

# PARISH NEWSLETTER

St Arvans with Penterry, Itton, Devauden & Kilgwrrwg

**Our Sunday Eucharist at 10 a.m. and celebration of Night Prayer on Wednesdays at 20.00 are live-streamed on the St Arvans Parish Group page on Facebook and are available to watch at any time**

Please help to keep us informed of anyone who is in need or is isolated over the next weeks and months, and anyone in need of our prayer and support  
Parish Priest (Vicar / Rector):  
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**3<sup>rd</sup> January 2021**

***The Epiphany of the Lord***  
*Year B*



## The Collect

O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **AMEN**

## A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you. A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

[60. 1 - 6]

*Reader / This is the Word of the Lord*  
*Response / Thanks be to God*

## Psalm 72 1-7, 10-14

**R/ Kings bow down before him; all the nations do him service.**

Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the king's son; That he may rule your people righteously and the poor with justice; That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, and the little hills bring righteousness.

**R/ Kings bow down before him; all the nations do him service.**

He shall defend the needy among the people; he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.  
He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, from one generation to another.

**R/ Kings bow down before him; all the nations do him service.**

He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, like showers that water the earth.

In his time shall the righteous flourish; there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

**R/ Kings bow down before him; all the nations do him service.**

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute, and the kings of Arabia and Saba offer gifts.

All kings shall bow down before him, and all the nations do him service.

**R/ Kings bow down before him; all the nations do him service.**

For he shall deliver the poor who cries out in distress, and the oppressed who has no helper.

He shall have pity on the lowly and poor; he shall preserve the lives of the needy. He shall redeem their lives from oppression and violence, and dear shall their blood be in his sight.

**R/ Kings bow down before him; all the nations do him service.**

## A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians [3; 1-12]

I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you, and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. Although I

am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

*Reader!* This is the Word of the Lord  
*Response!* **Thanks be to God**

### **The Gospel**

Alleluia, alleluia!  
We saw his star as it rose  
and have come to do the Lord homage.  
**Alleluia!**

The Lord be with you:  
**And also with you**

### **Hear the Holy Gospel according to St Luke** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet: "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'" Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped

over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. *[St Matthew 2. 1-12]*

This is the Gospel of the Lord  
**Praise to you, O Christ**

### **For Your Prayers**

That we may rejoice in the light who is Christ

That our spiritual communions will give us the grace to serve Christ more fully.

Those throughout the world suffering from the Coronavirus  
Doctors, nurses and all medical staff,  
all carers, medical scientists and researchers.

All who are isolated and alone, those anxious for their health and well being and those of their loved ones.

For those in government throughout the world, that they may make informed, wise and compassionate decisions for the good of all

### **For the Church:**

For the bishops of the Church:  
John, Archbishop of Wales;  
Cherry, Bishop of Monmouth, Philip, Episcopal Visitor of the Society of the Holy Cross in Wales, Jonathan, Bishop of Ebbsfleet; Justin, Archbishop of Canterbury. & for all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the Apostles. All bishops, priests and deacons and all baptised Christians  
For the reunion of all Christians: for Pope Francis, for Orthodox Patriarch Bartholomew, & for the leaders of the Reformed traditions

### **For the Sick & those in need:**

Roy Staples, Ralph Hamilton, Patricia Hamilton; Sylvia; The Revd Helen Rodwell; Amanda Morgan; Naomi; Kim; Elisabeth; Helen Herbert; Cliff Edwards; Dave; Philip; Eirion, John, Iris Ayres

### **For the Departed:**

The recently departed: Valerie Ross; our own departed relatives & friends, & those whose anniversaries of death fall at this time: Elizabeth Howell; Muriel Sunderland; James Smart; Angela Die

### **Thought for the Week**

"When God saw the world falling to ruin because of fear, he immediately acted to call it back to himself with love. He invited it by grace, preserved it by his love and embraced it with compassion."

*St Peter Chrysologus (c.380 – c. 450)*

### **The Jereboam Interview**

*We continue our series of extracts from the Jerusalem and Galilee Gazette, an imaginary first-century newspaper. Week by week the correspondent Jereboam interviews various people whose lives have been affected in some way by Jesus Christ and his teaching.*

*Thanks to the Parish of St Catharine's Chipping Campden & to the author for permission to reproduce 'Jereboam'*

### **Innkeeper**

**Innkeeper:** Please don't take this the wrong way, Jereboam, but I hadn't expected to see you around here again so soon.

**Jereboam:** No: I'm surprised myself, but I heard that some people had made their way here by following a star.

**Innkeeper:** Oh, our royal visitors, you mean...

**Jereboam:** So it's true that they're kings?

**Innkeeper:** When they first arrived, they certainly looked like royalty of some sort.

**Jereboam:** Am I right that they followed a star?

**Innkeeper:** Apparently so...and several of us did spot an unusual star the other night. I can only assume that these gentlemen had seen the same one.

