

**OBJECTIVE**

To have each family member understand that Jesus Christ is the King of our lives, the ruler of all we do.

**PREPARATION**

The committee leading this activity should review and use the *Preparing for the Family Night* checklist in *Appendix B* to plan for the event. This month's session is different than others, as there are no break-out sessions. Instead, the families will participate in a all family night activities together.

Session leaders should allocate sufficient time to prepare, familiarizing themselves not only with the session but also with each of the following Bible passages: Matthew 1–2, Luke 2:1–20, Micah 5:2, Jeremiah 23:5–6, Isaiah 7:14, Numbers 24:17, and Psalm 72. In addition, look over any prayers that will be used so that you are comfortable with them as well. If theological questions arise during preparation, the leader(s) should schedule a meeting with the parish priest so that the lesson is fully understood before the session.

On the day of the session, allow time to organize the materials. Since this session should fall close to the Nativity, consider taking some sort of collection for a local food bank, shelter, or other social agency.

**MATERIALS NEEDED***For the Whole Group*

- Copies of prayers and/or prayer services (*for all participants*)
- Flip chart, masking tape, and markers
- Bags filled with the following items (*one per family*):
  - Construction paper
  - Tape
  - Scissors
  - Markers
  - Bible with concordance
- Station handouts (*see pp. 61–70*)
- Three gift boxes with wrapped removable lids (*for labeling and contents see p. 59*)
- Icon of the Nativity and an icon of Jesus Christ (*preferably as High Priest*)
- Large popsicle sticks (*10 per person*)
- Glue
- Paints with small paint brushes (*multiple colors*)
- Glitter, sequins, or jewel decorations (*to glue on popsicle stick stars*)
- Ribbons
- Construction paper with popsicle star traced on it (*1 per person*)
- *Family Time: Closing Activity* handouts (*see pp. 71–72*)
- Pens/pencils and paper
- *Family Night: Taking It Home* handouts (*see pp. 73–74*)

**OPENING AND CLOSING PRAYERS**

*We recommend that as a parish family you begin and end your evening with a worship service or prayer. We have included a Small Compline service in Appendix A to reproduce and distribute for all to participate. If you choose a different service, make every effort to have the text available for everyone. Teach*

## SESSION 4

### I AM KING

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*the families the beautiful Katavasia of the Nativity before you begin tonight's session as it ties into the lesson. It is important to take a few minutes as a group to review the meaning of this hymn so that all can be active participants when praying. Consult with your parish priest for guidance in this.*

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Christ comes from heaven; meet Him.

Christ is on earth exalt Him. O you earth, sing to the Lord.

O you nations, praise Him in joy for He has been glorified.

—**Katavasia of the Nativity**

#### **OPENING ACTIVITY: FOLLOW THE KING (15–20 minutes)**

*After the opening prayers, have the families spread out in an open space. Make sure that the person leading this activity is someone who can really have fun with it—a loud, charismatic, and outgoing personality will be most successful. Assign volunteers beforehand to help you judge the families and keep score. Once everyone is ready, state the following in your own words:*

We are going to begin tonight's lesson by playing a game called Follow the King. I am going to be the king, and each of your families represents a village in my kingdom—in other words, you are under my rule. Every family must appoint a ruler of your village. The ruler will be responsible for receiving the instructions for things your village must do for me, the king. Next, you must choose a name for your village, but since I am a very picky king you may not use the letter "e" in them. You must use, however, one of my favorite letters "x," "y," or "z" in your name. I will give you exactly two minutes to come up with your name, which will be judged on its creativity. In other words, be ready to explain how you chose your name and what its significance is.

*Give the participants two minutes and have them share their names. Write their names on the flip chart to keep score. Comment colorfully as they report back and award points for creativity.*

Very good! Now, I want to warn you—I am a bit of a nutty king. Some of these requests might seem a little crazy, but you must follow my instructions. Your village will be given points by my royal court according to your obedience and creativity. Oh, and one more thing—I will only give instructions one time to your ruler—if they don't hear or understand, you will have to guess what I wanted you to do and proceed accordingly. You have all been given a bag with materials to assist with your tasks. Make sure that your villages are all spread out so that you don't run into another's land. Rulers, approach the king!

