

written by teens, for teens

epiphany

Christmas 2011

Taize
like nothing else

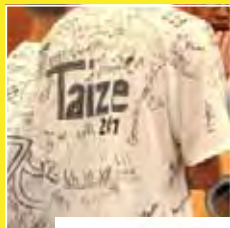
my story
when everything
changed...



the joy of
silence
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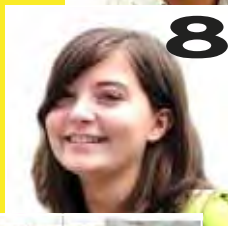
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It's that time of year again. As many of us wait in anticipation for Christmas and all its glitzy commercialism, the Christian celebration of Christ's birth is often sidelined.

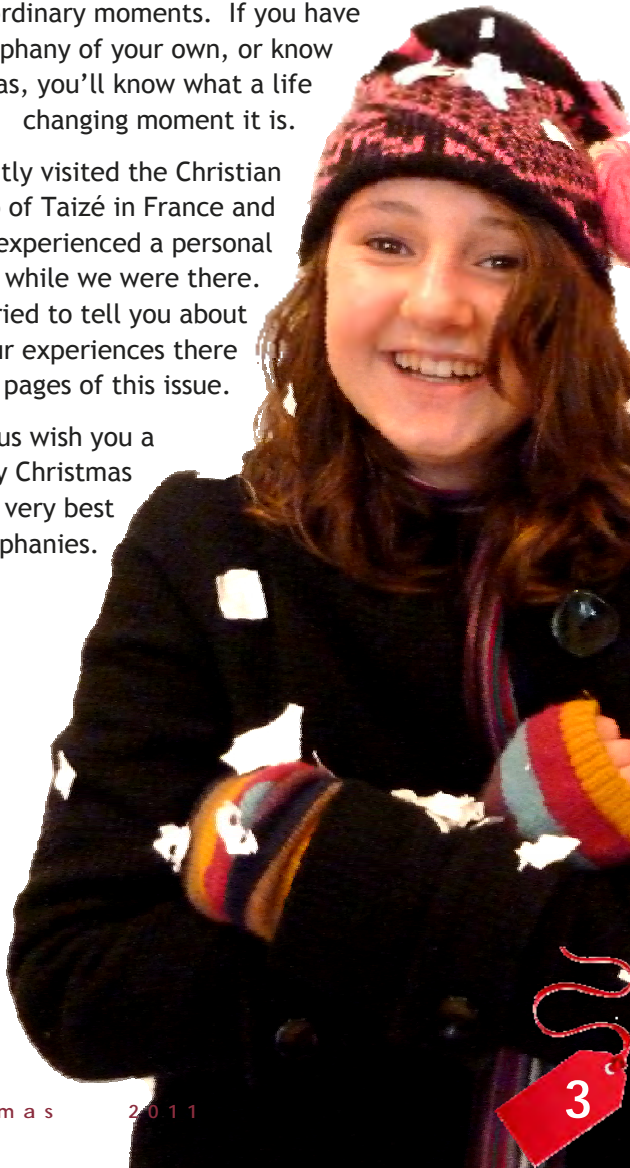
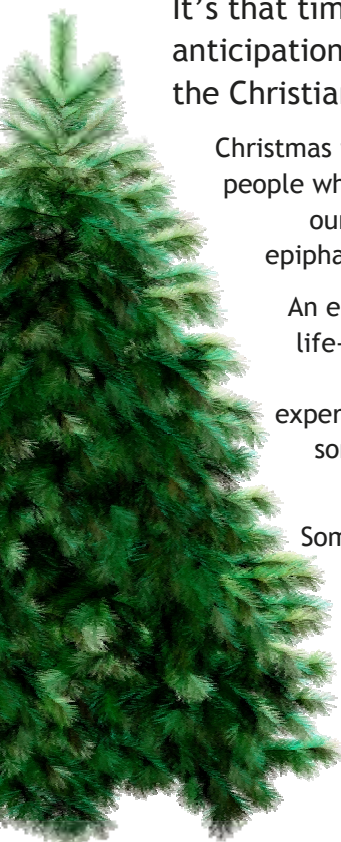
Christmas is not all about the birth of Jesus though, but also about the people who it affected and his wise and humble visitors. This issue of our magazine "epiphany" is all about epiphanies, including the epiphany of the magi which ended their search for the son of God.

