

Prayers for Epiphany

Scripture Focus: Matthew 2:1–12 (The Visit of the Magi)

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us begin our prayer with the Sign of the Cross.

All: In the name of the Father . . .

Leader: In this Gospel, we hear about some people who saw a star that led them to a special child. Today we call these people “the Three Kings,” although the Gospel never says there were three of them! They did offer three famous gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Reader: A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew.

(Reader then reads the Scripture passage above from Breakthrough! The Bible for Young Catholics.)

Leader: Today we celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany, the Three Kings, who found Jesus and worshipped him. The word *epiphany* means “showing” or “manifestation.” At the visit of the Three Kings, the Savior, Jesus, was shown to the entire world.

The Gospel makes a point of saying, “They *prostrated themselves* and did him homage.” A *prostration* is a special and humble gesture that we sometimes use at important times in the liturgy. It is a gesture of full surrender to God. For example, deacons prostrate themselves before they become priests. A prostration is a full-out lie-down-on-the-floor in humble worship.

Let’s try it for our prayer today. First, space yourselves so that you have room to lie down. Next, kneel in your place. Next, put your hands on the floor and slowly lower yourself to the floor. Put your two hands together under your forehead. Now, let’s stand and begin our prayer.

After each petition, the response is, “We worship you and give you our whole selves.” Then do a prostration for a minute, and rise for the next prayer. We will do three prostrations in all.

Leader: Lord Jesus, thank you for coming among us as God and man. Thank you for becoming a little child, for dying and rising for us. Thank you for showing yourself today to the world.

All: We worship you and give you our whole selves.

All prostrate themselves for a moment until the Leader says, “Please rise.”

Leader: Lord Jesus, thank you for choosing Mary and Joseph as your human family to help you to learn and grow. Thank you for everyone in our lives who helps us to learn and grow.

All: We worship you and give you our whole selves.

All prostrate as before, then rise.

Leader: Lord Jesus, thank you for the star that guided the Three Kings. Thank you for our Church, our Pope and bishops, our priests, deacons, leaders and teachers, all who guide us to you.

All: We worship you and give you our whole selves.

All prostrate as before, then rise.

Leader: Let us conclude our prayer with a joyful “Amen!” and “Alleluia!”

All: Amen! Alleluia!

Closing Prayer

Leader: Today we learned that the Three Kings found Jesus, and that Jesus came for everyone in the world. Let’s ask the Three Kings to lead us in prayer.

King 1: Jesus is our King. I brought him gold, my most precious possession.

All: Jesus, we give you our hearts.

King 2: Jesus is our God. I brought him incense, a sign of my heartfelt worship.

All: Jesus, we worship you as God and man.

King 3: Jesus died and is now risen. I brought him myrrh, to anoint his body. And now he lives forever!

All: Jesus, you died and rose for us. You are with us now. Alleluia!



Ritual Guide

Opening Prayer

Preparation

Choose a reader to read the verses from the Gospel of Matthew.

Optional: Choose an appropriate song to begin and end the prayer.

Gather

Gather the group before the Christmas crib. Distribute the prayer handouts. Briefly rehearse the prayer response and the prostration. Remind the group to get down to the floor and up again quietly.

Pray

Begin with the Sign of the Cross as indicated. Introduce the reading with the words given, or in your own words.

(An activity for Epiphany can be found in chapter 10 of the *Breakthrough! Leader Guide*.)

Closing Prayer

Preparation

Choose three young people (or ask for volunteers) to be the Three Kings. You may have paper crowns for them to wear, or large name tags labeled “King 1,” “King 2,” and “King 3” to identify them as kings. (The kings may be either boys or girls, as this is a representation of the story.) You may give them small boxes to carry as gifts, or ask them to pretend to carry a gift. Gather the kings, standing, in one spot and have each step forward separately to read his or her line. Remind them to lay their gifts (either boxes or “pretend gifts”) at the feet of Jesus in the Christmas Nativity scene after they speak. They may then join the group.

Gather

Gather the group at the Christmas crib, or allow them to stay at their desks or tables. Ask them to sit down, and then distribute the prayer handouts. Explain that the Three Kings will lead us in our prayer today.

Pray

Motion each king forward to speak his or her line.

Optional: End with the song you chose for the opening prayer.

