

Epiphany 2013



The Epiphany ('manifestation' or 'showing forth') of Christ on January 6th is a celebration of the proclamation of Christ to the world. The eve of the Feast of the Epiphany (Twelfth Night) marks the end of the Christmas celebration. In the Western Church, the story from Matthew of the visitation of the Magi from the East represents the many cultures and lands that God sent his Son to save. For the Church in the East (Orthodox), the revelation of Jesus as the Christ is one who is anointed by God, as experienced in His Baptism and ministry in first-century Palestine.

The Feast of the Epiphany is followed by a period of "Sundays after the Epiphany"; the length of the Epiphany season varies in length from four to nine Sundays, depending on the date of Easter each year. In 2013 there will only be five weeks of the season. The Last Sunday of Epiphany is celebrated as Transfiguration Sunday. In 2013, that will be on February 10th.

The themes of Epiphany are of light, anointing and commissioning for public ministry. It is a time for remembering the recognition of Jesus as God by many people, among them the magi, John the Baptist, Jesus' disciples, and Christians in every age, including our own. This season of the church year gives us the opportunity to reflect upon our own Baptism and rededicate ourselves to the ministry of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ. The theme of discipleship is the initial focus in the readings for the Sundays after the Epiphany.

Epiphany is a time for remembering the signs of Jesus that revealed his presence to the people, as in the first miracle at Cana and in the healing miracles. It is also a time to bless the homes of Christians with holy water, incense and prayers, that those who abide in the home may be empowered to live lives that are an epiphany of God's coming among us in Jesus, into whose body we have been incorporated at our baptism. (See *The Book of Occasional Services* for this service).

The Magi

We only hear of the three wise men (magi) from Matthew's gospel (Matthew 2:1-12). Magi were people who studied the movement of the stars to interpret their meaning. These magi came from the east, following a special star and bringing gifts to the child Jesus. They were Gentiles, not Jews, and they worshipped him. The story of the magi that we know is grounded in legends that came out of the Middle Ages and described them as kings named Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar. The gifts of the magi (described in Matthew) are:

- Gold for royalty, wealth and the kingship of Christ
- Frankincense is made of gum from an Asian and African tree. It may be burned to produce aromatic smoke used in worship, and symbolizes divinity and prayer
- Myrrh, a bitter resin used in ancient times to anoint bodies before burial is a symbol of suffering and death. It foretells Christ's giving of self through death.





The Three King's Cake is a European tradition. The cake – usually a flat circle – hides a bean or two, a doll or a clutch of tiny fortunes. The significance of the hidden fortune varies. A hidden dime might signify wealth in the coming year. The finders of two dry beans might become king and queen of the Epiphany party. In New Orleans, the finder of a hidden black bean must give a party for all the other guests. Invite your group to make (and eat) a traditional King's Cake.

Ingredients:

½ c. blanched almonds
1 c. sugar
6 T. soft butter (save the wrapper)

1 t. vanilla or almond extract
2 eggs, lightly beaten
2 T. raisins or currants
1¼ c. flour

1½ t. baking powder
beans, dimes, or thimbles

1. Grind the almonds with ¼ c. sugar in a food processor or blender.
2. Use a fork to mix the butter and sugar together in a bowl until thoroughly blended.
3. Beat in the eggs (saving a tablespoon of egg to glaze the top) and the extract.
4. Sift together the flour and baking powder into the egg mixture.
5. Stir in the sugar-almond mix, the raisins or currants and any fortunes (beans, dimes, etc.)
6. Turn the dough onto a greased cookie sheet (use the paper from the butter to grease the sheet).
7. Pat the dough flat into a ½" circle.
8. Spread the reserved beaten egg on the top of the cake.
9. Bake at 350 degrees F for 20 minutes. Recipe will serve 12.



Candlemas

Another tradition during Epiphany in some cultures is Candlemas (Candle Mass), on February 2. It takes its name from the candles carried at the celebration of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple (see *The Book of Occasional Services*). It celebrates a ritual of Jewish law related to first-born sons that Joseph and Mary carried out (Luke 2:21-40). Luke's gospel tells how Simeon and Anna, devout Jews, honored the infant Jesus as the promised Messiah.

Additional Resources:

- *Anglicans On-Line* <http://anglicansonline.org/special/Epiphany/epiphany.html>
- *Liturgy for the Whole Church: Multigenerational Resources for Worship* by Susan K. Bock (2008: Church Publishing) offers plays, prayers and ideas for all seasons of the year, including Epiphany
- *Growing Together: Sacred Celebrations for Fall & Winter - Volume 1* (2012: Morehouse Education Resources) offers a variety of activities for an intergenerational Epiphany celebration.
- *Building Faith* <http://buildfaith.org> has numerous articles on Epiphany ideas
- **Two liturgies follow:** one for home use and one for a congregational setting. Both speak of how the Gospel is spread and how each of us are part of 'showing forth' the light of Christ in the world.

Chalking the Door

This short liturgy is a way of marking our homes, usually at the front or main entrance, with sacred signs and symbols as we ask God's blessing upon those who live, work, or visit throughout the coming year. In Exodus, the Israelites marked their doors with blood so that the Lord would pass over their homes; but in this service, we mark our doors with chalk as a sign that we have invited God's presence and blessing into our homes



In Great Britain, the service commonly takes place on Twelfth-Night, January 6th. This date is also observed as Epiphany, commemorating the visiting of the Christ Child by the three Magi (Wise Men) with their gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh. On Twelfth-Night in Europe, many families gather in their homes to celebrate this feast with friends, food, singing, and gifts. It is at these Twelfth-Night celebrations that "Chalking the Door" is most often observed.

Chalk is used in this service as an ordinary substance made of common elements of the earth, put to holy use. Chalk will not permanently mar the dwelling. As its image fades from view over time, those who participated in its original placement will remember it and the purpose for which it was intended. In doing so, they may rededicate themselves to that purpose. After a year passes and a new Epiphany arrives, they will have the opportunity once again to celebrate the themes of this season and once again to seek God's blessing on their homes and on those who come and go through its doors.

Chalking the Door¹

On the Epiphany of Our Lord, January 6, family and friends (C for "community") gather at the main entrances to homes or apartments (nursing home quarters, extended care facility, hospital rooms!), and ask God's blessing on their dwellings and on all who live or visit there. Leadership may be shared with a change of voice at each Leader's part (L).

L Peace be to this house and to all who enter here.

L A reading from Proverbs: "By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established; through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures."

L Let us pray: Gracious God, as a shining star once guided the magi to the birthplace of the infant Jesus, so enable those who dwell here to be your light in the world; through Jesus Christ we pray.

C Amen.

Using chalk (hence, "Chalking the Door"), people are invited to inscribe the lintel of the home (the horizontal frame above the door) with the inscription shown below. The letters C M B come from the traditional (9th century) names for the "three kings" -- Caspar, Melchior & Balthazar. Some also suggest "Christus Mansionem Benedicat" which means, "May Christ bless this dwelling!"

Each person is afforded a turn to make one or more of the marks: 20 + C + M + B + 02

L A reading from Isaiah: "The effect of righteousness is peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and quiet places."

People may join hands or extend their hands outward and upward (orans) for the prayers.

L Let us pray: Sovereign God, we pray that you will bless this home and all who live here with your gracious presence, that your love may be our inspiration, your wisdom our guide, your truth our light, and your peace our benediction; through Jesus Christ we pray.

C Amen.

L Lord, remember your children and teach us to pray:

C Our Father...

People may make the sign of the cross in remembrance of their baptism.

L May the Lord watch + over our going out and our coming in, from this time forth and forevermore.

C Amen.

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