



CHASING THE LIGHT

My friend has a delightful little cat that loves to play. Her favourite game is to madly chase a laser beam of light from a torch. Regrettably, the cat never quite captures the elusive beam of light.

Humans are not unlike the little cat. We frantically chase around for the light of insight that might lead us to truth and authenticity. We search for peace and wisdom and chase the mysterious gift of enlightenment.

Today, in the gospel story, we meet the Magi - a group of wise Persian astrologers who begin a journey to find the source of wisdom by employing the tools of their craft of astrology. They follow a star and their journey leads them to Bethlehem. They chase the light and find their source of wisdom - the infant Jesus.

The star symbolises the psychological and spiritual journey they and we must make in order to be truly enlightened. A star is a source of light. It is a symbol of the human spirit seeking guidance in the dark night of ignorance. Like our little cat, we humans need to chase the light. We seek an illumination of spirit. We need a 'star' to follow, a 'star' that does not lead to an illusory, empty destination.

Today's gospel reveals that the Star of Bethlehem is the source of spiritual light to which we must hitch our wagon. Our star is the light of God, Creator and author of light. The God who spoke earth's first illumination "*Let there be light, and there was light.*" (Gen 1:3); and, as the epochs rolled by, sent his only Son into our world

to shine in our midst to radiate the light of the knowledge of God's glory.

The Star of Bethlehem reveals the divinity in its starkest and simplest form - The Son of God revealed to be a helpless infant lying in a manger. "*I, the light, have come into the world so that whoever believes in me need not stay in the dark anymore.*" (Jn. 12:46)

To come into the Light we, like the Magi, must make our own spiritual journey out of darkness. We are given a 'star', an interior light to guide us - our conscience. Each person has, imprinted in their heart, a natural instinct for what is good and true as God sees it. Conscience is a light that, if developed and followed, will lead us to God.

The light of conscience is magnified by right choice and good actions. It is intensified by grace in the sacraments of baptism and Eucharist. It is expanded by reflection on the scriptures and the teaching of the Church. It reaches its nadir when we contemplate, love and adore the Christ in his



epiphany as the Light comes into the world. The chase ends. We have 'caught' the Light!

Michael Gilbert CSsR
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2017

OUR VISION

"Everything is to be oriented towards the praise and glory of God".

OUR MISSION

The St Agnes' Parish Community strives to make our Vision a reality by a commitment to:

- holiness in the image of Christ
- proclaim the good news of salvation
- minister within the faith community
- the service of all, particularly those in need

Gospel Reflection

Recently some Christian scientists got to work trying to explain the star that led the wise men to Bethlehem. They came up with a complicated, and no doubt plausible, astronomical theory about how a certain brilliant star may have appeared around the time of the birth of Jesus. Though I was intrigued by their methods, I wondered why they bothered. Matthew's wandering star is not about astronomy. It's religious shorthand for describing how the heavens preside over and guide the events of the world. The image of a star is used in similar ways in the Books of Deuteronomy, Numbers, Isaiah and the Psalms. This entire feast is all about symbols, not science. Reported by Hippolytus as early as the third century, it is celebrated twelve days after Christmas, the number itself echoing God's goodness in creating and recreating us.

The wise men's star is on a par with the other images Matthew uses. At the centre of each of the first three chapters of his Gospel there is an extraordinary event. In chapter one Joseph hears the message of an angel in a dream. In chapter two the wise men find Jesus by following a star. And by chapter three the heavens open and God speaks at the baptism of the Lord. By any standards that's quite an opening to a biography! It's all about the manifestation, or epiphany, of God's glory in the world.

And let's look carefully at where and for whom this glory is revealed. The first instance is to Joseph while he's in bed asleep. The second is to gentile astrologers who, by reporting their news to Herod, set up an immediate threat to Jesus. The third instance is to all those Jews who were coming to hear John the Baptist. Within three chapters of Matthew's Gospel the circles of God's glory revealed in Jesus become more public and change lives. The lives of Joseph, the star gazers, John the Baptist and those who heard Jesus preach will never be the same again.

The Feast of the Epiphany is not an ancient version of Halley's comet. It is about how God's glory changes human hearts. T.S. Eliot got this point in his poem 'The Journey of the Magi'.

'Birth or death? There was a Birth, certainly.
We had evidence and no doubt, I had seen birth
and death.
But had thought they were different; this Birth
was hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our
death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms.
But no longer at ease here, in the old
dispensation.
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.'

