

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
Epiphany of the Lord
January 7, 2024



The Magi were men who sought something greater, who sought the true light, the light capable of indicating the path to follow in life. They were individuals who were certain that creation contains what we could describe as God's signature, a signature that man can and must seek to discover and decipher.

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

Department Telephone: 508.363.6246

Chapel Website: www.ourladyofprovidence.net

MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday, January 6 *Vigil of the Lord's Epiphany*

4:00pm Blessings upon Chapel-friends by Janet

Sunday, January 7 *Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord*

7:30am In thanksgiving for OLP chapel-friends by Janet

4:00pm +Barbara Robitaille by alumnae of former SVH School of Nursing

Monday, January 8 *Feast of the Baptism of the Lord*

12:00nn +William & Barbara Galvin

Tuesday, January 9 *Ordinary Time Begins: Week One*

12:00nn Continued healing: Sean, Richard, Susan, Kelly & Owen, Luke

Wednesday, January 10

12:00nn Healing for Eileen, Marie, Bridget, Paul & Patricia

Thursday, January 11

12:00nn Grateful for life, faith, family and priests

Friday, January 12

12:00nn For the intentions of Daniel & Paul

Saturday, January 13 *Vigil of the 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time*

4:00pm +Allen Cutty

Sunday, January 14 *Second Sunday in Ordinary Time*

7:30am +Sue Bee Go Osorio-remembering her birthday

4:00pm +Jose Martins Coelho

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 memorial¹ or an optional memorial².*

Toward a Better Understanding of the Gospels

In Western Christianity, Epiphany (Gk. ἐπιφάνεια) is the third major observance of Christmastime that concludes with the Baptism of the Lord. The term epiphany means manifestation or the appearance that marks the majesty surrounding the newborn Savior. Due to its Western focus on the visit of the Magi, it is an acknowledgement that the Child of Bethlehem is both Redeemer and King. The feast also reveals the universal nature of the Kingdom of Christ. Liturgically speaking, all the events that commemorate the history of salvation are situated in time and, so, are unrepeatable (Gk. ἐφάπαξ). However, because those incidents are elements in the history of the world's salvation, God takes the initiative and He is the central or principal agent. Though once-for-all events, their impact transcends the time in which they first occurred because, as crucial aspects of divine revelation, those salvific events bear spiritual fruit that is imperishable. The liturgy re-presents them as active now in the grace they unleashed that continues to unfold the salvation Christ accomplished. For Roman Catholics, the emphasis is placed on the visit of the Magi to Bethlehem. Among the Synoptics, today's Gospel is uniquely found in Saint Matthew. Within its Matthean context, the Lord's genealogy (Mt 1:1-17) is the prelude and, then, the Gospel's infancy portion is composed of five incidents that each of them incorporates an Old Testament prophecy: (1) the virginal conception refers to Isaiah 7:4: "the Lord himself will give you a sign; a virgin pregnant and about to bear a son"; (2) the adoration of the Magi and Micah 5:1-3: "Bethlehem Ephrathah...from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel...He shall take his place as shepherd"; (3) the flight into Egypt refers to Hosea, "When Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son..." (Hos 11:1); (4) the massacre of the Holy Innocents and the prophet Jeremiah, "In Ramah is heard the sound of sobbing; bitter weeping! Rachel mourns for her children" (Jer 31:15); and (5) the return to Nazareth – "He shall be called a Nazorean." Thus, each event must be seen in light of those Old Testament prophecies. In his version, Saint Matthew neither recounts the Lord's birth nor the Annunciation to Mary; instead, after the annunciation to Joseph (Mt 1:18-25), the evangelist begins the visit of the Magi by noting that the Child "was born in Bethlehem of Judea" and the oracle of the prophet Micah is cited as Scriptural evidence that the Messiah was destined to be born there. Matthew adapts that prophecy by changing Bethlehem-Ephrathah into Bethlehem of Judea and omitting the prophetic reference to Bethlehem's being "small among the clans of Judah." Then, the evangelist adjusts the end of the oracle by adding that from there "shall

Saint Augustine - Sermon 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 today 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 benefitting 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.

