

## Faith in 5 – Adults Epiphany



1. **Epiphany is the commemoration of Christ's manifestation to the Magi**, that Christ came to save all mankind, and not just the Jews. This feast celebrates how Christ's identity is revealed by the unique gifts the Three Kings presented him.
2. The name Epiphany comes from the Greek epiphaneia, meaning "appearance" or "manifestation". The holiday is also called the Feast of Epiphany, Theophany, or Three Kings' Day. It is celebrated 12 days after the birth of Christ. While the traditional date for the feast is Jan. 6, in the United States the celebration of Epiphany is moved to the Sunday between Jan. 2 and Jan. 8.
3. In the Latin Rite of the Catholic Church, Epiphany celebrates the revelation that Jesus is the Son of God. It focuses primarily on this revelation to the Three Wise Men, but also in his baptism in the Jordan and at the wedding at Cana.

In the Eastern rites of the Catholic Church, Theophany – as Epiphany is known in the East – commemorates the manifestation of Jesus' divinity at his Baptism in the River Jordan. The Baptism of the Lord is celebrated the Sunday after January 6<sup>th</sup>. According to the Third Roman Missal, when the Solemnity of the Epiphany is transferred to Sunday, if this Sunday occurs on January 7 or 8, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on the following Monday. For 2023, the Feast Day is on January 9<sup>th</sup>. This marks the end of the Christmas season.

The Nativity and Epiphany or Theophany are important to consider, as these feast days reveal Jesus as the Son of God, and the significant beginnings of His life and ministry. This points to the meaningful place God should have in us: first in our hearts, in our plans/beginnings and in the new year.

4. St. Matthew's gospel describes the Wise men as Magi, or "magicians," that they came from the East to Jerusalem, and that they had seen a star announcing the birth of the King of the Jews. They were sent by King Herod and were asked to report back to him so that he, too could worship the Child. The Wise Men were miraculously warned in a dream not to return to Herod, as he planned to kill Jesus to preserve his authority. They returned to their homes by an alternative route.



5. St. Matthew's gospel is the only one to mention the Magi, and he does not identify the wise men by name or number. Western tradition believes it to be three kings while Eastern tradition believe it to be 12 in number. The idea of Three Kings and the presence of camels is linked with two Old Testament prophecies. Psalm 72:10-11 reads: "May the kings of Tarshish and the islands bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. May all kings bow before him, all nations serve him."

The names of the Magi are thought to have been derived from a Greek manuscript written in the year 500 in Egypt and translated to Latin. [Western tradition](#) has identified

the Magi as Caspar (also Gaspar), Melchior (also Melchior), and Balthazar (Balthasar).

6. The gifts given to the Christ-child were symbolic gifts from the kingdoms of the Wise Men, who are thought to come from the Arabian Peninsula, where the gifts originated from. Different aspects of Christ's identity are revealed, in the gifts the Three Kings presented him:
  - a. Gold – Kingship of Christ
  - b. Frankincense – Deity of Jesus. As noted in the Old Testament, frankincense was traditionally burned in the temple as an offering to God (Leviticus 2:2). It is both used as a perfume and incense. By bringing this gift, the Magi affirmed Jesus was no ordinary man; he is both fully man and fully God.
  - c. Myrrh – the Death of Jesus. The gift of myrrh foreshadows Jesus' death – myrrh was commonly used as an anointing oil to prepare a body for burial.

Jesus is king, He is God, and, in His marvelous grace, He died, so that we might live. As the Magi actively pursued Jesus, so too should we seek and follow Christ!

**6. Chalking the Door.** As the New Year begins, an old-World tradition and special blessing may take place at the home. This is a great way to dedicate our homes and ourselves to God for the new year. The chalking of the door serves not only as a witness of one's faith, but a reminder that the year and family – all who dwell there - belong to the Lord.

Tradition states the chalking of the door may be done by a priest or the head of the family after Mass of the Epiphany. Some churches may distribute blessed chalk and holy water. The blessing of the home is usually an inscription on the doorway and a short prayer but may be more elaborate and include songs.

With the blessed chalk, the initials of the three Wise Men are inscribed and connected with Crosses, over the inside of the front door (on the lintel, if possible). The year is then written, breaking up the numbers and the year so that they fall on both sides of the initials. It would look like this, for example:

## **20 C+M+B 23**

The "20 " represents the millennium and century, the "C" is for the first Wise Man, Caspar, the "M" for Melchior, the "B" for Balthasar, and the "23" standing for the decade and year. Though the initials represent the Wise Men, it is more popularly believed that the Kings' initials stand for "Christus mansionem benedicat" ("Christ bless this house").

O come, Let Us Adore Him!

**"Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?**

**For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."** Matthew 2:2

This is a free resource! For more information, visit [www.acatholicmomslife.com](http://www.acatholicmomslife.com)