



Epiphany
by Janet McKenzie

from *Holiness and the Feminine Spirit: the art of Janet McKenzie*,
edited by Susan Perry, New York: Orbis Books, 2009.

We, the people of Boonah Catholic parish,
acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands on which our parish is located
and where we conduct our mission and ministry.

We pay our respects to ancestors and elders, past and present.

As a local community of faith within the Church of Brisbane,
we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples'
unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters and seas
and their rich contribution to society.

Warm greetings to the members of the Boonah Catholic community and beyond on the solemnity of the Epiphany within the season of Christmas.

1. REFLECTIONS ON THE SUNDAY WORD.

The **reflection** for this Sunday is offered by Julian McDonald, a Christian Brother who lives in Sydney.

Magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, asking: "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage."

Matthew 2, 1-12

The word "epiphany" comes from the Greek *epiphainein* and found its way into English from the French word *epiphanie*. It generally means a revelation or manifestation of something that has been hidden. In the Christian calendar Epiphany marks the celebration of the revelation of Christ to the Gentile (non-Jewish) world. Tradition has it that a band of magi or wise travellers from the east undertook an arduous journey, with the aid of their astrological knowledge and expertise, to find and pay homage to "the new-born king of the Jews". What they discovered was a revelation to them.

Matthew is the only evangelist to have recorded this story. However, its details have

so captured the imagination of poets, storytellers, graphic artists and ordinary Christians through the ages that many of them have modified and embellished Matthew's story. Because Matthew specified three gifts, many concluded that the Magi were only three in number. In time, names were invented for them - Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar - and they were listed as kings from India, Persia and Arabia respectively. As late as 1895, Henry van Dyke wrote *The Story of the Fourth Wise Man* and named him Artaban. In the early part of the last century, W.B. Yeats wrote a poem entitled *The Magi* (1916) and T.S. Eliot *The Journey of the Magi* (1927). Upwards of 20 famous artists, including Botticelli, Giotto, Rubens and Velasquez have painted versions of The Adoration of the Magi.

All these artists and writers have experienced their own revelations, epiphanies and moments of insight into the significance of the birth of Jesus as one of us and the impact his birth has had on humankind. Some of these artists have depicted endless streams of people from all nations flocking behind the Magi, drawn by the Light of the world, whose magnetism over centuries has drawn countless people to search for him.

Gold, frankincense and myrrh were not just three costly gifts. The medieval mind knew the meanings of these gifts, but Matthew understood long before they did, for he, too, had read Isaiah (today's first reading). Gold, of course, is a gift worthy of a king; frankincense is for the worship of a god; and myrrh is an embalming oil. Here was a king, a god and a human being who was to die. In those three images of the wise men and their gifts, we see that the child they came to worship would die for not one tribe, people or nation but for humankind. Jesus said he would draw all people unto himself, and this is the very first scene in Scripture in which we see that happening.

The Magi represent for all of us the wisdom that recognises human life to be a journey taken in search of the One who calls us beyond ourselves into faithful service; the One before whom we are prepared to kneel, and to whom we offer the best of our gifts, flawed and unworthy though they be. What is truly extraordinary about the Magi is that despite their status and wealth, they could kneel with grace and dignity before what to them must have been utter simplicity, vulnerability and poverty. Somehow, they sensed they were in the presence of a child who would become far greater than they could ever imagine.

But the journey of the Magi is essentially about us. Their search mirrors our search for the only one who will satisfy us. We, too, choose paths

that take us through stress and discomfort, not across deserts on camels, not knocking on palace doors to get final directions to out of the way places like Bethlehem. But we ask questions, look for guidance and sometimes end up in blind alleys. But we also have moments of epiphany, insight and revelation along the way, and in the most unexpected places and circumstances.

Naomi Levy is a forward-thinking rabbi who established a movement known as Nashuva - a spiritual outreach service to Jews turned off by traditional Jewish service. There is a statement on her website that reads: *At Nashuva, we believe that prayer leads us to action. It reminds us that we are here to heal a broken world.* Inspired by some of Albert Einstein's insights into humanity (see below), Levy wrote a delightful book called *Einstein and the Rabbi: Searching for the Soul* (2017, Flatiron Books). In it she describes an encounter she had with a member of her congregation: "'Pray for me, Rabbi' is probably the most common request people have made of me over my years in the rabbinate. I am always honoured to pray for people. But, of course, I worry when people ask me to pray for them. Are they asking because they don't think God will listen to them? Do they think prayer requires a correct formula, and if they don't know the magical incantation that their cries won't be heard?