An epiphany is a sudden, powerful, and often spiritual or life-changing realisation that people experience in otherwise ordinary moments. If you have experienced an epiphany of your own, or know someone who has, you'll know what a life changing moment it is.

Some of us recently visited the Christian youth camp of Taizé in France and many of us experienced a personal epiphany while we were there.

We've tried to tell you about Taizé and our experiences there in the pages of this issue.

So let us wish you a most merry Christmas and the very best of epiphanies.



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the Magi**

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Ask Evangeline

plus **Chanting,
Films, Reviews, Puzzles**
and much more!



Taizé: like

This summer, several of us visited the monastic youth camp at Taizé in France. It's a fantastic place — like nothing else — so we wanted to tell you a bit about our experience there.

To start with, here are our top ten facts:

Taizé is an ecumenical community in rural Burgundy in France, half way between Dijon and Lyon.

It was set up by Roger Schutz, a Swiss Protestant theologian who went there in 1940 to establish a monastery and became known as Brother Roger.

It is now home to around 100 Brothers who live and worship there, providing a pilgrimage centre for young people aged 16 to 20 from all over the world.

The church fits over 5,000 people.

The first Brothers took life-vows in 1949.



«Dans l'espérance, nous avons comme une ancre de notre âme.» He 6: 19
"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul."
Heb 6: 19
"La esperanza es como un ancla firme para nuestra alma." Heb 6: 19
"In der Hoffnung haben wir einen sicheren Anker der Seele." Hebr 6, 19
"Nella speranza noi abbiamo come un'ancora della nostra anima." Eb 6:19

nothing else



Young people have been welcomed there since 1958.

About 100,000 people do a Taizé pilgrimage annually.

The site includes a camping area with around 100 large 12-person tents for groups.

Worship is very meditative with a great emphasis on chanting, prayer and silent reflection.



There are services three times a day - early morning before breakfast; just before lunch; and straight after dinner.



Meeting the fantastic Brother

We met the fantastic Brother Maxime while we were at Taizé and just had to get him to tell us about himself...

Favourite music?

While I'm writing emails I listen to music from north-east Brazil. I travelled there and was given many Brazilian CDs.

I like Amy Winehouse too, but she was so stupid!

Languages?

I can survive in lots of languages! And I speak a bit of eight languages - at least enough to get by!

English, German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Romanian, Catalan,

Arabic: Latin languages

mainly. But I

can't write in

many languages.

Favourite socks?

No! - I take the first pair I find in the morning, I don't choose! Before morning Eucharist, I have to get over many obstacles and I barely remember to put socks on!



Maxime

Why did you become a Taizé Brother?

God led me to it. I was 17 when I first came here for two days. It was such a strong experience. I like it that, at Taizé, we have one foot in monastic life, centred on prayer and meditating the word of God; and the other foot in the world, so that we aren't kept apart from the world and away from society.

It's amazing how many people trek here! They're on holiday and they're very cool, but also very serious at the same time. I like that. It describes well the way that God welcomes us and is really accepting while, at the same time, is asking a lot from us. So our relationship with God must be serious and cool at the same time. This balance is what I like in Taizé.

When do you get to see your family?

Next Sunday! Eight of my family are coming to stay for the week. It's always hard when someone says they want to be a Taizé Brother but, after a while, it becomes easier. Our families come here to see us and I think that lots of them see that the way that we worship here means that we don't want our commitment to this community to destroy our family ties.

Do you miss sex?

No! I do a lot of sport now to use up my energy: rollerblading, running and rock climbing. We're all in the same situation: you look to another life, other than sexuality, to release this energy. We do this within ourselves. We all want to be faithful. We always have so much energy, it's like sitting on a volcano that's ready to erupt but, at the same time, we pacify this energy with prayer and turn it into a way to do something beautiful.

Have your views changed since you became a Brother?

I see that the world is more complicated than I thought before and I've found that there is really no reason to be angry. I was judging people, finding them not very courageous or could do more; but, looking back, I discovered things were more complicated than I'd thought. Now I'm more humble, I hope. It's normal to be full of fire when you're young but, as you grow older, you understand that the fire must be used carefully. If you are quiet, you need to be very quiet.



Why is it that so many - with prayers three times a day, no to only an hour of

It is my personal opinion that teenagers seem to be perceived as a sort of bizarre phenomenon that will never be understood by the outside world. For many people, teenagers are just the stereo-type hoodies, smokers, drinkers and drug takers who scare little old ladies to death when they're made to pass them in the street; not typical church-goers.

