



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

700 King Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada L8P 1C7

HAPPY EPIPHANY ✨



Children's Liturgy of the Word

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Today's solemnity continues the celebration of the mystery of God's manifestation to the very ends of the earth. The visitors from the East symbolize the extent of God's salvation as it unfolds for peoples of every land. As they offer gifts, as would be fitting for a king, they announce to the world that an astonishing event has occurred; all peoples will know the glory of God, the Epiphany of the Lord.

The birth of Jesus is God's manifestation (Epiphany) in the world. In Christ, salvation has come for everyone, Jew and gentile alike.

Our first reading tells us that the Light has come, a light to guide us all. In this Light, the glory of God shines forth. This Light is the Epiphany of God.

The Gospel tells us that this Light shone in the East and brought visitors from afar to see this manifestation of God's love. Christ is the one to whom all people will come, bringing gifts fit for a king. He is the "newborn King of the Jews" and, indeed, of all the earth. He reveals God's unconditional love for all people.

Objectives

- † To introduce the words Epiphany and Magi.
- † To explore how God can be seen and known by us.

Leader's Preparation:

- † Pray the Lectionary readings.
- † Review the background.
- † Reflect upon the reflection questions.

Environment and Materials

- † Two screened adult leaders.
- † Liturgical space; the liturgical colour is **White**.
- † White cloth, a Lectionary and a candle.
- † Place the Bible in a prominent location for the children to see.
- † Select volunteers (older children or adults) to proclaim the readings.

Background

First Reading: Isaiah

- † Isaiah saw a transformed world.
- † Isaiah's images might have seemed impossible to the listeners of his people, who were beleaguered and lost in exile. Yet, this might be the hope to which they could cling.
- † God promised, so therefore, God will do it.
- † Someday, there will once again be light, glory, and justice. All will again see the signs of Jerusalem's overflowing riches, splendour, and radiance.
- † All nations shall return to this new vision, not just exiles.

Gospel: Matthew

- † This story of royal visitors tells of their long journey to find this new king, bring gifts, and pay homage.
- † The passage from Matthew in which we hear about the Magi on every feast of Epiphany comes from the prophet Micah: "And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel."
- † It also speaks of another ruler who was troubled by the possibility of a new ruler and who later slaughtered innocent children to try to prevent his kingship.
- † However, the Old Testament prophecy speaks about a different kind of kingship, not one of riches or majesty that rulers like Herod would envy.
- † Instead, he will be a ruler who will care for the people of God like a shepherd cares for his sheep. It is hardly an impressive picture for a king, yet this is the Messiah we celebrate this Epiphany!

Leader's Reflection Questions

- † Who has unexpectedly helped you to recognize God's presence and action?
- † How do you respond to God's presence with humility and with the gifts you have to offer?

The Liturgy

Procession from the main Church

After the opening prayer, when all are seated, the leaders come forward and stand facing the altar.

Priest: My dear children, Jesus is the Light of the world. When you turn to him, you will know his Light is God's love. Go in peace to hear how you can live as children of God.

When most of the children have formed a procession, the leader with the book proceeds to the place of the celebration. The second leader usually walks behind the children. Upon arrival at the location of the celebration, the leader places the book on the prepared table.

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children to sit and prepare. Begin with the Sign of the Cross. Help the children think about and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may say the following prayer in these or similar words.

O God, you revealed your Son to the world by the guidance of a star. Lead us too, by the Light of faith, that we may also bring others to you. Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the Gospel.

First Reading

The children sit during the proclamation of the reading.

A reading from the book of the Prophet Isaiah.

Arise, shine, for your Light has come, and the glory of the Lord is upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples, but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your Light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift your eyes and look around; they all gather together and come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice because the abundance of the sea and the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

They shall bring gold and frankincense and proclaim the Lord's praise.

The Word of the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God

Gospel

The children stand for the Gospel. The leader proclaims the Gospel. All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and chest.

Minister of the Word: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

All sign themselves on the forehead, lips and chest.

Children respond: Glory to you, O Lord

✠ A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem, wise men came from the East to Jerusalem, asking,

"Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? We observed his star rising and have come to pay him homage."

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him,

"In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet."

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying,

"Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage."

When they had heard the king, they set out, and there, ahead of them, went the star until it stopped over where the child was. They were overwhelmed with joy when they saw that the star had stopped.

On entering, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and knelt and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country on another road.

