

Wednesday 1st January 2025

THE *Wednesday*
WORD



Encountering Christ

The Wednesday Prayer Custom for Homes, Schools & Parishes

Prayerfully preparing for Sunday Mass with special prayers for our school families



Set aside 10-15 minutes and create a suitable environment by removing any distractions. Make sure that you are comfortable. Perhaps light a candle. Make the sign of the cross and remain still for a minute of settling silence.



Remember that through this scripture our Lord is truly present. Read the Gospel, aloud and slowly, and pay attention to any words that stand out. If any do, meditate on them for a few minutes and be invited into a dialogue with God.

1

Read

The Gospel for Sunday 5th January 2025

THE COMING OF THE MAGI

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.

Taken from Matthew 2:1-12 The Epiphany, Year C

2

Reflect

After reading the Gospel, did any words stand out? If they did, ponder or discuss them before proceeding with the reflection.

After spending a few minutes considering this Gospel, continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection.

The contrast is overwhelming: Herod, the King of the Jews, the nation prepared since all ages to welcome the coming of God to set all things right, fails to recognise the coming of the Lord. Herod is so blind as even to make every attempt to liquidate this child who heralds the completion of history and of Jewish hopes. By contrast the trio of wise men from the East, the traditional home of natural wisdom, show their conviction that the turning-point of history has arrived by journeying over desert and mountain to welcome and pay homage to the Lord. The evangelist is clear that this is the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy of the coming of peoples from the East to worship the Lord. Especially in eastern Christianity, the festival of the Epiphany (rather than the birthday of Jesus) is regarded as a celebration of the manifestation of Christ to the world. 'Manifestation' is the meaning of the Greek word 'Epiphany': it was first used of the public 'manifestation' of the Roman emperor on a state visit, for he was regarded as a deity to whom worship and adoration were due. **What are we celebrating on this Feast of the Epiphany? Why is Epiphany a high point during the season of Christmas?**

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

3

Respond & Request

Now slowly and prayerfully read the Gospel once again but this time in silence. Consider how this Gospel could apply to your life in general. Thank God for any insight you may have received.

Then ask God to bless you with a spiritual gift to help you act on any resolution you have made. Perhaps: love, hope, understanding, wisdom, faithfulness, peace, patience, humility, joy, forgiveness, self-control, courage, generosity, faith or something else.

4

Pray for Families

This Wednesday's word for our school families is GUIDANCE!

After praying for your loved ones, please remember to pray for our present and future Church, particularly for the families connected to our schools. You may want to conclude this special weekly time with a simple prayer such as:

St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church, pray for us. Mary, Star of Evangelisation, pray for us. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

**The Jubilee
Year of Hope**

Share the Prayer: Why not forward a digital copy of this Parish Version to your friends? Also, to see a sample of your primary school's *Family Version*, visit: wednesdayword.org

WEDNESDAY WORD PLUS †

Fr Henry's reflections on the first and second readings of **Sunday 5th January 2025**



1st Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6

The Glory of the Lord Has Risen 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 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.



Many of the most glorious passages in the liturgy are taken from this third part of Isaiah, written after the return of Israel from captivity in Babylon. They are full of optimism and a new self-confidence. What is more, they show an awareness of Israel's mission to the world. This awareness had already been implied in God's promise to Abraham that 'all nations will bless themselves in him' – and is picked up by Mary in her Magnificat. But now there is a new understanding: God's choice of the people of Israel was not just for themselves, but so that they could bring light to all the nations. This is expressed in terms of the sunrise which suddenly brings light to a grey world. All the people need to do is simply to lift up their eyes and see the throngs of peoples eagerly coming from the remote deserts to draw salvation from Israel. How aware are we that our mission too is to bring light and salvation to a darkened world, that the message of God's love entrusted to us is given to us not only for ourselves but for all?

How do we (the Church, the people of God) bring the light of the Lord to all those around us?



2nd Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3. 5-6

The Climax of Creation

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 message of the Letter to the Ephesians is that the mystery hidden from the beginning of the ages has in Christ at last been revealed. In the first century there was great expectation of a defining and transforming event. In Christ this event had taken place. In his earlier letters Paul had already referred to it. Now two other dimensions have become clear. The division between Jews and gentiles is no longer valid, for in Christ all nations are summoned to the salvation promised to Abraham. This was only the completion of the promise that in Abraham all nations would bless themselves. Secondly, in Christ creation was brought to its completion. Just as all creation was created in Christ, the Word and Wisdom of the Father, just so all creation was summed up and brought to a head in Christ. As Christians we believe this, but to what extent do we live by it? Do we see all creatures, and especially all human creatures, as united with us and making sense only in Christ, even if they do not realise it? What confidence and joy this should give us!

What is the "mystery" spoken about in this letter and how do we make that "mystery" known?



In Christ all nations are summoned to the salvation promised to Abraham.



The Wednesday Word Connecting Home, School & Parish through the Word of God

**The Wednesday Word is under the patronage of St Joseph, Patron Saint of Families and Protector of the Church
Within the tradition of the Catholic Church, each Wednesday is dedicated to St Joseph**