Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Dismissal Session
The Dismissal Session is for catechumens only who are dismissed from worship before the Creed (RCIA #75.3). The Dismissal Session group may gather for the Catechetical Session at another time during the week.

Catechetical Session
When the Dismissal Session is immediately followed by the Catechetical Session, parents or other sponsors join the group after Eucharist. Baptized children preparing for confirmation and Eucharist may also join in the Catechetical Session (RCIA #254; Appendix III, #19). Select the session options that fit your time frame.

NOTES FOR THIS SUNDAY

Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord readings
- Isaiah 60:1-6
- Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13
- Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6
- Matthew 2:1-12

Doctrine correlations
- In the magi, representatives of pagan religions, the gospel sees the first-fruits of welcome for the good news of salvation through the incarnation (CCC #528).
- Through the centuries, in so many languages, cultures, peoples, and nations, the church has constantly confessed one faith grounded in the conviction that all people have only one God (CCC #172).

RCIA team notes
Christ the Lord, Son of the living God, came to save people from their sins that all might be made holy (Decree on the Bishops’ Pastoral Office in the Church, #1). Help the catechumens realize that God’s saving love through Jesus Christ is for all humanity.
GETTING READY FOR THE SESSION

Items to prepare

- check-in sheet and nametag materials
- poster paper or white board, erasers, erasable markers
- white cloth on table or counter for prayer, percussion instrument
- Bibles, one set to Matthew 2
- nativity set, candle in a heat-proof holder, matches
- incense charcoal in a heat-proof holder and incense or quick-starting incense
- newsprint or poster paper, removable mounting sticky, double-sided tape, pencils, pens, drawing supplies, scratch paper, nice paper
- copies of “Faith at Home”
- table protectors, baby onesies, cardboard pieces covered with plastic, fabric markers, scratch paper, pencils, pens, note cards
- prayer on cards

Gathering Prayer Ritual
On a white cloth, place a Bible, candle, and a nativity set.

Singing option
Use music from your faith community resources or find carol words online at www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com. Bring songbooks or song sheets and music in a player.

Snack option
Send a reminder to the sponsor providing the snack this week.

Engaging the Word
Bring large sheets of newsprint or poster paper, removable mounting sticky, double-sided tape, pencils, pens, drawing supplies, scratch paper, and nice paper.

Sharing Faith groups
Plan a place to display the completed “Herald.” Option: Ask someone to enter the stories in a newsletter computer program, e-mail copies to parents and sponsors who can share them with the children, or post it on the parish website.

Crossing the Ages Activity option: Onesies for Jesus
Contact sponsors to contribute baby onesies (snap at bottom shirt). Cover cardboard pieces (slightly smaller than the onesies) with plastic. Gather table protectors, fabric markers, scratch paper, pencils, pens, note cards. Arrange for delivery to a pregnancy crisis center or home for unwed mothers.

Closing Prayer
On cards numbered in order, print the stanzas of the prayer.
DISMISSAL SESSION

GATHERING  
(15 MINUTES)

If using incense charcoal, light it in a heat proof container at least five minutes before catechumens arrive and have an assistant watch it. Catechumens, having heard the Sunday proclamation of word, are dismissed from the Mass. Greet the catechumens as they arrive. Have them check in and put on nametags. For anyone new provide nametag materials.

GATHERING PRAYER RITUAL

Chime a percussion instrument as a call to prayer. All stand around the prayer focal point.

(†) Sprinkle incense on the coals or light quick-start incense. Light the candle. Pause for a moment of silence. Then pick up the incense container.

Waft the incense towards the candle, saying:
**May your light, O Christ, show us the way.**

Waft the incense towards the Bible, saying:
**Teach us, O God, the words of everlasting life.**

Waft the incense around the space, saying:
**Come, Holy Spirit, and sanctify this gathering place to be holy ground.**

Waft the incense towards the catechumens, saying:
**God who is among us, open the eyes, open the lips, and open the hearts of these catechumens as they share here today.**

All: **Amen.**

Invite everyone when you lift a hand to respond, “All nations shall come with gifts of peace.” Prayerfully say the following verses inspired by Psalm 72, calling for the response by lifting a hand.

**O God, endow all leaders with judgment.**  
**May justice flower with peace forever.**  \(\text{response}\)

**All leaders shall offer gifts.**  
**All nations shall serve.**  \(\text{response}\)

**Rescue the poor who cry out.**  
**Save the lives of the poor.**  \(\text{response}\)

Song Suggestion: A Christmas carol sung in liturgy.

Extinguish the candle flame. Snuff out the incense.
CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER

Invite everyone to sit in a circle. Introduce anyone new. Invite sharing about their experiences with the “Faith at Home” pages from the previous session.

BUILDING COMMUNITY

Good Guys, Bad Guys: Ask the catechumens to think about good characters and evil characters. Heroes and heroines represent good, and villains represent evil. They can suggest real historical people or story characters, and their examples may be from two different circumstances. Invite volunteers to say the characters. If needed, say the example:

Hitler did evil things, but Maximilian Kolbe stood up against evil by giving his life for another man.

