

PARISH BULLETIN 2010/4 OF THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING COMMUNITY

EUROPEAN PARISH

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Ut unum sint.....

That they may be one....

WEBSITE: www.catholic.lu

SCHEDULE OF MASSES AND CONFESSIONS

Mass every Saturday evening at 19.00 hrs in St. Alphonse, 32 rue des Capucins and on Sundays at 11.00 a.m. In Ss. Peter and Paul, Hollerich.

Confessions every Saturday evening from 17.30 to 18.00 in St. Alphonse and at any other time by appointment (please ring 470039) at 34 rue des Capucins.

BAPTISMS

Baptisms are normally held on Saturdays at 11.30 in St. Alphonse. In special circumstances, on Sunday at 15.00 in St. Alphonse or at 15.30 in Hollerich (subject to the availability of the church). If you are thinking of having your child baptized, please contact me well in advance (some months), as there are a great many baptisms in our parish and it will not always be possible to have the ceremony on the day that suits you best. There will be an **obligatory preparatory meeting** (usually with several couples present). It is normally held on a Monday evening at 34 rue des Capucins at 19.30. We invite the parents and, if possible, godparents, to be present. The meeting lasts about an hour or so. The date of the next meeting will be announced on the website some time in January.

WEDDINGS

If you are thinking of getting married, you need to contact me well in advance (six months or so). You will need to provide a recently dated baptismal and confirmation certificate and a 'letter of freedom to marry', which you will get from the parish in which you were baptized and grew up. We then proceed to draw up a matrimonial dossier. If you are getting married outside Luxembourg, the dossier will have to be sent to the diocese in which the wedding takes place, three months before the ceremony.

1. LITURGICAL CALENDAR FOR ADVENT, CHRISTMAS, NEW YEAR

November 28 th	First Sunday of Advent (Year A)	Matt. 24, 37-44
December 5 th	Second Sunday of Advent (Year A)	Matt. 3, 1- 12
December 12 th	Third Sunday of Advent (Year A)	Matt. 11, 2-11
December 19 th	Fourth Sunday of Advent (Year A)	Matt. 1, 18-24

**December 24th Christmas 'Midnight' Mass at 22.00 in Hollerich.
Carol Service at 21. 30**

December 25th Christmas Day Mass at 11.00 in Hollerich.

December 26th Feast of the Holy Family Matt. 2, 13-15. 19 – 23
(This Sunday the mass will be shorter than usual, perhaps with only one reading, as I will have to be at the airport at 12.30. Epiphany: there will be no English masses this week-end.

January 2nd:

January 9th Baptism of the Lord Matt. 3, 13-17

January 16th 2nd Sunday in Ordinary time John 1, 29-34

January 23 3rd Sunday in Ordinary time Matt. 4, 12-23

January 30th 4th Sunday in Ordinary time Matt. 5, 1- 12

February 6th 5th Sunday in Ordinary time Matt 5, 13- 16

February 13th 6th Sunday in Ordinary time Matt. 5, 17-37

Lent starts quite late this coming year. Ash Wednesday is on the 9th March

2. CHRISTMAS AND HOLIDAY ARRANGEMENTS

The 'midnight' Mass on Christmas Eve will be at 22.00 hours and will be preceded by a carol service, beginning at 21.30. The mass is intended for adults. We ask you, if you are here for Christmas, to bring your children to the Christmas Day Mass in Hollerich at 11.00 a.m. As I will be leaving for a holiday in Ireland on December 26th, immediately after mass, I will not be here for the feast of the Epiphany which is celebrated in Luxembourg on January 2nd. You are invited to attend mass that day either in St. Alphonse at 10.00 a.m. (in French) or in one of the city churches.

3. CHRISTINGLE SERVICE ON CHRISTMAS EVE 4.00 P.M.

This service for children under nine years of age, together with their parents, has been a delightful Anglican/R. Catholic joint prayer and praise service for some years past. The purpose is to combine carol-singing and prayer with good works. Everyone brings an envelope with a donation for the Children's Society – an English organization which helps homeless children. Each child present at the service receives a 'Christingle', i.e. an orange with a candle inside it. The Christmas story is told and acted out and we sing well-known Christmas carols. So do come along and join our Anglican friends at 4.00 p.m on Christmas Eve at the Anglican Chapel in the Centre Konvict on Ave. Marie-Therèse.

