

**OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL**  
**SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL**  
**WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER**  
**Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord**  
**January 5, 2025**



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The gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh respectively symbolize:  
King, God and Suffering Redeemer as well as virtue, prayer and suffering

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**CHAPEL SCHEDULE**

*Weekday Mass:* (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

*Weekend Masses:* Saturday: 4:00pm - Sunday: 7:30am & 4:00pm

*Holiday Mass Schedule:* afternoon prior at 4:00pm

Holy day proper at 12 noon and 4:00pm

*Confessions:* First Saturday of every month at 3:30pm

*Department Telephone:* 508.363.6246

*Chapel Website:* [www.ourladyofprovidence.net](http://www.ourladyofprovidence.net)

## **MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE**

Saturday January 4 *Vigil of the Lord's Epiphany*

4:00pm +Marguerite Hoey by alumnae of former SVHSN

Sunday, January 5 *Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord*

7:30am In gratitude to God for a favor requested & granted

4:00pm Seeking divine favor on granting a special intention

Monday, January 6 *Saint André Bessette, religious*<sup>2</sup>

12:00nn For the Catholic Church in the NE states visited by Brother Andre

Tuesday, January 7 *Saint Raymond of Peñafort, priest*<sup>2</sup>

12:00nn +Repose of the soul of Bishop George Rueger & retired bishops of Worcester

Wednesday, January 8

12:00nn Asking God for a special intention to be granted

Thursday, January 9

12:00nn +Jason Zito

Friday, January 10

12:00nn For the health & wellbeing of Joanne, LaMarr and relatives, living & deceased

Saturday, January 11 *Vigil of the Feast of the Lord's Baptism*

4:00pm +Earl McGrath recalling the day of his birth - 78th birthday

Sunday, January 12 *Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*

7:30am For the intentions of the celebrant

4:00pm Asking God for a special intention to be granted

The Key to Understanding the Day's Liturgical Significance: *Sunday is the day that the Church celebrates the Paschal mystery—the Lord's Day—which, according to apostolic tradition, is the day of Christ's Resurrection. The Sundays of Advent, Lent, and during the Easter Season take precedence over other celebrations. Solemnities honor significant religious events, beliefs or saints of the greatest importance and universal in their observance that begin at Vespers (or Evening Prayer) the day before. Feasts must be observed, though, less important than solemnities, hence, feasts are only observed on the natural day. Memorials are of two types: Either the observance is an obligatory memorial<sup>1</sup> or an optional memorial<sup>2</sup>.*

### **Toward a Better Understanding of the Gospel of Epiphany**

In his Infancy Narrative found in the first two chapters of Saint Matthew's Gospel, following the account of the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:1-17), the subsequent material is comprised of five episodes that refer to five prophecies of the Old Testament. The episode of the Adoration of the Magi (Mt 2:1-12), unique to Saint Matthew, correlates with the prophecy of Micah: "But you, Bethlehem-Ephrathah least among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel; whose origin is from of old, from ancient times. Therefore the Lord will give them up, until the time when she who is to give birth has borne; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the children of Israel. He shall take his place as shepherd by the strength of the Lord, by the majestic name of the Lord, his God; and they shall dwell securely, for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth: he shall be peace" (Mi 5:1-4). Matthew adapts the text from Micah in these distinctive ways: (1) instead of *Bethlehem-Ephrathah*, he indicates that it was *Bethlehem of Judea*. The redaction could be merely to distinguish between two villages in Galilee with the same name or to call attention to Bethlehem as the city of David, symbol of the Messiah. In Micah, (2) the Messiah's birth place is described as "least among the clans of Judah." The village's smallness is in stark contrast with the immensity of its mission, "From you shall come forth for me *one who is to be ruler in Israel*." The name Bethlehem, according to Saint Gregory the Great, means "house of bread." Then, at the end of the quotation from Micah, Saint Matthew modifies the last few words (i.e., one who is to be ruler in Israel) into (3) "from [Bethlehem] shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." The title *shepherd my people Israel* is found in the Second Book of Samuel, after the tribes of Israel had rallied to David's side, seeking to capture Jerusalem. The tribes reminded David that even when Saul was King, the God of Israel had told David, "You shall shepherd my people Israel; you shall be ruler over Israel" (2 Sam 5:2). Thus, Jesus is the new David and the Magi came to Jerusalem in search of "the newborn king of the Jews." As King Herod heard from "all the chief priests and the scribes" that the Messiah was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem. According to Saint Augustine, "The New [Testament] is in the old concealed; the Old [Testament] is in the new revealed" (*Quaestiones in Heptateuchum* 2.73 PL 34 623). The Magi (Gk. μάγοι), who came first to Jerusalem from the East, did so in order to render homage to the newborn King. Tradition has it that they were kings and how many of them came remains a subject of debate. The number three likely arose due to the three gifts that were brought and their royal dignity appears to be derived from the Psalms, "May the kings of Tarshish and

