



# Worshipping & Praying Together as a community dispersed

*during the week beginning  
Sunday, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2021*

*The Baptism of our Lord in the Season of Epiphany*

## **The Parish of Christ Church Cathedral, Newcastle.**

The worshipping communities of the Cathedral and St Peter's Hamilton.

***The Dean of Newcastle, The Very Reverend Katherine Bowyer,  
along with all of the clergy, staff, and lay leaders of the Parish of Christ Church Cathedral,  
wish you blessings, peace, and joy for the year ahead.***

Our Christmas Worship at both the Cathedral and St Peter's was glorious, with the return of our choirs and congregational singing (even if behind masks), and we had a significant number of visitors join with us throughout the week for our 9 Lessons and Carol services, the Family Services and our traditional Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services.

However, by New Year's Eve, our government health officials were compelled to advise that we must return to restricted singing by a small number of choristers and all members of the congregation resume the wearing of masks during worship and our Feast of the Epiphany was a little less spectacular that it would have otherwise been.

Without hesitation, we have willingly restored these COVID-safe practices with the commitment and purposeful intent to limit any possibility of transmission of the virus, but the implications for our social interactions and worship are a stark reminder of the year that was, and the heightened state of awareness that we must maintain to prevent the spread of the virus. We rejoice that we continue to worship in our churches in this region, with just a few inconveniences.

As we commence the second week of our New Year and the Season of Epiphany, the readings in our lectionary cycle intentionally focus us on what it means to be baptised members of the body of Christ, the Church. We might be motivated to reflect on how we represent the body of Christ in our, city of Newcastle and in Hamilton... How do we serve God, both in our church community and in the wider community, through all these challenges? What does the world experience when they observe us, both as individuals and as a community, during these times? Are our lives a revelation of God with us, and in us, during challenges and adversities? Does the light of the incarnate Christ child shine through us, illuminating the darkness of the world around us?

This Epiphany Season is punctuated by the theme of God's self-revelation to the world told by the Evangelist, Mark. Commencing with the revelation of the Holy Trinity at the Baptism of our Lord Jesus and concluding with the Transfiguration narrative, God's Trinitarian nature is again revealed as we join the disciples in an up close and personal experience with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God's self-revelation invites us into fellowship with the Holy Trinity, and through our intimate fellowship with the Godhead, we are called to be witnesses to God's sovereignty and God's universal love and compassion to all people in all circumstances, always.

# The Revised Common Lectionary for The Season of Epiphany 2021

## Epiphany of the Lord

January 6, 2021

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalms 72:1-7, 10-14

Ephesians 3:1-12

Matthew 2:1-12

## Presentation of the Lord

February 2, 2021

Malachi 3:1-4

Psalms 84 or Psalm 24:7-10

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-40

## Baptism of the Lord

January 10, 2021

Genesis 1:1-5

Psalm 29

Acts 19:1-7

Mark 1:4-11

## Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany

February 7, 2021

Isaiah 40:21-31

Psalms 147:1-11, 20c

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

## Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 17, 2021

1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20)

Psalms 139:1-6, 13-18

1 Corinthians 6:12-20

John 1:43-51

## Transfiguration Sunday

*(last Sunday before Lent)*

February 14, 2021

2 Kings 2:1-12

Psalm 50:1-6

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

## Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 24, 2021

Jonah 3:1-5, 10

Psalm 62:5-12

1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Mark 1:14-20

## Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

January 31, 2021

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Psalm 111

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Mark 1:21-28



## Reflection on the Baptism of our Lord by *The Reverend Angela Peverell*

The first Sunday of the season of Epiphany plunges us into the Markan Gospel account of the Son of Man, the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Mark doesn't place his emphasis on the genealogy of Mary and Joseph, or the Annunciation, or even the Nativity and the Epiphany story of the visitation by the Magi. Mark's Gospel account begins with a brief introduction to the Prophet John the Baptist and a Man in a queue waiting to be baptised by John in the River Jordan.

During my semester studying the Gospel of Mark, we watched a movie depicting the Gospel according to Mark. Without any pre-ambule or prologue (true to the Gospel account), the movie opened with the Baptist in the River Jordan, baptising all who came seeking repentance and forgiveness of their sins, preaching that "he was just the forerunner of he who would come after", whom John declared, "would baptise them with the Holy Spirit". The camera shot continuously moved back and forward between the Baptist baptising people one by one, and an ever-increasing queue along the riverbank, gradually making their way closer to where they would enter the water to be baptised.

