

SUNDAY to SUNDAY

FACT OF FAITH THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

The Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord is the Christian observance that celebrates the public manifestation of the Jesus' kingship to the world when the Magi visit and adore him. In the Gospel of Luke, an angel of the Lord reveals Jesus as "savior," "Messiah," and "Lord" to the shepherds when Jesus is born and laid in a manger (see Luke 2). But the visit of the Magi reveals another facet of Jesus' destiny—his kingship.



In Matthew, chapter two, the Magi announce to King Herod the purpose of their visit. Arriving in Jerusalem to seek the Messiah, they ask Herod, King of Judea, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising

and have come to do him homage." Departing Jerusalem and following the star's movement, they find the child Jesus and his mother, Mary, in Bethlehem. Joyfully, they prostrate themselves before the King and present to the newborn King gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Through this prophetic event, the kingship of Jesus is revealed, while the gifts brought by the Magi prophecy the type of kingship Jesus would have.

While tradition holds that the Magi were three kings or wise men, Scripture is silent on the number of kings who arrived to give homage to the Lord, as well as the background of the Magi (kings, astronomers, etc.), and their names. Nonetheless, while extensive details are absent in Sacred Scriptures, Christian tradition holds that there were three wise men, named Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.

Current tradition in the United States often sees families using chalk to mark the top of a door post of their home with the initials of the three kings and the current Epiphany year. For example, for Epiphany 2017, a family would mark "20 + C + M + B + 17." This chalking of the lintel is generally accompanied by a short ritual blessing of the house.

SAINT OF THE WEEK THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD

Feast—January 9

Jesus fulfilled all the precepts of Jewish religious law perfectly, including the required rituals of purification and

atonement. So when John the Baptist preached a "baptism of repentance," Jesus went to receive Baptism from him not because he needed to repent but "to fulfill all righteousness." In the moment that Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit came down upon him, and the Father spoke from the heavens that he was well pleased with his beloved Son.

By this example, Jesus modeled the simple path through which all people who are baptized become sons and daughters of God. Through the action of the Holy Spirit, the waters of Baptism cleanse a person from all sin and restore his or her relationship with God to its original holiness. Baptism, therefore, transforms one's identity.

Baptism also gives a new purpose to a person's life—being washed in water and renewed by the Holy Spirit, they are joined into the Kingdom of God and given the mission to increase the Kingdom in their lives. Just as Jesus began his public ministry after receiving Baptism, so too are the new children of God commissioned to spread the Good News to all, beginning first with the transformation of their own lives, and then spreading and sharing that joy with others, so as to bring all things under the authority of the Kingdom of God.

Just before his Ascension, Jesus renewed the meaning of Baptism as an entrance to discipleship and even prescribed how it should be administered to others: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Mt 28:19).