Once, about twenty years ago, I went to visit a man in the hospital. He said: 'Pray for me, Rabbi. I don't know how to pray.' I said: 'Of course I'll pray for you. But first, tell me, what is it you want me to say to God?' He thought for a moment and then began trembling as he spoke: 'God, I'm yours, I know that. But I belong here with my family. My heart is aching. I've never let myself love like this before. Give me time. I pray to you, God, give me time.'

These words flowed from the heart of a man who felt he didn't know how to pray.

When he was done, he sighed deeply, and I could see the worry and tension depart from his face. A calm overtook him, a light, a grace. I witnessed with my own eyes how prayer heals. From that moment on, any time someone asks me to pray for them, I always ask the same question: What do you want me to say to God? And it never fails. People astound themselves with words they didn't know existed inside them. The soul speaks of its own accord."

The responses that Rabbi Levy's question evokes are examples of true epiphanies, revelations of

God present in people's lives. If we care to look into the experiences of our own lives, we will surely be able to identify moments of insight, revelation grace when God's love touched us in the kindness, sensitivity or compassion of people who have cared about us. The story of the stargazing Magi in today's gospel-reading prompts us to set our hearts on searching for the "star" of God's justice, compassion, sensitivity and kindness, whose light we can share with those around us.

A human being is a part of the whole, called by us 'Universe,' a part limited in time and space.

He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separate from the rest—

a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness.

The striving to free oneself from this delusion is the one issue of true religion.

Not to nourish it, but to try to overcome it is the way to reach the attainable measure of peace of mind.

Albert Einstein

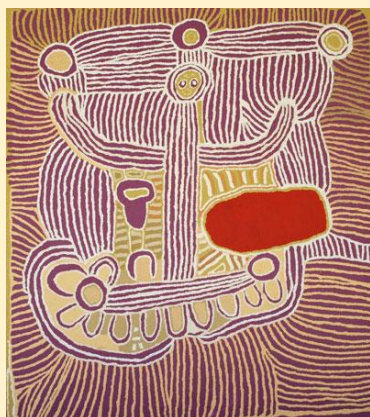
2. *Boonah Parish happenings . . .*

from commands to invitations,
from laws to ideals,
from threats to persuasion,
from coercion to conscience,
from monologue to conversation,
from ruling to serving,
from withdrawn to integrated,
from vertical and top-down to horizontal,
from exclusion to inclusion,
from hostility to friendship,
from static to changing,
from passive acceptance to active engagement,
from prescriptive to principled,
from defined to open-ended,
from behaviour-modification to conversion of heart,
from the dictates of law to the dictates of conscience,
from external conformity to the joyful pursuit of holiness.

When these elements are taken in the aggregate, they indicate a model of spirituality. This, they say, is what good Catholics should look like and this is how they should behave. That means the elements indicate what the Church should look like and how it should behave. This is a significant model-shift. This is a teaching of the Second Vatican Council.

- Fr. John O'Malley SJ, 2006

Our **SUNDAY EUCHARIST** schedule is:



Desert Eucharist
Linda Syddick Napaltjarri (b. 1937)

Saturday

5.00pm

Boonah church

Sunday

7.30am

1st and 3rd Sunday: Harrisville church

2nd and 4th Sunday: Peak Crossing church

9.30am

Boonah church

Our **WEEKDAY EUCHARIST** schedule for this week, the 3rd – 8th January 2022:

Tuesday 4th January 5.30pm **Boonah church**

Wednesday 5th January 6.00pm, **Peak Crossing church** *followed by dinner at The Peak Pub*

Thursday 6th January 8.00am **Boonah church**

Friday 7th January 9.15am **Boonah church**



We pray with and for those who are sick in our parish and beyond: all across the globe infected with COVID-19; former pastor of Boonah parish Fr. Ellis Clifford, Chris Healy, Paul White, Arthur Devin, Liliana Toohill, Libby Shields, Marko Babic, Max Gardiner, Bernice Lippiatt, Trish Merlehan, Bernadette Pinchin, Simon Greatrex, Neil O'Connor, Cate Mitten, Bernice Brault, Paula

Ebrington, Fletcher Casey, Jill Archer, Louisa, David Mitchell, Vince Bellett, and sick members of parish families and those beyond our parish boundaries.

