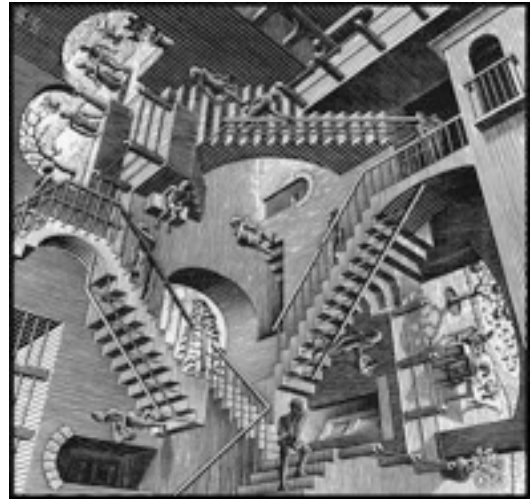
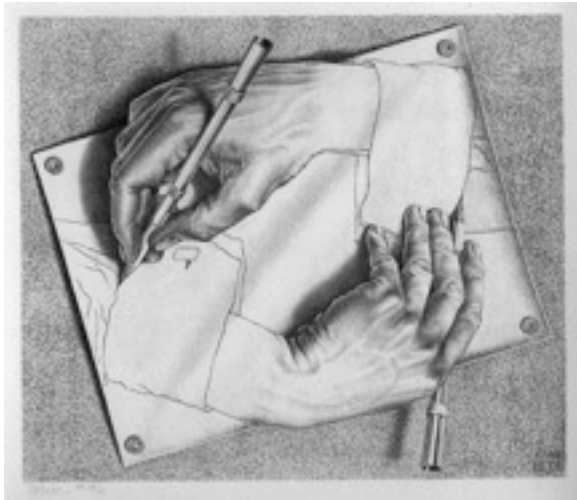


Maurits Cornelis Escher was born on June 17, 1898 in the Netherlands. He is better known as M. C. Escher. He was a Dutch graphic artist and is remembered for his often mathematically inspired woodcuts and lithographs ... featuring impossible constructions, as well as explorations of infinity, architecture, and tessellations. He died in the Netherlands on March 27, 1972.

Some of his more noted works are titled “Drawing Hands” of two hands drawing each other ... “Relativity” which depicts an infinite stairway ... “Waterfall” which shows an impossible building channeling water ... and one of his many tessellations - interlocking images that fill the space is titled “Sky and Water” where birds and fish interlock in a diamond pattern.



In all of Escher's work - the images are not as neat and tidy as they may immediately appear. What initially looks commonplace is soon seen to be surreal or impossible. The spaces between birds are fish-shaped; the spaces between fish are bird-shaped.

Things are not what one would necessarily expect at first glance.

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord.

Epiphany is from the Greek - *epi* meaning "outside" or "outer", and *phainein* meaning "to show." English words we may be familiar with are *epidermal* - the outer layer of our skin ... and *phantasm* - an appearance or an image.

Today's feast represents Christ's first appearance to the Gentiles - those not of the people of Israel, to whom he first came. Most of us, I would assume are not of Hebrew origin. And today's feast celebrates that Salvation is open to all people - including us.

Yet things are not what they appear.

In the Gospel, the Magi arrive looking for the newborn King. They go to the palace, where they find King Herod - who himself is surprised that there's any other king besides himself. On further exploration, the Magi find the newborn King - but not in a palace, but rather the poor dwelling of the Holy Family - quite possibly the stable or the cave where the child was born.

And in these humble conditions, the Magi bow low and offer gifts.

Quite unexpected ... not what anyone might anticipate.

And the gifts - Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh - also hold a symbolism that may need explanation. Gold - in recognition of Jesus' status as King ... Frankincense - in recognition that He is God the Son; the Second Person of the Holy Trinity ... and Myrrh - which aside from not being spelled the way I expected ... implies Christ's death - his Sacrifice for our Redemption.

As we go forth from this place, let us recognize that things are not always what we expect ... that God doesn't always come in ways that we might notice. Let us ask for a deepening of our own gifts of Faith, Hope, and Love - that we might live within the mystery of the Incarnation - by living God's Holy Will for us. Not always as we expect, but with joyful expectation of God's generosity for us.