

- 1 For Christians who are Catholic or Protestant, Christmas Day itself is the focus for prayer and celebration at Christmas-time.
- 2 Christians of the Orthodox Church (such as in Russia and Greece) have a quiet celebration on Christmas Day, but have the Epiphany (the 6th of January) as their main day of prayer and celebration at Christmas-time. Why do Orthodox Christians focus in a public way more on the Epiphany (when the wise men visited) than on Christmas Day itself?
- 3 They recall that the birth of Jesus was greeted by ordinary shepherds who recognised that he was the Son of God. The birth was quiet and almost secret. It wasn't yet time to make public the news of the birth of the Son of God. And so Orthodox Christians tend to see Christmas Day mainly for personal commitment, in the manner of the shepherds.
- 4 They celebrate more publicly on the 6th of January, the Epiphany - the feast that recalls the wise men travelling to worship Jesus. The birth of the Son of God is no longer a secret, and the wise men represent the people of all nations, searching for God.
- 5 Whilst the shepherds were invited to a personal commitment, the wise men from afar represent a broadcasting of the Good News - the Son of God has been born a human being. The 'secret' is out! Epiphany marks the 'going public' of the Good News that Jesus is present. And so Orthodox Christians celebrate Epiphany together and in a special way. The Epiphany represents a challenge and an invitation to all people to recognise who Jesus is.
- 6 *Let us pray:*
**Jesus, God-with-us,
what gift shall we bring to you?**

**The angels bring their song,
the heavens bring their star,
the shepherds bring their wonder,
the animals give their manger,
the wise men bring their gifts,
and we human beings
bring the Virgin-Mother.
We bring our whole selves to you
who have so fully and generously
given yourself to us.
Amen.**

This is an excerpt from the page of this date in
'Praying Each Day of the Year',
a 3-volume book
by Nicholas Hutchinson, FSC.

For details:

<http://www.matthew-james.co.uk/>

Could make use of a search engine
to research this topic further.

This material is part of
the prayer and education website
of the De La Salle Brothers
in Great Britain:
www.prayingeachday.org