By the time the Feast of Epiphany arrives, we may have a tinge of Christmas fatigue along with a few extra pounds. Sometimes, this day is called Little Christmas, the Feast of the Three Kings, or in Eastern Catholicism, *The Theophany,* and the manifestation of God. It would not be a Christmas pageant without the arrival of the Magi to the sounds of *We Three Kings of Orient of Orient are*. The Magi are also known as the Wise Men or the Three Kings. The Gospels do not ever mention that there were only three kings; this number has become popular because of the three gifts that are mentioned in our Scriptures: gold, frankincense, and myrrh . Again, although not found in our Bible, traditions gives us the names of these visitors from the East: *Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthasar.* Three is a frequently told joke about what if the Magi were women and it goes something like this: *They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought practical gifts.*

Along with Christmas and Easter, the Epiphany is one of three oldest feasts celebrated in the Catholic Church. The traditional date for the feast is January 6th, twelve days after Christmas. Now, the feast is celebrated on the second Sunday after Christmas. Epiphany is a Greek word that means to make manifest, a sudden insight to see and understand something in a new way, or a manifestation message of a Divine Being. The great Irish Catholic writer James Joyce used the term epiphany not in a religious sense, but in a sense that something suddenly becomes apparent that one had no previously understood or seen.

I think, if we allow ourselves and are open to the power of God’s grace in our lives, epiphanies occur rather often. Sometimes, when I read the scriptures to prepare a homily, a text that I may have read hundreds of time suddenly opens up to me in word or phrase that leads me to see something in a new way.

The wise men were also known as astrologers, men who studied the stars. The stars were so familiar to them. Yet, the see a new star, shining in such a way that it moves their hearts to make a long and arduous journey to follow that star. Their journey leads them to the stable of Bethlehem.

Many of you have looked at and sailed upon the Chesapeake hundreds of time. But at a certain time, a certain hour, the color of the sky, the movement of sea with light of the sun upon is different and moves you to a prayer of awe: Oh my God! At a baptism, I look at the tiny fingernails of an infant and see the fingerprints of God. I think of the words of Gerard Manley Hopkins poem *God’s Grandeur: The world is charged with the grandeur of God. It will flame out, like shining shook foil.*

# *The Old Testament* focuses on the covenant relationship that God forms with the Jewish People. In the Book of Deuteronomy we read in chapter seven: *For you are a holy nation to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the nations on the earth, to be His own. The Lord did not give you His love and choose you because you were more people than any of the nations. For the number of your people were less than all nations. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the promise He made to your fathers*. There are several instances in *The Old Testament* where God does reach out to people of other nations, but it is major theme of *The Old Testament* that Jewish people have a special relationship with God. Jesus Christ is born of the Jewish race as are Joseph and Mary. The apostles and first disciples were Jewish. Christ is seen as the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament.

One of the earliest dilemmas the early Christians face after Pentecost is the question of should Gentiles (non-Jews) be accepted as Christians. If they are to be accepted, must they follow all the Jewish norms and traditions. Peter and Paul even debate this question in the Acts of the Apostles until the Apostles come to a clear understanding for the revelation of the Holy Spirit that Christianity is for all people, be the Jew or Greek, slave or free, woman or man. The visit of the Magi is also a clear testimony that God is revealing that God is for all peoples. The Magi are foreigners from the East. They are not Jewish but they have found the Christ. The Christian faith welcomes all people of all nationalities.

|  |
| --- |
| The gift of gold was a king’s gift and Christ is our King. Frankincense was a worthy gift for Christ since He was the anointed One who deserves our worship. Myrrh was a prophetic gift because Jesus would die for the sins of the world. Gold speaks of His birth. He is born a King. Frankincense speaks of the fragrance of His life. Myrrh speaks of His death. All of this is indicated in the gifts that were brought to Him at His first coming. O Come Let us Adore Him.  |