

NEW! WEEKLY GOSPEL
REFLECTION VIDEOS

LITURGY OF THE WORD WITH CHILDREN

Children Celebrate!



Winter 2024–2025 (Year B/C)

NOVEMBER 24, 2024 | OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE
through **FEBRUARY 16, 2025** | **SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME**

Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

LEADER'S GUIDE

Winter 2024–2025

YEAR B/C

November 24, 2024

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE

through

February 16, 2025

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

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Children Celebrate!

Liturgy of the Word with Children

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Additional Resources at Pflaum.com

Sunday Readings

For your convenience, each Sunday's Lectionary readings for the Liturgy of the Word with Children can be downloaded from pflaum.com. It's as easy as 1-2-3!

1. Go to **pflaum.com/readings** for a list of Sunday readings (updated at the end of each month).
2. Click on the date you want. That Sunday's readings will open in a PDF.
3. Print or download the file.

For more about the Sunday Readings, see the Introduction to this Leader's Guide.

Weekly Gospel Reflection Videos!

Available to subscribers of *Children Celebrate!*

Visit <http://bit.ly/3x37mJb> for weekly Gospel Reflection videos. These videos can be used within your Children's Liturgy of the Word program, or shared with parents and families to view at home.

Children Celebrate! Director's Manual

For an easy-to-follow Director's Manual, go to **pflaum.com/liturgy-of-the-word** and click on "Bonus Resources" and then "Program Directors." There you will find a manual that outlines practical steps for establishing a program, recruiting and training volunteers, and creating the proper environment and liturgical flow.

In addition, you will learn how to most effectively incorporate *Children Celebrate!* materials into your program. Additional resources are also suggested.

Children Celebrate! Children's Liturgy of the Word – MP3 Album

With joyful melodies, call-and-response segments, and child-friendly lyrics, John Burland's inviting liturgical pieces are perfect for Children's Liturgy of the Word programs. For example, "Go Now and Listen to God's Word" can be sung as children are dismissed from the assembly, and "Yes, Lord, I Believe" is a jubilant option for singing the Creed, helping little ones to profess their faith.

Visit **giamusic.com** and search "Children Celebrate" to order.

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This Issue's Themes

DATE	SUNDAY	THEME
November 24, 2024	OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE	Jesus Is Our King
December 1, 2024	1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT	Jesus Reminds Us to Focus on God
December 8, 2024	2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT	Make a Straight Path for the Lord
December 15, 2024	3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT	The People Listen to John the Baptist
December 22, 2024	4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT	Mary Visits Elizabeth
December 29, 2024	HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH	God Helps Jesus Protect Mary and Jesus
January 5, 2025	EPIPHANY OF THE LORD	The Wise Men Worship Jesus
January 12, 2025	THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD	Jesus Is Baptized
January 19, 2025	2ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus' First Miracle
January 25, 2025	3RD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Reads the Scriptures
February 2, 2025	THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD	
February 9, 2025	5TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Jesus Helps Simon Believe
February 16, 2025	6TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME	Blessed Are You

Using *Children Celebrate!*

Children Celebrate! is a complete step-by-step resource for celebrating the Liturgy of the Word with Children. The two components of *Children Celebrate!* are this Leader's Guide and the Children's Leaflets, a book of tear-out, take-home sheets.

LEADER'S GUIDE (each week has two parts)

I. Preparation provides the leader with information about the week's Scripture readings and how they relate to children today. Its elements are the following:

- **Today's Readings** cites the exact Scripture readings you will be using that day. (Remember, these readings do not always match the readings chosen for the adults. See more about the

readings on page 6.) A theme sets the tone of that day's liturgy.

- **Prepare with Prayer** helps center you on the task at hand, which is not only helping children hear and understand God's Word but also hearing and understanding God's Word through the children.
- **Scripture Background** helps you understand the readings and prepare to break open the Word.
- **Prepare the Meeting Space** gives you suggestions for enhancing the environment for that day's celebration. Review this section a few days before the liturgy.

- **Suggested Music** provides suggestions for appropriate songs during the liturgy. Information on where to find each piece of suggested music is on page 62.
- **Children's Connections** explains each week's theme and Scripture message as it applies to children today.
- **More About...** provides additional background about a topic that is related to this week's liturgy.
- **Using the Children's Leaflet** provides brief background information about the take-home sheet.
- **Activity** provides a reproduction of the take-home sheet. Solutions to puzzles are shown as needed.

