The Parish of St. Edward the Confessor
Registered Charity no. 234025

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Newsletter for Sunday 4th January 2026 *Sunday Readings Cycle **A*** *Weekday Readings Cycle **II***

Readings for 2nd of Christmas: Sirach 24:1-2,8-12 (Ecclesiasticus); Psalm 147(146); Ephesians 1:3-6,15-18; John 1:1-18
Psalm Response: The Word became flesh and dwelt among us
Readings for the Epiphany: Isaiah 60;1-6; Psalm 72(71); Ephesians 3:2-3a,5-6
Saturday 3rd Jan 5.45pm 1st Mass of the 2nd SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
Sunday 4th Jan 10.30am Mass of the 2nd SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS
Monday 5th Jan 9.15am Mass
Tuesday 6th Jan 11.30am Mass SOLEMN HOLYDAY of THE EPIPHANY of the LORD (in the church)
7.00pm Mass SOLEMN HOLYDAY of THE EPIPHANY of the LORD *(*in the Community Room)
Wednesday 7th Jan No Mass *(Optional: St. Raymund of Peňafort, priest, religious)*
Thursday 8th Jan
Friday 9th Jan 1.00pm (Macclesfield Hospital Chapel)
Saturday 10th Jan 10.00am
10.30-11.00am Sacrament of Reconciliation
Saturday 10th Jan 5.45pm 1st Mass of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
Sunday 11th Jan 10.30am Mass of the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord
Readings for the Baptism of the Lord: Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7; Psalm 30(29); Acts 10: 34- 38 ; Matthew 3:13-17.

FOOD BANK
From this **Sat 3rd** Jan the bring food gifts for the Food Bank at weekend Masses as the Food bank re-opens again this **Tues 6th Jan,** the Epiphany.

CHILDREN'S FIRST SACRAMENTS PROGRAMME
Next Wed 7th Jan ~3.30- 4.45pm after school in the C. Room 1st Sacrament of Forgiveness programme for the children who already have applied,led by *Caroline Mottram* Caroline.mottram@taktalk.net & 07953 27687 & *Ann 0'Brien*: panddobrien@btconnect.com & 07774 467317

CRIB & CHRISTMAS TREE
Volunteers will be needed to dismantle and pack away the crib and tree at any convenient time after the end of next Sunday morning's Mass.

THANK YOU for YOUR GENEROSITY Last Sunday's Collection £207.50

GET IN TOUCH QUICKLY –IF YOU ARE SICK If you or your relative enters Macclesfield Hospital or the Hospice, let Fr. Peter know as soon as possible on Tel: 01625 423576 or email st.edmacc@gmail.com If possible, contact before Fr. Peter makes his regular visits to the hospital on Tuesdays & Fridays

DIARY OF EVENTS
Mon 5th Jan Christ the King Pr. School opens
Sun 18th Jan Peace Sunday
Sun 18th Jan Collection for the Retired Priests' Fund
Tues 10th Feb 7pm Meeting of PPC
Wed 18th Feb Ash Wednesday
Sun 5th April Easter Sunday

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD
Next Tuesday 6th January, the Catholic Church celebrates the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. It is a Holyday of Obligation. Mass is at 11.30am & 7.00pm. On that day we commemorate the "manifestation" of the expected Messiah, who reveals himself to all the peoples of humanity, represented by the Three Wise Men who arrived in Bethlehem from the East. The Gospel according to St. Matthew tells us that "*going into the house they saw the child with Mary, his mother. And they fell down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh"* (Mt 2:11).

Here are 7 facts that perhaps you didn't know about the 3 Wise Men & the Epiphany.

1.The Church celebrates three epiphanies. The feast of the Three Kings is commonly called Epiphany, a word that in Greek means "manifestation" in the sense that God reveals himself and makes himself known. However, the Church celebrates three manifestations of the life of Jesus as epiphany: the Epiphany of the Magi from the East (manifestation to the pagans), the Epiphany of the Baptism of the Lord (manifestation to the Jews), and the Epiphany of the wedding at Cana (manifestation to his disciples). They also are respectively the first time Jesus is manifested to be the messiah in the 3 Gospels of: Mark (the baptism); Matthew (the 3 magi); John (the wedding at Cana)

2. It's believed to be the second-oldest feast day. The feast of the Epiphany is one of the oldest Christian feast days, most likely the second after Easter. It began in the East and then came to the West in the fourth century. It is said that originally Christians commemorated the three epiphanies on the same date. In some Eastern Churches, they even gave this feast day the celebratory character of the birth of Christ, but this aspect was diminished when the Roman feast day of Christmas was added in the fourth century. In the Middle Ages, the Epiphany gradually became known more as the feast of the Three Wise Men. Currently, the Catholic Church celebrates the three epiphanies at different times on the liturgical calendar.

3. A saint determined the date Studies maintain that Epiphany was set for 6th January because this day commemorated the birth of Aion, the patron god of Alexandria, who was related to the sun god. It was also because winter solstice was celebrated on the same date in Egypt since ancient times. St. Eusebius of Caesarea and St. Jerome in the fourth century — as well as St. Epiphanius in the sixth century — stated that the kings arrived to see the child Jesus before he was 2 years old. However, St. Augustine (354 AD – 430 AD) maintained in his Epiphany sermons that they arrived on the 13th day after the birth of the Lord — i.e. 6th January on the current calendar.

