



ONE MISSION, TWO PARISHES

Saint Timothy's & Saint Luke the Evangelist
Catholic Parishes, Forest Hill & Blackburn South

Parish Office for both Parishes: 17 Stevens Road Forest Hill Vic 3133

Parish Office tel: 03 9412 8499; Presbytery tel: 03 9877 2292

Email: foresthill@cam.org.au | Web: sttimothys.org.au

Email: blackburnsouth@cam.org.au | Web: blackburnsouth.org.au

WEEKLY BULLETIN: SUNDAY 7 JANUARY 2024

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

REACH OUT IN LOVE AND MERCY: MARK 6: 32 - 34



Readings this week: Isaiah 60:1-6; Ps 71; Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12.

Gospel Reflection ~ Greg Sunter

The gospel of Mark, the first of the four canonical gospels to be written, does not bother at all with the question of the birth of Jesus. Written some ten or more years later, the gospels of Luke and Matthew both present a version of the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus. The gospel of John, written later still, also avoids details of Jesus' birth. The two accounts of the infancy that we do have from the gospels tell very different stories because they have each been used to place the rest of the gospel in a particular context. Unfortunately, the two stories have been mashed together so much that we now have one notion of the Christmas story that is a poor amalgam of the two unique narratives. In the gospel of Luke, Joseph and Mary are living in Nazareth and travel to Bethlehem and are forced to give birth out in a field because there is no room at the only inn in Bethlehem. The ones who bear witness to the birth in this account are shepherds – some of the lowest of the low – as the gospel of Luke identifies Jesus as having a preferential option for the lowly ones. In the gospel of Matthew, Joseph and Mary are living in Bethlehem and give birth in their own house. They later flee to Egypt and then settle in Nazareth. The two towns need to be included in both accounts because they are named in some of the ancient prophecies about the Messiah. In the gospel of Matthew, the witnesses to the birth are wise men, dignitaries from another land. The Matthew writer wants to emphasise the 'kingship' of Jesus and it is fitting that foreign dignitaries present gifts on the birth of a king. The two stories deserve to be dealt with uniquely and should be unravelled from the muddled, entwined version that dominates our Christmas imagery.

Historical Context – The Magi: In some translations, the 'wise men' of this passage are referred to as 'Magi'. Magi was the name given to the Persian priestly caste. Persia (now, Iran) lies to the east of Israel. These wise men are also sometimes portrayed as astrologers, but that is largely because of the reference 'We saw his star as it rose'. It is interesting that the passage describes 'some' wise men; tradition has developed a specific number of three – based on the three gifts presented. These anonymous (and purely literary) figures have been given names and their 'relics' lie in honour beneath the Cathedral of Cologne.

Have you thought? – Epiphany: The feast of the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Jesus to humankind. The wise men are the representatives of humanity bearing witness to this revelation. However, the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Jesus as not only the Messiah of Israel but the Saviour of the whole world. Interestingly, in this gospel that emphasises the 'Jewish-ness' of Jesus, the witnesses to the birth are gentiles from a foreign land. Their inclusion is a powerful declaration that the revelation of Jesus is for all people. Regardless of the liturgical year, this reading is always used on the feast of the Epiphany to celebrate this pivotal moment.

Gospel Focus – Going home: The wise men, or Magi, are warned in a dream not to go back to Herod and they go home by a different way. How could they do anything but go home another way – indeed, go home as different people? They are changed by their encounter with the child Jesus and they go home a different way; in a different state; in a whole different frame of mind. When we genuinely encounter Jesus – in scripture, in life, in prayer, in ourselves – then we cannot go home the same way; we must go home by a different way as the Magi did.

REACH OUT IN ...

Whitehorse Deanery
Eastern Region
Archdiocese of Melbourne

Rev Father Gerard

Parish Priest

Sonya O'Farrell

Part-time Parish Secretary

Wednesdays,

Thursdays & Fridays

10.00am – 2.00pm

SUNDAY MASS

ST: & SL: Saturday Vigil @ 6.00pm

Sunday ST: @ 10.30am *Australian*

5.00pm – *Vietnamese*

& SL: @ 8.30am

WEEKDAY MASS & SL: ROSARY

ST: Weds. & Thurs. @ 9.15am

Fri. @ 10.00am

1st Wednesday of the month

@ 10.00am Mass of Anointing.

