# LSW

children

*of his sons because he thought they were threats to his throne. The emperor Augustus commented that it was safer to be Herod’s pig than to be Herod’s sons.*

How did the priests react when they were asked? *They couldn’t care less. With all their wisdom that told them where to find the infant king, they did not bother to search him out to worship him. They seem to be too contented where they were.*

How did the wise men react? *They were worshipful.*

How would *you* react? *Get them to examine themselves. How can they be sure? Would they follow anybody who claims to be the Christ? What are their criteria?*

For all children

They wise men brought gifts for the infant Jesus:

* Gold, usually given for a king, for Jesus was the infant King;
* Frankincense, a kind of incense used during worship, for Jesus is the highest of all priests;
* Myrrh, used to embalm dead bodies, for Jesus will one day die on the cross.

What gifts will you bring for the infant king? *Gifts could be simple (eg, milk for a baby), or personal (eg, my favourite* *teddy bear), or symbolic (like those gifts the wise men brought), or intangible (eg, acts of worship or charity).*

When the wise men saw Jesus they were filled with delight and approached him with great respect. How would you approach Jesus to show that you truly respect, worship and love him? *Extend the discussion to include how we are to approach Jesus in the liturgy. There is a lovely insight told by a Christian about his approach to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Beneath the altar of the church is a cave, which is said to be the cave where Jesus was born. He noticed that the doorway to the church was low, so low that anybody approaching has to stoop to enter. Isn’t it fitting that any pilgrim wishing to see his king has to approach on bended knees?*

Year A, B, C

The Epiphany of the Lord

**Images**

Going home a different way

**Points to note**

This is a very rich reading and the chosen theme is broad enough to accommodate sub-themes you could use. Select one that you are comfortable with and in keeping with the age group of the children.

The younger ones may be asked to present gifts to Jesus, with the discussion leading on from the Christmas presents that they have received. Older children could be asked to look at the reactions of the different people to the coming of Jesus in the story: Herod reacting with fear for his position; the priests reacting with indifference; the wise men reacting with worship.

Ultimately, the session must end with a realisation that, having met Jesus, the wise men went home by a different way. Likewise, our routes and actions must lead us down different paths after meeting Jesus. Otherwise the epiphany has been in vain.

Epiphany is late this year and this means the Baptism of the Lord is celebrated on the following Monday and not the following Sunday. If you would like to have the sharing of names of the children that is normally done on the Baptism of the Lord, you can insert it in for this Sunday. I have included the leaflet for the Baptism of the Lord so that you can insert it in accordingly.

**Liturgy**

*Christmas is not a single day but a season that lasts for twelve days. It is the second season of the Christian year, following on from Advent and ends on Epiphany. Epiphany is a Greek word that means the appearance of a god. Where the initial is capitalised, it refers to the appearance of Jesus to the wise men. As this is the last day of Christmas, ask the children to give one last Christmas greeting to each other.*

## Acclamation before the Gospel

Alleluia, alleluia!

We saw his star as it rose

And has come to do the Lord homage

Alleluia!

Gospel

*Explain to the children who the wise men were. They were people who study the stars. No, the Gospel accounts did not report them as kings or that there were three in number. These and their names were later additions.*

*Explain that Herod was a cruel king who was always afraid that somebody would take his throne away. This Herod, called the Great because he rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem, was a different Herod from the one who ruled when Jesus was crucified.*

The Lord be with you.

*All:*  And also with you.

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Matthew

(Mt 2: 1-12)

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judaea when Herod was king, some wise men came to Jerusalem from the east. “Where is the infant king of the Jews?” they asked. “We saw his star as it rose and have come to worship him.” When Herod heard this, he was worried, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together the chief priests, and asked them where the Christ was to be born. “At Bethlehem in Judaea,” they told him, “for this was what the prophet wrote in the Scriptures:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah

you are by no means least among the leaders of Judah,

for out of you will come a leader

who will be a shepherd of my people Israel.”

Then Herod called the wise men to see him privately. He asked them the exact date on which the star had appeared, and sent them on to Bethlehem. “Go and find out all about the child,” he said, “and when you have found him, let me know, so that I too may go and do him homage.” Having listened to what the king had to say, they set out. And there in front of them was the star they had seen rising; it went forward and halted over the place where the child was. The sight of the star filled them with delight, and going into the house they saw the child with his mother Mary, and falling to their knees they paid him their respect. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh. But they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, and returned to their own country by a different way.

This is the Word of the Lord

**Dialogue**

*There being a wealth of discussion points, I have outlined some that can be linked and organised along a unifying sub-theme. All discussions should be personalised within the context of each person's contribution according to each person's experience and age. Ultimately, the children must identify how their lives can change after having met Jesus, in big ways as in small. Just as the wise men did not take the same route to return home after meeting Jesus, neither should we return to our more questionable sides after meeting Jesus, in spirit, in prayer, in the mass, or in works of charity.*

For older children

How did Herod react when he heard about the king just been born? *Herod was always afraid that someone would be king instead of him. In fact, he killed his wife, her mother and three*