

THE ORATORY—dedicated to THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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Registered as a Charity

Parish Weekly Newsletter

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This newsletter is available in large-print format. Ask at the Sacristy.

January 4th 2009: THE EPIPHANY



EPIPHANY

Some people refer to the Epiphany as a "Little Christmas". Interestingly, however, it was for a long time a feast regarded as no less in rank than Christmas Day itself, and with an Octave of a higher rank even than that of Christmas.

Nowadays, sadly, it seems to be passed over and forgotten. Maybe this is either because its real meaning is not understood, or because the world is tired of Christmas celebrations, and wants only to get back quickly to "normal" life. As of two years ago, even we now generally celebrate the Epiphany on the first Sunday of the new calendar year, by which our Bishops hope the Feast will revive once more. But for all those who would still like to observe the Epiphany on its original day, we will once again be celebrating a High Mass according to the 1962 Missal on January 6th at 8 p.m. (see notices).

THE REVEALING OF GOD AS MAN

But what exactly is the Epiphany about? The Gospel of the Feast is the familiar account of the coming of the Magi to the infant Christ, and of their presentation of gifts to Him. Yet this is not the only event which is celebrated on this great day—the Eastern Church calls this feast the "*Theophany*", the "*Revelation of God*", which takes place in three stages: first to the Magi; secondly at Our Lord's Baptism; thirdly, in Our Lord's first miracle at Cana. These three events are quite far apart in time, of course, but they all speak of the **presence of God revealed in Christ's humanity**. We, too, observe all these events on the same day in the feast of the Epiphany, though not explicitly at Mass. It is at Vespers in the evening that you can hear the Antiphon sung at the *Magnificat*, proclaiming that these three mysteries are recalled together on this day.

AND THE MAGI?

Returning to the Coming of the Magi, there are a few things that are puzzling about them. First, there is their identity. Note that St. Matthew does not tell us that they are Kings, but "Wise Men", as we generally translate the word. We know that the "Magi" were a learned caste of Persian priests who specialised in astronomical observations. For the Magi, God showed Himself in the patterns of the stars and planets. When something extraordinary happened in the sky, like the new and bright star which appeared, they understood this to mean that God was sending them a message that He was doing something extraordinary on the earth. It then became their quest to find out what this message meant. Apart from St. Matthew's account, we know nothing definite about the star which led the Magi to Bethlehem. But this is why they are often described as "Wise Men", on account of their learning.

Secondly, how did the Magi come to be described as "Kings"? This comes about through the association with today's Old Testament reading at Mass from the prophet Isaiah, who foretells the future coming of kings to Jerusalem, and even of whole nations coming out of the east "bringing gold and incense". Also the Responsorial Psalm in today's Mass (from psalm 71) speaks of Kings from three places—Tarshish, Sheba and Seba—bringing gifts to the King of the Jews. Which leads to the next question:

Thirdly, what of the *number* of Magi? St. Matthew gives us no definite information, but apart from the reference above to three kings in psalm 71, it has reasonably been assumed throughout history that since St. Matthew mentions exactly three gifts, each was brought by one person. Moreover, the relics of *three* Magi, named traditionally as Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, can still be venerated in Cologne Cathedral.

Finally, what of the gifts themselves? We noted above that the prophet Isaiah had already foretold in today's first reading that gold and incense would be brought by foreign kings to Jerusalem. But myrrh is mentioned only in St. Matthew's Gospel. Myrrh is rare and therefore very costly, and was added to oil to give it a fragrance for anointing, especially for people of great rank or state, like kings. Like incense, myrrh comes from the east. On account of its strong scent it was also associated with funeral embalming. Hence from the time of the Church Fathers, the gift of myrrh was associated with preparing for Our Lord's future death.

Sunday January 4th: The Solemnity of the Epiphany (White)

- 8.30 a.m. **Low Mass**
- 9.30 a.m. **Latin Low Mass (1962 Missal:)** (2nd Sunday after Christmas)
- 10.30 a.m. **High Mass**
- 12.00 p.m. **(Families with young children)**
- 5.30 p.m. **Sung Congregational Mass**
- 7.30 p.m. **Solemn Vespers and Benediction**

Liturgical Calendar

Year 2 or B of the Lectionary at Mass and Psalter Week 2

Monday to Friday: Masses at 7.30 a.m., 12.45 p.m. and 5.45 p.m. Rosary at 7.45 p.m.
Confessions are heard from 12.30 p.m. and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass.

Monday January 5th: Feria of Epiphanytide. Optional Memoria of St Charles of Mount Argus, Priest. (White)

- *Blessing with St Philip's relic at 8 p.m.*

St Charles of Mount Argus (1821-1893) was a Dutch Passionist Priest who came to Staffordshire in 1852. From 1857 until 1866 he lived at the Passionist Monastery in Mount Argus, Dublin, where despite his poor grasp of the English language he was renowned as a friend of the poor, a confessor and a healer. After another spell in England he returned to Dublin in 1874, this time for good. He was canonised in 2007.