*Once they have all arrived, proceed with the following instructions spoken carefully, loudly, and clearly.*

I would like each village to write a song about your village using the tune of any familiar Christmas carol. You will only have three minutes to compose the song, and your entire village will have to perform. Use the pen and paper in your material bag to help compose the song.

*After all the performances have been judged, call the rulers back again. This time, you will very quickly and quietly give the following instructions:*

I would like everyone under age 10 to hop like a rabbit and everyone over age 10 to moo like a cow when I say, “Go.” You must stop the moment you see me raise my hands.

*After this task is completed and points awarded, call the rulers back again. This time you are to give them the following written instructions without saying anything (one copy per village.)*

Please visit one of your neighboring villages. Before you meet with them, you will have three minutes to prepare a gift using only the materials in your bag and your creativity. This gift should be something they can use to better their village. When you are meeting with each other, you must also find out the favorite ice cream flavor of each villager. You will be judged based on the other village’s perception of your hospitality, your knowledge of their ice cream preferences, and the usefulness of your gift.

*After this task is completed and points awarded, call the rulers back again. This time, you are to give them the instructions while mumbling, but highlighting the words that are underlined:*

It is time to pay taxes. I would like everyone’s right shoe from your village lined up in front of me.

*After this task is completed and points awarded, say the following aloud for all to hear:*

I will share the final instructions with everyone. Look up the word “king” in the Bible concordance. Find a passage that describes a good king. You will be given three minutes to do this and are expected to share your quote with the rest of the group. Since you’ve been good villagers, I will answer any questions and even assist you if necessary with this task.

*After every group has shared, ask the following questions:*

**DISCUSS** *(Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.)*

- Was it hard to follow the king?
- What made it more difficult?
- What made it easier?
- What are some other words or phrases that can mean “king” or person in charge with a similar role? *(Possible answers will include: ruler, leader, head, chief, boss, director, and guide. Write answers on the flip chart.)*
- A few minutes ago, we heard some passages that described good kings from the Bible. With your families, take the next three minutes to come up with a list of qualities that would make a good ruler, leader, and king.

*After sufficient time has passed, have the families share their qualities and write them on the flip chart.*

- In the Bible, St. Matthew writes, “Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born **King** of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him” (Matthew 2:1–2). The word “king” appears two times in this passage. How are they different? *(Write “king” and “King” and record answers on the flipchart.)*

## SESSION 4

### I AM KING

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- When we were playing Follow the King, what would you have done if my instructions had been to follow Him? (*Hold up an icon of Jesus Christ and allow time for all to answer.*)

#### **OPENING REMARKS** (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

Jesus is our King and Lord. We are called to follow Him and obey His rules. Unlike the king in the opening game, He doesn't have us do wacky things, and never asks us to do anything He hasn't done Himself. He clearly communicates what He wants us to do through His Scripture and His Church. He is a merciful ruler who forgives and shares His wealth with everyone.

December is a month when we occupy ourselves with preparing for and celebrating the birth of our King, Jesus Christ. We spend a lot of time shopping, wrapping gifts, making food, attending holiday parties, etc. Our focus tends to be on indulging ourselves instead of focusing on the One who was born our eternal King. Jesus Christ never declared outright, "I am a King." Instead of using words, which in many cases are just empty expressions, Jesus proved that He was a King concerned for the well-being of His subjects with His actions. What are some of the things that He did to prove that He was King? (*Allow time for answers and supplement with the following.*)

As our King, He transformed the lives of sinners into lives of sanctity. As our King, He restored to health those who were physically and spiritually sick, raising the dead to life. As our King, He set us free from the bondage of Satan and sin, making us free to serve Him as servants of God. As our King, He fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. As our King, He humbly and powerfully served us. As our King, what does He want from us, His royal subjects? (*Allow time for answers and supplement with the following.*)

As King, Jesus Christ wants followers who are committed to Him. As we approach our Lord's Nativity, let us look at our commitment to the King, Jesus Christ, and the responsibilities of being His loyal subjects. Let us renew ourselves in faith and live up to the expectations of the King. Remember that His birth was the greatest gift ever given: the opportunity of life and eternity with our King, Jesus Christ.

