

Epiphany 3rd January

Canticle - A Song of the New Jerusalem

**Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.**

**Arise, shine out, for your light has come,
the glory of the Lord is rising upon you.**

**Though night still covers the earth,
and darkness the peoples;**

**Above you the Holy One arises,
and above you God's glory appears.**

**The nations will come to your light,
and kings to your dawning brightness.**

**Your gates will lie open continually,
shut neither by day nor by night.**

**The sound of violence shall be heard no longer in your land,
or ruin and devastation within your borders.
You will call your walls, Salvation,
and your gates, Praise.**

**No more will the sun give you daylight,
nor moonlight shine upon you;**

**But the Lord will be your everlasting light,
your God will be your splendour.**

**For you shall be called the city of God,
the dwelling of the Holy One of Israel.**
Isaiah 60.1-3,11a,18,19,14b

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

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.**

New Testament Reading

Ephesians 3.1-12

¹I, Paul, am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – ²for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you,³and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵In 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: ⁶that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ⁷Of 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. ⁸Although 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, ⁹and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰so 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. ¹¹This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

Psalm 148.7-14

¹⁰ May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute, may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts.

¹¹ May all kings fall down before him, all nations give him service.

¹² For he delivers the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no helper.

¹³ He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy.

¹⁴ From oppression and violence he redeems their life; and precious is their blood in his sight.

¹⁵ Long may he live! May gold of Sheba be given to him. May prayer be made for him continually, and blessings invoked for him all day long.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Gospel Reading.

Matthew 2.1-12

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, ²'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.'³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶'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.'"⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared.

⁸Then 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.'⁹When 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. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On 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. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Sermon

The Epiphany

Bishop Clive's sermon for 3 January 2020

Isaiah 60:1-6 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12

I remember from my childhood how taking a photo used to be 'an event' in our family. My father had rather a nice camera but he wasn't really an enthusiast for photography, so when a family occasion came round and photos needed to be taken, there was a great hiatus as the camera's little blue book of instructions was sought, scrutinised and then re-scrutinised to try and identify the right settings. This approach was not ideal for spontaneous moments that needed to be captured, so as a result, our family history is sparsely recorded on film, with whole years' missing from the record.

How my father would have appreciated the camera on an iPhone. No book of instructions required. Just point and click! Better still, crystal clear images. And because most of us carry our phones with us wherever we go, there is no excuse for missing out on any special moment or occasion. Every year Jenny goes through our photos and compiles a family 'year book' – a digital photo album which records our most special times. And because of the quality of the photos, the magic of those moments and experiences is recreated.

I am sure that many of us will have our own albums, whether digital or not, which help us to relive those most special occasions in our lives, enabling us to remember how we felt, how our lives were touched by a particular occasion – whether it be a birth, wedding, graduation or confirmation ...

Today the Church celebrates the Feast of the Epiphany. It's good to remind ourselves of what we understand by 'an Epiphany'. It's an occasion when God reveals himself to us in a particular way – when he touches our life through the power of a particular experience.

In Ephesians 3: 2-3, St Paul makes reference to his great personal Epiphany, when God revealed Himself to Paul in dramatic fashion on the road to Damascus – not only bringing about Paul's conversion to Christianity, but also resulting in him being assigned a particular vocation, described here as a 'commission of God's grace'; namely to bring the gospel to the non-Jewish peoples.

But when the Church refers to 'The Epiphany' we are of course remembering and celebrating the visit of the wise men from the East to the infant Jesus. And in this instance too we are recalling how God touched those wise men through the power of their experience. They wouldn't have been able to capture a photographic image of the Holy Family but we can be sure that they carried with them a mental image of that scene for the rest of their lives, and we can imagine what a source of inspiration that would have been. When Matthew speaks of them returning to their country 'by another road' he may indeed be suggesting that their lives had fundamentally changed course as a result of the encountering the Christ child.

So what might it mean for us to celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany? Surely it has to be a second-hand experience, because we can't see the Holy family in the same way as the wise men, we can't channel the power of their experience...

Perhaps not, but today we can celebrate our own Epiphanies, our own moments, times of revelation. Today is a day for flicking through the album of our own faith journey. Whose are the faces we see, the people who, as we recall them, speak to us of God? Who have been our guiding stars? And what are the situations, events, conversations, that remain imprinted on our memory, because, through them, we felt that God had come close to us?

The 'album' of our faith is the most precious possession that we have because it is uniquely personal to us, a series of pictures, wither mental 'snapshots' or those in physical form, which represent key points in our journey of faith.

When I was a parish priest, one of the most privileged experiences was to visit the bereaved and to hear their accounts of the life of their loved one. Sometimes a photo album would be produced and then, as we flicked through it together, I would feel a deeper sense of connection with that person, a greater closeness, a greater depth of understanding of them and their life.