SL: Tues. @ 5.00pm

Wed., Thurs. & Fri. @ 9.30am

Sat. @ 9.00am

RECONCILIATION

SL: Saturday 9.30am – 10.00am &

5.30pm – 5.50pm

SL: EXPOSITION & BENEDICTION

The Blessed Sacrament is exposed
for Adoration Wednesday

Start: 7.00pm | End: 8.00pm

MACS Catholic Primary School

21 Stevens Road, Vermont, 3133 Vic

Tel: (03) 9878 4188

Ms. Anne Maree Jones **Principal**

Email: principal@sttims.catholic.edu.au

Website: <https://sttims.catholic.edu.au/>

MACS Catholic Primary School

46 Orchard Grove,

Blackburn South Vic 3130

Tel: (03) 9877 4023

Mrs. Clare Ryan: **Principal**

Email: principal@slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au

Website: slblackburnst.catholic.edu.au

Prayer to Saint Timothy

O God, who adorned Saint Timothy
with apostolic virtues, grant,
through his intercession that, living
justly and devoutly in this present
age, we may merit to reach our
heavenly homeland. Through our
Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who
lives and reigns with you in the
unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for
ever and ever. Amen.

*Patron Saint of stomach and intestinal
disorders.*

Prayer to Saint Luke the Evangelist

O St. Luke, you were chosen to reveal
in preaching and writing God's love
for the poor. Moved by the heavenly
Spirit of Love, you detailed the life of
Jesus, showing His divinity and His
genuine compassion for all human
beings. Help those who already glory
in God's name to persevere in one
heart and one mind and inspire all
people that they may hear the Good
News of Salvation. Amen

*Patron Saint of artists, physicians,
surgeons, students and butchers.*

WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER this weekend all who are sick, especially
Kit Bing Fan, Tony Keaney, Kathryn Holmes, Therese O'Donoghue,
Stewart Davis, Trevor Stowe, Jerry Donoghue, Margaret Hayes and all those
Parishioners unable to be among us this weekend. For all who have died
recently, especially Caroline Hogan and Leonie Makiol, for the casualties of
war in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza and for those whose anniversaries occur about
this time especially John Carman, Stefano Defina, Sophia Dunn, Noreen Rabel,
Fr. John O'Callaghan, Francis Borg, Robert Hammett, John Kennedy,
Dr. Triet Le, Patricia Duguid, Una Paramanathan, Dorothy Girling and
Linda Flynn. May they rest in peace.

LITURGICAL CALENDAR THIS WEEK: **Ordinary time ~ Monday:**
The Baptism of the Lord; **Saturday:** St Hilary, bishop, doctor; Mass of the Virgin
Mary. **Masses this weekend:** Preface of the Epiphany of the Lord I, Eucharistic
Prayer I; Eucharistic Acc. No. I.

EPIPHANY MEANING: a moment of sudden and great [revelation](#) or
[realisation](#).



REFLECTION BY DIANNE BERGANT CSA: The Christmas season
reaches an apex with the Epiphany. In some liturgical traditions, it is
the central celebration of Christmas. It commemorates not only the
birth of Christ and the visit of the Magi, but also his baptism in the
Jordan and the manifestation of his glory at the wedding feast of
Cana. In the Roman Catholic tradition, the focus is on the visit of the
Magi and the implications of that visit for the glorious manifestation
of God to all the peoples of the world. There is a wonderful summons
to alertness and presence of mind and heart, a call for all the nations
to witness the marvellous works of God that shine as light in the midst
of the surrounding darkness. The light of God is known in the ways in
which the most vulnerable in the city are cared for and
acknowledged. In just action and righteousness, the city becomes
the beacon of God, and all the nations are attracted by this light.
The quality of the light leads the way through the darkness and
sustains the world in goodness and peace. The manifestation of God
among us changes the ways in which we perceive each other.
Christ's birth provides us with the light by which we see a new criterion
for relating. The Magi represent the multi-ethnic and cultural diversity
in civic and parish situations, as well as the many religions of the
world. All people, regardless of race or ethnic origin, can be co-heirs
with Christ.

SL RITE OF PRESENTATION & WELCOME this weekend for
Benjamin Huang, son to Rachel and Adi. Please make them all welcome.