4. Kings by tradition St. Matthew, the only one in the Bible who mentions the Magi, explains that they were from "the East," an area that, for the Jews, was the territories of Arabia, Persia, or Chaldea. The easterners called doctors "magi. "Magus" in the Persian language meant "priest," and precisely the magi ("magoi" in Greek) were a caste of Persian or Babylonian priests. They did not know divine revelation like the Jews, but they studied the stars in their desire to seek God. Tradition called the wise men "kings" in reference to Psalm 72 (10-11), which proclaims: "The kings of the West and the islands will pay tribute to him. The kings of Arabia and Ethiopia will offer him gifts. "All kings will bow down before him and all nations will serve him."Our current liturgical text currently reads in the Church as "*May the kings of Tarshish and the islands shall pay him tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring him gifts. Before him all kings shall fall prostrate, all nations shall serve him."*

5. There could have been more than three St. Leo the Great and St. Maximus of Turin in the fourth and fifth centuries, respectively, speak of three magi, not because this was based on any tradition but perhaps because of the three gifts the evangelist describes.
In the first centuries there are pictorial representations in which two, four, six, and even eight magi appear. However, the oldest fresco of the adoration of the Magi dates back to the second century and is found in an arch of the Greek chapel in the Roman catacombs of Priscilla, and three appear there. The Three Wise Men would have had material of a prophetic nature (some have suggested that they obtained it from an eastern Jewish community, such as that of Babylon) that allowed them to astronomically identify the birth of the "King of the Jews."They may have been especially motivated to see him because at the time it was expected that there would come a universal ruler from Israel. In his book "Jesus of Nazareth," Pope Benedict XVI explains: "We know from [Roman historians] Tacitus and Suetonius that speculation was rife at the time that the ruler of the world would emerge from Judah, an expectation that [the Jewish historian] Flavius Josephus applied to [the Roman emperor] Vespasian, thereby finding his way into the emperor's favour (cf. De Bello Judaico III, 399-408)."

6. The origin of their names, physiognomies, and gifts The names of the Magi do not appear in the holy Scriptures, but tradition has assigned them some. In a Paris manuscript from the late seventh century they are called Bitisarea, Melchor, and Gataspa, but in the ninth century they began to be referred to as Balthazar, Melchior, and Gaspar. Melchior is generally depicted as an old white man with a beard representing Europe. He offers the child gold in recognition of the kingship of Christ. Gaspar (also called Casper or Kasper) represents Asia and brings incense representing the divinity of Jesus. Balthazar is usually depicted with dark skin because he comes from Africa. He gives the Saviour myrrh, a substance used to embalm corpses and symbolizes the humanity of the Lord.

7. The star may have been a conjunction of planets
Several hypotheses have been built around the star of Bethlehem that the Three Wise Men saw. It was previously said that it was a comet, but astronomical studies indicate that it was apparently due to the conjunction in the sky of the planets Saturn and Jupiter in the constellation of Pisces. Thus, the Magi possibly decided to travel in search of the Messiah because, in ancient astrology, Jupiter was considered the star of the prince of the world, the constellation of Pisces as the sign of the end times, and the planet Saturn in the East as the star of Palestine.
In short, it is presumed that the "wise men of the East" understood that the Lord of the end times would appear that year in Palestine.
It is likely that the Three Wise Men knew some messianic prophecies of the Hebrew people and that is why they came to Jerusalem, to Herod's palace, asking for the king of the Jews. On the 6th January the Catholic Church celebrates the solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord. On that day we commemorate the "manifestation" - English translation of the Greek word- of the expected Messiah, who reveals himself to all the peoples of humanity, represented by the Three Wise Men who arrived in Bethlehem from the East. The Gospel according to St. Matthew tells us that "on entering the house they saw the child with Mary, his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (Mt 2:11)

This story was first published in 2021 by ACI Prensa, CNA's Spanish-language news partner. It has been translated and adapted by CNA.

THE Wednesday WORD

Preparing for the Mass of Sunday 4th January 2026

2nd Sunday after the Nativity — shorter form: John 1: 1-5, 9-14

Relax

Make the Sign of the Cross † and remain still for a minute of settling silence. Then read the Gospel — preferably aloud and slowly — paying attention to any words that stand out to you.

Read

This Sunday's Gospel : THE WORD MADE FLESH

In the beginning was the Word: the Word was with God and the Word was God. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him. All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men, a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower. The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world. He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him. He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him. But to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to all who believe in the name of him who was born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man but of God himself. The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Did any words or phrases stand out to you in the Gospel? If so, take a few moments to meditate on them.

Reflect

Now read the Gospel again and consider what the Lord might be saying to you, or asking of you, through it. Then continue by reading Fr Henry Wansbrough's reflection...

