



REFLECTION

The name Bethlehem comes from two Hebrew words and it means house (*beth*) of bread (*lehem*). We can think of our churches, whatever their locations, as 'bethlehems'. Within their walls Christ lives in a special way as Emmanuel in the midst of His people: always there when two or three gather in His name, there in the person of the priest, there in the sacramental actions, nourishing generation after generation with His Word, feeding them with the Living Bread of His Body, and providing them, through good times and bad, with an effective reminder of His abiding presence in their midst in the reserved Blessed Sacrament.

STEWARSHIP: The three kings in today's Gospel traveled a great distance at considerable cost to offer their richest gifts to the Infant Jesus. How far will I go and what will I offer to do homage to this newborn King and Savior?

C. B. Moss

"WE do not believe that God has added, or ever will add, anything to His revelation in His Son. But we can now see many things in that revelation which could not be seen by those who first received it. Each generation of Christians, and each people to which the Christian Gospel is preached, makes its own contribution to the understanding of the riches of Jesus Christ.

READINGS FOR THE FEAST THE BAPTISM of the LORD

13 JAN '19

Is. 40:1-5, 9-11: The prophet Isaiah announces that Israel's time of sorrow is coming to an end. It is now time to rejoice because the Lord is coming in triumph. A pathway must be prepared in the wilderness. The glory of the Lord will be visible to all.

Ti. 2:11-14; 3:4-7: Paul's letter to Titus, in speaking of 'the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior', seems to echo a theme from the First Reading.

Lk. 3:15-16, 21-22: Jesus is baptized in the river Jordan by John the Baptist. After His baptism, while Jesus is at prayer, the Holy Spirit descends in visible form and the Father identifies Jesus as His Son, on whom His favor rests.

St. Jerome

"Christians are made, not born."

MONTHLY INTENETION FOR JANUARY:

Young People and the Example of Mary. That young people, especially in Latin America, follow the example of Mary and respond to the call of the Lord to communicate the joy of the Gospel to the world.

ICON AT THE DOOR THE MAGI

This beautiful 13th century masterpiece was painted by Italian artist Giotto for the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua. During this time period, Western iconography was still heavily influenced by Byzantine iconography, clearly seen from many of its details.

The Magi come bearing gifts and worshiping the newborn Christ, as angels receive their three gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The star appears comet-like in the sky.

The Triple Meaning of the Epiphany

The vast majority of Catholics as well as Christians of other faith traditions have come to view the Feast of the Epiphany as a celebration of the visit to the Christ Child by the Magi, or Three Wise Men, as some of our traditional English translations have come to call them. The coming of the Magi to Christ and their presentation of the gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh certainly do have tremendous significance and theological meaning. The gifts themselves are often seen as representative of Christ's nature and life: Gold for Christ the King, frankincense for Christ the Divinity, and myrrh (a rare, fragrant, but very bitter natural resin often used in anointing bodies for burial or mummification rituals in the ancient Near East) for Christ the Sacrifice. Hence, the significance of the coming of the Magi has come to be celebrated in our modern Christian spiritual and liturgical experience as the event of the Feast of the Epiphany. While it is more than appropriate to celebrate this important theological and spiritual event as

part of the Epiphany, the coming of the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem was not what this extremely important feast was originally all about.

The hard calendar date for the Feast of the Epiphany is January 6th, traditionally “the 12th Day of Christmas.” In modern times, the Church moves the liturgical celebration of the Epiphany to the Sunday closest to the 6th. This year, we are blessed that those two dates are one and the same. In the Eastern Church, the Incarnation is celebrated on January 6th, which is also the Feast of the Epiphany. January 6th was the date the Incarnation was originally celebrated in both East and West, we celebrate it on December 25th because of the arguments of the early Christian philosopher and chronographer Sextus Julius Africanus. What is celebrated on January 6th, however, isn’t just a celebration of Christ’s birth, but a celebration of the fact that the Word was revealed to the wider world to have been made flesh.

