

ST. MARY'S CHURCH

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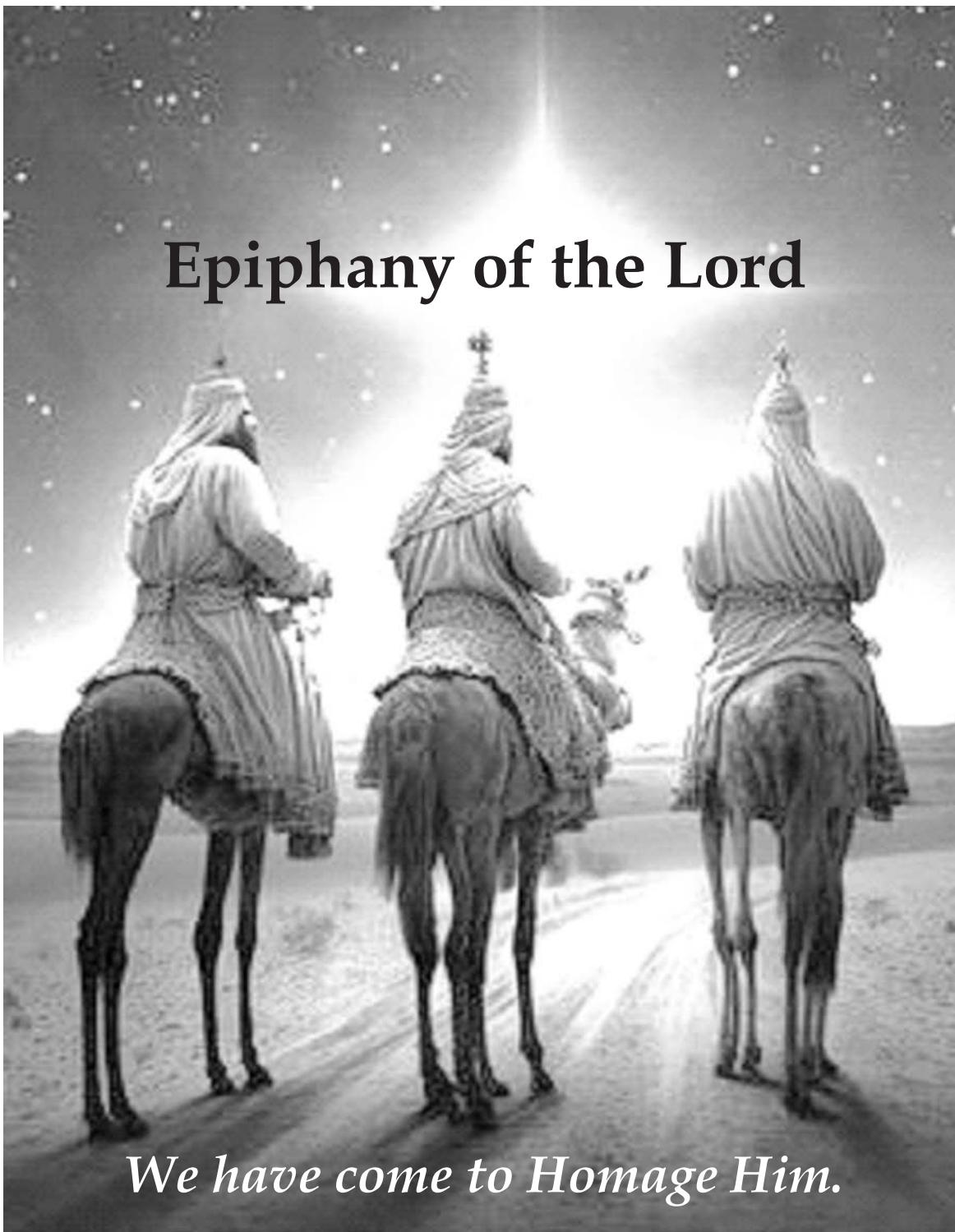
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Epiphany of the Lord



MANIFESTATION

Over the years, I've written extensively about experiencing God and how every Catholic and Christian is meant to encounter moments when God's presence is made clear to us in a very real and sensory way. By nature, God's revealing of Himself has always been accompanied by tangible signs—Moses, with his eyes, saw a bush that was blazing yet not consumed, which gave the appearance of God's presence to him. Moses also heard God's voice, perhaps within or from outside himself, but the voice that spoke directly to him instructed him to remove his sandals, for the ground he was standing on—in God's presence—was sacred and holy. Words, actions, events, and sensations accompany God's presence to us and within us, and sometimes it is felt as a sense of joy, peace, or inner calm.

