



DIOCESE OF HAMILTON

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

The Epiphany of the Lord

Children's Liturgy of the Word

The Canadian Catholic Church celebrates the Epiphany of the Lord on the Sunday after Holy Family. This Solemnity celebrates Jesus' presence to us as the light of all nations. The readings focus on this in different ways: Isaiah prophesies that nations and kings will come to Jerusalem's light, bringing gold and frankincense; Psalm 72 envisions a just king receiving tribute from distant lands like Sheba while aiding the needy. Ephesians reveals the mystery of the Gentiles as co-heirs in Christ. Matthew recounts the wise men from the East, guided by a star, adoring the child Jesus with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, bypassing Herod.¹

This Solemnity symbolizes the Church's universal mission with the Magi² serving as the first of the Gentiles who pilgrimage to Christ and a star guiding humanity to the newborn King, fostering justice, peace, and inclusion in salvation.

The Epiphany illustrates that the child Jesus symbolizes God's light reaching everyone, including the young and inspires childlike faith and wonder, as seen in the Magi's journey.

The Gospel portrays the Magi adoring Jesus as a child, not as a distant king, but as an infant God-made-man, accessible to everyone. This invites children to see themselves in the story: like the Magi, they can follow the star's light with simple trust, approaching Jesus in humility and joy.

¹ Herod the Great was the king of Judea under Roman rule and a ruthless tyrant whose fear of the newborn king led to the Massacre of the Innocents and opposition to Christ, while highlighting the Magi's faithful pilgrimage.

² Magi were wise seekers from the East, traditionally three kings but biblically unnamed Gentile astronomers or philosophers,

Background

Isaiah prophesies that Jerusalem will be radiant with God's glory amid global darkness, drawing kings and nations bearing gold, frankincense, and camels—foreshadowing the Gentile pilgrimage to Christ. The "light" is messianic salvation, universal yet centred on Israel; Epiphany fulfills as Magi embody nations adoring the true Light.

Psalms 72 is a royal psalm in which Solomon prays for a just rule extending dominion "from sea to sea," with kings of Tarshish, Arabia, and Saba offering gifts and rescuing the needy—typifying Christ's universal kingship, as embraced by the Magi, and contrasting with Herod's tyranny. Justice and mercy prefigure Gospel salvation for all peoples.

Ephesians reveals God's hidden plan: Gentiles are co-heirs with Israel in Christ's promise through the Gospel—not through prophets, but through apostolic revelation (v.5). The Epiphany manifests this: the Magi's adoration signals the nations' inclusion in salvation history. Unity in the Body of Christ transcends ethnic barriers.

Matthew depicts the wise men, guided by a star, adoring the child of Bethlehem, amid Herod's rage, offering gold (symbolizing kingship), frankincense (symbolizing divinity), and myrrh (symbolizing mortality). The Star evokes Num 24:17³, and the Flight fulfills Hos 11:1⁴. Contrasts faith vs. fear: Gentiles seek humbly, fulfilling Isaiah 60⁵. Model pilgrimage to Christ, prefiguring the Church's mission.

In summary, readings converge on Christ's Epiphany: light to the nations, King of justice, mystery of inclusion, and firstfruits of adoration.

³ "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near— a star shall come out of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel; it shall crush the borderlands of Moab, and the territory of all the Shethites." Numbers 24:17.

⁴ "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." Hosea 11:1.

⁵ "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen 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." Isaiah 60:1–3.

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: (in these or similar words)

We gather today to celebrate the Epiphany, the time when the three Kings visited Jesus after his birth and brought him gifts. Go with your leaders to listen to the readings and think about the gifts you can give to Jesus.

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

Welcome.

The leaders assist the children in sitting and preparing. **Begin with the Sign of the Cross.** Help the children think and connect their actions as they touch their foreheads, shoulders, and stomachs. The leader may offer the following prayer, in these or similar words.

Today we celebrate the Epiphany—Jesus shining like a bright light for all people, even from far away! Let's stand and pray.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Jesus, you are the Light of the world. Help us listen to your Word today.

Amen.

Invite the children to listen to the readings. Proclaiming all the readings is unnecessary; however, the Gospel is required.

READINGS

FIRST READING

Isaiah 60.1-6

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Arise, shine, for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen 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 up your eyes and look around;
they all gather together, they 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 shall be brought to you,
the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
A multitude of camels shall cover you,
the young camels of Midian and Ephah;
all those from Sheba shall come.
They shall bring gold⁶ and frankincense,⁷
and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

⁶ The Magi's gift of gold symbolizes Christ's royal kingship and divine wisdom, acknowledging him as the eternal King born in humility. This precious metal, fitting for earthly monarchs, elevates Jesus above temporal rulers, revealing His messianic dignity to the Gentiles.

