

**FOLLOW
YOUR STAR!**
(MATT 2:1-12)

Matthew is a Jewish Christian writing for a community which included many people from a Jewish background.

So to this evangelist it is natural to show that in the person of Jesus, God's plan for human beings, as revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures, has been fulfilled. His audience, steeped in the traditions of their religion, would understand the background against which he is writing and the allusions he is making to their folklore and practices.

The biblical background to Matthew's presentation of the Good News is that of the Exodus, the event which defines the Jewish people and their understanding of God. The human figure dominating the narrative is Moses, the person who puts into action God's plan for the liberating of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt and who brings God's Law, or Teaching, to the Israelites at Sinai. Matthew casts Jesus as a present-day Moses: his Infancy Narrative has many echoes of the story of Moses and of the Exodus experience. Hence, the tragic episode of the massacre of the male children in and around Bethlehem (for which there is no evidence outside of the account of Matthew) echoes the reaction of the Egyptian Pharaoh to a perceived threat to his throne and power.

So when we consider the exotic visitors from the East, the Magi, and the star which leads them to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem, we would do well to look for clues in the Exodus story. One possibility is the figure of Balaam, described by a Greek-speaking Jewish writer called Philo as a *magos*.

He is a person accredited with supernatural insight, who is brought by King Balak to curse the people of Israel and so bring disaster upon them. Balaam, instead, pronounces a blessing, so causes the opposite effect. He prophesies that "a star shall come forth from Jacob, and a sceptre arise out of Israel" (Num 24:17). The star in Matthew shines over the land of Israel (Jacob) and announces the birth of the King of the Jews (the sceptre). Herod intends to use the Magi to destroy Jesus, whom he regards as a threat to his tenuous claim to be a king, but they thwart his plans by not returning with the information he needs, as a result of a supernatural warning. Matthew thus sets the scene for his narrative of the ministry and passion of Jesus. Jesus is a figure like Moses, but even greater, and will fulfil God's plan for another Exodus for those who accept his message. ■

REFLECT

There have been many learned articles written about the Star of Bethlehem, its identity and the time of its appearing. However, the Gospel writers often use symbolic writing to convey their belief about the person of Jesus. Matthew, then, is drawing on stories familiar to his audience and

expects them to make the connections. Many Christians have little acquaintance with the Jewish Scriptures and so fail to appreciate the links being made. The answer to 'What was the star of Bethlehem?' is probably to be found in the Book of Numbers, rather than in astronomical speculation. ■

SAY

All nations shall worship you, Lord.

DO

Read the first two chapters of the Gospel according to Matthew. Look up the cross references to the Book of Exodus and note the connections.



LEARN

Midrash is a type of writing which takes a familiar biblical story and re-interprets it.

Some scholars regard Matthew's Infancy Narrative as a *midrash* on the story of Moses and the Exodus.

The Magi are Gentiles with knowledge from the natural sciences; they need the Jewish Scriptures to complete their search.

Matthew mentions three gifts, not three Kings.

PARISH OF DROMORE

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Epiphany of the Lord

Sunday Mass Times

St Colman's Dromore **All Saints Ballela**
Sunday 11.00am Sunday 9.45am

Weekday Mass Times: St Colman's

Mon, Wed, & Thurs - 9.30am: Liturgy of the Word with Eucharist

Mass - Tues & Fri : 9.30am

Sat: 10-11am: Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Weekday Mass times: All Saints

Thursday – 7.00pm

Ballela Anniversaries

Sun 6: James McCusker, Kilkinamurry

Sun 13: None

Dromore Anniversaries

Sun 6: Frances Hamilton

Hugh McGrath

Sam & Lily Clarke & Sam Clarke Jnr

Fri 11: Nan Catney

Sun 13: James McEvoy

Hugh Eadie

Offertory Promise Collection £1120.80

Readers - Dromore

Sun 13: John McKeown

Medjugorje Irish Centre Pilgrimages April

– **Oct 2019:** 7 nights B&B and Airport Shuttle service from Dubrovnik or Split for €279 per person sharing. Book any flight-any time and we provide guaranteed airport shuttle service. Call us for further info and book the dates that suit you, Tel. 014434510 or email reservations@med-irishcentre.com.

Irish for toddlers

Parent and Toddler groups for those with an interest in Irish are starting up for the new term.

Please note no knowledge of Irish is needed to attend these groups: Hilltown's group takes place each Thursday Morning in Carullion House, between 9.30am-11.30am. Bryansford's group takes place each Friday morning in St Patrick's Hall, between 9.30am-11.30am. Activities include craft table, healthy snack and rhyme time in Irish. Cost is £2 per family and everyone is most welcome.

Sunday 6th January 2019

Parish Draw Winners Week 39

£100	Carol Marks	228
£50	Maureen Brooker	371
£30	Michael & Mona McGreevy	088
£20	Rosemary Mulgrew	209

Ballela G.A.C. Lotto

Fri 28th Dec: 1 7 16 20

No £10 winners, Seller: John Doyle

Fri 4th Jan: 4 8 10 13

£10 winners: Johnny McCusker & John Joe McIlroy
Seller: Anglers Rest

Ballela Community Group

Pilates Class

Class will resume on Tues 8th Jan at 7pm in Ballela school with a block of six classes. Cost £54 for the 6 weeks. If interested contact Sara on 07928674733.

Fitsteps Exercise Class

Starting on Wed 16th Jan 8-9pm in St Colmans Hall Dromore an exercise class based on Ballroom & Latin dancing suitable for all ages & fitness levels, no partner or previous dance experience required. Cost £5 per class contact Kelly 07864294422 and on Facebook Fitsteps: Kelly McAleese.

The Abbey Christian Brothers' Grammar

School Open Day

Sat 12th Jan from 10am – 12 noon. Followed by headmaster's address.

St Colman's College Newry

Open Day on Sat 19th Jan 2019 from 10am -1pm principal Cormac McKinney will address guests at 11am and 12 noon. Prospective post 16 students and their parents/guardians are also very welcome to attend.

Weight Watchers Class

Will resume on Tues 8th January from 10am -11am in St Colman's hall Dromore. Tea/coffee available and everyone welcome.

PiYO

Classe's start on Mon 7th Jan at 7.30pm in St Colmans hall. PiYo is a fusion of Yoga and Pilates but set to music. For more information contact Sarah Hursk on 07961979843.