

January 6, 2019

Epiphany of the Lord

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

Today's Readings

Isaiah 60:1–6
Psalm 72:1, 2, 10abc, 10de–11
Matthew 2:1–12

The Wise Men Worship Jesus

Preparation

Children's Leaflet

Have on hand copies of the Children's Leaflet for this Sunday. Distribute copies either at the start of the session or before the children return to the assembly.



Prepare with Prayer

May his name be forever; as long as the sun, may his name endure. May the tribes of the earth give blessings with his name; may all the nations regard him as favored. Blessed be the LORD God, the God of Israel, who alone does wonderful deeds. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may he fill all the earth with his glory. Amen and amen. (Psalm 72:17–19)

Scripture Background

To celebrate the Epiphany, the Church specifically chose today's reading from Isaiah for its theme of universal salvation. These verses were written after the Jews had returned to their homeland following 70 years of exile in Babylon.

It was good to be home again, but life was in many ways a bigger struggle than ever. The people had to raise up a new temple from the ashes of the old, rediscover the forgotten rudiments of their faith, address sticky political problems caused by their return, and rebuild their national economy. Doubtless they wondered, "Is this all there is—just one national crisis after another?"

Then along came Isaiah's prophecies of the glorious future to be realized in messianic times. Included was a vision of a new and different kind of relationship with foreigners. No longer would they simply be enemies that Israel had to conquer or resist, or avenging instruments in God's hands, used to chastise the nation for its betrayals of the covenant. Rather, foreigners

Prepare the Meeting Space

In the worship area, on a table draped with a white cloth, place:

- ▶ a Lectionary
- ▶ a battery-operated candle
- ▶ a statue or a doll representing the infant Jesus

Have ready for the gathering activity a recording of "We Three Kings," a large paper star or a star-shaped Christmas ornament, and three items to represent the gifts of the Magi: small container of incense, small bottle of perfume, and anything gold or gold-colored, such as a piece of jewelry or a sports trophy. (If you prefer, just use three small wrapped boxes.)

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

Gathering: "Away in a Manger" (*Seeds* CD-1, Track #8) or "Christmas Star" (*Promise & Good News* CD-1, Track #12)

Gospel Acclamation: "Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia" (*Promise & Good News* CD-2, Track #24)

would become equal partners with Jews in God's saving plan. Flocking to Jerusalem with their gifts and their sacrifices, they would come to recognize and to honor the one true God that Israel had always known and worshiped.

Today's Gospel shows the beginning of the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Three foreigners, bearing gifts for the newborn king, foreshadow the people of all races and nations who one day will flock to Jesus. In the greatest show on Earth—God's magnificent display of love for all humankind—Jesus really is the star.

Children's Connections

Today's Gospel is filled with fascinating elements of danger, intrigue, and divine intervention. Because it's a story worth repeating—and complicated enough to be a bit confusing for the very young—it is suggested that you re-read it during the homily. Children enjoy hearing their favorite tales over and over again, especially if they are told well.

In preparing and giving this "second reading," consider following these suggestions:

1. S—l—o—w d—o—w—n and, as the saying goes, take time to smell the flowers.
2. Plan to vary the volume (loud, soft), pitch (high, low) and rate (fast, slow) of your voice to match each dramatic situation as it unfolds.
3. Pause whenever you want to create a brief moment of suspense—for example, after the word "worried" in verse 3.
4. Use a different voice for each character that speaks, such as a calm, gentle voice for the wise man in verse 2; a low, rough voice for Herod in verses 4 and 8; a high-pitched, frightened voice for the priest in verses 5-6.
5. Let your facial expressions reveal character, too. Scowl when you read Herod's words, go "bug-eyed" when the frightened priest speaks, and so forth.
6. Practice reading the piece aloud until your interpretation feels natural.

More About ...

The Catechism on the Incarnation

- "The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries." God made everything converge on Christ—"all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the 'First Covenant.'" (#522)
- Moreover, God stirred "in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming." (#522)
- Christ came into the world as a child to remind us that we, too, "must humble ourselves and become little" in order to ready ourselves for his kingdom. (#526)
- Christmas celebrates the "marvelous exchange" that happened when humanity's Creator took on human nature in order to make humanity "sharers in the divinity of Christ." (#526)
- "The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (Magi) from the East." They represent "the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation." (#528)

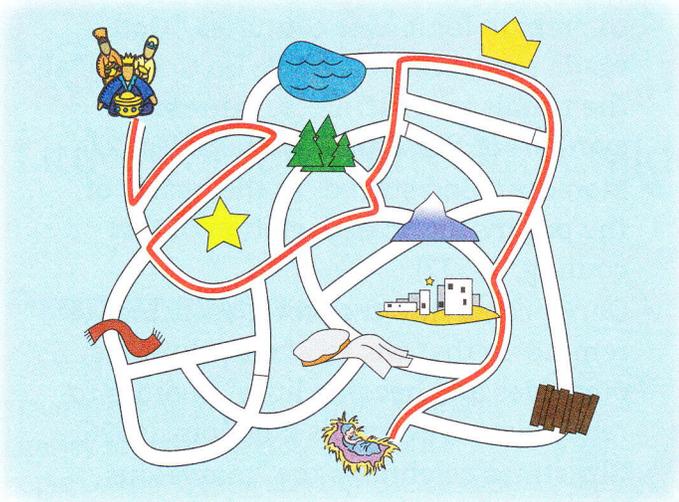
The Children's Leaflet

The leaflet for this week helps children learn about the Magi's visit to the newborn Jesus, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

You may distribute the leaflet now, for use during the session, or before the children return to the assembly. If you distribute the leaflet now and time permits, you may wish to read with the children the summary of the Gospel in "The Word of God This Week" after you have read the Gospel.

