

CATHOLIC PARISH OF ST MARY'S MACLEAN



ST JOHN'S CHURCH



ST MARY'S CHURCH



ST JAMES' CHURCH

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THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD: 4 JANUARY 2026

There is a fascination with stars: their beauty shining and sparkling in the dark canopy of the night; amazement and wonder at their number and extent.

And who amongst us hasn't stolen a furtive glance at the horoscopes, half humorously checking 'what the stars hold for me'.

The Magi, the wise men in today's gospel story, were not like the writers of our horoscope columns. They were astronomers – astrologers from ancient religions found to 'the East' of Bethlehem, perhaps modern day Iraq or Syria.

In particular, they would have thought that the birth of those destined to be great figures would be signalled by unusual constellations of events in the night sky. They really believed that stars greatly influenced and controlled the destiny of human beings.

But, *these* Magi were open to the insights of other religious traditions. And it was that combination of their own religion of astrology and their reading about Jewish expectations of a wonderful person who would inaugurate a new epoch of history, which led them to: To what? To whom? To Jesus, in a nondescript dwelling, in a nondescript town, hovered over by an exhausted Mary and a protective Joseph.

This would be a most unexpected culmination of their journey.

Yet, because they were *genuine seekers after truth*, they were open enough to see in this baby what their own religious teaching had prepared them for, even as they were led beyond that religious system.

They were the first non-Jewish people to kneel before that infant. They did homage to this baby. Why? I think it was because they realised that the stars did not control *this* infant.

On the contrary: 'There is something in *this* baby which *caused* the night sky to respond. *This* baby is responsible for the movement of the stars!'

They were sufficiently filled with wonder that they preserved the child from the deadly schemes of Herod, not reporting where they had found him.

And, then they returned to their home country, 'by a different way'. They were on a different journey after encountering the Child.

What does this Gospel passage hold for us today? 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.

People may be trapped in the limiting language of their astrology or Buddhism, or an ideology such as atheism or whatever. Of course, those systems of thought cannot save anyone, though 'the seeds of the gospel may be found in them'.

However, individually and personally, Buddhists and atheists and astrologers can be set on a journey towards 'the Love which moves the sun and all the stars' (Dante).

As a person responds to the (often anonymous) prompting of the Holy Spirit 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. This is where we differ drastically from some fundamentalists. The Catholic Church believes that the billions in China and India, who have never heard the Gospel, can be saved.

However, such persons, even leading humane lives, 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.

That Truth which we have the privilege of understanding leads us to accept the claims made on us by the baby to whom the Astrologers paid homage: We understand and accept

that *He* is the Body Language of God,
that *He* is 'God with us', Emmanuel,
that *He* indeed is well-named as Jesus meaning 'Yahweh saves',

that *He* is The Answer to all the seeking after truth and the yearning of the human heart.

O come, let us adore *Him*. **Fr Michael Tate**

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

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

COLLECT

O God, who on this day revealed your Only Begotten Son to the nations by the guidance of a star, grant in your mercy, that we, who know you already by faith, may be brought to behold the beauty of your sublime glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

FIRST READING*Isaiah 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.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM *Ps 71:1-2. 7-8. 10-13, R. see v.11*

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

1. 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.)
2. 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.)
3. The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts 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. (R.)

4. 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*Ephesians 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.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, alleluia!

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

Alleluia!

GOSPEL*Matthew 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.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Look with favour, Lord, we pray, on these gifts of your Church, in which are offered now not gold or frankincense or myrrh, but he who by them is proclaimed, sacrificed and received, Jesus Christ. Who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

PREFACE A; EUCHARISTIC PRAYER III

COMMUNION ANTIPHON (*Iluka*)

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Go before us with heavenly light, O Lord, always and everywhere, that we may perceive with clear sight and revere with true affection the mystery in which you have willed us to participate. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

The very ancient Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the fact that Israel's Messiah is also the Saviour of the entire world. We believers of later generations take this more or less for granted. But it is clear that for the earliest Christians of non-Jewish ('Gentile') origin it was a source of immense wonder and gratitude. The passage from the Letter to the Ephesians read as today's Second Reading (Eph 3:2-3, 5-6) speaks of it as a great 'mystery', one which Paul himself came to know by revelation (his experience on the Damascus Road; cf. Gal 1:16), before becoming, as Apostle to the Gentiles, the principal instrument of its realisation.

Faced with this 'mystery' of the extraordinary richness and scope of God's salvation, the early Christians went back to the Scriptures of Israel to find traces of its foretelling. The Book of Isaiah, more especially the oracles of the post-exilic prophet(s) we hear in chapters 40-66, proved a rich mine for this purpose. They feature the kind of inclusive vision that emerges so magnificently from the text set for today's First Reading (Isa 60:1-6). It has clearly influenced Matthew's account of the coming of the

Wise Men, which forms the Gospel.

The reading from Isaiah addresses the holy city, Jerusalem. The image seems to be that of the break of dawn. All around, in the valleys, is darkness ('night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples'). But the highly elevated city of Jerusalem is beginning to catch the rays of the rising sun, a magnificent light identified with the 'glory of the Lord'. At this, the nations begin streaming to Jerusalem, bringing their riches to place before the God of Israel.

The wonderful Gospel story of the coming of the Wise Men from the East (Matt 2:1-12) catches up and expands upon this vision. It is interesting that Matthew's gospel, which of the four gospels is most at pains to portray Jesus in Jewish light, lets this episode where Gentiles bring gifts dominate its story of Jesus' childhood. The Gospel will conclude on the same note with the great Commission, 'Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, ...' (28:16-20).

