

CELEBRATE EPIPHANY

INTRODUCTION

Epiphany, the feast of the Magi, the three wise men who bring their gifts to the Christ Child, is a sadly neglected feast in Britain. In this country, by January 6th, the children are back at school, the presents have been eaten, lost or broken, and the Christmas tree's probably gone to the council tip for shredding. But a proper Epiphany makes a lovely ending to the Christmas season, and a good excuse for a final celebration.

In Spain, Epiphany is a big celebration, bigger than Christmas day! In Spanish, Epiphany is called 'Fiesta de Los Tres Reyes Magos': in English this means 'The festival of the three Magic Kings'. Epiphany celebrates when the Kings or Wise men brought gifts to the baby Jesus.

Children have some presents on Christmas Day, but most are opened at Epiphany. Some children believe that the Kings bring presents to them at Epiphany. They write letters to the Kings on Boxing Day, December 26th, asking for toys and presents. And on Epiphany Eve (January 5th) they leave shoes on windowsills or balconies or under the Christmas tree to be filled with presents. Gifts are often left by children for the Kings, a glass of Cognac for each King, a satsuma and some walnuts. Sometimes a bucket of water is left for the camels that bring the Kings! There is also a tradition that if a child has been 'bad', the Kings might leave pieces of coal made out of sugar in the presents

Big towns and cities have Epiphany Parades on the eve of Epiphany, it is very much like a carnival where with each King having a big float that is shaped like a camel or sometimes real camels are used in the parade particularly in the big cities like Barcelona and Madrid. See pictures here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/gallery/2016/jan/06/three-kings-day-celebrations-in-spain-in-pictures>

The Three Kings in the Spanish Epiphany are:

- Gaspar (Caspar), who has brown hair and a brown beard (or no beard!) and wears a green cloak and a gold crown with green jewels on it. He is the King of Sheba. Gaspar represents the Frankincense brought to Jesus. Frankincense is sometimes used in worship in Churches and showed that people worship Jesus.
- Melchior, who has long white hair and a white beard and wears a gold cloak. He is the King of Arabia. Melchior represents the Gold brought to Jesus. Gold is associated with Kings and Christians believe that Jesus is the King of Kings.
- Balthazar, who has black skin and a black beard (or no beard!) and wears a purple cloak. He is the King of Tarse and Egypt. Balthazar represents the gift of Myrrh that was brought to Jesus. Myrrh is a perfume that is put on dead bodies to make them smell nice and showed that Jesus would suffer and die.



Epiphany Eve (also known as [Twelfth Night](#)) marks the end of the traditional Christmas celebrations and is the time when you were meant to take Christmas decorations down - although some people leave them up until [Candlemas](#).

It is a feast to celebrate!