Leaflet Activity

This week, children will learn about the three wise men who followed the star to Jesus. We, too, must seek to find and follow Jesus and offer him the gifts of our love and faith.



The Liturgy of the Word

Gathering

Explain to the children that today is the feast of the three kings who visited the newborn Baby Jesus. Therefore you will begin the service with a small procession to commemorate their journey from a faraway land to the land where Jesus was born.

As the children sing along with a recording of the traditional Christmas carol “We Three Kings,” lead them in procession around the room while holding a star high above your head. Three children acting as the Magi will follow you, carrying the three gifts, and the rest of the children will follow them. When you reach (or return to) the worship area, place the star somewhere near or above the infant Jesus, and have the three Magi lay their gifts at his feet.

Collect

Leader: *In ancient times, people fell on their knees in the presence of a king. Because Christ the Lord is King of Heaven and Earth, today let’s kneel for our opening prayer. All kneel.*

Lord Jesus, when you were born, wise men from the East traveled hundreds of miles to see you in person and to bring you gifts fit for a king. Today,

remembering the gifts they brought you, we, too, want to give you something. So we bring you the gift of our listening hearts. Amen.

Invite the children to be seated. Light the candle and begin the First Reading.

First Reading

Leader: Who can tell me something about the city of Jerusalem? Why do Christians like to visit this city? What do they go there to see? Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah predicted that, one day, Jerusalem would become a great and important city, attracting visitors from around the world.

Read Isaiah 60:1–6. Then say, “The word of the Lord.”

Children: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

The psalm may be either sung or spoken. Before beginning the psalm, sing or announce the response.

Leader: Lord, every nation on Earth will adore you.

Children: Lord, every nation on Earth will adore you.

Leader: *Read Psalm 72:1, 2, 10abc, 10de–11.*

Gospel Acclamation

Invite the children to stand. Sing the suggested Acclamation or another familiar one. If you choose not to sing the Acclamation, proceed to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Proclaim the Gospel

Leader: Now we will hear the story of the three wise men who followed the star to Jesus’ birthplace. You’ve probably heard the story before, but do you remember how the three wise men put Jesus’ life in danger? It happened when they stopped in Jerusalem to talk with an evil king named Herod.

The Lord be with you.

Children: And with your Spirit.

Leader: A reading from the Gospel of Matthew.

Children: † Glory to you, O Lord.

Leader: *Read Matthew 2:1–12.* Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

Review key points from the story using the following ideas and questions. (Some questions the children can answer, and some you may need to answer for them.)

- ▶ When the wise men had realized that a new king of the Jews had been born, how did they feel? (*They were happy and excited.*)
- ▶ When King Herod learned of it, how did he feel? (*He was worried.*)
- ▶ Why would Herod have been worried? (*He was afraid that Jesus would replace him as king. He cared more about himself than about his people.*)
- ▶ Herod couldn't answer the wise men's question; do you remember what it was? (*Where is the child born to be king of the Jews?*)
- ▶ But who did Herod know would have the answer? (*Priests and Teachers at the Temple would know.*)
- ▶ Why did they know? (*They studied the Bible and knew all the prophecies about the Messiah.*)
- ▶ What did Herod ask the wise men to do after they found Jesus? (*Come back to Jerusalem and tell him where they found Jesus.*)
- ▶ Was Herod telling the truth when he said he wanted to worship Jesus, too? (*No. He wanted to kill Jesus.*)
- ▶ How did God protect Jesus from Herod? (*God sent the wise men a warning in a dream, so they returned home without telling Herod anything.*)

Reread the Gospel, then conclude with these ideas:

- ▶ God sent Jesus to save the whole world! That's why God announced Jesus' birth with a bright star that the whole world could see.
- ▶ The next time you look at the stars, think of all the other people in the world living under those same stars, remember that God loves them as much as God loves you, and pray for them.

Profession of Faith

Leader: Please stand now for the profession of faith. Answer each prayer question with, "Yes, I do." Do you believe in God the Creator, who made the sun, the moon, and all the stars?

Children: Yes, I do.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus the Lord, God's only Son, whose birth was announced by a bright star?

Children: Yes, I do.

Leader: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit, who leads us and guides us the way the star guided the wise men?

Children: Yes, I do.

Leader: Do you believe in the holy Catholic Church, which brings people to Christ from all around the world?

Children: Yes, I do.

Prayer of the Faithful

Leader: Let us pray. Loving God, because you have loved us enough to send us Jesus, we are not afraid to ask you for all our needs. To each petition, please respond, "Show us your love, O Lord."

Leader: For the leaders of the Church, that they will show us the way to Jesus, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Show us your love, O Lord.

Leader: For the members of our parish, that they will always seek Jesus and follow after him, let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Show us your love, O Lord.

Leader: For the leaders of our (town, city) and country, that they will be like the three kings—wise and good—let us pray to the Lord.

Children: Show us your love, O Lord.

Leader: Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:

God in Heaven, many times you have shown us your great love, and we know that you will show it many times more. For this we thank you, through Christ our Lord.

Children: Amen.

Return to Assembly

The Liturgy of the Word ends with the Prayer of the Faithful. Prepare the children to return to the assembly in a respectful manner. If you haven't already done so, distribute the leaflets. Remind the children to take the leaflets home and share them with their families. Encourage them to complete the Family Corner activities as a family.