



Dungog & Gresford Parishes

CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Including **St Mary's Church**, Brown Street, Dungog, **St Patrick's Church**, Rifle Street, Clarence Town, **St Helen's Church**, Park Street, East Gresford, **Sacred Heart Church**, Summerhill Road, Summer Hill via Vacy.

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

7 JANUARY 2024

Parish Staff

Fr Andrew Doohan (*Parish Priest*)
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Office Hours

The Parish Office is staffed on Tuesdays from 10am until 2pm & Fridays from 10am until 1pm.

Parish Bulletin

Items for inclusion in the Parish Bulletin should be received at the Parish Office by 5pm on Wednesdays. Copies of the Bulletin are available from the Parish website and are updated weekly.

Other Contacts

Clarence Town Val Preece—0403 251 434,
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Safeguarding Promotion

For all safeguarding concerns within the parishes, please contact Fr Andrew in the first instance at the Parish Office (or mobile in emergencies).

Parish School

St Joseph's Primary School
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A Pastoral Note...

It feels a little odd to be contemplating things connected with Lent and Easter when we have not yet finished our celebration of Christmas, and yet this past week I have been doing exactly that.

With Ash Wednesday exceptionally early this year—almost as early as it can be—it is time to be thinking about how we should mark our Lenten season. Elsewhere in the bulletin there's a notice about the Lenten resource, which I draw to your attention and your consideration.

And with an early start to Lent, we can also expect an early start to Easter. And that brings a few problems especially about **when** the Easter Vigil can start, particularly since daylight savings finishes the week *after* Easter.

Here's the facts:

The Easter Vigil cannot begin before nightfall;
Nightfall on 30 March (Easter Sunday) is 7.44pm.

You can see where I'm going...

There'll need to be some conversation about the celebration of the Easter Vigil, which will have an impact on how the whole of the Paschal Triduum is celebrated. That, however, can wait a few weeks.

In other news, with the start of the new year we hope that work on the new classroom for the school will be starting soon—the sooner the better!—so that some of the more 'intrusive' work that would impact on the playground can be completed before the school returns at the end of January.

I'll be sure to grab the occasional photo of the building of the new facilities to follow the progress of the building, and you can look forward to seeing them here in the bulletin (and perhaps the website).

And on that bright and cheery note, it's back to the usual run of normal activities.

Have a blessed week...

Fr Andrew

The Catholic Parishes of Dungog & Gresford recognize we stand upon the traditional country of Gringai clan of the Worimi people, who have walked upon and cared for this country for thousands of years.

We acknowledge their cultural heritage, beliefs and deep spiritual attachment and relationship to this country. We pay our respects to their Elders—past, present, and emerging—and commit ourselves to working together for reconciliation and justice.

The Epiphany Blessing...

...**OR** *Marking Your Homes with Blessed Chalk for the New Year*

There is an ancient custom in the life of the Church where people mark their homes with blessed chalk to mark the beginning of the New Year. This custom is intimately linked to today's feast, the Epiphany of the Lord.

This ancient custom is a way of incorporating the liturgical feast of the Epiphany as a domestic ritual into the prayer life of the family. The chalk to be used is first blessed during the weekend Masses for Epiphany, and the parishioners are invited to mark the lintel of their front door as follows:

20 C+M+B 24

The letters C, M and B stand for the traditional names of the Three Wise Men who came seeking Jesus: Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar. The letters also represent the words *Christus Mansionem Benedicat* (*May Christ Bless this Abode*).

This weekend we will bless chalk at each of our Sunday Masses and make it available to those who might wish to celebrate the chalking of their homes.

A limited number of printed prayer resources to help you to celebrate this ancient custom will be available at the back of the churches.

The prayer resource will also be available on the website under 'Resources' if you would additional copies.

GOSPEL FOCUS

Going home

The wise men, or Magi, are warned in a dream not to go back to Herod and they go home by a different way. How could they do anything but go home another way – indeed, go home as different people? They are changed by their encounter with the child Jesus and they go home a different way; in a different state; in a whole different frame of mind. When we genuinely encounter Jesus – in scripture, in life, in prayer, in ourselves – then we cannot go home the same way; we must go home by a different way as the Magi did.

Homily by Fr Richard Leonard SJ

Recently some Christian scientists got to work trying to explain the star that led the wise men to Bethlehem. They came up with a complicated, and no doubt plausible, astronomical theory about how a certain brilliant star may have appeared around the time of the birth of Jesus. Though I was intrigued by their methods, I wondered why they bothered. Matthew's wandering star is not about astronomy. It's religious shorthand for describing how the heavens preside over and guide the events of the world. The image of a star is used in similar ways in the Books of Deuteronomy, Numbers, Isaiah and the Psalms. This entire feast is all about symbols, not science. Reported by Hippolytus as early as the third century, it is celebrated twelve days after Christmas, the number itself echoing God's goodness in creating and recreating us.

The wise men's star is on a par with the other images Matthew uses. At the centre of each of the first three chapters of his Gospel there is an extraordinary event. In chapter one Joseph hears the message of an angel in a dream. In chapter two the wise men find Jesus by following a star. And by chapter three the heavens open and God speaks at the baptism of the Lord. By any standards that's quite an opening to a biography! It's all about the manifestation, or epiphany, of God's glory in the world.

