

BY JIM MERRITT
Special to Newsday

The Feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 6 celebrates the revelation of God to mankind in human form. This week's clergy discuss the meaning of the Epiphany, one of world's oldest Christian feasts, and also known worldwide as Three Kings Day.

The Rev. Msgr. James M. McNamara
Pastor, Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal R.C. Church, Point Lookout

Epiphany means "appearance," so the feast of the Epiphany celebrates the appearance of Christ to the whole world. It signals that God's love is universal and is meant for all people. God does not just love some of us. God loves all of us. Jesus is revealed as the Savior for all the nations through the visit of the Magi from the East. In some countries gifts are exchanged on Jan. 6, which is traditionally the feast of the Epiphany. It is an opportunity for us to recognize the gift of presence to one another and to express our appreciation to our loved ones for who they are and what they do. The story of the three wise men who follow the star to Bethlehem is found in Matthew's Gospel chapter 2, verses 1-12. "The Magi set out because of a deep desire which prompted them to leave everything and begin a journey. It was as though they had always been waiting for that star" (Pope Benedict XVI). We would do well to yearn for the star that points to the Prince of Peace and the God of Hope. The birth of Christ the Savior took place over 2,000 years ago. The significance of Christmas in our troubled world today lies deep within our hearts where fear often dominates and revenge seeks release. While remaining



James M. McNamara

OUR LADY OF MIRACULOUS MEDAL



Maxine Barnett

THE CHURCH OF ST. JUDE



Rafael Garcia

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF HEMPSTEAD

orated. However, during this very special season, the Church celebrates the revelation of Jesus as the essence of him making possible the work for our salvation.

The Rev. Rafael Garcia
Pastor, United Methodist Church of Hempstead

The Feast of the Epiphany is the revelation of the divine. According to the Gospel of Matthew, it's when wise men from the East came to Bethlehem to offer worship to the infant Jesus, and they brought gifts as a way to recognize and honor his divinity. In the Bible they don't actually have names. The assumption that they were three started in the Second Century and the names Gaspar, Balthasar and Melchior were given in the Sixth Century. Celebrating the Epiphany is more of a tradition in some Latin-American cultures than others. Puerto Ricans and Mexicans give a lot of weight to the celebration. It is on that day, which in Spanish is called Dia de Los Reyes, or Three Kings Day, that they give gifts during Christmastime. In one of my previous parishes in Port Chester in Westchester County, a family from Mexico organized a celebration and they brought the rosca de reyes, a pastry in the shape of a ring with small figures of the infant Jesus baked inside. By tradition they slice the rosca and whoever gets the figure is supposed to organize a feast for the Virgin Mary at some point later in the year. Epiphany in the United Methodist tradition begins with Epiphany Sunday, which is celebrated at the beginning of the year, and extends for five or six more Sundays. During the last Sunday of Epiphany, the Protestant tradition celebrates the Transfiguration of the Lord, which is the story when Jesus took three of his disciples to the top mountain and revealed his glory.

ASKING THE CLERGY

What meaning does the Feast of the Epiphany hold?

realistic and cautious, may we move beyond fear to faith and allow the Prince of Peace to flood the world with love.

The Rev. Maxine Barnett
Curate, The Church of St. Jude (Episcopal), Wantagh

A vivid childhood memory of mine is of my younger brother dressed in sandals, a borrowed bathrobe and a paper crown. He sang "We Three Kings of Orient Are" loudly and off-key. He was playing the part of one of the Magi who came to see the baby Jesus. It's a familiar scene played out in Sunday school Christmas pageants all over the world. However, the Feast of Epiphany, Jan. 6, gives the Church an opportunity to unwrap the significance of what this band of sages

teaches us about who Jesus is. Matthew's Gospel does not say how many were in the group that made the long, arduous journey following the star from the Far East to Bethlehem. We are told that they arrived, worshipped the child and presented the three special gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The Epiphany is that the Magi regarded Jesus as King and Lord. Since Epiphany is about revelations about Jesus, this feast also focuses on Jesus' baptism. Gospel accounts of the event describe the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus with a voice from heaven declaring that Jesus is God's beloved Son. Also during Epiphany, many Christians remember Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana. In changing water into wine, Jesus reveals his divinity. From solemn to festive, there are many cultural differences in how Epiphany is commem-

calendarwatch

TODAY

SPIRITUAL DISCUSSION

HICKSVILLE Saturday discussion is for those who would like to share their journey with like-minded friends, 10 a.m.-noon, Center for Spiritual Living Long Island, 17 Maple Place, free, csl-longisland.org, 516-822-9314.

