

## Epiphany 6/1/26

Half empty: half full. What can look a real positive to some can appear a real negative to others. Three Magi appear from the east following their star prompted by dreams to go this way or that, sensitive to the more spiritual side of their nature willing to be inspired, to allow room for the imagination, for paradox, for thinking outside the box, for crossing boundaries. You are hearing of course something of Iain McGilchrist's take on reality and the vital role of the right hemisphere, supposedly the Master but so easily usurped by left-brain thinking with its tendency to facts only and in King Herod's case to boots on the ground – that is the exercise of power by any means possible, to the crossing of boundaries only in the pursuit of self-interest, a transactional approach to reality – what's in it for me. We can read today's other texts in a similar light. Isaiah seems to be opening up the possibility that all will be welcomed to the feast of the Lord, that Israel will be a place where all will find safety and succour - but its original setting is very much one of religious nationalism – gentiles are welcome not so much to share in Israel's wealth but to bring their own silver and gold to make Israel great again. It's a very subordinate role. Matthew's vision could be read in a similar way, but we have St Paul to thank for opening up a more catholic understanding – migrants not only to serve but to share in Israel's inheritance: the mystery of God's love for all people made known in Christ and revealed now through the Spirit, but it is easy for us too to subvert this universalism with a narrower sense of what it means to be Christian, to be catholic, and to keep strangers at bay. There's a parish priest in the diocese of Boston, USA, being summoned to explain his replacement of Mary, Joseph and Jesus in his church's nativity scene by a notice saying 'ICE was here', that is they've already been removed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents. It's a wonder the Magi have been allowed to remain, perhaps because they brought or bought their way in with gold, frankincense and myrrh. But they may not last long if word gets around that they're not only Magi but also 'Kings'. There can only be one King in Israel, or Christendom, and so often it isn't Christ.

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