And let's look carefully at where and for whom this glory is revealed. The first instance is to Joseph while he's in bed asleep. The second is to gentile astrologers who, by reporting their news to Herod, set up an immediate threat to Jesus. The third instance is to all those Jews who were coming to hear John the Baptist. Within three chapters of Matthew's Gospel the circles of God's glory revealed in Jesus become more public and change lives. The lives of Joseph, the star gazers, John the Baptist and those who heard Jesus preach will never be the same again.

The Feast of the Epiphany is not an ancient version of Halley's comet. It is about how God's glory changes human hearts. T.S. Eliot got this point in his poem 'The journey of the Magi'.

'Birth or death? There was a Birth, certainly,
We had evidence and no doubt. I had seen birth and death,
But had thought they were different; this Birth was
Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our death.
We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
With an alien people clutching their gods.
I should be glad of another death.'

And so may this feast change our hearts and enable us to die to self so as to be born to God's glory that can and does shine through us. And may we remember that this epiphany is not meant for us alone, but that we are called to go public with it and demonstrate our belief in today's feast by the way we live, the world we help create, and the one we strive to recreate.

© Richard Leonard SJ

Richard Leonard SJ is the Director of the Australian Catholic Office for Film and Broadcasting, is a member of the Australian Catholic Media Council and a film critic for all the major Australian Catholic newspapers. He completed a PhD in cinema studies at the University of Melbourne. He lectures in cinema and theology at the Jesuit College of Spirituality and has been a visiting lecturer in Australian cinema at the University of Melbourne, a visiting scholar within the School of Theatre, Film and Television at UCLA and is visiting professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Australian Catholic University, has lectured widely and is the author of numerous books.

2024 Lenten Program

With Lent starting so early this year, it's now time to order resources for those who might wish to undertake a Lenten reflection journey, either individually or as part of a group. Once again, the Diocese of Wollongong program will be the program of choice.

Sign up sheets are available in our churches this weekend—please add your name (and number of copies if you're representing a group) either this week or next Sunday so that an order can be placed during the week beginning Monday 15 January.



The Parish Diary (for the week ahead)
1st Week in Ordinary Time

Monday 8 January

The Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Tuesday 9 January

Wednesday 10 January

NO MASS Fr Andrew attending to diocesan and family commitments.

Thursday 11 January

9.30am Mass @ East Gresford

Friday 12 January

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

Saturday 13 January

Sunday 14 January

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

8am Mass @ Clarence Town

9.30am Mass @ Dungog

11.30am Mass @ Summer Hill

Today's Liturgy:

1st Reading Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm Psalm 71

Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

2nd Reading Ephesians 3:2-3, 5-6

Acclamation Matthew 2:2

Alleluia, alleluia!

We have seen his star in the East;
and have come to adore the Lord.
Alleluia!

Gospel Matthew 2:1-12

Memorial Acclamation

When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup,
we proclaim your Death, O Lord,
until you come again.

Pope Francis' Prayer Intention for January:

"Let us pray that the Spirit help us recognise the gift of different charisms within the Christian community, and to discover the richness of different ritual traditions in the heart of the Catholic Church."

Safeguarding in our Parishes means ...

The Parishes of Dungog & Gresford hold that children, young people and vulnerable adults are a gift from God with an intrinsic right to dignity of life, respect and security from physical and emotional harm. They are to be treasured, nurtured and safeguarded.

In line with the Safeguarding Policy of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, our parishes have zero tolerance for all forms of abuse and are committed to safeguarding all who interact with the parishes through our activities, ministries and services, especially children and adults at risk.



Have you thought? Epiphany

The feast of the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Jesus to humankind. The wise men are the representatives of humanity bearing witness to this revelation. However, the Epiphany celebrates the revelation of Jesus as not only the Messiah of Israel but the Saviour of the whole world. Interestingly, in this gospel that emphasises the 'Jewishness' of Jesus, the witnesses to the birth are gentiles from a foreign land. Their inclusion is a powerful declaration that the revelation of Jesus is for all people. Regardless of the liturgical year, this reading is always used on the feast of the Epiphany to celebrate this pivotal moment.

In Your Charity, Please Pray for:

Those Who Have Died: Peter McGinty.

Those Whose Anniversary of Death Is In January: Bob Copus, Josie Gibson, Bill Taylor, Donald & Hope Lord, Kevin Byron, Noreen Lucas, Joan Riches, Michael Curry, Mary Neilson, Michael Bede Holstein, Maureen Reynold, Len Trappel, Patrick Dooley, Rufie Bunt, Eileen Moore, Andrew Whelan, Merv Clayden, Norah Studdert, Jack Gehrig, George Maurer, Eileen Lane, John Smith, Fr Allan Curry, Reginald Peter Wilson, Joseph Watson, Aveen Watson, Edith Thomas, Pauline Thomas, Fr Martin Jackubas (England), Michael Denko, Marea Cox, Janet Lambert.

Those Who Are Sick: Maryann Smith, Daphne Bond, Maree McCulloch, Leonie Young, Lisa Reid, Bev Herbert, Denise Wenden, Warren Wade, Irene Robinson, Luke Barry, Kathie Maynard, Kevin Ward, David Loudon, Michaela Brown, Phillip Hartup, Ella Rusak, Anne Newman, Graham McCarthy, Pam Edwards, Keith Edwards, Otilie Sheens.