At the end of the Gospel, the Minister of the Word proclaims The Gospel of the Lord.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Children: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The children sit to listen to the reflection.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Please consider the amount of time available to return to the main assembly. The leader may wish to reduce the number of questions.

An excellent place to begin is the question:

What does the word Epiphany mean?

It means "manifestation" or "appearance."

An epiphany is a new way of thinking about something. It is like when something suddenly becomes clear to you, and you say, "Oh, now I get it!" The Epiphany is an important event.

It was well-known in ancient times that a new star in the sky signalled the birth of royalty. The birth of a royal king is why the Wise Men refer to the star as "his star," meaning Jesus' star. King Herod was threatened by anyone whom the Wise Men were seeking and referred to as "King of the Jews." He would have felt threatened.

Do you think King Herod was happy when he heard of the new king? Why?

Allow the children time to respond.

When the Wise Men found baby Jesus, they gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, customary gifts for a newborn king, as they knew they would visit royalty. In our tradition, though, the gifts take on a special meaning. The way the Wise Men honour Jesus is different from the way the others would have honoured him. Jesus becomes a shepherd for everyone. He is our Light.

If you were going to meet Jesus today, what would you bring? What would your offering be to honour Jesus?

Allow the children time to respond.

The most precious thing that you can bring to Jesus is yourself. There are many ways you can give yourself to God. One way is to pray to God and ask for guidance to use your gifts and talents to improve the world.

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess our faith.

Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

The Creed

Depending on the time, a simple profession of faith may be made (see below).

Leader: Do you believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, who became our brother and gave his life for us?

All: We do believe.

Leader: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit who lives in our hearts and gives us everlasting life?

All: We do believe.

Leader: This is our faith. This is the faith of the Church. We are proud to profess it.

Prayer of the Faithful

Invite the children to think of the needs of others and to announce their petitions. The leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. It may be necessary for the leader to repeat and/or paraphrase the petition and conclude it with the cue for the response: For this, we pray. All respond to each petition by saying: Lord, hear our prayer. Sample intercessions are below.

Leader: The brightness of God illuminates the world, so we bring our prayers and petitions to God.

That the Church shines Christ's Light in the world, we pray:

That governments shine Christ's Light on peace, we pray:

That those who suffer see God's healing Light, we pray:

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children or add intercessions based on the Church's current needs, the world, or the local community.

That those who have died live in God's Light forever, we pray:

Leader: God, you love all people and want them to know Jesus. Make us know him better, and by how we live, may others get to know him through us. We ask you this through Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

The leader may invite other intercessions from the children or add intercessions based on the Church's current needs, the world, or the local community.

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and perhaps think about what they have heard and are now doing.

Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

Readings: New Revised Standard Version of the Bible © National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCC). Adapted by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Adaptations © 2009, NCCC. All rights reserved.

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The Epiphany of the Lord

Children's Liturgy of the Word

Today's Readings

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

We Pray

O God, let us adore your
Son who came into the
world for all nations.
Amen.

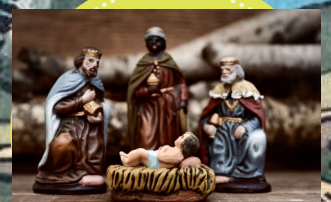
The Word of God This Week

Guide Us to Jesus



Wise men from the East followed a star to Jerusalem. They asked, “Where is the child who will be king of the Jews?” King Herod told them to go to Bethlehem and let him know when they found the baby.

When the wise men found the baby, they gave him special gifts and worshiped him. But they did not go back and tell King Herod where he was.



Activity

With a pencil and a ruler, connect the stars in order from 1 to 6.

What do you see? **Color the star.** Think about the ways that God guides you every day.

FATHER
1 and 6



SON
2



HOLY SPIRIT
5



Family Corner



FAITH FOCUS

The three kings discovered a rising star. It was the opening act for someone great, so they followed the star in search of that someone — a newborn king. When the star finally rested over Bethlehem, they discovered that the real star was God, revealed in the Person of Jesus.

God's love is present in the stars and in all of creation. God's love is present in the Person of Jesus. God's love is for everyone!

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Take your family outside on a clear night and look at the stars in the sky. Pick out the brightest one and pretend it is the Christmas star.

- Recall the Christmas carol "We Three Kings." What lyrics describe the star? How do you think the three kings felt following such a star?
- Describe a time when something in nature was especially memorable, or holy, for you.
- Describe someone who reveals God's love to you.