**Jereboam:** Well, I don't know much about astronomy, but even I reckon I've seen some fairly unusual stars before – or

some of them might have been planets, I'm not sure. Anyway, the point is that I've never felt the urge to walk towards one of them!

**Innkeeper:** Strange, isn't it? From what I gather, these people somehow felt drawn towards the star.

**Jereboam:** There's another thing: I can see that a star could lead you in a certain direction – sailors use them for navigation, obviously -- but how does the star tell you where to stop? It sounds like someone reaching the base of a rainbow: it just wouldn't happen.

**Innkeeper:** Such a curious business! They almost seem to have had their own connection with the star, as if it had summoned them personally. At least that would explain why half the world hasn't been turning up here.

**Jereboam:** That's a point: nobody else has followed this star, have they?

**Innkeeper:** Not as far as I know...although I think one or two of the shepherds might have mentioned it.

**Jereboam:** Look, can I pick you up on something you said a moment ago? You said that the men looked like royalty when they first arrived. Do you mean that they didn't look royal afterwards?

**Innkeeper:** They came into the town with great pomp and ceremony – all very impressive in its way. But then everything seemed to change, and you'd hardly notice that they were around. In the end they just slipped away, almost in secret.

**Jereboam:** I can explain that. From what I was told, they needed to avoid being spotted by certain people.

**Innkeeper:** I heard that rumour too – but there's more to it than that.

Everyone that's seen this young family has gone away changed in some way – myself included. With those kings, or whatever they were, you could see they'd been humbled, even startled. Everybody seems to be affected in a different way.

**Jereboam:** I'm beginning to realise that too.

### A Prayer of Spiritual Communion

My Jesus, I believe that you are in the Blessed Sacrament. I love you above all things, and I long for you in my soul. Since I cannot now receive you sacramentally, come at least spiritually into my heart. As though you have already come, I embrace you and unite myself entirely to you; never permit me to be separated from you. Amen.

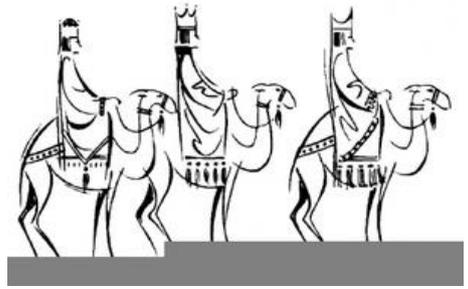
*(The Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament)*

### This Week

**Today,** we keep as the great feast of the Lord's Epiphany, although some may also observe it on the traditional date of January 6<sup>th</sup>

This is the feast in which we celebrate the Good News being shown or revealed to the Gentiles - the rest of the world. It is a celebration of the Light himself. It is also an acute awareness of the rejection of the Light. After being warned in a dream, the Holy Family become political refugees and must flee their own country. This week's readings are taken from the first letter of John about the mystery of love. The gospels are from stories in the life of Jesus following the arrest of John the Baptist, including the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus walking on the sea to reassure his disciples, the curing of a man suffering from leprosy, and John himself speaking of the Messiah to come.

**Next Sunday** is the Baptism of the Lord. We hear the Lord say in the first reading from Isaiah, "Here is my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one with whom I am pleased, upon whom I have put my spirit." That is echoed in St Mark's Gospel, after Jesus' baptism: "On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.'" This feast marks the end of the Christmas season. Monday begins the Epiphany Season, the winter ordinary time of the Church's year which will continue until Ash Wednesday.



### A Reflection for The Epiphany of the Lord

+ St Matthew's account of the birth of Jesus ends with the appearance of the Wise Men at Bethlehem and both the various symbolic meanings and the terrible consequences of their arrival... Nothing recorded in the Gospels is without significance - nothing is included, as it would be in a novel, for the purpose of adding a bit of colour or interest to the story. The meaning of the adoration of the Magi lies in who they were and where they came from, in the nature of the gifts they brought with them, and the terrible slaughter of the innocent children of Bethlehem by Herod - an unintended but deeply and darkly meaningful consequence of their journey, involving as it did the collision of this search for divine truth with the human lust for power and control.

These days we tend to regard the Wise Men, as not the Three Kings of medieval legend, but as wandering astrologers from the cultures to the east of the Holy Land and beyond. To us, the whole astrology thing probably means reading your daily horoscope in the press or wherever, hoping for a lucky week - harmless enough, I suppose, just as long as you don't actually believe any of it or plan your life around it. But "astrology" as it existed at the time of the birth of Christ is was far more than that. It was part of the high culture of the day, combining what was known of science at that time, with observation of the night sky, philosophical speculation and the study of history. And, accordingly, ancient astrologers were taken very seriously - their pronouncements, like the predictions of modern day economists, made Emperors and Kings uneasy with their musings on the future of empires and their rulers and the signs they could see in the heavens.

