

Christmas: Epiphany of the Lord

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Background for Scripture Readings

First Reading

- The showing forth of God's glory is apparent in today's passage from Isaiah.
- All nations will walk by Jerusalem's light, the glory of God within it.
- The prophet announces to the people that even in the midst of darkness, they will forever be enlightened by the presence of God.

Second Reading

- The earliest Christians, mostly Jews, struggled with the realization that even Gentiles are included in God's plan of salvation.
- Today's letter points out that people in former ages did not understand that God's mercy extended to all people.
- Gentiles and Jews are one body in Christ.

Gospel

- Matthew's Gospel clearly demonstrates that all the prophecies of old have come to fulfillment in Christ.
- As promised, Gentile wise men recognize Jesus as Messiah even when the Jerusalem sages do not.
- The official priests and scribes quote the messianic prophecies that identify Bethlehem, the city of David's birth, as the birthplace of the Messiah. However, they do not follow their own wisdom.

Breaking Open the Word

Leader Instruction

Catechist Reflection Guide for the Epiphany of the Lord

First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6—Your light has come!

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13—Every nation adores the Lord.

Second Reading: Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6—We all share the same promise!

Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12—They opened their coffers and presented him with gifts.

Invitation to prayer (30 seconds)

Ask the children to quiet themselves and sit comfortably. Have them take three deep breaths while you prompt them to relax as they breathe in God, our Father who loves us, Jesus Christ, his Son, our brother, and God's Holy Spirit who lovingly guides us. As an invitation to prayer, make the Sign of the Cross.

Listening for a word or phrase to speak to your heart (3-4 minutes)

Ages 5-6: Use the word *gifts* to focus children's attention. Read aloud from a children's Bible or tell the story of the three Magi in your own words.

Ages 7-14: Read the Gospel passage or special phrase slowly and deliberately while the children are silently listening. Ask them to listen for a word or phrase that seems to be God's word for them today. Spend about 30 seconds as they pick out their "word" from God. Ask them to silently repeat that word or phrase and to write it on their heart.

Loving God through his Word (3-5 minutes)

Ages 5-6: Focus children's attention on the picture of the gifts that the three Kings brought Jesus. Have a conversation about gifts. Ask children: **What are some of the gifts you received on Christmas? What are some of the gifts you gave at Christmas?** Explain that **people give us gifts to show us we are special. We give gifts to people we think are special.**

Ages 7-8: Guide children to reflect on the picture of the three gifts. Read the text aloud and invite children to share their responses to each activity.

Ages 9-11: Help young people imagine themselves in the story as reporters. Use the text on the handout. Allow time for silent reflection, and then have young people share their thoughts on paying homage to God. End the session with an exchange of the Sign of Peace.

Ages 12-14: Guide young people in a meditation. Help them imagine themselves in the scene as TV news broadcasters by having them sit quietly as you slowly read the text on the handout. End the session with an exchange of the Sign of Peace.

Living the Gospel words through the week (3-5 minutes)

The handouts describe one or two ways children and young people can live this reflection on the Gospel through the week at home, school, or play. If appropriate, have them add one or two more personal choices to act on this week.