

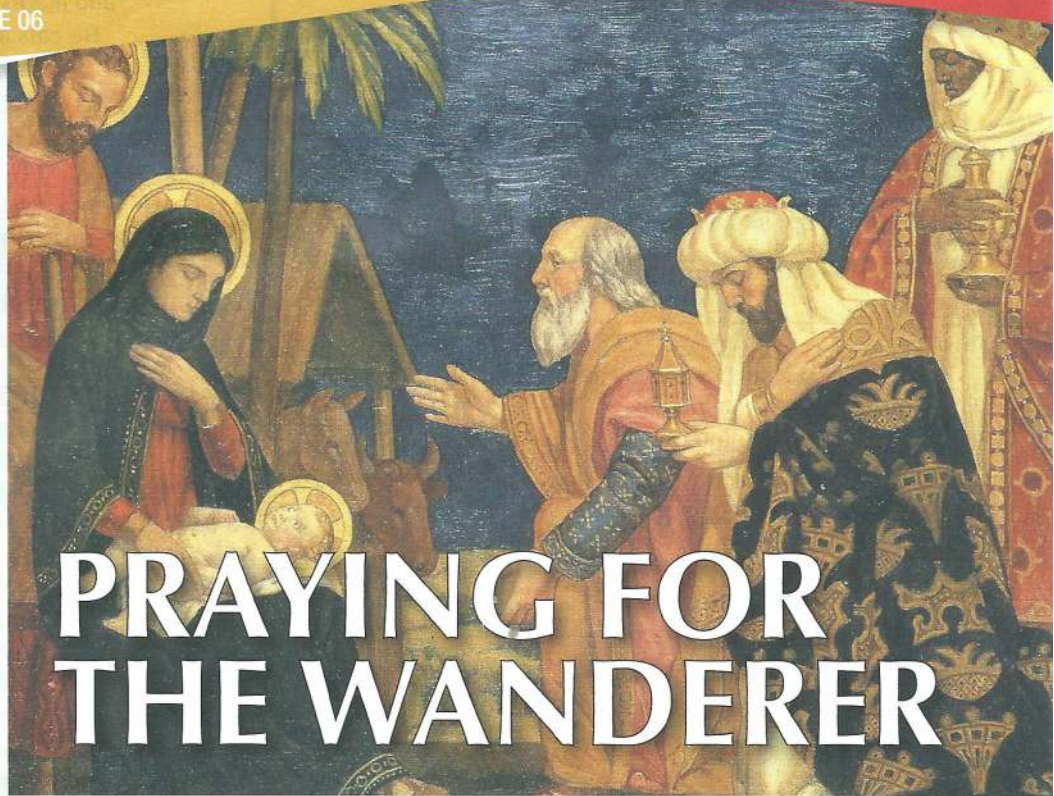
Parish Newsletter

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD | 6 JANUARY 2019
CYCLE C | ISSUE 06

There is a lovely tradition in parts of Europe of marking the lintel or doorpost of households with chalk and a blessing to mark the visit of the Magi (traditionally called Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar) with the letters 20+C+M+B+19 – the coming year of 2019 with the initial letters of Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar between the 20 and 19. The markings are still visible some months afterwards. In one place, some three months after the January 6th marking, a visiting son remarked that robbers had marked out his parents' house for a robbery! In fairness, we live and journey in different times compared to the Magi.

The image of the journey is often used to describe our mortal lives. We talk of making our way in life, or life-mapping. When you think of it, a journey always presses onward; we cannot return by the way we came but must always go another way.

Epiphany in the Irish tradition was reckoned as a time apart. People would light 12 Rush candles for the coming year and burn them. There was the alarming tradition in some places that each family member took one (large families – you see) and whichever burnt out first – that person would die in the coming year. Of course, the 12th Night was Nollaig na mBan or 'Women's Christmas.' I was never convinced of this supposed custom of the men-folk of Ireland turning into a



Jamie Oliver type chef overnight and looking after the kitchen on that day. There is some evidence of 'rambling' however – single men intent on marriage would 'target' homes of single ladies on the Epiphany night. Not to mention another traditional belief that animals could speak on Christmas Night – a tribute to their role on that First Christmas in the stable – and that on the 12th night water would turn to wine. Mind you it was thought to be very unlucky to try and watch it take place.

They are only folk traditions but they each remind us that in this new year life returns to the earth and to every human being. I smile when people talk of removing the Christian faith from Ireland – it's in our very marrow, not just our place-names and customs, even if only half-remembered.

No doubt People will map out their own path this year – it could be in make up or break up, welcoming

a birth of a child, of a new family in marriage – all the twists and turns that 2019 will take. It's worth remembering that when the three wise visitors came to Bethlehem – shepherds, the poorest of the poor were there before them. There was no 'cleaning up' an area for this most Royal of visits of the Christ-child. Everyone is welcome, for God, here, is the great equalizer. Everyone is afforded a place, not just kings but shepherds also. ■

– Tom Cox

THIS WEEK (7-13 JANUARY)

- 7 **Mon** St Raymond of Penyafort, priest
- 8 **Tue** St Thorfinn, bishop
- 9 **Wed** St Adrian of Canterbury, abbot
- 10 **Thur** St Peter Orseolo, hermit
- 11 **Fri** St Silvanus of Amiens
- 12 **Sat** St Benet Biscop & St Aelred of Rievaulx
- 13 **Sun** BAPTISM OF THE LORD

NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS



Isaiah 40:1-5.9-11
Psalm 103:1-4.24-25.27-30
Titus 2:11-14.3:4-7
Luke 3:15-16.21-22

Reflection

Let us reflect on the contrast between Herod and the gentile Wise Men, and shepherds.

Lesson

God calls all people, of every race and nation, to recognise Jesus as their Lord and do him homage.

Prayer

Teach us to be truly wise, to be patient in the face of trials and to be courageous on the long journey into your mystery.