



Holy Family Parish Northeast Mallee

northeastmallee@ballarat.catholic.org.au 03 50324144

Website: northeastmallee.org.au

Incorporating the Communities of St Mary's Sea Lake, Sacred Heart Culgoa, St Michael's Lalbert, St Joseph's Nandaly, S's Peter & Paul Quambatook & St Mary's Swan Hill as well as the Lake Boga Families & Faith Group



7TH JANUARY 2024: THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD



This week we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany; God's presence is revealed to all the world. The Child Jesus is God-here-among-us, and he is to be a Light to all the Nations!

Just consider the story of the Magi for a moment; they tell Herod that 'we saw his star as it rose'. Now, we usually imagine a big whopping star hanging over Bethlehem, because that is what we see in artwork. And there is some truth in that depiction. It is just like how the baby Jesus is often depicted as shining light onto those around him... these depictions in art depict the deeper truth that Jesus is our Light, and that he shines brightly in

our hearts. But let's go back to the story for a moment. Herod and his advisors are blindsided by the Magi's arrival. In other words, the Magi have noticed something that Herod and many others have missed. Does a stunningly bright star fit that story? No, otherwise everyone would have noticed it.

Instead, the story suggests something far more subtle; these Magi are skilled and dedicated observers of the night sky. Perhaps it was something in the movement of a planet or comet, perhaps one crossing or meeting with a significant constellation (like the Great Lion), and perhaps this then made them think of the Kingdom of Judah and so they 'followed' it to Jerusalem. That is all just conjecture, but the deeper point of the story is this; they were able to find and recognise Jesus for who he was, even when others were still blind to his presence. The signs that led them there were available to everyone, but the Magi had the open hearts to begin the search, the wisdom to read the signs, the dedication to pursue those signs all the way through to the end, and finally the humility to fall down in homage once they had got there. And so, they became the first to 'see' what others had missed. But the great news is this; millions upon millions have since followed after them. We are part of that same story; we too have to work hard to read the signs that are all around us, we too have to persevere through times of darkness and doubt, we too even have to swallow our pride at times, so that we too can come to know God's presence to us in Jesus.

HOUSE BLESSINGS FOR THE EPIPHANY

The Feast of the Epiphany is traditionally held as a special time to call on God's blessing over our households for the year ahead. The Magi risked all and worked hard to follow the light of the star. May we set our hearts on Christ and his ways. And following the light, the Magi found God, present to all the world in the child Jesus.

So too may we recognise God's loving presence in our own homes today.

Like last year, we will bless some chalk and prepare some prayers for you to take home as a family. Christ is revealed as the Light to draw all peoples together. May his light shine brightly in our homes that they may be beacons of love and peace!

Parish Contact Details:

Po Box 71 Swan Hill, Vic 3585

Phone: 03 5032 4144

northeastmallee@ballarat.catholic.org.au

Website: northeastmallee.org.au

Office Hrs: Tues, Wed and Fri 10:30 -2:30

Parish Priest

Fr James Kerr

Parish Office:

Glenda Klabbers & Mary Kennedy

Child Protection Officers:

Damian and Karen Kelly

Child Safe Church

Here in the Parish of Holy Family North East Mallee we follow the Child Safe Standards outlined by the Victorian Government and we also implement procedures and standards as directed by the Ballarat Diocesan Office.



PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS

RECENT DEATHS+

Vince Tripodi
Charlie "Billy" McClelland
Joe Saraceno
Antoinetta Barresi

ANNIVERSARIES OF DEATH

Trish McGrath, Mary Stemmer, Elizabeth Loader
Margaret Cleary, John McLoughlin,
Annie & Ken Dwyer, Frank & Theresa Shiels
Betty Borchard, John Rogers, Ralph Jones,
Florentino Aranas, Jenny Leonardi,
Rhonda Coughlan, Felicia Foott, Domenic Bartalotta
Marie LeDeux, Bill Hogan, Tania Foott

SICK LIST

Yvonne Richardson, Paul Donohue,
Jayden Williams, Margaret Foott,
Jarrod Crimmins, Michael Bourke, Jack Donohue,
Jude Lewis, Susan, Yvonne Annan,
Bridget Phyland, Carmel Ryan,

**THIS WEEKEND (6/7TH JAN)
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD**

Saturday: 6:00pm Swan Hill

NO MASS Sea Lake

Sunday: 10:30am Swan Hill

WEEKDAYS IN SWAN HILL

Monday **1.30pm Funeral Prayers Rex Delmenico**

Also Mass 5:30pm (Feast of the Baptism of Jesus)

Tuesday **10.30am Funeral Mass Joe Saraceno**

Wednesday 10am

Thurs: **10:30am Funeral Mass Antonietta Baressi**

Confessions 5pm, Mass 5:30pm, Adoration

Friday: **9am Mass**

Sat 13th Jan: **1:30pm Memorial Mass Vince Tripodi**

NEXT WEEKEND (13/14TH JAN)

2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Saturday 6:00pm Swan Hill

Sunday 8.30am Quambatook

Sunday 10.30am Swan Hill

Sunday 5pm Nandaly

NOTICES



**STILL AVAILABLE:
COLUMBAN CALENDARS,
GOD'S WORD**

**Columban Calendars @\$10 each
Gods Word 2024 \$20 each
All available from the office.**

SEMINARIAN VISIT

This coming week we welcome seminarians Simon and Channa for a special visit to our Parish. Simon has joined us from Nigeria and Channa from Sri Lanka in order to study for our Diocese. Perhaps you might like to invite them around for some good Mallee hospitality? Just let Fr James know!