▪ **EVERY SUNDAY** when we gather for the Sunday eucharist, there are baskets (of some kind or another) at the entrances of our churches.

We are invited to bring a gift of **non-perishable food or goods** for people seeking help from our local St. Vincent de Paul.

The local conference very much appreciates our weekly support.

▪ **THANK YOU** to all who support the weekly Sunday collection. Your gifts enable the parish to meet its expenses and to function like an everyday household. If you would like to give weekly or monthly in a planned way, please see me.

▪ **CELEBRATING THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION.** The 1st Rite for Reconciliation (formerly known as Confession) may be celebrated anytime. Please phone 5463 1057 to make a suitable time. Alternatively see me before Mass (if there is plenty of time) or after Mass (once the majority of people have left the church).

3. On New Year's Day, I phoned Fr. Joe Duffy, one of our 'recently' retired priests of the Church of Brisbane. He spoke enthusiastically about presiding at the Mass on 1st January with the community at Holy Spirit Aged Care community, Carseldine. The first day of the year in our liturgical calendar is the solemnity of Mary, Mother of God. I asked if he would be willing to share it with us. *Thanks Joe!*

Back in the parish I used to say to the people becoming Catholics for the first time (the catechumens):

There's nothing else quite like the Catholic church! It's this great supermarket with all these amazing shelves, and things on the shelves for you to choose to your heart's content! Rosary beads, hundreds and hundreds of saints, all sorts of prayers and devotions, litanies and aspirations, holy pictures galore, all kinds of devotions, scapulars and miraculous medals, Fatima and Lourdes and Guadalupe and Medugorje.

So much on the shelves!

Amazing when you stand back and think about it!

The church's devotional life!

Wonder about its dimensions,
its amazing depth!

So where does this lead us today? 1st January?

What we celebrate today has nothing whatsoever to do with the first day of the new calendar year 2022!

Today, we are in shock and awe,
because today the Church honours Mary,
the mother of God!

Start to try to get your head around that.

Mary! Mother of God!

Octave! Eight! Perfect number!

Counting from Christmas Day!

Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ our saviour,
each day of the octave marked off in the Mass for us
to reflect on the wonder and the marvel of it all.

And now, take note of the last line of today's gospel:
When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception!

Gospel of Luke, chapter 2! Notice the name was given by Gabriel before, not during, and not after.

We know, from our knowledge of Luke's gospel, that this dedication in the temple was about much more than what it seems.

Much more, on account of who else was present in the temple that day,
and we recall what these two people also present did, and said.

Prophet Simeon and prophetess Anna!

Simeon? To be remembered for all time by the *Nunc dimittis*! This canticle immortalized for all time in the Divine Office (Liturgy of the Hours) . . .

Compline (Night Prayer)!

*Now Lord, you may dismiss your servant in peace,
according to your word,
because my eyes have seen your salvation!
A light for the revelation to the Gentiles,
(namely you and me),
and the glory of your people Israel."*

And Anna, coming forward at that very same time.

Luke's text:

Anna gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.

Do you remember?

These parts of the story are gospel texts for days five and six of the Christmas octave.

The honouring of Mary as mother of God,
on the eighth day,
was an ancient church liturgical celebration.
Over the centuries it somehow got lost.

Not only that, but these three marvellous moments collapsed into the one church celebration focusing on the circumcision in particular.

Thanks to the commitment and dedication of that wonderful charismatic leader of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Paul VI, Mary's motherhood, as we honour it today, has been restored to its former liturgical glory - its rightful place!

We need always to be revisiting the significance and role of Mary in our own personal faith journey.

You may recall!
When the bishops of the church met in Rome in 1962-1965 for the Second Vatican Council!
One of the challenges they faced!
What to do with Mary!
Ought they produce a single significant document restating Mary's role in the history of our salvation, honouring her by it being out there on its own somewhere, so to speak?

Or what might the Council otherwise say regarding Mary, how and where?
How about tucking it in there, within the Council's most important dogmatic constitution, *Lumen Gentium* (Light of the Nations)!
And we can see, today, what the church fathers did (in 1964), and now we know why this is what they did.
So we didn't finish up with many Marian teachings scattered all over the place on the supermarket shelf!
The council fathers gave Mary her rightful place, right there in the very heart and soul of the Church.

In other words, when we come to Mass, Mary is right up front here, in the very first row, the first worshipper of her son, the Christ, and here as mother! Mother of God!
As we gather to praise, to remember, to offer, to give thanks!
Here she is: Mary leading us as we pray the Mass!