At Christmas we focus on *giving gifts*, when actually we are *exchanging gifts* with loved ones and friends. The true Christmas focus is on the love of God Who magnanimously gives His unbounded love to all humankind, not just once, but forevermore. If we are to exchange anything, we should acknowledge our acceptance of God's magnanimous love and return it to Him as generously as our hearts allow.

Today's activity is a bit different; we won't be breaking into groups but rather staying with our families. We are going to be learning more about the birth of our King by walking through some of the key points of the Nativity story. Before we begin, I have one question. Does anyone know that there is a special way to greet each other at Christmas—and I don't mean saying "Merry Christmas." At Pascha, we all know how to respond when I say, "Christ is risen!" (*Allow people to answer "Truly He is risen!"*) There is a similar type of greeting during Christmas, but unfortunately not many people are aware of it. It can actually be found in the Katavasia we prayed at the beginning of this session. Can anyone tell me how it begins? (*Allow people a chance to answer. If no one guesses, proceed with the following.*)

We should greet people by saying, “Christ is born!” Can anyone tell me the response? (*Allow people a chance to answer—if no one guesses, proceed with the following ...*) We respond by proclaiming, “Glorify Him!” Let’s practice. (*Go through several rounds of saying “Christ is born! Glorify Him!”*) We will be practicing the greeting and response all day, so if you hear me say “Christ is born,” make sure to proclaim “Glorify Him” loudly.

### SET-UP OF STATIONS

*The set-up area will depend on how many families you are anticipating. You can have families rotate by themselves or with other families. If movement is too difficult, assemble station packets for each family. Make sure that assistants are floating around and helping families stay on task, answering any questions that may arise. Give families approximately 7–10 minutes per station. Below are set-up instructions for the stations. Additionally, read through the handouts for these stations (pp. 61–70) before proceeding with the set-up.*

- *The Story—Set an area with a sign and participant handouts (see pp. 61–62).*
- *The Gifts—Set an area with a sign, participant handouts (see pp. 63–64), and the following items:*
  - *First wrapped gift with removable lid and the following:*
    - *Outside label that reads “Gift 1.”*
    - *Gold—Ask the priest for something small from the altar or use a piece of gold jewelry.*
    - *A folded note card inside the box that reads “This is a gift of gold, which was meant as a gift for a King.”*
  - *Second wrapped gift with removable lid and the following:*
    - *Outside label that read, “Gift 2.”*
    - *Frankincense—Ask the priest for this or where it can be purchased.*
    - *A folded note card inside the box that reads “This is a gift of frankincense, which was meant as a gift for God.”*
  - *Third wrapped gift with removable lid and the following:*
    - *Outside label that reads “Gift 3.”*
    - *Myrrh—This can be found in the aromatherapy section of most health food stores.*
    - *A folded note card inside the box that reads “This is a gift of myrrh, which was meant as a gift for a Man who would suffer and die.”*
- *The Prophecies—Set an area with a sign, participant handouts (see pp. 65–66), and several Bibles with both the Old and New Testaments and a concordance.*
- *The Icon—Set an area with a sign, participant handouts (see pp. 67–68), and an icon of the Nativity. As there are many different icons of the Nativity, look at the handout on page 67 and make sure the icon you use has all the necessary components. See page 68 for a black and white copy of a Nativity icon that would be appropriate.*
- *The Hymn—Set an area with a sign, participant handouts (see pp. 69–70), and a person to teach the hymn or a recording of the hymn. We have provided a translation from the Web site of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. Check that it matches the one your parish will be using. If not, provide the proper translation.*