II. The Liturgy of the Word is a ready-made liturgy specifically written for that week's readings and theme. Its elements are the following:

- **Gathering** helps the children settle into their places. Playing appropriate background music or singing a song provides a transition into an attitude of prayer.
- **Collect** sets the tone for the worship experience.
- **Focus Statements** for each of the readings help you give the children a key idea to listen for and to help them better understand the theme of the readings.
- **Responsorial Psalm and Gospel Acclamation** provide liturgically appropriate responses for the children to use.
- **Homily** gives you starter ideas for interesting, creative, and relevant reflections on the Gospel.
- **Profession of Faith** is a simple and interactive declaration of what we believe as Catholics.
- **Prayer of the Faithful** are the prayers for the needs of the world, the Church, and the community. These are often a common first step for children into spontaneous prayer and can be powerful moments for children.

- **Return to Assembly** provides the leader with a cue to prepare the children to rejoin the main assembly and to remind them to take home a Children's Leaflet.

CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS *(each leaflet is two-sided)*

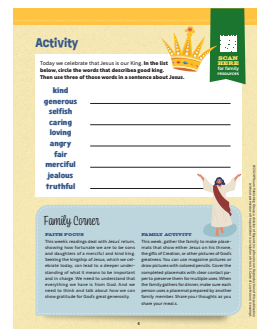
Front Side

- **Today's Readings** gives the Scripture citations for that Sunday's liturgy.
- **We Pray** is a short prayer for children based on the week's theme.
- **The Word of God This Week** is a summary of the day's Gospel story.



Back Side

- **Activity** provides an entertaining way to reinforce the Gospel message.
- **Faith Focus** highlights how the Gospel message can pertain to the family.
- **Family Activity** provides practical suggestions to families on how to put the Gospel into action at home.



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION VIDEOS

- **How to access the videos:** Visit <http://bit.ly/3x37mJb> to view the videos for this quarter.
- **What's included?** Each weekly video includes a Gospel Reflection, Saint Spotlight, Closing Prayer, and Reflection Question.
- **Promote:** Share these videos with those assisting with Children's Liturgy of the Word for use during your program, as well as with parents and families.

Introduction

What Is Liturgy of the Word with Children?

Liturgy of the Word with Children is a worship experience geared especially for children. It mirrors the worship experience of the larger community, with a style that is engaging and interactive. Jesus himself recognized that children have a pure spirituality, and he made them the primary spiritual model for all believers.

Liturgy of the Word with Children is not formal religious education, nor is it intended to be a substitute for attendance at religious education sessions. Rather, it should be considered a partner to religious education programs. Both are important for a child's spiritual development, just as continuing faith formation and growth in spirituality are important for adults.

The Word of God has a message that is as relevant and fitting for children as it is for adults. The children, however, often fail to hear the message simply because the adult vocabulary is beyond their comprehension. Liturgy of the Word with Children offers an experience for the children to hear Scripture in words they understand and to share their own understanding of God's Word.

Celebrating the Liturgy of the Word in this way is an empowering experience, giving children a foundation for understanding and appreciating Scripture. Over several years, the children not only become comfortable with hearing and discussing God's Word but also gain an understanding of and appreciation for their liturgical heritage as Catholics.

When and How Do the Children Leave the Assembly?

The celebration of the Liturgy of the Word with Children follows the same structure as the Liturgy of the Word for the entire assembly. In fact, it begins with the Introductory Rites, which are celebrated in the large assembly, where the children are seated with their families.

After the Introductory Rites, the presider invites any children wishing to participate to join the leader and proceed to the worship space set aside for them. They return after the Prayer of the Faithful to celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist with the entire community.

What About the Readings?

The readings in the children's Lectionary sometimes differ from those used in the adult Lectionary. When planning liturgies to be used with children, the Church allows some flexibility in the number and choice of readings on Sundays and feast days.

According to the *Directory for Masses with Children*, "If three or even two readings appointed on Sundays or weekdays can be understood by children only with difficulty, it is permissible to read two or only one of them, but the reading of the Gospel should never be omitted" (Chapter III, No. 42). In addition, because of the difficulty some children may have in understanding certain verses, it is sometimes possible to omit one or another verse from the reading. (For a complete reading of the directives regarding selection of readings, see the *Directory for Masses with Children*, Chapter III, Nos. 41-47.)

In *Children Celebrate!* we follow the readings from the *Lectionary for Masses with Children*, which is approved for use in all dioceses of the United States by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. We determine themes and make suggestions for each Sunday's liturgy based on these readings. For this reason, it is important that you check each week's citations as listed in this Leader's Guide before finalizing your plans for that Sunday's celebration.

Preview the Readings

If you do not have access to a children's Lectionary while you prepare your liturgy, you have three other options for previewing the readings for each Sunday.

