

Epiphany
Pastor Erik Gauss
Cross, Yorkville

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." Matthew 2:1-2

On the twelfth day of Christmas...

I know, I know, some of you are ready to be done with Christmas and move on. I have spoken with several people who take their Christmas decorations down before the New Year! But please give me a moment to explain. Before it was common practice to start Christmas on the day after Thanksgiving, the Christmas season didn't begin until, well, Christmas Day. Christmas Day was known as the first Day of Christmas.

The Christmas Celebration would continue on each of the Twelve Days of Christmas. Each day would celebrate a different part of the Christmas Story or the Christian tradition. For example, December 26th is a widely shared remembrance of the first martyr of the Christian faith, St. Stephen; December 28th is Holy Innocence Day to remember the children murdered by Herod in an effort to kill Jesus; and January 1st is the naming and circumcision of Jesus.

The twelfth Day of Christmas is on January 6th and serves as another important celebration, Epiphany. Epiphany is when it is celebrated that the Magi came to worship/ honor Jesus, the king of the Jews. In reality, the Magi didn't arrive for quite some time after Jesus was born (Herod killed all males under the age of two). Frequently, Epiphany was more celebrated than Christmas itself with many deep and rich traditions.

I won't be the guy that says that society has lost so much because we have been so focused on presents under the tree; but I will say that as Christians, our celebrations and emphasis should be more intentional. The celebration of Epiphany is probably the most meaningful to most all of you reading this article. Unless you are a direct descendent of Abraham - a Jew by blood - Epiphany is the day that it is remembered that Jesus came for ALL people.

Over the years of the New Testament, the Jewish descendants had to be regularly reminded that the gentiles (or non-Jews) were just as important as those with strong blood lines. Today, the Christian Church needs to continually remind itself that Christmas isn't here for us but rather, Christmas is here for ALL. In turn, the modern day Christian Church ought to be here for ALL as well.

Epiphany celebrates the Light that has come to the world for ALL people. Jesus is The Light of God who has come for you, me, our friends, and our enemies. Jesus is God, who came down from Heaven to be with us! So don't put away all those decorations just yet; leave up a manger scene, with the wise men included, and remember God's gift to ALL people.