

The Epiphany Workshop Notes



SLIDE ONE – HOLDING SLIDE

LEADER'S NOTES

Welcome to your *Epiphany: New Hope, New Future* Workshop. This presentation lasts *up to* 20 minutes. We recommend you deliver the whole workshop but please use the material as time and circumstances allow.

This workshop has been prepared by **Missio**, Pope Francis' worldwide charity for overseas mission. Through educational, medical, welfare and formation initiatives, Missio brings the hope of the Gospel where there is turmoil, poverty and uncertainty in the world.

Through lived examples in this workshop, pupils can see how Missio is supporting Church-backed projects around the world that are witnessing to God's great love for us all, especially the poorest, the marginalised, and the most vulnerable.

Missio projects are almost entirely funded by supporters' donations. With the exception of Gift Aid, we receive no UK government assistance. **Your support enables our work to continue overseas and at home.**



START OF WORKSHOP

SLIDE TWO

Over the last two weeks this has become a familiar sad sight: discarded Christmas trees letting us know the celebrations are well and truly over. But are they?

In the world's eyes Christmas may be over, but in the eyes of the Church, Christmas does not end until we celebrate two important feasts: the Epiphany and the Baptism of Jesus.*



In fact, if we were Christians living in different parts of the world, most especially if we were Orthodox Christians living in Greece or further east in Russia, we'd find it odd to have Christmas Day as **the** big event. For them gifts are not exchanged until the Epiphany.

This isn't unusual. In the first centuries after the death and resurrection of Jesus, all Christians across the world focused their attention on the Epiphany and Baptism of the Lord. The birth of Jesus was important, but it is what God communicates in these two events that deserved the bigger celebration.

Why? What's so special about what the Epiphany and Baptism communicate?

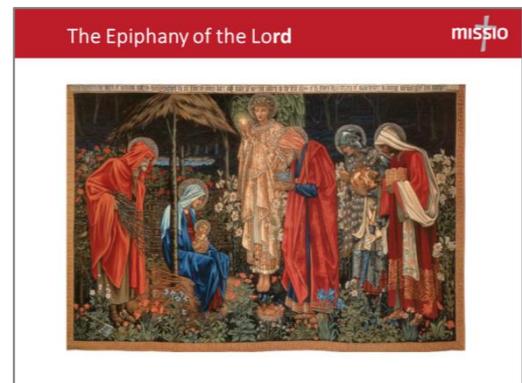
Let's begin today by focusing on the Epiphany and finding out what we know about this feast.

SLIDE THREE

Ask students to briefly tell you what they can about the Epiphany. The image on the slide should prompt them. Challenge them to identify the three responses that are to be revealed on screen.

Click twice to reveal the three responses

- **During the Epiphany we hear the story of the Magi's arrival ***



Scripture tells us that the Magi travelled from foreign lands in the east, possibly modern day Iraq. The Magi spoke a different language and had different beliefs. For the people of Bethlehem, they were considered outsiders and their presence caused anxiety, as most things that seem different to us initially do.

The Magi's inclusion in the nativity story helps us understand that Jesus' birth heralded a new era: where all people, whatever their background or belief, are to be welcomed and valued in God's name.

- **The Epiphany reveals something of Jesus' mission through the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh**

Gold is understood as a symbol of Jesus' status as a king, but he will prove to be a very different kind of king. Jesus' kingship will be revealed through love and service, as is symbolised in the gift of frankincense, incense used in religious ceremonies and for healing.

Myrrh was a sweet-smelling oil used to anoint the dead. This seems an odd present for a baby, but it is included to help us understand that Jesus' life would be offered as a gift for us.

Through Jesus' words and actions we would be shown a new way to live together, while his death and resurrection would reveal the power of God's love to restore life and restore hope.

- **During the feast of the Epiphany we hear how the Magi followed a bright star which led them to Christ**

The star in the Epiphany story reveals to us the guiding light offered through faith in a loving God. Just as the Magi were steered by the star through the wilderness, we too, are guided through dark and difficult times when we follow the example of Christ: when we reflect on scripture, stay close to God in prayer and trust in God's love for us.

[Click for next slide](#)

** Additional notes – The Magi is the official title for the Three Kings. The Magi were definitely not kings. This idea emerged over time due to the expensive gifts they brought. They were astronomers and sages, hence their ability to chart the stars; and they were not Jewish, they were probably pagan. Nor do we know how many there were – just that they brought three gifts.*

SLIDE FOUR

The Epiphany reveals an image of God that many Christians down the ages believe is worthy of great celebration.

- It shows us that God is revealed through creation and in the ordinariness of everyday life (think of the star the Magi followed and the birth of Jesus in a modest manger)



[Click to reveal image](#)

- It helps us to understand that it is God's desire that we should *freely choose* to be guided by him, especially through times of confusion and difficulty, just as the Magi freely chose to be guided through the dark wilderness by the light of God's bright star

[Click to reveal image](#)

- And most importantly the Epiphany teaches us that Jesus, who is God, loves and values all people; whatever their background, whatever religion (or absence of), whatever their status. Christ became man for everyone and welcomes everyone into his presence.

