Teaching the Liturgical Year

LESSONS
for January
2020
Teaching the Liturgical Year

Four Lessons for January 2020

January 5, 2020: The Epiphany of the Lord

January 12, 2020: The Baptism of the Lord

January 19, 2020: The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

January 26, 2020: The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
The Visit of the Magi
(Middle and Upper Elementary)

January 5, 2020 – The Epiphany of the Lord

Overview
In this week's Gospel passage, the magi visit the infant Jesus to bring Him gifts and honor Him. In this lesson, students will come to a deeper understanding of the identity of the magi and consider ways in which they too can be like the wisemen as they come to adore the Lord.

Directions
A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
B. Review and discuss the answers when finished.
C. Have your students read the excerpts from the article “What the Magi Can Teach Us” by Fr. Ed Broom, OMV, from CatholicExchange.com, and answer the reflection questions as they go. The complete article can be found at the following link: sophiaonline.org/WhattheMagiTeachUs.
D. Call on students to share and discuss their answers when finished.

Answer Key

Focus Questions
1. Magi from the east. They were looking for the newborn king of the Jews to pay him homage.
2. They were the ones currently in power. The birth of a new king threatened their power and control over the people.
4. Herod asked the Magi to search for the child and bring him word when they had found Him. Herod said he wanted them to do this so he could pay homage. He likely did not want to do this in truth, but rather sought to kill the newborn King because he threatened Herod’s rule.
5. A star which came to rest over the place where the child was.
7. They had been warned not to do so in a dream.
A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 2:1-12: The Visit of the Magi

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel." Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

Focus Questions

1. Who came to Jerusalem? What were they looking for and why?
2. Why do you think King Herod, the priests, and the scribes were troubled to hear of the birth of a new king of the Jews?
3. Where did the prophecy say the king of the Jews would be born?
4. What did King Herod ask the Magi to do? What reason did Herod give for this request? Do you think Herod was being honest about what he planned to do? Why or why not?
5. What led the Magi to the newborn king?
6. What gifts did the Magi give?
7. Why did the Magi not return to King Herod?
What Can the Magi Teach Us?

**Directions:** Read the excerpts from the article “What the Magi Can Teach Us” by Fr. Ed Broom, OMV, from CatholicExchange.com, and answer the reflection questions as you go.

**What Can the Magi Teach Us?**

The Magi who came in search of the Child-King Jesus from the East are sometimes called the Wisemen. Their travelling was difficult—no comfortable cars with music, air-conditioning and luxurious motels or restaurants along the way. There travelling was long—many long arduous and grueling miles. Physically, their travelling would have been very stressful; if they travelled on camels can you imagine the strain, duress, and physical exhaustion. In sum, they were willing to count the cost to encounter the Lord Jesus resting in the arms of Mary, contemplated by the eyes and heart of good Saint Joseph. As the saying wisely teaches us: “Wise men still find Jesus in the arms of Mary.”

1. In what ways can being a follower of Jesus be uncomfortable? Why is this potential discomfort worth it?

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2. Why is it wise to seek Jesus through Mary?

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**Are You Wise?**

What indeed is wisdom? According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, Wisdom is the greatest of all of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. A short and easy definition, simple to memorize for what wisdom is can be expressed as such: “Wisdom is the Gift of the Holy Spirit that moves us to relish the things of God.” As a child licks and savors and relishes chocolate dipped ice cream, so a true follower of Christ relishes all that refers to God, His honor and glory and the salvation of immortal souls.

3. What are three ways that you can relish, or find joy, in God, His honor and glory, and the salvation won for you by Christ?

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Now let us turn and lift our gaze on how we indeed can truly be wise men and women by focusing on Jesus and giving to Jesus through these three symbolic gifts of Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh.

**The Gift of Gold to the Child Jesus**

One of the wise men presented Jesus with the precious gift of gold. Even though this wise man was a King from the East, he recognized what he saw as he prostrated himself before that little baby: this little infant in the arms of Mary was indeed a king. This Jesus in the arms of Mary was the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and the Creator of the whole universe.

By the gesture of prostration, this earthly, but very wise King humbly put the Lord Jesus, the King of the universe, on the throne of his heart. Then for us let us dethrone all that is unworthy of our noble calling, as followers of Jesus the King. Let us reaffirm our allegiance to Jesus and enthrone Him as the King of our mind, heart, soul, and entire life. “Long live Christ the King!”

4. What is something in your life that you need to give Jesus power over and make Him Lord and King? After reflecting on your answer to this question, write a brief prayer asking for Jesus to be Lord over your life.

