

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you.” (Isaiah 60:1)

Appropriate words to begin a new year. New Year though to many is about striving and making promises or resolutions to live by, often short-lived! For some it is a depressing time after the hustle and bustle of Christmas with January appearing a long, cold month and a long wait till next pay day!

In the Church however, there takes place a very special festival when on the 5th January we celebrate Epiphany which means ‘appearance or manifestation’, acknowledging those words of Isaiah, “your light has come.” The word Epiphany’ comes from Greek and means ‘to show’, referring to Jesus being shown to the world as God’s beloved Son. The six Sundays which follow Epiphany are called the ‘time of manifestation’. Throughout the world, Christians celebrate it on January 6 - 12 days after Christmas Day and the time to take down the Christmas tree. Many countries refer to it as “Three Kings Day.” On this day, Western Christianity recognizes Christ’s manifestation to the Gentiles (non Jews) who were represented when The Magi visited the child Jesus and showed how God’s gift of the Good News is for everyone. Eastern Christianity observes Jesus’ baptism on this day. His baptism revealed his identity to mankind. Epiphany celebrates God revealing himself to the world in the East and the West.

Since epiphany means manifestation, early celebrations honoured the four manifestations of Christ. His birth, the adoration of the Magi, his baptism, and the first miracle at Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine. These four manifestations reveal God to mankind. At his birth, the angels bore witness, and the shepherds, representing

Israel, bowed before Jesus. The visit of the Magi revealed Jesus to the Gentiles. The Holy Spirit descended at His baptism, and God declared Jesus' identity. The first miracle at the Wedding in Cana revealed Jesus' divinity over nature. God disclosed himself to humankind through the person of Jesus thereby making himself known so we might know Him.

Epiphany also focuses our attention on the magi's response to Christ's revelation. They worshiped him and presented him with rich gifts. They recognized that they were in the presence of the King of the Jews, and they responded appropriately. On Epiphany we are reminded that we must do the same. We need to worship Christ as King by presenting ourselves as gifts to him and return to God what is rightfully His.

My wish for 2025 is to enable and accompany our communities to discover that they too are gifts from God and to realise their place as people loved by God. Each of our four churches are here to reach out to and serve our communities. Each and every one of us is an Epiphany; a showing, a gift, containing a spark that can become a flame of love to reveal to the world in 2025. Let's do so together.

Every peace and blessing.

Rev James