



## The Twelfth Day of Christmas

“The Twelve Days of Christmas” is a popular song most of us have heard many times before. Traditionally, the feast of Epiphany was the twelfth day after Christmas, or January 6<sup>th</sup> and traditionally for many people, it marked the end of the Christmas season and celebrations. On that day, many people would begin to take down their decorations. Christmas vacation would end for school children. People would prepare to enter the bleakness of the long winter season. However, the celebration of Epiphany should really energize and remind us of what we celebrated just two weeks ago.

What does the word “Epiphany” mean anyway? People of faith say it means, “Appearance of Jesus as Messiah,” not just another person but as Messiah, as the one long awaited. It also means, in its more general sense, manifestation or showing. Today we celebrate the event in which Jesus was shown to the Gentile, or non-Jewish, world for the first time. The three wise men represent the Gentile world. A baby was born into the world and the three astrologers went to see this baby. Certainly, infants are born every day all over the world, but there was something special about this baby. He was *both* human and divine. This baby Jesus came into the world *for* the whole world. Each gift given by the wise men is symbolic and tells us something about this newborn infant.

The gold symbolized the royalty of Jesus. It tells us that He will have a kingdom...a kingdom not built of armies and palaces, but one built on love and peace. The frankincense symbolizes adoration and prayer, as does incense today. When we pray to the Lord, we recall that our prayers are rising to the Lord as does the incense. The myrrh, a type of spice, symbolizes the death and burial that one day will be a part of Jesus’ earthly experience. Vinegar mixed with myrrh was offered Jesus as He hung upon the cross. It was also placed in Jesus’ tomb.

For today’s feast of the Epiphany, blessed chalk is available in the narthex. You are invited to take a piece of chalk home with you and mark your doorway with the following inscription: “20 + C + M + B + 18.” The C-M-B are the initials of the legendary names of the Magi: Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar. It also stands for *Christus Mansionem Benedicat: May Christ bless this dwelling place*. As you mark your doorway, the presiding member of the household prays: “May all who come to our house this year rejoice to find Christ living among us, and may we seek in everyone we meet, Jesus, Who is Lord forever and ever. Amen.”

*Father David*