



# Liturgy of the Word with Children

Te Ritenga o te Kupu hei ngā Tamariki

Prepared by the Liturgy Centre, Catholic Diocese of Auckland

## The Epiphany of the Lord

White

'Epiphany – Magi'

Isaiah 60:1-6 Psalm 72 Matthew 2:1-12



Who were the wise men and where did they come from? What gifts did they bring to Jesus? Gold is a precious and costly metal, often worn by kings. Gold was to indicate the royalty of the child. Frankincense is a type of incense which gives off a perfumed, pleasant smelling smoke, to indicate the holiness of the child. Myrrh is a perfumed ointment often used to prepare the dead for burial. This was to indicate the humanity of the Christ child, and symbolise his suffering and death. Why did the angel warn them not to go back to King Herod?

### Leader's Preparation

In preparation for leading this celebration begin by reading and reflecting on the Scriptures for The Epiphany of the Lord, starting with the Gospel. (You may choose to use or focus on one reading only, but remember that the Gospel may not be omitted.) Then look through the preparatory material that follows and familiarise yourself with the Liturgy Outline.

### GOSPEL

Matthew 2:1-12

When Jesus was born in the village of Bethlehem in Judea, Herod was king. During this time some wise men from the east came to Jerusalem and said, "Where is the child born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him."

When King Herod heard about this, he was worried, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. Herod brought together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses and asked them, "Where will the Messiah be born?" They told him, "He will be born in Bethlehem, just as the prophet wrote, 'Bethlehem in the land of Judea, you are very important among the towns of Judea. From your town will come a leader, who will be like a shepherd for my people Israel.'"

Herod secretly called in the wise men and asked them when they had first seen the star. He told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, let me know."

I want to go and worship him too.” The wise men listened to what the king said and then left. And the star they had seen in the east went on ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. They were thrilled and excited to see the star.

When the men went into the house and saw the child with Mary, his mother, they knelt down and worshipped him. They took out their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh and gave them to him. Later they were warned in a dream not to return to Herod, and they went back home by another road.

## *FIRST READING*

Isaiah 60:1-6

Jerusalem, stand up and shine! Your new day is dawning, and the glory of the Lord shines brightly on you. The earth and its people are covered with darkness, but the glory of the Lord is shining over you. Nations and kings will come to the light of your dawning day.

Open your eyes and look around! Crowds are on their way. Your sons are coming from distant lands, and your daughters are being carried like young children. When you see this, your faces will glow. Your hearts will beat fast and swell with pride.

Treasures from over the sea and the wealth of nations will be brought to you. Your country will be covered with caravans of young camels, from Midian and Ephah. And the people of Sheba will bring gold and spices in praise of the Lord.

## *PSALM*

Psalm 72

**Response:**                    **Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.**

Please help the king to be honest and fair just like you, our God.

Let him be honest and fair with all your people, especially the poor.

Force the rulers of Tarshish and of the islands to pay taxes to him.

Make the kings of Sheba and of Seba bring gifts. Make other rulers bow down and all nations serve him.

*Scriptures from the Lectionary for Masses with Children (CEV)*  
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## *Background to the Readings for Leaders*

The word 'epiphany' comes from a Greek word meaning revelation or manifestation. The birth of Christ is the sign that God is with us, that God's hand is everywhere at work in the world. The 'wise men' were probably astrologers, or magi, from Persia, and they represent all who seek God with a sincere heart. They were not Jews, yet they were the ones who recognised the signs that indicated something special was happening, and they travelled far to find and worship the new king. Naturally they headed towards the palace in Jerusalem in their search. Imagine their confusion when they were led to a simple house in a small town. However they were open to seeing the divine in the ordinary, and after encountering Jesus they returned home by a new road. Herod, on the other hand, and the very people who should have been aware of what was happening right under their noses, had the opposite response: when they understand what was happening, they were not open to the revelation of God in this child and sought to harm him.

## *Images from the Readings*

- The glory of God shines brightly on you.
- Crowds are on their way
- We saw his star
- A shepherd for my people
- They took out their gifts

## *Reflection for Leaders*

This ancient feast celebrates the welcoming of all people who seek God with a sincere heart. It is not just the chosen people who are invited to faith in Jesus as Lord. He is significant to all who seek truth, and his light draws people into relationship with God. He is the sign of God's love for creation and through whom God's love is made known to all.

Today is a time to reflect on how far we have travelled in our own journey towards Jesus. What is leading you? How much progress have you made? What gifts do you bring? How open are you to the possibility of finding the divine in the ordinary? As we think on the story of the wise men, and reflect on how thrilled and excited they were to see the star, we might reflect back on times of pure delight in our own life experience. Did they cause us to take a new road?

We might also think about how open we are to welcoming foreigners' who come to seek Jesus. What hospitality ministries are present in your faith community?

How important are they?

## *Reflecting on the Readings with the children*

Before Sunday read over the suggested discussion points given in the Leader's Liturgy Outline.  
With the 8-12 year olds: First, listen to the children's own responses to the Reading/s and then, if needed, use some of the discussion starters suggested.

With the 5-7 year olds: Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'.

## *Suggested Focus*

Prepare a focus for the area where the children's Liturgy of the Word is to be held:

White cloth, Lectionary, a candle, and a nativity crib.

Also have a map of Israel, a star and three wrapped presents to use.