Though there are a very small handful of teenagers genuinely like this, few are like that for their entire teenage life and the vast majority are nothing like how the rest of society categorises them. What many

people appear to forget is that teenagers are real people, just as diverse as anyone over the age of 19 or under the age of 13 and not some kind of alien sub-species.

So it is not surprising that teenagers enjoy Taizé in the same way as anyone else. The big question is if young people are so enthusiastic about Taizé, why aren't they so keen when it comes to sitting in church on a Sunday?

*Taizé is
brimming with
exciting young
people from all
over the world*

I believe a huge factor in what attracts teenagers to Taizé is the presence of other people their own age. Churches at home tend to

consist of people of an older generation, so going there once a week just doesn't feel appropriate for them. In contrast,

teenagers prefer Taizé Internet access, and religious chanting - regular church a week?

Taizé is brimming with exciting younger people from all over the world, where they feel like they can really fit in and aren't an outsider in it all. I think that this feeling of belonging is central to being comfortable and happy in any place.

Another aspect of Taizé that makes teenagers sit up and listen, is the fact it's so different from school. It's a very relaxed, calming environment with no pressure to do anything. Many teenagers find they're being told what to do all the time; either by parent or teachers, when really they're yearning for independence, to be listened to and taken seriously. I think this does happen at Taizé. It's a great place to de-stress and appreciate all the different and interesting people around you.

*Taizé provides
an alternative
window into
Christianity*

Of course, a week without your parents is bliss if you're a teenager. It gives you a real chance at being yourself! Also, it's a holiday for a lot of people, and where better to go than the beautiful, sunny French countryside?

The contrast to church is obviously really important, and many teenagers will simply appreciate Taizé for being refreshing and different. It isn't really something you could associate with church. Taizé provides an alternative window into Christianity, meaning that teenagers feel they can connect with their spirituality in a more modern and interesting approach to religion. This, I feel, is what makes Taizé really special.

Go there if you can!

For information about going to Taizé with your group, see www.taize.fr/en



A global community



Taizé is a special sort of place that manages at once to combine the spirit of common endeavour with an immense diversity of people. During the course of your short stay, it's possible to talk to people from all corners of the world, perhaps with vastly different life experiences to your own.

The absence of boundaries can turn ordinary activities – like queuing for lunch – into incredibly surprises that opens your eyes to new ways of thinking. In my group alone, there were five different nationalities among the twelve of us, highlighting the global nature of this community.

We heard the day's gospel readings in multiple languages, sung chants in different tongues, all in one service, imprinting on us a feeling of our smallness in the world. While this can be a shock to the system on arrival, the idea of this little global village nestled in the French countryside soon becomes normality.

Later on in the week, this idea is driven home with great force when one of the Brothers gives a speech, in his native French of course, to a crowd of nearly five thousand all crammed into church after evening prayers waiting eagerly to hear what he has to say. The Brother's serene tones begin, then every few lines, all at once the silence would be broken by an explosion of sound as his words are translated into up to a hundred languages for the truly international congregation. Like the Disciples speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost! The effect is mind-blowing: the world could not feel so huge in such a small place anywhere else.

the joy of silence

I used to think silence was boring. It's what teachers insist you need to be during a chemistry test on infrared spectroscopy or something you do when you sit opposite somebody that you don't know on the 5:42 train from Middlesbrough. At Taizé, however, I learnt that it is actually something powerful and unique...

One afternoon at Taizé, I decided to walk away from all the noise and visit 'The Source', an area specially allocated for silence. Having never successfully meditated before, I was keen to see if it actually worked. There are lush trees of all varieties and long grass surrounding a leafy swan graced-lake at The Source, so if I couldn't meditate there, I couldn't meditate anywhere. So, I copied what other people seemed to be doing and sat under a tree, closed my eyes and listened hard.

All I could hear was the simple sound of a breeze blowing through leaves. Initially, this didn't seem terribly exciting. My mind wandered and I thought about all the other things that I could be doing such as getting an early space in the lunch queue or making a musical instrument out of polyethylene terephthalate bottles.

However, after a while the attraction of these distractions seemed to diminish and all of my attention was focused on what I could hear.

There was not an audible human voice to be heard, only the rhythm of nature and my own breathing. As far as I was aware, I was the only person on Earth. The worries of life seemed so distant and my pulse slowed. My heart was ready to hear God's words.