### CLOSING ACTIVITY (15–20 minutes)

*As each family completes the stations, give them a Family Time: Closing Activity handout. Have them follow the instructions on the handout, and when most families are done (they can continue at home if necessary) begin the wrap-up discussion.*

# SESSION 4

## I AM KING

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**DISCUSS** (*Look first to the children for answers and reflect back.*)

- What did you learn today?
- What type of King is Jesus?
- How can we properly worship our King?

**WRAP-UP** (*Paraphrase in your own words.*)

More than 2,000 years ago, our King was born in the most humble of all circumstances, an event that changed the world. Many are followers, but how many truly worship and obey our Heavenly King? Often we do not recognize our responsibilities as followers of Christ. He gives us gifts to use among ourselves, our families, and our neighbors. Sometimes we use these gifts to serve others, and other times we keep them hidden away, unused and wasted. Through prayer, love, charity, and true humility, we can learn what it means to be a true loyal subject of our Heavenly King and to follow His leadership. We should give, rather than receive, for He has given us our lives, our families, and our faith. Let us find our gold, frankincense, and myrrh and offer them to the newborn King. As we leave here tonight, let us remember the joyful proclamation and its cheerful response: **Christ is born! Glorify Him!**

### AS FAMILIES PREPARE TO LEAVE

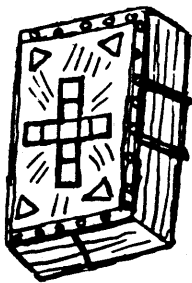
- Remember to close with a short worship service or closing prayer.
- Don't forget to give families the *Family Night: Taking It Home* handout.
- Let them know when the next Family Night is scheduled.
- Enlist families to help you clean up (*rotate monthly*).
- Thank them sincerely for their attendance and participation.

# FAMILY NIGHT: TAKING IT HOME

*Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." —Matthew 2:1–2*

## PRAY TOGETHER

*Christ is born! Glorify Him!  
Christ comes from heaven; meet Him.  
Christ is on earth; exalt Him.  
O you earth, sing to the Lord.  
O you nations, praise Him in joy  
for He has been glorified.  
—Katavasia of the Nativity*



## MORE SCRIPTURE ON OUR KING

<i>For God is my King ...</i>	<i>Psalms 74:12</i>
<i>...the Lord is our King ...</i>	<i>Isaiah 33:22</i>
<i>King of Kings ...</i>	<i>Revelation 19:16</i>

## WANT TO FIND MORE?

Grab your Bible and concordance and look up the word "King" or anything else you are interested in researching.

## FEATURED ARTICLE: LET US FOLLOW THE MAGI BY REV. FR. ANDREW DEMOTSES

In the nativity narrative of St. Matthew, we are introduced to the shadowy and mysterious figures known as the Magi, or Wise Men, "who studied the stars and came from the East to Jerusalem." (2:1). If we are willing to reflect for a moment, I think that we can catch glimpses of ourselves in the journey of these men. In a deep sense, they reflect the many dimensions of our own individual journeys of faith.

It is not difficult to imagine the many real dangers of their long journey: the resistance of their families, the efforts of colleagues to discourage them, the unbearable heat and freezing nights of the deserts they crossed, the danger of marauding thieves. And yet, they felt impelled to answer the call of the beckoning Star of Bethlehem, to worship the new-born King and lay their gifts at his feet. In this act of faith and obedience, "how happy they were,

what joy was theirs!" (2:9). And finding the child "they knelt down and worshipped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, and presented them to him." (2:11).

In this same way, that Star calls each of us to begin a life long journey to meet Jesus Christ, to acknowledge Him and make Him a part of our lives. In doing so, however, we need to acknowledge with honesty and forthrightness the difficulty of following Christ. But as with the Magi, we must undertake the journey knowing of its difficulty.