A VOCATION VIEW: God is not made manifest in magnificence, but in the
small and the ordinary. Use your talents to manifest God's ever faithful love for
His people. (Is. 60:1-6)

STEWARDSHIP CORNER: "They fell down and worshipped him. Then they
opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh."
- Matthew 2:11 Notice the order of events in the Magi's visit. First, they knelt
before Jesus and prayed to Him. Then they presented Him with their gifts. We,
too, must take time to pray before we present our gifts to the Lord. We never
know what God may be asking us to share! (**ST:** Weekly First Collection Presbytery
Envelopes: \$195; Thanksgiving Stewardship Envelopes this week: \$165; Vietnamese
Donation: \$280.40; **SL:** Last week's Church Stewardship Envelopes: \$473; Last week's
Presbytery Stewardship Envelopes: \$453).

WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS who have
walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge
the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the
ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

WEEKEND PARISH MINISTRY ROSTER

MINISTERS OF THE WORD

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Tony Lobo
	6:00 PM ST	Volunteer
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Joe Ferlazzo
	10:30 AM ST	Volunteer
	5.00PM ST	Hieu Nguyen & Dieu Nguyen

6 AND 7 JANUARY

13 AND 14 JANUARY

EXTRAORDINARY MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Ian Holmes
	6:00 PM ST	Volunteer
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Melina Barcellona
	10:30 AM ST	Volunteer
	5.00PM ST	Hung Dinh

6 AND 7 JANUARY

13 AND 14 JANUARY

SLIDE OPERATORS

SATURDAY	6:00 PM SL	Volunteer
	6:00 PM ST	Michelle Chen
SUNDAY	8:30 AM SL	Volunteer
	10:30 AM ST	Manny Gonzalez
	5.00PM ST	Toan Tran

6 AND 7 JANUARY

13 AND 14 JANUARY

SL WELCOMERS 6/7 DEC

6:00 PM Volunteer
8:30 AM Volunteer
10:30 AM Volunteer

SL CHURCH CLEANING

Roster in recess
for January

SL CHURCH FLOWERS

Roster in recess

ST CHURCH CLEANING

13th Jan. @ 2pm

ST CHURCH FLOWERS

January - Parishioners

ST COUNTERS

This week Team 4:
Mary Choy & Eileen Tam
Next week Team 5:
Anico Yee & Pabs Gonzales

HOSPITALITY

THE BASIC LITURGICAL MINISTRY

SL WELCOMERS 13/14 JAN

6:00 PM Volunteer
9:30 AM Volunteer
10:30 AM Volunteer

AGAIN, EXCERPTS FROM HOMILIES BY ARCHBISHOP

ROMERO: 'As The Magi from the East followed their star and found Jesus, who filled their hearts with boundless joy, let us too, even in hours of uncertainty of shadows, of darkness like those the Magi had, not fail to follow that star, the star of our faith . . .

Peace is not the product of terror or fear.

Peace is not the silence of cemeteries.

Peace is not the silent result of violent repression.

Peace is the generous, tranquil contribution of all to the good of all.

Peace is dynamism. Peace is generosity.

It is right and it is duty.

In it each one has a place in this beautiful family, which the Epiphany brightens for us with God's light.'

'God's reign must be established on earth. That reign of God finds itself hindered, manacled, by many idolatrous misuses of money and power. Those false gods must be overthrown, just as the first evangelisers in the Americas overthrew the false gods our natives adored. Today the idols are different. They are called money, they are called political interests, they are called national security. As idolatries, they are trying to displace God from his altar. The church declares that people can be happy only when, like the Magi, they adore the one true God . . .'

(Scott Wright, *Oscar Romero and the Communion of Saints: A Biography* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009], 71, 88)

SAFETY STATEMENT: We are committed to a safe and nurturing culture for all children and vulnerable persons in our Church. Saint Luke the Evangelist Parish Blackburn South holds the care, safety, wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as central and fundamental responsibilities of the Church. This commitment is drawn from and inherent to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ, with love, justice and the sanctity of each human person at the heart of the Gospel.

