

Faith Loops

Faith Loops are PowerPoint presentations with images and information that will help us grow in the understanding of our Catholic faith. They will be projected on the screens during the twenty minutes prior to each weekend mass.

During that time, the slides will loop, or repeat, themselves. Thus, the name: Faith Loops.



Epiphany: Did You Know ...?

- The Feast of Epiphany (January 6) is, in most Catholic churches, celebrated on the second Sunday after Christmas.
- At Epiphany we remember the visitation of the Wise men, when Jesus was revealed to the world.

Jesus continues to reveal himself to us everyday. We need only, like the Magi, seek Him.



Epiphany: Did You Know ...?

- The Magi were likely members of a priestly caste in Persia (present-day Iran) and were interpreters of dreams, healers, and astrologers.
- The Magi did not visit Jesus until sometime later, when Jesus was a child. This explains why Herod would have all Hebrew boys up to the age of two from the area of Bethlehem killed.



Epiphany: Did You Know ...?



- The star of Bethlehem, cited only in Matthew's gospel, appeared before 4 B.C., the year Herod probably died. Many theologians believe that Jesus was born between 6 B.C. and 2 B.C.
- The star had been prophesied in the Old Testament: "A star shall come out of Jacob."
(Numbers 24:17)

Epiphany: Did You Know ...?

- Some believe the star was the planet Jupiter, which arose in the sign of Aries, considered at that time to be the astrological sign of the Jews.
- It zigzagged across the sky as the Magi journeyed 1200 miles in search of a newborn king.
- Because of its appearance and movement, Christians consider the star to be miraculous. Indeed, God can use natural phenomena to fulfill His plan for our salvation.



Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

We learn the story of Christ's birth from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. However, Christian tradition has introduced new content to the Infancy Narrative.

Test your knowledge. What's true, and what's not?

Three wise men visited Jesus at his birth.

True or false?

Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

Three wise men visited Jesus at his birth.

Not known.

Wise men (Magi) from the East brought gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but there is no mention as to how many wise men came (Matt. 2:1–11).



Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

The wise men were kings in their home country.



True or false?

Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

The wise men were kings in their home country.

Not known.

Little is known about the Magi. Scholars believe they were astrologers and diviners.



Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

The wise men followed a star.

True or false?



Do You Really Know the Story of the First Christmas?

The wise men followed a star.



False.

The Magi **saw** a star rise when they left their home (Mt. 2:2). They **saw** the star again while en route to Bethlehem (Mt. 2:9).

Learning About Liturgy

Why does the priest place his hands over the chalice and make the sign of the cross during the Eucharistic Prayer?

The priest makes the Sign of the Cross because he is calling on the Holy Spirit as he prays to the Father to transform the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ. All three Persons of the Trinity are involved during the consecration.



Parish Pastoral Priorities

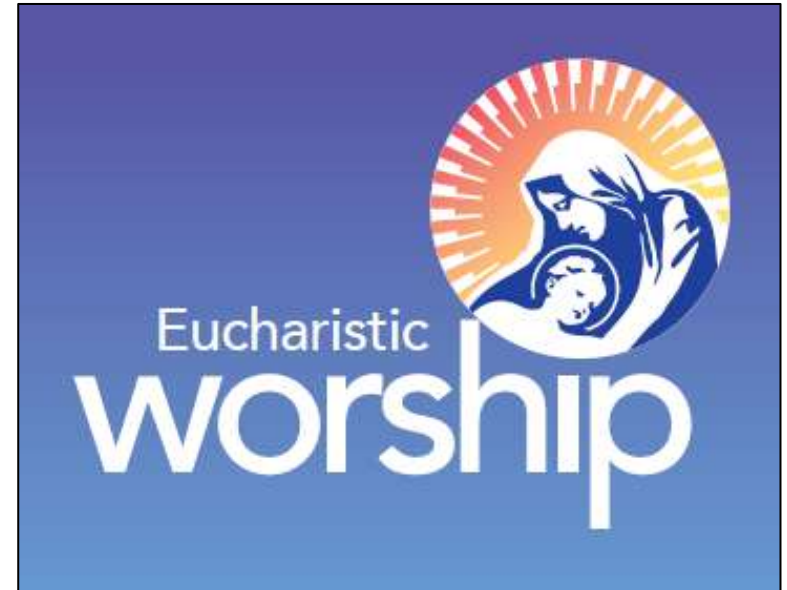
The Catholic Archdiocese of Edmonton has asked that every parish address three pastoral priorities. They are:



Parish Pastoral Priorities

We are a faith community that joyfully celebrates and better understands the Eucharist.

