

THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY
Mulberry Green,
Harlow, CM17 0HA
01279 429388
harlowold@dioceseofbrentwood.org

BULLETIN B 7 – 10TH JANUARY 2021

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

My dear brothers and sisters,

Now that the Christmas trees and trimmings have been taken away and the Festive season is over for another year, I would like to say thank you to all those who have helped our parish this Christmas. I am not going to list all who played a part, for fear of missing someone, but I and you and more importantly God knows who you are. So thank you and God bless you.

Despite all the negative feelings in our world, we celebrated the birthday of the Christ Child with dignity and with Joy. I was amazed at just how Joyful we were at Mass and although it seems really weird to say it, I think it was one of the most Spirit filled Christmases that I've known. On a personal note I would like to thank all who gave me gifts, cards and donations this year, I was amazed at your generosity, many heartfelt thanks.

Many year ago a lady told me what JOY means; Jesus first, others next and yourself last. As we begin this year with lockdown restrictions and all that we cannot do, let us remember to spread that real JOY around our community.

God Bless you all

Fr. John

MASS & ADORATION THIS WEEK

Sun	10	The Baptism of the Lord	1000 Mass	People of the parish
Tue	12	feria	1900 Mass	David Titley (RIP)
Wed	13	feria	1000 Mass	Tess Hogan (RIP)
Thu	14	feria	1000 Mass	Margaret Lynch (RIP)
			1020 Adoration	
Fri	15	feria	1000 Mass	Ordinariate of OL Walsingham
Sun	17	2 nd in Ordinary Time	1000 Mass	People of the parish

GOSPEL REFLECTION

On this weekend last year more than twenty thousand Christian pilgrims flocked to the Jordan River to be baptised in the spot where John the Baptist is said to have baptised Jesus. Qasr al-Yahud ("tower of the Jews") is located in the West Bank about twenty-five miles east of Jerusalem, on the border with Jordan. It is one of the most important Christian pilgrimage sites in the world.

Before the opening of the site in 2000, the location was closed to visitors and pilgrims as the area was filled with landmines that had been planted there following the Six Day War in 1967. After the signing of the peace agreement between Jordan and Israel in 1994, the site was cleared of mines, paving the way for the return of the ancient site from a war zone into a pilgrimage site. Care of the site today includes ecological work around the Jordan River itself, as its shores have become polluted and its levels are at historic lows as water gets diverted for human use. Yet many people want to be baptised in the Jordan River for both its historical and spiritual significance.

Jesus grew up in the backwater town of Nazareth in Galilee. When news reached him that John was baptising in the Jordan near Jericho, he seems to have interpreted it as a sign that the time had

come for his public ministry to begin. When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens opened suddenly, and Mark records that the Spirit descended like a dove upon him. And a voice from heaven said, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my favour rests on you." We learn that Jesus is sent by God and the "Beloved" of God.

As Jesus begins his public ministry, we are granted a revelation of the Holy Trinity. At this moment we see for the first time the union of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The three persons of the Trinity are participating in this baptismal ritual. But we see something else as well. We see Jesus accepting baptism by John, mingling with those who have come to confess their sins, be baptised and receive forgiveness. He joins the queue of people for baptism, wanting to share the joys and sorrows of his people. Jesus shows that he intends to engage with humanity in all of its struggles, limitations and problems.

The baptism of Jesus begins his plunge into the life of the people. In the depths of the water he enters into the depths of his own humanity, human society and the natural world which is the context of all life on earth. We could say that Jesus has entered into that part of all of us which laughs and sings, dances and cries, feels for those who are sick and suffering, desires the best for others, and cares for God's creation. Baptism builds up the faith, not only of the person being baptised, but of the rest of the church community.