come from you a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.” The title *shepherd of Israel* was given to David, when the tribes rallied around David against Saul who was their king at that time. It was the Lord God of Israel who said, “You shall shepherd my people Israel; you shall be ruler over Israel” (2 Sam 5:2). Thus, the Child of Bethlehem is the new David and “the newborn king of the Jews” because it had been foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. This interaction between the two Testaments, particularly when reading the prophetic literature, implies that the promise of the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New and that is supremely true in regard to Christ. Jewish *midrash* is a commentary on the Hebrew scriptures and, usually, midrash is a paraphrase enriched with elements from Israel’s gilded legends. On the other hand, *targum* is a translation/interpretation of the text that had a long oral history. Those two Jewish commentaries are utilized by Matthew in the adoration of the Magi. Those mysterious figures are ambiguous, at least as far as specifics mentioned in the gospel is concerned. Tradition has it that they were kings though that custom stems from what is found in Psalm 72. The early mosaics (e.g., the Basilica of Sant’Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna) depicting their visit include the Phrygian cap and garments reflecting the nobility of Persia. It is likely that if they were Persian, they would have been Zoroastrians, a religious group with a messianic tendency and who were also astrologers. While the number of Magi is not specified, their numerical variation has been great, for example, in Syriac churches often twelve magi are mentioned. Eventually, the number three prevailed over other possibilities more than likely because of the three gifts – gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The traditional names for the Magi are only attested to from the ninth century, “At that time in the reign of Augustus, on 1st January the Magi brought him gifts and worshipped him. The names of the Magi were Bithisarea, Melichior and Gathaspa” (*Excerpta Latina Barbari*, page 51B). Another Greek document from the 8th century being of presumed Irish origin was translated into Latin with the title *Collectanea et Flores* (PL 94: 541) and it continues the tradition of three kings along with their names and gives additional details. Matthew’s sole intention is to solemnly declare that from the moment the Child Jesus came into the world, the Messiah’s arrival (or Advent) was made known to distant lands. God the Father gave various signs to guide shepherds and Magi to Bethlehem. While the star guided the Magi from their homeland to Judea, the chief priests and scribes had to examine the Scriptures in order for those astrologers from the East to know that it was in Bethlehem that “the Christ was to be born.” The Magi followed a star and in Rome’s catacombs of Saint Priscilla, there is a fresco depicting the Virgin Mary holding the Child Jesus with another figure pointing to a star – tradition has it that this depicts the prophet Isaiah (Is 7:14) who foretold the birth of Emmanuel. These wise men, “on entering the house,” paid the Child homage and, then, offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. In his work *Adversus haereses* 3:9:2 Saint Irenaeus gave those gifts symbolic meaning, “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 came to make himself known in Judea, and to show himself to those who had never sought him.” Given Herod’s lies and treachery, having been warned in a dream not to go back to Jerusalem, the Magi left Judea for their own country by an unknown route.

National Eucharistic Pilgrimage — Pilgrimage Planned for the Eastern Route: May 17—July 16, 2024

In a General Audience (11 August 1999), Pope St. John Paul II said, “All of the spiritual life is a pilgrimage to the heart of the Father.” The practice of making a pilgrimage emerged in the fourth century of the Christian era, as a widespread practice, during a period when all theological eyes were focused on the Incarnation. The practice still continues and, like the Magi, pilgrimage requires going forth in faith. Last year on Epiphany (6 January 2023) Pope Francis related the journey of the Magi and their seeking the Child who has been born as an embodiment of the life-long Christian journey, the faith pilgrimage for every person, leading to the encounter with the Lord that the Holy Father described as being marked by restless questioning. He said that the Magi followed the star, “Filled with yearning for the infinite, they scan the heavens, find themselves marveling at the brilliance of a star, and experience the quest for the transcendent that inspires the progress of civilizations and the tireless seeking of the human heart. The star left them with a question: Where is the child who has been born?” The Child can still be found in the tabernacles and on the altars of the Church, throughout the world!

Epiphany - Theophany - Baptism of the Lord

Epiphany (Koine Gk: ἐπιφάνεια) means manifestation or striking appearance whereas the similar word theophany (Ancient Gk. Θεοφάνεια) means vision of God. In the Western Church, the focus of Epiphany is on the visit of the Wise Men and, so, the Child Jesus is understood as manifesting Himself to the Gentiles. In the East, though, the various Churches celebrate the grandest Epiphany of all: The Manifestation of the Trinity. In the Baptism of Jesus, the Trinity becomes visible for the first time. The Jordan River constitutes a unique place in salvation history. The Jordan is the river that the Israelites crossed to reach the Promised Land after the death of Moses (Dt 34:1-12). His heir Joshua, whose name means salvation and is the root of the name Jesus, is the one who led God's people across that river (Dt 31:1-8; 34, 9). The prophet Elisha told Naaman the Syrian to wash in the river Jordan in order to cure his leprosy (2 Kgs 5:1-27). The Baptism of Christ is recorded in all four of the Gospels: Matthew 3:3-17, Mark 1:7-11, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:29-34 which is a testimony of the fact that Jesus was baptized.

