



# ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

## THIS SUNDAY January 6 & BEYOND”

### “Epiphany: Appearances foretold, and realized, and still available”



This Sunday we celebrate a day that doesn't always fall on a Sunday: Epiphany or The Epiphany. You see, there is a connection between Christmas and Epiphany, and that connection is “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” So, since Christmas is always December 25th, Epiphany will always be January 6!

But that doesn't explain the connection besides there being 12 days. The connection is that Epiphany is the day that we celebrate the Wisemen finally arriving at Bethlehem. And then we say goodbye to the Story of the Birth of Christ until next year. Twelve days just

happens to be the time in between these two days of celebration. And there's a wonderful song that has been sung for centuries that we all know by heart.

If you don't mind, though, let's look at the readings from the Bible assigned for this Sunday as well as look at the reason why the early Church used the word “epiphany.”

An “epiphany” is an “appearance.” Sometimes the word “manifestation” is used to translate epiphany. “Look! Here he comes!” is one of the phrases we use to point to the moments in the Bible when Jesus “shows up.” It doesn't have to mean “show stopping”, but that is one way to relate such a thing in our day. When the Beatles iconically appeared in the door of their jet airplane on their first trip to the USA, there was an immediate cry (and screaming and tears!) as young people (mainly) said in their own way, “Look! There they are!” In the same genre, when a famous artist “appears” on stage at somebody else's concert, there is usually cheers and applause from the audience. The surprise appearance surely could have been “staged”, but to the crowd it was an epiphany.

There are so many “appearances” in the story of Jesus' birth, with rising stars, splendorous lights, and mysteries revealed, it is easy to say that these things are

epiphanies. And the greatest is the face of the child born on Christmas day: this is the appearance – the epiphany – of God to be with us.

Well, now, wait a minute, you might say....is this a new celebration called Epiphany, or isn't that Christmas you are talking about? And the answer is Yes! It would appear from ancient days of the Church that "Epiphany" was the first of the celebrations of Christ's life, after the Resurrection, of course, and the Coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. And yet there is more. There is the epiphany of the God incarnate here to us;, and then there is the epiphany of this Christ to the rest of the World, which is so much of the meaning ascribed to the visitation of foreign wisemen who were not Jews; and then, there is the epiphany of Jesus at the River Jordan and the voice from heaven along with the Holy Spirit coming down on him at that moment in the form of a dove. The BIG picture of the feast of Epiphany, and the season of Sundays called by the same name that follow, is the appearance of Jesus Christ to the World in these various and powerful ways!

Eventually the nativity of the Christ would have its own day, and so would the Baptism of Jesus, always celebrated the first Sunday after January 6. And that leaves January 6 to celebrate the arrival of the wisemen with their gifts to the scene of the Jesus' birth, still there in Bethlehem.

So now let's look at the lessons for Sunday, the Epiphany, January 6. I am using a lot of material here from Dr. Scott Hahn as an introduction to his biblical teaching. We hope to have a weekly study started in a couple of weeks using his bible resource material and study questions.

Herod, in today's Gospel, asks the chief priests and scribes where the Messiah is to be born. The answer Matthew in his gospel puts on their lips says much more, combining two strands of Old Testament promise—one revealing the Messiah to be from the line of David (see 2 Samuel 2:5), the other predicting "a ruler of Israel" who will "shepherd his flock" and whose "greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth" (see Micah 5:1–3).

Those promises of Israel's king ruling the nations resound also in today's Psalm. The psalm celebrates David's son, Solomon. His kingdom, we sing, will stretch "to the ends of the earth," and the world's kings will pay Him homage. That's the scene too in our First Reading, spoken 600 years before Jesus' birth, as nations stream from the East, bearing "gold and frankincense" for Israel's king.

The Magi's pilgrimage in today's Gospel marks the fulfillment of God's promises. The Magi, probably Persian astrologers, are following the star that Balaam predicted would rise along with the ruler's staff over the house of Jacob (see Numbers 24:17).

Laden with gold and spices, their journey evokes those made to Solomon by the Queen of Sheba and the "kings of the earth" (see 1 Kings 10:2, 25; 2 Chronicles 9:24). Interestingly, the only other places where frankincense and myrrh are mentioned together are in songs about Solomon (see Song of Songs 3:6; 4:6, 14).

One greater than Solomon is here (see Luke 11:31). He has come to reveal that all peoples are "co-heirs" of the royal family of Israel, as today's Epistle teaches. His manifestation forces us to choose: will we follow the signs that lead to Him as the wise Magi did? Or will we be like those priests and scribes who let God's words of promise become dead letters on an ancient page? The answer, of course, is yours to make. As has been said on that popular art form, "bumper stickers", Wise Men Still Seek Him. May you find Him as He has appeared!

Fr. Robert G. Eaton, Interim Rector

Readings for this Sunday – The Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6, 9 Psalm 72:1-2, 10-17 Ephesians 3:1-12 Matthew 2:1-12

## CALENDAR

**SUNDAY: The Epiphany**

8:00a Low Mass (Church)

10:30a Solemn High Mass (Church)

—*The entrance to the church is on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue*—

*Note: Coffee Hour & Fellowship follow the Mass in the Parish Hall.*

**MONDAY:** 7:00p (AA) Doctors' Group (Fireside Room)

**TUESDAY:** Noon Mass (St. Mary's Chapel)

**FRIDAY:** AA Meetings

8:00p Ladies' Group (Fireside Room)

8:15p Men's Group (Parish Hall)

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An Anglo-Catholic Parish in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

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