

## **Epiphany: A Day and/or Season of Many Names...**

*The Epiphany or the Manifestation of Christ to the Peoples of the Earth or the Feast of Lights or the Epiphany season* are all names for the liturgical season of the church we begin tomorrow, Saturday, January 6<sup>th</sup>.

We will hold a Pageant with Holy Eucharist at 10AM on that day.

Most of us identify the day with the coming of the Magi which is celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6<sup>th</sup>, in the *Book of Common Prayer*. The Baptism of our Lord is celebrated on the First Sunday after the Epiphany. Early Christians chose this day to celebrate the various manifestations or "epiphanies" of Jesus' divinity. These showings of his divinity included his birth, the coming of the Magi, his baptism, and the Wedding at Cana where he miraculously changed water into wine—his first miracle. The day was called "The Feast of Lights." Celebration of the Son of God replaced the pagan celebration of the sun. Baptisms were done and a season of prior preparation was instituted. It was later called Advent.

The solstice<sup>i</sup> was kept on December 25<sup>th</sup> by the 4<sup>th</sup> century. By then, Jesus' birth began to be celebrated on this day in both eastern and western churches. The western church commemorated the coming of the Magi on January 6<sup>th</sup>. The eastern church continued to celebrate the Baptism of our Lord and the Wedding at Cana on January 6<sup>th</sup>. In the east the day was called "Theophany" or "manifestation of God."

The Epiphany season is of four to nine weeks, from the Feast of the Epiphany through the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. The length of the season varies according to the date of Easter. The gospel stories of this season describe various events that manifest the divinity of Jesus.

We will observe The Baptism of our Lord on the Sunday after Epiphany, the 7<sup>th</sup>. The gospels for the other Sundays of the Epiphany season describe the wedding at Cana, the calling of the disciples, and various miracles and teachings of Jesus. The Last Sunday after Epiphany is always devoted to the Transfiguration. On that day, Jesus' identity as the Son of God is dramatically revealed in the Transfiguration gospel as well as the gospel of the baptism of Christ. We are called to respond to Christ in faith through the showings of his divinity recorded in the gospels of the Epiphany season. -Fr Hal