TOMORROW

SUNDAY SERVICES

SAG HARBOR Includes worship music by the church's praise band and Bible teaching; 10 a.m. service in English, 5 p.m. service in Spanish. Community Bible Church, 2837 Noyac Rd., cbchampton.com, 631-725-4155.

SUBMIT NOTICES ONLINE three weeks in advance at exploreli.com/submitevent. Look for "faith" in the "community" folder. When registered users of newsday.com submit an event online, it goes into our database with top priority. Upload photos and videos, too!

AN EPIPHANY CONCERT

BRENTWOOD Presented by the Rockville Centre Diocesan Choir, directed by Michael Wustrow, director of music at St. Agnes Cathedral in Rockville Centre, conducted in the Sacred Heart Chapel, 4 p.m., Sisters of St. Joseph Retreat and Renewal Center, 1725 Brentwood Rd., freewill offering appreciated, more information available at brentwoodcsj.org, 631-273-4531.

HANDBELL CONCERT

AMITYVILLE Holiday and classical music for hand bells and piano, 3 p.m., First United Methodist Church of Amityville, 25 Broadway/Route 110, freewill offering, amityunitedmethodistchurch.org, 631-264-0152.

THE WEEK AHEAD

THE MEN'S FORUM

SAINT JAMES Discussing "Defending the Catholic Faith," adoration begins at 6:30 p.m., speaker at 7:30, followed by coffee and cake at 8:30 Monday, Saints Philip & James Parish, 1 Carow Place, free, sspj.org, 631-584-5454.

TALES FROM THE TALMUD

ROSLYN HEIGHTS A study of tractate Berakhot, meets at 11 a.m. on the first Wednesday of the month, Temple Sinai of Roslyn, 425 Roslyn Rd., free, mysinai.org, 516-621-6800.

EAST END YOUTH FELLOWSHIP

SAG HARBOR All teens welcome, 7 p.m., Wednesday, lower level of Community Bible Church, 2837 Noyac Rd., free, cbchampton.com, 631-725-4155.

FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE

JERICHO Make shabbat come to life at musical Friday night service, join for a festive meal beforehand, 7-9:30 p.m., Jericho Jewish Center, 430 N. Broadway, service is free; dinner \$18 a person, \$54 a family, reserve, jerichojc.com, 516-938-2540.

SOULFUL SUNDOWN

MANHASSET Dinner, worship service and live performance by The Levins, 6:30 p.m. Friday Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock, 48 Shelter Rock Rd., \$4 dinner (optional), free worship service and coffeehouse, uucs.org, 516-627-6560.

Feast of Theophany

The divine liturgy for the Feast of the Holy Theophany will be celebrated on Wednesday (see Ask the Clergy, above). Theophany is one of the most important great feasts of the Orthodox Church. It commemorates the visitation of the Three Wise Men at the birth of Christ, celebrates his baptism in the River Jordan and marks the manifestation of the Holy Trinity and the beginning of Christ's ministry. In observance, a service and blessing of holy water will take place at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in East Meadow, followed by the Great Blessing of Water service at Alhambra Beach of Massapequa at about 1 p.m. Orthodox Christians use the holy water of Theophany to bless and sanctify their homes for the coming year. All are welcome.

WHEN | WHERE 9:30 a.m. Wednesday, Holy Trinity Orthodox Church, 369 Green Ave., East Meadow

INFO 516-483-3649, htocem.org

ADMISSION Free

— GINA TABARUS