That would explain King Herod's reactions, both before and after the Wise men get to Bethlehem.

So the Magi represent the arrival of the outside world, the societies and cultures beyond the history and traditions of the Old Testament and the Law of Moses - the world of what the Jewish tradition calls 'the Gentiles.' The Wise Men barely know why they are there, what kind of authority they were seeking, even the reason for their journey in the first place - they come with questions, they leave taking with them the knowledge that something in the fabric of the world itself has shifted. Something universally significant took place at the Epiphany, that 'something' had directly to do the mystery of the glory of God revealed in the child in Mary's arms.

The gifts the magi brought hardly need explanation, they are so familiar to us, even from the words of the most popular Christmas carols - gold for kingship, incense for divinity, myrrh for embalming the dead. The gifts lay out the pattern of the Gospels - the life this child will share and sacrifice for the life of all humanity. They bring their questions, their speculations, about history, civilisation, economics and politics, about good and evil, about the meaning of life and death itself, and they go away knowing that they have been given an answer that is in some way bound up with the mysterious nature of what it is they have seen. In this strange encounter, so far from their own experience of life, they are confronted - here in the primitive conditions of Bethlehem - with the maker and sustainer of all things and the ultimate resolution of everything they have spent their lives searching for.

St Matthew's Gospel, then, begins in the way it ends - with the proclamation that Christ, God become man, the Victor over sin and death, is the embodiment of truth for all nations, all peoples, all times and places.

Today, we ourselves are invited to continue our searching for God, our seeking of the deepest meanings of human existence. Yet, as with the Magi at the first Epiphany, it isn't an unaided search, a journey without guidance; we are not journeying in the dark. God has come to meet us and share his life with us. We realise, like the Wise Men

themselves, that our search for God is in reality God coming in search of each one of us.

And we find him here, at the Altar, at the Eucharist, in the humble but mysteriously offered elements of Bread and Wine, as the Wise men found him at the stable having taken the human flesh of his mother, the young Jewish woman, Mary. The gifts the Magi brought are exchanged for the gift of faith and belief and meaning; the gifts that *we offer* of bread and wine are themselves transformed into the person of our crucified and risen Lord, who gives himself to us as nourishment, sacramental food, to strengthen us in our lives as Christians and bring us ever closer to Him.

The message of the Epiphany is the message of the Incarnation itself, of the mystery of the divine shining through the ordinary stuff of life. And at this dark time of the year, at this dark time in our history, and at a dark and dangerous period in our own personal experience, above all the message of the Epiphany is the recognition that there is a God who loves us and who comes to us, as one of us, to save us, to give us new life and hope... So, for almost the last time this winter, "Merry Christmas!" +

### Some Epiphany traditions

The Feast of the Epiphany is the climax of Christmas. Indeed it is an anticipation of the parousia, the end of time, a foretaste of the fulfilment of the promise of Easter, of Christ's manifestation to all people. It is the most ancient date associated with the celebration of Christmas and in the Orthodox tradition today is the primary Christmas feast.

This feast is traditionally a three-fold celebration of the Magi's guidance by the star to the Infant Christ, the Baptism of Christ and the Wedding at Cana, all of which are manifestations of Christ - and the Lectionary provides for this in the days that follow.

It is a tradition in many churches between Christmas and Epiphany to move the figures of the Magi closer and closer to the crib each day until they finally arrive on the feast of the Epiphany:

**The Blessing of Chalk** is another traditional custom, reminding us that Christ is incarnate in the love we offer to one another in our daily lives. As the Magi came in search of the light of Christ and were welcomed by the Holy Family into the house, we welcome all who come in the Lord's name, praying that our homes may be protected from darkness and be filled with the light of Christ and the warmth of his Spirit. The rite uses the traditional names ascribed to the Magi: Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar

The blessing of chalk takes place at the Eucharist before the final blessing. The chalk is usually placed near the crib so that the people may take a piece home with them at the end of the Eucharist. This year it will be placed in the church tower so as to be accessible to the congregation as they leave.

### The Epiphany Proclamation:

Whilst dates such as Christmas Day are immovable and fixed in our minds, the moveable feasts of the church, primarily Easter and all the other days that depend upon it, are not so familiarly known or easily worked out. Of course, these days, calendars publish these dates well in advance, but during the time when calendars were not available, the Epiphany proclamation was invaluable. However, even today, the proclamation has great value: it asserts the primary feast of Easter as the heart of the liturgical year and proclaims the resurrection of Christ and the paschal mystery which colours all the times and seasons of the year. The proclamation is also a good opportunity to distribute parish calendars. The proclamation is made after the gospel or homily.

