

Shepherds and Wise Men Visit Jesus

Objective: The students will be able to tell that shepherds and wise men came to visit Jesus because they followed the bright star.

For the Catechist

The lesson is the second of two Nativity story lessons. The entire Nativity story will be told in the feast day lesson on the Nativity with the use of the Nativity icon, so do not dwell on the icon at this point. This lesson is quite appropriate for kindergartners. The students will identify with the idea of giving gifts to someone special. Stars are also fascinating to young children.

The visit of the shepherds and wise men occur because of heavenly sightings: a star and angels. All creation witnesses to the birth of the Messiah.

Background Reading

(Direct quotations from the sources noted)

Christ Manifested

"When He was recognized as Son of God by His resurrection (Rom 1:4), early Christians also began to appreciate this mystery of His incarnation in the Gospel events of His birth and baptism. His birth is described in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke with wise men from 'the East' recognizing Him as Messiah and King and with angels proclaiming Him as such to shepherds" (LLII 41).

Western "Epiphany"

"In time most Eastern Churches would add the feast of Christmas on December 25, but retained the feast of Theophany as the celebration of the Lord's baptism in expression of the profound theology connected with it. The West was later to accept the feast of Theophany but changed it to commemorate the "manifestation" (*epiphany*) of Jesus to the Gentile nations through the Persian wise men" (LLII 43-44).

Lesson Plan Overview

Opening: "Christ is born!—Glorify Him!"
[Modify words according to parish usage.]

Introduction: Discussion of signs **Need:**
Sign Visual Aid (provided)

Read Text Aloud: Hold text up for students to see as you read each page aloud. After each page, use the questions in the shaded box at the bottom of that page to discuss the lesson with the students.

Activity Tracks:

Choose a basic, group, or craft activity to reinforce the lesson (detailed on the pages that follow).

- **Basic:** "The Star of Bethlehem"
- **Group:** "Following the Star" Song Game
- **Craft:** "Gifts for Jesus"

Closing: "Christ is born!—Glorify Him!"
[Modify words according to parish usage.]

Come Bless the Lord Icon:

Packet I: The Nativity of Christ
Packet II:

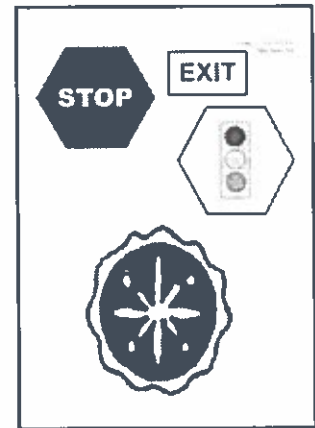
The Lesson Plan

Opening

We say a special greeting to the priest, our parents, and other people in our church at different times throughout the year. Does anyone remember the greeting for the season of the Nativity? [Allow responses.] Let's say this greeting, "Christ is born!" We answer, "Glorify Him!" [Have students say both.] I'll say—"Christ is born!"—and you say—"Glorify Him!" Let's try it.

Introduction

Last week we learned about Jesus' birth or the Nativity. Who can tell me anything about the story? [Allow responses. Piece together the story as they speak.] This week we'll continue the story. I brought something with me to help begin our lesson. [Hold up "Sign Visual Aid."] What is this called? [Point to stop sign.] (Stop sign) Do you know any others? [Allow responses.] All of these are called signs. We also know another sign—the sign of the cross. [Demonstrate.] It is a sign that we are followers of Jesus Christ. Signs tell us something we need to know. Here is another sign. [Point to the star.] Do you recognize it? It is part of the Nativity story. [Allow responses.] On the night Jesus was born, a very, very bright star shone in the sky. When such a star appeared, the wise men knew a king had been born.



Reading of Text

Hold text so that children can see the page as you read it to them. Read slowly and draw their attention to the illustrations. After reading each page, use the questions below (given also on the bottom of the student text) to review what you have read.

Page 1

- When was Jesus born? (At night)
- The shepherds were watching their flocks at night. What did they see? (The glory of the Lord shone around them.)

Page 2

- Who came to speak to the shepherds? (Angels)
- What is the first thing the angel said? ("Do not be afraid.")
- What else did the angel say? [Allow students to piece together the rest of the message.]
- What do you think the shepherds did after they heard the message?

Page 3

- Who else saw the star? (Three wise men)
- Can you name one thing they brought to Jesus? [Call on one student for each.] (Gold, frankincense, myrrh)
- Gold, frankincense and myrrh were gifts that were given to kings in that day. The wise men knew Jesus was a king.
- If you were going to give Jesus a gift, what would it be?

