

CELTIC EVENING PRAYER

FOR

EPIPHANY



**Glory to God, Glory to God.
Glory to God creating, Glory to God redeeming.
Glory to God, Light of the World.**

In the coming of the Wise Three,
you were revealed as King.
In your entering of the baptismal waters,
you were revealed as Christ.
In your changing of water into wine,
you revealed a new creation.

We give you thanks for signs of your Presence in the world.
We give thanks for your promise to be with us always.
We give thanks for your Presence with us, here, now.
Come, Lord Jesus. The gate of my heart stands open:
enter now, I pray.
Fill me with your Light.

SCRIPTURE

Micah 5 : 2

‘But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.’

Matthew 2 : 1-12

(The journey of the Magi)



REFLECTION

Epiphany means 'revelation' and marks the time when Jesus begins to be revealed as the Christ, the Saviour of the world. If we think about it, there was a huge chasm to span – Jesus was born in poverty among the animals – a vulnerable baby – how was God going to get from there to revealing him as Lord of all? Well, the process begins in Epiphany, which comprises 3 events : the visit of the Magi, which is celebrated throughout the world on 6th January; the Baptism of Jesus and his first miracle – changing water into wine at Cana.

So how exactly is Jesus revealed by the visit of the Magi – a story that only appears in Matthew's gospel. Much legend has grown up around the event and we must be careful not to lose sight of the eternal Truths that are embedded in this story :

*We **don't** know that there were three Wise Men – that presumption arises because there are 3 gifts mentioned, but what we **do** know, is that Magi were, indeed, very wise, learned men. They were philosophers, astrologers, interpreters of dreams, experts in medicine and, most likely, Zoroastrian priests, coming, as they did, from Persia. They were good and holy men, seeking the Truth. The eternal truth contained in their origins is that they were not Jewish. They were Gentiles. From the outset, God was revealing Jesus as the Saviour of the **whole** world. The birth of Christ was not one small step for a local religion - it was a huge leap for all humankind.*

Then there was the star : there is historical, astrological evidence that at the time it's believed Jesus was born, a bright, new star did appear in the sky – in a way that indicated the birth of a powerful King. It was the star that the Magi were drawn to and guided by. Therein lies the eternal Truth : Christ, the Light of the World – our guiding light – is always drawing us, always calling each and every one of us.

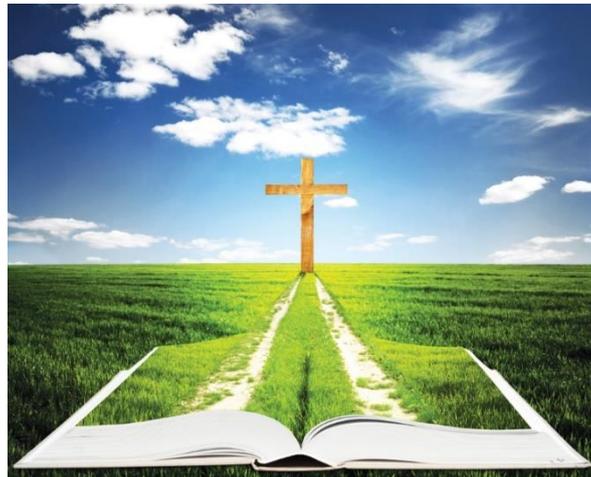
Then we have the gifts, which matched the characteristics of Jesus. Gold was the most precious metal and befitting a King. Frankincense was a gift for a priest – it was used in Temple worship. The word 'priest' in Latin is

'pontiflex', meaning bridge-builder. Jesus is the supreme bridge between humankind and God. Myrrh is for one who is to die. Jesus came into the world to give his life and his death for us. So the gifts reveal to us the eternal, true nature of Jesus : King of all, Perfect High Priest and Supreme Saviour of the world.



*The Magi didn't know exactly where the star was directing them and that's why they went to the royal palace in Jerusalem – 6 miles north of Bethlehem – assuming that's where a king would be born. Herod was anxious to find Jesus to kill him and remove him as a threat to his own power. Had the Magi not heeded the warning in the dream and unsuspectingly returned to Herod, they – and Jesus – would not have survived Herod's wrath. So, we are told, **'they went home another way.'***

*Of course, it means they took a route avoiding Jerusalem, but the last line of this amazing passage has a much deeper meaning. Like the rest of the story, it contains an overarching, eternal Truth : Anyone who seeks Jesus - no matter who they are, no matter where they come from - anyone who answers his call, who follows his Light : anyone who offers the gift of themselves will **never** be the same again. Jesus says 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life' and Jesus offers each and every one of us another way home.*



PRAYER

Jesus, truly God, truly human.
Your greatness holds the universe,
your goodness beckons us,
your wisdom searches us,
your generosity enriches us,
your strength spurs us,
your mercy frees us.

The face of Christ now shines upon us.

May our hearts become bright with the light of God.

Draw us to your light.

May your glory spread across the earth and may people see your wonder.

Amen.

PRAYERS FOR OUR WORLD



*Lord Jesus Christ, you came to our world, a light in our darkness. You walked among us, sharing our humanity, our laughter and our pain. We come to you now, trusting that you understand all the needs of the world and the people for whom we pray. **Lord, hear our prayer.***

*As we begin this new year, we continue to remember all who are suffering as a result of the pandemic. We give thanks for the hope that the vaccine brings and pray for its swift and efficient distribution. We pray for all who are ill and for those caring for them. Give protection and strength to all medical staff, carers and key workers. We remember the many who are struggling financially and who fear the loss of jobs and homes. We pray for our schoolchildren and students. May they discover new and effective ways of learning, that their education will not be compromised. Bless the work of all who prepare young people for their future. **Lord, hear our prayer.***

*Lord, giver of all good gifts, as we remember the wise men bringing gold, we thank you for all you have given to us, for all your blessings and we pray for those less fortunate. Those whose daily lives are marked by poverty, famine and conflict. We pray for those without a home, for refugees. Open our hearts to love and our hands to share. **Lord, hear our prayer.***

*Holy Lord, the Wise Men brought incense. Bless our worship here today and help us to know your abiding presence and love. We pray for your Church throughout the world: may she be a beacon of hope in these troubled times. **Lord, hear our prayer.***

*Loving Lord, the Wise Men brought myrrh and we rejoice that you came into the world for us and for our salvation. You are our Healer and Saviour and we bring to you all who are in pain or sorrow or need at this time. We remember especially those we hold in our hearts today **Lord, hear our prayer.***

*Grant eternal rest, we pray, to those whose earthly journey is over and your peace and comfort to those who mourn. **Lord, hear our prayer.***

Holy Child, you come as the Sun to a world lit by candles. By the light of a star, you brought the Wise Men to Bethlehem. Be our guiding light in this world and beyond and lead us home, we pray.

*These prayers we humbly offer in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.***

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING PRAYER

We take the light of our prayer into the world.

To pray for those unable to pray; to offer ourselves as answers to prayer.

We take the light of our compassion into the world.

To come alongside those who are suffering anguish of heart, mind or spirit.

To be as Christ for them.

We take the light of God's power into the world.

God's power made perfect in powerlessness; strength made known in weakness; life made known in dying.

Amen.

BLESSING

May God the Father, who led the Wise Men
by the shining of a star to find the Christ,
lead us on our pilgrimage to find the Lord.

May the glory and grace of God shine through us to the world.

Mary's Son beside us.

The Spirit deep within us.

May the Presence and blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be
with us and those we love and pray for today and always.

Amen.



Resources : Liturgies from Lindisfarne : Ray Simpson

Words in italics : Linda Garthwaite