When a certain Man from the queue entered the water, at first it appeared that this would be just another baptism, until as he was immersed by John under the water, the most magnificent things occurred, and a sort of epiphany happened... that Man was Jesus! The Son of God, The Son of Man, with whom the voice of God from heaven declared his delight as the Spirit descended on him. The cinematography was excellent, and a sort of epiphany happened, for me, watching that movie.

No doubt this was deliberate on the part of our lecturer. We know the story of the baptism of Jesus too well and if we don't stop to ponder the significance of what actually happened as Jesus emerged from the waters, we risk missing the significance of the self-revelation of the Trinitarian Godhead through the tearing open the heavens by God, to reveal God in three persons, and the significance of what our baptism means for us. At our baptism we are baptised with water, signifying the cleansing from sin that Jesus' death has made possible and our new life in Christ, and we are anointed with chrism oil, signifying the gift of the Holy Spirit that has descended upon us.

The Baptism of the Man in the queue on the bank of the Jordan is another "Epiphany" account we read of that "Man" emerging from the water to see the heavens being torn apart and the Spirit descending on him like a dove, and a voice from heaven saying: "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased." (1:10-11) This Epiphany of the Trinitarian Godhead, God the Father breaking through the division between heaven and earth declares the Sonship of Jesus, and the Spirit of God descending on him equips him for the mission ahead. This Man, the Son of God, the Son of Man, is the self-revelation of God. This Man, Jesus, is "the Epiphany".

In the Western Church, whilst we celebrate the Baptism of our Lord immediately after the Epiphany account of the visitation by the Magi on the twelfth day of our Christmas season, in the Eastern Church, the Epiphany celebrates the Baptism of Jesus, the "Epiphany of our Lord". These different emphasis' only serve to accentuate the importance of the Epiphany season on our Christian walk.

Epiphany, which will continue through to the "Transfiguration of our Lord", just before Lent, is our opportunity to immerse ourselves in the revelation of God with us, through the revelation of who Jesus really is. The Magi revealed who Jesus is and God's self-revelation at Jesus' baptism revealed who Jesus is and the evangelist Mark, will continue to provide us with evidence of the Christology of Jesus, all the way to the Cross, when the Temple curtain will be torn open and the Centurion will declare, "Surely this man was the Son of God". (15:39)

## Reflection on the Season of Epiphany by *The Very Reverend Katherine Bowyer*

### *Epiphany* /ɪˈpɪf(ə)ni,ɛˈpɪf(ə)ni/ (Noun)

- 1. the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles as represented by the Magi (Matthew 2:1–12).**
- 2. a moment of sudden and great revelation or realization.**

Have you ever wondered about how many words and phrases from the Bible and the Prayer Book punctuate our language? We talk about the good Samaritan, and regardless of whether the Scriptural origin is known, people immediately know that we are talking about a good person who cares. Similarly, phrases like ‘hiding your light under a bushel’ and ‘salt of the earth’ have a gospel foundation. We talk about a baptism (usually of fire) and we understand that it means an immersive and transformative experience, which is the theological and liturgical understanding too. And we talk about an epiphany or epiphanies, and understand them to be an ‘Aha!’ moment, as indeed it was for the Magi when they worshipped the Christ child.

The visit of the Magi, which Angela wonderfully unpacked for us in her sermon, is not a comfortable story. The visit of the Magi involves earthly politics, a well-intentioned visit which goes horribly wrong, and fugitive status for all at the end, all stemming from a quest for truth and to worship. It’s complex, Epiphany. On the one hand, revelation, light, Christ for the world, and on the other it’s like the gifts the Magi bring: gifts of celebration, gifts for a king, but gifts with deeper, darker meaning.

As I wrote back on Advent IV: “It all seems very complicated. But then, so too is the Incarnation.”

