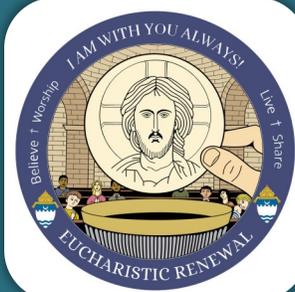


# Encountering the Eucharist

Believe ✦ Worship ✦ Live ✦ Share



Most Catholics are surprised to discover that the regulations regarding what constitutes valid matter regarding the wine are rather strict. Not just any old “store bought” wine will do. Canon 924 of the present *Code of Canon Law* (1983) states: §3 “The wine must be natural, made from grapes of the vine, and not corrupt.” This means that the wine must be naturally fermented with nothing added to it, and the wine itself cannot have soured or become vinegar, nor can it have anything artificial added to it like preservatives, or flavors. Additionally, the total alcohol content can not be above 18%.

## What We Believe...

### The Connection Between Epiphany And The Eucharist

After the Christmas season, the Church begins with her first round of her ordinal numbers counting off the weeks until the beginning of Lent. The season called “Ordinary Time” is so named after the ordinal numbers—a number defining a thing’s position in a series, such as “first,” “second,” or “third” and not intended to special or distinctive features. the liturgy during the Second weeks after Christmas were bration of Epiphany (i.e. first, Epiphany). In fact, next to the the Epiphany is *the oldest of* Evidence suggests that in the



and Egypt, the Epiphany was celebrated on January 6 which was observed as a commemoration of both the birth and baptism of Jesus. Like Christmas, which developed later at Rome, the Epiphany took its date from a pagan festival which it replaced; and like Christmas, it too, was a solstice festival. In the old calendar, the winter solstice occurred on January 6. The word “epiphany” means manifestation and the root of the word was often used to describe the dawn, and the appearance of gods bringing help to men. The Epiphany was also called the Theophany, the Feast of the Manifestation, the Feast of Lights, the Feast of the Appearing of Christ. Historically, Epiphany and its season focused on three major events in the life of Our Lord: the visit of the Magi (Matt. 2:10ff), the baptism of Christ (Lk. 3:21-22), and the changing of water into wine at Cana, our Lord’s first miracle (Jn. 2:1-11). In each of these stories from Scripture, we encounter a theophany—a visible manifestation of God to humankind. In other words, Epiphany focuses on a personal encounter with God that is an event where the manifestation occurs in an *observable* way. For the Magi, the theophany was the star they followed. At Jesus’ baptism, the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove and we hear the audible voice of the Father. Essentially, the entire Trinity was manifested in an observable way! Finally, by changing water into wine we see the first demonstration of Jesus’ divine power over earthly elements and a foreshadowing of Jesus changing wine into His blood at the last supper which was itself a foreshadowing of His death on the cross and the moment a soldier pierced his side with a spear and when out gushed blood and water (Jn. 19: 34). If we, like the Blessed Virgin Mary, ponder all these things in our heart (cf. Lk. 2:19), we should be able to perceive the *sacramentality* that’s associated with the Solemnity of Epiphany. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reminds us that the “sacraments are efficacious signs of grace, instituted by Christ and entrusted to the Church, by which divine life is dispensed to us. The *visible rites* by which the sacraments are celebrated signify *and make present* the graces proper to each sacrament” (#1131). What were the star, the voice, and the wine if not “efficacious signs” that signified and made visible the presence of God to the Magi, to John the baptizer, and the multitude of guests during the wedding at Cana? We, therefore, see that the Church has always assigned an importance to the Epiphany and its season not so much in the retelling of the stories themselves as in the sacramental foundations these events will later demonstrate. Let us not miss the point! God has chosen to “appear” or to manifest Himself in visible ways all throughout the Scriptures *continued on the back*



“Today Christ works the first of his signs from heaven by turning water into wine. But water has still to be changed into the sacrament of his blood, so that Christ may offer spiritual drink from the chalice of his body, to fulfill the psalmist’s prophecy: How excellent is my chalice, warming my spirit. .”

—from a sermon by Saint Peter Chrysologus (Sermo 160: PL 52, 620-622).

## “The Connection Between Epiphany And The Eucharist” continued from the front...

but in a particular fashion, “when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law” (Gal.4:4) to be the greatest manifestation and revelation of God’s presence. “For in [Christ Jesus] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:9). Jesus is Himself the great sacrament of God’s love. Jesus was the fullest revelation possible of God’s goodness and love. As Catholics we believe that Jesus is both Son of God and Son of Mary—truly human and truly divine. In His person, and through His actions, words and gestures Jesus made God and God’s love present on earth. He was, *and is still*, for us “the image of the unseen God” (Col.1:15), the “Word made flesh” who lived among us (cf. Jn.1) and hence the greatest sacrament of God! Thus, a multi-form encounter with Christ occurs within the framework of the eucharistic liturgy which Vatican II reminds us is “the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed,...the fount from which all her power flows” (*Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, 10). In a certain sense, the feast of Epiphany is the Church’s recognition that the great prophecy of Isaiah, of which “the Lord Himself will give [us] a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel” (7:14) has indeed heralded the observable presence of God with us as a permanent and stable reality. Have you ever noticed that the preferred design of the monstrance is a sunburst? It consists of rays or “beams” radiating out from the central disk in the manner of sunbeams on a stand, usually topped by a cross. The monstrance has the appearance of a great star upon the altar. Just as the star guided the Magi to Bethlehem (Hebrew: *Bet Lehem* “House of Bread”), so the monstrance should be our “star” guiding us to the bread of life. “Whoever comes to me,” says Jesus, “will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35). Wise men still seek Him.

## Life in the Eucharist: St. Catherine of Siena

St. Catherine of Siena, one of the greatest mystics and a doctor of the Church, dedicated her whole life to God from prayer, to service, to giving spiritual counsel to anyone



from beggars to Popes. She was born in 1347, made a perpetual vow of virginity at a very young age, became a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic, and lived a reclusive life of prayer and penance at home for the first several years of her life. According to the account recorded by her confessor, Blessed Raymond of Capua,

for the last seven years of her life, Catherine ate nothing besides the Eucharist. Even today, there is an ongoing Eucharistic miracle in Siena (the home of St. Catherine) in which a collection of around 350 consecrated hosts was found to be incorrupt and has remained incorrupt from 1730 until today. Over almost 300 years, and they show no signs of decay!

## Adoro te Devote: Epiphany Water

While the feast of Epiphany in the Roman Rite is primarily focused on the visit of the Magi, historically it was more focused on the baptism of Jesus Christ in the Jordan River. For this reason, there developed a special blessing of Epiphany water in memory of Jesus sanctifying the waters of Baptism. This blessing of water on Epiphany was maintained by Eastern Catholics, but Roman Catholics also have an optional ceremony that was approved in 1890 that did homage to this tradition. The emphasis of the blessing, however, was less on the commemoration of Jesus’ baptism and more on the symbolic nature of water as a cleansing agent. In this way, the blessing of Epiphany water in the Roman Rite was used to cast out Satan and all his demonic angels. It is a powerful blessing, one that uses strong language to invoke the power of God over evil. It reminds us of the spiritual power of holy water and encourages us to use it in faith, trusting in the protecting help of God over our spiritual enemies.

