

January 2024

The new year has arrived and some of you may have already taken your Christmas tree and decorations, but it's not yet time to put away all signs of Christmas. Some families like to leave the crib on display until the wise men have visited and delivered their gifts to Jesus, the newborn King.

The 6th of January is the Feast of the Epiphany and is celebrated in many churches on the Sunday of that week. We have created a special assembly that may be used in schools, and which explores the Epiphany through children's experience of giving gifts.

This is a perfect opportunity to reflect on what we can give to Jesus as we start afresh in 2024 with the reminder that Jesus is the most perfect gift of love from God to all of us!

This newsletter shares some of the content children will experience in school throughout January and suggests ways for you to engage with them about it. We hope and pray that the new year brings peace and blessings for you and your family.

January Assemblies in brief

Here's a look ahead to the assemblies for the month of January, including links to where you can read the Gospels and some prompt questions that you might like to explore further with your child/ren.

Growing with God

w/c 1st January

Jesus grew in friendship with God because of Mary and Joseph's example. Through a drama that shares photographs of growing up, children are invited to reflect on their own family and learn that in following the example of the Holy Family, we too can grow in our friendship with God.

Luke 2:22-40

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+2%3A22-40&version=NRSVACE>

- There are very few stories in the Bible about Jesus' childhood. The Gospel tells of when Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the Temple, showing their faithfulness to the practices of the Jewish faith. There are many opportunities as parents, to pass on the gift of faith to your child/ren. Perhaps you could talk to your child/ren about why you consider it important to, for example, go to Mass and receive the sacraments.
- Families are not all the same – but the Holy Family provides a model for how we can love and care for each other in our families. You might like to make the Holy Family a focus for your own family prayer time, reflecting on how their example can guide your daily interactions.

Children of God

w/c 8th January

This assembly helps children to move from thinking about Jesus' birth to His Baptism, which marked the start of His public ministry. Children will reflect on their identity as God's children and learn that they too are invited to become a special part of His family.

Mark 1:7-11

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A7-11&version=NRSVACE>

- The Gospel account of Jesus' Baptism tells us that God's voice spoke from heaven, revealing Jesus as His beloved Son. You might want to find a picture or painting of this scene and talk about the images showing God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit. Or perhaps you could encourage your child to draw their own picture.
- This may be a good opportunity to talk about your child/ren's Baptism when they became members of God's family. Perhaps you could share some photographs, light their baptismal candle in prayer time or simply talk about special memories of the day.

Jesus, Lamb of God

w/c 15th January

Jesus, the Lamb of God, invites us to 'come and see'. When we see Him for who He is, we receive peace, joy and life to the full.

John 1:35-42

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A35-42&version=NRSVACE>

- In his Gospel, John the Baptist's disciples are curious about Jesus and He invites them to come and see for themselves. You might like to talk to your child/ren about how we can learn about Jesus at church, through Bible stories and personal prayer.
- This is another opportunity to ask your child/ren to recall some names and titles of Jesus that tell us more about Him e.g. *Messiah, Lamb of God*.

News for Now!

w/c 22nd January

Drop what you're doing and come now! Jesus gives us the best news and this is His invitation - to listen to Him, turn back to Him and believe what He tells us because the kingdom of God is close at hand.

Mark 1:14-20

- You might like to talk to your child/ren about some amazing news that they have experienced e.g. the birth of a new sibling, them passing their spelling test, or getting a new pet. Then talk about the Good News – that God loves us, and Jesus shows us the way to a new life with God.
- In the Gospel, the first disciples dropped everything to follow Jesus. When something comes up that is really important to us, we can be quick to change our plans. You might want to talk about times when a family member had to drop everything and change plans quickly e.g. a parent leaving work to collect a sick child from school. Ask your child, what news would make them drop everything.

Deep Impression

w/c 29th January

Jesus' teaching was amazing, it changes people when they hear it, because what He says is spoken by God to show us who God is - are we ready to listen to Him?

Mark 1:21-28

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark+1%3A21-28&version=NRSVACE>

- The Gospel tells us that Jesus left a deep impression on the people. He was credible because His words matched His actions. This might be a good opportunity to talk to your child about people who influence them e.g. TV characters, footballers, pop stars. Who do they look up to and follow? What messages do they give? Are they good messages?
- Perhaps you could have some fun with your child/ren making your own marks or impressions e.g. footprints in snow, thumbprint in clay. We are made in God's image and likeness, and we can help to make His mark in the world.

Prayer

In the readings for the last Sunday in January the Psalmist writes:

***'O that today you would listen to His voice!'* Psalm 95:8**

The Daily prayers of that week remind children of how amazing Jesus' teaching is. Children learn that we can all listen to His voice today!

Listening to what Jesus says brings joy and children learn that we can respond by sharing that joy in simple ways... like sharing a smile or a kind word with those we meet.

Perhaps you would like to include this prayer within your family prayer time.

**Dear Jesus,
I want to listen to your voice today!
Help me to hear you
and fill me with your joy.
Amen**