Love and Mercy: Mark 6: 32 - 34

Parish Groups & Contacts

Lectors, Registrars, Collectors,
Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist,
Slide Projector Operator & Rosters

ST: Corrie Quimbo 9412 8499

SL: Margaret Gearon 0409 807 135

Baptism Preparation

ST: Mary Italiano 9412 8499

Vietnamese Community

Hoang Nguyen 0422 400 116

Andy Tran 0422 382 109

Vietnamese Youth

John Dinh 0448 977 037

Parish Collection Preparers

ST: Barry Silvester &

Michael Kawalevski

Stewardship Counters

SL: Dale Dixon - 0433 885 087

Steve Kilroe-Smith - 0404 864 232

Parish Pastoral Council

As we are one Mission now, it has been suggested that we require only one Chair?

Parishes Safeguarding Committee

Theresa Nguyen, Mary Italiano,

Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Janette Clark - 9877 2292

Fr Gerard - 9877 2292

Parish History

SL: Margaret Gearon - 0409 807 135

Whitehorse Deanery - Fr Gerard

Finance Committee

Bernard Negline

Parish Accountant

SL: Hall Hire

Sonya O'Farrell @ the

Parish Office - 9877 2292

Church Sacristan

ST: Margaret King & Hoang Nguyen

SL: Greg Grant - 0401 644 474

Church Housekeeping

ST: Margaret King 9412 8499

Church Cleaning & Flowers

SL: Megan McLean - 0419 347 693

Church Linen

SL: Beryl Kanagalinggam

Parish Garden Maintenance

ST: Des Connors, Leo Watson,

Anico Yee & Vietnamese Community

SL: Darren McLean - 0417 774 504

Holy Communion to the housebound - Fr Gerard

Parish Choirs

ST: Mary Italiano & Theresa Nguyen

SL: Lina & Maria Mafi

0411 136 043

Parish & School Fete Committee

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Advisory Council

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

School Parents' Association

ST: Ms. Anne Maree Jones 9878 4188

SL: Mrs. Clare Ryan - 9877 4023

St Vincent de Paul Conference

For Assistance: 1800 305 330

(Freecall: Monday to Friday 10am-3pm)

Parish Contacts:

ST: John McCoy

SL: Tony Lobo &

Steve Kilroe-Smith

Raise your voices ... Entrance Antiphon: Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come; and kingship is in his grasp, and power and dominion.

Response to the Psalm: Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! We have seen his star in the East; and have come to adore the Lord. Alleluia!

Eucharistic Acclamation: We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: We have seen his star in the East, and have come with gifts to adore the Lord.

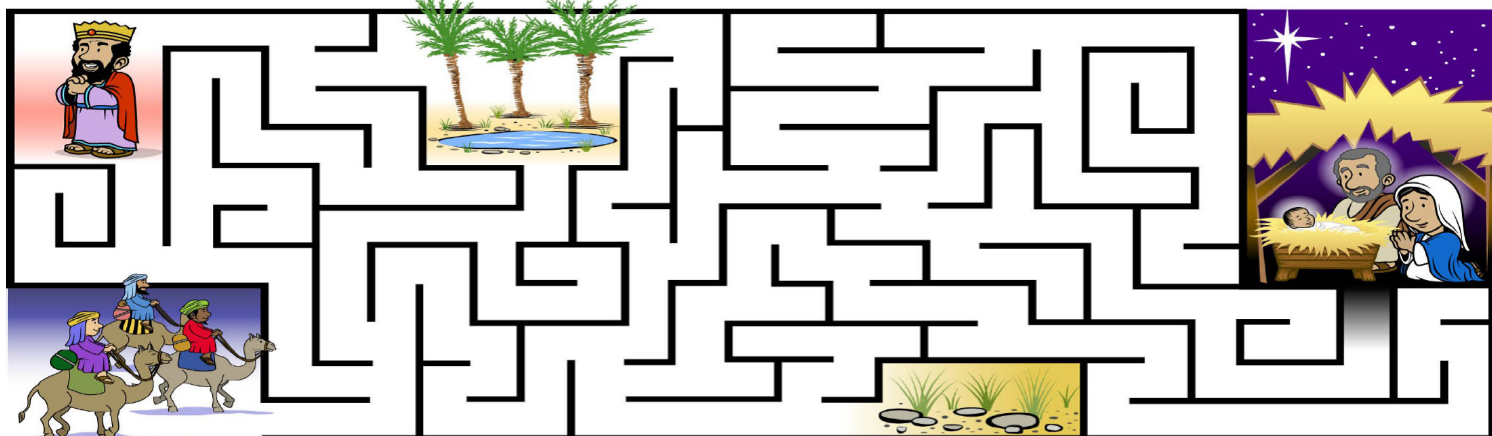
THE JOURNEY THIS WEEK – MANIFESTATION TO THE GENTILE NATIONS: Fr Mark De Battista says today we celebrate the manifestation of the Christ child to all the Gentile nations. Mother Hilda says there is a great spiritual message from an episode of fiction, Agatha Christie's character, Monsieur Poirot. Fr Tony Percy calls us to stop and think about that Gospel phrase; they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy upon seeing the star which then led them to the Christ child. Fr Sean Cullen says that by studying the life of Jesus, we can learn what the favour of God really means, and how it applies to each of us, and Trish McCarthy says that we too are called to share what God has done in our life to testify to the changes we've experienced with the help of the Holy Spirit. Plus, more great music!