Mk 1:7-11

In the account of the Baptism of Jesus, Mark's author introduces Jesus and who He is – both as Jesus of Nazareth and God's Beloved Son. There are no accounts of the Lord's birth or childhood before this beginning of Jesus' public ministry. This incident is simply preceded by an account of John the Baptist calling all to moral conversion and foretelling the coming of one greater than himself. This account contains three significant images drawn from Jewish scripture, including that of coming up from the water (Isa. 63:11) and of the heavens being torn open (Isa. 64:1) which is part of a larger prayer for God to help His people. The Spirit coming down like a dove recalls the Spirit of God hovering over the waters in the various actions of creation (Gen 1:1-2), now the Spirit descends upon Jesus as an act of renewed creation. The mystical voice heard by Jesus proclaims him as the unique Son of God draws from the psalms: "You are my son: (Ps 2:7) and from the prophets: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations" (Is 42:1). John was out in the wilderness, near the Jordan River and the desert is often where God manifests Himself. While baptizing, what John was doing was not as baptism is understood to be like today. Although elements of the language used rings of associations with Christian baptism, such as, "John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mk 1:4), ritual washing, then and now, is a part of Jewish life. In the Baptist's case, though, his baptism was less about cleansing and more about a public witness to the inner desire for conversion and moral change. The Baptist is only meant to proclaim that the One who will follow him will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Of all the accounts, Saint Mark is the only Gospel in which Jesus is depicted as actually being baptized. Matthew and Luke record it as a past event, and John's parallel account does not refer to Jesus being baptized at all. Doing so, though, is a profound realization by Jesus that He was being called to a particular mission, similarly akin to the prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. Three signs reveal the true identity of Jesus. The heavens are torn open, the Spirit descends like a dove and God the Father speaks. This is the first time that Mark's Gospel affirms Jesus as the Son of God, and it happens in the strength of words spoken out loud by the Father alone. The only other time that statement is made will

be when a centurion announces the same reality after Jesus has died on the cross (Mk 15:39). Those two spoken divine affirmations stand as bookends for the Gospel. The scriptural texts cited in the verses prior to this passage are a combination of Exodus and the prophets Malachi, and Isaiah "I am sending my angel/messenger ahead of you... to the place I have prepared" (Ex 23,30), Mal 3.1 ('I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me' (Mal 3:1) and "A voice of one crying in the desert prepare the way for the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Is 40:3). In effect, Mark is presenting us with the text of Isaiah, read through Malachi, as a reference back to Exodus. Allusions to the return from Babylonian exile are, thus, offered with overtones of the exodus, which is not surprising, since the return from exile is indeed a kind of second exodus—God powerfully leading his people out of oppression, through the desert, to the land of promise. Mark's use of these texts set up three sets of expectations. The first is what we might now call *Christological*: the preparation is for the coming of the God of Israel, but this now becomes preparation for the One who is coming after John the Baptist, who thus embodies the presence of God amongst His people. The second relates to the *identity of John* himself: in the subsequent chapter, Malachi goes on to identify the one doing the work of preparation as a returning Elijah (Mal 4:5) and there are numerous further Elijah motifs in the following verses. The third expectation is *eschatological*. This Elijah figure will be sent "before that great and terrible day of the Lord" (Mal 4:5) which sits within the widespread Jewish anticipation of an eschatological Elijah figure coming to prepare God's people and usher in the longed-for messianic age. The idea of baptism, administered by a third party, would seem to be novel. Gentile converts to Judaism or proselytes had to undergo a ritual washing as part of their initiation, but this signified a change of ethnic affiliation, and here John is baptizing Jews who remain Jews. Ritual washing in the mikveh was practiced at Qumran and in connection with the temple, but only began around this time, was self-administered, and was a repeated action where John is offering a once-for-all action in preparation for the coming of God. But there is a sense in which the people of God are very familiar with the idea of passing through water as preparation for the action of God. They passed through the waters of the Red Sea as preparation for journeying in the wilderness (hence Paul's language of 'baptism in Moses' in 1 Cor 10.2); they then passed through the waters of the Jordan to enter the Promised Land; the psalmist is rescued through the deep waters of death by God (eg in Ps 18.16); and in returning from exile God has rescued them as they 'pass through the waters' (Is 43.2). This multiple significance was captured rather nicely in the prayer over the water in the ASB 1980 Baptism service (sadly emaciated in the Common Worship service). John's baptism is offered as a sign of 'repentance', of turning back to the way of God after having strayed, and anticipates Jesus' own preaching about the right response to the kingdom in Mark 1.15. (It is often suggested that the Greek term metanoia has a sense of 'thinking again' because of its etymology, but words do not always mean what their etymology suggests, and in the LXX it is used to translate shuv meaning a literal or metaphorical turning around and changing direction.)

Excerpted from: Ian Paul. Psephizo. The Baptism of Jesus in Mark I