The word “epiphany” in the Greek means “a manifestation” or a “striking appearance.” Many scholars and Christian theologians believe that the Feast of the Epiphany can also be said to commemorate a Theophany, a vision of God. The Epiphany didn’t originally celebrate the coming of the Magi, although they came to be associated with the feast precisely because their visit to the Christ Child did help reveal the two natures of Christ. The feast celebrates three events which revealed the second person of the Trinity for who he was to the world. The first of these is the Incarnation itself, and we often lose sight of that reality since both religious and secular Western society celebrate Christmas on December 25th, and by the time of the Epiphany, our busy holiday schedules and time away from “normal life” has ended. It is sometimes difficult to imagine in modern culture that the Incarnation is worth a multi-day season of celebration, but the Church wisely reminds us of how Christ’s birth changed history through the length of our liturgical Christmas observance.

The second manifestation of Christ’s divinity and of the saving work of the Godhead through Him that has traditionally been celebrated as part of the Feast of the Epiphany is the Baptism of the Lord. Today, we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord as a feast of its own separate from the Epiphany, and it both concludes the Christmas season and begins Ordinary Time. However, the ancient Church celebrated the Lord’s Baptism as part of the Epiphany because the Baptism of Christ was yet another occasion where Jesus’ status as Messiah and Lord and as the Second Person of the Trinity was affirmed when the voice of the Father was heard declaring Christ’s Divine Sonship and the dove of the Holy Spirit descended from Heaven (cf. Matthew 3:13-17). Many Eastern Christians believe that this was the very first step on the road to Calvary, and because the Trinity was revealed so clearly in the events of the Jordan, and it was an Epiphany-a manifestation of God-so the Lord’s Baptism remains a part of Epiphany celebrations in the Eastern Church.

The final event that has traditionally been celebrated as one where Christ “made Himself known” in a Divine Epiphany is the Wedding at Cana. It was here where Jesus, acting upon a request from His Mother, turned water into wine for the wedding guests. It was Christ’s first miracle, and the hence the first instance where people in the community Jesus knew in His own day might get the hint that He is Messiah and Lord-the event was itself an Epiphany and Theophany-a manifestation of God in Christ Jesus. What happened at the Wedding at Cana was something that was done at Mary’s insistence, but at which Jesus made Himself known after telling her “my hour is not yet come,” but at which the best wine was given last, that given by Christ, where He “manifested his glory.” (cf. John 2:1-11)

What the Epiphany celebrates are those times—the Incarnation, the Baptism of the Lord, the Wedding at Cana, and even in modern times the gifts of the Magi, where the Divinity of Christ, who humbled Himself to share in our humanity, was made manifest and revealed to humanity in a very special way. Epiphany really celebrates the revelation that in all of these things “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, full of grace and truth.” (cf. John 1:14)



THREE KINGS

The three Kings, or Magi, are mentioned only in the Gospel of Matthew. Few details are given about these men in the Bible, and most of our ideas about them actually come from tradition or speculation. Scripture does not say how many wise men there were, but it is generally assumed there were three since they brought three gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The three Kings recognized Jesus Christ as the Messiah while He was still a child, and traveled thousands of miles to worship Him. They doggedly followed a star which led them to Jesus. By the time they met Jesus, He was in a house and was a child, not an infant, implying they arrived a year or more after His birth.

Three Gifts From Three Kings

The gifts of the wise men symbolize Christ's identity and mission: gold for a king, incense for God, and myrrh used to anoint the dead. Ironically, the Gospel of John states that Nicodemus brought a mixture of 75 pounds of aloe and myrrh to anoint Jesus' body after the crucifixion. God honored the wise men by warning them in a dream to go home by another route and not to report back to King Herod. Some Bible scholars think Joseph and Mary sold the wise men's gifts to pay for their trip to Egypt to escape Herod's persecution.

