

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord • Year B • January 3, 2021

Catechist Preparation

Scripture

FIRST READING—ISAIAH 60:1-6

This chapter and the next two are characterized by exuberance. Isaiah focuses on the restoration of Israel after having returned from exile. He describes a new Jerusalem as the pinnacle to which all the nations will gather.

SECOND READING—EPHESIANS 3:2-3a, 5-6

In this passage, Paul presents himself as the interpreter of divine mystery. Given his calling from God, Paul claims for himself the necessary authority to preach the Revelation of God in Christ for the community.

GOSPEL READING—MATTHEW 2:1-12

Each of the particular episodes of this chapter revolves around places: Bethlehem, Egypt, Ramah and Nazareth. The “star” that the wise men follow may have been the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter. The theme of this passage is the Magi doing “homage” to Jesus (see verses 2, 8, 11).

Church Teaching

The gift of Salvation in Christ is not meant exclusively for a single people or a single nation. God’s gift is extended to all people everywhere. From the time of Jesus’ infancy, by the visit of the wise men, the universal nature of Salvation in Christ is made clear. Furthermore, in his public ministry, Jesus interacted with pagan foreigners, preaching to them and healing them. The Church is called to do likewise in her worldwide ministry.

Additional Background

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 528, 848, 863, 868

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults: pages 115-116

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church: 107, 166, 168, 172

Dismissal Session

(Approximately 20 minutes)

Set the space with chairs in a circle. On a small table, place a white cloth, a white candle, and a Christmas crèche that includes the three kings (a Nativity scene).

Discover

1. Invite everyone to reflect on today’s liturgy quietly for 1-2 minutes. Then have the participants respond to the following questions in small groups:
 - ◆ *What did you see or hear in the Liturgy of the Word that impressed you?*
 - ◆ *What word, phrase or image from the readings still stays with you?*
2. Discuss as a large group what each person already knows about the event of the Epiphany.

Deepen

Have participants discuss the particular aspects of the Epiphany by pointing out the following:

- ◆ The wise men or Magi were not of Jewish descent. They were Gentiles.
- ◆ The gifts these three kings bring forth in honor of Jesus have deep significance. They symbolize that Jesus is Priest, Prophet, and King.
 - Gold represents royalty; the Son of God is the King of Kings and Prince of Peace.
 - Frankincense is connected with priesthood; Jesus offers himself as the perfect sacrifice on behalf of others.
 - Myrrh reminds us of the prophets who willingly risk their own lives to call people back to God; Jesus does this with his life.

Pray

Sing or chant the Responsorial Psalm.

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Extended Catechesis Session

(Approximately 45 to 60 minutes)

Sunday Word

Isaiah 60:1-6

Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13

Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6

Matthew 2:1-12

Welcome

Welcome everyone who is present, including sponsors, team members, and spouses who join the group. Invite one or two people to share some of the key points from the Dismissal Session.

Engage

1. Proclaim the First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6. Then discuss the meaning of the passage using the following points:
 - ◆ Hope is offered to the Israelites, who are presently in exile in Babylon, through Isaiah's message of a new Jerusalem.
 - ◆ Rejoicing is possible because the Lord has not forgotten them; God will restore them to their homeland and bless them with glory and splendor.
 - ◆ God shall deliver them from all darkness and they will give praise and thanks to God.
2. If there is time, invite participants to recall a time when they finally received a long-awaited promise. Have them share in small groups how they felt and responded to this news. Then have them relate their experiences to that of the Israelites whom Isaiah is addressing in the First Reading.

Explore

1. Highlight key points from the Participant Handout's Church Teaching: Universal Salvation, using these points:
 - ◆ The Epiphany celebrates the arrival of the Son of God for all people of all time.

- ◆ In Christ, we are all made one—we belong to him and to one another as members of the Body of Christ, the Church.
- ◆ The Magi were called from their homeland to follow the star and that star led them to Bethlehem and eventually to the Messiah.
- ◆ God works through human agents such as Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the Magi, in order to draw all people to himself.
- ◆ We, too, are called to be agents for the Lord—to be partners in the mission of Christ. As members of the Church, we are to lead others to God.

2. Highlight the Key Terms and Voices of Faith sections.

Apply

1. Invite the catechumens and candidates to complete these statements, and share responses with a partner:

From the prayer, discussion, and study for this Sunday, I understand the Church's teaching to be...

I am challenged to live the message of this Sunday by...

Pray

Use the prayer found on the Participant Handout and sing a Christmas carol.