- 1 Go to our website (pflaum.com/readings), click on the date you need, and print or download the readings.
- 2 The *Lectionary for Masses with Children* uses readings from the Old Testament and Book of Psalms. A select number of the refrains for the Responsorial Psalms are taken from the *Contemporary English Version* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. Readings from the New Testament are taken from the *Contemporary English Version, Bible for Today's Family: New Testament* © 1991 by the American Bible Society. The CEV can be purchased at stores and at americanbible.org.
- 3 Go to americanbible.org. Scroll over BIBLE RESOURCES. Scroll down and click on BIBLE SEARCH. Under the search box, click on Search Options. Select CEV Contemporary English Version (US Version). Enter the book, chapter, and verses that you need, such as Luke 15:11–32.

Where Do I Begin?

Your first step to prepare a Sunday session should be to pray for guidance. "Prepare with Prayer" opens each week's background material. It will help you begin to focus your mind and open your heart to God's message. Remain in prayer as long as you like.

Read the Scripture and background material in their entirety. Although the story may be familiar, you may see it with new eyes when challenged to lead a reflection on it. The background material will give you an idea of the social and historical context behind the Scripture.

Gather and write down your thoughts for the reflection. Look at them and meditate on them for a while. Certain themes or ideas will come through. Create an outline for your reflection based on these ideas.

Be sure to read through the Prepare the Meeting Space and The Liturgy of the Word sections well in advance so that you are not taken by surprise by any preparations you should have made or items you will need on hand. Allow plenty of time to set up and prepare before the session.

What Else Should I Know?

LITURGICAL COLORS

This edition of *Children Celebrate!* covers Our Lord, Jesus Christ, King of the Universe through the First Sunday of Lent. For Christ the King, the liturgical color is white or gold. To represent the penitential season of Lent, the color used is purple/violet. Use the liturgical colors on the table where you place the Lectionary or in other elements you use in your worship area.

MOVEMENT

Introduce movement wherever you feel it could be appropriate in the liturgy. Young muscles cry out to be used often, and this physical need causes the restlessness that some adults find irritating. Even the simple act of lifting their arms in prayer or carrying some small object to the front of the room can give children a refreshing but orderly break from being in one position for too long.

Trust Yourself

Finally, remember that *Children Celebrate!* is a complete resource that you can trust to be liturgically sound while also being creative. Nevertheless, you are the leader and you must be comfortable with what you want to do each week. Feel free to use (and trust) your own ideas as well.

There is no limit to what God can work through each of us. Your time with these children will have God's blessing and will be immeasurably fruitful. Enjoy!

Today's Readings

Zephaniah 3:14–15
 Isaiah 12:2, 4bcd, 6
 Philippians 4:4–7
 Luke 3:10–16, 18

Prepare the Meeting Space

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

- a Lectionary
- a green plant or fresh flowers
- a beach ball or another object easy for young children to throw and catch

Suggested Music

See page 62 for more information.

GATHERING:

“Jesus Is Coming” (Seeds CD-1, Track #7) or **“The Promise Part 2”** (Promise & Good News CD-1, Track #2)

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

“Gospel Acclamation; Alleluia” (Promise & Good News CD-2, Track #24)

The People Listen to John the Baptist

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

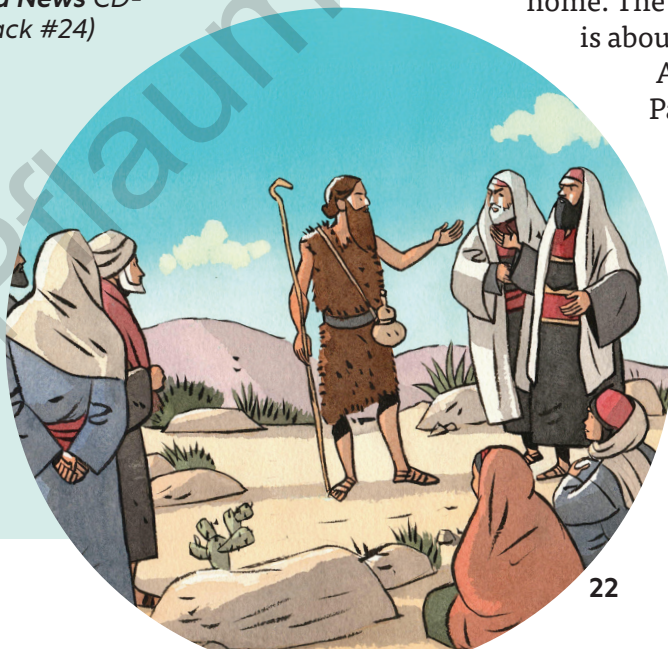
The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who lived in a land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing; They rejoice before you as people rejoice at harvest, as they exult when dividing the spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, The rod of their taskmaster, you have smashed, as on the day of Midian. (ISAIAH 9:1–3)

Scripture Background

This week's reading from Zephaniah concerns the same events as last week's reading from Baruch. After a long exile in Babylon, it is finally possible for the leading citizens of Jerusalem and Judah to return home. The time of punishment for sin is over, and a new era is about to begin.