At the time of the Second Vatican Council, two of the leading lights in Australia were Bishop Frank Rush, at that time bishop of Rockhampton, and Archbishop Guilford Young of Hobart.

I recall one of the great conversions to Catholicism around that time, Professor James McAuley, poet and literary critic! Very much inspired by Guilford Young!

I remember him teaming up with the musician and liturgist Richard Connolly.
And one hymn in particular! Somehow lost over the years, but I can still recall the chorus.

*In your motherhood, O Mary,
you and Holy Church are one!
Both at once we rightly call!
Mother of Christ! Mother of all!*

Today, in particular, can I remind you that you already have, at the tip of your tongue, the most essential things Marian, set out before you, in particular, in the joyful and glorious mysteries of the rosary:

- 1 Gabriel announcing to Mary that she is to be mother of God.
- 2 Mary visiting kinswoman Elizabeth to rejoice with her as she prepares for the birth of John the Baptist, the last of the great prophets!
- 3 Nativity! Birth!
- 4 Presentation in the temple! What we're solemnizing today!
- 5 Jesus found in the temple with the learned men of Judaism.

Then!
Resurrection! Ascension! Descent of the Holy Spirit!
Assumption, Coronation of Mary as Mother of the Church, and Mother of God!
So! What more is there to be said? Than that we keep today holy, as we honour Mary for who she is! And Mary! Her importance and relevance in our prayer life today!



picture: Mary Mosaic, Hanging Church, Cairo.

Modern mosaic adorning the forecourt of St Mary's church, Cairo. St Mary's Coptic Orthodox church is better known as the 'Hanging Church' for its position 'suspended' above the gatehouse of an old Roman fortification, and thus approached via a steep flight of 29 steps from an open forecourt below.

The church is the most famous of Cairo's many ancient churches and a reminder that Egypt's Christian community is one of the oldest in the World. The present building was started c 690 CE though has been altered several times since, notably the twin-towered facade which is 19th century. The interior has a much more ancient aspect with its many columns and arches, but photography is forbidden inside.

For more information on this church [click here](#).

Francis



30th December 2021

4. In the current weekly edition of *America: The Jesuit Review*, younger two authors offer eight New Year's resolutions inspired by Pope Francis. To read the whole article, [click here](#). To whet our appetite, we share some of resolutions 2, 4, 7 and 8:

Stop judging others.

Judging and gossiping about those around us is, as Pope Francis said in his audience on 3rd Nov., so easy to do that we often fall into it without thinking.

The pope offered a challenging alternative, to instead *take a look at yourself*. With this shift in perspective, Pope Francis suggests we might discover something important: *It is good to ask ourselves what drives us to correct a brother or a sister, and if we are not in some way co-responsible for their mistake*. Instead of nitpicking our neighbours, we can be honest with ourselves about our own shortcomings, making space for compassion instead of criticism.

Take one concrete step to become more environmentally conscious. (And start now!)

This year, world leaders gathered in Glasgow to discuss climate change at COP26. While Pope Francis was unable to be there in person, he did share a message. And let's just say this: he did not hold back.

If you want to do your part to protect the planet, here is the big takeaway from the pope's words: You should start now. Francis wrote to the conference with a tone of great urgency, recommending courses of action for both leaders and civilians. If there are lifestyle changes you have wanted to make in an effort to be more environmentally conscious, now is the time to get around to them. If there are things you think political leaders could be doing to protect all of us from the climate crisis, make them known – through your voice and

your vote. As the pope said, *there is no time to waste*.

Francis' message also offered spiritual advice for a world struggling with the effects of climate change. *We need both hope and courage*, he wrote. *Humanity possesses the wherewithal to effect this change, which calls for a genuine conversion, individual as well as communitarian, and a decisive will to set out on this path*.

Get off Twitter.

After the pandemic moved much of our lives online – YouTube Masses, Zoom happy hours, untold hours of Covid-19 doomscrolling on Twitter – you might be ready for a social media cleanse in 2022. Pope Francis has repeatedly urged people to get off their smartphones and to start communicating with the person

in front of them. This year, in a message to journalists, he again warned of “the tyranny of always being online”:

Listening always goes hand in hand with seeing, with being present: certain nuances, sensations, and well-rounded descriptions can only be conveyed to readers, listeners and spectators if the journalist has listened and seen for him- or herself. This means escaping – and I know how difficult this is in your work! – escaping from the tyranny of always being online, on social networks, on the web.