Silence spoke to me. It was so amazingly simple and unusual that it was overwhelmingly powerful. For that afternoon I forgot about the barriers of shame and worry so that the light of Christ was able to reach and heal me as it never had before. I had an epiphany: my big problems were so small and trivial relative to

the amount of worry they caused me. It doesn't matter if I can't solve a 'Rubik's Cube'. There was no need to worry, as my life is actually pretty good.

beyond understanding?

Brother Maxime talked about many new ideas that we may not have considered before. There is one thing in particular that he taught us, which has made a big difference for me.

Many people can look at everything in life and yearn desperately to understand it all. They often imagine that one of the main benefits of time passing is that you will come out the other end knowing more than you started with and that the knowledge you gain will make you more content.

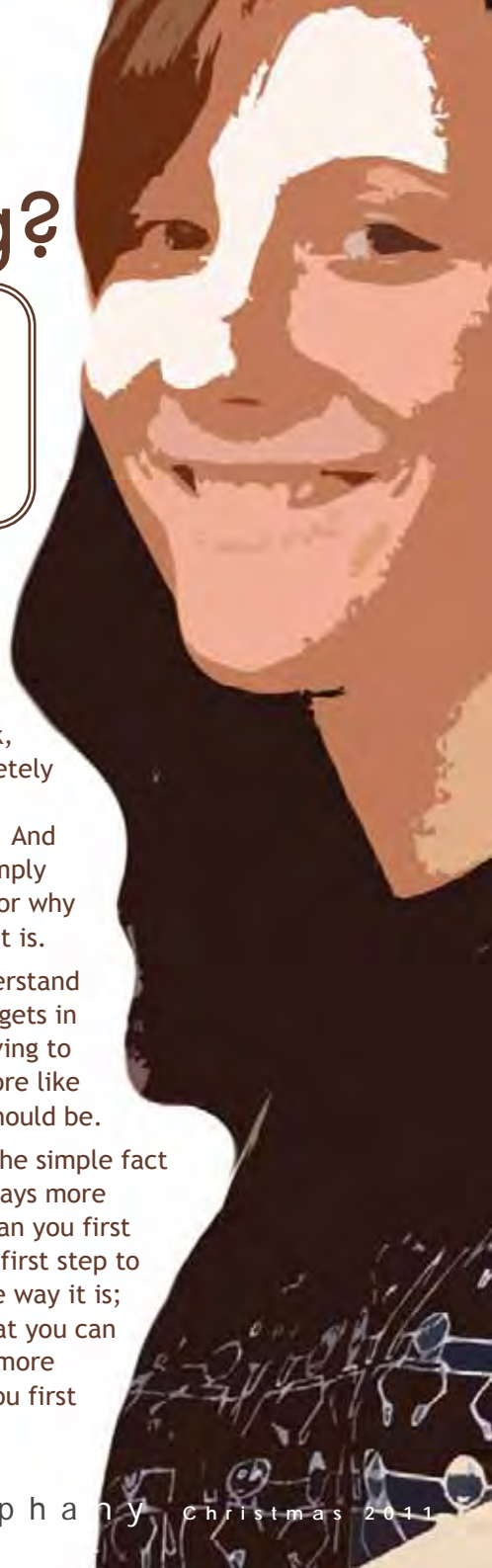
During our stay in Taizé, Brother Maxime explained where we were going wrong and taught us one of the most important things there is to understand: that life is nearly always more complicated than you first thought.

Since being at Taizé, I see this everywhere I look, and realise the importance of stopping myself from worrying about every ignorance and avoiding the impossible search for every answer in life where, all too often, there is none.

The truth is that perhaps there are more things in this world than we like to think, that are completely beyond our understanding. And often, there simply isn't a reason for why life is the way it is.

Striving to understand why things are gets in the way of striving to make things more like the way they should be.

Remembering the simple fact that 'life is always more complicated than you first thought' is the first step to accepting it the way it is; and through that you can only come out more content than you first were.



Chanting

I love chanting so much that one night I did it for seven hours without stopping (from evening prayer until 3am)!

Chanting is the earliest known form of singing.

If you take care of your voice (don't smoke or drink often) and learn to sing properly, you can chant as much as you want without getting hoarse.

Less than 2% of the population is tone deaf, so don't say you can't chant because 98% of people can without getting hoarse.

