

**ENTRANCE ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) Behold, the Lord, the Mighty One, has come; and kingship is in his grasp, and power and dominion

**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps 71)

**ANTIPHON:** Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

**RESPONSE:** Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

**LECTOR:** O God, give your judgement to the king, to a king's son your justice, that he may judge your people in justice and your poor in right judgement. **R.**

**LECTOR:** In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails. He shall rule from sea to sea, from the Great River to earth's bounds. **R.**

**LECTOR:** The kings of Tarshish and the sea coasts shall pay him tribute. The kings of Sheba and Seba shall bring him gifts. Before him all kings shall fall prostrate, all nations shall serve him. **R.**

**LECTOR:** For he shall save the poor when they cry and the needy who are helpless. He will have pity on the weak and save the lives of the poor. **R.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** Alleluia, alleluia! We have seen his star in the East; and have come to adore the Lord. Alleluia!

**COMMUNION ANTIPHON** (or a hymn) We have seen his star in the East, and have come with gifts to adore the Lord

**TODAY'S READINGS** Isaiah 60:1-6; Ephesians 3:2-3; 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

**NEXT WEEK** (2nd Sunday, Year B) 1 Samuel 3: 3-10, 19; Psalm 39; 1 Cor 6:13-15, 17-20; John: 1:35-42

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The witness  
that begins in  
our hearts



7 January 2024 Epiphany Year B

In my office there is a wall hanging with the letters C+M+B. which I was given when I visited Innsbruck in Austria in 1997. As I walked from the railway station to our Redemptorist house, I noticed these letters written in chalk above the entrance doors to a number of houses in the following fashion 19\*C+M+B+97.

When I asked one of my confreres about the meaning of the sign, he explained that in German-speaking Europe the feast of the Epiphany has become a charitable, fundraising event. Officially known as "Operation Three Kings Singing" the annual event is sponsored by the Catholic church and Catholic youth organisations. Most of the participants are young people who dress in costumes resembling what the Magi supposedly wore when they visited the baby Jesus.

With the leader carrying a star, the costumed Star Singers walk from house to house and sing traditional Christmas carols. At each stop they also solicit donations for various children's charities in Austria, Germany and abroad, as well as programs to end hunger in parts of the world. In Catholic regions, especially in rural areas or in smaller towns, the Star Singers may also inscribe the C+M+B house-blessings.

Traditionally, the letters C+M+B stand for the Latin phrase: Christus mansionem benedicat, which translates as "Christ bless this house." However, in a popular interpretation, the letters in the inscription stand for the names of the three Wise Men (Magi): Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar and the numbers indicate the

year which in my experience was 1997. The inscription is usually made with chalk that has been blessed by a local Catholic priest. The letters are clever as they include both the blessing and a popular interpretation.

The word 'Epiphany' comes from the Greek and means appearance or showing forth and describes Jesus' first appearance to the Gentiles. The Gentiles are represented by the Magi or wise men whom we have traditionally called the three kings or wise men. The names of the Magi from the East are not mentioned in the bible but come from a sixth century Roman tradition. The number three is taken from the gifts mentioned: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Originally, the word Epiphany referred to the visit of a king to the people of his provinces. In the context of Christianity, Epiphany refers to God's self-revelation in Jesus.

The gospel story of the wise men from the east following a star is an invitation to all of us to seek the Lord in the living of our lives, and to become what Pope Francis calls 'missionary disciples' who bear witness to others to the difference Jesus makes in our lives. This witness will begin in our hearts and homes and reach out to the wider world where we witness by our faith commitment and the values by which we live.

May the feast of the Epiphany be an occasion of personal and family blessing.

Michael A Kelly  
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