Activity Tracks

Basic: The Star of Bethlehem

The basic activity is the fourth page of each student text. It is a paraphrase of the Bible story that tells about the wise men following the star and asking King Herod for advice. Read the title and the story to the children. They may finish the dot-to-dot and color the illustration. Questions to reinforce the reading are as follows:

- *How did the wise men know a king had been born? (They saw the bright star which meant a new king had been born.)*
- *Whom did they ask about the new king? (King Herod) King Herod was not happy to hear of a new king. He thought the new king would take the throne from him. After a few days, the king ordered that all male babies be put to death. Joseph took Mary and Jesus to Egypt so that Jesus would not be killed.*

Group: "Following the Star"

Materials: Star worksheet

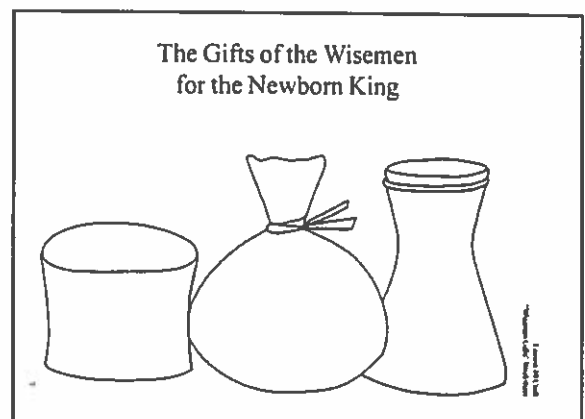
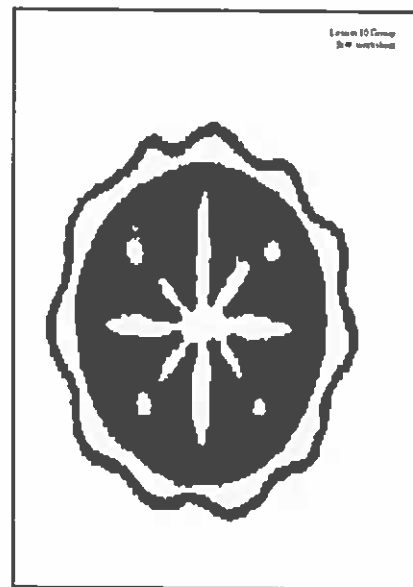
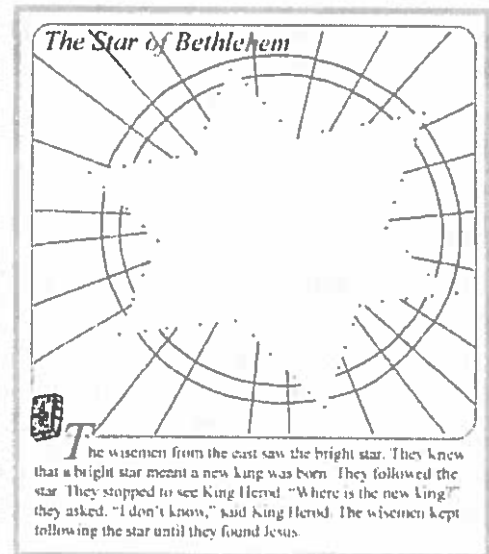
[Ahead of time, color the star bright or use glitter. If you wish, you may tape it to a long stick to be held high.] *Today we learned that the Star of Bethlehem guided the shepherds and wise men to Jesus. Here is a song we can sing to help us remember that. It is to the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell." One person gets to hold the star. As he or she walks around the room, we'll sing. When the star comes to you, you may join in the line and follow the star. Let's sing the song.*

"I'm following the star. I'm following the star. I'm going to see the newborn king. I'm following the star."

Craft: Gifts for Jesus

Materials: Gift worksheet copied onto heavier paper, glitter, pretty fabric scraps and other decorating materials, markers, glue

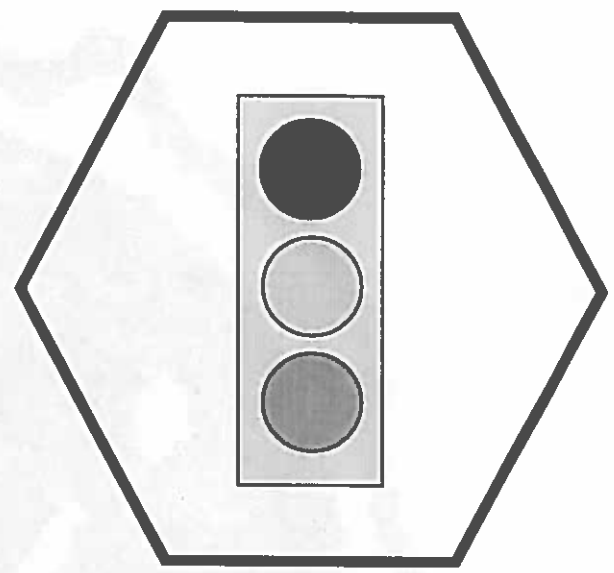
The wise men brought gifts to the newborn king, Jesus. The gifts were very precious items—gold, frankincense and myrrh. For our activity today, let's make the wise men's gifts. [Show example.] The title reads "The Gifts



of the Wise Men for the Newborn King." Our worksheet shows us containers for gold, frankincense and myrrh. To show they are precious, we'll use glitter and other pretty things. If you would like to create your own gift for Jesus, you can use these same materials and a sheet of paper without the drawings. Create a gift of your own.

Closing

[Gather the students before the icon of the Nativity at the icon corner.] We began our lesson with the greeting of the special season we're in. Who remembers the greeting? (Christ is born!—Glorify Him!) Who remembers which special season we're in? (The season of the Nativity or Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.) For our closing, let's have you say "Christ is born!" and I'll say "Glorify Him." Are you ready to say the greeting? "Christ is born!"—"Glorify Him!"





The Gifts of the Wise Men for the Newborn King

Lesson 10 Craft
"Wise Men Gifts" Worksheet