Strengths of the Three Kings

The Three Kings were among the wisest men of their time. Discovering that the Messiah was to be born, they organized an expedition to find Him, following a star that led them to Bethlehem. Despite their culture and religion in a foreign land, they accepted Jesus as their Savior.

Life Lessons

When we seek God with sincere determination, we will find Him. He is not hiding from us but wants to have an intimate relationship with each of us.

These wise men paid Jesus the kind of respect only God deserves, bowing before Him and worshiping Him. Jesus is not just a great teacher or admirable person as many people say today, but the Son of the Living God.

After the Three Kings met Jesus, they did not go back the way they came. When we get to know Jesus Christ, we are changed forever and cannot go back to our old life.

Hometown

Matthew says only that these visitors came from "the east." Scholars have speculated that they came from Persia, Arabia, or even India.

Names of the Three Kings

Matthew reveals nothing of these visitors' ancestry. Over the centuries, legend has assigned them names: Gaspar, or Casper; Melchior, and Balthasar. Balthasar has a Persian sound. If indeed these men were scholars from Persia, they would have been familiar with Daniel's prophecy about the Messiah or "Anointed One." (Daniel 9:24-27).

References to the Three Kings in the Bible

Matthew 2:1-12.

Occupation

The designation "Magi" refers to a Persian religious caste, but when this Gospel was written, the term was loosely used for astrologers, seers, and fortunetellers. Matthew does not call them kings; that title was used later, in legends. About 200 A.D., nonbiblical sources started calling them kings, perhaps because of a prophecy in Psalm 72:11: "May all kings bow down to Him and all nations serve Him." Because they followed a star, they may have been royal astronomers, advisers to kings.

Key Verses

Matthew 2:1-2

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him."

Matthew 2:11

On coming to the house, they saw the child with His mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped Him. Then they opened their treasures and presented Him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.

Matthew 2:12

And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

Key Takeaways

- The Magi were both real and symbolic. As real men, they confirmed ancient prophecies about Jesus being the Messiah, and as symbols they showed that He came to save all people, rich and poor, learned or unschooled, from anywhere in the world. These wealthy travelers were on the opposite end of the social and economic scale as the shepherds who had visited Jesus right after His birth.
- Many characters in Scripture go unnamed. They all point to Jesus Christ, the manifestation of God's love for the human race. The Bible is a book about Jesus.
- There is a message in the title "Wise Men." Wise people acknowledge their need for a Savior and seek to find Him. Foolish people reject Jesus and even seek to destroy Him.

WHEN DOES CHRISTMAS SEASON END?

Dec. 25 Marks the Beginning, Not the End, of the Christmas Season

We have been observing it throughout this past week. Heavily decorated homes have gone dark, gaily decorated trees are lying at the end of driveways depressingly wilted. The same is being repeated on city streets and shopping centers the decorations are coming down, too.

The After-Christmas sales are booming and the Return lines wind round and round the stores as folks come to exchange their unwanted Christmas presents.

For many, the Christmas season ends on December 26.

For faithful Catholics, the Christmas season begins at midnight on December 24 and continues well into January. While the rest of the world is winding down their Christmas celebrations, we're just gearing up for ours.

As stated last week we start with Christmas Octave. Since the eighth century, the Church has observed octaves – eight days of celebration following a feast or solemnity. Christmas has its own octave, and so does Easter. For Christmas, the octave begins on Christmas Day and ends on January 1, the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God.

Both during and after the Octave of Christmas, there are number of feasts to commemorate and celebrate.

December 26 – St. Stephen (the first martyr)

December 27 – The Holy Family

December 28 – Holy Innocents (children murdered by Herod's soldiers in the effort to destroy the Christ Child)

January 1 – Holy Mary, Mother of God

January 3 – The Epiphany of the Lord (visit of the Magi)

January 10 – The Baptism of the Lord

Throughout those days, we hear in the daily readings the stories of the Nativity, but also of the prophecies of Simeon and Anna at the presentation and the finding of Jesus in the temple as well as the initiation of St. John the Baptist's ministry.