Our parish will address this priority by having instructional masses, the first having taken place in mid-December. The second will be scheduled within the next two months. These Faith Loops also provide explanations about the Mass, its rituals and their meaning. Keep an eye out for 'Learning About Liturgy' slides.



Parish Pastoral Priorities

We are a faith community that is confident in proclaiming the Great Commission to spread the Good News of the Gospel within our respective vocations, professions, and communities.



Our parish will address this priority by inviting individuals, from time to time, to share a bit about their faith journey at the end of Mass.

These Faith Loops are also intended to provide the catechism necessary to form confident witnesses.

Parish Pastoral Priorities

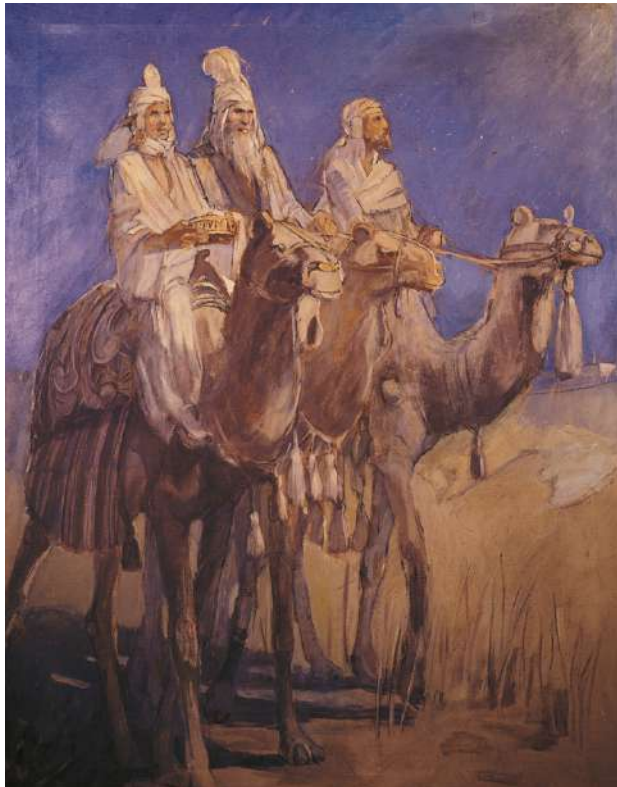
We are a faith community that accompanies families, fully recognizing the centrality of marriage and family in God's plan.



Our parish is addressing this priority by developing monthly faith lessons for parents to borrow and use at home with their children. Called 'Faith in a Box', each package will include a lesson plan with a variety of activities and all the resources needed for families to use in learning more about our faith.

Test Your Knowledge

The three kings who visited the Christ child are described as _____ in Matthew 2:1.



- a) foreigners
- b) Magi
- c) pagans
- d) angels

Answer

b. Magi

Saint Bede, an English monk and scholar who lived in the 7th century, said the three Magi came from Asia, Africa, and Europe, symbolizing how Christ would unite all nations in himself.



Test Your Knowledge

Epiphany means _____.

- a) “three kings”
- b) “the unveiling”
- c) “post-Christmas”
- d) “officially over”

Answer

b. The unveiling

“The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (Magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee” (CCC, n. 528).



It's a Custom!

On the Feast of the Epiphany, Christians celebrate the arrival of the Magi with their gifts for the newborn King. It has been a custom since the Middle Ages to bless one's home with holy water and incense on this day.



It's a Custom! (cont.)

The ritual involves the writing of the initials of the three wise men – Caspar, Melchior, and Balthazar – above the main door. They are connected with crosses and sandwiched between the numbers for the new year.

20 + C + M + B + 25

There is another way of explaining the three letters (CMB) used: *Christus mansionem benedicat ...* which is Latin for 'May Christ bless the house'.

A New Year's Blessing

At the sound of the tolling midnight bell,
A brand new year will begin.
Let's raise our hopes in a confident toast,
to the promise it ushers in.

May your battles be few, your pleasures many,
your wishes and dreams fulfilled.
May your confidence stand in the face of loss
and give you the strength to rebuild.

May peace of heart fill all your days,
may serenity grace your soul.
May tranquil moments bless your life
and keep your spirit whole.

Author unknown

You Were Wondering ...

What should we know about the town of Bethlehem?



You Were Wondering ...