The Gregorian chant was first taught at the Schola Cantorum in Rome which was founded in 590AD and is still the sacred music of the Catholic Church.

A normal person should be able to sing any chant at some pitch as humans can sing an average of two and a half octaves without straining and I couldn't find any chants that exceeded this number of octaves.

When you chant the A above middle C, the vocal folds are vibrating at 440 times per second. The fastest a hummingbird can flap its wings is near 90 flaps per second!

Chanting in a group gives a richer tone as no two people in the world have the same singing voice.

There's no need to be self-conscious when you chant as you hear your voice differently to how other people around you hear it.

Shoe

Once upon a time, at Shoe Terrace, there lived two shoes called Sally and Simon. One day they had a huge argument.

Sally got so annoyed that she stormed



!"£%^&*"\$£\$%*!"

...and you too!



At the hospital, Sally was really upset as she missed Simon and everything the nurse did didn't make her feel better.

One being



Is that any better?

Simon decided to visit Sally at the hospital and each told the other about their dream.



You didn't...?

Me too...!

Story

played with Simon, and away, but...

...she tripped over her laces and was rushed to Shoe Hospital.

Huh!

OW!

one night, Sally dreamt about not being able to live without Simon...

...while, back at Shoe Terrace, Simon had a similar dream about not being able to live without Sally.




It was this epiphany that made Sally and Simon realise how much they loved and needed each other. They quickly made up and they never argued again.

Sweet!



how my faith changed

Before I went to Taizé, I was one of those teenagers who had lost faith in religion. I was finding it hard to apply Christianity to my life. Like many other teenagers my age, I felt that church was pointless and wasn't delivering the message of God in a way that meant anything to me.

A young man with short brown hair and glasses is shown in profile, looking down at a blue ukulele he is playing. He is wearing a green t-shirt with a red and white graphic. The background is a bright, slightly blurred outdoor setting.

However Taizé was like a breath of fresh air that has re-engaged me with God and Christianity. I spoke to a Brother about my feelings of desperation with religion and he helped me to understand that, even if I felt like that now, God will guide me back to faith when I need it most.

I needed Taizé. I needed the quiet reflection time, I needed to meet other Christians and I really needed the perspective on life that Taizé gave me.

Having been there, I feel my faith has been renewed: I believe again. I really recommend this pilgrimage to any teenager who is feeling that church isn't the best place to celebrate their religion, because Taizé really revives the meaning of the church, not as a place but as a community.

Understand don't hate

my epiphany

My epiphany came to me - where else? - in Taizé, when one of the Brothers told us “Do not hate, understand”. Ever since hearing it for the first time, a moment that switched something on inside me, I’ve employed it regularly in day-to-day life and I think it’s helping me change into a better person. I think if the whole world used this message, it would be a better place too.

Let me start with an example we could all pick... I know someone who is spoiled, homophobic, loud, stupid, annoying... I’ll stop there... Anyway, if I were inclined to hate anyone, it would be her. However, not too long ago, I stopped myself and attempted not to hate but to understand her.

First, why is she spoiled? Well, she is very rich and evidently it is her parents who have spoiled her. However, they would have done that out of love, surely? So I understand that. Then, she’s homophobic. There are many reasons that could be behind this, of course. She could have been brought up to think that. She could have been bullied and called ‘gay’ herself, so now resents it. She could actually be gay herself and is scared of how she feels. She could be genuinely afraid of something she deems “unnatural”. I don’t know, but deep down she will have some reason for feeling this way. Maybe I should pity that.

Anyway the point is that I don’t hate her anymore. No, we will never be good friends; but I DO NOT HATE her. I UNDERSTAND her.