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**Gift of Incense to Jesus the Son of God**

Incense is a fragrant aroma that once burnt ascends on high to the heavenly realm. In Holy Mass incense can be used in the celebration of solemnities. The altar is incensed, the Gospel, the priest who represents Christ, and most important the Host consecrated while lifted on high. Saint Paul says that we are called to be the aroma of Christ. This means that we are called to imitate Christ by living a virtuous life. Traditionally, incense is also symbolic of prayer, our intimate union with God.

As the white smoke from the incense pot (thurible) ascends slowly reaching the very roof of the Church and beyond if it were possible, so do our prayers ascend on high to the throne of the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings. Therefore, not only do we want to proclaim in a triumphant hymn of praise that Jesus is Lord of Lords and King of Kings, but He is also the
Immortal, Infinite, all-wise, all-powerful, all-loving God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity.

Jesus in His incarnation is the Son of God made man. Let us renew our belief in the Divinity of Jesus. In the hymn of St. Paul, at the Name of Jesus may every knee bow in heaven and on earth and even below the earth proclaiming Jesus as Lord. (Philippians 2: 5-11)

5. What are two ways that you can imitate Christ today?
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A Gift of Myrrh to the God Made Man

What then is the third gift traditionally given to the Christ-Child by one of the Kings from the East?
It is myrrh! This was an element utilized for the purpose of anointing a dead body. Symbolically the myrrh pointed to the Humanity of the Lord Jesus that was destined to suffer and die for the salvation of the world at large as well as each and every one of us individually. To be more exact the myrrh was already pointing to what would happen to Jesus on Good Friday. Jesus' bitter passion that He would undergo that Good Friday would result in His bitter death, and burial and the myrrh was an element used to anoint His dead Body. Interpretation for us? We are called to die daily to the flesh, to sin, to selfishness, to egoism, to pride—in a word, we are called to crucify and put death all that within us is not of Christ Jesus. Furthermore, we are all called to suffer patiently in this short life that God has given to us, uniting our pains and sufferings to the Lord, so that one day we will be united with God forever in heaven.

6. What are two intentional sacrifices you can make in your life to follow Jesus' example of sacrifice?
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The Baptism of the Lord
(Middle and Upper Elementary)

January 12, 2020 – The Baptism of the Lord

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, Jesus comes to John the Baptist at the River Jordan to be baptized. At first John objects to baptizing Jesus, but then Jesus reveals why he should allow it. John baptizes Jesus, upon whom the Holy Spirit descends and comes to rest, while the Father proclaims Him to be His beloved Son. In this lesson, students will consider the meaning of Christ’s Baptism and the invitation it extends to all of us.

Directions
A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
B. Have students complete the Why was Jesus Baptized activity and complete the Focus Questions. Review and discuss the answers when finished.
C. Play for your students the Matt Maher song “Come to the Water” found at: sophiaonline.org/CometotheWater. Have students follow along with the lyrics from the “Come to the Water” Reflection handout.
D. After listening to and thinking about the song, have your students respond to the question on the “Come to the Water” Reflection handout. When finished, discuss the responses to the reflection question.

Answer Key

Focus Questions
1. To be baptized by John.
2. John felt unworthy to baptize Jesus, saying “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?”
3. Jesus told John that by baptizing Him he would be fulfilling God’s divine plan: He said, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.”
4. Heaven opened up and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus like a dove.
5. “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”
Why was Jesus Baptized?

1. Jesus' acceptance and inauguration of His mission as God's suffering servant
2. To be numbered among sinners
3. Jesus is already “the Lamb of God,” He is already anticipating the “baptism” of His bloody death, and He is already coming to fulfill all righteousness and submit Himself to the Father’s will.
4. The Son's acceptance
5. The Holy Spirit rests upon Jesus, how will now be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. The descent of the Son of God and the Holy Spirit is a prelude to the New Creation.
Sunday Reading

A Reading from the Gospel of Matthew 3:13-17: The Baptism of Jesus

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. John tried to prevent him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?” Jesus said to him in reply, “Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he allowed him.

After Jesus was baptized, he came up from the water and behold, the heavens were opened [for him], and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove [and] coming upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, saying, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

Focus Questions

1. Why did Jesus travel from Galilee to the Jordan?
2. Why did John try to stop Jesus?
3. How did Jesus change John’s mind?
4. What happened after Jesus was baptized?
5. What did the voice from Heaven proclaim about Jesus?
Why was Jesus Baptized?

Directions: Read the excerpt from the Catechism of the Catholic Church and respond to the Focus Questions.

