



parish newsletter

Second Sunday After Christmas | 3 January 2021



Reflecting on the Gospel

The Epiphany of the Lord books and opines why “Where is that thing?” simple tasks need to be so mumbled Bob as he searched frantically on his dimly lit desk for the current electric bill. “I know I put it right on top of these papers this morning!” Growing in frustration and bordering on anger, he flies stuff around, moves

books and opines why simple tasks need to be so hard. Enter his wife, who calmly says, “Maybe it would help if you put the light on, dear.” The desk light goes on and lo and behold, there is the electric bill right where Bob left it earlier. All it took was a little light!

We stubbornly refuse to turn on the lights! Either we are distracted, determined, disinterested, preoccupied, stubborn, apprehensive, or all of the above. Or perhaps, we fail to do the obvious. We would rather live our lives with the dimmest of lights or even in total darkness.

Live the Liturgy

Inspiration for the Week

Even the slightest flicker of a light helps to properly orient us when we find ourselves in total darkness. Being in darkness can be unsettling and even a bit unnerving. We lose our focus and struggle to find our bearings and achieve balance. On life’s journey we may think we are walking in the light but are really lingering in darkness. We do not see the full picture, either because we are distracted, disinterested, or even apprehensive.

Sometimes, we even choose to close our eyes when the light is readily available to illuminate our path. Do we really desire to know the truth of who we are? In Jesus Christ, a light has been given to those who dwell in darkness. God’s revelation gives us the light to see where we come from, who we are and where we are going. It also tells us that this Good News is not meant for just a privileged few but is intended to go out to all the world. Is this something we want to see?

*In the beginning was the Word:
and the Word was with God
and the Word was God.
He was with God in the beginning.
Through him all things came to be.*

Everyday Stewardship

Tracey Earl Welliver, MTS

If you’re on social media, you have probably seen a meme going around that features this quote: “God has a plan for your life. The enemy has a plan for your life. Be ready for both. Just be wise enough to know which one to battle and which one to embrace.”

There were certainly two competing plans for the Magi: God’s and Herod’s. And, wise as they supposedly were, it wasn’t entirely easy for the Magi to discern which was which.

After all, Herod posed as a friend. He offered the Magi hospitality and kindness. Though the Gospel doesn’t say so, he probably flattered them and appealed to every



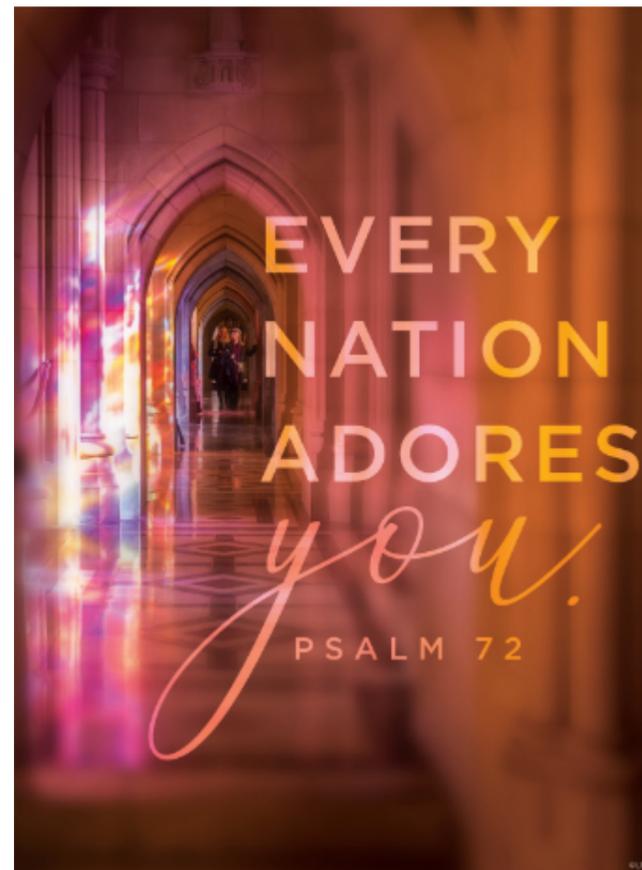
moral weakness he could observe in them. In his palace, they must have felt great physical comfort — rest and

Why are we afraid to do something so that we can actually see? It might help us to find quicker and better answers to problems, the meaning of life, relationships, happiness, and what is ultimate truth. Yet, we stumble along, moving things from one side to the other, getting angry, feeling cheated, being unsettled, resigning ourselves to the agony of defeat once again.

