

**LEAVING HOME TO FIND THE CHRIST-CHILD**

In her classic Religion and the Chain of Memory, the French sociologist Danielle Hervieu-Leger avers that many people today are displaced; they now live here but originally came from elsewhere, like you members of this community, and me too, from the North but now a bishop here in the deep south. Such displacement, she says, breaks the chain of memory, the ties of family and religious tradition. She speaks of a metaphorical strip on the station platform in Paris, where young people, arriving in the big city for the first time, divest themselves of their roots in order to begin a new life and a new way of living that overlays or even casts off traditional meanings and values. The upshot is, many people today lack a spiritual home. Anchorless, they are forever searching, pilgrims on life's journey, newcomers looking for their niche and a religious community to which to belong.

WHERE IS THE INFANT KING OF THE JEWS? WE SAW HIS STAR AS IT ROSE AND HAVE COME TO DO HIM HOMAGE. We celebrated yesterday the Epiphany of Jesus Christ, and the readings this week from the Letter of John and the Gospels about the start of His public ministry, continue to unfold for us who Jesus really is. Yesterday's Feast was about the Showing of Christ to the Magi: those wise men, scientists, people of learning. They are fascinating figures for us to ponder during this Year of Faith and new evangelisation. They are important not historically but theologically, because their gifts symbolically reveal who Jesus is: incense for a priest, oil for a prophet, gold for a King. In other words, Jesus Christ is the Priest, Teacher and Shepherd of all humanity. He is God the Son Incarnate, who has become for us humans the Way, the Truth and the Life. If we want to be fully human, if we want to live life to the full, if we want to find true happiness, then we must leave our 'home' and comfort zone in order to go and find him.

This coming year, I'd like to ask you as a community here to pray for our diocese and the work of new evangelisation. Pray for the people of our time, spiritually displaced, that they may find their niche. Please pray too for those modern Magi, the scientists and experts often on TV, such as Brian Cox and Stephen Hawking. These are people seeking the Truth though not following the right star. Science cannot slake the deep thirst of the human heart. Only philosophy, theology, prayer and love can reveal the ultimate answer for which human beings long. That answer is a Person, Jesus Christ. Jesus alone can satisfy the human heart. Jesus alone can bring us eternal life. Jesus alone is humanity's Priest, Prophet and King. And where do we find him? -In Bethlehem, a place-name in Hebrew that means the House of Bread, in other words, in the Church. So I ask you, please pray for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that those who are searching will find their heart's desire, will find the Way to Jesus Christ, will find their true home in his Church.

THE PEOPLE THAT LIVED IN DARKNESS HAS SEEN A GREAT LIGHT. Even now the Star of Bethlehem shines above us. It shines over the New Forest in this Dominican community, dedicated to St. Joseph. Indeed, it shines over all the churches and communities of our diocese, pointing to the House of Bread, to the Manger where Christ is present, to the Mass in which every human being can find their heart's desire. Please pray throughout this year for the evangelisation of England, that the people of this land may find him, the destination of life's journey.