

Gratitude, vocation, and new beginnings

On Sunday 5 January, St Mary Magdaleneâ??s celebrated the feast of Epiphany. Upon the announcement of Steven Ogdenâ??s impending retirement, Epiphany was a fitting occasion for the parish to acknowledge and thank Steven and Anne for their time there.

Steven preached on the text Matt 2:1-12. He began by talking about the experience of gratitude as a disarming gift, disclosing the things that really matter. In the Gospel of Matthew, the things that matter concern relationships.

Jesus, for example, articulates and underlines the value of a new order of relationships in the Sermon on the Mount (5:20), which is characterised by love, inclusion, and justice (7:12).



The Revâ??d Dr Steven Ogden and his wife Anne farewell parishioners at St Mary Magdaleneâ??s

In this vein, the parable of the labourers in the vineyard (20: 1-16) and the parable of the sheep and the goats (25:31-46) spell out the radical social and political implications of this new order of relationships.

Jesus inaugurates this new order.

In the shadow of the tyrant Herod, the birth of Jesus ushers in this new order. The magi, the outsiders, recognised the significance of the divine event. It is a new beginning. In this light, Steven spoke about the life and convictions of philosopher Hannah Arendt.

Hannah was a Jewish philosopher, who had been influenced by Paul and Augustine. She had a profound commitment to the inherent possibility of the human capacity to make new beginnings. This does not mean our problems are solved or the complexities of life are ironed out. Instead, it is an affirmation of the possibility of making a new start.

In this spirit, Steven thanked the parish and visitors for their love and support, and their mutual commitment to the God of new beginnings.

He experienced St Mary Magdaleneâ??s as a lively, passionate, and inclusive faith community, committed to the way of love and the work of justice. And it so has been a privilege for Steven to work

with the parish in various ways.

In gratitude, Steven thanked the parish.

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