⁷ The people of Israel used this incense, which was made from tree resin and used in Tabernacle ceremonies, where priests would burn it on an altar in the Holy Place as an offering to God. By presenting frankincense to the infant Jesus, the Magi were essentially recognizing His future priestly ministry.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 72.1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

Give the king your justice, O God,
and your righteousness to a king's son.
May he judge your people with righteousness,
and your poor with justice. **R.**

In his days may righteousness flourish
and peace abound, until the moon is no more.
May he have dominion from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth. **R.**

May the kings of Tarshish and of the isles render him tribute,
may the kings of Sheba⁸ and Seba bring gifts.
May all kings fall down before him,
all nations give him service. **R.**

For he delivers the needy one who calls,
the poor and the one who has no helper.
He has pity on the weak and the needy,
and saves the lives of the needy. **R.**

⁸ The Queen of Sheba was a monarch from an ancient kingdom in southern Arabia, renowned for her wisdom and wealth. She exemplifies a seeker of truth drawn to divine wisdom.

SECOND READING

Ephesians 3.2-3a, 5-6

A reading from the letter of Paul to the Ephesians.

Brothers and sisters,
Surely you have already heard
of the commission of God's grace that was given me for you,
and how the mystery was made known to me by revelation.
In former generations
this mystery was not made known to humanity
as it has now been revealed to his holy Apostles and Prophets
by the Spirit:
that is, the Gentiles⁹ have become fellow heirs,
members of the same body,
and sharers in the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel.
The word of the Lord.

A period of silence is observed after the reading.

⁹ Gentiles refer to all non-Jewish peoples or nations, historically the pagan or non-covenant peoples outside Israel, now united with Jews as co-heirs of God's promise through Christ in the New Covenant.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Matthew.

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East¹⁰ came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star¹¹ at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

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 that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.

Upon entering the house, they saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh¹².

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

The Gospel of the Lord.

¹⁰ East holds profound symbolic significance as the direction of divine light, Christ's origin and return.

¹¹ The star signifies Christ as the divine light guiding Gentiles to worship the newborn King, symbolizing God's love and universal salvation.

¹² Myrrh signifies Christ's mortality, passion, death, and burial, while also evoking priestly anointing, mortification of the flesh, and care for the suffering and calling believers to unite sufferings with His.

REIMAGINED READINGS FOR CHILDREN

The reimagined readings below are intended for use after the children have heard the original reading. The intent is to allow the children to hear the original reading and help them better understand it (not replace it).

Read at a minimum, the Gospel, which has the highest priority, and then ask the children to sit down. You can then read the reimagined reading. Leaders may not have time to read all of the reading. If time permits, after the Gospel, proclaim the Psalm, and then the first reading, if time permits.

Reimagined readers must always remain faithful to the original Scripture's intent, making it age-appropriate for children to understand.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 60.1-6

Wake up, Jerusalem! Shine bright!
Your light has come—God's glory is here!
The world is dark, all shadowy and gray,
But God's light rises on you today!

People from faraway lands will see,
And come running to your light with glee.
Kings will follow your shiny dawn,
Bringing treasures from near and far along.

Look up high! See them gather near—
Boys and girls are coming with smiles and cheer.
Your family returns from so far away,
Carried safe in arms all the day.

Your heart will jump and be so glad,
Full of joy—you won't be sad!
Ships bring gifts from the big blue sea,
Riches from nations for you and me.

Camels march with loads so tall,
From desert places, one and all.
Gold and sweet-smelling smoke they bring,
Praising God, their Maker and King!

RESPONSORIAL PSALM

Psalm 72.1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

R. Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.

God, give the king your fairness and right ways,

Teach the king's boy to judge in good ways.

Help him be kind to everyone he sees,

Especially the poor kids on their knees. **R.**

When he's king, goodness will grow like trees,

Peace will spread wide, as long as the moons and seas.

His land will stretch from ocean side to side,

From big rivers far to the world's wide tide. **R.**

Kings from islands and far desert lands,

Bring shiny gold and special gifts in hands.

Kings of Sheba with treasures big and bright,

All bow down low in the king's holy sight. **R.**

Every king kneels, every country too,

They serve the king with hearts happy and true.

He saves the needy who cry out in pain,

The poor with no one—no family or friend to gain. **R.**

He feels sorry for the weak and the small,

Keeps them safe from hurt—he loves them all! **R.**

SECOND READING

Ephesians 3.2-3a, 5-6

God gave me a special job just for you,
A gift of grace to share what's true.
He showed me His secret in a dream so bright,
I wrote it down—it's full of light!

Long ago, no one knew this fun plan,
Not people before, not even back then.
But now God's Spirit tells apostles and friends,
The mystery starts—and never ends!

Here's the secret, hip-hip-hooray!
Faraway friends join us to play.
We're all one big family in Jesus' love,
Sharing His promises from heaven above.

Through the Good News, we all belong,
Gentiles and us, singing one song!
Jesus makes us one happy team,
Fulfilling God's dream supreme!