The Third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, can always be regarded as the movement and wisdom of God, guiding not only our minds and thoughts but also our wills and desires toward Itself – toward God. The presence of the Holy Spirit can be felt in a tangible way, where one experiences a genuine, perhaps sudden sense of inner calm and peace, whether in a moment of turmoil or during quiet contemplation of God's love.

I've sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit several times in my life. It can happen at any moment, but I always feel it as a sudden quiver of energy that runs through me. It is rather like the calling-card of the Spirit, where I know this is a gifted moment of its manifestation in a particular situation I find myself in.

One of my earliest signs of the Holy Spirit, even though I had experienced this more generally earlier in my life, was at six years old while I was in first grade at school. Our teacher, Sister Mary Jacquelain, asked us students what we wanted to be when we grew up. I remember hands being raised around the classroom as the excitement over that question quickly brought to mind our dreams of future lives, imagining when we might turn these aspirations into a real career or a fantasy. (How often children want to be a superhero, which, while not practical, is a sign of personal greatness and power steered toward the good of others.) Some of my classmates' answers were a policeman, a fireman, a nurse, a doctor, and an astronaut. I still vividly remember raising my hand and responding, "I would like to be a priest." As I look back, I realize that I had no idea what a priest was, though I had an every-Sunday example of what a priest did, at least at Mass. Yet... as soon as I had spoken those seven simple words aloud, I felt a deep, quickening beat and rhythm of my heart, accompanied by a strange, sweet sensation I compared to being filled with cotton candy. The Holy Spirit!



A real manifestation of God in a little boy's innocence. It was an experience of joy and holy trepidation of what I said and what could be. I look back now and realize that the Holy Spirit was saying to me, "What you have just said you do not really know about yet. But that is my will for you." And I've never forgotten it, and how could I?

I experienced another physical sign of the Holy Spirit when I was a teenager. I had joined a youth group at Holy Cross Parish in Oshawa, led by Fr. Tony Van der Vechte, the associate pastor who worked closely with the youth. He had a gentle, kind approach with us and demonstrated a beautiful love for Jesus. A smaller part of the weekly youth group meetings at the church was dedicated to house-based Bible studies. One evening, I attended one of these meetings, arriving a little late. As I entered the basement, I could hear they were already listening to a talk on the scriptures, so I decided to wait in the adjoining room and listen instead of interrupting. While listening to the talk, I suddenly felt a strange yet beautiful sensation within me, as if I were being filled to the point that I might actually speak or say something, although I was all alone. I knew it was from the Lord.

On another occasion, during my time working at General Motors in Oshawa, I recall being invited to a Full Gospel Business Men's dinner featuring a Catholic priest, Fr. Bob McDougall, SJ, as the speaker. While he was giving his talk, I stepped out of the room to use the washroom, and when I returned, he was calling out different people in the room whom the Lord was healing at that moment. Fr. Bob would receive knowledge from the Holy Spirit of individuals in the room who were suffering from illnesses such as cancer and other ailments, whom the Lord was healing. Hearing this, I didn't want to disturb the gathering, so I leaned against the back wall and watched and wondered. As Fr. Bob identified those in the room with various afflictions claiming God's healing power, I silently asked the Lord if He was truly present among all this. It was fortunate that I was leaning against the wall because, as soon as I interiorly voiced that question, I felt a sudden and incredible surge of power flow through me from head to foot, as if God's Holy Spirit was responding within me, "Of course I am here!"

There have been other manifestations at different times in my life, besides those cited above, yet one thing common to all of them as I experienced them is that I deserved and merited none of them. None of these occurrences in which I experienced the power of the Holy were given me because I was holy, but rather the grace of God through which I experienced the ability and the call to be holy. Did I consider myself then or do I consider myself now to be holy? Not at all. In so many ways I sometimes consider myself to be a spiritual mess, yet the Lord in His great goodness blesses me with grace upon grace, as St. Paul would call it. I can't help but be grateful for the many blessings that have come to me over the years and the goodness Christ has shown to me. As well, I did not go out in search of any of these manifestations of God's presence I felt, rather, they found me when I was not looking for them. Found in these encounters with the Holy Spirit was God's call for me to desire to be holy, to follow Him and to desire to be close to Him. I wanted the 'more' that is God Himself and could not be satisfied in the world, though it wasn't and hasn't been or a lack of trying on my part.

