

'BREATHING WITH BOTH LUNGS THIS EPIPHANY' – HOMILY – 7 JANUARY 2018

Today and tomorrow we move.

Today, the celebration of the **EPIPHANY** is the last Day of Christmas.

We add the wise ones from the East - the Magi - to the Christmas crib.

Tonight the Christmas Crib is placed away for another year.

On Monday we move to the adult ministry of Jesus, remembering his Baptism.

We pray that we may live out our own baptismal vocation.

MAGI – THE WISE ONES FROM THE EAST

Last Sunday we heard in Luke's Gospel from two wise and holy Jewish people, Simeon and Anna.

This Sunday we hear from Matthew's Gospel 2:1-12 about the Magi from the East.

Sometimes in the Christmas Crib, they are shown as Kings.

But the Gospel calls them Magi.

The Magi are known as wise people from Eastern traditions.

They come searching for the truth, following a star.

They know that the child they seek is the king of the Jews.

They come not only to meet and greet, or pay their respects

They come to give *homage* to the child. The Greek word is for worship in English.

They worship Jesus.

Jewish priests and scribes quote a prophecy to Herod, pointing to Bethlehem as the place.

*"And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel."'*

Not only a ruler, but also one who shepherds his people.

HOW MANY LEADERS DO WE KNOW THAT WE COULD SAY "SHEPHERD" US? WHO DO WE SHEPHERD IN LIFE?

Though we see the Christmas scene as one of peace,

Matthew's Gospel points out the dangers faced by Jesus from the very beginning.

Particularly the wrath, jealousy and cruelty of Herod who seeks to kill Jesus.

As we encounter the peace that Jesus gives us in life,

WHAT ARE THE THREATS, WRATH, JEALOUSY AND CRUELTY IN OUR WORLD?

The Gospel tells us that Herod was "frightened".

HOW DO WE FACE OUR FEARS?

WHAT DO WE DESPERATELY HOLD ONTO IN LIFE?

PERHAPS POWER, PRESTIGE AND WEALTH LIKE HEROD?

WHAT ARE WE AFRAID OF?

WHAT CAUSES US TO BE CRUEL OR DEMEANING OR ABUSIVE OR MANIPULATIVE?

Herod tries to manipulate the Magi so that he finds out where Jesus is.

The Gospel continues:

“Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, ‘Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage.’”

The Magi response to finding Jesus says:

“When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure-chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

ON THIS JOURNEY OF 2018, WHAT ARE OUR HOPES AND FEARS? DO WE EXPECT TO BE OVERWHELMED WITH JOY?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

One challenge this year will be an action waiting to occur since 1788.

WHEN WILL WE ACKNOWLEDGE - IN ALL OUR CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, OFFICES AND CATHOLIC AGENCIES - THE INDIGENOUS HERITAGE OF THIS LAND AND ITS CUSTODIANS?

Some already have implemented this, but only a minority throughout the land. After consultation with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council, the Australian Catholic Bishops have stated in November:

*“Support for Acknowledgement Plaques on Catholic buildings
The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference approved the use of its logo on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council acknowledgement plaque.
The Conference supported and encouraged all Catholic agencies, including parishes and schools, to display the plaque.”*

REFUGEES

All nations agreed to the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants in September 2016.

There will be **two** UN documents, one each for migrants and refugees.

The UN Compact document for refugees will be available by February this year.

It will open for consultation to every nation for six to eight months.

Called a Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, it has **four** objectives”

- 1. “Ease pressures on host countries;*
- 2. Enhance refugee self-reliance;*
- 3. Expand third-country solutions; and*
- 4. Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.”*

WHY IS A DECLARATION ON REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS REQUIRED?

The New York Declaration reminded the nations of the world that in 2015 there were over **24.4 million migrants** in the world, and around **65 million forcibly displaced persons** *including over 21 million refugees, 3 million asylum seekers and over 40 million internally displaced persons.*"

The Declaration states that,

"We are witnessing in today's world an unprecedented level of human mobility. More people than ever before live in a country other than the one in which they were born.