GOSPEL

Matthew 2.1-12

Long ago, in Bethlehem, a town so small, Baby Jesus was born—God come for all! King Herod ruled with a grumpy frown. When wise men came from the East, they looked around. "Where's the new King of the Jews?" they said, "We saw His star shine bright ahead!" They packed their camels, travelled day and night, to find the Child and give Him light.

Herod got scared, shook in his shoes, called the wise men secretly, with sneaky news. "Ask priests where baby kings are born," they said, "Bethlehem!" from words long worn.

Herod whispered, "Find Him, tell me true, so I can worship—off with you!" But in his heart, he planned something bad to make the people and Jesus sad.

Wise men left, and oh what joy! The star popped back like a happy toy. It danced ahead to a simple house, stopped right there—like a pointing mouse!

They burst inside, saw baby so sweet, With Mary—fell down at His tiny feet. Opened bags with gifts fit for a King: Gold that sparkles, smoke that sings!

Frankincense prays to God up high, Myrrh for sad times—Jesus won't die! Then in a dream, an angel said clearly, "Skip Herod—go home another way, no fear!"

So they obeyed, slipped off in the night, Safe and happy, full of delight. The star showed Jesus is King, so true, for boys and girls—me and you!

This adventure reveals that the Epiphany is Jesus' light, calling all nations to worship Him, just as the Magi did.

Reflection

The leader may offer this reflection in these or similar words. Remember 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 did you hear? Allow children to respond.

The prophet Isaiah tells God's people: "Get up!", "Shine," "God's light is coming!" God promises that His light is so bright that people from all over the world will come to see it.

What helps you see when it is dark? (flashlight, lamp, sun)

Suggestion: Invite children to gently "shine" by smiling at the person next to them.

Some wise travellers, called the Magi, saw a special star in the sky. They follow it a long way until it leads them to Jesus. They bring gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, but the greatest gift they find is Jesus himself.

Why do you think the Wise Men followed the star?

What do you think the Wise Men felt when they saw Jesus?

Picture the bright star... the long journey... and baby Jesus smiling. God used a star to guide the Wise Men. God also gives us signs to help us find Jesus:

- People who love us
- The Bible
- Prayer
- The Church

Jesus is the Light of the World, and when we follow Him, we become lights too.

Who helps guide you closer to Jesus?

When you are kind or forgiving, how are you like a light?

What "gift" can you give Jesus this week? (kindness, sharing, helping, prayer)

Following the reflection, the prayer leader invites everyone to stand to profess their faith. Recite the Creed or use the sample below to ask the children to respond.

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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: I believe.

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

All: I believe.

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

All: I believe.

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

Prayer of the Faithful

Leaders may begin the intercessions by announcing the needs they know. The leader may need to repeat and paraphrase the petition, concluding it with the cue for the response: 'We pray.' All respond to each petition by saying, "Lord, hear our prayer." Sample intercessions are below.

The intercessions are said. The Leader introduces them, and an assistant announces them.

The leader says:

Trusting in Jesus, the Light of the world, let us bring our prayers to God. After each prayer, we all say, 'Lord, hear our prayer.'

R: Lord, hear our prayer.

Assistant:

For the Church, that like the star of Bethlehem, she may always lead people everywhere to Jesus. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For all people of the world, especially those who feel lost, lonely, or forgotten, that God's light may guide them to hope and peace. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For children everywhere, that they may learn to follow Jesus by being loving, forgiving, and generous each day. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

For our families and friends, that our homes may be filled with love, sharing, and the light of Christ. We pray to the Lord. R:

Assistant:

In the quiet of our hearts, we offer our own prayers... [pause] We pray: Come, Lord Jesus. R:

The Leader says:

God of light and love, you revealed your Son to the whole world. Hear the prayers we offer with trusting hearts, and help us always follow Jesus, who is our Lord forever and ever. We ask this through Jesus. Amen.

Return to the church

Ask the children to return to the main assembly. Ask them to return quietly and think about what they have heard and are now doing. Be mindful of children having difficulty finding their families.

THE AMAZING WORLD OF STARS & GUIDING LIGHTS

WHO CAN SPOT THE FIRST STAR?



Have you ever watched the sky darken with friends or family? You must watch closely to see the first star appear! Soon after, billions of stars twinkle in our galaxy.

WHAT MAKES A STAR TWINKLE?



A star sends a straight beam of light, but movement in the air changes the path of the light, causing it to **TWINKLE!**

STAR COLORS & THE NORTH STAR

Stars can be **BLUE**, **YELLOW**, or **RED**! The very bright **NORTH STAR** guides travelers and sailors. The Big Dipper's front stars point directly to it!



A GUIDING STARS FOR JESUS



At Jesus' birth, a **VERY BRIGHT** guiding star marked the place. Wise men followed it to find Jesus and worship him.

Following Jesus' teachings guides our lives in the right direction!



Readings: Lectionary Sundays and Solemnities,
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