SCRIPTURE AND (SMALL T) TRADITION

Just a short word on the 'Three Kings'. Much of what we say about them belongs to what we might call 'small t' tradition; names, stories and related practices handed down that don't really belong to our deposit of faith (i.e. you aren't asked to hold or believe them) and yet, in their own way, can still help us to focus on the deeper truth the Gospel is seeking to reveal. The blessing with chalk (see front page) is one obvious example; you certainly don't have to do it, but it can become a special moment of faith and blessing for your family if you chose to take it up in the right spirit. And most of what we hear about the numbers, stories and names of the Magi also belong to this same category.

If you read Matthew's Gospel, you will see it doesn't actually say how many Magi there were. In a simple sense the number '3' comes from the three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Could there be more? Quite possibly. But as we can't know for sure, three is as good a number as any.

Neither are the visitors actually named as 'Kings'. That comes from earlier prophecies of foreign kings

Our Parish Schools

St Mary's Primary School Sea Lake

Principal: Kate Nunn
47 Hannon Street, Sea Lake
Ph: 03 5070 1272

Principal@smsealake.catholic.edu.au

St Mary's Primary School Swan Hill

Principal: Kate Quin
2 Murlong St Swan Hill
Ph. 03 5033 2541

principal@smswanhill.catholic.edu.au

St Mary MacKillop College

Principal: Michelle Haeusler
53 McCrae Street, Swan Hill
Ph: 5032 9771

Principal@mackillopsh.vic.edu.au

coming from the ends of the earth to adore the Lord, just as we hear today in Isaiah 60 and Psalm 71. While Matthew himself refers to the visitors as Magi, or Wise Men, it is almost certain he had these Old Testament passages in mind when writing his Gospel. And either way you name them, the basic meaning is preserved; the visitors represent all the nations being drawn together by the Light of Christ.

Which comes to the next point; Matthew does not tell us where the Magi come from. That is deliberate. Their origins are left open as an invitation to see our own people represented there in Bethlehem. Many ancient traditions across the Church do just this. Persia and Babylon are often named, but sometimes also Ethiopia, Arabia, India and even China too. We can't know for sure, but trade routes existed at the time that did make such far flung points of origin possible. It is deliberately open-ended, leaving us all the room to imagine ourselves right there, alongside the Magi, following the Light to find Jesus, and recognising in him God's presence among us.

And lastly the names. Matthew doesn't give us any, but a very ancient tradition going back some 1500 years names them as Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar. Again, we can't know for sure, but the names are as good as any. And those names, as far as we can gather, carry meanings too; Melchior likely means 'my king is light' or 'City of the King', Caspar 'Treasurer' and Balthazar 'God protects the King'. The names therefore point again to the great mystery we celebrate today; Christ has come as King, a Light to all Nations. In him do we find our greatest Treasure.

HAVE YOU THOUGHT?

Why does Herod appear to take a great interest in the birth of Jesus?

What might Mary and Joseph have thought to see the wise men bringing gifts to their baby?

In what way was the journey of the wise men a journey of faith?

What is the significance of the wise men presenting earthly 'treasures' to the Christ child?

Whether or not the wise men are a purely literary device, what 'truth' does their story convey?

In what ways do you 'bear witness' to Jesus?

READINGS NEXT WEEK:

2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

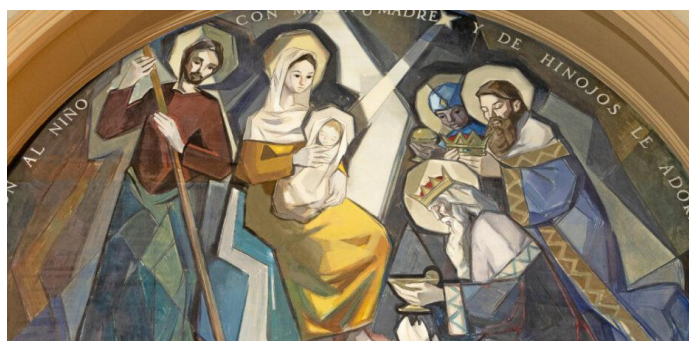
First Reading: 1 Samuel 3:3-10.19

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:13-15. 17-20

Gospel: John 1:35-42

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.

FIRST READING *Isaiah 60:1-6*

*A reading from the prophet Isaiah
The glory of the Lord shines upon you.*

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 your 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.
The Word of the Lord. ALL: Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 71:1-2. 7-8. 10-13, R. see v.11*
(R.) Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

O God, give your judgement to the king,
to a king's son your justice,
that he may judge your people in justice
and your poor in right judgement.
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.
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.
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.)**

SECOND READING *Ephesians 3:2-3. 5-6*
A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians
The revelation means that pagans now share the same inheritance, that they are parts of the same body.

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 that the same promise has been made to them, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel.

The Word of the Lord. ALL: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *Matthew 2:2*

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

GOSPEL *Matthew 2:1-12*

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew
We have come from the East to worship the king.

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.
The Gospel of the Lord. ALL: Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

May the Epiphany
remind us of the good
news of Christ.

