

Church, School & Home

The Epiphany In ancient times, the Christmas festivities lasted for a period of twelve days, coming to a close with the feast of the Epiphany on the sixth of January. This feast is one of the oldest and most interesting in the Christian calendar. From very early times it has been celebrated as a holy-day of obligation in European countries, but in our own land its popular observance has been more or less ignored, and its full significance almost forgotten.

Epiphany, the title of the feast, is derived from a Greek word meaning "manifestation." The name indicates the special object of the feast, which is to keep before the minds of the faithful, those events in the life of Christ which distinctively manifested His Divinity. The Epiphany originated in the Eastern or Greek portion of the early Church. At first, it was kept in place of Christmas as the special feast of the Nativity, since the first manifestation of the God-Man in this world took place "when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda." This aspect of the feast was peculiar to the Eastern Church where it prevailed generally up to the close of the fourth century, and in some sections, even later. After this period, however, the 25th of December was almost universally observed in honor of the birth of Christ.

The Epiphany first appears in the Calendar of Feasts of the Latin Church about the end of the fourth century. From its introduction this solemnity has been intimately associated in the West with the manifestation of the Infant Saviour to the Gentiles, typified by the wise men who, guided by a miraculous star, came from the East to Bethlehem to worship Him who was "born King of the Jews." According to an ancient tradition, these wise men were themselves of royal birth. For this reason the Epiphany is called in many places, the "Feast of the Kings." For this reason too, emperors and kings during the Middle Ages cherished a great devotion for the feast, and brought rich gifts to the churches on that day in imitation of the three Kings.

In more recent times, however, doubt has been cast upon the regal character of the wise men. The Latin Vulgate called them

"Magi," a name proper to members of the Persian or Chaldean priestly casts who were well versed in astronomy, medicine and natural philosophy. It is probable that in the course of their study of the heavens, they saw the star, and being men of virtuous life, they received a special revelation as to the supernatural meaning of the marvel. The same tradition which represents the wise men as Kings, makes them three in number, and gives their names as Gaspar, Melchior and Balthasar. However, this tradition seems to go back no earlier than the seventh century. In early Christian art the number of the Magi varied from two to eight, and an Eastern tradition places it at twelve.

While the Roman Liturgy makes the Adoration of the Magi the principal mystery to be honored in the Office of the Epiphany, it also refers to those other manifestations of Christ's Divinity which took place at His Baptism, and at the Marriage Feast of Cana. A beautiful summary of the scope of the feast is given in the "Benedictus" antiphon for this day: "On this day, the Church is joined to her celestial Bridegroom, because Christ washed away her sins in the Jordan, the Magi hasten with gifts to the royal espousals, and the guests are gladdened with water changed into wine."

It is interesting to note that Eastern Catholics commemorate the Adoration of the Magi on Christmas Day. Epiphany, for them, is sacred to the Baptism of Christ, and to the marvelous manifestation of His Divinity which followed, when the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in the form of a Dove, and a voice from heaven was heard saying: "Thou art my beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased." For this reason the 6th of January is referred to in an ancient Coptic Calendar as the "Immersion of the Lord." By Greek Catholics it is often called the "Feast of Lights." The meaning of this title may not be clear unless one recalls that in the early Church, Baptism was often known as the "Illumination," that is, the sacrament by which Christians receive the light of Faith.

Although the miracle which Christ performed at the Marriage Feast of Cana, and by which He first publicly displayed His divine power, is noticed in the liturgy of the Epiphany, in both the Latin and Greek rites, its place is but a subordinate one. Its significance is almost completely overshadowed by that of the Adoration of the Magi and of the Baptism of Christ.

Inseparably associated with this miracle, in the minds of English-speaking peoples, is the famous line of the Catholic poet Crashaw:

"The modest water saw its God and blushed."

The Epiphany indeed, forms a fitting crown to the Christmas festivities. The Church has instituted this feast of the "Manifestations" to remind Christians that the Babe of Bethlehem, lying so weak and helpless in the manger, is truly the God of Majesty and Power. Catholics should celebrate this feast with great fervor in these days when the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ is assailed on every side.

Entertainments "Learn to do by Doing"—Here in a few words is the keynote of modern methods of teaching. As a psychological principle it is a fact, at least it is much more than theory, that many of our mental processes tend to express themselves in action. Very often a mental impression will cause the organism to adapt itself for certain movement, which will be actualized unless inhibited. This tendency is particularly noticeable in children of a highly nervous nature. Some whenever they read must go through the motions of the vocal organs which correspond to the visual sensation. Others at the sound of music will beat time, shuffle their feet or hum. Thus it seems quite evident that many conscious impressions have a dynamic tendency to express themselves in action.

