



St Mark's Church, Reigate

January 2019

Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton

Dear Friends

Wisdom – life in all its fullness

During January (on the 6th actually, which in 2019 falls on a Sunday) we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany. Epiphany is the time we recall the arrival of the three wise men/magi/kings arriving in Bethlehem to visit the much heralded Messiah. They greeted him with elaborate gifts with deep meaning. Of course, we don't know how many Magi there were. All we know is that there were at least two as the Bible refers to them in the plural. As three gifts are mentioned it is usually assumed that there were three Magi, each giving one gift.

It is also generally thought that they were astrologers and that is why we call them wise. They had wisdom. In fact, it wasn't just the star following and journey TO Bethlehem that made them wise: they did something very, very wise ON that visit. They did not listen to King Herod or do as he had asked! You will remember from the passage in Matthew's Gospel chapter 2 that Herod had actually ordered them to return and tell him where the Holy Family was (so that he might dispose of the baby, though he didn't tell the Magi this last part). The men had a dream that told them to go home a different way and not to bump into Herod again. By doing so, Herod would not be able to find and kill the baby.

I think they were very wise not to do as the King ordered, but to go with their conscience. The story would have been so different had they done as Herod asked and we today would not be in the glorious position of being disciples of Jesus, travelling with him and having a personal relationship with him.

As we start our New Year with all our determined resolutions, how about we also pray that God will give us wisdom? Who wouldn't like to make the right decision, or help others to do the right thing? Those wise men have a lot to say to us about the enormity of a bit of wisdom. Wisdom is not being clever, it's hard to prove, it can't be studied or practised, but it can be gained. If we were all wise, wouldn't the world be a better place to live in? Perhaps we wouldn't damage it and each other so much.

So let's go for a year of wisdom in 2019, for ourselves and for others. Maybe when faced with a decision or a possible action, we could stop and ask ourselves – what would be the wise thing to do right now? And if we are in any doubt about that, we can ask God to help us.

Happy New Year everyone, and be wise in 2019!