After we celebrate the Feast of the Baptism of Our Lord, we enter into the time of ‘Sundays after Epiphany’. In truth I wonder if they should be renamed the Sundays of Epiphany because we hear in the gospel readings over these weeks, moments of epiphany, which are anything but straightforward, nevertheless also involve quests for truth and worship and transformation. Jesus encounters Philip, and calls him to follow, and Philip in turn evangelises Nathanael. Cautious of Philip’s enthusiasm, Nathanael utters the famous phrase: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” to which Philip replies “Come and see” – the perfect response inviting individual experience and response. And so Nathanael comes, sees – has an epiphany, - and follows.

Likewise, we will hear of Jesus calling Simon and Andrew, and James and John. Read on in Mark 1, and you’ll hear of Peter’s mother-in-law, of astounded crowds and of healing, or prayer and the urgency of Jesus’ call to proclaim the good news of the kingdom. It is full of epiphanies, individual and corporate, as people encounter Christ. Though the Magi have long since moved on, their experience is replicated, rippling across the lives of those who encounter Jesus.

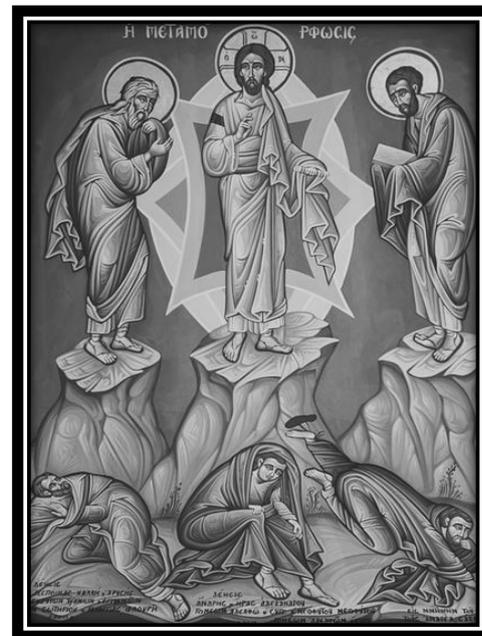
As we read the urgent words of Mark’s gospel, these epiphanies can all seem a bit chaotic, a bit messy: crowds clamouring at the door, demons crying out and being silenced, questioning synagogue worshippers – the light is moving quickly.

But isn’t that the truth of the Christmas story, isn’t that the truth of the Incarnation? It’s all a bit messy? For God comes to us, abides with us, dwells with us, in the messiness of human life, with all the uncomfortable and challenging bits as well as the hope and light. And isn’t it true that sometimes, in the midst of the messiness, in the midst of the turmoil, that we see most clearly, we have our epiphanies, we feel the presence of God most deeply, we hear the voice of the heavenly messenger guiding us in the right path, the safe way.

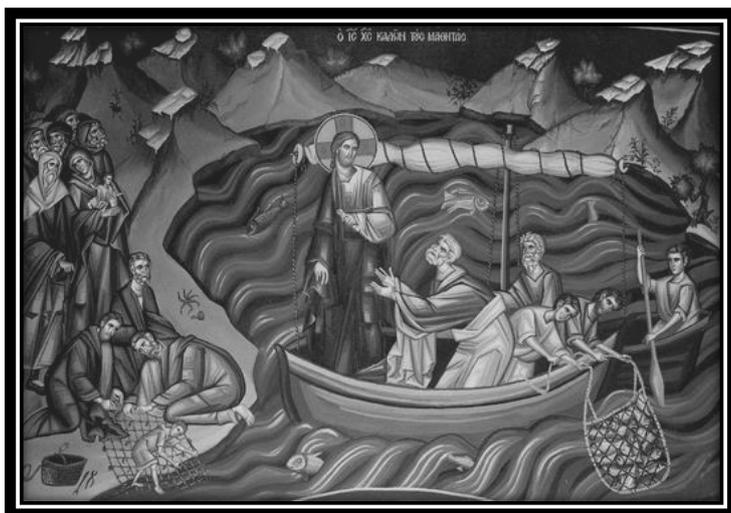
The feast of the Epiphany isn’t the most comfortable Christmas story, and the weeks that follow challenge us too, but this is a story which should bring us great comfort. For this is the story of salvation.



*The Baptism of our Lord*



*The Transfiguration*



*Jesus Calls the Disciples*

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You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXyas2uhJUNOnDetOpPdUOg>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/christchurchcathedralnewcastle/>

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