Among the school activities entertainments provide a valuable means for natural expression. In no subject of the curriculum, perhaps, may the dynamic principle be more thoroughly and successfully applied than in the teaching of English and history by means of class plays. The novelty of the class entertainment stimulates the instinct of imitation. Children are great mimics and delight to reproduce the actions of others. Thus it is much easier for them to *act* the thoughts than to express them in words. The child regards the entertainment as a kind of game, since play includes much make believe and personification. The enacting of his experiences may be crude but they are interesting because of the manifestations of the child inventiveness. The value of this mode of expression lies in the opportunity it affords to initiative and personality. Here the

resourceful teacher may point to the child's mistakes, but at the same time encourage him and praise his efforts. Such a procedure will implant in the child-mind the idea that perhaps he can succeed after all even though he be far from perfect at present.

One advantage of the class entertainment from the view point of teaching English, is that the pupils learn to master ideas and actions as well as words and rules. It is of the utmost importance that the ideas presented to the children should be suited to their capacity. But when the children dramatize an incident in literature, their thoughts on that subject are thereby enriched and their ideas are rendered more clear and definite. Therefore a class entertainment instead of interfering with the school work, emphasizes, reinforces, and vitalizes it. It furnishes the best test of the children's growth and power to think and of their skill in expression.

Furthermore we must take cognizance of the worth of class entertainment as a socializing factor. They bring the children into mutual contact. This begets sympathy which naturally leads to a participation in the feelings of others. Such companionship is beneficial and provides valuable training for the child. Frictions and oppositions are certain to arise with consequent punishment and a wholesome readjustment. Thus the child will develop certain social qualities which will contribute largely to his happiness and advance in life.

Class entertainments, apart from these educational advantages, offer exceptional opportunity to imbue the children with the spirit of Catholic festivals and with a love for their country's institutions and customs. This alone will justify the staging of a small play in every class on the more important holidays. We must not lose sight of the fact, that to enter into the spirit of our religious feasts, to know and appreciate our national customs and institutions, we must act them—we must live them, for we all "Learn to do by Doing."

Family Holiness If there be any single virtue peculiar to the truly Catholic Home, which distinguishes it from all other domestic groups, that virtue is family holiness. Family holiness is the hallmark of the household which has taken for its ideal the Holy Three who were gathered together in the

stable at Bethlehem—Mary the Chaste Madonna, Joseph the just man, and that Babe of babes, Jesus the Divine Infant. There was happiness, in spite of discomfort and isolation; there was joy, despite poverty; there was peace, notwithstanding the wintry weather and noisy cattle. What was the secret of this happiness, this joy, this peace, in the face of all that forbade them? Jesus was there, and with Him were Mary and Joseph. And their presence in any Home will assure for that circle the same blessings.

Every mother may take Mary for her model and will find in her a sweet-tempered and gracious exemplar. When homely tasks grow burdensome and everything conspires to annoy and discourage, there is consolation in the thought that Mary's task was not easy. If poverty presents his peaked mien, what comfort there is in the knowledge that Mary, too, had faced this spectre and was not disheartened! Should sorrow shadow the erstwhile happy home, is there not solace in the reflection that the Virgin's heart of hearts was riven by this sword? Mary was an ideal of selfless devotion to her Son, and in the imitation of this modern mothers will contribute much to the holiness of the Home.

Though all the incidents of St. Joseph's life are comparatively unknown, we possess an insight into his character. We may well picture his regret at being able to provide no fitting shelter for his spouse and her Child during their stay in Bethlehem, and we may conceive with what ardor and affection he labored to make the best of this unfortunate situation. The journey from Galilee had been slower than usual on account of Mary's condition, but Joseph did not complain though it had cost them their chance of securing accommodation at the inn. He had been chosen to protect and to provide for the Immaculate Mother and her Heavenly Child, and he set no limits to his exertions in the accomplishment of that duty. What an example for fathers! Provident, watchful, surpassingly devoted to his family, his character deserves imitation.

What can we say of the Child Jesus? He is the model of all, but especially as the Christmas Babe is He the epitome of all that is virtuous in a child. Obedient, patient, gentle, seeking poverty voluntarily, He presents manifold possibilities of good example. If He had willed it, He might have been born in the

palace of the Caesars', but he deigned to make a stable His birth-place. Even royal purple would have been poor covering for His tiny body, yet He allowed Himself to be bundled up in "swaddling clothes." The feedbox of animals was the cradle of His choice. It was the beginning of a life that was to be marked by obedience, by devotion to the wishes of his parents, by companionship with the poor. It was all for our example and every boy and girl may look to the Manger of Bethlehem for his paradigm. "A little Child shall lead them" and shall bless them as His followers.

The students of the Dominican House of Studies, Washington, are gratified by the many messages of appreciation that have come to Dominicana during the past year. They have come even from far away Jerusalem and from points on the Pacific Coast. Our readers have done us a real service for an editor can only judge the worth of his publication through the considered judgment of his readers. In expressing our thanks for the interest taken we hasten to wish our many friends a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, praying that their every good wish may come to fulfillment through God's grace.