

The Catholic Parishes of Branxton and Singleton are part of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

The Epiphany of the Lord, Year B

7 January 2024

First Reading

Is 60:1-6

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

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
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. *(R.)*

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. *(R.)*

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. *(R.)*

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

Eph 3:2-3, 5-6

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians.

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
Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

Lk 1:38

Alleluia, alleluia!

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

Gospel

Mt 2:1-12

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

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
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.



**REFLECTION
BY FR MICHAEL TATE**

Stars and Seekers after Truth

Unlike the writers of the horoscope columns in our newspapers, these Wise Men were scholar astrologers, probably from Syria or Iraq. They believed that the stars controlled the destiny of human beings, but they were open enough to the Hebrew scriptures to be led to the amazing discovery of a star-child in Bethlehem.

They knelt before this baby, doing homage, because they realised that the stars did not control *this* infant, but that there was something of this baby which caused the night sky to respond! They preserved the child from the deadly schemes of Herod, and then they returned to their home country, 'by a different way'. They were on a different journey after encountering the Child.

Who can doubt that the Holy Spirit led these wise men from the East to the manger? In fact, the Holy Spirit is at work in every human being, prompting each and every one to become seekers after Truth.

As a person responds to this prompting and tries to lead a good humane life, then the Church teaches that the Holy Spirit can draw them into the saving life of God. Thus, billions in China and India who have never heard the Gospel, can be saved. But, such persons do not savour the fullness of Truth as we do with the privilege of having the scriptures and the sacraments. Where it is possible, we are obliged to offer them the road map to the Truth.

We can take a moment to affirm our faith in the baby in the manger as the One of whom Dante spoke: 'the Love which moves the sun and other stars'. Come, let us adore him.

© Fr Michael Tate; mtate@bigpond.com.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:
Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come; and kingship is in his grasp, and power and dominion.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON:
We have seen his star in the East, and have come with gifts to adore the Lord.

NEXT WEEK'S SCRIPTURES
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B
1st Reading: 1 Sm 3:3-10, 19
2nd Reading: 1 Cor 6:13-15, 17-20
Gospel: Jn 1:35-42

MYSTERY OF FAITH
When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death O Lord until you come again.

Prayer Requests

Sick: Lorraine Cooper, Phuong Ho, Ron Hebbe, Austin Hoffman, Warren Markham, Jen Phillips, Olga Roberts, Selene Maree Stanholm-Atkins and Sharon Wood. **Bring healing, comfort, and peace to their bodies. Send strength to their carers.**

Anniversaries: Brian Tierney, Ann Payne, Pamela Davy. **Having returned to the Father, may they rest in peace.**

Baptisms: Piper Roberts (Branxton) and Elaiah Thompson (Singleton). **Called by name to be a child of God.**

Due to Privacy Laws, names of the sick and deceased can only be put in the bulletin with the permission of the immediate family.

PARISH CONTACTS

Parish Priest	Rev Thomas Chirackal	Presbytery: 6578 9651	Email: Thomas.chirackal@mn.catholic.org.au
Parish Secretary	Mrs Erica Janssen	Parish Office: 02 5507 4048 (Tues-Fri, 9am-3pm) Unit 5, 16 Cambridge St, Singleton	Email: singleton.branxton@mn.catholic.org.au Web: www.singletoncatholicparish.org.au
Facebook	Catholic Parishes of Singleton and Branxton	Promoters of Safeguarding Contact via the Parish Office	Singleton Parish: Niamh Marzol Branxton Parish: Lydia Gorczyca
St Patrick's Parish PLEASE PHONE THE PARISH OFFICE FOR BOOKINGS OF PARISH CHURCHES (5507 4048)			
Singleton	<i>St Patrick's Church</i>	Queen Street Singleton 2330	
Broke	<i>Immaculate Conception Catholic Church</i>	Wollombi Street, Broke	
Glendon Brook	<i>St. Paul's Catholic Church</i>	874 Glendonbrook Road, Glendon Brook	
St Brigid's Parish PLEASE PHONE THE PARISH OFFICE FOR BOOKINGS OF PARISH CHURCHES (5507 4048)			
Branxton	St Brigid's Catholic Church	Station St, Branxton 2335	
Greta	St Catherine's Catholic Church	Branxton Street, Greta 2334	
Schools in our Parishes			
St. Catherine's Catholic College	Principal: Mrs Niamh Marzol	K-12 Office: 02 6578 9600	Email: admin@singleton.catholic.edu.au
Rosary Park Catholic School	Principal: Miss Sallyanne Stanbridge	K-6 Office: 02 4938 1541	Email: admin@branxton.mn.catholic.edu.au
St Nicholas Early Education Singleton	Director: Ms Madison Keevill	Office: 02 4015 2860	Email: singleton@stnicholasmn.org.au
St Nicholas Early Education Branxton	Director: Ms Alex Stafford	Office: 02 4931 1220	Email: branxton@stnicholasmn.org.au