The Christmas season is filled with exciting scenes and happenings, all pointing to Jesus as the Christ. They all tell us about the magnificence and mission of the Infant born in Bethlehem that one day would be King.

That's the whole point of Christmas, isn't it?

The reason we have Christmas at all is because we are grateful and filled with joy that the God-Man has come to earth to bring salvation to all of mankind. He is the Christ. That's worth celebrating for a good long time.

According to the Church, the Christmas season officially ends with the Baptism of the Lord, observed this year on January 10. That gives us 17 days to celebrate Christmas, and all of them begin and not end on Christmas Day.

KoC NOVENA FOR LIFE

Taking place on nine consecutive Friday evenings beginning at 6:30 p.m. We are using the USCCB A Novena to Three American Saints for Life. Saints Elizabeth Ann Seaton, Frances Cabrini and John Neumann are powerful witnesses to the Gospel of life, each in their own time. This novena suggests three days of prayer to each of prayer to each of the Saints for the promotion of Life in our country and our Church today.

The period of adoration and prayer will be followed by the celebration of the Mass for those who choose to stay.

Each week a simple handout from the USCCB briefly explain some point of the pro-life debate is supplied at the Friday night adoration and is also attached to the Meanderings.

SAINT OF THE WEEK RAYMOND of PENAFTPRT 1185-1275 7 JAN

Dominican friar, canonist, and associate of Thomas Aquinas. Born near Barcelona, at Villafranca, Spain, he studied and taught at Barcelona for fifteen years. He then journeyed to Bologna, Italy, where he completed his studies in canon law and held a chair at the university from 1218 to 1221. At the request of the bishop of Barcelona, he returned home and served as a canon. In 1222, he entered the Dominicans at Barcelona, authoring for the order the influential manual on canon law for confessors, the *Summa de Casibus Poenitentiae*. He then served as a theologian for Cardinal Abbeville until summoned to Rome in 1229 by Pope Gregory IX (r. 1227-41). Named chaplain and grand penitentiary, he was commanded by the pope to collect and organize the massive body of papal decretals that had accumulated during the previous years. The fruit of his work was the papal bull *Rex Pacificus* (1234) and the papal declaration that only Raymond's collection should be considered authoritative. Offered the see of Tarragona, Raymond declined and chose simply to return home to Spain. Elected general of the Dominicans, he brought reforms to the constitution before retiring in 1240.

From the time he stepped down, Raymond gave himself to the cause of converting Muslims and Jews and so organized a school of Arabic and Hebrew studies. Raymond also suggested to St. Thomas Aquinas that the renowned theologian should write the *Summa Contra Gentiles* to assist missionaries in their efforts among non-Christians. Pope Clement VIII (r. 1592-1605) canonized him in 1601.

PRAYERS

Epiphany Prayers

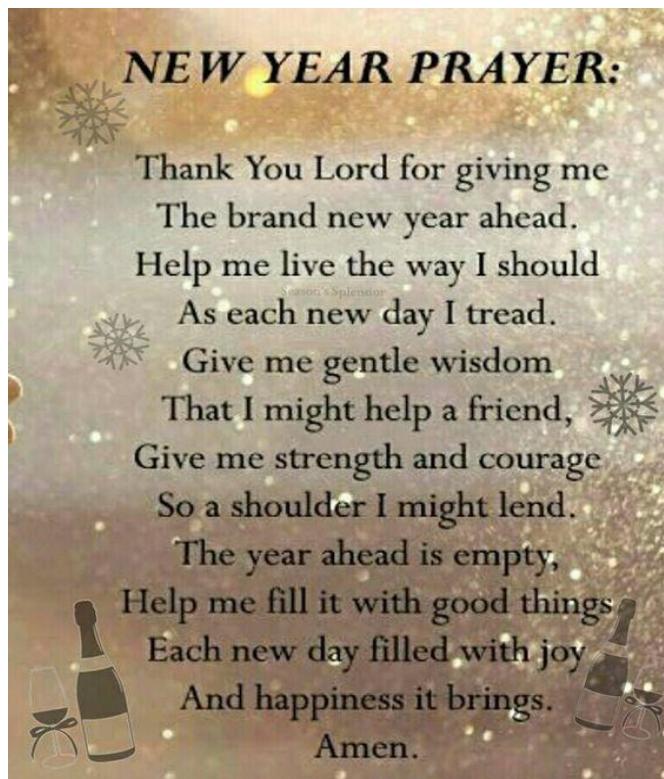
Arise, shine, for the Light of the World has come!

