

Catechesis At Home – Radiance!

The Feast of the Epiphany of the Lord – Year B

“Nations shall walk by your light, and kings by your shining radiance.” – Isaiah 60:3

The celebration of the Epiphany of the Lord is a celebration of the shining Light of God coming to earth and revealing Himself to all peoples for our salvation. It is a culmination of the twelve days of Christmas and a time to rejoice in God’s mercy and love. We learn that Jesus Christ was revealed to foreigners, pagans, who recognized His Divinity through signs of nature. They traveled a hard journey to give homage to a king. The gifts they brought were at that time in history traditionally given to kings, and they held special meaning: gold represents kingship and power, myrrh was used in embalming ointment and therefore represents mortality, frankincense was used in prayer and sacrifices and represents divinity.

The Scriptures are presented to us for our spiritual nourishment and to learn about God from Himself. He wants us to know who He is and this story of magi from the east coming to give homage and these particular gifts to the baby Jesus tells us some important things about Jesus Christ:

- Jesus is Lord of lords
- Jesus is King of kings.
- Jesus is fully human, and fully divine.

Because of these truths, we know that His kingdom never ends, as is promised through the prophets of the Old Testament:

In the lifetime of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to another people; rather, it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and put an end to them, and it shall stand forever. (Daniel 2:44)

He comes to save the entire world, not just the nation of Israel:

I say to you, many will come from the east and the west, and will recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the banquet in the kingdom of heaven... (Matthew 8:11).

The magi represent the non-Jews who come to believe in Christ.¹ That is the majority of Christians today. We can see ourselves represented by the three wisemen in the tradition of the Church. We offer ourselves to Christ – our treasure, our lives, our very souls. That is what Jesus tells us is the first and greatest commandment:

¹Matthew inserts into the story a saying (see ⇒ Luke 13:28-29) about the entrance of Gentiles into the kingdom and the exclusion of those Israelites who, though descended from the patriarchs and members of the chosen nation (the children of the kingdom), refused to believe in Jesus. There will be wailing and grinding of teeth: the first occurrence of a phrase used frequently in this gospel to describe final condemnation (⇒ Matthew 13:42, ⇒ 50; ⇒ 22:13; ⇒ 24:51; ⇒ 25:30). It is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in ⇒ Luke 13:28.



You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. (Matthew 22:37)

When we do this, we can fulfill the second commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Matthew 22:39) This is the Christian life in a nutshell. The Epiphany of the Lord is a reminder of the calling we have to give right worship to God and to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to others as we journey to Him.

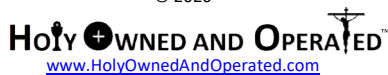
Christmas lights and candles are a major decorative element in our society. One reason for this is that Christ is the Light of the World and we are to help bring the Light to the darkness. But our Protestant brothers and sisters and the secular society tend to take them down or turn them off the day after Christmas. Catholics have the privilege of understanding the continuation of the feast, a word that means celebration, of the Christmas season through Epiphany. So, let your Christmas lights shine on through the Christmas season at least until Epiphany, and do not be afraid to keep them up longer!²

There are many traditions surrounding Epiphany, why don't you try one with your family this year:

- Bless the home for the coming year. Here is a link to the [Blessing of the Home and Household on Epiphany](#).
- Make or at least share a King Cake ([here's a traditional New Orleans recipe](#)). In Hispanic culture it is known as a *Rosca de Reyes*, and has a slightly different decoration. But the basics are the same, put a baby figurine into the cake and whomever finds it in their piece provides the King Cake for the next celebration!
- Some families and cultures exchange gifts on this day instead of (or in addition to) Christmas day. Children in some Hispanic cultures leave out their shoes on January 5 and find that the Magi have left them gifts over night.
- Twelfth Night – the night before Epiphany is celebrated in Europe to mark the end of “Christmastide” with feasting and merrymaking.
- Sing “**We Three Kings**” with your family. It is a wonderful song that deserves all the verses to be heard and seen – each one a dialog of one of the kings as they present their gift to Baby Jesus. We have provided the lyrics below and a wonderful, beautiful video to hear the entire song.

² The **Christmas Season** lasts from Christmas Day until the Feast of the Baptism of The Lord, which is the first Sunday after Epiphany. This time of the year is the most wonderful time of the year because of all the celebrations: **Advent** (the four Sundays prior to Christmas Day, through Christmas Eve); **Christmas Day** (December 25 – a Holy Day of Obligation); the **Octave of Christmas** (December 25 – January 1); the **Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God** (January 1 – a Holy Day of Obligation); **Christmastide** (the 12 Days of Christmas – December 26 through January 6); **Epiphany** (January 6 but since 1970 celebrated on the first Sunday after January 1); the **Feast of the Baptism of The Lord** (the Sunday after Epiphany); the **Feast of the Presentation of The Lord** (Candlemas - February 2, which is when the Church wraps up the **Christmas Season** after 40 days). So keeping your lights on and decorations up until Groundhog Day is a great way to show your Catholic Faith!

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We Three Kings

Verse 1: We three kings of Orient are
Bearing gifts we traverse afar.
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star.

Refrain: O star of wonder, star of night,
Star with royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding,
Guide us to thy perfect Light.

Verse 2: Born a king on Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again,
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign.

Refrain

Verse 3: Frankincense to offer have I.
Incense owns a Deity nigh.

Prayer and praising all men raising,
Worship Him, God on high.

Refrain

Verse 4: Myrrh is mine: Its bitter perfume
Breaths a life of gathering gloom.
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb.

Refrain

Verse 5: Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and God and Sacrifice.
Alleluia, alleluia!
Sounds through the earth and skies.

Refrain

Here is a really beautiful version of the song from The Hound + the Fox, featuring Tim Foust:



(clicking this will take you right to the video viewer on our web site)

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