MASS ROSTER – SUNDAY 14 JANUARY 2024

	Branxton Saturday 6pm	Greta Sunday 8am	Singleton Sunday 7am	Singleton Sunday 10am	Singleton Sunday 6pm	Counters 9.30am Tuesday
Welcomer	E Bendeich	D & J Clarke	C Crow	J Dries	J Dries	Counting will be done on Tues 9/1/24. Any counters available.
Commentator		L Gorczyca	G Cattermole	SCAE LEADER	E Janssen	
Readers	J Stafa S Stafa	L Harrison	J Duldulao H Duldulao	M Stowe	T Janssen H Janssen N Janssen	
Prayers		L Gorczyca	P Boyd	F King	E Janssen	
Offertory	K Jones K Jones	D Clarke J Clarke	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	VOLUNTEER NEEDED	
Rosary Leader		D Clarke				

Faithful and compassionate God, your Spirit guides the Church and makes it holy; hear the prayers we offer, that in the ministry to which you have called us, may we serve you faithfully, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

WEEKLY MASS DIARY

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
8 January <i>THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, YEAR B</i>	9 January	10 January	11 January	12 January	13 January <i>St Hilary</i>	14 January <i>SECOND SUNDAY IN ORD TIME, YEAR B</i>
OFFICE CLOSED	OFFICE OPEN	OFFICE OPEN	OFFICE OPEN	OFFICE OPEN		
<u>8.00am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>9.20am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>9.20am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton <u>11.00am</u> Mass Elizabeth Gates	<u>9.00am</u> Novena <u>9.20am</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton	<u>7.00am</u> Mass <u>10.00m</u> SCAE <u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Patrick's Singleton
	<u>9.20am</u> Mass St Catherine's Greta				<u>6.00pm</u> Mass St Brigid's Branxton	<u>7.35am</u> Rosary <u>8.15am</u> Mass St Catherine's Greta

St Brigid, St Catherine, St Patrick, and St Paul – pray for us

Weekly Notices

WELCOME TO OUR PARISH

We welcome visitors from all faith communities to our Parish Mass. If you are new members of our Parish, we ask that you take a Welcome Pack from the back of the church, complete and return the Member forms and one of our welcoming team will contact you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians, the Wonnarua people, who have walked upon and cared for this land for thousands of years. We acknowledge the continued deep spiritual attachment and relationship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to this country and commit ourselves to the ongoing journey of Reconciliation.

SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

The Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle has an abiding commitment to promote the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and vulnerable adults. Information brochures are available in the entrance to the church. If you have any concerns for a child or vulnerable adult, contact the Office of Safeguarding 02 49791390 or childprotection@mn.catholic.org.au or visit www.officeofsafeguarding.org.au for more information and resources.

Parish Office Hours

The Parish Office will be **CLOSED 25 Dec to 9 Jan** (Bulletins for this period were published on 22 December). I wish you all a very happy new year full of light and peace.

Do you have the Mass App?

Whether you're at home or travelling, the Diocese's mobile app shows you Churches and Mass times near you. If you're looking to attend Christmas Mass in your Parish, or you're just not sure about upcoming Mass times near you, simply searching in the app by your location allows you to find service times in your area. You can download the app for free from the **Apple App Store** and **Google Play Store**. Just search for 'Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle' and click install on your mobile or tablet!

Parish Bereavement Teams – Expression of Interests

Interested persons are invited to contact the Parish Office to submit an Expression of Interest for either the Singleton or Branxton Parish Bereavement Teams. Members of the Bereavement Teams tirelessly support and service people of our parish in their time of loss. They liaise with the Parish Funeral Directors when funeral arrangements are required. Ministers in the team will undertake the Stepping Stones formation program.

Hope Tree Project 14 – Martha's Piggery

Thank you to everyone who has donated to the Hope Tree Group Project 14 – Martha's Piggery. A total of \$3251.25 was collected from our church donation boxes, St Brigid's Caritas Group, the Legion of Mary Greta and generous personal donations. We are pleased to report that the first load of bricks has been delivered to Martha's house to begin building the piggery. We will post further updates as they come in.

2024 God's Word – Daily Reflections

Designed to help you to keep the Word of God close to your heart in your daily life. A companion on the journey to pray, to share, to grow in God's love and be nourished by the Word of God. Includes the Bible readings set down for each day, with a reflection. Limited copies are available at the Parish Office. Please bring \$15 cash for payment.

Cemetery Thanks

A very special thank you to those who have worked hard to ensure the cemeteries in Singleton and Branxton are tidy for visitors at this special time of year. Special thanks in Singleton to Terry Dunn, Adrian Klasen, Ron Nowland, Kerry Dries and Julies Dries.

2024 Lenten Reflection – Transformation through Revelation

During the season of Lent, we are called to look deeply at the human condition, just as Jesus, the Son of God, experienced. We are reminded during this time of hardship, suffering, and ultimately dying that we must stretch ourselves. We must pray and fast from whatever is taking hold of the fullness of life. This time calls for personal reflection and encourages us to look out with missionary eyes to intentionally give to those in need.