Wise men came from the East

The Epiphany of the Lord



Help the wise men find their way to Bethlehem - watch out for King Herod!



The wise men had to search for Jesus.
Where are some of the places we
can find Jesus in our world today?

Draw yourself offering a gift to Jesus

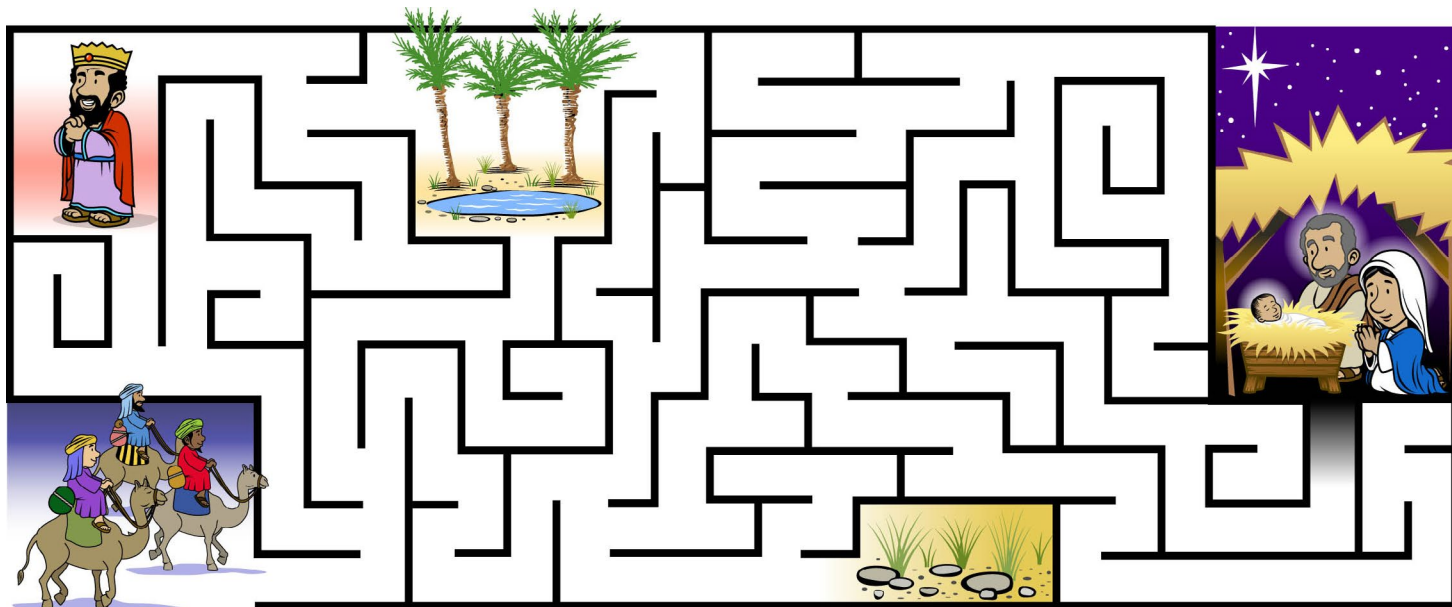


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SUNDAY READINGS

READ AT HOME

The Epiphany of the Lord

Year B

7 January 2024



Collect

May the splendour of your majesty, O Lord, we pray,
shed its light upon our hearts,
that we may pass through the shadows of this world
and reach the brightness of our eternal home.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Readings and Commentaries

The word “mystery” can mean many things. It can refer to something about which the facts are obscure. On the other hand it can refer to something which is so rich in meaning it can never be exhausted. It’s the latter usage that’s in play when we talk of “the mystery of the incarnation.” But there’s plenty of the first kind when it comes to Christmas and Epiphany. Where and when and how these feasts came to be observed still generates lively debate.

