

THE EPIPHANY FOR CHILDREN

IN a hospital in Germany there were many poor sick people. Some of them could move about, but were not well enough to be discharged. A crib was set up for them, but visitors were allowed to come and pray by the little manger too. The crib took up all one side of a large room, and was very pretty, but rather puzzling, and I will tell you why. There were three parts to the exhibition. One scene represented the manger with the ox and an ass, with Our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph, and the dear little holy Child. The three Kings were there Melchior, Caspar, and Balthasar. There was nothing puzzling about them. But in another part of the scene Our Lord was grown up, and was represented standing in a brook of running water; near Him was St. John the Baptist in the act of baptizing, and over the Divine head hovered a spotless dove. In yet another scene was a marriage supper; guests were sitting at table, and waiters were on the watch. The six stone water-pots showed it to be Cana of Galilee, but what had Cana to do with Christmas and the Epiphany?

I will tell you what. Epiphany means manifestation, and manifestation means showing forth. Now, there were three special times when Our Lord showed Himself forth. The first time at the Epiphany to the Wise Men from the East, whom He brought to His feet by means of the bright star. The second time was at the Baptism, when Jesus stood in the river, and the Holy Ghost, in the figure of a dove, and the Eternal Father by a voice from Heaven proclaimed Him to be His Beloved Son. And the third time was at the marriage feast of Cana, when, to please His most holy Mother, Our Lord Jesus performed His first miracle, even though the real time for miracles had not come.

These are the three Epiphanies, three manifestations that the Church keeps today January 6th. But we usually think of Kings only, don't we? and their grand coming: Melchior with his gold :

"Born a King on Bethlehem s plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again;
King for ever, ceasing never,
Over us all to reign."

Caspar with his fragrant incense:

"Frankincense to offer have I,
Incense owes a deity nigh;

Prayer and praising, all men raising,
Worship Him, God most high."

Balthasar with his bitter her :

"Myrrh is mine, its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom
Sorrow, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb."

Did we bring our offering to Our Lord with the shepherds on Christmas Day? Had we saved up pennies to give to His poor, or to His Church, or to His Vicar on earth? If not, might we not try to bring Him something with the Kings? Ashamed, are we, because their gifts were costly and ours are not ? Oh no ! We have not gold, perhaps, nor costly gums, nor soothing myrrh. But these gifts were symbols, too, and we can have the gold of charity paid out in word and deed and thought; the incense of prayer, burning sweetly in aspirations and loving words to Our Lord; the myrrh of self-denial, little things suffered joyfully for His sake. Such are rich gifts in our little Master s eyes.

"Glorious now behold Him arise,
King and glory and sacrifice;
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Earth to the heavens replies."