Catechism of the Catholic Church no. 536

The baptism of Jesus is on his part the acceptance and inauguration of his mission as God's suffering Servant. He allows himself to be numbered among sinners; he is already "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world". Already he is anticipating the "baptism" of his bloody death. Already he is coming to "fulfill all righteousness", that is, he is submitting himself entirely to his Father's will: out of love he consents to this baptism of death for the remission of our sins. The Father's voice responds to the Son's acceptance, proclaiming his entire delight in his Son. The Spirit whom Jesus possessed in fullness from his conception comes to "rest on him." Jesus will be the source of the Spirit for all mankind. At his baptism "the heavens were opened" - the heavens that Adam's sin had closed - and the waters were sanctified by the descent of Jesus and the Spirit, a prelude to the new creation.

Focus Questions:

1. What is signified by Jesus' Baptism?

2. In His Baptism, what does Jesus allow of Himself?

3. What three things is Jesus already or already doing at His Baptism?

4. What is the Father's voice responding to?

5. How are Jesus and the Holy Spirit linked at His Baptism? What is their descent a prelude to?
“Come to the Water” Reflection

O let all who thirst
Let them come to the water
And let all who have nothing
Let them come to the Lord
Without money, without price
Why should you pay the price
Except for the Lord?

And let all who seek
Let them come to the water
And let all who have nothing
Let them come to the Lord
Without money, without strife
Why should you spend your life
Except for the Lord?

And let all who toil
Let them come to the water
And let all who are weary
Let them come to the Lord

All who labor without rest
How can your soul find rest
Except for the Lord?

And let all the poor
Let them come to the water
And let the ones who are laden
Let them come to the Lord
Bring the children without might
Easy the load and light
Come to the Lord

Come to the Lord
Come to the Lord
Come to the Lord

I will run to you, I will run to you
I will run to you my Lord

Reflection Question:

How does this song’s invitation to come to the Lord reflect Jesus’ Baptism?

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Teaching the Liturgical Year

John the Baptist’s Testimony to Jesus
(Middle and Upper Elementary)

January 19, 2020 – Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, John the Baptist reveals to his followers the Messiah, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. John makes clear that he came to prepare the way for Jesus who will baptize not just with water, but with the Holy Spirit. In this lesson students will compare Jesus, the Lamb of God, to the first Passover lamb.

Directions
A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
B. Review and discuss the correct answer when complete.
C. Have your students complete The Sacrificial Lamb activity.
D. Review and discuss the correct answer when complete.

Answer Key

Focus Questions

1. He called Him the Lamb of God. He said Jesus would take away the sin of the world.
2. He was referring to the fact that Jesus is God.
3. So that Jesus might be made known to Israel.
4. The Spirit came down like a dove from Heaven and remained upon Him (Jesus).
5. God had told him that the one whom the Spirit came down upon and remained was the one who would baptize with the Holy Spirit.

The Sacrificial Lamb

1. A year-old, unblemished male lamb.
2. Kill it, roast it, and eat it.
3. On the doorposts and lintels.
4. Passover
5. Go through Egypt and kill the firstborn animals and people.

6. The Lord would pass over every family that had lambs’ blood on its doorposts and lintels.

7. Forever.

8. Jesus is the Lamb of God. He is the sacrifice of a new Passover. His sacrifice is once and for all. He died for everyone. The first Passover lamb was sacrificed to save the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. Jesus sacrificed His own life to save everyone from sin and death. The Hebrew people ate the Passover lamb in order to receive freedom and new life. We receive new life in Christ when we eat the Eucharist.
Sunday Reading

A Reading from the Gospel of John 1:29-34: John the Baptist’s Testimony to Jesus

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from heaven and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God.

Focus Questions

1. What title did John the Baptist give to Jesus when he saw Jesus coming towards Him? What did John say Jesus would do?
2. What do you think John meant when He said that Jesus “existed before me,” even though Jesus was born after him?
3. Why did John come baptizing with water?
4. What did John tell the crowd he saw at Jesus’ Baptism?
5. How did John the Baptist know that Jesus was the Son of God?
The Sacrificial Lamb

Directions: Read the passages from Exodus about the instructions God gives to the Hebrews for Passover. Then answer the focus questions.

John the Baptist called Jesus the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. With this title, John was directly recalling the history of the Jewish people. Centuries before John and Jesus, the Jews were captive slaves in Egypt. God freed His people from slavery with the sacrifice of a lamb during Passover. John was announcing that Jesus would be the sacrificial lamb of a new Passover: a Passover from sin and death.

The Instructions for Passover

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: “Tell the whole community of Israel: On the tenth of this month every family must procure for itself a lamb, one apiece for each household. Your lamb must be a year-old male and without blemish. You may take it from either the sheep or the goats. Then, with the whole community of Israel assembled, it will be slaughtered during the evening twilight. They will take some of its blood and apply it to the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. They will consume its meat that same night, eating it roasted with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. It is the Lord’s Passover. For on this same night I will go through Egypt, striking down every firstborn in the land, human being and beast alike, and executing judgment on all the gods of Egypt — I, the Lord! But for you the blood will mark the houses where you are. Seeing the blood, I will pass over you; thereby, when I strike the land of Egypt, no destructive blow will come upon you. This day will be a day of remembrance for you, which your future generations will celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord; you will celebrate it as a statute forever.” – Exodus 12:1, 3, 5-8, 11-14

1. What did God tell Moses that He wanted the Israelite people to get?

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2. What did God want the Israelite people to do with the lamb?

