



# ST. AGATHA'S PARISH

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## *The Epiphany of the Lord* *2/3 January 2021*

### **EPIPHANY AND THREE WISE MEN - MAGI**

We really don't know their names, because the Bible doesn't tell us. However, tradition has it that the wise men who came to seek and honour the infant Jesus were named Gaspar, Balthasar, and Melchior. The wise men, also known as magi, were men belonging to various educated classes. They were of noble birth, educated, wealthy, and influential. They were philosophers, the counsellors of rulers, learned in all the wisdom of the ancient East. The wise men who came seeking the Christ child were not idolaters; they were upright men of integrity. They had apparently studied the Hebrew Scriptures and found there a clear transcript of truth. In particular, the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament must have claimed their attention, and among these they found the words of Balaam: "A Star shall come out of Jacob; a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel" (Numbers 24:17).



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Last Sunday it was mentioned in the news letter that the Epiphany is the last day of the Christmas season.

Thus, the feast of the Epiphany celebrates the many ways that Christ has made Himself known to the world, mainly the three events that manifested the mission and divinity of Christ: the visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:1-12), the baptism of Jesus (Mark 1:9-11), and the miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11).

The visit of the Magi is emphasized on Epiphany Day. the wise men from the East visited the baby Jesus and offered their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

#### **HOMILY** by Richard Leonard

Recently some Christian scientists got to work trying to explain the star that led the wise men to Bethlehem. They came up with a complicated, and no doubt plausible, astronomical theory about how a certain brilliant star may have appeared around the time of the birth of Jesus. Though I was intrigued by their methods, I wondered why they bothered. Matthew's wandering star is not about astronomy. It's religious shorthand for describing how the heavens preside over and guide the events of the world. The image of a star is used in similar ways in the Books of Deuteronomy, Numbers, Isaiah and the Psalms. This entire feast is all about symbols, not science. Reported by Hippolytus as early as the third century, it is celebrated twelve days after Christmas, the number itself echoing God's goodness in creating and recreating us.

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## January 10: The Baptism of the Lord

Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John.

Why did Jesus do this?

The Baptism of Jesus was not like ours. Jesus was not just joining the group around John the Baptist.

Rather Jesus was expressing solidarity with all people in a baptism of new life.

Jesus was baptized to show us clearly the need for the sacrament of baptism. Jesus was baptized to sanctify water which would be used for our baptism.



### In our prayers we remember

#### **Those who have died recently:**

Sr Agatha Freeman

#### **Those whose anniversaries occur about now:**

Adrian Martin, Tom McCormack, Jack Bowden, Margaret Bowden, Alan Leutenegger, Jennifer Leutenegger, Max Leutenegger

#### **And those who are unwell:**

Sr Maureen Martin FCJ, Delphine Schulz, Nayland Pinkey, Anne Quinlan, Shelley Winter, Margot Gooding, Duncan Pegg, Charlie Richards, Noreen Martin, Kateri Byrnes, Patrick (Paddy) Ryan, Nick Newton, Lauren Carney, Patricia Beveridge, Janice Lewis, Michael Blanchard, Colleen Smythe, Peter Armstrong.

Flynn Crowley, Lyndell Sawyer, Ray Pavey, Michael Cashman, Donald Morrisson, Joseph Tam, Bryan Weaver, Alexander Clark, Rosemary Douglas, Danielle Johnson, Gordon Hodge, Maureen Long, James Elliott, Camille Butler-Storms, Mary Ann Marcelo, Isabel Leddick, Carmel Elms, Helen Orosz, Lisa Bowes, Sophia Horrocks, Mario Di Filippo, Norma Fiore, Joan Healy, Dell McHugh, Ken Kipping, Paul White, Edward Clark, Regina Hwan, Deanne Du Bour, Melissa Waka, Agnes Tam, Kerri Smith, El Purwo, Patrick Gallagher, Hellen Passente.

***Reminder to let us know when names are no longer required to be shown on the sick list.***

#### **THANK YOU...**

Thank you so much for your generous contributions to the church.

The offerings for Christmas Masses: \$3,268.00

The offerings last weekend 26/27 December:

**1st Collection \$630.00 2nd Collection \$132.00**

**Loose \$594.70**

If you are not part of the Planned Giving Program and would like to contribute via online internet banking, details are as follows: Account name: St Agatha's Parish.

BSB number: 064 786 Account number: 0061 36002

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The wise men's star is on a par with the other images Matthew uses. At the centre of each of the first three chapters of his Gospel there is an extraordinary event. In chapter one Joseph hears the message of an angel in a dream. In chapter two the wise men find Jesus by following a star. And by chapter three the heavens open and God speaks at the baptism of the Lord. By any standards that's quite an opening to a biography! It's all about the manifestation, or epiphany, of God's glory in the world.

And let's look carefully at where and for whom this glory is revealed. The first instance is to Joseph while he's in bed asleep. The second is to gentile astrologers who, by reporting their news to Herod, set up an immediate threat to Jesus. The third instance is to all those Jews who were coming to hear John the Baptist. Within three chapters of Matthew's Gospel the circles of God's glory revealed in Jesus become more public and change lives. The lives of Joseph, the star gazers, John the Baptist and those who heard Jesus preach will never be the same again.

The Feast of the Epiphany is not an ancient version of Halley's comet. It is about how God's glory changes human hearts. T.S. Eliot got this point in his poem 'The journey of the Magi'.

'Birth or death? There was a Birth, certainly,

We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,

But had thought they were different; this Birth was

Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.

We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,

But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,

With an alien people clutching their gods. I should be glad of another death.'

And so may this feast change our hearts and enable us to die to self so as to be born to God's glory that can and does shine through us. And may we remember that this epiphany is not meant for us alone, but that we are called to go public with it and demonstrate our belief in today's feast by the way we live, the world we help create, and the one we strive to recreate.