

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Feast of the Holy Family of Nazareth
December 29, 2024



...they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions....all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers.

CHAPEL SCHEDULE

Weekday Mass: (Monday-Friday at 12 noon)

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

Holyday 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

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MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday December 28 *Vigil of the Feast of the Holy Family*

4:00pm +Repose of the soul of Most Rev. Daniel Reilly

Sunday, December 29 *Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph*

7:30am Asking God to grant the noble intentions of Nancy Boyd

4:00pm +Pat Mesite—recalling the day of his birth

Monday, December 30 *Sixth Day in the Octave of Christmas*

12:00nn +Patti-Jane Nixon by the alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

Tuesday, December 31 *St. Sylvester Pope - Seventh Day in the Octave of Christmas*

12:00nn In gratitude for the episcopal role of Bishop Daniel Reilly—may he rest in peace

New Year's Eve—Vigil of the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God

4:00pm For the safety of all who are traveling this night

Wednesday, January 1 *New Year's Day - Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord*

12:00nn +John & Mary Murray by their family

4:00pm For the noble intentions of Nancy Boyd

Thursday, January 2 *Saints Basil the Great & Gregory Nazianzen, bishops*²

12:00nn In gratitude to God for a favor requested and obtained

Friday, January 3 *Holy Name of Jesus - First Friday Devotion to the Sacred Heart*

12:00nn For increased devotion to the Sacred Heart - Loved be the heart of Jesus!

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

4:00pm +Marguerite Hoey by the alumnae of formers SVH School of Nursing

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

7:30am +For the repose of the soul of Most Rev. Daniel Reilly

4:00pm For the intentions of the celebrant

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**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding of the Gospels during Christmastide

After Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple, after Simeon and Anna proclaimed that the Child Jesus represented the hopes and devout expectations of all Israelites, Saint Luke declares, "The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon him" (Lk 2:40). After that prophecy, the incident recounted in today's Gospel constitutes the first manifestation of that wisdom, during Passover, when Jesus was twelve years old. Once again, it was in the Temple of Jerusalem where this occurred and, eventually, that sacred building will mark the end of Christ's public activity. The Holy Family had made the most solemn of the three pilgrimage feasts to Jerusalem. Somehow, unbeknownst to Mary or Joseph, Jesus remained behind and they only realized that He was missing on the evening of their return journey to Nazareth. Then, after three days of searching, they found Him in the Temple. The scholars of the Law "were astounded at his understanding and his answers" and later on, those same legal scholars will oppose Him. Relieved at finding her Son, Mary reproached Him for staying behind without telling them or anyone else. Looking at what was described and the typical parental reaction, though, is not the focus. The Gospel is not merely a collection of actions and reactions as it is a narrative of the events of salvation which, by their unfolding, reveal to those who listen to the Gospel Jesus' identity, then and now! The summit toward which all that has happened moves is what Jesus said to Mary and Joseph, which revealed salvific information whose crucial importance is underlined by their incomprehension and astonishment. During the exchange with the Virgin Mary, after a series of questions and answers, Jesus declared, "Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" Though an obedient Son to His Mother and foster-father Joseph, imbued with incomparable wisdom, this Holy Child has an unheard of relationship with God the Father. Only in small, somewhat digestible increments of revelation is that intimate relationship between the Father and Son exposed. This gradual unveiling is manifested through the Son's un-

Pope Francis - Angelus Address, the Feast of the Holy Family

Children's growth is a great joy for the family, we all know it. They are destined to grow and become strong, to acquire knowledge and receive the grace of God, just as happened to Jesus. He is truly one of us: the Son of God becomes a child, agrees to grow, to become strong; he is filled with knowledge, and the grace of God is upon him. Mary and Joseph have the joy of seeing all this in their son; and this is the mission to which the family is directed: to create conditions favorable to the harmonious and full growth of its children, so they may live a good life, worthy of God and constructive for the world.

