

**Transformation – NOW!
Epiphany**

Opening prayer:

Lord Jesus, today we remember kings who came
And bowed before you, offering precious gifts.
And we remember you – Almighty King – who came
And humbly gave yourself, even to death on a cross.
We also would come and kneel, and lay our lives at your
feet.

We commit again to love you, and others,
with all our hearts, minds, souls and strength.
We pledge again to give our money, our status, and our very
selves

to your kingdom of love.

We ask that all may see your love in us
that we may bring about your kingdom of justice
with obedience, sacrifice, and love.

Amen.

Adapted from www.christianaid.org.uk

Hymn: O Worship the Lord

sung by St Martin's Voices

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!

Low at his feet lay thy burden of carefulness,
high on his heart he will bear it for thee,
comfort thy sorrows, and answer thy prayerfulness,
guiding thy steps as may best for thee be.

Fear not to enter his courts in the slenderness
of the poor wealth thou wouldst reckon as thine:
truth in its beauty, and love in its tenderness,
these are the offerings to lay on his shrine.

These, though we bring them in trembling and fearfulness,
he will accept for the name that is dear;
mornings of joy give for evenings of tearfulness,
trust for our trembling and hope for our fear.

O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
bow down before him, his glory proclaim;
with gold of obedience, and incense of lowliness,
kneel and adore him, the Lord is his name!

John Samuel Bewley Monsell (1811-1875)

Bible Reading: Matthew 2: 1-12 (NIV)

The Magi visit the Messiah

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the

people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written:

“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for out of you will come a ruler
who will shepherd my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him."

After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Reflection: Gifts

*Adapted from a reflection by
Jenny Walpole, St Peter De Beauvoir*

The Christmas Story tells us the shepherds brought a lamb; Christina Rossetti's poem (In the bleak mid-winter)

suggests all we need is to give our heart. But the gifts of the wise men allow us to ponder our own gifts; those given to us by God which we share with our family, our community and in our workplaces.

Is God pleased with the way we use the gifts he gave us, or do we make excuses for not using them well?

Regardless of our new year's resolutions or failure at them, we must offer ourselves, our talents as well as our shortcomings. Epiphany is a good time to ask ourselves 'what is holding us back from offering our gifts to God?'

If life is old and tired and our treasures seem limited, the three wise men can provide an inspiration for the on-going journey of faith. No-one gets chauffeur driven to Bethlehem. The on-going journey of faith might be painful, surrounded by darkness and without a star appearing even intermittently to reassure us. The magi travelled through the dark and through the wilderness and so do we on our faith journey. Like the wise men, we travel on our road through life and bring the light of the stable, of the Christ Child, with us. Our task now is to spread that light by using the gifts God has given to us.

Hymn: Christ is our Light

sung by St Martin's Voices

Christ is our light! the bright and morning star
covering with radiance all from near and far.

Christ be our light, shine on, shine on we pray
into our hearts, into our world today.

Christ is our love! baptised that we may know
the love of God among us, swooping low.
Christ be our love, bring us to turn our face
and see you in the light of heaven's embrace.

Christ is our joy! transforming wedding guest!
Through water turned to wine the feast was blessed.
Christ be our joy; your glory let us see,
as your disciples did in Galilee.

Leith Fisher (1941-2009)

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Prayers: Welcoming the Light

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(Five candles are lit, one after each petition)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.
They lived in a land of shadows, but now light is shining upon
them. You have given them great joy, O Lord; you have
made them happy.

Jesus, Word made flesh dwelling among us,
come, lighten our darkness.

Jesus born of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
come, lighten our darkness.

Jesus adored by the wise men,
come, lighten our darkness.

Jesus revealed to the world,
come, lighten our darkness.

Jesus here and with us now,

come, lighten our darkness.

The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory, as the glory of the only son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Blessed are you Lord our God for you have called us out of darkness to be children of light. The bright light of your presence scatters the darkness within us and is a lantern to our paths.

Bless these lights that they may remind us of the light of your presence among us and your love for us all:
through him who is the Light of the Word, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

Diocesan Prayer

**Heavenly Father, as we meet
as members of the Mothers' Union in Manchester,
may we know Your presence and hear Your word.
Teach us how best to serve You,
seeing not just the needs of this Diocese
but those of the wider world.**

**Help us at all times to trust in You and seek to do
Your will. Fill us with Your spirit, encourage us, use
us and bless us,**

that we may have strength to follow Your way.

**We pray in sure hope and the assurance of Your
power.**

Amen

Hymn: Brightest and Best

sung by St Martin's Voices

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Cold on his cradle the dew-drops are shining;
low lies his head with the beasts of the stall;
angels adore him in slumber reclining,
Maker and Monarch and Saviour of all.

Say, shall we yield him, in costly devotion,
odours of Edom, and offerings divine,
gems of the mountain and pearls of the ocean,
myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?

Vainly we offer each ample oblation,
vainly with gifts would his favour secure:
richer by far is the heart's adoration,
dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.

Brightest and best of the sons of the morning,
dawn on our darkness, and lend us thine aid;
star of the east, the horizon adorning,
guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.

Reginald Heber (1783-1826)

Blessing

May God the Father,
who led the wise men by the shining of a star
to find the Christ, the Light from light,
lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord. **Amen**
May God,

who has delivered us from the dominion of darkness,
give us a place with the saints in light
in the kingdom of his beloved Son. **Amen**

May the light of the glorious gospel of Christ
shine in your hearts and fill your lives
with his joy and peace. **Amen**

And the blessing of God Almighty, who is Father, Son and
Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always.
Amen

Thank you for joining in with Thursday Prayers.

Choral music: The Church of England St Martin in the Fields

Theme music: Catherine Hilton

Theme image: Aarn Giri on Unsplash.com

Readers: Rosemary Taylor, Nicola and William Stubbs,
Joy Butterworth, Christine and Richard
Faulkner, Yvonne Jennings, Jenni Beaumont

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**Next Thursday Prayers will be on 10th February 2022,
“A new heaven and a new earth”**