

The Epiphany of the Lord

The Greek word Epiphany (*epiphanos*), which means *appearance* or *manifestation* or showing forth, is used to describe Jesus' first appearance to the Gentiles. Originally the word Epiphany referred to the visit of a king to the people of his provinces. "Epiphany" refers to God's Self-revelation as well as to the revelation of Jesus as His Son to all mankind. Epiphany is an older celebration than the feast of Christmas, having originated in the East in the late second century. In Italy and Spain, the gifts traditionally associated with the Christmas season are exchanged today, on the feast of the Epiphany. Among Italians, it is believed that the gifts are brought by the old woman, *Befana* (from Epiphany), whereas Spanish custom attributes the gifts to the *Kings* or *Magi*. In the Western Church, the feast commemorates the coming of the Magi as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles. In the Eastern Church, the feast also commemorates the Baptism of Christ. The angels revealed Jesus to the shepherds, and the star revealed him to the Magi, who had already received hints of Him from the Jewish Scriptures. Later, God the Father revealed Jesus' identity to Israel at his Baptism in the Jordan. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus revealed himself as the promised Messiah. Finally, Jesus revealed himself as a miracle worker at the wedding of Cana, thus revealing his Divinity. These multiple revelations are all suggested by the Feast of the Epiphany.