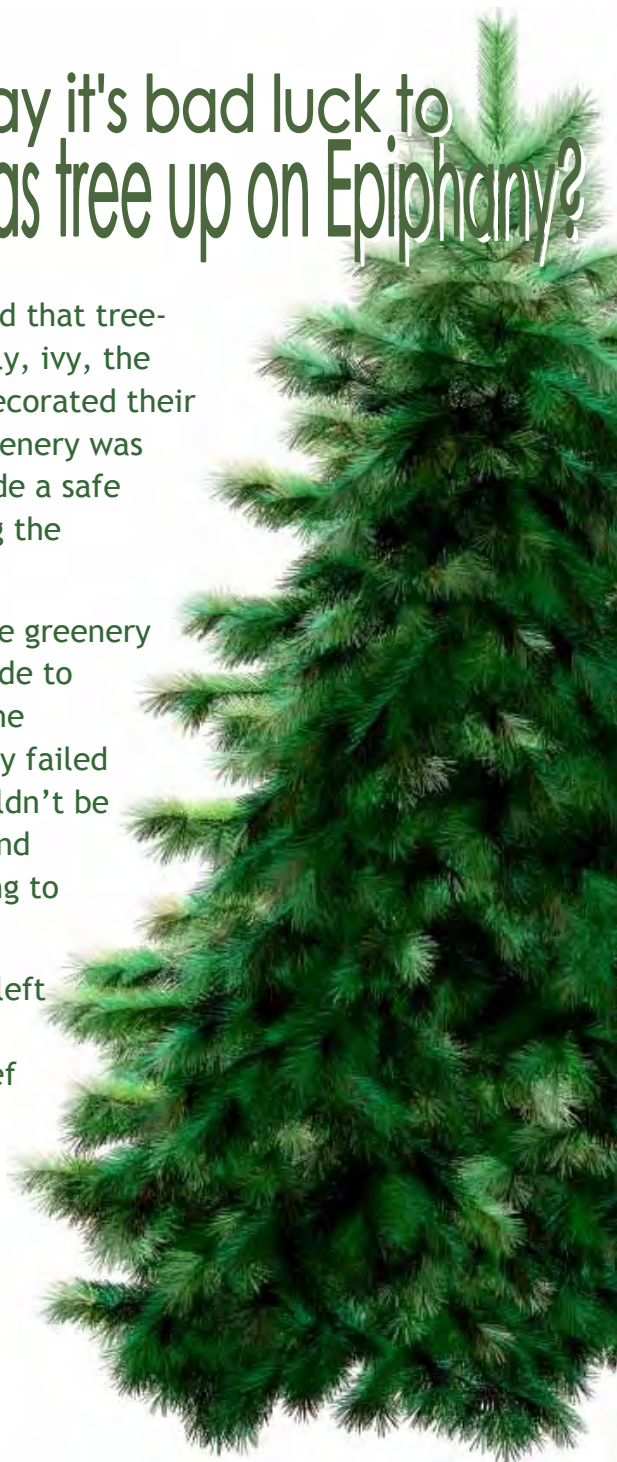
This message should be spread wider, because it actually works. Lack of hate leaves room for understanding, which makes better people and thus makes better societies. It’s easy to say “without hate the world would be a better place” but I’ve taken that one step further and, I believe, made it accomplishable. So I implore you to see reason and join me in my quest. Be enlightened, not blind. Be prepared to listen, not fight. UNDERSTAND, DON’T HATE.

Why do people say it's bad luck to leave your Christmas tree up on Epiphany?

A long time ago, people believed that tree-spirits lived in the greenery (holly, ivy, the Christmas tree etc) that they decorated their homes with. The decorative greenery was brought into the house to provide a safe haven for the tree-spirits during the unforgiving midwinter days.

Once this season was over, the greenery had to be returned back outside to release the tree-spirits into the countryside once again. If they failed to do this the vegetation wouldn't be able to start growing again; and spring wouldn't return, leading to an agricultural disaster.

It was also thought that, if you left the greenery in the house, the tree-spirits would cause mischief in the house until they were released. Today people still feel it's bad luck leaving the Christmas decorations up after epiphany. It's funny how old superstitions still impact the lives we live!



The coming of the Magi

What happened at that first Epiphany, when the magi came to the baby Jesus? Adam has imagined their diary - here are some extracts...

The star was a true sight for an astrologer's eyes. It sprang from nowhere, and we, the Magi, the wise men of Persia, knew it was the sign we had been waiting for. Mesopotamian prophet Balaam of old had foretold that the coming of a star would signify the rise of the Messiah for Israel. Seeing this star, we gathered a group of about 100 Magi, plus soldiers and headed towards it.

A year or so of arduous travelling by foot later, we arrived at Jerusalem, but lost sight of the star. We Magi are astrologers, and astrology is a highly regarded science, so we went to Herod, king of the Jews, and enquired after the Messiah. His eyes widened at the thought of a competitor, so he requested we keep him informed.

We camped just outside Jerusalem that night, when one of our number received a prophetic dream, warning us not to return to Herod, as he was jealous of the Messiah, and wanted rid of him.