An Epiphany resolution that we might do well to consider, is to find opportunities, initially perhaps within our church families, to share with one another snapshots from our faith journeys. It might bring us closer together, deepening our understanding of one another. But it might also serve as a dry run for our own version of Paul's mission to the Gentiles, because talking about the power of God in our lives is the most effective form of evangelism. I often wonder why I need to preach at Confirmation services, because the most powerful form of evangelistic witness has already been given by those candidates who have given their testimony – speaking directly and powerfully of their experience of God's revelation in their lives and the life changing difference it has made. But it isn't for everyone to be able to give public testimony

Last year we gave a pocket version of our Year Book to my mother for Christmas, for her own enjoyment but also because we knew that she would want to share it with her friends. Not for nothing are small photo albums called 'Granny's boasting books' !

The challenge for us all is to find ways of 'boasting' (to use a word favoured by St Paul) of our faith, to those who have not yet experienced God's revelation in their lives. The challenge of finding a simple way of incorporating evangelism into our discipleship is not one that we can duck. For while St Paul may have had a very particular evangelistic commission from God, all baptised Christians are called to be faith super spreaders, finding ways to talk as naturally about our faith as my mother might do about her family.

We do not know how the wise men bore witness to their Epiphany though we certainly know how St Paul bore witness to his. The question for us, is how to bear witness to ours?

+Clive Wulfrun

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

ST MICHAEL

Those newly in need of prayer

Those in continuing special need of prayer:

Sam Bassett, Mark Berry, Elizabeth Chapman, Chris Clayton, Dorothy Clayton, Jo Cobb, Dottie Collins, Alison Cox-Toplis, Martin Dewes, Chris Dickerson, Sonia Doidge, Colin Eastwood, David Edge, Robert Harris, James Knight, Robert McAllester-Jones, Matthew and Emmeline and their parents, Ruth and Andrew Martel, Marielouise Oliver, Arthur Palin, Nick Rutter, Anthony Staples aged 7, John Tipper, Sheila Vaughan, Judith Watson, Renee Wellings, Peter and Anne Whatson, Felicity Woodfield, Jamie, Gary and Denise, Julian & Wendy,

Those who have died

Bill Hill

ST JOHN

Pat Crowe, Jo Hearn, Ann Kinson, Allan Law

Those who have died

Sean Drew

Post Communion Prayer

Lord God, the bright splendour whom the nations seek: may we who with the wise men have been drawn by your light discern the glory of your presence in your Son, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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CHURCH NOTICES

Dear All,

I want to say a big thank you to everyone who has contributed to our services at St Michael's and St John's over Advent and Christmas. Despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic and changing government regulations we have done much more than simply keep things going. We have maintained worship and kept our churches open but also offered new things such as the Bake and Drop and Walk Through Christingle which have been much appreciated. All of this helps to maintain our Christian fellowship but also reach out to others.

After recording over 30 Sundays Ron has decided to retire from recording readings and sermons each week. He has done a wonderful job and I know that many people are grateful for the recordings. Thank you for all your hard work Ron.

Our Zoom Sunday morning services for Remembrance and Advent worked very well and many people joined in. The feedback from a good number was that it is really good to be able to see faces of friends especially when we are in a lockdown.

If there is another lockdown and churches are shut, we will have two Zoom services on Sunday morning at 8am and 10am.

Once again thank you to everyone for everything that you are doing to help.

Happy New Year
Simon

WORSHIP BY ZOOM

Our regular zoom worship is on the first and third Sundays of each month.

Next regular services

Sunday 3rd January 2021 6pm

Sunday 17th January 2021 6pm

You can join the service from 5.45pm. The service will last about 40mins. ***If you have not had a link by Friday at 11am please contact the office***

office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk

MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2021 will be £8.50 payable by cheque to "P.C.C. of St, Michael and St. Mary". This will not be collected in the normal way by your deliverer. Please post it directly to me. Details are in the December and January magazine. Thank you for your cooperation Barbara Homewood Tel 255909

THE FOODBANK is always happy to receive gifts of

- Tinned meat and fish
- Tinned fruit and vegetables, soup and beans
- Rice pudding and custard
- Instant coffee, tea, sugar, long life milk and fruit juice
- Packets of cereals, biscuits and snacks
- Pasta, rice and pasta sauce
- Jam

Items should be **at least 3 months in date** or the Foodbank is not allowed to issue them. *Maggie and David_01543 255308*

PARISH DIARY

Sunday 3rd January

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St John's
6:00pm	Evening Worship	Zoom

Monday 4th January

All day **OFFICE CLOSED**

Tuesday 5th January

OFFICE CLOSED

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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Wednesday 6th January

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
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Thursday 7th January

All day **OFFICE CLOSED**

8:15am	Morning Prayer	Zoom
10:00am	Funeral: Sean Drew	St John's

Friday 8th January

Saturday 9th January

Sunday 10th January

8:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St Michael's
10:00am	Holy Communion	St John's