# LEADER'S LITURGY OUTLINE

## *The Epiphany of the Lord*

At a suitable moment after the Opening Rites, but before the First Reading is proclaimed, the children are presented with the Children's Lectionary and a candle and sent, with their ministers, to the place where they will celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word, with words of dismissal such as the following:

*INVITATION – Pōwhiri* I invite the children to join in the procession for their celebration of the Liturgy of the Word.

**To the Minister of the Word:** Receive this Book of Readings and proclaim God's Word faithfully to the children entrusted to your care.

Receive this candle as the light of Christ who is present in his Word.

*PROCESSION WITH THE BOOK OF READINGS – Te Kapa o te Pukapuka Tapu*

*WELCOME – Ko te whakatau*

**Leader:** O God, you revealed your Son to the world by the guidance of a star. Lead us too, by the light of faith, that we may bring others to you as well. Amen

**R** Amen.

*First Reading: Isaiah 60:1-6* (if used) The Word of the Lord / Ko te Kupu a te Ariki  
Thanks be to God / Whakamoemiti ki te Atua

*Psalm 72*

**Response:** Lord, every nation on earth will adore you.  
(or another suitable response known by the children)

Christmas: Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. I bring you news of great joy.——

Al - le - lu - ia. Al - le - lu - ia. Je - sus our Sav - iour is born.

### *Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12*

**Minister of the Word:** A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew

**Children:** **Glory to you, O Lord / Korōria ki ā koe, e te Ariki**

**At the end of the Gospel:** The Gospel of the Lord

**Children:** **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ / Kia whakanuia rā koe, e te Ariki, e Hēhu Karaiti.**

### *REFLECTING ON THE READINGS WITH THE CHILDREN – Whai Whakaaro*

**8-12 year olds:** Suggested Beginning: A good place to begin is with the question: What did you hear? Allow each child the opportunity to respond in their own words to hearing the Word of God. Then begin a general discussion, building on these responses, perhaps using some prepared questions, like the following, to stimulate ideas.

- The wise men from the east came on a long journey to find the child that was born to be king of the Jews. How did they know where to go? Why did they go and talk to Herod?
- Where did Herod tell them to go? (Show the map and indicate where Bethlehem and Jerusalem are on it)
- What things did the wise men bring for the child? (Gold, precious and costly, was offered to kings; frankincense, perfumed incense, was offered to God; and myrrh, a perfumed ointment used for burials, indicated the humanity of Jesus and his death)
- When do we give or receive presents?
- Why did the angel tell the wise men not to return to Herod?

**5-7 year olds:** Adapt some of the questions in the 8-12 material and then join with the older group for the 'Liturgical Action'

## *LITURGICAL ACTION – Ko te Ritenga Karakia*

Dramatisation of the Gospel by the children might be used as an act of worship this week.  
Use the star and let them mime following it towards the nativity crib.  
Let three children bring the presents.



## *PROFESSION OF FAITH – Panui o te Whakapono*

We believe in God the Father,  
who made the whole world.  
We believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God,  
who was born in Bethlehem  
and lived among us,  
who died on the cross for us,  
and rose from the dead.  
We believe in the Holy Spirit  
who brings life and love to us all.  
We believe that the Church is one family,  
and that one day  
we will share everlasting life  
with God in heaven.  
Amen.

## PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL – Te Īnoinga o te Hunga Whakapono

(Here are some suggested intercessions; you are encouraged to compose your own according to the age and experience of the children)

**Leader:** Believing the promises of the Word we have just heard, let us call upon God for all our needs:

- For the Church, that she be a welcoming beacon of light and truth and hope to guide us all to know God. Let us pray to the Lord  
R **Lord hear our prayer** or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- That we share the gifts that we have to help and support each other. Let us pray to the Lord  
R **Lord hear our prayer** or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- That we have the courage to go where God leads us. Let us pray to the Lord  
R **Lord hear our prayer** or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**
- That people who do not know the gift of Jesus to the world will know true peace in their hearts. Let us pray to the Lord  
R **Lord hear our prayer** or **E te Ariki whakarongo mai rā ki a mātou**

**Leader:** Loving God, help us to share your love and all that you have given us, to make this world a place of welcome. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord

**All:** **Amen**

The children re-join the assembly before the prayers over the gifts.





# The Epiphany of the Lord

*Echo Mime*

Matthew 2:1-12

Epiphany - Magi

## A story from Matthew's Gospel

Hands open as in reading a book

Just after Jesus was born

*Form hands as in rocking a baby to sleep*

three wise men

*Hold up three fingers*

came to visit

*Walking on the spot*

the new king

*Form hands as in rocking a baby to sleep*

but could not find him

*Looking around*

anywhere!

*Shaking head*

They went to Herod

*Thumbs down*

to ask

*Hand from mouth to a person*

'Where is the new king?'

*Hands raised, palms skywards, as in a questioning gesture*

We have come to worship him'.

*Hands folded as in prayer*

Herod was mad

*Stamp one foot and form a fist with right hand*

and angry

*Stamp one foot and form a fist with left hand*

and worried.

*Drag hand across forehead*

'King? What new king?'

*Form hands as in rocking baby to sleep*

'I am the only king around here!'

*Point to self*

Herod told the three wise men:

*Hold up three fingers*

'Go and find this new king

*Point in one direction*

and then tell me

*Point to self*



From 'Just Imagine 4, Many Creative ways of presenting Scripture' written by Rina Wintour, Mountjoy Enterprises, [www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au](http://www.mountjoyenterprises.com.au). Available from the Liturgy Centre.