Tuesday January 6th: Feria of Epiphanytide. (White).



- *Mass for the children of the Oratory Primary School at 9.30 a.m.*
- *High Mass according to the 1962 Missal to celebrate the Epiphany at 8 p.m.*

Wednesday January 7th: Feria of Epiphanytide. (White) Optional Memoria of St Raymond of Penyafort, Priest. (White)

St Raymond (1175-1275) became a priest in his native city of Barcelona, then studied law in Bologna and became a famous preacher. He joined the Dominicans in 1222 and was then asked by Pope Gregory IX to bring order and unity to the Church's system of Canon Law. After returning to Barcelona he was appointed Master General of the Dominicans and devoted much of his time to procuring the freedom of slaves. During his time in Rome he had heard many accounts of the difficulties faced by Missionaries, particularly dealing with non-Christians in North Africa and Southern Spain. He therefore established schools to teach Arabic and Hebrew. He was known as a compassionate man devoted to Our Lady. He is the Patron Saint of Canon Lawyers.

Thursday January 8th. Feria of Epiphanytide. (White).

Friday January 9th. Feria of Epiphanytide. (White).

Saturday January 10th. Feria of Epiphanytide. (White).

- *Mass at 8 a.m. and 11 a.m.*
- *Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament from 8.30 to 10.45 a.m.*
- *Benediction at 10.45*
- *Confessions from 10.55 a.m. to 12 noon and from 5.30 p.m. until the end of Mass*
- *First Mass of the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord: at 5.45 p.m.*

Sunday January 11th: The Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord (White)

Mass & Service Times:

- **8.30 a.m. Low Mass**
- **9.30 a.m. Latin low Mass (1962 Missal)**
- **10.30 a.m. High Mass**
- **12.00 p.m. (Families with young children)**
- **5.30 p.m. Sung Congregational Mass in English**
- **7.30 p.m. Vespers and Benediction**

Please pray for the sick Peter Burt, Kim Potter, Raymond Colquhoun, Margaret McKenna, Angela Davis, Maureen Reedy, Marie-Therese Jones, Margaret Casey and Carole Halls.

Of your charity please pray for the repose of the souls of those who have died recently: Michael Shiels and Kathleen Devere; **and of the souls of those whose anniversaries occur about now:** John Chavasse, Mabel Reeves and Dorisa Cozzi

Michael Shiels's funeral will take place on Friday, January 16th at 12.45. Followed by burial at Quinton.

Reception of remains: Thursday, January 15th at 4.30 p.m.

The following are requested to read at Mass next weekend, January 9th/10th, Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord:

Saturday 5.45 p.m.: Brigid Hogan
Sunday 8.00 a.m.: Margaret Hawkins
12.00 p.m.: Eamon Grant
5.30 p.m.: Jason Mahoney

Collections:

Feast of the Holy Family, 2th December:
Offertory: £1,495.00
Second: Diocesan Development Fund: £318.00
Thank you

The second collection today will be the Diocesan Pro-Life Collection.

The Crib collection is for the Apostles of Jesus Seminary at Bukinda in Uganda

TODAY

The SECOND COLLECTION is the annual Diocesan Pro-Life Charity Collection for "Life".

The ORATORY CHRISTMAS PRIZE DRAW: Please note that all tickets stubs and money must be handed in no later than 6 p.m. Tomorrow, Monday 5th January.

The PIETY STALL is open after all Sunday Masses. **GIFT VOUCHERS** are now available. **The new Diocesan Catholic Directory** is also on sale.

THIS WEEK

THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY may be observed, out of devotion, on the traditional date, 6th January at the High Mass according to the 1962 Missal at 8 p.m.

CHRISTMAS PRIZE DRAW After the High Mass at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, January 6th, the annual Christmas Prize Draw will take place in the Lower Cloister Hall.

ADORATION AT REDNAL resumes this coming Wednesday, January 7th, beginning with Mass at 2.30 p.m.

Our TALKS on ST PAUL & HIS TEACHINGS take place on Saturday mornings in the Lower Cloister Hall after the

11 a.m. Mass (approx 11.30 a.m.) and recommence following the Christmas break this coming Saturday, January 10th, when Fr. Gregory will speak on "St. Paul and the Church".

AGM OF THE WALSHINGHAM ASSOCIATION takes place next Saturday in the Lower Cloister Hall at 2.30 p.m.

NOTICES

THE NATIVITY TRAIL: an exhibition of paintings on the theme of Christmas and the Epiphany, is still on view at the Art Gallery in Victoria Square until Tuesday, 6th January, the traditional date of the Epiphany. If you have not already seen it, it is worth a visit. There are many beautiful paintings to be seen there, from many centuries and artists all telling different aspects of the Christmas Story. Entry is FREE.

NEXT WEEKEND there will be the annual WHITE FLOWER retiring COLLECTION for the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children.

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN please remember that St. Philip's Chapel is available to you at Sunday morning Masses. There are lovely children's books available there to help arouse or keep your children's interest!