### Saint Augustine of Hippo - Sermo 203

For the Greek word Epiphania we say Manifestatio in Latin. On this day, then, the *manifested* Redeemer of all nations has made a solemn feast for all nations. And so we are celebrating to-day the Manifestation of Him whose Nativity we celebrated only a few days ago. Now tradition has it that our Lord Jesus Christ, born twelve days ago, was adored by the Magi on this day. That they adored Him is a truth spoken by the Gospel; on what day they did so, is proclaimed by the fact that this glorious feast is observed everywhere. For, inasmuch as the Magi were the first among the Gentiles to learn of Christ the Lord, and because they, not yet benefiting from His speech, followed the star which appeared to them and which, in place of the Infant Word, spoke to their sight—like a tongue of heaven; it is but right, and right it truly is, that the Gentiles should gratefully acknowledge the day of the first fruits of their salvation, and with thanksgiving and solemn homage dedicate it to Christ the Lord. Obviously, the first fruits of the faith and revelation of Christ among the Jews were the shepherds who, coming from the immediate vicinity, saw Him on the very day He was born. The news was given to them by the angels, to the others by the star. Glory to God in the highest was said to them: in the others there was fulfilled. The heavens tell of the glory of God. Indeed, like the beginnings of two walls coming from different directions—the circumcised and the uncircumcised—both have met at the Cornerstone, so that He might be their Peace, making both one.

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the islands bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts” (Ps 72:10) – Tarshish designated the area of the far west and Sheba (Arabia) was considered the far south. As Magi or Magians, members of a sacred caste that was originally Median, who seem to have conformed to the Persian religion, while retaining some of their older beliefs. If so, then, as Persian in origin, they were conceivably part of the Zoroastrian religion, which believed in the coming of the Messiah and, so, were also astrologers. The Magi or Wise Men had been guided by the Star which denoted the Birth of the newborn King of the Jews, even prior to their arrival in Jerusalem. Traditionally, the Star of Bethlehem is linked with the Star of Prophecy, “I see him, though not now; I observe him, though not near: A star shall advance from Jacob, and a scepter shall rise from Israel that will crush the brows of Moab, and the skull of the Sethites” (Num 24:17). In Rome’s Catacombs of Saint Priscilla, you find the first known depiction of an image of the Virgin Mary, who is holding the Child Jesus on her knees. Beside her, there is a man pointing to a star and art scholars believe the image to be that of the prophet Isaiah, dressed in a cloak that denotes him to be a philosopher of distinction. It was Isaiah who prophesied about the future birth of Emmanuel (Is 7:14). Others believe the image to be a depiction of the prophet Balaam (Num 24:17). Regardless of the prophetic identity, reaching out over the prophet and Mary is a blossoming tree branch that refers to another Old Testament prophecy “The Rock of Jesse has blossomed; the Virgin has brought forth Love and Man.” The expression blossoming designates the emergence of a powerful force from an unexpected source. The Magi bring three gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Child’s royal lineage as king of the Jews is confirmed by the nature of those gifts: myrrh symbolizes the mortality of humanity and that the Child would die and be buried; gold testifies to Christ’s eternal reign; and incense or myrrh reveals that this Child was God who was made manifest not only in Judea but eventually to all those who never even sought the King as the Magi had. Ultimately, though, those offerings express the fulfillment of various messianic prophecies found in Isaiah (Is 60:5-6) and foretold by the psalmist (Ps 72:10-11). After their distinct privilege to behold the Savior, in a dream, the Wise Men were told not to return to Herod and Jerusalem and, so, they returned to the East by another route, evading the tyrant who sought to destroy the Child destined to be King of the Jews.

