

This issue of Catherine's Wheel is dedicated to the memory of Terry Edwards (13 May 1935 – 11 November 2025). A true gentleman and friend to everyone he met.

Vale Terry Edwards.



Welcome to the Advent 2025 Issue of Catherine's Wheel. First off we have some photos of the recent 60th Birthday Celebrations for St Catherine's Parish that was a tremendous success. Fr Bart O'Donovan was the guest preacher. A birthday cake was enjoyed by all and the after service lunch at the Midway Hotel was a delight.



Next up, on December 6, the Parish Synod Representative (Greg Trenowden) had the honour and privilege to attend an Extraordinary Synod that was called in order to elect the 11th Bishop for the Diocese of Adelaide. This Synod was held at St Peter's College. After a full day of opinions, friendly discussion and secret voting, the next Archbishop of Adelaide was chosen to be Right Reverend Dr Bradly Billings.



Next up, we have an article published on www.christianity.org.uk that you might find of relevance.

The first Christmas

Christmas Day is celebrated around the world as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity. For Christians it is one of the most significant moments in history – God becoming a human like us and arriving as a tiny, vulnerable baby. Most Christians celebrate Christmas Day on 25 December. Christians in the Orthodox Church mark it on 7 January. The exact date that Jesus was born is not known. Most historians think it was probably in the autumn around 5 or 6 BC.

The only sources of information we have about Jesus' birth are two books of the Bible, Matthew and Luke. Matthew became one of Jesus' followers when he was an adult; Luke was a doctor who wrote his account of Jesus' life after meeting eye witnesses. Both books were written in about 60 to 65AD – some 30 years after Jesus' death. They were for different audiences: Matthew for Jewish readers; Luke for non-Jews. The accounts give us different perspectives on what happened. Matthew is always keen to show that Jesus Christ was the Messiah – a leader sent by God to liberate his people, who had been promised for centuries in ancient Hebrew writings.

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Luke tells how God sent an angel called Gabriel to a young woman called Mary, a virgin who lived in Nazareth in what is now northern Israel. Mary was engaged to a carpenter called Joseph. (In those days, being engaged or betrothed was like a legal contract and could only be broken by divorce.) Gabriel told Mary she would miraculously fall pregnant and have a son. Matthew tells us that another angel appeared to Joseph to reassure him that although his fiancée was pregnant, she had conceived miraculously and he should not divorce her. The angel says *'Joseph... do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you are to give him the name Jesus because he will save his people from their sins'*.

At that time, the region was part of the Roman Empire. As the day approached for Mary to give birth, the Roman ruler, Caesar Augustus, issued a decree that a census should be carried out across the empire. This registration enabled the

Romans to recruit soldiers and ensure that everyone paid their taxes. Under the decree, everyone had to return to their home town which meant Joseph had to travel 70 miles from Nazareth to his family's town of Bethlehem. Luke tells us that when Mary and Joseph arrived, they could not find a place to stay. Mary gave birth and placed the new born boy in a manger – an animal feeding trough. The Bible does not tell us, but it is likely that their accommodation was the ground floor room of a house or a cave under it – that is where families often kept their animals – or outside in a stable.



That night an angel appeared to shepherds looking after sheep in the fields outside Bethlehem. Luke tells us the angel told them about the birth, *'I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today...a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord...'* The shepherds visited Jesus, Mary and Joseph to worship him and then spread the word about what the angel had said.

When he was eight days old, the baby boy was circumcised in accordance with Jewish tradition. He was formally given the name Jesus. To fulfil another tradition, when he was just over a month old, Joseph and Mary took him to the temple in Jerusalem where they made an offering to God.

Traditional nativity plays also have three wise men arriving to pay homage and give gifts to Jesus. But this cannot have happened on the same evening. It may even have taken place one or two years later. The Bible book, Matthew, tells us these men, known as magi, travelled from eastern lands looking for *'the King of the Jews'*. They had been guided by a star, which suggests they were astrologers. The Bible does not name the men, and we do not know how many they were. They went first to Jerusalem where the king, Herod, was disturbed by the news of the birth of this apparent rival. He consulted religious leaders who told him about ancient Hebrew writings which foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. So he sent the magi there and asked them to report back to him.

'But you Bethlehem... out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel...'

Guided by the star, the wise men travelled the short distance on to Bethlehem. They went to the house where Mary and Joseph were staying and bowed down to worship Jesus. They left gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then, warned in a dream about King Herod's real motives, they avoided Jerusalem and returned to their homeland by another route.

At this point, an angel warned Joseph in a dream that King Herod planned to kill Jesus and that the family should escape to Egypt. Herod, furious at being outwitted, ordered that every boy in Bethlehem aged two and under should be killed. Such a massacre fits with what historians know about how Herod ruled. But Joseph had fled to safety with Mary and Jesus. They stayed in Egypt until Herod died in about 4BC. The family then returned to Israel and settled back in Nazareth. Some Christians mark the visit of the magi by celebrating Epiphany on 6 January. Orthodox Christians use this date to remember Jesus' baptism as an adult aged about 30.

Prophetic writings about Jesus' birth

Jesus' birth was foretold by ancient Hebrew prophets. Micah, writing about 700 years before Jesus says, *'But you Bethlehem...out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel...'* The prophet, Isaiah, says *'the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel'*. The word Immanuel means 'God with us'. Another Bible book, 2 Samuel, says Jesus would be descended from King David. Matthew, in his account, makes clear that Joseph is a direct descendant of David. Other ancient writings foretell Jesus' escape to Egypt and the fact he would be raised in Nazareth.

(Note no author was given credit for the article on the source website)

Lastly, we have a photo of Cathy handing out Christmas gifts to junior Parish members during Advent this year.



Parish Council

For updates on activities please speak to one of your friendly Councilors.

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