



REFLECTION

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Many people including some Catholics think that Christmas ends on December 26, while liturgically Christmas Season starts on Christmas Eve (December 24) and one of the important feasts during Christmas Season is the Epiphany of the Lord. Its celebration on January 6 predated the celebration of Christmas on December 25. The early Church, especially in the East, in one feast of the Epiphany on January 6 commemorated the Nativity, Visitation of the Magi, Baptism of Christ, and the Wedding of Cana. By the fourth century, some dioceses started to celebrate Christmas and the Epiphany as separate feasts. The Council of Tours in 567 set the dates for

the celebration of Christmas Day on December 25 and the Epiphany on January 6. While the traditional date for the Epiphany is January 6, in the United States its celebration is moved to the Sunday between January 2 and January 8. In 2026, it is celebrated on January 4.

In the Latin rite of the Catholic Church, the celebration of the Epiphany focuses mainly on the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God to the Three Wise Men (also called Magi) and through them to the whole world. St. John Paul II in his homily on January 6, 1996, points out the symbolic role of the Wise Men:

In the Words of

ST. JOHN PAUL II

Today, the Solemnity of Epiphany, this is how the prophet's words resound. The ancient, evocative oracle of Isaiah in a way foretells the light that shone on the stable in Bethlehem on Christmas night, anticipating the angels' song: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased" (Lk 2:14). In a certain sense, in pointing to the light the prophet is pointing to Christ. As it shone for the shepherds seeking the newborn Messiah, so this light shines today on the path of the Magi, come from the East to adore him who was born King of the Jews.

The Magi represent the peoples of the whole earth who, in the light of the Lord's birth, set out on the way leading to Jesus and, in a certain sense, are the first to receive that salvation inaugurated by the

Saviour's birth and brought to fulfilment in the paschal mystery of his Death and Resurrection. When they reached Bethlehem, the Magi adored the divine Child

and offered him symbolic gifts, becoming forerunners of the peoples and nations which down the centuries never cease to seek and meet Christ.