And so may this feast change our hearts and enable us to die to self so as to be born to God's glory that can and does shine through us. And may we remember that this epiphany is not meant for us alone, but that we are called to go public with it and demonstrate our belief in today's feast by the way we live, the world we help create, and the one we strive to recreate.

Fr Richard Leonard SJ, LiturgyHelp

World Day of Prayer

Friday 3 March

What is the World Day of Prayer?

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide ecumenical movement of women of many faith traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year on the first Friday in March. Throughout the entire day, we collectively pray all over the world, beginning with the first sunrise and ending at the last sunset. Our prayers follow the sun's path around the globe. WDP's motto is "Informed prayer leads to prayerful action." Through World Day of Prayer, women affirm that prayer and action are inseparable and that both have immeasurable influence in the world.

Co-ordinated services of Christian worship and prayer are held across the world in over 170 countries, directed by the international body – the World Day of Prayer International. The program for the service is prepared well in advance by women from one focus country of the world. Each service has an advertised theme and involves Bible readings, prayers and songs and a reflection. This year the service is prepared by women from the Philippines. The theme is 'Am I being unfair to you?'

What are the goals of World Day of Prayer movement?

The motto of the World Day of Prayer is "informed prayer and prayerful action". The prayer day promotes informed prayer for the women of the focus country who write the service program. The WDP service presents their needs and concerns and their praise to God through the use of Bible passages and prayers and testimonies. The people around the world attending WDP services can then support them by participating in the service. Hopefully too the service will generate subsequent informed action in support of the women of the focus country. The Day of Prayer also encourages Christians of all traditions to join together and express community in prayer and praise to our God – locally and globally.

World Day of Prayer will be held in St Agnes' Church at 9.30am on Friday, 3 March.



World Day of Prayer
AUSTRALIA

Need help with your parish giving?

Call Trudi
(02) 6588 7444



Parish Giving Programme

St Agnes' Rugrats

Community Youth Group

Rugrats is an open youth group centred around social activities held at the Port Macquarie Youth Hub in Horton Street. It is held on Friday evenings from 3.30pm through to 7.00pm and includes afternoon tea and dinner. The cost is \$3.00 per person or \$6.00 per family, with two or more children.

Rugrats is fully supervised and recommences on Friday, 20 January – all are welcome. For further information please contact Peter on mobile number 0429 658 404.

Stamps

The parish is happy to accept stamps as we have now found a person willing to collect and send to the Missions. However we cannot accept stamps unless they are trimmed of excess paper waste. That is – leave a 2 mm border around each stamp. The stamps will be sold to help the poor areas of Peru under the auspices of the Mary MacKillop Missions Fund.

Parish Retreat

Will be held on Saturday, 11 February at the Francis Retreat Centre, Bonny Hills. It will be a one day retreat. All parishioners, teachers and parents are most welcome. Register on line via the St Agnes' website using the following steps, or call the Presbytery Office.

- Website: www.stagnesparish.org.au.
- Click on Parish Education link.
- On the RHS click on Parish Registrations.
- This will take you to School Interviews, enter Event code for Parish Retreat - 422eh - then click green 'Go' button.
- This will take you to Retreat Registrations.

Blood Donations

Donating blood is an important community service requiring new donors to ensure there is sufficient blood for patients in need.

To find out how to become a donor, or for more information call 131 495, or visit the website: www.donateblood.com.au.

Remember in Prayer



Recently Deceased: Ellen Breakell, Peg Eddy, Frank Lloyd.

Anniversaries: Kevin McDonnell, John Abi-Saab, Frederick & Phyllis Duff, Sr Josephine Quinn, RSM, Tony Petro, Freda Morcom, Fay McGrath, Stan Condon, Dr Vispi Davar, Fr James Carney, Fr John Buggy, Fr Joseph Doyle, Fr Thomas Muldoon.

Other Mass Intentions: Pat Huxtable, Janelle Ramstadius, Marija Miller, Pat Chuck, Peter Chuck, Hilton Dodds, Minnie Downes, Nora Downes Roberts, Ern O'Reilly, Beryl Thomas, Molly & Robert Friggens, donor intentions and Masses of thanksgiving.

Coeliac Hosts

Coeliac Hosts are available for parishioners who prefer these hosts. Prior to Mass commencing please go to the Sacristy and speak with our Pastoral Assistant, Peter O'Driscoll, and then sit towards the front of the Church. Coeliac hosts are available at the Chapels.