“And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.” The light has come into the world in the person of Jesus Christ! We no longer have to fumble in the darkness. We have been gifted with the illumination we need to see our way through things and find what we really are looking for. All these years later, however, so many are still reluctant to accept him. Perhaps they are unconvinced, disinterested, preoccupied, stubborn, apprehensive, or all

of the above. Everyone has their own reason for not wanting to turn on the switch.

But there are so many answers to so many of our problems in this humble Child of Nazareth. A simple birth teaches us about God’s tender wedded relationship with humanity. It speaks to the expanse of God’s salvation across the globe, and the incarnate Divine wonders and blessings that are a part of our life moment to moment. It calls us to understand the design of world order God intended as found in the Beatitudes, the sacredness of every human life and all of creation and the meaning of things we struggle with most, like suffering and death. We have a lot of Good News to share, not just with a privileged few but with all the world. All races and creeds can receive God’s healing word. God continues to manifest himself even now! Use the light to find what you are really looking for!



Readings

First Reading

Wisdom speaks her own praises, in the midst of her people she glories in herself. (Ws 24:1)

Psalm

The Word was made flesh and lived among us.

Second Reading

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. (Eph 1:3)

Gospel Acclamation

Alleluia, alleluia!
Glory be to you, O Christ, proclaimed to the pagans. Glory to you, O Christ, believed in by the world.
Alleluia!

Gospel

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth. (Jn 1:14)

tables of plenty on what was an otherwise long and treacherous journey.

But if the Magi were honest with themselves, I’ll bet they would have admitted that, regardless of Herod’s charm, they felt a gnawing sense of doubt while in his presence. When they looked upon the Christ Child, born in a stable without any of the comforts of the world or protections of wealth, they probably felt the opposite. They probably felt safe.

The Magi were lucky enough to have the right plan spelled out for them in a dream, but for the rest of us, it’s enough to remember this: God’s plan is often the one that leads us to places of great simplicity, great humility and great love. Let’s have the wisdom to view power with suspicion, and innocence with admiration.

Masses this Week

3	SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS	Ecd 24:1-2,8-12—Ps 147:12-15,19-20—Eph 1:3-6,15-18—Jn 1:1-18 10.30 Mass St Mary's Holy Souls 17.00 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish
4	Monday Weekday before Epiphany	1 Jn 3:7-10—Ps 97:1,7-9—Jn 1:35-42 12.05 Mass St Mary's PD Selva (RIP)
5	Tuesday Weekday before Epiphany	1 Jn 3:11-12—Ps 99—Jn 1:43-51 12.05 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Veronica Jacob (82 nd Birthday) 19.00 Vigil Mass St Cecilia's Anne Felton (RIP)
6	THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD	Is 60:1-6—Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13 [cf. 11]—Eph 3:2-3a, 5-6—Mt 2:1-12 12.05 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Moira & Sean Kelly
7	Thursday St Raymond of Peñafort	1 Jn 3:22—4:6—Ps 2:7bc-8, 10-12a [8ab]—Mt 4:12-17, 23-25 12.05 Mass St Mary's Intentions of Nuala & Trim Griffin
8	Friday Weekday after Epiphany	1 Jn 4:7-10—Ps 72:1-2, 3-4, 7-8 [cf. 11]—Mk 6:34-44 12.05 Mass St Mary's Eveline & Bob Rodgers (RIP)
9	Saturday Weekday after Epiphany	1 Jn 4:11-18—Ps 72:1-2, 10, 12-13 [cf. 11]—Mk 6:45-52 Ps 98:1, 2-3ab, 3cd-4 [3cd]—Jn 1:19-28 11.00 Mass St Mary's David Barnes 18:00 Vigil Mass St Cecilia's Kevin, Cecilia, Adrian Finn (RIP)
10	THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD	Is 42:1-4, 6-7/Ps 29:1-2, 3-4, 3, 9-10 [11b]/Acts 10:34-38/Mk 1:7-11 or Is 55:1-11/Is 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6 [3]/1 Jn 5:1-9/Mk 1:7-11 10.30 Mass St Mary's People of the Parish 17.00 Mass St Mary's Holy Souls

Prayers for Christmas

Holy Jesus, by being born one of us, and lying humbly in a manger, you show how much God loves the world. Let the light of your love always shine in our hearts, until we reach our home in heaven, and see you on your throne of glory. Amen.

Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth: accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you, our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen.

Loving Jesus, you were born in a stable but worshipped by the angels. Be with (N. and) all who are lonely, and with all who feel distant from celebrations. Be for us a living hope that lightens their hearts. Amen.

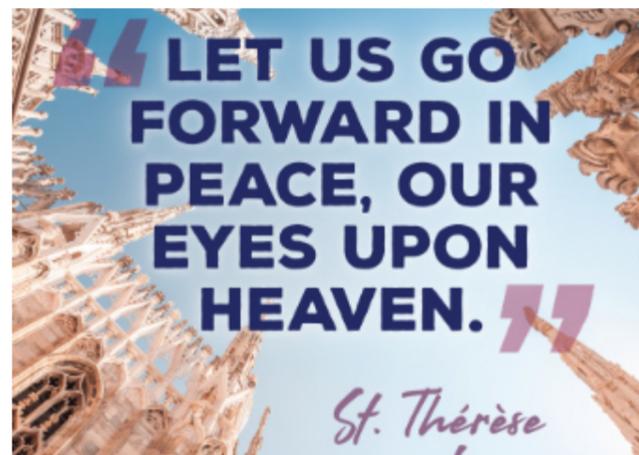
Jesus, as you healed the sick, bring healing to those in our families who are ill today. Jesus, Lord of love, in your mercy, hear us.

Questions for the Week

First Reading: In late 6th century BC, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed an unimaginable future of glory for Israel in the wake of their return from seventy years of captivity in Babylon. What message of hope does our nation need today?

Second Reading: Paul speaks of God's "revelation" to include Gentiles as "coheirs" and "copartners" with Jews in the divine promise fulfilled in Christ Jesus. How welcoming are you to those you consider outsiders?

Gospel: The magi's visit to discover the "newborn king of the Jews" caused great anxiety for the religious leaders of Jerusalem, including King Herod. Why do you think some people are not open to the good news of Jesus Christ?



News & Announcements

Epiphany of the Lord

A few years ago the bishops of England and Wales chose to move the feast of the Epiphany of the Lord from the Sunday after Christmas to the traditional day of 6 January, this year a Wednesday. Ordinarily, the Epiphany is a holy day of obligation; however, at the moment the obligation is suspended because of the coronavirus regulations. Nevertheless, we have added a vigil Mass so that you can attend this great feast of the Christmas season.

Email Newsletter

Sign up on our Facebook page to get the newsletter emailed to you every week. Alternatively, you can download it and read back issued on the parish website at sunderlandcatholic.com.

If there is another lock-down after Christmas its a good way of staying in touch with what's happening in the parish.

Baptism

Congratulations and welcome to Mika Adaeze Ufomadu and Ugwu Chimadalu Isabel on the occasion of their Baptism.

Funerals

Please pray for the repose of the souls of Margaret Irene Graham, Gabriel Ifeka, Anne Felton and Mary Ann Duncan who have died recently. May the Lord grant them and all the faithful departed eternal rest.

The Year of St Joseph



In December, Pope Francis wrote a letter called *Patris Corde* (With a Father's heart). In it he recalls that it is 150 years since St Joseph was declared Patron the Universal Church; therefore has declared 2021 to be the Year of St Joseph. As we struggle to overcome the effects of

COVID-19 and yearn for protection and a way forward, St Joseph extends to us the love and protection he gave to Jesus and Mary.

