

‘ENVIRONMENT, BUSHFIRES, PRAYER & SOLIDARITY’  
EPIPHANY 5<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2020

## THE MAGI

Yesterday afternoon, the three Magi were placed in our Christmas Crib, as we commemorate their journey from the East to worship the new-born Jesus in Bethlehem.

We celebrate the *Epiphany*, the Good News to the Nations.

At this time of year, we look ahead.

Holidays, preparing for school, skills training, tertiary studies, planning the diary.

And as Australians we have an opportunity to update our protection and management of the environment.

## HOMILY IN SIX PARTS

Today’s homily will be in *SIX* parts.

- 1) [TEN-YEARLY REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN AUSTRALIA](#)
- 2) [PRAYER DURING FIRE & DROUGHT](#)
- 3) [MAGI – THE WISE ONES FROM THE EAST](#)
- 4) [THE MAGI CAME TO WORSHIP JESUS](#)
- 5) [HEROD](#)
- 6) [OUR SOLIDARITY AND PRAYER IN 2020](#)

### 1) [TEN-YEARLY REVIEW OF THE ENVIRONMENT IN AUSTRALIA](#)

The Environment in Australia is impacted by all levels In Government.

Concerning Commonwealth legislation, the [Second Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999](#) is now under way.

The current review comes ten years after the last review.

In its [Discussion Paper](#) it says,

*‘The EPBC Act is more than 1000 pages of complex legislation, to which has been added over 400 pages of regulations. This review is a once in a decade opportunity to look closely at the Act, how it operates, and what it is achieving. While it is not a review of environment policy – which is the job of government – this review is a crucial opportunity to make recommendations to ensure that the Act is fit for the future. Changing land use, invasive pests and weeds, a changing climate, more frequent extreme weather events, and fires continue to put pressure on our environment and heritage. Australia’s population, the ways that businesses operate, and how governments regulate are changing. Community and business expectations of governments are vastly different from when the EPBC Act was first legislated 20 years ago.’*

### **The Review Timetable is**

Oct 2019 Review announced; Nov 2019 Discussion paper

### **Feb 14 Submissions due**

Feb 2020 Exploring reform options; Jun 2020 Draft report; Oct 2020 Final Report

As Australians we are invited to participate.

February 14<sup>th</sup> is not long away.

## POPE FRANCIS ENCYCLICAL – LAUDATO SI’ – ON CARE FOR OUR COMMON HOME

And for us as Church, as we also reflect on the 2015 environmental Catholic teaching of [Laudato Si’ - On Care for Our Common Home](#).

We come before Jesus today in this Eucharist with heightened awareness of particular aspects of our environment.

**We share a common desire to pray  
for our brothers and sisters suffering from the threats of bushfires.**

Let us now pray together our parish prayer this summer.

### [PRAYER DURING FIRE & DROUGHT](#)

Each day during summer across our nation we pray to you, our God, for the gift of life-giving rain, for those threatened this day by a dry land, high temperatures, strong winds, breathing difficulties and extreme fire alerts in parts of our nation.

Wherever we are and whatever we do today, we pray for our sisters and brothers who have died tragically during the bushfires, we pray for their families and friends and community members, and for those who have lost their houses and properties.

We turn to you, our God, as we reach out to support each other.

We are family.

We pray for the many dedicated people fighting fires, and those providing emergency assistance.

We pray for those who continue to struggle with the ongoing drought and its devastation. We pray for them and their communities.

We hear of the loss of livestock, animal and birdlife and habitat during drought and fire. We pray for the land and its healing.

We pray for life-giving rain. We pray as family that we work together.

We turn to you, our God, in this hour of need for members of our human family and for our common home.

Amen



*Click on image for printable version of this prayer*

## MAGI – THE WISE ONES FROM THE EAST

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 were known as wise people from Eastern traditions. They came **searching for the truth**, following a star.

As we focus nationally on the environment, let us search for the truth together. Like the Magi, may we journey in truth.

## THE MAGI CAME TO WORSHIP JESUS

The Magi knew that the child they sought was the king of the Jews. They came not only to meet and greet, or to pay their respects. They came to give homage to the child. The Greek word is for worship in English. **They worshipped Jesus.** Jewish priests and scribes quoted 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.

We pause and ask a question.

*In what ways do I expect Jesus to shepherd me this year?*

[pause]

## HEROD

As we note in the world media, we face heightened tensions in parts of our world, particularly in the Middle East these past few days.

Though we might think of 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 sought to kill Jesus. The Gospel tells us that Herod was *“frightened”*.

Herod tried to manipulate the Magi so that he could find out where Jesus was.

Just as the **Magi represent** our searching for the truth, so **Herod represents** the temptations and dangers of envy, violence, cruelty, manipulation, and misuse of power and wealth.

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.’”*

## SOLIDARITY & PRAYER IN 2020

The Magi story informs us:

*“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.”*

We think of the Australians who have opened their homes to people seeking refuge from the bushfires.

We think of their gifts of hospitality and compassion and hope.

During the week ahead, the Church in Australia is to announce further support for those affected by the bushfires.

Already there are [St Vincent de Paul Bushfire Appeals online](#) where people can contribute.

As the Magi brought gifts to Jesus, may we bring as gifts,

- our offering of hospitality and compassion,
- our love and faith,
- our hope and joy,
- our commitment as disciples and witnesses and neighbours, and in particular in 2020, among many issues to be faced,
- our solidarity with, and prayer and love for, others in distress.

Let us pray.

Fr Gerry

[Readings: <https://universalis.com/Australia/20200105/mass.htm>]

