

Feast of the Epiphany

Three kings visit Jesus

INTRODUCTION

The three wise men were not Jews. They came from lands far to the East, and were astrologers who used the stars to guide them on their journeys. They also knew of the prophecies of an infant king to be born, a Saviour. Through them, his arrival was announced to the world. Jesus the saving Lord has come not just for the Jews but for *all* people.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

As the candles are being lit, the children listen to this reading from Isaiah (*cf* Isaiah 60:1-3):

The glory of God is shining on you! All other people will live in the shadows, but you will always have God's light to chase away the darkness. Other people will look at you and see the light of God's love shining out.

SORRY

If we have done anything to make God sad or disappointed with us, we can make a fresh start by singing our sorry song together and trying again. Sing Sorry Song 4: *When we say that we are sorry.*

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing the Advent Song.

GOSPEL (*cf* Matthew 2:1-12)

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, a small town in Judaea when King Herod ruled the land. Three wise men from the east had been following a bright star. They went to Jerusalem and asked King Herod where they could find the new-born King of the Jews that they had come to adore. Herod was greatly troubled because he didn't want anyone else to be King, so he sent for his advisors.

'Tell me where this child, the so called King will be born,' he asked.

'It has been foretold by the prophets that he will be born in Bethlehem,' they answered.

King Herod sent for the wise men and said to them, 'I will allow you to search for this child, but you must come back and tell me where to find him. Then I too can go and honour him.'

The wise men set off again on their journey. They followed the bright star until it appeared to stop over a stable. There they found Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus. They were filled with

wonder and joy, and fell to their knees to worship him. They gave him gifts fit for a king, of gold, frankincense and myrrh. An angel warned them in a dream not to return to Herod's palace, so they went back to their own countries a different way.

DISCUSSION

What did the wise men follow to lead them to Jesus? – Years ago, before people had maps and signposts, they used the stars and the position of the sun in the sky to tell them where they were.

Who were the three wise men and where did they come from? – They were believed to be three kings called Melchior, Caspar and Balthazar. They came from countries to the east, although no-one knows exactly where, and are supposed to represent all the peoples of the world.

What gifts did they bring to Jesus?

1. Gold – This was brought by Melchior. Gold is a precious and expensive metal, often worn by kings. This was a sign of Christ's royalty.
2. Frankincense – This was brought by Caspar. Frankincense is a type of incense, which when burned gives off a perfumed, pleasant smelling smoke. This was a sign of Christ's holiness.
3. Myrrh – This was brought by Balthazar. Myrrh is a perfumed ointment which was used to prepare the dead for their burial. This was a sign of Christ's humanity and his suffering and death.

What warning did the angel give to the wise men?

ACTIVITY

Photocopy this cut-out model preferably onto thin card. The children can then cut out and decorate the three kings and their crowns and gifts. Assemble the kings and mount them on the stand up camels.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Like the three wise men,
we are here today to worship you, Jesus.
We have no gold,
but we give you our love.
We have no frankincense,
we give you our prayers.
We have no myrrh,
so we give you ourselves.