In the Christian life, discouragement comes in many forms. There is discouragement when it seems our prayers are not answered; when we work with honesty and integrity, but see others, who cut corners, prosper and advance; when we endure personal separation and loss, and when we need compassion and affir-



mation, and they are not to be found.

But through the mystery of faithful obedience, the Magi offered themselves and their gifts to Christ, transcending at that moment the difficulties and discouragements of their journey. And having met Christ they were changed men and went home by another route, symbolizing their confidence and trust in the new direction their lives had taken. And to the wise men and women of every age, this same opportunity is given each Christmas when the star returns again, to shine anew in the heart of each of us.

—Taken from [www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org).

# FAMILY ACTIVITY: CELEBRATE EPIPHANY/THEOPHANY

Epiphany means “shining forth” or “manifestation.” The feast is often called “Theophany,” which means the shining forth and manifestation of God. The emphasis in the present-day celebration is on the appearance of Jesus as the human Messiah of Israel and the Divine Son of God, One of the Holy Trinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Thus, during His baptism by John [the Forerunner] in the Jordan, Jesus identifies Himself with sinners as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (*John 1:20*), the “Beloved” of the Father, whose messianic task it is to redeem men from their sins (*Luke 3:21; Mark 1:35*). And He is revealed as well as One of the Holy Trinity, testified to by the voice of the Father, and the Spirit in the form of a dove. This is the central epiphany glorified in the feast day—the Holy Trinity. *Adapted from The Orthodox Faith, Vol. II: Worship, by Fr. Thomas Hopko*

## ABOUT THE ICON

Christ stands in the Jordan River at the center of the Theophany icon. Dressed in animal skins and a green cloak, the disheveled Forerunner and Baptist John

stands on the bank to the left of Christ with his hand raised. The Holy Spirit, in the form of a dove, is directly over Christ. To the right, the angels worship the Trinity revealed. *Adapted from The Icon Book, by Boojamra, Essey, McLuckie, and Matusiak.*

## SOME THINGS TO DO

- Have your children prepare containers for Holy Water to take to Liturgy the day of the feast. Plastic or glass containers (with lids) should be washed thoroughly and then may be decorated on the outside. A cross or small Theophany icon may be attached with rubber cement.
- With parents' guidance, children should prepare their rooms for blessing and select one personal possession



to be blessed as well: a new icon for their room, a baseball glove for an avid player, etc.

- Hold a “dress rehearsal” in preparation for the priest's visit to bless your home: practice singing the troparion together, and plan the route for the children to lead the priest from room to room carrying a lit candle.

—Taken from the archives of

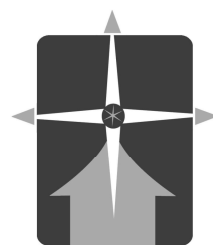
Orthodox Family Life [www.theologic.com/ofhweb](http://www.theologic.com/ofhweb).

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- *Epiphany: The Festival of Lights* produced and available from the Greek Orthodox Telecommunications ([www.gotelecom.goarch.org](http://www.gotelecom.goarch.org)).
- *Adventures of Spero, the Orthodox Church Mouse! The Nativity of Our Lord—Christ's Birth* by Jane Sarlas-Fontana, published by Light and Life Publishing ([www.light-n-life.com](http://www.light-n-life.com)).
- *Nativity Icons PowerPoint* by Fr. Joseph Samaan, available from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Outreach and Evangelism ([www.outreach.goarch.org](http://www.outreach.goarch.org)).

## FAMILY CHALLENGE

Your challenge this month is to have a birthday party—fit for our King. As we approach the birth of the King of Kings—our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ—it seems only appropriate that we celebrate Him. Consider how you will make this day special for Him. What meaningful gifts can you give Him?



KAT'OIKON EKKLESIA  
Family as Church

Center for  
Family Care

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