

Catechumenate Session

APPRENTICES IN FAITH: A Resource for the RCIA
Solemnity of the Epiphany of the Lord • Year B • January 8, 2012

*God of all times
and places, kingship
and power are yours.
Your light shines
upon all of Creation.
Your love is near to us
at all times. Continue
to lead us by faith to
the glories of Heaven.
Amen.*



Sunday Word

Isaiah 60:1–6
Psalm 72:1–2, 7–8, 10–11, 12–13
Ephesians 3:2–3, 5–6
Matthew 2:1–12

Radiant

The prophet Isaiah extols the future splendor of a restored Jerusalem. The exiles shall return and rebuild God's city in beauty and all the nations shall be drawn to her.

Without Exclusion

Saint Paul clarifies for the Christian community that he has received a revelation from God. God has revealed that the Gentiles are coheirs and copartners of the Body of Christ, the Church. Salvation is offered to all without exclusion.

Paying Homage

Foreign wise men arrive from the East to pay homage to the newborn king. Their destination is Bethlehem where they offer priceless gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to the infant Jesus.

Church Teaching: Universal Salvation

The Dawn of Light

In reflecting on her nature as the servant of the Lord Jesus, the Second Vatican Council described the Church as *lumen gentium* or the “light of all peoples.” The Church is to be light to all. She is this light by proclaiming in everything she says and does that men and women everywhere are recipients of a great Good News: Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, in whom no darkness can overcome.

The Church's self-understanding—that the light of Christ shines out from her—is embodied in today's feast. The Epiphany proclaims that all people are attracted to and can find Salvation in God's light, Christ. Indeed, the Church exists, having been given a mandate by the Lord Jesus to teach all nations what Christ has commanded. She is to make disciples, and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This mandate from the

Lord prompts the Church to go to the ends of the Earth telling everyone the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Salvation for All

The term *epiphany* is taken almost directly from the Greek *epiphaneia* meaning “showing” or “manifestation.” In the context of the Christmas season, Jesus, the Word made flesh, is *shown* as the light of all peoples. He has been gloriously revealed as the Messiah of Israel, the Son of God, and Savior of all people in every time and all places.

The wise men (*magi*) who journeyed from the East, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, are understood by the Church as the first-fruits of a great harvest to come. All the nations and all peoples, who welcome and believe in the Good News, are saved in Christ, beginning with the Incarnation.

On their journey, the wise men stop in Jerusalem. This stop indicates that they seek in Israel the long-prophesied One who will be king of the nations. Their following of the star shows that non-believers can be opened to the truth of Jesus, and then worship him as the way, the truth and the light.

The Epiphany celebrates how God has made a place at his Banquet for every person everywhere. All are invited to join in the heritage first announced by the prophets of Israel and in these days now fully preached by the Church. People of every nation, language and culture are called to share in the one eternal banquet with Jesus Christ the Lord.

Distinctiveness of Church Teaching

The Church’s missionary impulse derives from the conviction that all are meant to share in the Banquet of God’s love. The essential nature of the Church is therefore universal. The Church preaches the Word of God and proclaims the Kingdom of God throughout the world. The Solemnity of the Epiphany celebrates the first harvesting of Salvation and the calling of the Gentiles to the Lord Jesus.

Key Terms

CHURCH

Sent by Jesus Christ to announce, bear witness, make present, and spread the Good News of Salvation from God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 738).

MESSIAH

From the Hebrew for “anointed;” Jesus is anointed by the Spirit for his mission as Savior (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 436).

Voices of Faith

Now, Israel means “a mind that sees God.” Thus the church from among the Gentiles is also called Israel, not according to the flesh but according to divine grace.

—Saint Cyril of Alexandria

Life is like a voyage on the sea of history, often dark and stormy, a voyage in which we watch for the stars that indicate the route. The true stars of our life are the people who have lived good lives. They are lights of hope. Certainly, Jesus Christ is the true light, the sun that has risen above all the shadows of history.

—Pope Benedict XVI

Further Reading

Catechism of the Catholic Church: 528 (Epiphany), 848 (universal sacrament of Salvation), 863 (apostolic mission of the Church), 868 (Church proclaims the fullness of faith)

United States Catholic Catechism for Adults:

Chapter 10, especially the section entitled “Church as the Sacrament of Salvation,” pages 115–116

Compendium—Catechism of the Catholic Church:

107 (all invited into Kingdom), 166 (universal Church), 168 (belonging to Church), 172 (mission of Church)