



Dear Friends,

On January 6 the Church celebrates the feast of “Epiphany”. This feast commemorates the mysterious visit of the Magi to the Baby Jesus. Who were the Magi? What does the word “Epiphany” mean? “Epiphany” means “manifestation,” or “appearance”. The ancient feast of the Epiphany actually celebrates three events, tied together by the meaning of the word epiphany as “appearance” or “manifestation.” Jesus suddenly appears as who He really is - Messiah and God - to the Magi, at Cana when he works his first miracle, and when he is baptized in the Jordan.

In the early Church, Epiphany was therefore second only to Easter Vigil as the time to celebrate the sacrament of baptism. Blessed water from those baptisms were used to bless the dwellings of the faithful, and it became customary to write over the doorposts of blessed homes “C+B+M” meaning “Christ blesses this house (Christus benedicit mansionem).” Since the three kings were also remembered at the same time, someone decided to give them names, and to use CBM as their initials - Caspar, Balthasar, and Melchior. Yet if you look closely at the gospel account of the Magi (Mat 2:1-12), you won’t find these names.

Actually, there is no mention of how many Magi there were or that they were kings riding camel-back. In chapter 60 of Isaiah (Is 60:1-6), it is predicted that at a time of darkness, the glory of the Lord will shine over Jerusalem. The heavenly light will be a beacon to the pagan nations and even to their kings. Here we find mention of camels whose job it will be to bring the wealth of these nations, including frankincense and gold, to the city of the Lord. Psalm 72

agrees that far off kings will bring gifts to the Son of David. The tradition of the Church has always seen the story of the Magi as a fulfillment of both Isaiah's prophecy and Psalm 72. Isaiah 60 refers to only two of the gifts mentioned by Matthew: gold, fit for a king, and frankincense, for the worship of God. So, what about the myrrh - where does that come from and what does it mean? Myrrh, an aromatic resin, was used in preparing the dead for burial. Gold reveals that the babe in the manger is actually a king; frankincense tells us that is he God incarnate; myrrh tells us that he has come to die. That someone would redeem God's people through suffering and death was foretold by Isaiah a few chapters earlier (Is. 53). This was the really hard thing for those living in Jesus' time to comprehend - that the same person who fulfilled all those prophecies about a glorious new king also fulfilled the prophecies about a suffering servant. The Feast of the Epiphany is not about the Magi - it's all about Jesus. It's about the true Star, the King of Kings, whom we are to follow.

May God bless our homes,
Fr. Krzysztof Kardzis

P.S. Christmas is always a special time and there were many people working hard to make our church look beautiful and our liturgies meaningful. Thank you very much to those who cleaned the church, helped decorate, all musicians, altar servers, ushers and each one of you for celebrating the birth of the Lord at Sacred Heart Parish.

And thank you for the Christmas cards and good wishes.