

The Carpenter's Helper

This Week...

Burning of the Greens

What's up with
this tradition?

Weekly Parish Schedule

Add your group's event to
the calendar: email
stthomassooffice
@googlegroups.com

New Service Weds 1/15 at noon

Join us for a service of
Intercessory Prayer
with Holy Eucharist

What's With This Epiphany Bonfire????

When I was a young boy growing up in the Polish section of east Baltimore (Highlandtown, to be exact, and within walking distance of Canton, Broadway, Boston Street, and Fells Point), my mother ALWAYS removed the Christmas decorations on the feast of the Epiphany, January 6. In those days, we would just put the greens in the alley for the trash folks to pick them up.

When I was a young man (in the late 1980's), my family and I found our "church home" at ST. THOMAS and for some reason, there was ALWAYS a "stripping of the church greens" and a bonfire on the feast of the Epiphany, January 6. Somehow, I became involved with this ST. THOMAS tradition and have been organizing the bonfire portion ever since. (For general information, the city of Newark requires a bonfire permit and the fire department is aware of the date and time of the burning. Sometimes, however, the Newark Police and the University of Delaware Police seem to be out of the loop.) I decided to do a bit of research to figure out what was the big deal with this feast day and removal of the Christmas greens:

1. The term "epiphany" means "to show" or "to make known" or "to reveal". The Feast of the Epiphany is the revelation of the "light" of the Christ Child to the Gentiles (non-Jews) through the arrival of the Magi (sages/wise men, not necessarily kings, from Persia).
2. The story of the Magi traveling from the East following the "Star of Bethlehem" to see the Christ Child appears only in the Gospel of Matthew. There is no mention of the number of Magi in Matthew. However, since the 6th century, the Christian writers have used the names of Caspar ("Master of Treasure"), Melchior ("King"), and Balthazar ("Protect-the-King").
3. The gifts of the Magi are symbolic of who Jesus is, and what He did and taught. **GOLD** symbolizes that Jesus is King, since precious metals were often given as gifts to royalty. **MYRRH** is symbolic of the sacrificial death of Jesus, since it was one of the balming spices used on Jesus' body. As a medicinal agent, it also symbolizes that Jesus is a healer, and healing was a component of His adult ministry. **FRANKINCENSE** (incense) symbolizes Jesus' role as Priest, since ancient Jews and Greeks believed that incense, used in worship, carried prayers to heaven.
4. Saint Bede the Venerable hints that the Magi represent different races, an idea that was further developed around the 14th century, in which the men were said to represent the 3 known races of the time, European, Asian, and African.
5. Epiphany marks the end of the Twelve Days of Christmas and the Christmas Season.

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6. Tradition calls for the removal and burning of wreaths, trees, and evergreens left from the Christmas Season. In earlier times, it was bad luck to leave evergreen decorations up past January 6 or to discard them by means other than burning. (VOILA!!!! Now I know why we do it!!)

7. "In conclusion, the Feast of the Epiphany is a time of focusing on the mission of the Church in reaching others by "showing" Jesus as the Savior of ALL people. It also is a time of focusing on our Christian community and fellowship, especially in healing the divisions of prejudice and bigotry that we all too often create between God's children."

Come and celebrate the end of the Christmas Season on Sunday, January 5 beginning with a Fellowship and Pot Luck Supper at 5:00 PM. Since the Church will have been stripped of the Christmas greens after the 10:30 Service that morning, the lighting of the bonfire will proceed shortly after dinner.

by Bob Rys



I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them- 1 Timothy 2:1

A Service of Intercession with Holy Eucharist

Wednesdays at noon

Please join us to pray for all the needs of our hearts,
the parish, and the world.

Begining January 15th

PARISH CALENDAR

Sunday, January 5

8:00am (N) Holy Eucharist Rite I
9:00am (U) Youth Confirmation
9:15am (P) Adult Education
9:15am (U) Nursery
9:30am (U) Children's Worship
10:30am (N) Holy Eucharist Rite II
11:45am (GH) Coffee, Fellowship
12:00pm Greening of the Sanctuary
2:00pm (C) Girl Scout Troop 513
5:00pm (GH) EPIPHANY Fellowship
worship, pot-luck, & burning of the greens

Monday, January 6

6:30am (C) Sunrise Serenity AA
7:30pm (GH) Scottish Dance

Tuesday, January 7

6:30am (C) Sunrise Serenity AA
4:30pm (U) Girl Scout Troop 513
7:00pm (GH) UD Ballroom Dance
8:00pm (U) KIS AA

Wednesday, January 8

6:30am (C) Sunrise Serenity AA
10:30am (C) Lectionary Bible Study
4:00pm (C) Blue Hen Bounty
5:45pm (P) Centering Prayer
8:30pm (GH,K) S College Speakers AA

Thursday, January 9

6:30am (C) Sunrise Serenity AA
7:30pm (MR) St Gregory's Choir

Friday, January 10

6:30am (C) Sunrise Serenity AA
12:00pm (P) Al-Anon
6:30pm (P) Women's AA

Saturday, January 11

-available-

Sunday, January 12

8:00am (N) Holy Eucharist Rite I
9:00am (U) Youth Confirmation
9:00am (GH) Finance Update
-with DOUGHnuts
9:15am (U) Nursery
9:30am (U) Children's Worship
10:30am (N) Holy Eucharist Rite II
with Holy Baptism
11:45am (GH) Coffee, Fellowship
1:00pm CREW Faith & Family
UD Basketball Game
2:00pm (U) Girl Scout Troop 513
7:00pm (GH) UD Ballroom Dance

location key:

(C) Classroom
(GH) Great Hall
(N) Nave
(P) Parlor

(MR) Music Room
(U) Undercroft
(BO) Business Office
(RO) Rector's Office