We made the six mile hop to Bethlehem by midday and eventually found the babe and parents in a tiny house in the outskirts. I saw the Messiah myself - he was almost two years old. We gave him three gifts - Gold, as befits a king; frankincense for the priest; and myrrh for his death. I felt that here, in this stuffy, unclean room, was the future. For here was the Messiah.

There are some classic poems about the journey of the Magi. We've put some of them up on our website—take a look at: www.our-epiphany.org.uk

faith in Films

Have you seen how often faith appears in films?
Here are just some of the examples we've seen:

Chronicles of Narnia

The adventures of Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy may not seem religious but actually each character has a symbolic representation for every aspect of religion...

Angels and Demons

Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon works to solve a murder and prevent a terrorist act against the Vatican...

Bruce Almighty

Bruce Nolan is a fairly normal man who lives in America. He complains about God too much and so God gives Bruce all his powers and tells him he can do what he likes but not to mess with free will...

Evan Almighty

God contacts newly elected American Congressman, Evan Baxter, and tells him to build an Ark in preparation for a great flood...

Something on your mind...?

Ask Evangeline



I feel stupid. In maths, I don't understand a lot of things and I'm scared about asking my teacher because she is really scary. We aren't allowed to talk during class, so I don't get a chance to ask my friends. Sometimes I copy my friends work but, even though I have the right answers, I don't know how to get them. I have GCSEs coming up and it's important I know how to get full marks because I can't copy or ask for help in the exam. I'm constantly not doing the homework — I pretend I haven't got any because I don't know how to do it.

Evangeline suggests:

Don't feel stupid! It's perfectly fine to be stuck on a piece of work: everyone gets stuck sometimes! But, you're right, it is important to know how to work things out. Your teacher may be scary but it's her job to help you: she won't judge you for asking for some extra help. Why not get someone at home to ring the school and talk to her? With your homework, a parent or carer will be happy to help. If they can't, ring a friend and ask them for help or even better go and speak to a teacher at break or lunch.

I can't keep on top of things! I have so much homework its unreal! I am always up till 2 o'clock in the morning and I still don't get it all done. I've no time to do anything and I'm worried I won't get to hang out with my friends or see family. I've no time for lie-ins because my mum wants me to help around the house and I have a Saturday job. It's like my teachers don't care. What should I do?



Evangeline suggests:

Working yourself too hard can be stressful especially when you don't want to let anyone down. My advice is calm down; make a plan for each week include your homework and plenty of sleep. You should not do more than 2 hours work at a time. Take half an hour's break talking to friends or watching the TV. Why not suggest to your mum you do fewer jobs so you can have more free time. Make sure you make it clear you know she's busy too and you'll help out when you can but homework is more important. Hope this helps!

guess the Language



Whilst we were in Taizé, it was impossible not to feel in touch with the rest of the world. One of the ways the global community is obvious is the rainbow of different tongues you hear all the time, regardless of what you're doing. Test yourself with this Guess the Language quiz to see how well you can identify languages...

1

Veselé Vánoce is how to wish someone a happy Christmas in which language?

- a) French b) Hungarian c) Czech d) Polish

2

If you said **Desejo-lhe umas boas férias!** to someone, you'd be saying you hoped they have a good holiday - but which language is it?

- a) Italian b) Catalan c) French d) Portuguese

3

Нова Година refers to the "New year" where?

- a) Azerbaijan b) Serbia c) Poland d) Moldova

4

If someone said **Goed Luch in het nieuwe jaar** to you, they'd be wishing you good luck in the New Year. In which language?

- a) Dutch b) Welsh c) German d) Irish

5

"Epiphany" in this language is **Trettondagen**. Which is it?

- a) Swedish b) Dutch c) Luxembourgish (yes, that is a real language!)
d) German

6

Kerskaartjies are "Christmas cards" in which language?

- a) German b) Afrikaans c) Dutch d) Danish

7

In which language does **Noël sous la neige** mean

a "white Christmas"? a) Catalan b) French c) Spanish d) Italian

The Answers:

1 Czech, 2 Portuguese, 3 Serbia, 4 Dutch, 5 Swedish, 6 Afrikaans, 7 French

hope from tragedy



In Norway last July, Anders Behring Breivik, a deranged and embittered extremist attacked a youth camp, killing 69 defenceless young people. The attack horrified the people of Norway and the rest of the world. This September, a party of youth leaders visited us in Hexham and we talked to them about life in Norway and about the attack.

