The Indonesian artist Hendarto paints them in strong colours. The horizon is bright blue. They are guided by a star. Its light draws them onto an unknown route, and into an encounter with God in the stable of Bethlehem. What happens there?

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 3:2-6 is the preaching text for the Feast of Epiphany in 2016. The letter quotes Paul with the words: “Surely you have heard of the commission of God’s grace that
was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me… that is, the Gentiles have become *fellow heirs*, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel” (NRSV). The Good News Bible puts it simply: “The secret is that by means of the gospel the Gentiles [non-Jews] have a part with the Jews in God’s blessings; they are members of the same body and share in the promise that God made through Christ Jesus.”

‘Mission to the palace’ is what the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) calls its efforts to achieve good contacts with heads of state. The three wise men, too, are out on a mission, looking for the prophesied king. Their mission to find power leads them to the powerless. The Ghanaian chiefs are rooted in their traditional rites of reverence for the ancestors. At the same time, some of them are church members. Two worlds of religious beliefs meet. Excluding people from Holy Communion is for some pastors in Ghana a way of drawing a borderline between Christian faith and traditional religion. However, Ghanaian theologian Kwame Bediako underlines in his contextual African theology that the church is called upon to show that “the Christian God had already been understood and apprehended by Africans before the missionaries came.” The ecumenical movement is characterised by encounters that bring people of other cultures and religions into contact with the mystery in Christ. Whether in Ghana, in Korea or in Indonesia, everywhere people cross the borders of their culture, language and their religion and open themselves to the mystery of God’s revelation.

The Letter to the Ephesians is permeated by the certitude that Jews and the nations of the earth only form the Body of Christ together. There is no right of the first-born and favourite children, of the apparently faithful to the law and the newcomers. All are included. “The one God embraces the One World, that speaks 7000 dialects and languages. God is open to all cultures and nations,” says Japanese theologian Kosuke Koyama.

This child in the manger brings peace into the world. Peace between Jews and non-Jews, between Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists. All are included. “We can only talk to God when we put our arms around the world,” says Martin Buber, describing this peaceful stance.

We have to spell out the peace emanating from the small and vulnerable, the powerless, in our everyday life contexts, our business activities and our social participation. That is strenuous and conflict-ridden but, above all, fulfilling. Wherever peace and justice become reality, the star shines brightly in the night. The peace-makers of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana are an encouraging example of this.

The painting by the Indonesian artist Hendarto does not portray the three wise men as proud kings, who know everything in advance. They do not appear powerful and arrogant. On the contrary, they seem to be groping their way forward, hesitant in their questioning. In the Christmas story in Luke 2:9 we hear: “The glory of the Lord shone around them.” Now a light again shines on the path. With Epiphany we enter into a festival of light. Finding clarity on the way that God shows us is something we long for. We want to see clearly in our own lives, in order to take the next step. Let us set off with the whole world as gropers, seekers, found by God.

Heike Bosien

“Epiphany means for me: heaven and earth come together in the child in the stable. The wise men from the East proceeded in this direction. Since then, all people have received a new direction for prayer: the Son of God in the manger, on the cross, as the risen Christ.”

Dr. h. c. Frank Ottfried July, bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Württemberg
Opening prayer

Merciful God,
You made your Son the light of the world.
The wise men followed this light – and since then the world has set off to find you.

Full of yearning for your righteousness, your brightness, your peace.
And we too hope for your light when we come before you now.

We pray:
Give us open eyes, ears, lips and hearts.
Put us on the right path to find you and make it possible,
So that we can pass on your light,
together with people from all over the world.

Amen.

Sophie Abendschein

Prayer

We pray for all those who are dear and precious to our hearts:
Keep them in your protection and peace.

We pray for all who are strange and hostile to our hearts:
Remove that which divides us and give us harmony and peace.

Christ overcomes and destroys our darkness and empowers us in the freedom of your children.
Show us the way through the just queen. Amen.

Junita Lasut

Intercessions

O Lord, the whole earth has set out
to find and to worship you.
We understand that we are part of one big movement
when we believe that Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Today we want to pray with Christians in Indonesia,
with whom we are one in faith, despite the many miles between us:

Speaker 1

We think of the Christians in the vast archipelago of Indonesia,
who are joyfully enlarging their church buildings
and training young people from their congregations to become pastors.

Speaker 2

O Lord,
Keep our sisters and brothers in Indonesia in their enjoyment of faith.
Bless all new beginnings and movements that carry your message further.
Guide the many young people who want to become pastors.
Strengthen us with full confidence that a new beginning is possible in your name.

Lord in your mercy

Congregation

Hear our prayer
In Indonesia live 200 million Muslim and 20 million Christians, along with Hindus, Buddhists and members of tribal religions, often side by side, often as members of the same family. The churches are open to a friendly dialogue of religions. We ask God to help us live peacefully together.

O Lord, extremist religious forces are also gaining ground in Indonesia. Show us that people of all religions depend on one another, and that no one can promote hatred in your name. Strengthen all those in Indonesia and in Germany who are friendly and open towards one another, thereby showing that they wish to live together in harmony. Touch those who as spokespersons of their religious communities set the tone for how others are talked about.