Welcome Fr Frank Devoy

We welcome Fr Devoy back with us this weekend to assist with our Parish Masses. Fr Peter Wood is on leave for the month of January.

MacKillop Gift Shop

The gift shop has for sale a wide range of gifts, religious items and cards. It is open Monday to Friday 10.00am to 2.00pm and is located on Hayward Street, behind KFC. The phone number is 6584 9779.

Quote for the New Year

'Every man should be born again on the first day of January. Start with a fresh page. Take up one hole more in the buckle if necessary, or let down one, according to circumstances; but on the first of January let every man gird himself once more, with his face to the front and take no interest in the things that were and are past.'

Henry Ward Beecher, Nineteenth century American clergyman & speaker.

Pope Francis Tweet

"May nonviolence become the hallmark of our decisions, our relationships and our actions."

Parish Priest

Father Leo Donnelly

Assistant Priest

Father Peter Wood

Assistant Priest

Father Roland Agrisola

Pastoral Assistant

Peter O'Driscoll

T (02) 6584 9970

Presbytery Office

47 Hay Street Port Macquarie

PO Box 23

T (02) 6583 1024

E pastoraloffice@stagnesparish.org.au

www.stagnesparish.org.au

Office Hours:

8.30am - 4.30pm

PARISH MASSES

ST AGNES' CHURCH | Hay Street, Port Macquarie

Monday to Thursday: 5.15pm

Friday: 12.05pm

Saturday: 8.00am, 6.00pm Vigil

Sunday: 7.30am, 9.00am, 5.00pm

Please note: Weekday Masses at 9.00am on Public Holidays

Reconciliation: Friday 11.30am -12 noon, Saturday 11.30am - 12.30pm

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament:

1st Saturday of the month 8.30am - 9.30am.

ST FRANCIS CHAPEL /Lochinvar Place, Port Macquarie

Contact: Sr Anne Hannigan

Ph 6589 9814 or 0419 243 259.

Communion Service or Mass: 9.30am Monday - Thursday

Sunday Mass: 9.30am

CHRIST THE KING CHAPEL | Boronia St, Port Macquarie

Contact: Sr Anne Hannigan

Ph: 6589 9814 or 0419 243 259

Weekday Mass: See Notice On Chapel Door

Mass: Saturday Vigil - 4.30pm

Rosary: 1st Saturday of the month 4.00pm.

ST BERNARD'S, TELEGRAPH POINT | Rollands Plain Rd, Telegraph Point

Thursday: 6.00pm.

STAR OF THE SEA, LAKE CATHIE | Ocean Drive, Lake Cathie

Sunday: 8.00am.

FEAST DAYS

The Baptism of the Lord
Monday, 9 January



The Beginning of Ordinary Time
Tuesday, 10 January

St Hilary
Friday, 13 January



ROSTERS

14 & 15 January 2017

READERS AND COMMENTATORS

6pm Vigil: Jodie Rich
Robert Green
Barry Johnson

7.30am: Cath Murphy
Darren Smith
Brian Tierney

9.00am: Judy Brady
Genevieve Postlewait
Betty Hodgson

5.00pm: Volunteers Please
See Peter in the Sacristy

9.00am: Pat Daley
Mary Bennett
Hank Brinkman
Hebin Kallikkadan

5.00pm: Ellen Hales
Angela Sullivan
Dianne Hughes
Sean Jennings

GIFT BEARERS ROSTER

6pm Vigil: The Bell Family
7.30am: S Wilson & S Bale
9.00am: N & B Moore

MINISTERS OF THE EUCHARIST

6pm Vigil: Paul Jones
Gae Green
Bill Skane
Sue Skane

7.30am: David Hogan
Sandra Wilson
Kevin Lewis
Sandy Lushchwitz

THE STATUE OF OUR LADY

Sue Kingston
37 Church Street
Port Macquarie
Phone: 6584 9815

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS

2nd Sunday in OT—Year A
Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; Psalm 39;
Corinthians 1:1-3;
John 1:29-34.

DIOCESAN INVESTMENT FUND PAYS 2.15% AT CALL!

There are no fees or charges on your account. *AGENTS: Mrs Veronica Rinkin & Mrs Mary O'Brien*
DIF Office, Parish Administration Centre, Phone: (02) 6583 7439 9am – 1pm Monday - Friday