There are so many ways to draw rich reflections from this episode. I think it is important to bring out the blend between pagan wisdom and (Jewish) scribal information that leads the wise men to the Saviour. Their own natural gifts, the wisdom of their people and their scientific investigations (astronomy), have impelled their quest. They have seen the 'Star' that the biblical prophecy in Numbers 24:17 indicated would be a sign of a King of the Jews who would have universal significance. They have followed this star, but they need the scribal wisdom of Israel to locate the One whose birth it announces (in Bethlehem). Revelation comes, then, from a combination of natural wisdom and biblical prophecy.

Not only do they pay homage to the infant Jesus as their ruler: they place before him the rich gifts of their culture and these are graciously received. Joseph has faded from view; it is Mary, the mother of Jesus, who receives their gifts on his behalf.

Their journey has been one of faith and risk. The treacherous and murderous figure of Herod looms over all, presaging the Passion that is to come. But the riches of God's salvation will go to the Gentiles. In the beautiful words to the Wise Men that the English novelist Evelyn Waugh puts on the lips of the Empress Helena:

'... you came and were not turned away. You too found room before the manger. Your gifts were not needed, but they were accepted and put carefully by, for they were brought with love. In that new order of charity that had just come to life, there was room for you, too.' (Helena [Penguin, 1963] 145.)

We too walk in the footsteps of the wise men, sharing their longing, their faith, and the joy of their discovery, and bringing our own gifts to the Lord.

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ONLINE GIVING

Internet donations to assist our parish are always welcome. Details for donating online via Electronic Funds Transfer BSB: 032582 Account Number: 810033 [Surname, parish envelope no]

PRAYER REQUESTS

Prayers for the Sick: Miriam Scherger, Toni Murphy, Kathy Leseberg, Ava Blay, Mark Thurbon, Alma Bailey, Mary Wiseman, Sue Gravalin, Ron Weekes, Margaret Donges, Pam Lewis, Matthew & Paul Gallagher, Chris Naismith, Trevor Nicolai, Graham Courte, Peter Burns, Matthew Tierney, Matt Mohorovic, Sharon Grayson, Dennis Catheral, Allan Dick. **Recently Deceased:** Fotka Mijic, Donna Ellis, Fran Eckersley, Anita Gooley. **Anniversary:** Anthony Ricaplaza, Ron Crittenden, Norman Young, Pat Shortt, Colin Campbell, Les Sinderberry. **Pray for:** Gordon & Kym Eckersley, Ruben Rollon, Edith Young, Mary Shortt, Anmary Wood, John Drum, Kristen Rooke, Marcus Sims. All the suffering souls in Purgatory especially the dec'd members of F.O.S.S.

MASS TIMES:

Sunday Masses: Yamba: 5:30pm (SAT); Maclean: 8:30am (SUN); Iluka: 10:30am (SUN).

Weekday Masses: Wednesday, 9:30am: Yamba; Thursday, 10:00am: Iluka; Friday, 12:00nn, Maclean; First Saturday: 11:30am, Maclean.

RECONCILIATION TIMES

Saturday, 11:00am, Maclean; 5:00pm, Yamba
Sunday, 8:00am, Maclean
Wednesday, 10:00am, Yamba
Thursday, 10:30am, Iluka

EUCCHARISTIC ADORATION:

First Wednesday: 10:00am, Yamba
First Saturday: 12:00pm, Maclean

MINISTRY ROSTER: 10/11 JANUARY 2026

Readers: Yamba: A Ricketts/B Montgomery;
Maclean: R Harvey/S Winter; Iluka: C Lesberg.
Commentators: Yamba: A Schofield, Maclean: J de Roos, Iluka: A Speirs. **E Communion:** Maclean: J Moloney. **Count team:** Robertson.

READINGS: 10/11 JANUARY 2026

First: Isaiah 42:1-4. 6-7; **Second:** Acts 10:34-38; **Gospel:** Matthew 3:13-17.

NEWS & EVENTS

Emergency contact: In case of emergency outside of parish office hours, contact Fr Roland 0401 508 812.

Fr Roland's annual leave: Please note Fr Roland will be on annual leave from December 29 for 4 weeks. During this time, visiting priest, Fr Proencio Bognay will be assisting with weekday and weekend Masses.

Parish bulletin online: Our bulletin is now uploaded

weekly to our website <http://stmarysparish.org.au>

POSTPONED Renovation work to St James

Church: Further updates will be provided as more details become available.

Parish Secretary position: With Lucia and her family relocating to Sydney in mid-January, our parish is seeking a new Parish Secretary. This is a permanent part-time role, hours negotiable, and is based at the Maclean Parish Office. For more information, speak to Fr Roland or Lucia E: office@stmarysparish.org.au P: 02 6645 1188

St James Church Restoration Fund: We have decided to continue with collecting cans/bottles to provide funds for ongoing restoration works in Yamba and throughout the parish. Please remember the cans/bottles must have the 10c symbol on them and no crushing! For queries, please call Fran 0401 303 522.

Schools' Newsletter: Diocese of Lismore Catholic Schools is pleased to present the latest edition of its newsletter; copies are available at each Church. To stay up to date with the latest in Catholic education, please use this link: <https://bit.ly/492bBr3>.

Did You Know? – 1st & 2nd Collections: The First Collection supports our priests and the clergy of the Diocese. The Second Collection contributes to the upkeep and running of our parish, including expenses such as electricity, insurance, building maintenance, and church equipment. A sincere thank you to all who continue to support our parish through planned giving and weekly collections. Your generosity sustains the mission and pastoral life of our parish community.

Safeguarding: If you or a person close to you has been abused by someone working or ministering within the Diocese of Lismore, we ask you to contact us. We will listen to you respectfully: offer support and discuss options you have available to you. Contact the Safeguarding Office – Phone: (02) 66219444 or