In Indonesia new generation is growing up that wants to prepare well for the challenges of the 21st century. Almost all parents want their children to be well educated and supported.

We pray for the many schools and vocational training institutions run by the churches in Indonesia: Let them be places to develop the intellect and enable young people to gain trust in their abilities. Show the girls, in particular, how much potential they have which they can contribute on an equal footing. Be particularly close to those who bring disabled children out of isolation and help them share in a learning community.

“Epiphany means for me: God has been made manifest in this world - as a human being. That way God’s salvation comes to all people.”

Dr. Volker Jung, church president of the Evangelical Church in Hesse and Nassau
Europe.”
Jochen Cornelius-Bundschuh, bishop of the Protestant Church in Baden

Suggested hymns
The First Novell – Traditional English melody. Harm. Christmas Carols New and Old, 1871

From Indonesia
(Easy to learn, an old favourite, suitable as a hymn after the sermon)

O Tuhan pimpinlah langkahku - Thuma Mina. International Ecumenical Hymnbook, Munich, Basel 1995, No. 191 (Catchy tune, could be sung as a refrain during intercessory prayer)

“Epiphany means for me the light of hope at the beginning of a new year. My image of it is the star. The light of hope followed by the wise men from the East leads to Christ, the light of the world. It is not a fixed star but a wandering star, ne that goes with me on the journey of life, giving guidance and illumination.”
Rev. Raimund Hertzsch, Head of the Moravian Church

Indonesia – Informations about the country
After India and China, Indonesia is currently the fastest growing economy and the third largest democracy in the world. With 250 million inhabitants, the country has the fourth largest population – and the biggest share of Muslims worldwide.

It is an emerging economy and the only member of the G20 nations from Southeast Asia of growing economic significance.

The country’s motto, “Unity in diversity”, celebrates the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity of its inhabitants. The Indonesian Muslims, who make up 87% of the population, are known for their liberalism. The great majority subscribes to the state philosophy Pancasila and thereby to the peaceful coexistence of the religions in the country. Fundamentalist groups have recently started calling this into question. They want to turn Indonesia into an Islamic state. However, the majority elected the reformer Joko Widodo (“Jokowi”) president in autumn 2014; he stands for continuing the democratic transformation after the fall of the dictator Suharto and for a secular state. This shows that the vast majority of Indonesians do not wish to depart from the constitution. The president’s policy of a more just distribution of the growing wealth and consistent reforms of the corrupt bureaucracy also find broad support.

EMS has nine member churches in Indonesia, seven of them being in Sulawesi with a majority Muslim population, one on the island of Halmahera, in the Moluccas, where Christianity is
widespread and one on the largely Hindu island of Bali. The Protestant churches in Indonesia are strongly involved in interfaith dialogue, in advocating for human rights, in combating poverty in rural regions and in the schooling and vocational training of the younger generation. EMS supports numerous church projects in these fields and supports them in striving to maintain religious freedom in the country.

Christine Grötzinger

Christians in Indonesia

What concerns you as Christians in the current situation in Indonesia? What do Christians there pray for?

Christians in Indonesia are part of a multicultural society. Since the republic was established, they have been working to develop their country, and are active in quite different areas. As citizens of a pluralist society one of our main concerns is striving to live peacefully with people of other religions. This happens e.g. through interreligious dialogue, inter-religious cooperation on the principle of Gotong-Royong (mutual assistance) and acting towards one another with mutual respect.

Christian faith is stimulated by contact and exchange with those holding other beliefs. The demands of a multicultural society keep it alive and vibrant.

It is also challenging to live together in so many different groups. Accordingly, Indonesian Christians pray for harmony with other religions, and for democracy and freedom.

Welman Boba

“Epiphany means for me: The heavens open and the earth shines in the glory of God’s righteousness.”

Christian Schad, church president of the Protestant Church of the Palatinate

Recommendation for the offering: presenting projects

Trades and occupations with a future – training for young people from Sulawesi

Sulawesi is one of the poorer islands of Indonesia. Many people live from agriculture. That way they can guarantee the survival of their families but the money is not enough for a good schooling and vocational training for their children. And so many young people lack real prospects for the future – of all places, in a country that is constantly developing and needs more and more well trained manual and skilled workers.

Giving young people the chance to benefit from the development of their country and contribute to it - in their training centres, the Toraja church and the Minahasa church are working on this aim, with different emphases.
Back in 2007 the Toraja church reorganised its Vocational Training Unit (VTP) Tagari in Rantepao. The special thing is that the training is two-track. The young people do part of it in Rantepao, and the other part in their respective home areas. That way they can integrate local working conditions and demands directly in their training programmes. In this project, EMS supports motor cycle mechanics and basic computer training. Girls, in particular, are encouraged to learn traditionally male occupations in order to be able to earn their own living.

The Minahasa church’s training centre in Tomohon teaches young people carpentry. The trainees work with coconut wood and are absolute champions in this field. Coconut wood is plentiful in Indonesia and is almost only used as firewood because of its hardness. However, with the aid of an EMS staff member, techniques have been developed to process this wood into furniture, furnishings and even for building houses. It is used in a way that is as sparing as possible on the environment. That way, young people discover that business-mindedness and environmental protection can be successfully combined.