After everyone who wishes has a turn, say:

In the gospel story about the magi, there are two types of people. The child Jesus, ruler of all, is total goodness, but Herod is an evil king.

RECALLING THE WORD (10 MINUTES)

Have everyone sit with Bibles in a circle. Use the following as a guide. For information, refer to “Insight for the Catechist” and the reflections on the “Faith at Home” page. Always affirm the catechumens’ responses, adding comments to add to their understandings.

Help everyone find Isaiah 60:1-6. Explain:

The poet writes about a vision of God’s glory shining through troubling times. People of faith provide a beacon of hope for the suffering people in the world. By speaking out, the faithful can influence governmental leaders.

➢ What words in this poem show God’s radiant glory?
➢ With the power of God’s Spirit guiding us, what can believers do to influence governments and bring hope to suffering people? (Possibilities include: become educated, vote, write letters, attend meetings, contribute to causes.)

Help the catechumens find Ephesians 3:2-6. Ask:

➢ What are your questions about this passage? (Prepare to comment about the stewardship of God’s grace, the mystery made known by revelation, Gentiles as coheirs.)

Gentiles were people not of the Jewish faith. Many Gentiles became followers of Christ’s way. While some Jewish Christians felt that Jesus had come just for their group, Saint Paul helped them realize that Jesus came for everyone. He emphasized that this was not his opinion but a revelation made by the Holy Spirit.

The gospel story this week is about the manifestation of Christ as Savior of the world. We call this celebration the feast of the Epiphany.
Have everyone find Matthew 2:1-12.

- I wonder: Why did the magi, who were not Jewish, make a difficult trip to find the Messiah?
- I wonder: What has your journey to find Jesus been like?

Affirm the members’ comments. Summarize:

The magi brought gifts to honor Jesus who came to the world for everyone.

**Praying Intercessions**

Let us pray. When I lift my hand please respond, “One God of all, hear our prayer.”

- Let us rise up to worship and to reflect radiant love. (Lift a hand for the response.)
- Let us be stewards of grace in a way that reveals your love, O God, to all people. (Lift a hand for the response.)
- Let all people know about divine glory through the goodness of believers. (Lift a hand for the response.)

Invite the members to contribute intercessions. Conclude:

God, whose radiance shines for all, hear the prayers we have spoken and those we hold in our hearts. We pray in the unity of the Holy Spirit and through Christ Jesus who shows us the way to you, one God of all, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Option: Break for a snack or social time. If the group disperses now and meets for catechesis later in the week, collect nametags.
The Catechetical Session follows the Dismissal Session either immediately or at another time during the week. The catechetical session is designed for catechumens and parents or sponsors to grow in faith together. The status of the catechumens never is to be confused with that of baptized children preparing for confirmation or Eucharist, who may join in this catechesis as supportive companions (RCIA, Appendix III, #19).

**GATHERING FOR CATECHESIS**  
(5 MINUTES)

Welcome the catechumens, parents, sponsors, and any baptized children arriving from liturgy. Have those arriving check in and put on nametags. If this Catechetical Session is not following the Dismissal Session, allow an additional ten minutes and begin with the Gathering segment in the Dismissal Session.

**PRAYING**

Invite everyone to stand around the prayer focal point. Use the (†) prayer from the Gathering Prayer Ritual in the Dismissal Session, another prayer, or sing a gathering song from liturgy.

**ENGAGING THE WORD**  
(20 MINUTES)

Display newsprint or poster paper on a wall. Print a title across the top, such as, BETHLEHEM HERALD. Inform the group that they are going to be investigative reporters regarding the events that happened in Bethlehem. Say:

> The story about the magi visiting Jesus is an epiphany, which means that someone makes a discovery that reveals an insight. Many people confuse the story and think that the visitors were the kings. Actually, there are two rulers in the story, King Herod and Jesus. The visitors could have been any number of people and probably were traveling as a large group in a caravan. They are called “magi,” which means that they were wise people searching to find Truth. Today, we will pretend to be investigative reporters telling the truth of these biblical events.

Assign partners or small groups with pencils, scratch paper, drawing supplies, and writing paper. Have them choose one of the following headlines or develop their own. Some groups may include other parts of the Christmas story found in the first two chapters of Matthew and

---

**SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD**

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13  
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6  
Matthew 2:1-12

**Insight for the Catechist**

Saint Matthew’s story about the magi visiting the child Jesus parallels Saint Luke’s story about the shepherds’ visit. Both groups receive a unique revelation. While the shepherds see an angel, the magi are guided by a star.

Both groups were outside of mainstream society. Shepherds were considered lowly because, living in the hills, they were unable to religiously follow Mosaic Law and attend temple worship. The magi were foreign strangers.

Together they represented early church membership. Many first Christians had been social outcasts, and others were Gentiles.

The scribes and chief priests rejected Jesus and ultimately had him condemned to death, while the least likely of believers followed the way of Christ, the Savior.

The magi story is about Jesus, who is a threat to worldly power but comes for the sake of the whole world.

