



## THE LOOP

The Monthly Newsletter for the Parish of Isle of Dogs

January 2010

### “EPIPHANY”

THERE IS SOMETHING SURREAL ABOUT THE COMING OF THE WISE MEN. WHETHER WE CALL THEM ‘KINGS’ OR ‘MAGI’ THEY SEEM TERRIBLY OUT OF PLACE AT THE SIDE OF JESUS’ CRADLE IN BETHLEHEM. THEY ARE FROM A DIFFERENT WORLD FROM MARY AND JOSEPH IN SO MANY WAYS. THEY COME FROM EXOTIC DISTANT LANDS, THEY ARE MEN OF LEARNING, AND THEY HAVE THE WEALTH AND LEISURE TO MAKE AN EPIC JOURNEY. TO THE EVERYDAY POVERTY OF THE STABLE IN BETHLEHEM THE WISE MEN BRING GIFTS THAT SEEM COMPLETELY OUT OF PLACE BECAUSE OF THEIR RARITY, GOLD AND FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH. NO WONDER THAT IN SOME CHRISTIAN CULTURES ‘KING’S DAY’ OR ‘THREE KINGS’ IS THE MOST EAGERLY EXPECTED DAY OF CHRISTMAS. IT IS A MOMENT OF PURE SPECTACLE (SEE LYNN COLLIER’S ARTICLE IN THE NEWSLETTER).

THIS IS THE MOMENT OF ‘EPIPHANY’ OR SHOWING. JESUS IS SHOWN AS GOD TO REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONS AND CULTURES OF THE WORLD, AND THEY FALL AT HIS FEET AND OFFER HIM GIFTS AND WORSHIP. EPIPHANY IS MORE THAN ONE DAY THOUGH. IT IS A SEASON THAT STRETCHES FROM THE 6TH JANUARY TO THE SUNDAYS BEFORE LENT. THROUGH THIS SEASON THE READINGS OF THE CHURCH ARE ALL ABOUT HOW GOD IN JESUS IS REVEALED, FOR EXAMPLE WHEN HE IS BAPTISED BY JOHN IN THE RIVER JORDAN, AND WHEN HE CHANGES WATER INTO WINE AT THE WEDDING FEAST AT CANA. I HAVE A PARTICULAR LIKING FOR THE EPIPHANY SEASON BECAUSE IT SHARPENS OUR ATTENTION AND MAKES US LOOK FOR PLACES WHERE GOD’S GLORY IS BEING REVEALED SUBTLY IN OUR OWN TIME AND EXPERIENCE. CAN WE SEE GOD IN HUMAN LOVE IN OUR FAMILIES; CAN WE SENSE GOD IN THE GRANDEUR OF NATURE, OR THE BUSTLE OF THE CITY; CAN WE DETECT A LONGING FOR GOD’S RULE IN THE POLITICAL SYSTEMS OF OUR WORLD AND THE WAYS IN WHICH THEY FAIL TO DELIVER ALL THEY PROMISE?

IT SEEMS ONLY RIGHT EPIPHANY SHOULD COME SO CLOSE TO THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW CALENDAR YEAR. WHATEVER ELSE 2010 BRINGS, WHATEVER ELSE WE PROMISE OURSELVES TO DO WITH THE NEW YEAR, WE CAN RESOLVE LOOK HARDER, AND LISTEN MORE ATTENTIVELY TO THE WAYS THAT GOD IN JESUS CHRIST WILL REVEAL HIMSELF.

## Diá De Los Reyes

Diá De Los Reyes (Three Kings Day) in Spain really should be experienced at least once in a lifetime.

Christmas Day in Spain is just the start of the 12 days leading up to January 6<sup>th</sup>, Three Kings Day. This is similar to our Christmas Day when gifts are opened and families visit one another to eat and drink. **Kings Day is in keeping with the religious tradition that this was the day that the Three Kings (Los Tres Reyes Magos) arrived bearing gifts.** As an English woman abroad, I always found the evening of the 5<sup>th</sup> January the most spectacular. Crowds line the streets whilst magnificent processions take place all over the country. The Spanish take great pains with preparations leading up to this celebration. Colourful costumes are sewn and embroidered with much care and attention to detail. Beautiful lights hang in abundance in the streets and in all the years I lived there I never saw one not working! It's a huge treat for the crowds as elaborately decorated floats pass by carrying children in their biblical costumes. As they travel through the streets they throw hundreds of sweets into the crowds. People carry upside down umbrellas and women and girls hold out their skirts to catch as many as possible as the sweets are scattered everywhere. Music seems to come from each corner of the town or village and it is truly one of the happiest and most joyous occasions in traditional Spain.

At the end of this fun day, much like our children leave things for Santa Claus, before they go to bed, the Spanish children leave water outside their front doors for the Three Kings and some grass for their animals. Shoes are sometimes placed outside with letters inside. On the morning of Diá De Los Reyes the water and grass will be gone and in the shoes, new socks or fruit wrapped in shiny paper will have taken the place of the letters.

Lynn Collier

### **From the pen of the Bishop of London:**

'I am delighted to announce the appointment of five new Prebendaries to fill the vacant Prebendal Stalls in our Cathedral.