We sing the traditional carol, *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, but the song does not tell us much about the birthplace of the Lord. Micah, one of the minor prophets who lived around 750 B.C., foretold that the Messiah's birthplace would be Bethlehem:

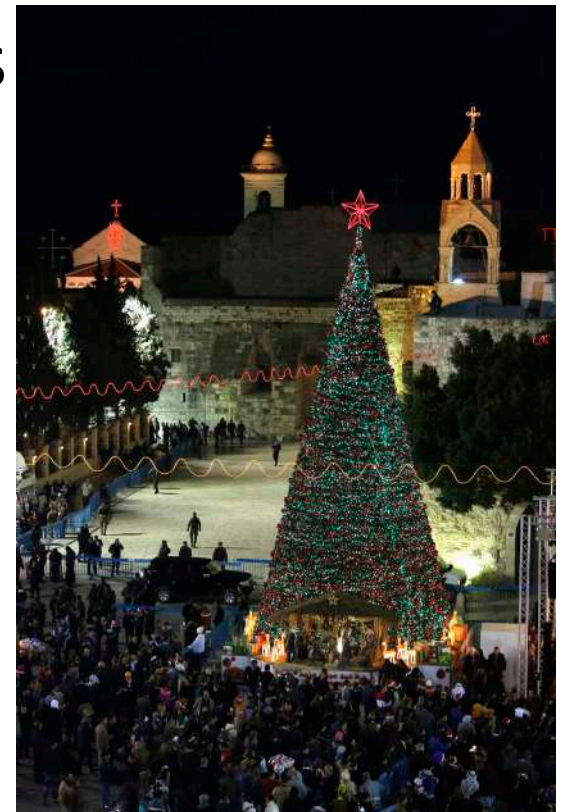
“But you, O Bethlehem, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel. He shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.” (Micah 5:2–4)

You Were Wondering ...

Bethlehem is eight kilometers from the city of Jerusalem. Today, with a population of 25 000, it is no longer so little.

The name, Bethlehem, actually means 'house of bread', a fitting birthplace for the One who would be 'the Bread of Life'. The great King David was born in Bethlehem, which is why Joseph – a descendant of David – needed to register there.

Photo: Manger Square in Bethlehem



You Were Wondering ...

At 2550 feet above sea level, Bethlehem is in the hill country of Judea. Established in a fertile area, Bethlehem is a trading center for farmers and shepherds.

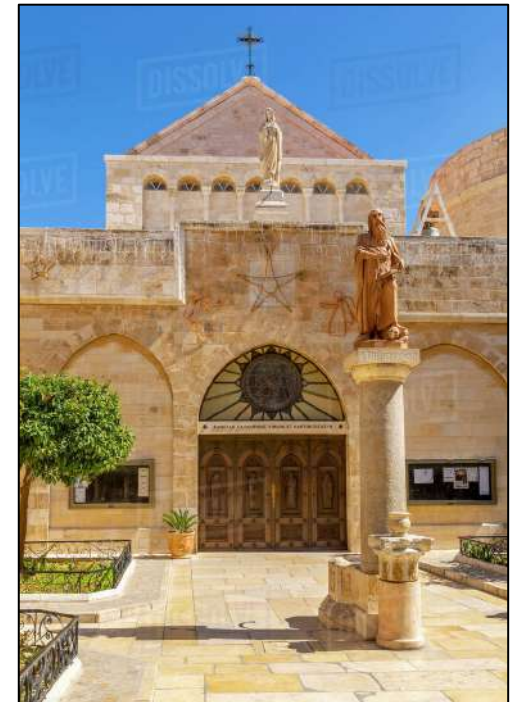
Tourism is Bethlehem's main industry, employing 25% of the working people and accounting for 65% of the city's economy. The city's main streets and old markets are lined with shops selling handicrafts, spices, jewelry and oriental sweets. Numerous shops sell olive woodcarvings, the most popular product purchased by tourists.

You Were Wondering ...

The Church of the Nativity, a major tourist attraction, stands in the center of the city and is part of a large plaza known as Manger Square. Under the church is a grotto or cave called the Holy Crypt, into which visitors can descend. It is believed to be the place of Jesus' birth.

Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem occur on three different dates: December 25 is the traditional date for Roman Catholic and Protestant Christians.

Orthodox Christians celebrate on January 6 or 19.



Prayer Before Mass

Dear God, help me to be open to all that you want to
give me at Mass today.

My heart is open.

I come empty and unsure and troubled.

I come in hope.

I come in need to be loved by you,
united with this faith community,

strengthened by your word,
and nourished by the Bread of Life.



Cleanse me. Refresh me.

Strengthen me for the journey ahead.

Lead me to heaven.

Thank you, God, for this time together.

Thank you, God, for everything. Amen.

Questions???

Do you have a question about the Catholic faith or about the celebration of the Mass? If so, write it on a piece of paper and drop it into the marked shoebox on the table at the back of the church. We will try to answer it in a Faith Loop at a later date.

Thank you.