Darkness covers the earth and its people,
but the radiance of God's Light
burns away its shadows,
illuminates the smallest corner,
and heralds in the start
of a new dawn,
where hearts no longer fear,
souls might be set free,
and sister shall follow brother,
nation shall follow nation,
and kings and princes bow down in awe
before the one who comes to reign.

Arise, shine, for the Light of the World has come!

Alleluia!

We are drawn to your feet in worship
Your creation facing its creator
Hearts laid bare by your light
Humbly asking for your mercy.
We come to you as a people in need
of assurance and forgiveness.
We come to you as a people in need
of healing and wholeness.
We come dependent upon your love.
Draw us close.
Enfold us in your arms.
Fill us with your Spirit
that we might reflect your light
within this dark world,
speak your Word with boldness
and draw others to your feet.
We ask this through your dear Son Jesus Christ.
Amen



O Mary,
bright dawn of the new world,
Mother of the living,
to you do we entrust the cause of life
Look down, O Mother,
upon the vast numbers
of babies not allowed to be born,
of the poor whose lives are made difficult,
of men and women
who are victims of brutal violence,
of the elderly and the sick killed
by indifference or out of misguided mercy.

Grant that all who believe in your Son
may proclaim the Gospel of life
with honesty and love
to the people of our time.

Obtain for them the grace
to accept that Gospel
as a gift ever new,
the joy of celebrating it with gratitude
throughout their lives
and the courage to bear witness to it
resolutely, in order to build,
together with all people of good will,
the civilization of truth and love,
to the praise and glory of God,
the Creator and lover of life.

Evangelium Vitae, The Gospel of Life, 105

UP-COMING SCHEDULE

Saturday 5 Jan	Mass 8:30 a.m. Funeral 10:00 Vigil Mass for Epiphany 5:00 p.m.
Sunday 6 Jan	Masses 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m. 11:30 a.m. 5:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m. Brig
Monday 7 Jan	Day Off Mass 8:30 a.m.
Pvt. Confession	9:00 a.m. Brig 7:40 p.m.

Tuesday 8 Jan Mass 8:30 a.m.
 Deanery Meeting 10:00 a.m.
 St. Brides Correctional Facility Christmas Mass 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday 9 Jan Mass 6:30 a.m. 8:30 a.m.
 Confessions 7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.
 Mass Amazing Grays 11:00 a.m.
 PCRS Mass 2:00 p.m.

Thursday 10 Jan Mass 8:30 a.m.
 Doctor Appointment
 First Reconciliation 4:30 p.m.
 Confessions 5:00 p.m.
 Mass 6:30 p.m.

Friday 11 Jan Mass 8:30 a.m.
 Spiritual Direction 11:00 –
 KoC Adoration/Benediction for Life 6:30 p.m.
 Mass 7:30 p.m.

Saturday 12 Jan Mass 8:30 a.m.
 First Reconciliation Prayer Service 10:00 a.m. – 12 Noon
 Confessions 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.
 Vigil Mass Baptism of the Lord 5:00 p.m.

Sunday 13 Jan Baptism of the Lord
 Masses 7:00 a.m., 8:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m. Brig 7:00 p.m.