

SHARING THE GIFTS THIS YEAR
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD – 2 JANUARY 2022



GIFT OF AN OPEN HEART TO MARY

Yesterday as we gathered for New Year's Day Mass, during the Prayers of the Faithful, we spent a quiet moment thinking of Mary in our lives.

Let us pause and ponder Mary's loving presence in our lives as we enter the New Year. **[pause and pray]**

THE GIFT OF RECEIVING EACH DAY AS A NEW GIFT

At the same Mass yesterday, we remembered Saint Edith Stein, who was born in 1891, and was baptised as a young woman on January 1st, 1922.

On yesterday's centenary of her baptism, we recalled an insight from her. She had taken some time off from her academic career, and had volunteered for some months to be a nurse during the First World War, caring for patients in infectious wards in particular.

Returning afterwards to do her doctoral thesis, she explored what 'empathy' means. As she continued her research, she commented

"every day I felt that the ability to continue my work was like a new gift."

Let us pause early in this New Year,
and ask God that we be granted the ability
to live each day as a new gift from God. **[pause and pray]**

INTERCESSION OF SAINT EDITH DURING COVID19

With the COVID being transmitted more frequently now in Australia, we need to be even more aware of each other's safety, with spacing, masks, sanitising and following health advice.

As we enter the New Year,
let us pray to God for the intercession of Saint Edith Stein
in the lives of our families, our community and ourselves.

As Edith followed the health protocols of her day in infectious wards over a period of months, to keep people as safe as possible, may we follow the health protocols of our day in keeping people as safe as possible.
[pause and pray]

EPIPHANY – SHARING OF GIFTS

Today is the celebration of the EPIPHANY,
with the Magi giving gifts to Jesus.
We add the figures of the wise ones from the East,
the Magi to the Christmas crib.

OUR WORSHIP OF GOD AS A GIFT TO GOD

We hear in Matthew's Gospel 2:1-12 about the Magi from the East. 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 and to pay their respects, but also to give homage to the child. Their worship of Jesus was their great gift.

THE GIFT OF WORKING WITH GOD FOR PEACE

The term Magi has several meanings. One understanding of the term Magi, is that they were from the eastern part of the Middle East, during an era of conflict between two Empires during an era of conflict between two Empires

- the Romans and the Parthians.

Several decades before the birth of Jesus, there had been a Parthian invasion which the Roman Empire repelled. There is a strong symbol in the journeying of the Magi from the Parthian region, to Jesus in Bethlehem, to give worship.

The symbol of the Magi challenges the mentality of war and destruction in general, and between east and west in particular. Another view is that the Magi were from Iraq, again supporting the message of Jesus as the Light to the Nations. There is the opportunity for peace if we really desire it and work with God for it.

THE GIFT OF COURAGE TO CHALLENGE ANY THREATS TO PEACE

In the world, there are temptations to conquer and to control others, out of fear and insecurity within us.

The Gospel relates:

“Then Herod secretly called for the magi 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.’”

Herod saw the birth of Jesus as a threat to his power. Herod was violent and abusive and manipulative in his response. Hence the contrast between the Magi and Herod. Though we see the Christmas scene as one of peace, Matthew’s Gospel points out the dangers faced by Jesus from the very beginning, especially the wrath, jealousy and cruelty of Herod as he tried to kill Jesus.

As we encounter the peace that Jesus gives us in life, we accept the gift of courage from the Holy Spirit to challenge any jealousy, fear and cruelty within ourselves and in our world.

OUR GIFT TO JESUS IN 2022 – A DESIRE TO LOVE GOD AND NEIGHBOUR

In this New Year, may we face our fears and insecurities. In this New Year, may we ask God in prayer to show us the path to peace. In this New Year, may we turn to Jesus who offers us a better quality of life – a way of life where we are loved by God and where we deeply love God and our neighbour.

As the Magi brought gifts to Jesus, may we bring as our gifts to Jesus in 2022,

- a desire to be aware of God's deep love for us,
 - a desire to love God deeply in return,
 - a desire to love our neighbour
- and to care for the earth, our common home.

As a gift to each other, may we continue to be sensitive to the safety of others during this Pandemic.

May we share the experience of the Magi, in being overwhelmed with joy in the presence of Jesus.

Let us pray.

Father Gerry

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010222.cfm>