- Strange Star Appears
- Honorable Visitors, Dishonorable King
- What Do Shepherds Have To Do With It?
- King Herod is Jealous of Child
- Magi Hit Destination
- Baby Discover Under Star
- Humble Child Receives Gifts
- Magi Evade Herod

Distribute Bibles. Have everyone find Matthew 2:1-12. Remind them that news stories answer who, what, where, when, and how. Ask them to brainstorm in their groups. Then, representatives write final drafts of their stories while others draw pictures of the event. Circulate to make clarifications as needed.

**Sharing Faith**

(10 MINUTES)

Have each group present its story and pictures. Assemble the stories and selected pictures on the large paper. Tell where the “Herald” will be on display or explain that a newsletter with their stories will be on the parish website or collect email information from parents and sponsors who will share with the children.

With the whole group, conclude:

The magi represent people of pagan religions. Although not of the Jewish faith, they welcome the Good News of salvation and recognize that through the

---

**Crossing the Ages Activity**

(Optional activity for children and adults together: 20 minutes)

**Onesies for Jesus** (Social justice activity, RCIA #75.4)

Invite the members to cover the tables and decorate clothing as gifts for babies born to mothers in crisis. Show how to insert a plastic-covered cardboard sheet into the onesie to protect the ink from leaking through. Ask each to decide on a message such as “Jesus is the One” or “Mom loves me.” Suggest they plan their designs with pencil on scratch paper. Then, they use fabric markers to write the message and decorate the onesies.

Those who finish early may want to write prayers or encouraging messages on cards for the expectant mothers.

Recruit some parents or sponsors to take the catechumens to deliver the baby clothes at a home for pregnant mothers.
Incarnation God becomes one with all humanity.

CARRYING OUT THE WORD (5 MINUTES)

SUMMING UP

Invite everyone to stand around the prayer focal point. Encourage them to offer insights from this week's session. Summarize:

For 2,000 years the church has taught one faith with the conviction that all people have only one God. Even though there are many different languages, cultures, peoples, and nations, the magi’s visit shows that Jesus came for everyone.

CLOSING PRAYER

Distribute prayer cards to volunteers. Ask them to prepare to read. Ask everyone to respond after each line, “Rise up in splendor, sons and daughters of God.” Readers say:

Reader: Jesus came as a baby on earth,
When Mary was chosen to give God birth. (response)
Reader: Magi followed the rising star.
Looking for Jesus, they came from afar. (response)
Reader: With gifts of incense, myrrh, and gold,
They paid homage, we are told. (response)
Reader: Come, worship, give gifts, and sing.
Thank God for giving us everything. (response)

Go forth from this place with respect for the faith of all people.

And may the ever-living God bless us,
(Make the Sign of the Cross on yourself as a model for everyone.)
protect us from all evil,
and bring us to everlasting life.

All: Amen.

Distribute the “Faith at Home” page. Collect the nametags.
At a convenient time for the family, gather around a dining table or in the living room. Silence all electronics. Place a Bible opened to Matthew 2 in the center. Begin with a moment of quiet.

REFLECTING ON ISAIAH 60:1-6

This poem in praise of Jerusalem, “the City of God,” is a vision about the ingathering of the sons and daughters of Israel who had been dispersed. The glory of God shines upon them. “Rise up” is an ancient call to worship. The early Christians held onto this vision as a reminder that God ultimately triumphs and gathers in those who have been enclosed in gloom.

⇒ With what attitudes do we “rise up” for worship?
⇒ How has God’s glory shone through a gloomy time in our family?

Use the following as a guide to “rise up” and pray about a troubling time.

★ Define a problem or problems that the family, individual members, or someone you know may be experiencing.
★ Go outdoors and gaze at the stars or darken a room and light a candle in the center.
★ Imagine the glory of God shining through the problematic time.
★ Envision a time in the future when everyone shines in a new way once the trouble is over.

REFLECTING ON EPHESIANS 3:2-3A, 5-6

Saint Paul makes clear that Gentiles and Jewish people are all equal before God. This is not merely Paul’s opinion but a revelation by the Spirit to the holy apostles and prophets.

⇒ In what times and places have people, believing God to be on their side, confronted an enemy?
⇒ As stewards of God’s grace, what is our proper response to those who promote hostility while claiming God is on their side?
REFLECTING ON MATTHEW 2:1-12

“Epiphany” is the manifestation of Jesus as the Savior of the world. The magi represent all the wise people, believers of every faith practice, who seek Truth. The story tells about King Herod trying to trick the magi so that he can eliminate a future leader, but divine intervention triumphs. The gifts have layers of meaning. Gold might represent the goods of the earth which all belong to God. Frankincense is burned in prayer offerings. Myrrh has healing power.

⇒ Why did Herod fear the child Jesus?
⇒ What do you suppose Mary thought about the unusual visitors with their gifts?

A child catechumen writes on the illustrations below. Other family members draw three simple gift shapes on other paper. On each gift write something that you can give Jesus according to the following: a material item for someone in need, a prayer for someone, something you can do to help someone sick or suffering.