

Epiphany 2025

Isn't it great to be free from more TV cookery programmes and quizzes and back in the ice cold bus shelter and stable, back in Church, to worship and adore the new-born Christ-child?

I expect you all had that Christmas cracker moment around the table - when you put on a bright paper crown and read out the jokes to each other? I had two for you this morning but Liz said that I couldn't share the first one in case I am accused of blasphemy! So here goes:

"Sr. Margaret's kindergarten class is performing the traditional Nativity scene for their adoring parents. Cue the three Magi... The first little child bellows, "Here, I bring you gifts of gold!" The second confidently says, "Here, I bring you myrrh!" The third hesitates a moment, then mumbles, "Here, Frank sent this..."

At one of our school carol services, I heard this poem by Eleanor Farjeon (a famous child author and poet I subsequently discovered). It is called 'In a Far Land':

.... But rode to find a child."

OK, it isn't T S Eliot but it is still attractive and accessible, especially to children: that sense of royal colours, adventure, and exotic presents; that sense of wonder, arriving at the place, the shelter, the stable where God came down to earth. God was and is that child laid bare, and the brightest of stars shone down on that JOY which is forever, Jesus, our

Emmanuel. We all want to peer in, we all want to say a prayer or two at the crib and put our shopping bag down; we want to bring our own reflection for a fruitful and holy new year because ‘whatever our story, Epiphany starts with Christ. Where will we look for Him and where will we find Him?’ Through Word and Sacrament, Music and Silence, through the treasure of human love and friendships; there are a myriad of answers, sincerely felt.

If we can find him in the filthy stable, hallowed ground, we can find him in the tallest tenement block or the quickest of underground trains. There is nowhere Christ hides from us willingly. We just need to be gracious and welcoming enough to be found by Him. And we need to move on from the kindergarten to see in the Magi, their courage which gives our questing hearts a voice – “to seek, to find, to worship, and to rejoice”

That’s at the heart of today’s Gospel and new Season; not to be surprised by joy, but uplifted and transformed by joy. That is why the nuts and bolts of worship matter and why it has been a privilege for me to work closely with James in recent years. With you, we both want the ‘experience’ of worship to be all-consuming, inspirational, unforgettable – drawn to use all our senses - because it is Christ who welcomes us in the first place and invites us ‘to enter in.’

A vocational life is all about our listening to God and our waiting on Him as it is also about our responding joyfully to his faithful journeying with us to build a kingdom community.

“You may think (said Mother Teresa) that what you can do is only a drop in the ocean but the ocean is made up of drops.”