

THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI DURING THE COVID PANDEMIC
THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (YEAR B) – 3 January 2021



The Magi by Henry Holiday | public domain | edited www.stjosephsbrackenridge.com

WE CELEBRATE THE EPIPHANY

This weekend we celebrate the Epiphany –
the coming of the Magi, the Wise Ones, to offer gifts to Jesus.

We add the Magi figurines to the Christmas crib.

In some Eastern traditions of Church,
Christmas is celebrated on January 6th, the set date for the Epiphany.

Let us reflect on the coming of the Magi and the coming of the COVID-19 Vaccines.

Back in March in our parish community,
we began praying for the development of safe vaccines for COVID-19.

[The Prayer has been on our parish website](#) since mid-March.

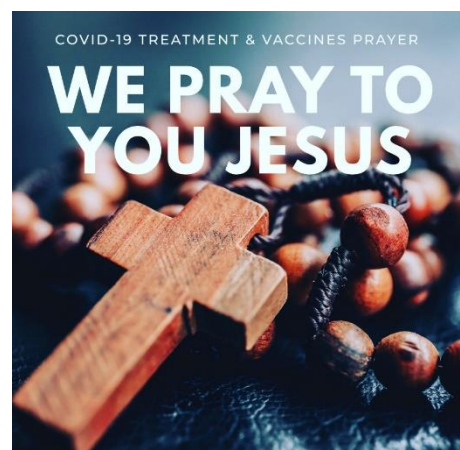
Let us pray it again.

COVID-19 - TREATMENTS & VACCINES PRAYER

We pray to you, Jesus,
for all involved in the search
for Treatments and Vaccines for COVID-19.

We pray for the medical scientists and researchers.
We pray for the safety of people during the trial phases.
We pray for health authorities responsible for approval processes.

We pray to you, Jesus,
that we remain proactive in our health precautions
as we await the development of effective treatments and vaccines.
Amen.



COVID THIS NEW YEAR

With several vaccines now being offered overseas, and more being developed,
we hear in the media of percentage results for their effectiveness.

In the light of 2020, we ponder what should be our attitude to the New Year.
Perhaps part of our attitude is that we learn from 2020.

We hear of the continuing scale of COVID-19 overseas.
So, so many deaths in some countries.
In light of the news overseas, we cannot pretend that we are safe in Australia.

With increasing numbers recently in parts of Sydney,
and some new outbreaks in Victoria,
we know that COVID-19
does not respect international and state borders.
We need to be responsible.
And we need the gift of hope.

PONDERING THE COMING OF THE MAGI & THE COMING OF THE COVID VACCINES

How can the Gospel today help us in the New Year?

As we follow the stories of the vaccines,
let us turn to Matthew's Gospel,
with the gifts of the Magi to Jesus.

*“Then, opening their treasure-chests,
they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”*

WE PONDER THE GIFTS OF THE MAGI

The gifts were treasures. All three could be traded for other needs.

Gold – we are familiar with its uses.

Frankincense – used across religious traditions, then and now.

Myrrh – spice to take away the blandness of everyday life and make some days more special.

We remember Old Testament references to gold and frankincense in Arabia.
With the reference to the star,
we think of Iraq and its study of astronomy.
Some refer to Persia (Iran) and other nations of the east.

WE PONDER THE VACCINES THEMSELVES

- the Vatican moral explanation [Note on the morality of using some anti-Covid-19 vaccines by the CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH](#)
- the Australian Government explanation by the Prime Minister and Chief Medical Officer on New Year's Day included the difference between full approval and particular emergency use authorization for COVID-19 Vaccines. [Details are on the Prime Minister's website.](#)

A) WE PONDER THE ATTITUDE BEHIND THE SHARING AND DISTRIBUTION OF THE GIFTS

- The Magi, the Wise Ones, came searching for the truth, following a star.
- They knew that the child they sought, was the king of the Jews.
- They came not only to meet and greet and pay their respects.
- The Magi came to honor to Jesus and worship Jesus.
- The Magi accompanied the gifts all the way, until they were safely delivered.

WE PONDER THE ATTITUDE BEHIND THE SHARING & DISTRIBUTION OF THE VACCINES

- In our lives we are called to prayer and love for all.
- Pope Francis has called for the vaccines to be available for all people in his [Christmas message.](#)

B) WE PONDER THE WORLD AT THAT TIME

- Some rulers protected their Empires and Territories by force and manipulation.
- Herod, fearful in protecting his own position, massacred people.
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 sought to kill Jesus.
- The Gospel has a quote that the Messiah
would not only be a leader, but also a shepherd.
The Gospel records that the 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." '*

C) WE PONDER THE WORLD NOW AND ASK THREE QUESTIONS.

1. *During the COVID-19 Pandemic, what does it mean to be a shepherd?*
2. *During the Pandemic, how do we, as communities of faith, work together for the safety of the whole human family?*
3. *How do we help our leaders to govern and be shepherds at the same time?*

We gaze once more at the Christmas Crib and Pray.

[pause]

NEW YEAR PRAYER

We pray to you, Jesus,
for the safety of people
in Sydney, in Melbourne
and in other COVID areas.

We pray to you, Jesus,
for the parishes
of the Northern Beaches of Sydney,
for the parish
of Doveton in Melbourne,
for other parishes affected
in New South Wales and Victoria,
and for all communities in lockdown.

We pray to you, Jesus,
for our brothers and sisters
throughout the world
during the Pandemic.

We pray to you, Jesus,
for the gift of hope this New Year.
Amen

Fr Gerry

Readings: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/010321.cfm>