

EPIPHANY 2026 All Souls' **LIGHT UP THE WORLD** dtw

'Light up the World!'

Spectacular fireworks ushered in 2026 all around our globe as city after city hit the midnight countdown from east to west. Sydney, our cultural capital, did it again with a huge extravaganza watched by around 1.1 mil on their foreshores and half a billion around the world. Ironically, the Feast of Hanukkah, that people were gathering to celebrate at Bondi 3 weeks ago, is called the Festival of Lights, and it was appropriate that menorahs were displayed on the 2 pylons with a minute's silence for those precious human lights horrifically snuffed out or scarred for life, and we are all left in utter bewilderment, with a deep sense of darkness and shame within the Australian soul.

The Feast of Epiphany comes to us each year offering our sad, sorry, but beautiful world a different, more lasting and all-embracing kind of light. Isaiah prophesies: 'Arise, shine; for your light has come... Nations shall come to your light... then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice'. (Isa 60. 1, 3, 5) Our church prays, 'God of the nations, we have seen the star of your glory rising in splendour; may the brightness of your incarnate Word pierce the night that covers the earth, signal the dawn of justice and peace, and beckon all nations to walk as one in your light'.

Epiphany means 'manifestation'. Today we celebrate Christ's manifestation to the world in the guise of the Gentile Kings. But you and I are called to embody the Epiphany in our own lives: to manifest our love, joy, hope and peace to others; to light up the world! Jesus said (I'm using the Message translation), "You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public on this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand – shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven." (Mat 5. 14-16)

Epiphany means letting something be made very visible all the time, not just 20 minutes of spectacular crackle and whiz. Epiphany is a permanent attitude, not a passing fad. Epiphany is intentional, unconditional love, grace, truth and compassion, not just a Season. The powerful authenticity of Epiphany smacks in the face of greed, capitalism, terror and injustice. It can change the inhumanity of this world in the human face of each and every person who has the courage to shine with the brilliance of its light. Will *you* dare to? Will I? Too many New Year's resolutions get snuffed out too as people return, one by one, to comfortable normal.

The life of Jesus, like that of most of humanity was certainly no fairytale; Jesus interacted all too often with the forces of darkness. But this morning, while being realistic about the darkness of our world, along with the wise men, we encounter hope and we encounter glory; hope and glory that can *never* be snuffed out, hope and glory that we are called to reflect. For in Christ, God's light has shone and the darkness can never overwhelm it. And we have seen *his* glory, the glory of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. Amen

Poem Handout: The Bright Field. RS Thomas