

- While most of the world has already put away their Christmas trees and their decorations, we Catholics are still going strong in our Christmas celebrations!
- This is because Christmas, along with Easter, is a feast that so solemn and so important that we cannot limit its celebration to just one day.
- Indeed, these two feast days of the Church are so eminent and the mysteries that they recall are so sublime that we celebrate these two feasts for an octave: 8 days.
- The number 8 is significant because it symbolizes the 8th day of creation, the day of re-creation, which brings perfection to the original 7 days of creation. Thus, the number 8 is a symbol of perfection, of rebirth, resurrection and eternity.
- Yet the Church continues her celebrations of these feasts even beyond the 8 days of the octave with the celebration of an entire liturgical season. So, Christmas for us is not just a single day of celebration, but rather a period of great celebration.
- Whereas during Advent we longed for the coming of Christ with hopeful expectation, now in the Season of Christmas we revel in the joy of His presence.
- Through the Christmas Season, the Church combs through the immensity of the Christmas mysteries by a series of feast days, slowly savoring the love and goodness of the Lord revealed through these feasts, like one might enjoy a fine wine or a succulent dish.
- We try to wrap our minds and hearts around not only the events surrounding Christ's birth, but as well mysteries such as His conception in the womb of His ever-virginal mother, the Holy Family's hidden life in Nazareth, His Presentation in the Temple, and His baptism.
- Today we meditate upon our Lord's Epiphany, which is the manifestation of Christ to the entire world, and a further unfolding of the mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord.
- While the mystery of the Incarnation, which is the mystery of our infinite and eternal God stepping into the limits of time and humanity, is difficult to grasp, God the Father wasn't about to keep it hidden! He wanted the world to know how much He loves us.
- Whereas at Christmas we celebrated that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary in fulfillment of the great Jewish prophecies of the Old Testament, in the Epiphany we celebrate that Christ came not just for the Jews to whom He owed His human heritage, but that He came for us all.
- We see this in the fact that the Magi who come to do homage to the newborn King of the Jews were not Jews, but were gentiles from the East – astrologers by trade.
- To think: that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us! Our God, infinite in wisdom and power, Who dwells eternally in unapproachable light, deemed fit to impoverish Himself by clothing Himself with our humble human flesh. It's incomprehensible!
- Yet, in this incomprehensible fact we find the immense love of our God.
- In love God created us. And even when our first parents spurned His love in their pride, God continued to love mankind and to pursue mankind.
- We see this so clearly throughout the Old Testament stories of our Lord forming covenants with His chosen people, longing to keep them close to Himself.
- We see the divine love, too, in the Old Testament prophecies that foretold of a Savior who would ransom humanity from its sinfulness.
- And we see our Lord's love in the fulfillment of these prophecies, which is what we've been celebrating in this beautiful Christmas season. Christ our King has been born for us, and in love He will save us from our sins.

- Pervading the entirety of Sacred Scripture is a nuptial theme. The Scriptures reveal to us the great love story between God and man, of God pursuing us as a young man pursues a beloved he hopes to make his wife.
- Christ is not simply our Savior and King. He is the great Bridegroom, and we – the Church – are His bride, called to be holy, without spot or wrinkle.
- As our bridegroom He takes us as His own, loving us and caring for us as an adoring husband loves and cares for his bride. Christ leads us, He protects us, and He provides for us in husbandly fashion, if we allow Him.
- And as our sign of belonging to Jesus Christ, we, as His bride, take on His name as a bride takes the name of her husband, calling ourselves Christians.
- In a way this nuptial theme of Scripture finds its culmination in today's feast. God weds the divine nature and human natures together in Christ in the mystery of the Incarnation so that Jesus can be our Savior and Redeemer.
- The gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh brought by the 3 Magi are really wedding gifts to honor this incredible marriage.
- Just as Jesus unites in Himself the divine and human natures, He also desires to be united with all mankind in the unity of His Church, which is His body.
- Yet, for this union to take place, we must humble ourselves in worship – just as the Magi do.
- As learned men known for their wisdom, they traverse afar from their homeland led onward by a miraculous star. And upon finding the place of the newborn King of the Jews, they drop to their knees in homage, offering this infant king the costliest and most valuable of gifts.
- In the same way, we must learn to set aside our daily distractions, at least for a period of time each day, and focus intently upon our Lord in prayer.
- We must seek Him out and kneel before Him in prayer and worship, uniting ourselves to Him and offering Him the best of ourselves in love.
- As a further sign of our love, we must strive to obey our heavenly Bridegroom by being obedient to the teachings and precepts of His Church, loving Him above all else and our neighbors as ourselves.
- And we must be diligent and intentional in our reception of the Sacraments, seeing in them – especially Holy Communion – a means of consummating our love with Him.
- Today, my friends, we recall not only that God became flesh – that Truth itself became incarnate – but that our Lord wishes to love us and be united with us. Indeed, our Lord wants to love us as a beloved spouse.
- Knowing that love is repaid by love alone (St. John of the Cross), may we respond to God's immense love for us with a burning love for Him.
- In this new year may we repay God's love by seeking to unite ourselves more fervently to Him through our dedicated prayer, humble obedience, and our diligent and intentional reception of the Sacraments.