### **Hope & the Magi**

Among the various virtues, hope was the predominant virtue among the Magi. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* describes hope this way, as “the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (CCC, n. 1817). No one knows how many days, months, or years the Magi who were likely astrologers had searched the skies for a sign of the anticipated Messiah’s birth. Estimates, when taken together, the Magi would have taken a minimum of 19-28 days for the them to travel from “the East” to Jerusalem. Such persistence and difficult travel clearly imply that the Magi hungered for the kingdom in order to seek it so ardently. Thus, embodying hope was essential for them in order to see the Messiah in the figure of a humble Child even when few else would have thought that way. Writing of the childless Abraham, Saint Paul says that “he believed, hoping against hope, that he would become ‘the father of many nations’” (Rom 4:18). The same could be said of the Magi as they entered a humble manger looking for the newborn king of the Jews. Jürgen Moltmann wrote, “Totally without hope one cannot live. To live without hope is to cease to live. Hell is hopelessness” (*Theology of Hope: On the Ground and the Implications of a Christian Eschatology*). It is no accident that above the entrance to Dante’s depiction of hell is the inscription: “Leave behind all hope, you who enter here” (It. “Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch’intrate”). Finally, it is widely thought that the Magi were Zoroastrians who had traveled from Persia to the Roman occupied province of Judea to venerate a new “king.” Their journeying was not simply to discover another monarch, however. Inspired by astrology, the Magi’s search would become a mystical search and, so, ultimately, an Epiphany or Manifestation. Many families will celebrate Epiphany with an opportunity to bless their homes in the New Year by taking the first two numbers of the year, adding the letters +C+M+B+ (to honor the names of the three Wise Men), and then adding the last two numbers of the year while displaying this sign over the top of the door of their home. The letters stand for the Latin phrase, “Christus mansionem benedicat,” or, “Christ, bless this house.” (20+C+M+B+25). Happy New Year!

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# Christ the Light of All Lights Follows John the Baptist

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In the *General Norms of the Liturgical Year and Calendar (GNLYC)*, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord takes place on “the Sunday falling after January 6” (*GNLYC*, n. 38). Since in the United States, the celebration of the Lord’s Epiphany is transferred to the Sunday that is closest to January 6, occasionally those two feasts will fall on the same day. Too often, the reason that the Lord underwent John’s baptism of repentance is misconstrued. As sinless, the baptism John imposed upon Jesus was not a baptism of forgiveness; no, as Saint Thomas Aquinas determined John’s baptism was unable to forgive sin nor was it capable of incorporating anyone into God’s grace. Instead, by submitting to John’s form of baptism, Jesus consecrated the act of baptism and endowed water with the power to forgive sins. According to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, “Our Lord voluntarily submitted himself to the baptism of St. John, intended for sinners, in order to ‘fulfill all righteousness.’ Jesus’ gesture is a manifestation of His self-emptying. The Spirit who had hovered over the waters of the first creation descended then on the Christ as a prelude of the new creation, and the Father revealed Jesus as his ‘beloved Son’” (*CCC*, n. 1224). This incident in the life of Christ is enshrined in each of the four Gospels. It marks the beginning of the Lord’s public life and, from that point on, the young man Jesus emerges from the obscurity of Nazareth into the life of an itinerant preacher, proclaiming God’s mercy and forgiveness, amid multiple miraculous events of healing the sick and casting out demons. By stepping into the Jordan River, at the beginning of His mission of redemption, it is the descent of the Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, which bestowed the title of the Christ or God’s Anointed upon Jesus. This divine manifestation is accompanied by the voice of God the Father, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” Such a mysterious declaration reveals another crucial aspect of the identity of Jesus that He is the Son of God, who has been sent by the Father to be the Savior of the world. Thus, this entire event can be classified as the first manifestation of the Holy Trinity, technically speaking, a theophany (Gk. Θεοφάνεια) that literally means a *revelation of God*. The Father is the One who begets and sends His Son to redeem humanity and, so, the Son Jesus Christ is the obedient servant who accomplishes the Father’s will and the Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier who empowers the work of redemption. From the outset of His public life, Jesus’ identity is revealed within the Trinitarian relationship. In the earliest days of the Church, the visit of the Magi, the Baptism of the Lord, and the miracle at Cana were all incorporated into the meaning of the Lord’s Epiphany because each of those three events manifested and unveiled who Jesus was and forever remains.