failing desire to do the will of His heavenly Father. The reference to the fact that the delay in finding Jesus lasted "three days" fast-forwards the attentive mind and faith-filled believer to Easter! Only on the third day did Mary and Joseph realize that Jesus was missing and on the third day after His death on Calvary, Christ will rise from the dead. The same incomprehension that befell them after the incident in the Temple will also plague the disciples in Emmaus on that first Easter evening when Jesus upbraided Clopas and his companion, saying, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" (Lk 24:25-26) Then, after all that has been settled, Saint Luke makes this observation that Mary "kept all these things in her heart." Years later, this insight echoes what the evangelist said about Mary after the shepherds had seen the Christ Child and had become the first messengers of Christmas, "All who heard [the message] were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart" (Lk 2:18-20). The finding of Jesus in the Temple is the conclusion of Saint Luke's Infancy Narrative. Unique to the Third Gospel, Jesus is portrayed as the faithful Jewish boy, raised in the Judaic traditions, and fulfilling all that the Law requires. With this episode, the infancy narrative ends just as it began, in the setting of the Jerusalem Temple. Jesus reveals to Mary and Joseph that God is His Father. Moreover, His divine Sonship, and obedience belong squarely in doing the Father's will, which takes precedence over all else. After this grand finale to the account of the Savior's Birth, Saint Joseph is never mentioned again; yet, he remains the epitome of the upright man and, according to Saint Bernardine of Siena, "He was chosen by the eternal Father as the trustworthy guardian and protector of His greatest treasures, namely, His divine Son and Mary, Joseph's wife. He carried out this vocation with complete fidelity until at last God called him, saying, 'Good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord.'" The Virgin Mary, Mother of the Savior, continues to be the consummate Mother, suffering through her Son's apparent death, realizing that He was risen, and she continues her maternal role up until the day of Pentecost

Christmas: Eight, Twelve, or Forty Days?

Dom Gaspar Lefebvre, in the *Saint Andrew Daily Missal* for laypeople assisting at the traditional Latin Mass, explains: "The Christmas cycle is like a magnificent drama in three acts, whose purpose is to show forth, in three distinct ways, the Incarnation of the Word and the raising of human nature into union with God." This begins with Advent as we anticipate the coming. Then with Christmastide, we contemplate "the mysteries of Our Lord's childhood" and "are made to see with our eyes and handle with our hands the Word of life," who became human so "that we may have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ and that our joy may be full." The third act, which is now termed as part of Ordinary Time, between the Baptism of Our Lord and Candlemas, "is an extension of Christmastide, in which Our Lord's divinity continues to be affirmed." This is done by "Christ Himself who acts and speaks as God." Christmas required four weeks of preparation for the Lord's advent or coming. Then, the octave of Christmas was observed as eight solemn days of rejoicing. In the language of the Church, the word "solemn" does not mean being grim, serious, or morose. The Twelve Days of Christmas refer to the Christmas octave as well as the four subsequent days that takes the Church to the feast of Epiphany. Christmastide is the liturgical season that spans from the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord to January 5 or Epiphany Eve, commonly called Twelfth Night. As early as the mid-sixth century, the Church began to formally set aside the twelve days from Christmas to Epiphany as both a sacred and festive season. The observation of a prolonged festive post-Christmas celebration continued through the Middle Ages and up until the early modern era. In the traditional or pre-Vatican II liturgical calendar, the Christmas season or Christmastide lasts even longer for 40 days. It begins with the vigil Mass said on Christmas Eve, and ends on February 2nd or Candlemas, which is the day on which the Church celebrates the feast of Jesus' presentation in the temple. Excerpted from www.ncregister.com. Susanna Spencer. A Catholic Guide to the Traditional 40 Days of Christmas. 10 January 2023.

Holy Day Mass Schedule—December 31/January 1, 2025

Tuesday, December 31 - 4:00pm

Wednesday, January 1 - Mass at 12nn & 4pm - no Mass at 7:30am

Christ the Light of All Lights Follows John the Baptist

Introduction

The Epiphany of the Lord was the original feast of Christ's birth in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Traditionally, this event in the life of Jesus has been observed on the twelfth day after Christmas or January sixth. However, in countries like the United States, "where [Epiphany] is not observed as a Holy Day of obligation, it has been assigned to the Sunday occurring between January 2 and 8" (*GNYLC*, n. 37). Today, while being overshadowed by Christmas, without a proper understanding of Epiphany, only half of the theological implications of the Lord's Incarnation can be properly understood. Once having realized that the Word-became-flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so that God the Eternal Word was born as the Christ Child, the feast of the Epiphany requires us to look at the mystery of the Incarnation from the opposite angle—this Child is King of the Universe and, so, Epiphany highlights the Child's divinity while Christmas rejoices in the humanity of Jesus.

