

THE EPIPHANY.

The Feast of the Epiphany is now presenting itself in solemn and fitting grandeur. Its name, which signifies *manifestation*, sufficiently indicates that it is specially destined to honour the appearance of a God among men.

As we have already said, this Feast was at one time blended with that of Christmas; but when the decrees of the Holy See obliged the churches to commemorate the Mysteries of the Nativity on December 25th, the 6th of January was not shorn of all its glory, but retained the name of the Epiphany.

In France, and in all colonies inhabited by the French, this Feast is called "The King's" or "Feast of the Kings," while in England it bears the name of "Twelfth Day." It also is sometimes called "Old Christmas Day," as before the change of *Style* what is now December 25th was then January 6th.

On the Feast of the Epiphany are celebrated three great manifestations of the glory of Christ: the Mystery of the Magi, who, led by a star, came from the East to pay homage to the Divine Royalty of the Babe of Bethlehem; the Mystery of Christ's Baptism in the waters of Jordan, where He was proclaimed to be the Son of God by the voice of His Heavenly Father Himself; lastly, the Mystery of Christ's exercising His Divine power by turning the water into wine at the symbolical Marriage of Cana.

The first of these mysteries, the adoration of the Magi, is the special one held up for our contemplation by the Holy Church on this day, whilst the Mystery of our Saviour's Baptism is honoured on the day of the Octave, and that of the Marriage in Cana on the second Sunday after Epiphany. It is, then, with the Manifestation of Christ to the Magi, and, through them, to the Gentiles, that we have to do to-day. The birth of the Divine Infant had been made known to the Jews and the shepherds by the ministry of an angel, or angels, whilst to the Magi it was made known by the apparition of a star. True science is ever the hand-maid of religion, and many eminent astronomers have born testimony to the existence and singular brilliancy of this star, (1) and, without taking away from its miraculous character, have explained this celestial phenomenon in various ways.

The three illustrious visitors to the Crib are named *Magi*, not because they were *Magicians*, which is one signification of the word *Magi*, but because they were learned in natural science and endowed with extraordinary wisdom. The name St. Matthew bestows on them is that of "Wise Men from the East," Matt. 2: 12). The Persians and many other Oriental nations called their doctors, or learned men, *Magi*, in the same way as the Hebrews called them *Scribes*; the Egyptians, *Prophets*; the Greeks, *Philosophers*; and the Latins, *Sages*. The Church also bestows on these Wise Men the title of *Kings*, and many old paintings seem to confirm this title by representing them crowned and bearing all the insignia of royalty. Another opinion is that these *Magi* were priests, since, in various countries, the power and dignity of priesthood was always conferred on kings. However this may be, whether they were really kings or priests, it is certain that they were persons of the highest merit, and it has always been believed that they were three in number, without counting their respective attendants or suites. The names assigned to them by tradition are Gaspar, Melchior and Balthazar, and they represent the three great human families: Melchior, that of Sem; Gaspar, that of Cham; and Balthazar, that of Japheth.

It is not precisely known from whence they came, for the Evangelist only says they came "from the East," i.e., from some country to the East of Jerusalem and Bethlehem. The more probable opinion is that they came from Arabia Felix, and the prophecies concerning them would seem to bear out this theory. Nor is it exactly known how long their journey lasted, but tradition says they arrived in Jerusalem on the sixth of January, where they

made researches as to where they would find the newborn King of the Jews that they might hasten to adore Him. Herod the Great, who was then (unjustly) on the throne of Judæa, desirous of ridding himself of this King, spoke fairly to the Magi and asked them to visit him again on their return from their quest and inform him where this wondrous Infant might be found, but Herod's hypocrisy being afterwards revealed to them, they took good care to pass to their homes by another route.

Guided by the star, they found the place where lay this Infant King whose throne was a manger, and on the thirteenth day after His birth the Magi prostrated themselves before Him in adoration, and opening their treasures offered Him gold, frankincense and myrrh; gold to honour His royalty, frankincense to honour His divinity, myrrh as an emblem of His mortal life.

After the Magi had rendered their homage to their Sovereign Lord and conversed at great length with Mary and Joseph, they took their leave, weeping and protesting of their unalterable fidelity to the Faith which they had now professed. Having arrived in their own country they made known what they had seen and heard, and preached to their people the wonders of the Incarnate Word who had come to earth for man's salvation.

Shortly afterwards, renouncing their kingdoms and their riches, they conformed themselves to that life of poverty and humiliation the secret of which they had learned at the Saviour's Crib.

The tradition of the Church tells us that eventually they won the crown of martyrdom, and although the calendar of Cologne gives a detailed account of their death, at extreme old age, from natural causes, there is no certainty to be attained in the matter. Their relics, after having reposed for various lengths of time in Persia, Constantinople and Milan, were in 1162 transported to Cologne, in whose Cathedral they have ever since been venerated.

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THE POPE'S JUBILEE.

THE JUBILEE MASS AT ST. PETER'S.

The New York *World's* special from Rome gives the following account of the Holy Father's Jubilee Mass, and the grand ceremonies at St. Peter's:

Rome presented a beautiful appearance this morning. Although the day was crisp and cold, it was clear. Flags waved from nearly every house, and gay ornaments and decorations were seen everywhere. The city, since yesterday, has been filled to overflowing. The train services have been doubled, and every train has come in crowded with visitors. All the hotels and available quarters were last night filled to their utmost capacity. There was the greatest eagerness on the part of every one to witness the splendid ceremonial of the Jubilee Mass, which took place this morning within the dark, picturesque interior of mighty St. Peter's Cathedral. So great was the interest that thousands of people passed last night upon the steps, and in the vicinity of this church, waiting patiently through the long, cold watches of the night for the opening of the doors to admit the great host of people invited to be present. It is estimated that there were at least eighty thousand people within the walls of the church during the ceremonial. Notwithstanding the fact that the number was so large, there was no undue crowding or disorder. Three thousand Italian troops stood from early morning until the close of the ceremony in the Palace St. Pierre, in front of the Cathedral. These soldiers stood in compact, impassive lines, making a brilliant background for the picturesque and cosmopolitan gathering which pressed through the portals of the church at 6.30 this morning, when the great doors were swung back by the gendarmes of the Pope's special service. These gendarmes, with the Swiss and Palatine Guards, guarded the interior. They posed in picturesque groups at every turn of the interior. Some 1,000 policemen, in civilian clothes, mingled with the audience for the purpose of guarding against any possible disorder or outbreak from some fanatical anti-clerical.

(1) A dissertation on the subject of this star would be *à terre* out of place; but those desirous of learning more on the subject may consult "The Lesser Bollandists": article Epiphany.