"I wish I could persuade everyone to be devoted to this glorious saint, for I have great experience of the blessings which he can obtain from God. I have never known anyone to be truly devoted to him and render him particular services who did not notably advance in virtue, for he gives very real help to souls who commend themselves to him."
— St. Teresa of Avila

Pope Francis offers a number of insights about St Joseph. First, his life was a life offered in love; and in him, "Jesus saw the tender love of God."

He was a man called to serve the mission of Jesus and he "co-operated in the great mystery of Redemption".

According to the Pope, by accepting Mary unconditionally, he shows himself as a prophet for our times. Moreover, he is the special patron of all those people forced to leave their homes because of war, hatred, persecution and poverty. The Pope calls him, "A man of creative courage".

St Joseph is a father who teaches the value, dignity and joy of work. He shows us how family, community and work go together. "There is a renewed need," the Pope says, "to appreciate the importance of dignified work, of which Joseph is an exemplary patron." Joseph, says Pope Francis, "knew how to love with extraordinary freedom." He never made himself the centre of things. His focus was Mary and Jesus, the ones he loved.

St. Joseph show us how to love in 2021

Flock Notes

There is a wonderful detail in the gospel of the visit of the Magi: after they visited Jesus they went home by a different route.

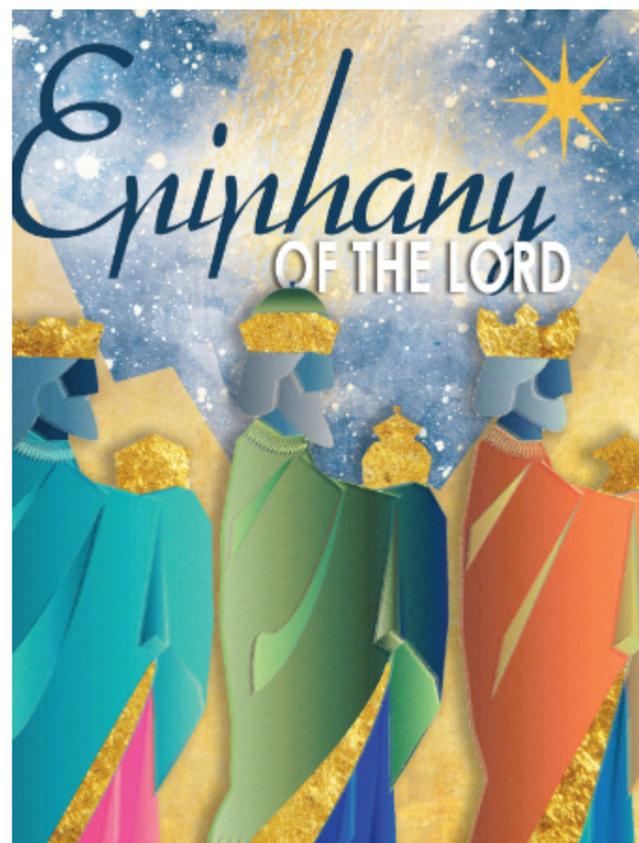
This isn't just because they had to avoid Jerusalem and King Herod who wished to kill the child: there is a deeper reason at work. Their encounter with Jesus changed them.

To find the child they followed a star. They used their intelligence and the own religious traditions to discover the birth of the King of the Jews; but once they had encountered the Son of God for themselves, they no longer needed to follow the light of stars: they had seen the Light of the World.

That's why they went home by a different route: they were different

people; their encounter with Christ made them new people ready to follow new ways.

At every Mass we attend we too encounter the same Christ as the Magi. We too offer our gifts and adoration. After Mass this week what way will you go home? Will you go back a different way?



Our Lady of Mercy Parish

27 Bridge Street, Sunderland, SR1 1TQ • (0191) 567 5354 • sunderland.ourladyofmercy@rcdhn.org.uk

St Mary's Church • 27 Bridge Street • Sunderland • SR1 1TQ
St Cecilia's Church • Ryhope Road • Sunderland • SR2 7TG

Fr Christopher Hancock MHM JCD, Parish Priest • christopher.hancock@diocesehn.org.uk
Fr Emmanuel Nuh Mbeh MHM, Assistant Priest • emmanuel.mbeh@diocesehn.org.uk
Rev Eddy Barker, Parish Deacon • Canon Alexander Barras, Priest in Residence