

Epiphany Activities

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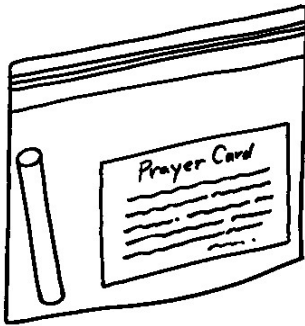
January 6 – Epiphany

(Or the first Sunday following the Feast of the Holy Family, or the twelfth day after Christmas)

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.” Matthew 2:10-12

The roots of our modern day Epiphany are many. The word itself comes from a Greek word that means, “appearance” or “to show oneself.” On this day Christians originally celebrated God becoming man at the Baptism of Jesus. Today eastern churches still celebrate this day as the Baptism of our Lord. In the Catholic tradition we observe Epiphany as the day the three kings visited Jesus and acknowledged Him as the savior the world had been waiting for.

Tradition gives them the names Melchior, Balthazar and Casper. We know that they were scientists who studied astronomy, math and probably medicine. They were aware of the prophecies of the birth of God’s Son and the salvation that He would bring to the world. They looked for a sign of the Messiah’s birth in the stars. When the brightest star they had ever seen appeared in the sky, the kings knew that they had to follow it to find the Son of God.



Prayer for Epiphany

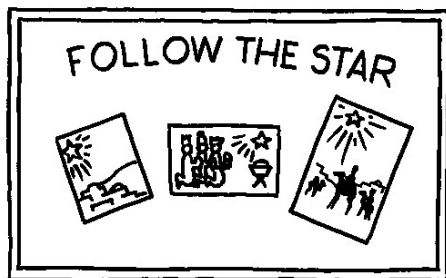
A bright star guided the three kings to the place where Jesus was born. The kings were very happy to see the new baby and they gave him gifts of frankincense, gold and myrrh. On this Epiphany day, we are thankful for the gift God gave us, his Son, Jesus. We are also thankful for the gifts we received and were able to give to others this holiday season. We ask that in the days ahead, we remember others and continue the spirit of giving all year long. Amen.

Activities

Door Markings

Encourage families to bless their homes by writing (with chalk) the year with the initials of the kings on the top of the doors like this: 20+C+M+B+03 (The first and last two numbers reflect the current year). In a zippered bag, send home instructions, with a piece of colored chalk and the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, we ask that you bless our home today. We thank you for the love we have for each other and for you. With the prayers of the saints, Casper, Melchior and Balthasar, we ask that our home be a place of happiness, love, understanding, acceptance and safety for all who enter. As we write our New Year and the initials of the Three Wise Kings on our door, we pray in your name. Amen.



Three Kings Images

Look through your box of used Christmas cards, taking out the ones with pictures of the three kings. Post these in your prayer corner or add them to a bulletin board titled, “Following the Star” or “Searching for Jesus.”

Kings Cake

Share a Kings Cake with the children in your class. Hide a candy coin in one or more cupcakes. The child who gets the coin in their cake is king for the day. Present the king with a crown and little gift.

Celebration Table



The three kings, or the magi, tell us that all peoples are welcomed by Jesus. They also encourage us to travel far, in our hearts and minds, to come to Jesus. To symbolize this, cover the table with dark blue fabric, place unbreakable magi statues on one side of the table, and a figure of the Christ Child on the other. Make paper stars, and lay them on the table in a path between them, so the men are following the star path.

Star Ribbons

Trace three stars on heavy paper. With glitter pens write the words: Joy, Hope, and Peace on each of the stars. Staple the stars on a piece of ribbon and make a loop at the top for hanging.

Follow the Star Game

Play Follow the Star game. Cover a cardboard star with aluminum foil. Have the children cover their eyes while someone hides the star in your classroom. Everyone looks for the star and the person who finds it first hides it for the next round of the game.

Show and Tell

Plan a special Show and Tell for the week after Christmas. Everyone is invited to bring in a favorite toy. Use the following blessing of toys with the whole group.

Prayer

Dear God, thank you for the gift of your Son, Jesus, at Christmas. We also thank you for the blessing of family and friends with whom we celebrated this special time. Today as we share the gifts that we received in your honor, we ask for your blessing. (At this time move around the circle and touch each child gently on the head and ask for God's blessing.) "God bless Sarah and her new panda bear" or "God bless Michael and his new football."



Sunday Following Epiphany – Baptism of the Lord

Jesus came from Galilee to be baptized by John the Baptist. After Jesus was baptized he came out of the water and the sky opened and he saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and hover over him. With that a voice from the heavens said, "This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased." Matthew 3: 13-17 This feast is dedicated to the Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Jesus was an adult when his cousin John baptized him in the Jordan River. The Baptism of Jesus marked the beginning of his public ministry.

Prayer

Just as Jesus was baptized with water into the family of God by his cousin John, we too have been baptized with water into our community of faith. Today we are grateful for the new life we have in Jesus through our baptism. Help us to live every day as children of God. Amen.

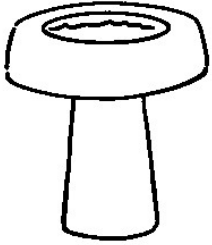
Activities

Blessings

Pass around a clear bowl of water after the baptism prayer above. Have the children dip their fingers into the water and make the Sign of the Cross. Or bless children by making the Sign of the Cross on their foreheads with holy water.

Baptism Discussion

Talk about the rite of baptism. If possible watch a baptism in your community.



Model Baptism

Do a model baptism with the children using a baby doll and inviting your pastor or another teacher to be the celebrant.

Photos at the Font

Take a photo of each child at the baptismal font of your church.

Baptism Celebrations

Find out the date of each child's baptism and celebrate it with the class using the blessing above. Also have the children bring in pictures of their own baptisms.

Shell Remembrances

The scalloped seashell is one of the symbols of baptism. Ask your community for donations of seashells and use them to make remembrances of baptism for the children in your group. Lace a ribbon through a hole in the shell. (If there is not a hole in the shell, use hot glue to fasten it to a ribbon or ask a volunteer to drill holes in the shells.) Make a necklace with the seashell or use a shorter ribbon to make it an ornament. With a gold fine point pen, write the name of the child and the date of his/her baptism on the inside of the shell.