Looking at my own life, I often wonder why these beautiful and mysterious things have happened to me, especially since I don't know how others experience God. In fact, what if God gives me these things because He knows I need them to strengthen my faith, while others might not need them at all? So, I have nothing to boast about except for the great love I know Jesus has for me. I often recognize, and believe others might too, that perhaps the greatest weakness or illness among Christians is amnesia—because it's so easy to forget what God has done for me and through me. What He has done for me is most fully realized in His death on the Cross. What He has done and is doing for others comes through the gift and call of the priesthood, allowing others to become holy through that calling. As a sinner, I know God chooses to work through me, as a priest, to help others experience His grace. I cannot boast about this at all, because it doesn't come from me, nor is its source found within me. I received the Holy Spirit when I was baptized and it was fostered, thankfully, through the faith and example of my parents.

The greatest manifestation the world has ever seen is the miracle of the sun at Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. Over 70,000 people witnessed the sun seemingly rotate and change colour, then appear to detach from its axis and plunge toward Earth. The people had been told by the three children, to whom the Blessed Virgin appeared, that there would be a remarkable miraculous sign, so they would believe that God was calling them to conversion. While the countryside had been drenched in heavy rains for three days, the miracle occurred wondrously, drying the land and the people's clothing as if there had been no rain at all. God manifests Himself to us so that by the signs seen and sensed, we would come to believe that God's great power outside of us was moving man to Himself.

The shepherds, regarded by city dwellers to be criminals and low-life's, were among the first to be invited to see the newborn King. In the darkness of night, as they were with their flocks, a brilliant heavenly light appeared and an angel invited them to come and see the Saviour born that night. They represent those whom many would consider lowly, dirty and low class, yet the heavenly invitation is given to them. And they come and behold this most strange sight where in utter poverty and muck and dung, is found the Saviour who is but a baby.

The Maji sought to find the one whose birth the stars would guide them toward, and when they found Him – most humbly and unexpectedly – as a mere baby, their lives were changed symbolized in the fact that when they left, "they left by another road".

Our earthly pursuits will find us taking many paths. Some of them rambling while others more guided and straight. Yet ultimately all of our choices, hardships, struggles, joys, friendships and relationships will lead us to a final place and face. May it be the magnificent and beautiful face of Jesus Christ... for endless days. (Fr. Charles)



SCHEDULE & INTENTIONS	
MASS	
Tue Jan 6 th	NO MASS
Wed Jan 7 th	NO MASS
Thurs Jan 8 th	NO MASS.
Fri Jan 9 th	NO MASS
Sat Jan 10 th	
8:30am	NO MASS
4:30pm	+Louis Vella Requested by the Family
Sun Jan 11 th	
9:00am	For the People
11:00am	+David & Andy Calado Requested by Helena Calado

Please Pray for the Sick

Mary Little, Alex Poirier, Hudson Ford,
Mary Elliot



Please Pray for the Recently Deceased



The Sanctuary Lamp Burns
In Memory of the Krpan & Rozic Families
Dec Jan 4th to Jan 10th, 2026



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Offertory Envelopes that need to be picked up, will be in the parish hall. If you would like to start using envelopes please give me a call at the parish office and I will get a box ready for you.

ARE YOUR REGISTERED WITH THE PARISH?

HAVE YOU MOVED?

DO WE HAVE YOUR CORRECT ADDRESS
Please let the office know, as we want to
make sure that your tax receipt gets to you

CATHOLIC MOM'S GROUP

Meetup Wed Dec 3/2025
9:30-11am
Church Hall
"Drawing Closer to God"
Children welcome
Bring some colouring pencils
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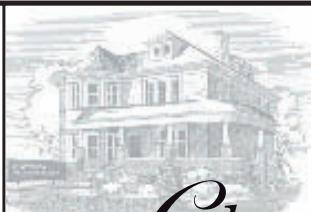
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