Although written almost 700 years later, Saint Paul's letter to the Philippians is filled with a similar spirit of joyful anticipation. But it's the Second Coming of Christ that will inaugurate the new era Paul foresees. In a real sense, Paul is asking the Philippians to live each day as if it were their last, for when Christ returns, he will take to himself all those who have remained faithful to him right up to the day of his return—or the last day of their lives, whichever comes first.

In the Gospel, we see that John the Baptist



also senses the dawn of a new era, one destined to bring the first coming of Christ with his emergence into public view. Jesus will bring blessing, however, only to those who give up their sinful ways and return to God.

John's preaching challenged any Jew who believed that simply tracing his lineage back to Abraham and Sarah would give him a "free pass" into the messianic kingdom. Chastened by John's warning to prepare for the Messiah's arrival, people began asking him, "What should we do?" It is a question that believers of all times and places need to keep asking themselves.

CHILDREN'S CONNECTIONS

It's always fun to hear how first-graders complete old proverbs. Their answers offer proof positive that kids can say, in the words of the late Art Linkletter, "the darnedest things."

Young children enjoy noncompetitive games that invite everyone's participation, so be sure to ask at least one question of each child. Some questions are suggested, but if needed, add extras.

Encourage the children to respond with speed and spontaneity, perhaps saying the first thing that comes to mind. Offer no judgments or critiques on their answers. The time for serious commentary will come later, during the homily. At that time, clear up any misconceptions about each question, and concentrate on how a true peacemaker would respond to the situation. Do not make any child feel uncomfortable or "on the spot" for an answer that he or she gave earlier.

THE CHILDREN'S LEAFLET

The Children's Leaflet for this week helps children learn about being ready for Jesus, through a summary of the Gospel, prayer, and a creative activity.

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. Point out the artwork and ask the children what is happening in the picture.

More About ...

The Catechism on Peacemaking

- By recalling the commandment, 'You shall not kill,' our Lord asked for peace of heart and denounced murderous anger and hatred as immoral." (#2302)
- "Peace cannot be attained on earth without safeguarding the goods of persons, free communication among men, respect for the dignity of persons and peoples, and the assiduous practice of fraternity." (#2304)
- "Peace is the work of justice and the effect of charity." (#2304)
- "Earthly peace is the image and fruit of the peace of Christ, the messianic 'Prince of Peace.'" (#2305)
- "All citizens and all governments are obliged to work for the avoidance of war." (#2308)
- "Injustice, excessive economic or social inequalities, envy, distrust, and pride raging among men and nations constantly threaten peace and cause wars. Everything done to overcome these disorders contributes to building up peace and avoiding war." (#2317)

Leaflet Activity

This week, the children will learn that all people are called to live in a way that invites Jesus in our midst.

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

Gathering

Ask the children to form a circle. Stand in the middle and tell the children you will throw the ball to someone while asking a question. The person who catches the ball must answer the question, throw the ball back to you, then sit down. Accept any answer. The game ends when all the children in the circle are sitting down. Each question begins with "What should you do if..." Here are some starter questions.

What should you do if...

- you see a full trash can somewhere at home?
- you see someone in a store drop a wallet?
- a playmate falls down and starts crying?
- you are called for dinner in the middle of an interesting movie?
- a storm comes and you feel afraid?
- your mother won't buy you a toy you want?
- you have two candy bars and your little sister wants one?

Tell the children that you will have more to say about this game during the homily. Then note that each question concerned a situation in which someone's actions could add peace and love to the world or take away some of its peace and love.

Collect

LEADER: *Invite the children to stay in the circle, bow their heads, close their eyes, and pray in their hearts as they listen to the song "Come, Lord Jesus." Play "Come, Lord Jesus."*

And so we say together now,
"Come, Lord Jesus, come."

CHILDREN: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

LEADER: Come in peace and make us people of peace.

CHILDREN: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

LEADER: Come and make our hearts like yours.

CHILDREN: Come, Lord Jesus, come.

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

First Reading

LEADER: In today's First Reading, the prophet Zephaniah has joyful news for the people of Jerusalem. War is over; peace has returned to their land.

