

## THE SEASONS OF THE CHURCH.

## EPIPHANY.

**I**MMEDIATELY after the season of Christmas, and closely depending upon it, is that of the Epiphany, when we commemorate the making known of Christ to the Gentiles: at which time the "wise men" who came from the East to Jerusalem, were permitted to pay to Him their worship, and to offer to Him their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh,—they being the first of the Gentiles who came to Him, and as such representing all the nations of the earth whom He came to save by the might of His holy Incarnation.

This is the *fact* of the Epiphany. But there is more than this intended, we may be sure. It is meant that we should learn that He who, born into the world on Christmas-day, was truly a man, was also, and ever had been, truly God. As then we were taught by the Christmas services that our Lord was "man of the substance of His mother, born in the world;" so now, by the Epiphany services, we learn that He was "God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds." Of these two natures "is one Christ, very God, and very Man."

The great humility, in which our Lord as at this time came to visit us, is a wondrous circumstance. Yet we are not to think of this to the exclusion of another truth, equally important. We must not forget that our Lord is also our Creator, our God, and will hereafter be our Judge. May it not be that, to impress *this* truth upon us, the Gospel records those glorious sights which accompanied the Nativity of our Blessed Lord? Shepherds are keeping watch over their flocks by night, and the Angel of the Lord stands before them, surrounded with that wondrous glory which belongs to the Divine Redeemer: and after announcing to them the birth of the Saviour there appears a multitude of the heavenly host praising God. And at the Epiphany a meteor in the heavens had gone before the wise men who came from the East country, until, "standing over where the young Child was," it designated Him to whom they in adoration offered their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, "thus showing,"

as says one of the old fathers, "their belief that He to whom they knelt, was a King, was God, and was a Man."

Nor must it be forgotten that this mysterious birth had been heralded by the Angel Gabriel; that the spiritual Elijah had been sent to prepare His way; and that now while the Infant Christ withdraws into Egypt, he leaves at Bethlehem a band of infant martyrs behind Him. All this, we think, should serve to rescue our Lord's nativity, and His Person, from that *familiarity* with which it has, unhappily, been treated.

And it cannot be doubted that the teaching of the Epiphany, which is, that the Man born at Christmas is still, as He always had been, and always will be, truly God,—it cannot be doubted that this teaching will help to guard us from an undue familiarity, at the same time that it keeps before our minds one great truth of our religion. The Epiphany is the manifestation of the Almighty God through the veil of the flesh. And so, on the festival itself, in the Holy Gospel we hear of the manifestation by the star; in the second morning lesson we have brought before us the acknowledgement by God the Father of the Eternal Son while the Holy Ghost visibly descends from heaven; and in the evening lesson we have the Saviour manifesting forth His glory by the first miracle at Cana of Galilee.

And so in the Gospels for the following Sundays, we have (1) our Lord's wonderful discourse with the doctors in the temple; then (2), a repetition of the miracle at Cana; (3), the healing of the leper and of the Centurion's servant; (4), the stilling of the tempest and the cure of the demoniac; all doubtless intended to impress upon our minds the one great truth,—that He who did such mighty works was Perfect God, as well as Perfect Man; that He "who was born of the Virgin Mary," and whose nativity we have just commemorated on Christmas-day, was also "God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds"; thus completing the statement of the catholic faith upon the subject of the Incarnation,—"that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man." G.