Olwen Field, Vicar of St Martin, West Drayton in the Willesden Area will fill the Stall of Harlesden. Jonathan Trigg, Vicar of St Michael, Highgate, in the Edmonton Area will occupy the Stall of Portpool and Alan Green in the Stepney Area, Team Rector of St John on Bethnal Green and Area Dean of Tower Hamlets is to occupy the Stall of Sneating.

From the Two Cities Area, Alan Moses, Vicar of All Saints Margaret Street and Area Dean of Westminster, St Marylebone, and Charles Marnham, Vicar of St Michael, Chester Square, will occupy the Stalls of Holborn and Oxgate respectively.

We are grateful to God for their ministry, serving London over many years. Please continue to remember them in your prayers at this time. The Installation of the Prebendaries will be held on Sunday 16th May 2010 at Evensong in the Cathedral at 3.15 pm.'

*Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dr Richard Chartres, December 2010*

## From a Sermon for the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent by Hilary Elliott

I know quite a few of us really appreciated the day for fasting and prayer which we had at the beginning of Advent. It enabled us perhaps to enter into the spirit of the season and to pray and reflect differently. It seems to me it's been a busy Advent. As well as fasting and praying, we had the successful Christmas Fayre in support of the new St Luke's, the monthly prayer breakfast, marching in support of the climate talks in Copenhagen and also lots of music.

We've had traditional Advent pieces in Christ Church, at the beginning of Advent, the Docklands Singers concert, hymns and cake at St Luke's, Mudchute Carols, Clare College and this evening we are looking forward to the nine lessons and carols with the Christ Church extended choir.

John the Baptist was born in song. He leapt in his mother's womb when she was six months pregnant and Mary arrived on the doorstep. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed a blessing with a loud voice. And Mary then broke into the Magnificat. It is difficult to imagine that these two faithful Jewish women restraining themselves to speaking rather than singing their praises. And when John was born and Zechariah's tongue was loosened, he praised God. Jews sing at times like this.

If you take the lives of John the Baptist and Jesus, the offspring of these two women there is a contrast between the convivial nature of Jesus' relationship with people and the austerity of John's. There's something of the wild man about John. Some scholars think that the Essene community in the desert ran an orphanage for the children of priests, so it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that John grew up there: a harsh environment physically, among a fairly ascetic group. We don't know that for sure, but the desert was clearly a familiar place to him given his dress, diet and the fact that God's word came to him in the wilderness. John was a rugged man, his character and his message shaped by the wilderness. But he must have sung: song was his heritage and the singing of his childhood must have laid an indelible foundation. He was a man of the wilderness with a hard message to proclaim. So perhaps any music he made is wilderness music, the music of living on the edge, of desolation.

What singing have you heard recently from the ruins and wastelands and wildernesses of our world? Perhaps from Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur or from Bethlehem and Zimbabwe? We remember perhaps, in South Africa, the part music played in maintaining people's identity and courage during the apartheid years. This music was a defiant rebuttal of the horrors and injustice of apartheid: an expression of the outrageous hope for racial equality.

Church music can be a foretaste of the heavenly music. It bears the wounds of the earth and its people as well as its glories. It weeps the tears of earth and the people of the earth as well as exulting in praise. John, the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah knew in his life tears and joy, the need for repentance and the assurance of a Saviour. Mary lifted up her voice and from the very depths of her heart proclaimed the power, the mercy and the justice of God. Christians over the centuries have joined in her song as we do today –

'God All Powerful has done great things for me, and his name is holy. He always shows mercy to everyone who worships him. The Lord has used his powerful arm to scatter those who are proud. He drags strong rulers from their thrones and puts humble people in places of power. The Lord made this promise to our ancestors to Abraham and his family forever.'

Lord, we bring you our joys, our sorrows, our thanks and our praise as we await your coming in glory!  
Amen.

**Raffle Prizes: St Luke's and MacMillan Nurses**

Please do look at sheets on office door at Christ Church as a few prizes are still yet to be claimed.

Thanks to everyone to contributed in so many ways to the Christmas season.

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**Baptisms** in December: Kerry Michelle Hadley  
Louise Danielle Kreuder  
William Joseph Kreuder  
Jessica Michelle Kreuder  
Molly Anne Kreuder

*“Fight valiantly under the banner of Christ against sin, the world and the devil and continue Christ’s faithful soldier and servant to the end of your lives”*

**Weddings** in December: Dmitrij Rumiancev and Yuliya Oleksenko

*“God is love, and those who live in love live in God, and God lives in them”*

**Deaths** in December: John Henry Roberts  
Frazier Gordon Gray  
Annie Kilgour

**One year’s memorial:** Joan Jordan

*“Rest eternal grant unto them O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them”*

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### ***Praying for people***

*In Christ Church and St Luke’s there are green forms for you to fill in if you wish to have a prayer said for yourself or someone else*

<p><b>WE ARE PLANNING TO PUBLISH THE LOOP EVERY FIRST SUNDAY OF THE MONTH ALONG WITH THE PARISH DIARY WHICH ALSO COMES OUT AT THAT TIME</b></p>
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