

## EPIPHANY

*Fairer than the sun at morning  
was the star that told his birth;  
To the lands their God announcing,  
Seen in human form on earth.*

*By it's peerless beauty guided  
See the Eastern Kings appear;  
Bowling low, their gifts they offer,  
Gifts of incense, gold and myrrh.*

I really love the set-up of our two cribs this year. At the front of the church, as you come from the road onto the drive, the first figure you encounter, standing under the tree, is one of the three wise men. He is obviously on his way to Bethlehem. Beyond him, in front of the church wall, stands the shed where Mary and Joseph are kneeling in adoration of their new-born baby. At a distance to the left and to the right of the crib are the other two kings also on their separate journeys to Bethlehem.

Inside the church, the second crib is situated in front of the octagonal altar under the great arch from which hangs the beautiful rood. Again, Mary and Joseph, accompanied by the shepherds are kneeling or standing in awe before the divine child. The wise men are situated separately away from the crib. They still haven't come together in Jerusalem. It made me realise that these three wise and intelligent men were not lifelong friends on a wild epic adventure. They were probably complete strangers, upright wealthy and educated men who had a shared vision. They had seen a sign in the sky which filled them with a great determination to make a long, difficult and hazardous journey of discovery to find where the star would lead them. It must have taken a great deal of preparation and yet it was no coincidence that they arrived at the same place and at the same time. They did not know what they would find at the end of their journey or even what to expect. All they knew was that it would be momentous, an event that would change the world. They first tried the palace of King Herod but were disappointed for the answer was not there. The star led them further to the little town of Bethlehem.

The remarkable thing is how they interpreted what they found there. A common working man with his young wife and their baby, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid on a bed of straw in a stable fit only for animals. Yet, these rich and educated men, gentiles, immediately fell on their knees to worship the child lying there. They did not feel the hardness of the ground nor worry about the damage to their fine clothes for they knew that this baby was the one who would change the world. They presented him with gifts fit for a king. Oh, what faith they displayed!

When I stand before the crib. I cannot but look up to the rood above. The alpha and the omega, the beginning of his life on earth and the end of his life on earth.

Sacred gifts of mystic meaning:  
Incense doth the God disclose,  
Gold the King of Kings proclaimeth,  
Myrrh a future tomb foreshows.

In thy glory, O Lord Jesus,  
To the Gentile world displayed  
With the Father and The Spirit  
Endless praise to thee be given