## The Lord’s Baptism & the Baptism of the Faithful

Just as Jesus was revealed at the Jordan River as the beloved Son of the Father, those who are baptized are privileged to receive a new identity and become adopted sons and daughters of God. The fruit of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection constitutes the end of death and sin, as well as

the divine invitation to share in the very life of the Blessed Trinity. Through the transforming waters of baptism, Jesus the Christ imbues those waters with the power to forgive sin and to freely share His divine nature with us. Like at the Jordan, after the words of baptism are uttered, the infant, child or adult is reborn and God the Father acknowledges another redeemed son or daughter to be His own. Christian faith is primarily about what we have become in Christ before anything else. This act of spiritual adoption incorporates those emerging from the baptismal font into the very life of God and definitively places the baptized within the ambit of His merciful grace. The late Pope Benedict XVI outlined another aspect of the Lord’s baptism. The baptism demanded by John differed greatly from other religious rituals. John offered baptism only once because it indicated a radical break with sin and a new way of thinking and acting. This ritual break with the past was a preliminary act to the as yet Unknown One whose coming was imminent who John foretold would “baptize...with the Holy Spirit and fire.” Pope Benedict also noted that Jesus’ baptism serves to express the Son’s submission to doing the will of the Father and His identification with sinners. Symbolically, being immersed in John’s baptism, although He had no need to do so, Jesus endorses the need for repentance and forgiveness. By doing so, He is already embracing the crushing weight of humanity’s sinfulness that will become painfully obvious on the Cross. These events along the banks of the Jordan River foreshadow the eventual salvific acts of Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection. Finally, by embodying Christ’s total identification with sinners, the radical humility of Jesus also becomes a powerful sign. As Saint Paul said that by emptying Himself, not clamoring for equality with God which was His by nature as the only-begotten Son of the Father, Jesus became a slave for the salvation of the world. This single event must be placed within the total context of Christ’s life. It began when the Father’s only-begotten Son took flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Then, around thirty years of age, He began to publicly express His divinity by curing the sick and forgiving sins, coupled with communing with tax collectors at dinners held in His honor, along with the Lord’s loving exchange with the adulterous woman. In those three or so years, Jesus placed His entire life at the disposal of the Father. Then, the Crib and the Cross constitute the sacred intersection of God’s redemptive mercy and the everlasting cure for the curse inherited by the sin of Adam and Eve – the twin evils of unending sin and its death-dealing fate are overcome and the sacrifice of Calvary brings eternal life to earth. According to Saint Proclus of Constantinople, “At Christmas we saw a weak baby, giving proof of our weakness. In today’s feast, we see a perfect man, hinting at the perfect Son who proceeds from the all-perfect Father. At Christmas the King puts on the royal robe of his body; at Epiphany the very source enfolds, and, as it were, clothes the river. Come then and see new and astounding miracles: the Sun of righteousness washing in the Jordan, fire immersed in water, God sanctified by the ministry of man.”

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