



THE EPIPHANY 6 January



CAVALCATA DEI MAGI
EPIFANIA

The epiphany is one of the major religious feasts of the year, celebrated in the Catholic church twelve days after Christmas on the 6th of January. The word derives from the Greek *Epiphaneia* meaning “appearance”, assuming within the Christian tradition the significance of the initial manifestation of the humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ to the Magi.

Many masterpieces of Florentine painting, by Beato Angelico, Botticelli, Leonardo, Filippo Lippi and Gozzoli were inspired by the Epiphany. In Florence as elsewhere, the revocation of the Epiphany in its more broadly cultural aspects, had its supreme expression in Gozzoli’s dazzling fresco. Until, that is, at the wish of the Opera del Duomo and the Florence City Council, together with the city diocesan authorities, the splendid re-enactment of the *Procession of the Magi* was revived for the delight of young and old alike. Among the many meanings (religious, cultural and social) which the Florentines have discovered in this historic spectacle, everyone is free to take that what they find most appropriate. The procession of the

“Magi” in their sumptuous costumes, accompanied by figures representing the Florentine Republic, unwinds along the ancient streets of the city. Starting from Piazza Pitti it proceeds as far as the Piazza del Duomo where, inside the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, and in the presence of the highest ecclesiastical authorities, the participants offer their gifts before the image of the child Jesus. This day has become a special celebration for the city’s children, with the release of balloons bearing their messages to the Christ child and gifts distributed by the Opera del Duomo of Florence.