EACH PARISH IS INVITED TO PARTICIPATE

The Vatican has prepared **twenty** points to aid the discussion on the Compact for Refugees. The Migrants & Refugees Section of the Vatican -

"guided by the Holy Father, urges the Bishops' Conferences to explain the Compacts and the Points to their parishes and Church organizations, with the hope of fostering more effective solidarity with migrants and refugees. Given the great range of issues covered in the Points, each Bishops' Conference should select the most relevant points for their national situation and bring them to their Government's attention, specifically the Ministers responsible for the country's negotiations on the Global Compacts.

*Each country has already begun to prepare its position, and the negotiations will take place during the first six or eight months of 2018. The same Points in more formal language, for use in advocacy, may be found in the document *Twenty Action Points for the Global Compacts* .*

*Though grounded in the Church's experience and reflection, the **20 Points** are offered as valuable considerations to all people of good will who might be willing to implement them and advocate their inclusion in their country's negotiations.*

Leaders and members of all faiths, and organizations of civil society, are welcome to join in this effort.

*Let us unite *to welcome, to protect, to promote, and to integrate* people obliged to leave their home and seeking a new one among us."*

Refer link: [Vatican Migrants and Refugees Section – Twenty Pastoral Action Points](#)

EAST AND WEST

In the Catholic Church there are rich traditions of Eastern and Western Catholic Churches. Recent Popes have reminded us that we need to breathe with both lungs.

Pope John Paul spoke several times of this intimate relationship.

Three of his quotes are:

1. *Pope John Paul II - Discourse to Members of the Roman Curia, 28 June 1985,*

"As I have said several times, the church has to relearn how to breathe with its two lungs, both the Eastern one and the Western one. I repeat and stress that again today..."

3. *Pope John Paul II in his Encyclical UT UNUM SINT 25th May 1995,
"In this perspective an expression which I have frequently employed finds its deepest meaning: the Church must breathe with her two lungs!"*
4. *Pope John Paul II on Sunday 24th June 2001 addressed the Ukrainian Catholic Episcopate,
"Here the Church breathes with the two lungs of the Eastern and Western traditions. Here there is a fraternal meeting between those who draw from the sources of Byzantine spirituality and those who are nourished by Latin spirituality."*

OUR PARISH

In Australia we have much to learn about the struggles that refugees face. Our own parish has the Western - called Latin - traditions from many countries. And we have parish members from Eastern Catholic Churches including Chaldean, Syriac Catholic, Melkite, Armenian and Syro-Malabar Churches. **May we together, breathing from both lungs, on this Feast of the Epiphany, reach out to the wisdom within, from east and west, to respond to the plights of refugees in our world, and in our own community.**

As the Magi brought gifts to Jesus,
may we bring as gifts, our love and faith,
and in particular in 2018, among many issues to be faced,

- **our advocacy for refugees in this year of international consultation**
- **and our advocacy for the acknowledgement of our Indigenous Sisters and Brothers.**

Let us pray joyfully.

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Breathing with Both Lungs this Epiphany – 7 December 2018]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/010718.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook07012018>]

Other References:

[UN Global Compact on Refugees – Proposal to UN General Assembly August 2018](#)

[UN Declaration Refugees and Migrants, resolution adopted 19 September 2016](#)

[Vatican Migrants and Refugees Section – Twenty Pastoral Action Points](#)

[John Paul II - Discourse to Members of the Roman Curia, 28 June 1985](#)

[John Paul II *UT UNUM SINT* - On commitment to Ecumenism, 25 May 1995](#)

[John Paul II Address to the Ukrainian Catholic Episcopate, 24 June 2001](#)

Image: Edward Burne-Jones - Adoration of the Magi 1904 public domain

