



Epiphany commemorates three scriptural events: the visit of the Magi to the stable of Bethlehem following the nativity of Jesus, Christ's Baptism in the Jordan, and his first miracle at the wedding feast at Cana. This Epiphany article focuses on the significance of the Magi or three wise men who follow the star in search of the King of kings.

(<http://www.churchyear.net/epiphany.html>, <http://catholicism.about.com/od/holydaysandholidays/p/Epiphany.htm>.)

Epiphany is Greek for "to manifest" or "to show ". The feast of manifestation, or Epiphany, is traditionally celebrated the 12th day after Christmas, January 6th. *In the dioceses of the United States this feast has been moved to the Sunday between January 2 and January 8.* The Feast of the Epiphany marks the first manifestation of the birth of Christ to the Gentiles (non Jews). **The Three Kings – Melchor, Gaspar, and Balthazar — had come from the East in search of the Christ child.**

The Three Kings, also known as the Magi or the Wise Men, brought with them gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh:

- gold signifying that Jesus is King;
- frankincense, the symbol of prayer, signifying that Jesus is the Son of God,
- myrrh, which is used to anoint the dead, signifying that Jesus would die for the salvation of all.

Like the angels, we are called to be heralds of this good news and like the visiting Magi, we may offer our own gifts to Jesus.

So when does the Christmas liturgical season end?

At The Baptism of Jesus.

“It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” Mark 1:9-11

No one knows the date of Jesus' birth and it is unlikely that a Roman census would have taken place in mid-winter. In the early days of the church, it was decided to celebrate the birth of Christ around the winter solstice (the shortest day of the year). This date was chosen to emphasize an important symbol of the reality: **Christ as light of the world, breaking in on the darkness of human sin and bringing healing and hope for all.** In 350 CE, Pope Julius I fixed December 25th as the official date for the feast. The white and gold in this season symbolize great rejoicing, newness of life, victory and a new beginning.

The liturgical season of Christmastide begins with the evening (Vigil) Mass on Christmas Eve, continues past New Year's Day, the Epiphany and ends with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after the Epiphany (<https://www.catholiccompany.com/getfed/does-christmas-end-on-epiphany/>).

