

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON



In the Church's calendar the Christmas season begins on Christmas Eve with the Vigil Mass and continues until the feast of the Baptism of the Lord which takes the place of the First Ordinary Sunday of the Year. Traditionally the Epiphany is celebrated on 6 January, the twelfth day of Christmas. In many countries, including Australia, the feast

is transferred to the Sunday closest to 6th January. In 2020, we celebrate The Epiphany on Sunday 5 January.

The word ***Epiphany*** comes from the Greek word for "manifestation". In the western Church, the feast became associated with the manifestation of Jesus to the non-Jewish peoples through the visit of the Magi. Each year we read the account of the coming of the Magi that is found only in Matthew's Gospel (Mt 2:2-12). In Matthew's Gospel the Magi or wise men came from the East; that presumes that they were probably from Persia, modern Iraq.

In the Eastern Churches the Epiphany was the original feast of Christ's birth. When adopted by the Church in western Europe, it became a celebration of the revelation of God's eternal plan of salvation in Christ, manifested as "the light to enlighten all nations". From early times it was associated also with a commemoration of the Lord's Baptism when Jesus was anointed as Messiah and revealed as God's Son. We celebrate the Baptism of the Lord on the Sunday after the Epiphany.

As Jesus came to reveal God's love for all peoples so we too are called to bring a message of peace and good-will to all the nations. That is an invitation to work with men and women of all races, religions and cultures to bring peace to the world. We pray especially for peace in Iraq and Syria.

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