

TRINITY NEWS

WEEK 01. January 05, 2020. EPIPHANY

Today we're celebrating the Epiphany, though actually today, January 5th, is Twelfth Night or Epiphany Eve – Epiphany, the Feast that wraps up Christmas, is tomorrow – but since it's a working day ...

Epiphany, which means the “showing”, the “revealing,” celebrates just that: the Revelation of Christ to the world – which is, I admit, rather vague. In fact, there are three themes traditionally associated with it.

In the East Jesus's first sign at the wedding in Cana, and especially his Baptism are emphasized; in the West, the focus is on the wise men or Magi from the East- popularly known as the Three Kings – and the topic of our gospel story this morning.

How ‘wise men from the East,” became Three Kings named Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar, is a long and convoluted story: needless to say the story caught the medieval imagination and they went wild with it. And it doesn't stop there, there's a lot more. Melchior is identified as being from Arabia, riding a horse and bearing the gold; Caspar's from the Orient, rides a camel and brings along the frankincense, and Balthazar, well, he's from Africa, rides an elephant and provides the myrrh.

What's interesting though is how theologically appropriate all these legends are despite their fancifulness – they actually emphasize and focus the major theme of the feast by linking it to specific prophecies from Isaiah and the psalms.

*"The Nations [Gentiles] shall come to your light
and Kings to the brightness of your dawning."
and in our own psalm today where we read,
"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall pay tribute, *
and the kings of Arabia and Saba offer gifts.*

The ‘wise men' then, are identified with the kings in these prophecies, and more than that, as specifically Gentile Kings from all over the known world, (though in fact, they were probably Persian), and behold, the meaning of the feast is made clear: the Christ's light, brings the Gentiles, the whole world, bearing their gifts or tribute, to Jesus; the dawn of universal salvation.

Funny how myths and legends are often true in a deeper sense of the word.