The Gospel reading for this Second Sunday after Christmas is the same as that for Christmas Day itself. Perhaps, after all the celebrations of Christmas, there is room for a more sober thought. The climax is not at the end of the reading, but is in the centre: 'to those who believe he gave power to become sons of God'. On either side of this verse are rejection by his own people, and acceptance by those who see his Glory. This theme of acceptance and rejection runs right through the gospel of John, some accepting (the disciples, Nicodemus, the Man Born Blind), some rejecting (the Pharisees, the leaders of the Jews). The disciples accept at the Marriage Feast at Cana; the leaders of the Jews immediately afterwards reject at the Cleansing of the Temple. You cannot remain neutral; you must either accept or reject. It is a great trial-scene, and we judge ourselves by our reaction to Jesus. The Father has given all judgment to the Son, but the Son judges no one. The last dread scene is when the Jewish leaders pass sentence on themselves before Pilate and before Jesus crowned as king and seated as judge; they reject God's kingship by saying, 'We have no king but Caesar'. There is no need for sentence to be passed, for we pass our own sentence on ourselves.

Does it make sense to say that we judge ourselves?

Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB

Rest

Now call to mind the Lord's love for you, remembering that through this scripture the Lord is truly present. Then silently and prayerfully listen for God's voice and rest in God's love.

Respond & Request

Thank God for any insight you may have received, and respond by asking the Holy Spirit to bless you with a spiritual gift or help you to grow in a particular fruit of the Spirit.

You might pray for wisdom, courage, faithfulness, self-control, patience, generosity, joy, kindness, love, peace, faith, chastity - or another grace - to help you live out your faith this week.

Remember

This Wednesday's word for our families is **HOPE**

(To see the Family Version, please visit: wednesdayword.org)

As you pray for your loved ones, please remember to pray for the Church and for the families connected to our schools.

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.

Wednesday Word Plus +

If you'd like to spend more prayerful time with God through the First and Second Readings, follow the same process for praying with the Gospel (overleaf). Gently place the First or Second Reading and Fr Henry's reflection into that same prayerful rhythm for more fruitful meditation with God's Word.

First Reading: *The Wisdom of God takes Root*

Sirach 24: 1-2, 8-12

Wisdom speaks her own praises, in the midst of her people she glorifies herself. She opens her mouth in the assembly of the Most High, she glories in herself in the presence of the Mighty One; "Then the creator of all things instructed me, and he who created me fixed a place for my tent. He said, "Pitch your tent in Jacob, make Israel your inheritance.' From eternity, in the beginning, he created me, and for eternity I shall remain. I ministered before him in the holy tabernacle, and thus was I established on Zion. In the beloved city he has given me rest, and in Jerusalem I wield my authority. I have taken root in a privileged people in the Lord's property, in his inheritance.'

This wonderful poem, of which we read all too short an extract, celebrates the splendour of Jerusalem, where the Wisdom of God, the Law, took root. The author loves the Law, the Temple and Jerusalem with all his heart, as the gift and manifestation of God. God creates by his Wisdom, the master-plan and agent of creation. Wisdom, expressed in the Law, is also the master-plan which guides God's image and representative, which teaches us how to live as the image of God. So our author sees Jerusalem as the visible symbol of all the beauties of God's creation. We Christians, however, see Christ as this Wisdom of God, who took root in his Chosen People, and in Jerusalem – or at least in Bethlehem, 7km away. For us, then, this hymn is a celebration of God's Wisdom in Christ, taking root in the human race. In Colossians Paul hymns Christ as Wisdom, the first-born in creation and the first-born from the dead. In the great hymn at the beginning of Ephesians Christ is described as the climax in whom all creation is summed up, in whom God 'brings everything together under Christ as head'. The completion of creation is, then, the fullness of the Incarnation which we celebrate at Christmas.

Does it make any sense to speak of God or Christ as Wisdom?

Second Reading: *The Cosmic Plan of God*

Ephesians 1: 3-6, 15-18

Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, he chose us, chose us in Christ, to be holy and spotless, and to live through love in his presence, determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ, for his own kind purposes, to make us praise the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in Beloved. That will explain why I, having once heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and the love that you showed towards all the saints, have never failed to remember you in my prayers and to thank God for you. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, what rich glories he has promised the saints will inherit.

The sevenfold blessing, with which Ephesians begins, sums up God's plan of salvation for humanity. The climax is in the centre, 'to bring everything under Christ as head'. Christ is the Wisdom of God, the plan according to which and through which all things were created. Christ is also the completion of the creation, and the unity of all things in Christ is a special emphasis of the whole letter. All things are under Christ as head creation, all nourishment for creation and all guidance of creation. In ancient medical science the head was held to be the source of all these: all nourishment comes through the mouth, the brain thinks things out and makes the decisions on which the whole body acts. Christ performs for creation these functions which the head performs for the body. In earlier letters Paul had written that the Body of Christ which is the Church is made up from many limbs and members, which all have different contributions to make to its wellbeing. Now he develops this image and differentiates Christ as the head of the whole Body as its guide, leader, nourishment and focus.

Is the Body a helpful image for the Church?

> **"Christ is the Wisdom of God, the plan according to which and through which all things were created."**