

CHURCH SEASON OF EPIPHANY

The 12 days of Christmas always end January 6, Epiphany Day, when we read the story of the magi's star-lead search for the newborn king and the presentation of their gifts to Baby Jesus. The lectionary readings for the Sundays after Epiphany include the story of Jesus' baptism and the story of Jesus' transfiguration.

This year Epiphany continues through January to Tuesday, March 1, the day before Ash Wednesday. Epiphany is the first of two "ordinary" seasons of the church calendar (the season after Pentecost is the other). It is "ordinary" but not as in "usual" or "commonplace". This "ordinary" comes from the "counted/numbered" (from ordinal numbering) naming of the weeks: first, second, third, etc. Sundays after Epiphany.

"Mardi Gras", Fat Tuesday" and "Pancake Tuesday" are other names for the last day of Epiphany which began as an occasion for eating rich food using the last of the butter and oil before strict fasting during the season of Lent. In some locations, festivities including elaborate costumes, parades, floats, and fancy-dress balls are not limited to just the final Tuesday but happen throughout the weeks after Epiphany Day. Purple, gold and green iced cakes that include a hidden "Baby Jesus" token have become a seasonal treat.

Epiphany is full of light, seeing, and knowing. "Epiphany" comes from the Greek word, epiphaneia, meaning "manifestation" or "appearance." Magi follow a bright star to see and worship Jesus. John baptizes Jesus knowing he is the one sent by God. The disciples understand Jesus in a new way after witnessing his mountain-top Transfiguration.

Our stained-glass pieces for Epiphany show a scallop shell (for baptism), and three candles (for Transfiguration). On our stairwell calendar look for the star and three gifts on the first white panel of Epiphany marking the Magi story... and the sun glasses on the final white panel, marking the brilliant, dazzling white seen on Transfiguration Day.

Our calendar symbol for the season of Epiphany is a lit candle, reminding us Jesus is a Light to all the world, and that we, too, can be lights to the world.

We thank Jane Spalding for contributing this article about Epiphany. Submitted January 2022.