There is a strong Christian tradition in Norway. 80% of people are members of the Church of Norway and two thirds of teenagers get confirmed.

At Christmas, the major day of celebration is Christmas Eve. People go to church at 4pm, then have their Christmas celebration meal at 5. It's traditional to eat lamb though that's now seen as old fashioned and more people are eating turkey.

Everyone was very sad about the attack at the summer camp on the island of Utøya. Norway is such a small country and, we thought, such a safe place. The government said we don't want revenge: we want to fight with peace. It made a big impression that so many countries tried to help. The Church was very important for people at this time, too: people would come and light a candle.

It has become a time of great hope. It's strange that such a tragic event could bring people together so much. Churches have been opened (in Sweden too) so that people could come to light candles and leave flowers. It has united the nation. People turned to the church for support and it has raised awareness of real values. It has been great to get support from around the world and for their prayers.

word search

Can you find all the words we've listed here that describe what is meant by an epiphany or by having an epiphany?

CHANGE	FIND	MEANING
COMPLETION	GRASP	REALITY
COMPREHEND	INTERPRET	SOLVING
DISCOVER	LEARN	TRUTH
EXPERIENCE	MANIFESTATION	WHOLE



BONUS: Can you also find the name of the country that Taizé is located in (6 letters long)

arrow word

Fill in every blank space in the grid by writing the answers to the clues, one letter per box, in the direction of the arrows.

Bad King ↓	Gospel Epiphany found in ↘		Month of Epiphany ↓	Night of feasting (number) ↓		Epiphany marks the end of this ↓	Three _____ men ↓	They brought three gifts ↓	
								Not day but _____ ↓	
	The Magi's first gift ↓		It led the Magi to Jesus ↓						
						Jesus was called this by some ↘			
						Bethlehem is capital of this ↓			Common symbol of Epiphany ↓
							Jesus' mum ↓		
The Magi's third gift ↘									
								Carol: "___ he comes" ↓	
He came as saviour →									
Shepherd brought these →									

Stuck? Find the answers on page 27

Reviews

Becoming Jane



Our rating:

Although it can be fairly boring in places, the film tells the truly endearing story of Jane Austen (Anne Hathaway) and her struggle with life and lost loves. James Mcavoy gives an excellent portrayal of Jane's very own Mr Darcy, Tom Lefroy. Remember your box of tissues for the tear-jerking twist at the end... A must see for *Pride and Prejudice* fans!



Ceremonials

by Florence + the Machine

Our rating:

With the highly anticipated follow up to the acclaimed debut 'Lungs', Brit award winner Florence is back with her machine for her sophomore album 'Ceremonials'. This album hits harder and stronger than previous efforts and there is a big US influence on the album. "The water gave to me" is spine-tingling.

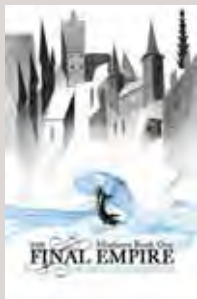


The Final Empire

by Brandon Sanderson

Our rating:

Truly an epic, this book has anything and everything you could possibly want: engaging main characters, awe-inspiring fantasy, daring fights, ingenious plans, romance and a perfectly paced plotline filed to the brim with twists and danger to keep any reader hooked. Sanderson has a way of making his world and characters completely believable and fabulously imaginative.



The Only Way is Essex

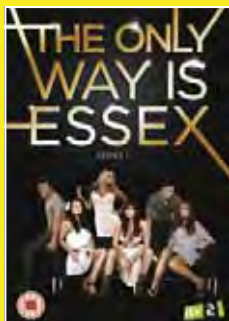
(the boxed set)



Our rating:

'Shut uppp!' the show that has the whole nation talking. 't.o.w.i.e' as it's known to fans is un-missable. The docu-soap even won the 'TV audience award' at this year's BAFTA's.

Yes the staged antics of the cast won't appeal to everyone; but believe us when we say there is never a dull moment in Essex!



at the back

Credits

epiphany

is published four times a year by
PRESS THIS at Hexham Abbey, Hexham,
Northumberland, NE46 3NB

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Puzzle answers

Here are the answers to the page
24/25 puzzles:

word search

The bonus word you were looking
for, the country where Taizé is
located in, is... FRANCE

arrow word

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
H	M	A	T	F	H	C	H																	A
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