

Living in the Promise

Christmastime continues until almost halfway into January this year. So, just as most people are taking down their decorations—or have had them down for days—and are heading for the sales, we are still working through the wonder of God becoming human in Jesus Christ.

Over Christmas itself, we remembered the coming of Jesus as the baby in Bethlehem and the revelation of the Word-made-Flesh to local people. If that was where it had stopped, of course, the world would probably not have changed very much. But our Epiphany Gospel tells us that there were wise men from the east also waiting for news of the Messiah. We do not know who they were or where they came from. We do not really know why they would have been interested in the king of the Jews—but somehow, from their readings of the Jewish scriptures and maybe their own sources, they knew that something powerful was unfolding. This drew them away from their own lands—following a star. They went to the most obvious place—the palace of Herod—but there was no new king there. In the end, they were led to one of the least likely places they could have imagined—a stable.

You might like to think about what it was that so attracted those wise men—and what it was they were seeking?

What would cause you to leave your home and go in search of something you had heard or read about?

What “stars” have you followed—or dreams or promises? Where did they lead?



It reminds us that God works in ways that we often do not expect or even imagine. It also prompts us to remember that many people are looking for signs—particularly of something worth believing in. As the tinsel and decorations

are put away, many people regret the loss of sparkle—but also feel that, now Christmas is over, there is nothing much to look forward to. Somehow, the message proclaimed to the ends of the earth which so appealed to the wise men of old fails to strike them...

How might we become better at showing people the enduring power of the Gospel and the hope it has for them?

How might our own lives show the joy of “following the star of faith” —and so attract others to join us on the Journey—not to the crib but to eternal life?

Diocesan Festival 2014

21-22 June 2014
Youth Village

As this is Corpus Christi weekend, the Festival will have a Eucharistic theme. It will pick up on words of St Augustine about the Body of Christ:

**Behold what you are—
become what you receive!**

The speakers will include:

Bill Heusch
Karen Kilby (new Bede Chair)
with **TenTen Theatre**
and **More than Dance.**

There will be streams for children and young people.
Opportunities for Adoration in the chapel.
Marketplace of things going on in the Diocese.
Festival Mass and Procession
And more...

Publicity will be available shortly, but you can register your interest and be among the first to receive information by contacting us using the details below.

Contact Details

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The Amazing and Exciting Gospel!

On the Feast of Christ the King, Pope Francis released an exhortation inspired by the Synod on the New Evangelisation. One of his great themes was to grow in love of the Word of God so that we are eager—and more confident—in sharing it and its meaning for our own lives with other people.

Why not make taking time each week to pray with the Gospel of the coming Sunday one of your New Year's Resolutions? Here are a couple of extracts from the document with thoughts to get you started.

Pope Francis says that 'the study of the sacred Scriptures must be a door opened to every believer.' and that familiarity with God's word calls for dioceses, parishes and Catholic associations to provide for a serious, ongoing study of the Bible, while encouraging its prayerful individual and communal reading.

Does your parish have a group that prays with God's Word?

Do groups and associations you belong to include time with the Word of God in your meetings?

And if the answers are 'no' what might you be able to do about it?

Francis also points out that the best incentive for sharing the Gospel comes from:

- + contemplating it with love,
- + lingering over its pages
- + and reading it with the heart.

If we approach it in this way, he suggests that its beauty will 'amaze and constantly excite us.'

We can sometimes feel intimidated by the Bible—so it is good to remind ourselves that God intends it to be understood—though we might need to make a bit of an effort!



Photograph © Mazur/catholicnews.org.uk

Here is one way to pray with the Gospel—though it can be used for other parts of the bible (for example, the First and Second Readings at Mass and the Psalms).

Use the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday. You can find it in a missal—in some parish newsletters—in Universalis for Kindles and other e-readers or on the Liturgy Office website.

Choose a time when you won't be disturbed and light a candle. Use a simple prayer in your own words inviting the Holy Spirit to open your mind and heart to what God might be saying to you in this passage.

Read it through slowly and get an overall feel for what it is saying.

Pause for a moment—

Then read it again, this time looking for any words or phrases that seem to speak particularly to you.

Repeat those words to yourself a few times—a bit like chewing the cud! Allow their meaning to sink into your soul.

Invite God to draw out anything he particularly wants you to notice—or simply let the words take you into silence.

Close when you are ready, reminding yourself (in Francis' words) that you have been entrusted with a treasure which makes us more human and helps us to lead a new life and thank God for so great a gift.

Prayer Station of the Month...

As we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord this month, you might like to make a point of highlighting your font or holy water stoup.

These are available in all our churches and many people have them in their homes. However, many people walk past the holy water—or use it fairly absent-mindedly—perhaps forgetting what it symbolises.

Yet it links us back to the waters of the Jordan and the water that John the Baptist immersed Jesus in two thousand years ago.

Since then millions of people have

Waters of Baptism

For two thousand years, countless men, women and children have passed through the waters of baptism.

The waters, symbolise the passage from death to new life.

But for some, it has led to death—
or torture—
or oppression.



Dip your hand in the holy water stoup—
and make the Sign of the Cross—
reminding yourself of your Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering because of their baptism.

passed through the waters of baptism—some at great cost to themselves. Even today, in some countries, being a Christian makes you a target for extremists and, even, some governments.

Set up your prayer station next to—or above your holy water and encourage people to use it to remind themselves of their own baptisms – and to join in prayer and solidarity with those who suffer because of theirs.,

"Those who kill Christians don't ask for our ID cards to know which church you were baptized in."
Pope Francis