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3. Where did God want the Israelites to put the lamb’s blood?

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4. What did the Lord call this night?

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5. What did God say He was going to do that night?

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6. What difference would the lambs' blood on the doorposts make?

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7. For how long does the Lord want this day to be remembered?

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8. Remember what you have learned about Jesus' life and Death. In what ways is Jesus similar to the Passover lamb? For whom did He die? What did the Passover lamb save the Hebrew people from? What does Jesus, the Lamb of God save us from? What did the Hebrew people receive when they ate the Passover lamb? What do we receive when we eat the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Eucharist?

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The Beginning of the Galilean Ministry and the Call of the First Disciples (Middle and Upper Elementary)

January 26, 2020 – Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Overview
In this week’s Gospel passage, Jesus begins His Galilean ministry by calling the first Apostles. These men leave their old lives behind and immediately follow Christ. In this lesson, students will consider the sacrifices required to be a follower of Christ and how they can respond to Jesus’ call in their own lives.

Directions
A. Have students read the Gospel passage, or read it aloud to your students, and then answer the focus questions. You may have students answer them on their own or you may discuss them together as a class.
B. Review and discuss the answers when complete.
C. Show your students part of the video “Fishers of Men” produced by the USCCB Secretariat for Vocations and Priestly Formation (from 6:46 to the end of the video). The video can be found at the following link: sophiaonline.org/FishersofMen.
D. Then, have students work individually to complete The Call of a Disciple activity. When finished, ask for student volunteers to share and discuss their responses.

Answer Key
Focus Questions
1. Galilee. A prophecy of Isaiah’s was fulfilled.
2. “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”
3. Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. They were fishermen. Jesus said He would make them “fishers of men.”
4. James and John. They were also fishermen.
5. They all immediately left what they were doing and followed Him.
6. He taught in the synagogues, proclaimed the Gospel of the kingdom, and cured every disease and illness among the people.
When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen. From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

Focus Questions

1. To where did Jesus withdraw after John the Baptist was arrested? Whose prophecy was fulfilled by His moving there?
2. What did Jesus preach in this land?
3. Who were the first two Apostles Jesus called? What was their profession? What did Jesus say He would make them?
4. Who were the other brothers Jesus called to be His Apostles? What was their profession?
5. How did the men whom Jesus called to be Apostles in this Gospel respond to Jesus’ call?
6. What did Jesus do around Galilee?
The Call of a Disciple

Directions: Watch the video clip from “Fishers of Men” and read the information below. Then, answer the reflection questions.

In this week’s Gospel, Jesus calls the first Apostles. Each of them was living normal lives until Jesus approached them and invited them to something greater. He called them to follow Him. Each of them immediately left everything and came after Jesus. There must have been something amazing and powerful in Jesus’ presence for these men to give up everything to follow Him.

Likewise, Jesus approaches each of us today. He calls us to follow Him, just like He called those first Apostles. Some of us He calls to follow Him in a very special way as priests. Others He calls to religious life. Most of us He calls to follow Him as married persons, raising families in the Christian faith. Jesus calls everyone, no matter their specific vocation, to seek holiness in all things.

How do we respond to Jesus’ call? Are we willing to sacrifice everything for Him?

1. A priest in the video clip said, “When there's love, sacrifice is easy.” Do you think this is a true statement? Why or why not?

2. Following Jesus requires sacrifice. For some of us, that sacrifice may be our entire current way of life. For others it may mean giving up smaller, everyday things. Describe a time when you sacrificed something for someone else. What did you sacrifice and why? Was it easy or difficult to do? Why? How did you feel after giving up what you sacrificed? Did the other person know you had sacrificed for them? What was the outcome?

3. One form of sacrifice is placing the needs of others over your own. To do this is to serve others. Serving others is to imitate Christ by laying down our lives like He did. What are three specific ways that you can serve others today?

4. Would you ever consider becoming a priest or religious (a sister or a brother)? Why do you think God calls some men and women to serve the Lord and His people as a priest or religious?
5. Imagine that Jesus came to you while you were doing something normal that you do every day, such as watching TV, playing a video game, or brushing your teeth, and asked you to follow Him. In the space below, write your response to Jesus' invitation. Tell Him what would be difficult in your life to give up and why. Ask Him to give you the desire for faith and to follow Him.

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