Read Zephaniah 3:14-15. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

Responsorial Psalm

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

LEADER: Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

CHILDREN: Cry out with joy and gladness: for among you is the great and Holy One of Israel.

LEADER: *Read Isaiah 12:2, 4bcd, 6.*

Second Reading

LEADER: In today's Second Reading, Saint Paul gives us some advice on how we can make the world a better place.

Read Philippians 4:4-7. Then say, "The word of the Lord."

CHILDREN: Thanks be to God.

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: In today's Gospel, Saint John the Baptist has just finished telling a crowd to get ready for Jesus' coming. People are excited and ask him, "What should we do?" Listen closely to John's an-

swers—because we, too, must get ready for Jesus. That’s what it means to get ready for Christmas. The Lord be with you.

CHILDREN: And with your spirit.

LEADER: *A reading from the Gospel of Luke.*

CHILDREN: † Glory to you, O Lord.

LEADER: *Read Luke 3:10–16, 18. Then say, “The Gospel of the Lord.”*

CHILDREN: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Homily

First, review John’s teachings in the Gospel. John said:

1. Everyone who has extra food and clothes should share with those who have none.
2. Tax collectors should do their work honestly and not cheat anyone.
3. Soldiers should not be bullies who force people to give them money.
4. Everyone, in short, should try to be a peacemaker in everyday life.

Then review the questions used in the opening activity, and explain what a true peacemaker would do in each situation.

PEACEMAKERS WOULD:

1. Empty the trash can (*Philippians 4:5*).
2. Return the lost wallet (*Luke 3:13*).
3. Help a hurt playmate (*Philippians 4:5*).
4. Stop watching the movie and go to dinner (*Luke 3:16*).
5. Do what Saint Paul said: “Don’t worry...but pray” (*Philippians 4:6*).
6. Be content with what they have (*Luke 3:14*).
7. Share their candy (*Luke 3:11*).

Profession of Faith

LEADER: Please stand for the profession of faith, and answer each question with the response, “Yes, I do believe.” Do you believe that God, the loving Creator, sent us Jesus to show us the ways of peace?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe that Jesus, God’s only beloved Son, is the Prince of Peace?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

LEADER: Do you believe that God the Holy Spirit helps you perform works of peace?

CHILDREN: Yes, I do believe.

Prayer of the Faithful

LEADER: As a symbol of our unity and peace, let us once again form a circle, join hands, and pray. To each petition, please respond, “Let there be peace on earth.” For Pope _____ and all leaders of the Church, that they will show the world the ways of peace, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Let there be peace on earth.

LEADER: For leaders of all the nations of the world, that they will work together for peace, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Let there be peace on earth.

LEADER: For ourselves and for the members of our parish, that we will be true peacemakers and share what we have with others, let us pray to the Lord.

CHILDREN: Let there be peace on earth.

LEADER: *Invite the children to pray their own petitions. Then pray:*

Let us pray. Loving God, when Christmas comes, we will celebrate that day long ago when you came to live among us as a little baby. Out of love for you and concern for all the babies being born into today’s world, please help us make our world a kinder and gentler place. This we ask through the same 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 watch this week’s Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Today's Readings

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

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*)

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

*Let the king be fair with everyone,
 and let there be peace
 until the moon falls from the sky.
 (PSALM 72:7)*

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 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. Avoid the most common mistake: reading too fast without taking a breath!
S-l-o-w d-o-w-n so that your listeners won’t miss a single detail of the story.
2. 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. For example, 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 priests 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 priests speak, etc.
6. Practice reading the piece aloud until your interpretation feels natural.

CHILDREN’S LEAFLET

The Children’s Leaflet for this week helps the 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.

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)



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 watch this week's Gospel Reflection video and complete the Family Corner activities as a family.

Leader's Checklist

NOVEMBER							DECEMBER							JANUARY							FEBRUARY								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
			1	2	3	4						1	2			1	2	3	4	5	6						1	2	3
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29				
							31																						

SUNDAY	PREPARATIONS /PROPS	MUSIC	LECTOR	SCRIPTURE BACKGROUND	HOMILY PREP	CHILDREN'S LEAFLETS	OTHER
11/24/24 Christ the King							
12/1/24 1st Advent							
12/8/24 2nd Advent							
12/15/24 3rd Advent							
12/22/24 4th Advent							
12/29/24 Holy Family							
1/5/25 Epiphany							
1/12/25 Baptism of the Lorr							
1/19/25 2nd OT							
1/25/25 3rd OT							
2/2/25 Presentation							
2/9/25 5th OT							
2/16/24 6th OT							

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