4. SOME THOUGHTS ON THE FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY

As we won't be celebrating the Epiphany together, a few reflections on the meaning of the feast might be appropriate. The word 'epiphany' means etymologically a **shining forth** – as when the sun breaks through. The ancient Romans and Egyptians celebrated the winter solstice, the 'sol invictus' the unconquerable sun emerging again from the darkness of winter. When the Christian church became established (after Constantine), it decided not to suppress the pagan feast of light but to 'baptize' it, by celebrating the birth of Christ, the **light of the world**, on December 25th. The Greek East celebrated the manifestation (epiphania) of God's love on January 6th. Later on in Rome, December 25th was celebrated as the day on which God's Light was manifested to the Jews (the shepherds) and January 6th as the day on which it was manifested to the Gentiles – the Magi, or pagan wise men from the East.

Light is such a primal thing that people have always used it as an image. The 18th century glorified '*the light of reason*' which banished what it regarded as the superstition and ignorance of the 'dark ages'. 18th century intellectuals thought of themselves as 'enlightened', compared to their credulous ancestors. Everything, religion included, had to submit to the searching light of reason and be judged by it. Now we're all children of the Enlightenment, for good or ill. One way this shows is in our response to the story of the Wise men and the star. The modern mind asks instinctively: did this happen? Is it historical, or only a story, a legend? But this is ultimately a superficial question. Even if you grant that some of this story is not historical, you only specify **what it is not**. You haven't begun to get near **what it is**. Matthew was a very sophisticated writer and if he uses some elements of myth or legend, he does so consciously because it helps him to say what he wants to say. And for all our sophistication, we're really rather simple and literal-minded if all we can ask is: did it happen or not? The question is: did **what** happen?

What Matthew is doing in this story is reflecting, as Luke did in the Christmas readings, on the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. That – and not Jesus' birth – is his starting point. And he believes that in Jesus, God is present in human history. In today's story he wants to emphasise that God's light has shone forth in the darkness of the human scene. Matthew, unlike the 18th century, didn't believe that enlightenment is the privilege of any age or people. All ages are a mixture of light and darkness. The vital thing is to **seek the light** and to **recognize the true light when one finds it**. Maybe that's one way of understanding the '**star**' which rose in the east – it's the star of wisdom, the light of their own tradition which the Wise Men follow, trusting that it will lead them to the source of all light. Christians have seen in the Wise Men the representatives of the great traditions of wisdom, African, Persian, Indian. Human wisdom has nothing to fear, for it finds its fulfilment in the Light that is Christ. The sight of the star, says Matthew, '*filled them with delight*', as it rested over the place where the child was. They had found what they were looking for, and worshipped – though it was very different from what they might have anticipated. But, as always,

faith means decision, conversion, leaving the past behind. T.S. Eliot in his 'Journey of the Magi' saw this clearly when he has the Wise Men say « *This birth was hard and bitter agony for us, like death, our death...*[we were] *no longer at ease in the old dispensation* »

Celebrating the Epiphany, we might ask ourselves: are we ready to undertake, like the Wise Men, a long and painful journey, searching, following the light – or will we be satisfied with our 'enlightenment' and our technical know-how?. Are we in danger of confusing endless information with real wisdom? Or, like Herod in the story, do we see Christ as a threat to our security, someone we can dispense with and get rid of. Or will we, like the Wise men, have the wisdom and faith to recognize God's light and find our delight and fulfilment in the simplicity and poverty of the child in the manger, the man on the Cross, the bread and wine that we bless and share. And are we still capable of the greatest wisdom of all, that of kneeling and adoring and laying our gifts at His feet?

5. DATES TO KEEP IN MIND

Advent Service of Reconciliation, Tuesday December 14th at 20.00 hrs

A service of readings and prayers, with a short homily. The service will last about 40 minutes or so, at the end of which the prayer of absolution will be said. There will also be an opportunity, if you so wish, to make a brief private confession.

'Intermedii' Concert at Konvikt Centre Chapel, December 15th at 20.00 hrs.

The Intermedii Christmas Concert of Music and readings has become one of the traditional events in the lead-up to Christmas. In the past Rev. Chris Lyon and Fr. Eamonn Breslin interspersed the music with readings and poems. This year Joan Lyon will be doing duty, as Chris is away on a course. There will be a glass of wine or juice at the back of the church after the concert – which will last about an hour and a half. Entrance is free, but there will be a retiring collection, the proceeds of which will be donated to charity.

Wine and Cheese evening at the Salle paroissiale, Strassen on February 4th, 19.30

This is the evening and the event at which the European parish launches our Lenten project for 2011. It will begin at 19.30. It has not been always well attended, though it is not only a worthwhile but a most enjoyable evening. There will be plenty to eat and drink (not just wine and cheese), good company and a Tombola with excellent prizes.

And, on that note, I bring this brief Bulletin to an end. Keep an eye on the website, catholic.lu for further news items over the next few weeks.

To all our parishioners, whether you're staying in Luxembourg or going on holidays, my very best wishes for a holy and blessed Christmas.

Eamonn Breslin

