



Epiphany ABC
Lectionary Catechesis
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Beginning with the Annunciation, through Christmas, and to the Epiphany, the Gospel is revealed to us. (CCC1171) Epiphany means “a showing forth, a manifestation”. In some ways this is a high feast of evangelization for the whole Church and the world. Remember part of Pope Francis’s Christmas message was to invite even atheists to work together with us for peace, as some vision we can all share. There are obstacles to evangelization, one being the marriage in our culture of Church to Society and the life of the anonymous Christian. Christianity should be lived in the light of the Christ. The central themes this Sunday are homage, evangelization, and gifting the poor and oppressed, of whom we have plenty in the modern world. This feast sets out the mission of the Church, and its symbols of light reflect Pentecost.



First Reading: Isaiah 60, 1-6

Vss. 3 and 6 appear to be the initial reason the lectionary pairs this prophecy with the gospel. It is also the source of the folklore about the magi, including camels in our manger scenes, that the magi were kings, their Eastern and African origins, and that two of their gifts are foretold. The real point of the passage, however, is on the epiphany of God’s light. The light is for the nations, no longer just for Israel, and the light results in a “heart throb and overflow.” But about what? Joy, the human family is made one again.

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

The psalm is a prayer for the king, and is the last “of the psalms of David,” the king. This is an extended prayer for the king that he rule with justice, especially for the poor and oppressed. Then he and the whole people will be worthy to receive all of God’s blessings including rain and abundant harvest. His justice will be so renown that all the other kings of the earth will bring him tribute and strive to imitate of him. God is the one who does all these things, and Jesus, Son of God and LORD, is understood to be the prophetic answer to this prayer.

<i>New Evangelization Steps from Isaiah 60, 1-6</i>	
Know Your Faith	What does the person of faith see in our world today? How do we “read the signs of the times”? What does the light reveal?
Live Your Faith	When does your heart throb and overflow? What do you think about the human family being one again? How does God’s shine forth from you?
Share Your Faith	What gifts do you share with your parish and Church? How or when do you “herald the praises of the Lord”?
Worship	Why does the priest invite us to “Lift up your hearts”/“Sursum corda”? What role does light play in the liturgy.

<i>New Evangelization Steps from Psalm 72, 1-2. 7-8. 10-11. 12-13</i>	
Know Your Faith	Who is the true ruler of the world, visible and invisible? What have we been hearing from the popes, especially in our own time, since Leo XIII, about the poor?
Live Your Faith	What do you do to bring about justice for the poor and oppressed? How does our social justice work bring us closer to Jesus?
Share Your Faith	Have you ever advocated for the poor or someone oppressed? How do you care for the poor and oppressed? In what ways does the Church help the poor and represent the needy? Identify groups.
Worship	What is the abundance and great bounty we receive at the Mass? In what way are we impoverished when we come into the world and into God’s presence?

Second Reading: Ephesians 3, 2-3a. 5-6

Paul’s whole mission was to evangelize the Greek and Roman world with a personal encounter with Jesus Christ through his ministry of the Word. His stewardship is not something limited by national politics, culture, economics, or religion, but rather crosses all those limited human structures to reconcile all the nations and peoples. Sadly and strangely enough his words strike at the barriers we create of prejudice, intolerance, and division among us in our world today. St. Paul writes that everyone is a potential “co-heir”, “member”, and “co-partners”. Our problem today is the enculturation of the Church into Euro-centric and U.S. patterns of the behavior and thinking, just when the Church is most counter to this culture.

New Evangelization Steps from <i>Ephesians 3, 2-3a. 5-6</i>	
Know Your Faith	What is the relationship between faith and stewardship? What does it mean when we say the Bible is revelation? (CCC 50-67)
Live Your Faith	How are you a good steward of God’s grace in your daily life? What light guides your life now?
Share Your Faith	The social justice components in our faith are CCC 1928-1931 and 2419-2422. Read, reflect, and share. Are Gnostic writings, the non-biblical Dead Sea Scrolls, and other ancient writings any kind of revelation?
Worship	What does the Church teach about astrology today? (CCC 2110-2126) Why is astrology still around and consulted?

Gospel: Matthew 2, 1-12 The Adoration of the Magi

The Epiphany story has four parts: the magi arrive in Jerusalem, their private interrogation by Herod and his commission to find the child, their arrival and homage before Jesus, and their return home. Matthew is the only gospel which tells this story. Whoever they were, they were not kings; the text calls them “magi” from the land of the rising sun (literally); ancient Turkey was called Anatolia, land of the rising sun. So as well as not giving a specific place of origin, nor does Matthew tell us how many there were or their names. Adding to the questions raised by the text and its story, in the first several centuries of Christianity, all sorts of folkloric material arose about the magi, including their names, the meaning of their gifts, and their home countries.

Magi were Zoroastrian priests and seers who performed rituals and who read the positions of stars, sun and moon to interpret human events. The Renaissance Medici Chapel of the Magi includes a fresco called the “Adoration of the Magi” by the artist Benozzo Gozzoli, portraying a procession of Byzantine Emperor (John VIII Palaiologos) and dignitaries arriving at the Council of Florence, 1439-1449. You will be happy you googled this one for the beautiful details.

Vss. 1-12: CCC 486 The Catechism here observes that the “manifestation of this fact takes place only progressively” throughout the life of Jesus.

Vs.1: CCC 528 This is the key Catechism citation about the Epiphany. Parts of this passage may be considered ill-worded such as the word “pagans” and the concept of *Israelitica Dignitas*. Both of these could pre-occupy much group discussion time to clarify. Keep the emphasis on the evangelization aspects of this teaching on this solemnity.

Vs. 2: CCC 439, 528 Peoples would recognize the fundamental characteristics of the Messiah.

Vss. 4-6: CCC 528

Vs. 11: CCC 724 Mary makes known and reveals Christ to the poor shepherds and to the magi, representing all the nations. Mary is an evangelist in this role.

New Evangelization Steps from <i>Matthew 2, 1-12</i>	
Know Your Faith	What are the fundamental characteristics of the Messiah? Taking away all the folklore, what is the faith truth in the narrative about the magi?
Live Your Faith	How have you progressively come to know Jesus? How far away or close are you to Bethlehem? Reflect upon your journey of faith and the gift of “you” that you present to Jesus.
Share Your Faith	What can you do today to be an evangelizer? (Hint: What does Mary do?) Are you limited by race, religion, or culture as to whom we can share the good news of Jesus?
Worship	What does “adoration” and “homage” mean to you? What does gold, frankincense, and myrrh mean to you? Why does the Church use incense?



Next Week: Baptism of the Lord A

Is 42, 1-4.6-7; Ps 29; Acts 10, 34-38; Mt 3, 13-17