Given the wealth of associations that the Epiphany has had historically, especially in the Eastern Church, it’s quite surprising that the lectionary provides only one set of readings that is to be used every year. That makes the visit of the Magi the sole focus and ignores the other related “manifestations” of Jesus such as his birth, his baptism and the changing of the water into wine at Cana.

For all the exotic appeal of the story, the starlight that guides the Magi contrasts sharply with the darkness emanating from the court of Herod. Like Luke and John, Matthew wastes no time alerting his readers to the shadow cast by the cross even over the infant Jesus. As the searchers ask in T. S. Eliot’s famous poem, *The Journey of the Magi*, “Were we led all that way for Birth or Death?”

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

60:1–6

Arise, shine out Jerusalem, for your light has come,
the glory of the Lord is rising on you,
though night still covers the earth
and darkness the peoples.

Above you the Lord now rises
and above you his glory appears.
The nations come to your light
and kings to your dawning brightness.

Lift up your eyes and look round:
all are assembling and coming towards you,
your sons from far away
and daughters being tenderly carried.

At this sight you will grow radiant,
your heart throbbing and full;
since the riches of the sea will flow to you;
the wealth of the nations come to you;
camels in throngs will cover you,
and dromedaries of Midian and Ephah;
everyone in Sheba will come,
bringing gold and incense
and singing the praise of the Lord.

First Reading

One could well imagine this text being considered for the Christmas Midnight Mass. Even in the full blaze of day its opening summons still stirs: “Arise, shine out Jerusalem . . . the glory of the Lord is rising on you.” The jubilant spirit is sustained throughout, from the first words to the final phrase, “singing the praise of the Lord.” This joyful oracle is addressed to Jerusalem, but it is universal in scope. It envisages the holy city becoming the centre of the world. Not only will exiles return in gladness, but kings and nations will come to pay homage, bringing the wealth of the world with them. Matthew’s telling of the story of the Magi – foreigners coming from afar to acknowledge the one true God with gifts of gold and incense – is certainly in harmony with, if not directly inspired by, this prophetic vision. Readers should take the opportunity to proclaim this exuberant text with conviction and positive energy. Like Isaiah himself, they are announcing God’s own authoritative command to look with wonder at the revelation of divine glory. The affective tone of the reading grows stronger and stronger until the initial dawning of the light eventually discloses the tide of humanity streaming to Jerusalem with their gifts. The key thing for readers is to note that this is a fully-charged visionary poem, not a low-key narrative. They enter fully into its spirit and deliver it at a pace that allows the congregation to savour its richness. Naturally they will have checked the pronunciation of unfamiliar words.

Responsorial Psalm

Ps 71:1–2, 7–8, 10–13

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

O God, give your judgment to the king,
to a king’s son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgment. **R.**

In his days justice shall flourish
and peace till the moon fails.
He shall rule from sea to sea,
from the Great River to earth’s bounds. **R.**

The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts
shall pay him tribute.
The kings of Sheba and Seba
shall bring him gifts.
Before him all kings shall fall prostrate,
all nations shall serve him. **R.**

For he shall save the poor when they cry
and the needy who are helpless.
He will have pity on the weak
and save the lives of the poor. **R.**

Responsorial Psalm

Scattered through the Book of Psalms are several that are commonly called “royal,” in that they centre in one way or another on the person of the king. The king was understood to represent the people before God and in turn to rule over them in God’s name. These royal psalms pay tribute to the king and idealise his role. In fact the majority of kings whose stories are recorded in the Old Testament wantonly betrayed the trust placed in them. The psalms therefore point beyond any current occupant of the throne to a future ruler anointed by God. Christian believers identify this messiah with Jesus of Nazareth.

In Psalm 71/72 the king is praised for his wisdom, right judgment, eminence, protection of the weak and care of the poor. These are all attributes of the God of Israel whose rule the king is meant to mirror. The psalm echoes Isaiah’s oracle of a golden era, not for Jerusalem and its people however, but for the person of the king. The response – “Lord, every nation on earth will adore you” – reinforces this personal focus.