Even if you are not a journalist, you can take a page from our very offline pope and make 2022

a year filled with IRL conversation and friendship.



Call your loved ones regularly (and truly listen to them.)

When was the last time we visited or telephoned an elderly person in order to show our closeness and to benefit from what they have to tell us? That was Pope Francis' question in his homily for the World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly on 26th July. Few groups have been more profoundly affected by the

ongoing pandemic than our elders. Now that vaccines and boosters have made it possible to safely visit them, what if you took the next year to listen to or even record their stories and wisdom?

Let us not lose the memory preserved by the elderly, for we are children of that history, and without roots, we will wither, the pope said. They protected us as we grew, and now it is up to us to protect their lives, to alleviate their difficulties, to attend to their needs and to ensure that they are helped in daily life and not feel alone.



28th December 2021

5. **FACT:** In 1995 President Mandela appointed Archbishop Tutu as chairman of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission which investigated human rights abuses and political crimes committed by both supporters and opponents of apartheid between 1960 and 1994. Tutu said:

I hope that the work of the commission, by opening wounds to cleanse them, will thereby stop them from festering. We cannot be facile and say bygones will be bygones, because they will not be bygones and will return to haunt us. True reconciliation is never cheap, for it is based on forgiveness, which is costly. Forgiveness in turn depends on repentance, which has to be based on an acknowledgment of what was done wrong, and therefore on disclosure of the truth. You cannot forgive what you do not know.

6. Over the past week, many reflections have been offered on the death of Archbishop Desmond Tutu from South Africa. One searing image in my memory is that of Tutu in formal dress surrounded by tear gas after participating in an anti-apartheid meeting:



Source: Getty Images on BBC:
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-22292744>

Justin Welsby, the Archbishop of Canterbury offered his tribute :

The death of Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu (always known as Arch) is news that we receive with profound sadness – but also with profound gratitude as we reflect upon his life. My prayers and condolences are with his family and all who loved him, with the Anglican Church of the Province of Southern Africa, and all of the people of South Africa.

Arch's love transformed the lives of politicians and priests, township dwellers and world leaders. The world is different because of this man.

Archbishop Tutu was a prophet and priest, a man of words and action, one who embodied the hope and joy that were the foundations of his life. He was a man of extraordinary personal courage and bravery: when the police burst into Capetown Cathedral, he defied them by dancing down the aisle.

He was a man of enormous vision: seeing the possibilities for building the Rainbow Nation long before anyone else, except perhaps President Mandela.

His vision and bravery were allied with a canny political sense and wisdom, enabling him to be a healer and apostle of peace while so many still saw wounds and war.

He was a pioneer, the first Black Archbishop of Capetown, the pioneer of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

He was a great warrior for justice who never stopped fighting – whether it was for those in his own country, for inclusivity in the South African Constitution, or for those suffering injustice around the world.

When you were in parts of the world where there was little Anglican presence and people weren't sure what the Anglican church was, it was enough to say "It's the Church that Desmond Tutu belongs to" – a testimony to the international reputation he had and the respect with which he was held.

Most of all he was a Christian disciple – that was the root of everything else.

After meeting him, many would speak of being in the presence of one who brought God close to them. His joy, grace, laughter, hope and life caught up those around him with a sense of Jesus Christ.

It was Jesus' love we saw in his eyes, Jesus' compassion we heard in his voice, Jesus' joy we heard in his laughter, Jesus' face we saw in his face. And it was beautiful and brave.

His greatest love is now realised as he meets his Lord face to face.

We are thankful today for such a life so well lived, even as we feel the sorrow of such great loss.



I enjoyed a thoughtful reflection on Tutu that connected his faith with his action in the broader community and in the church.

It is written by P. Pratap Kumar, Emeritus Professor, School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal and was published in *The Conversation* soon after Tutu's death.

To read it, [click here](#).

Lord God of the nations,
we have seen the star of your glory
rising in splendour.

The radiance of your incarnate Word
pierces the darkness that covers the earth
and signals the dawn of peace and justice.
Make radiant the lives of your people
with that same brightness,
and beckon all the nations
to walk as one in your light.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
in the splendour of eternal light,
God for ever and ever

(Year C: Epiphany, Alternative Opening Prayer)



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John

pastor
Boonah Catholic community