To access our Diocesan Resource, Transformation Through Revelation, please visit

<https://www.mn.catholic.org.au/media/6680/0003733-dio-2024-lenten-program-06.pdf>

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Magi

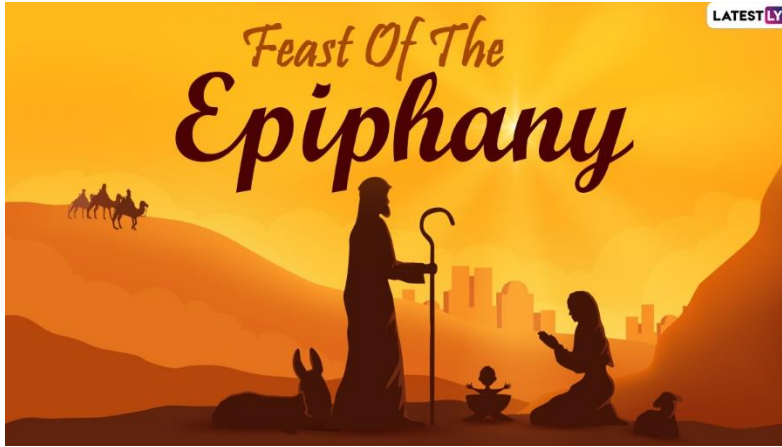
In some translations, the 'wise men' of this passage are referred to as 'Magi'. Magi was the name given to the Persian priestly caste. Persia (now, Iran) lies to the east of Israel. These wise men are also sometimes portrayed as astrologers, but that is largely because of the reference "We saw his star 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.

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.

Excerpts from Homily of Pope Francis



Feast Of The Epiphany

From the experience of the Magi, we learn that the first “place” where he loves to be sought is in restless questioning. The exciting adventure of these Wise Men from the East teaches us that faith is not born of our own merits, thoughts and theories. Rather, it is God’s gift. His grace helps us to shake off our apathy and opens our minds to ask the important questions in life. Questions that challenge us to leave behind our presumption that everything is fine, questions that open us to what is beyond us. For the Magi, that was the beginning: the restlessness of those willing to ask questions.

Brothers and sisters, the journey of faith begins whenever, by God’s grace, we make room for the restlessness that keeps us awake and alert. It begins when we are willing to ask questions, when we are dissatisfied with our daily routine and take seriously the challenges of each new day. When we step out of our comfort zone and decide to confront the uncomfortable aspects of life: our relationships with others, unexpected events, projects needing to be undertaken, dreams to be realized, fears to be faced, physical and mental sufferings.

The second place is in the risk of journeying. Questioning, including spiritual questioning, can lead to frustrations and desolations unless we embark upon a journey, unless we turn ourselves, in the depths of our being, to the face of God and the beauty of his word. The Magi in fact did not simply study the heavens and contemplate the light of the star; they set out on a journey full of risks, without safe roads and clear maps. They wanted to discover this King of the Jews.

The same is true of our faith: without a continuous journey in constant dialogue with the Lord, without attentive listening to his word, without perseverance, faith cannot grow. It is not enough to entertain some vague idea about God, to say some prayer that salves our consciences. We need to become disciples, following Jesus and his Gospel, bringing everything to him in prayer, seeking him in the events of our daily lives and in the faces of our brothers and sisters.

Finally, after restless questioning and the risk of journeying, the third place where we encounter the Lord is in the wonder of worship. At the end of their long journey and tiring quest, the Magi entered the house, where “they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage” (v. 11). This is what really matters: our restlessness, our questioning, our spiritual journeys and the practice of our faith must all converge in worship of the Lord. Our pastoral activities will be fruitless unless we put Jesus at their centre and fall down in worship before him. Like the Magi, let us fall down and entrust ourselves to God in the wonder of worship. Let us worship God, not ourselves; let us worship God and not the false idols that seduce by the allure of prestige or power, or the allure of false news; let us love God and not bow down before passing things and evil thoughts, seductive yet hollow and empty.

Brothers and sisters, let us open our hearts to restlessness, let us ask for the courage to continue our journey, and let us finish in worship! Let us not be afraid, for this is the path of the Magi, the path of all the saints throughout history: to welcome our restlessness, to set out and to worship. Brothers and sisters, may we never stop our restless questioning; may we never interrupt our journey by yielding to apathy or convenience; and in our encounter with the Lord, may we abandon ourselves to the wonder of worship. Then we will discover that a light shines even in the darkest nights: the light of Jesus, the radiant morning star.

M R W M F S P J Z N Z B O G F
 Y W P L C F K X F A O I T R D
 R F G O L D T S S H P N E M I
 R C R N X D P O A M E V G T V
 H Y Y M C R O W D A N F H R Z
 G L O R Y Y Q R J I Q Q J P D
 F R A N K I N C E N S E T L X
 U F V X A X Z Z R L I Q B X E
 W Z H K H D C Q J S W S M W B
 A O Y E B D H O U S E T U C P
 O Y F M C E J V K W E A R Q C
 R G D G X L X J S Z A R S E A
 E G E Y E S D L Q H S T Y I L
 E G L L O Z P R U V T I V N E
 E L D A Y I Q I S Y S P I P E

Try to find these words:

crowd
 day
 east
 eyes
 frankincense

glory
 gold
 house
 myrrh
 open
 sea
 star