The psalm’s reference to kings bringing tribute anticipates the gospel and no doubt contributes to the legend that the Magi were kings. The two issues for readers to attend to are the pronunciation of the place names (“Tarshish,” “Sheba” and “Seba”) and the extra length of the third verse.

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians **3:2–3, 5–6**

You have probably heard how I have been entrusted by God with the grace he meant for you, and that it was by a revelation that I was given the knowledge of the mystery. This mystery that has now been revealed through the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets was unknown to any men in past generations; it means that pagans now share the same inheritance that they are parts of the same body, and the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel.

A reading from the holy Gospel **according to Matthew**

2:1–12

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of King Herod, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. 'Where is the infant king of the Jews?' they asked. 'We saw his star as it rose and have come to do him homage.' When King Herod heard this he was perturbed, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, and enquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 'At Bethlehem in Judaea,' they told him 'for this is what the prophet wrote:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah
you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,
for out of you will come a leader
who will shepherd my people Israel.'

Then Herod summoned the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. 'Go and find out all about the child,' he said 'and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.' Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they did him homage. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

Second Reading

In the verse preceding the text for today's feast, the author of Ephesians describes himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus." It's notoriously difficult to reconstruct a reliable chronology of Paul's life and letters, but references like this continue to persuade some scholars that Ephesians was written by Paul himself while he was imprisoned there. Others argue that it's a later work written by a disciple in Paul's name. Either way, the reading is Pauline in character, notably the author's claim to a personal revelation and apostolic mission.

The "mystery" revealed to Paul is two-fold in nature. The more specific reference is to the good news of non-Jews becoming heirs to the promises made to Israel. The other and broader reference is the whole of God's saving plan for humanity, now made known in Jesus Christ. Paul is spelling out the theological implications of the story Matthew tells in the gospel.

In this instance Paul's line of thought is relatively straight-forward, helped by the omission of his aside in verse 4. The language too is uncomplicated. However, as usual the sentences are long, with the central assertions extended by a number of subordinate clauses. Readers will need to proclaim the text with deliberation and to vary their tone to help the assembly distinguish between trunk and foliage. In sum, readers should aim to convey Paul's delight in sharing this revelation.

While the NRSV leaves the long sentences intact, it does set the reading out in short lines which would be worth examining. As usual it uses inclusive language.

Gospel

Matthew's account of the visit of the magi has all the ingredients of a gripping drama for stage or screen. Seekers from afar, mysterious signs, corruption at court, unwitting authorities, and a vulnerable target all make for an exciting story. Matthew, however, is not out to entertain his readers but to enlighten them.

He achieves three things at least. He identifies the Christ-child as the long-awaited messiah; he anticipates the apostles' mission to preach the good news to all nations (28:19); and he foreshadows the conspiracy that will succeed in executing God's anointed one.

A corollary of Matthew's story-telling success is the wealth of invention it has sparked ever since, especially about the number and identity of the magi (whom Matthew never names as kings) and about the meaning of their gifts. For all the charm of this creative imagination, it is important not to lose sight of Matthew's purpose.

Except for allusions in some Christmas carols, today is the only day in the annual cycle of readings that this story is told. Summer holidays may mean smaller congregations, but those who attend would be blessed to hear it proclaimed with flair and preached on with insight.

An alternative translation of the scripture readings is given here from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). This may be particularly useful for those in parishes which use the NRSV Lectionary.

EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

FIRST READING (NRSV)

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah 60:1–6

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.

SECOND READING (NRSV)

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians 3:2–3, 5–6

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.
In former generations
this mystery was not made known to humanity
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.

GOSPEL (NRSV)

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew 2:1–12

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.

Blessing for Epiphany

May God, who has called us
out of darkness into his wonderful light,
pour out in kindness his blessing upon us
and make our hearts firm
in faith, hope and charity.

Amen.

And since in all confidence we follow Christ,
who today appeared in the world
as a light shining in darkness,
may God make us, too,
a light for our brothers and sisters.

Amen.

And so when our pilgrimage is ended,
may we come to him
whom the Magi sought as they followed the star
and whom they found with great joy, the Light from Light,
who is Christ the Lord.

Amen.

And may the blessing of almighty God,
the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
come down on us and remain with us for ever.

Amen.

(Adapted from the Solemn Blessing for Epiphany, Roman Missal p 711)



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