

Our Service Together

January 8th 2023

Epiphany (deferred from 6th January)

An Acclamation for the Season

All: Alleluia, alleluia, Christ was revealed in flesh, proclaimed among the nations and believed in throughout the world. alleluia!

Preparation

All: This is the day that the Lord has made.
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Through the brokenness of Christ, we become one body
as one body we now gather in the name of Christ to offer our praise and thanksgiving, to receive God's holy word, to pray for the needs of the world,
and to seek the forgiveness of our sins, that by the power of the Holy Spirit
we may give ourselves to the service of God.

Our Confession

The sun of righteousness has dawned with healing in his wings. Let us come to the light of Christ, confessing our sins in penitence and faith.

All: Jesus Christ, risen Master and triumphant Lord, we come to you in sorrow for our sins, and confess to you our weakness and unbelief.

We have lived by our own strength, and not by the power of your resurrection.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived by the light of our own eyes, as faithless and not believing.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

We have lived for this world alone, and doubted our home in heaven.
In your mercy, forgive us, hear us and help us.

Be still for a moment in confession and in receiving God's Grace in Christ

All: May Almighty God, who in Jesus Christ has given us a kingdom that cannot be destroyed, forgive us our sins, open our eyes to God's truth, strengthen us to do God's will and give us the joy of his kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Risen Lord. **Amen.**

The opening prayer

All: The night has passed, and the day lies open before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.
Silence is kept.

All: As we rejoice in the gift of this new day, so may the light of your presence, O God, set our hearts on fire with love for you; now and for ever. Amen.

The Psalmody 72.1-7 and 10-14

Give the king your judgements, O God, and your righteousness to the son of a king.
Then shall he judge your people righteously and your poor with justice.
May the mountains bring forth peace, and the little hills righteousness for the people.
May he defend the poor among the people, deliver the children of the needy and crush the oppressor.
May he live as long as the sun and moon endure, from one generation to another.
May he come down like rain upon the mown grass, like the showers that water the earth.
In his time shall righteousness flourish, and abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring gifts.
All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall do him service.
For he shall deliver the poor that cry out, the needy and those who have no helper.
He shall have pity on the weak and poor; he shall preserve the lives of the needy.
He shall redeem their lives from oppression and violence, and dear shall their blood be in his sight.
Glory be to the Father, and to the Son: and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Scripture Reading Ephesians 3.1-12

This is the reason that I Paul am a prisoner for Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles— ²for surely you have already heard of the commission of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I wrote above in a few words, ⁴a reading of which will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. ⁵In former generations this mystery was not made known to humankind, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit: ⁶that is, the Gentiles have become fellow-heirs, members of the same body, and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

⁷Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given to me by the working of his power. ⁸Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; ¹⁰so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. ¹¹This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, ¹²in whom we have access to God in boldness and confidence through faith in him.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Gloria

All: Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

The Gospel Matthew 2.1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.' ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all

Jerusalem with him; ⁴ and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵ They told him, 'In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶ "And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

⁷ Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, 'Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.' ⁹ When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰ When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹ On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹² And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

At the end of the reading we say:

All: This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

A Reflection for the day *Revd. John Webb writes:*

I was lucky to be posted to Cyprus several times during my time as a padre. In addition to enjoying the climate I was able to appreciate the richness of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. Very early in the history of the church it split between the Western under Rome and the Eastern under Constantinople. For many centuries they were antagonistic towards each other and evolved very differently. Thankfully that antagonism has now been largely overcome and we are able to learn from the strengths of each other's traditions. Both my PA and verger were practicing members of the Orthodox Church and we would often discuss our differences. One of the times when this was most evident was at this time of year with the celebration of Christmas and Epiphany. We get very excited about Christmas and almost ignore Epiphany while they hardly acknowledge Christmas but get very excited about Epiphany.

Both Christmas and Epiphany are concerned with the coming of Christ, but in different ways; Christmas, following St Luke's account, is about Jesus as the fulfilment of the promise of a Messiah for the Jewish people with the visit of the shepherds; Epiphany, following St Matthew, presents a much wider vision of Jesus as the saviour of the whole of mankind both Jews and gentiles with the arrival of the wise men. Traditionally we in England have combined the two at Christmas with nativity plays where the shepherds and the wise men jostle for room round the manger.

If the star the wise men followed appeared when Jesus was born they would have arrived a long time after the shepherds. We don't know exactly who, how many, or what they were, but the inference is that they were scholars of some sort, who had been searching for the meaning of life. They were the first in a long and distinguished line of scholars who have dedicated their lives to research into the mystery of God become man in Jesus.

The gifts that they presented are seen as representing the significant aspects of Jesus ministry; gold for a king; frankincense for a priest; and myrrh pointing to the suffering and death on the cross. Generations of artists have been inspired by this story resulting in added symbolism. The wise men have been depicted as different racial types indicating all humanity acknowledging the one true God. They are sometimes young, middle aged and old, but I have not yet seen them as female or disabled!

The amazing richness of interpretation that we get from this simple story emphasises that the coming of Jesus is, to those of faith, the most important event in the history of the world. The Old Testament records the unsuccessful attempt of a small nation to understand the mystery of God. In the dramatic story of the wise men we see the beginning of the full revelation of God in the person of

Jesus Christ. I am grateful to my Orthodox friends for this insight.

The Creed

All: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Prayers *We make our intercessions*

O God of peace, who has taught us that in quietness and confidence shall be our strength; help us, as we come into your presence, to be still and know that you are God.

In the power of the Spirit and in union with Christ let us pray to the Father.

As we mark the visit of the wise men let us open our hearts and minds once more to celebrate the coming of Jesus. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer*

Strengthen our Bishops and those who seek to serve you in this diocese May they be filled with the Spirit and serve you as the first disciples. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer*

We Pray for the King, Prime Minister, and all World leaders, that they may have the Spirit of wisdom and optimism to lead us through this difficult time. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

We pray for the homeless, hungry and starving, that their needs may be satisfied.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

Let us pray for our families, friends, and neighbours that we may bring light and hope in the darkest places.

Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick, suffering and dying and we give thanks and pray for those who use their skill and risk their lives to care for them. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer*

Hear us as we remember those who have died..... According to your promises grant them joy in your eternal kingdom. *Lord in your mercy hear our prayer.*

Rejoicing in the fellowship of all your saints, we commend ourselves and the whole creation to your unfailing love. Amen.

The Collect

All: O God, who by the leading of a star manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: mercifully grant that we, who know you now by faith, may at last behold your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Gathering our prayers and praises into one, let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

All: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
for ever and ever. Amen.

The Conclusion

All: Christ, as a light illumine and guide me this day.
Christ, as a shield overshadow me.
Christ under me, Christ over me;
Christ beside me on my left and my right.
This day be within and without me. Amen.