



CHRISTMAS IS NOT OVER YET

LITURGY BYTES *by Michele Hall*



The shopping, the wrapping and the visiting may be over for you now that we are into the new year of 2026. However, as far as the Church goes, it is still Christmas. Just look around the Church - the trees, the nativity scene, the flowers, wreaths, and banners still welcome us each day. Simply put, Christmas is a "season" in the Church's calendar that lasts for a few weeks, even after December 25th!

The liturgical season of Christmas begins with the vigil Masses on Christmas Eve and concludes with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord. The Christmas season is one of the shortest on the Church's calendar, but it is also unique. Within it is the 8-day celebration of the Lord's Nativity (known as the Christmas octave), as well as other feasts pertaining to Jesus becoming one of us as Our Lord and Savior. There are several saints' feast days celebrated that contain special significance to the season. Here are a few: December 26th – St. Stephen – first martyr; Holy Innocents – December 28th – Herod's order to kill boys under the age of 2 in the Bethlehem area, trying to hold onto his power as King; Feast of the Holy Family – falls on the first Sunday after Christmas (except when Christmas falls on a Sunday, then it is celebrated on December 30th); January 1st – holyday – Mary the Mother of God; and the one most of us are familiar with – the feast of the Epiphany (Little Christmas) when the Magi visited the baby Jesus and brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. This feast was always on January 6th, but the Church transferred it to the Sunday between January 2nd and 8th in the United States.

The Christmas season concludes with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord which always falls on the Sunday after the Epiphany, or when the Epiphany falls on January 7th or 8th the feast of the Baptism of the Lord is then celebrated on a Monday. This commemorates the day on which Christ formally accepts his mission as the redeemer and is baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Parishes usually invite the families who had babies baptized in the past year back for a blessing and special recognition. So even though the Christmas season is a short one, there are plenty of important days of celebration.

Have a blessed, joyful, and healthy week ahead!