Feast of Epiphany Goes West – Christmas Goes East

The Greek word *epiphaneia* (Gk. ἐπιφάνεια) literally means *conspicuous appearing* and, thus, the title of this feast emphasizes the impact that Christ's visible appearance as the Child of Bethlehem would have on the entire world. Originating in the eastern part of the Empire, too often, its spirituality and liturgical practices seem impenetrable to Roman Catholics in the West because Epiphany has a profound mystical foundation. There are three interwoven events in this feast as celebrated among Eastern Orthodoxy: the adoration of the Magi, the Lord's baptism, and the Wedding Feast of Cana which are all conjoined because those three incidents manifest Christ's divinity. In the West, this observance is also known as *Three Kings Day* or *Twelfth Night*. For Western Christians, the emphasis is upon the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem, when Christ was revealed as the Son of God to the Gentiles. Among eastern Christianity, though, the focus is upon the Lord's Baptism by John and the resultant theophany (Gk. θεοφάνεια) or revelation to all the world that Jesus is the Son of God, which is linked with the miracle of the Wedding Feast of Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine — a miracle that manifested His divinity, too. The Divine Light that shone upon the Child Jesus at His birth was not external to Him, but it was the Child's internal light that was manifested - "Begotten of the Father before the daystar shone or time began, the Lord our Savior has appeared on earth today" (*Liturgia Horarum* EP I). Thus, the Son of God was born as a helpless Child, in fact, Mary's son is God incarnate, who is both Sovereign Lord and Universal King. The glad tidings of Christmas were the privileged revelation first made to the shepherds, while the angelic hosts declared the inauguration of the dawn of the world's true Light in their hymn of praise of the Light which the shepherds were singularly allowed to behold. Yet, the fullness of the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah is only completed on Epiphany with the appearance of the mysterious Star that led the Magi from the East to the town of Bethlehem. There, the Wise Men paid homage to the infant King as Isaiah had once foretold, "Nations shall walk by your light, kings by the radiance of your dawning" (Is 60:3). This divine light will bring blessings to Zion – the glory of the Lord, the return of the dispersed children of Israel, and the wealth of the nations, all will walk by that Light, which can never be extinguished.

The Magi from the East

These mysterious visitors from the East still remain just as unfathomable today, since their number and country of origin remain shrouded in mystery. Their royal nature is predicated upon Psalm 72, "May the kings of Tarshish and the islands bring tribute, the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. May all nations bow before him, all nations serve him" (Ps 72:10-11). Mid-sixth century mosaics of these kings, found in the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna depict them wearing the Phrygian cap as well as breeches and capes that were typical for Persian nobility. If those Magi were from Persia, more than likely, they were members of one of the castes of astrologer priests likely Zoroastrianism—a religion that had Messianic expectations, too. Their explicit number is not mentioned in the Gospel of Saint Matthew (Mt 2:1-12), though the tradition that there were three Wise Men prevailed (e.g., among Syriac churches there are twelve wise men), likely because of the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Their names are only attested to in a ninth-century manuscript as Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar. The textual evidence for their names begins earlier in a 6th century Greek manuscript that was translated into Latin entitled *Excerpta Latina Barbari* ("At that time in the reign of Augustus, on the 1st of January, the Magi brought him gifts and worshipped him. The names of the Magi were Bithisarea, Melichior, and Gathaspa") and from a later Greek document. two centuries afterward, that is known under the Latin name *Collectanea et Flores* (PL XCIV: 541D).

Gold, Frankincense, & Myrrh

Tradition has it that the Venerable Bede, who died in 735 AD, wrote this description of the Magi, "The Magi were the ones who gave gifts to the Lord. The first is said to have been Melchior, an old man with white hair and a long beard ... who offered gold to the Lord as to a king. The second, Caspar by name, young and beardless and ruddy complexioned ... honored Him as God by his gift of incense, an oblation worthy of divinity. The third, black-skinned and heavily bearded, named Balthasar ... by his gift of myrrh testified to the Son of Man who was to die" (H. Kehrer. *Die Heiligen Drei Könige in Literatur und Kunst*). Then, Saint Irenaeus of Smyrna (ca. 130 -202 AD) wrote that the gifts of the Magi were given to Christ due to the fact those gifts embodied the various offices associated with redemption: "Myrrh signified that he, for our mortal human race, would die and be buried; gold, that he was the King whose reign would be without end; incense, that he was God who would come to make himself known in Judea, and to show himself to those who had never sought him" (*Adversus haereses*, 3:9:2). The gold was for Christ as King, the frankincense as a symbol of His Deity and the myrrh was the burial ointment as a symbol of death for the Suffering Redeemer. On another level, St. Irenaeus said the gold signifies virtue; the frankincense, prayer; and the myrrh, suffering. Finally, Jesus holds the triple office of priest, prophet, and king (Lat. *munus triplex*). As priest, Christ sanctifies and fosters holiness, that is to say, the Lord re-establishes the lost link between divinity and humanity; as prophet, He speaks and embodies the divine truth; and as king, Jesus leads us on the right path, giving guidance to the human project. You might say that, as priest, Christ is the life; as prophet, He is the truth; and as king He is the way (cf Jn 14:16).