



St Francis of Assisi

Parish Newsletter

".....we can celebrate the most beautiful Christmas ever. In one of your woods, in Greccio, there is a cave similar to that of Bethlehem. I would like to represent the Christmas scene and see with our eyes, the poverty in which the Child Jesus came into the world. I want to see how he was placed in a crib and lay there between the ox and the donkey".

St Francis of Assisi.

St Francis of Assisi.



ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Grove Crescent Road, Stratford, London, E15 1BJ

SUNDAY CYCLE: B (MARK)

WEEKDAYS CYCLE: II

7TH JANUARY 2024

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD



The Magi have been following the star, the mysterious sign in the skies, and they now bow down humbly before the Christ Child offering prayer and gifts. We thank God for his graciousness and giftedness to each one of us.

Today's Readings

Isaiah 60:1-6: Arise, shine out Jerusalem, for your light has come.

Response to the Psalm: All nations shall fall prostrate before you, O Lord.

Ephesians 3:3-6: All people share in the promise and salvation of God.

Matthew 1:1-2: And falling to their knees, they did him homage.

"We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage"

Matthew wrote his gospel for a Jewish group of Christians, to show that Jesus was the fulfilment of their longings for a Messiah (see genealogy, Mt 1:1-17). He also wanted to show that God's salvation would reach "to the end of the earth" (Is 49:6). Matthew signalled this intention by telling about gentiles, strangers, coming to visit the Holy Family in Bethlehem. These "wise men" (Greek: "magi", "astrologers") believed that a new star indicated the birth of a new ruler, and they had observed his star at its rising. The magi came from the East, where the sun rises, and the star guided them to Jesus, the true light that was to come into the world. When they arrived in Jerusalem, they asked King Herod the Great where they could find the new-born king of the Jews. Herod's advisers told him that the prophet Micah had foretold the birth of a Messiah in Bethlehem, the birthplace of David where David was also anointed king. Fearing that this child would be a threat to his throne, Herod sent the magi to search for the new-born king on the pretence of offering him homage. The star illuminated the way to the Christ child and to Mary his mother. The magi offered the child gifts that signified his kingship (gold), his priesthood (frankincense), and his saving death (myrrh, used in anointing the dead). The magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, so they returned 'by another way'. We are all invited to discover the Lord.



However, after encountering Christ, we cannot return to our old ways. We've got to travel in a different direction--the path that leads to him. **NOTE:** The word "epiphany" means a 'manifestation' or an appearance of a supernatural being. There are three 'manifestations associated with 'The Epiphany': The **manifestation** to the pagans at 'The coming of the Magi; the Baptism of Jesus when the heavens were torn open and the voice from heaven **manifested** Jesus as "My Son, the beloved; my favour rest on you"; and the Wedding at Cana, in Galilee when his power was **manifested** by his first miracle. Because the magi brought three gifts, legend made them "three kings," on the assumption that none of them would be so 'unwise' as not to bring a gift! They were given the names of Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY:

WEDNESDAY 10TH JANUARY 2024- NIGHT SHELTER.

SATURDAY 17TH FEBRUARY 2024 – VALENTINES DAY DANCE – LARAGE HALL – DETAILS TO FOLLOW.

SATURDAY 25TH MAY 2024 – PILGRIMAGE TO WALSINGHAM – DETAILS TO FOLLOW

Pray for those who have died, and those whose Anniversaries occur around this time, also, please pray for the sick, and, remember

the People of Ukraine, and the people Japan following the devastating earthquakes. We also pray for peace in the Holy Land.

EPIPHANY

7TH JANUARY 2024:

2pm - Prayers around the Crib followed by a get-together in the Hall with Mince Pies and Mulled Wine.



FEAST OF THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Monday 8 January 2024.

Mark 1:7-11 (Isaiah 55:1-11; Psalm 29; 1 John 5:1-9)

“You are my Son the beloved; my favour rests on you”



The baptism of Jesus is another “epiphany,” or divine manifestation. The word baptism comes from a Greek word baptizo, which means to plunge, or to be submerged in water. Christian baptism is very different from the Jewish ritual washings or cleansings, which were self-administered and could be repeated many times. Christian baptism is administered by another person and happens only once in a lifetime. At the heart of Christian baptism is dying to one way of living and then rising to a whole new way of life. In baptism, the elect are plunged into the death and resurrection of Christ. By submitting to baptism Jesus embraced our full humanity. God's beloved Son sanctified the foul waters of our sinfulness by his divine presence. Just as God's favor rested on Jesus, all God's children are beloved sons and daughters. **NOTE:** *Baptism forgives all sin and incorporates one in the life of the Trinity. Believers are given a share in the divine nature. In addition, baptism makes you a member of the Body of Christ and of the visible manifestation of that body, the Church, and provides for us a share in the mission of Jesus. Water is the main symbolic element that conveys the sacrament of baptism, along with the words, “I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” That triple plunging or immersing under the water symbolizes dying to the old self. Coming up out of the water corresponds to being born anew in Christ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1239-40).*

NOTE 2: DID JEWS BAPTIZE BEFORE

JESUS CAME? *Ritual washings were practiced by various groups in Palestine between 150 BC and AD 250. Jews practiced many kinds of water purifications Jewish Priests washed themselves ritually before exercising any sacred function.*

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People had to be purified with water to prepare them for worship. The Qumran community near the Dead Sea practiced many daily water purifications (John the Baptist may have been a member of this ascetic community). In the gospels, there is the baptism of John baptizing Jesus, and there is the baptism in the name of Christ in the Church. They are two distinct things. Christian baptism is an identification with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The baptism of John was a Jewish washing. Throughout Jewish history, it was traditional for Jews to demonstrate repentance through washing ceremonies. John was preaching repentance for the coming of God's reign. The people who accepted that message and desired to repent came to John. The internal conversion of their heart was demonstrated externally in their baptism in anticipation for the arrival of Messiah. It was a baptism of repentance, and so it was Jewish baptism.

CONFIRMATION 2024

There is a meeting on Friday 12th January 2024 for all Confirmation Candidates at 7pm in the Large Hall.

SEASONS

After the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on Monday, the Crib and Christmas Tree are taken down and from Tuesday this week we have **Week 1 in Ordinary Time. Cycle B (Mark)** in the Lectionary. Cycle II weekdays. Liturgical colour: Green. Just 5 weeks till **Lent!** – about 10 weeks to **Holy Week and Easter.**

HOLY HOUR –



Eucharistic Adoration - every Saturday at 10.30am (after 10am Mass).

Monday to Friday 12:15. Tuesday, after Mass, St Anthony Novena.
Saturday: Morning Prayer: 9:40am Mass 10am followed by Holy Hour
Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 11:30am.
Confession: Saturday: 10:30am - 11:30am & 5pm –5:45pm
Sunday: 6pm Saturday, **9am, 10:15am, 12 noon & 4:30pm** (Ukrainian).
Fr Michael O'Grady, OFM (Parish Priest)
Fr Brian McGrath, OFM
Fr Yusuf Bagh, OFM
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