The best New Year's resolution we could make for ourselves and for our world would be to plant deep in our hearts these important Epiphany lessons. And to resolve this year to share the gift of God's love as best we can.

There are many ways in which this year we can resolve to share God's love. One way we do this is by being mindful of the needs of others, those close to home and those far away; then doing what we can to reach out and help. This might be through prayer, practical support, fundraising, or campaigning for change.

SLIDE FIVE

One person doing just this is Sr Eulie, a missionary sister from the Philippines who works with Buddhist communities in Cambodia.

Missionaries are individuals who have committed their lives to sharing God's love with people in a different country and often from a different culture. Like the Magi, Missionaries travel into unfamiliar lands to encounter Christ in the poor and forgotten. Sr Eulie shares the gift of God's love in one of poorest countries in the world.

The image on screen shows Sr Eulie teaching children from the slums around Cambodia's capital city, Phnom Penh. Sr Eulie set up her free school in Phnom Penh some years ago, with the help of Missio.

Without the school, the children Sr Eulie serves wouldn't receive an education as many of their families are too poor to pay regular school fees. This leads to a sense of hopelessness within families, because without the knowledge provided by education, a child's life chances are limited. But thanks to Sr Eulie and Missio, the children are given the skills and education needed to build a better life and better communities.



SLIDE SIX

Sadly, many children are unable to attend Sr Eulie's school because of the long distances involved in travelling to it. But rather than forgetting about them and their needs, Sr Eulie came up with the idea of a travelling school (see image on the screen).

Sr Eulie needs help to expand the mobile tuk-tuk education centre to reach more children at risk. She also hopes to provide classes to the parents, many of whom have never been to school and are unable to read or write, so that they can grow in confidence and support their children's learning.



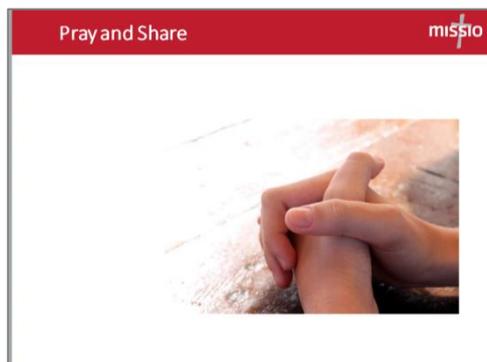
**Pope Francis' words are simply added on screen as a stand alone inspirational quotation.*

SLIDE SEVEN

We can help Sr Eulie educate more children by raising money for Missio, but also by remembering her and the children she cares for in our prayers. This may seem only a small thing, but prayer is very important.

Being held in the prayers and hearts of others, even strangers, reminds us that we are held in God's heart, too. In a way that goes beyond explanation, prayer strengthens us and those we pray for.

We'll finish this workshop by listening to the Gospel account of the Epiphany, and within this, we will be invited to pray. Do your best to concentrate on the words you are about to hear, and especially the last line, which we will say together. This line reminds us that we, too, are invited to share the gift of God's love and the gift of ourselves, as Sr Eulie is doing, to make the world a better place and help those within it who struggle.



SLIDE EIGHT

The scripture will appear on screen in three sections; please click to reveal each section. It is recommended that you ask a student to read out the scripture and another student to read out the prayers.

Please note, to avoid overlaid slides, the prayers are added here in the notes only.

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came and asked, 'Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star and have come to worship him.'

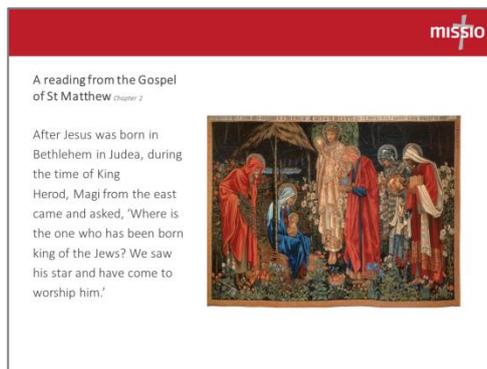
Lord, at the start of a new year we pray for those who make long and dangerous journeys to build better futures. We ask for the grace to welcome the stranger and value all people, as you taught us.

Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

When Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all the people of Jerusalem with him. He sent the Magi off to Bethlehem, saying, 'When you find the little child, report to me.' The Magi set off, and the star that they had seen in the east led them on.

Lord, we pray for missionaries like Sr Eulie, who do not allow fear to stop them from following Christ's light and sharing your love freely. We pray this year for the courage to do the same.

Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.



The star stood above the place where the little child was. The Magi came and saw him, with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshipped him. And they opened their treasures and offered him their gifts.

Lord, we pray this year for the grace to be generous with the gifts you have given us: our talents, our good humour, our sense of compassion, our treasures. Encourage us to use our gifts to benefit others, especially those in need.

Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

SLIDE NINE – Closing holding slide