Today we are reminded of the implications of our own baptism in Christ, which requires us to live as Christ did and immerse ourselves in the grief and joy of all God's people. We are called to show compassion to people in need, be advocates for justice and peace, and care for the gifts of earth, such as water. We are to be a healing presence in the world. And note that Jesus is told that he is "Beloved". As human beings, we have an instinctive need to be loved as well as to love others. Hopefully, each of us has people in our lives who love and care for us. Have you told them lately how much they mean to you? Today may we be mindful of the people who love us and be grateful for the great gift they give us. And also today, may we be more dedicated in our loving, and resolve in the coming year not to let petty quarrels and jealousies get in the way of caring for those around us. Our love for and service to one another is a sharing in the love of God. Let us be reminded of that as we reflect on the beautiful image of Jesus, the voice of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove of peace revealing themselves at the Jordan.

Epiphany door blessing as a symbol of hope in 2021

There is a custom of blessing homes on the Feast of the Epiphany (6 January) when the family gather to ask God's blessing on their home and family life. It is an invitation for Jesus to be a daily guest in our homes.

Instructions for Blessing the Home

Using the blessed chalk (which was blessed at the Wednesday mass of the Epiphany and made available) or indeed any white chalk, mark the lintel of your front door as follows:

20 + C + M + B + 21 saying:

The three Wise Men, Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar followed the star of God's Son who became human two thousand and nineteen years ago.

May Christ bless our home and remain with us throughout the New Year.

Amen.

Then say the following prayer:

Visit, O Blessed Lord, this home with the gladness of your presence.

Bless all who live or visit here with the gift of your love;
and grant that we may manifest your love to each other
and to all whose lives we touch.

May we grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of you;
guide, comfort, and strengthen us in peace,
O Jesus Christ, now and for ever.

Amen.

May the peace of Christ be with all who enter this house. Watch over and protect our families and loved ones in these difficult times of the pandemic. Keep us free from sickness, danger and restore to health those have contacted the virus. May we be signs of your healing presence to one another as welcome you, Savior of us all, into hearts and homes.

May the love of Christ, bring hope to all whose lives have been compromised in any way by the pandemic, especially the unemployed, the homeless, the poor and those whose lives are in danger. Keep us safe from all that might harm us in any way and fill us with a deep and abiding trust in your loving presence.

May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life.

All: AMEN

What does the inscription '20 + C + M + B + 21' mean?

The letters have two meanings. First, they represent the initials of the Magi – Caspar, Malchior, and Balthazar – who came to visit Jesus in His first home. They also abbreviate the Latin phrase, *Christus mansionem benedicat*: "May Christ bless the house."

The "+" signs represent the cross, and the "20" at the beginning and the "21" at the end mark the current year.

Taken together, this inscription is performed as a request for Christ to bless those homes so marked and that He stay with those who dwell therein throughout the entire year.

Covid-19

This New Year, perhaps more than ever, due to restrictions in place as a result of Covid-19, is a year in which we need to invite Jesus into our homes, our Domestic Churches.

The ancient Christian tradition of marking doorways with blessed chalk on the Feast of the Epiphany will carry new meaning for many Catholics in 2021. Following a year that saw families shaken by the coronavirus pandemic, the traditional home blessing will serve as a special symbol of hope and a visible reminder of faith. Many people have suffered the loss of a loved one to this virus. The chalk, along with other symbols, will be an even stronger reminder of how important God is to us and of what an important factor Jesus is in our daily lives.

The blessing, popular in Poland and other Slavic countries, has spread to many parts of the world. It takes place on the liturgical feast marking the visitation of the Magi to the Christ Child and the revelation that Jesus is the son of God. The blessing involves taking simple chalk, usually blessed by a parish priest, and scrawling doorways with symbolic numbers and letters – this year, “20+C+M+B+21.”

The numbers represent the current year and the letters stand for the first letters of the traditional names of the magi: Caspar (sometimes spelled “Kaspar”), Melchior and Balthazar. The letters are also an abbreviation for “Christus Mansionem Benedicat,” Latin for “May Christ bless this dwelling.” We will use this as an opportunity to remember that living a Christ-like existence on a daily basis is important to all. Just as we took for granted our health and safety as a society, we are reminded of how we might sometimes take for granted the sacrifice Jesus made for all of us. The chalk is a daily visual symbol for us, just like seeing the crucifix hanging on the wall, helping us to keep within us thoughts of grace, love, peace, happiness, forgiveness and more.