



How the Three Wise Men Can Lead Us to Jesus

"no one comes to Christ
and goes back the same
way he came!"

By Claudia Cangilla McAdam

Like us, the Magi (the Wise Men) weren't Jews. They were Gentiles in search of the Manifestation (which is what "Epiphany" means) of the Truth. And the tradition that they hailed from three separate continents (Europe, Asia, and Africa) and are customarily portrayed as being from different races speaks to the call to all humankind to search for and to embrace Jesus as King.

"Christ is meant to be the Truth for everyone," said Fr. Javier Nieva, then-pastor at St. Mary of Littleton in an Epiphany homily a few years ago.

If we look to the Magi as models of discipleship, we may find our lives dramatically transformed this Christmas season.

Chapter two of Matthew's Gospel provides the story of the Wise Men's journey and subsequent discovery of the King of the Jews. The path they lead us on can inspire us to follow them in six critical ways:

1. Prepare. Laying the groundwork when beginning the journey can prove to be crucial if we are to encounter the Lord. The Magi prepared by studying Scripture and other writings as well as the signs seen in the sky.

Likely living in the same geographic area as their forerunner and pagan prophet, Balaam, the Magi would have been well-acquainted with the prophecy he proclaims in Numbers 24:17. They searched the skies for the sign he foretold:

*I see him, but not now;
I behold him, but not nigh;
A star shall come forth out of Jacob,
And a scepter shall rise out of Israel.*

What kind of preparation, searching, and awareness are part of our lives?

"The Magi evoke the importance of alertness in the spiritual order," Bishop Robert Barron said in an Epiphany homily. "We must keep our eyes open to see what God is up to."

In what ways are we prepared to recognize the presence of God in our lives? How far—spiritually, mentally, physically—will we travel to encounter the Lord? Do we avail ourselves of the graces imparted by the Sacraments? Do we routinely read Sacred Scripture, devotionals, or other writings, such as works about the lives of the saints?

What benefit can be drawn from joining Bible studies or attending parish missions or talks given by notable Catholic scholars and clergy? Do we make use of free faith-enhancing media content such as that found on FORMED.org, on Christian radio stations, or in television fare such as The Chosen?

And even if we sit and absorb what comes our way, what do we do with it? That brings up the second point.

2. Take Action! Get involved! "The Magi teach us to move," Bishop Barron instructs.

"They didn't find the Truth sitting in front of the TV, just being comfortable at home," Fr. Nieva adds.

After spotting the star, the Wise Men embarked on a journey, despite how long it would take or what obstacles they might encounter. They stepped out in faith, searching to find what they knew awaited them.

Are we too lazy or afraid to get out of ourselves to find the

Truth? We weren't created to be complacent, anxious, or troubled, but rather to fear not and to "seek the Lord while he may be found" (Is 55:6). Like the Magi, we should be confident in undertaking our journey of faith.

3. Join with Others. We don't always discover the truth on our own. It can be important to do as the Magi did: journey in a group and assist each other.

If only one Wise Man had left to follow the star, he may have become discouraged and given up. For us, corporate worship enables us to support and be supported by others in a community, to share the joys and difficulties experienced along the way. The same thing occurs when we join a Bible study, take a course that enlivens faith, or take an active role in the ministries of our Church.

Additionally, the Magi weren't afraid to ask for assistance, as they did with Herod. Thankfully for us, the Magisterium, the official teaching authority of the Church, is a trusted source of guidance in our lives as Catholics.

4. Expect Opposition. The mention of Herod in the point above illustrates the stumbling blocks we may face on our journey of faith. The wicked ruler tried to manipulate the Magi in his plan to destroy the newborn King, but the Wise Men were shrewd enough to persevere in their mission despite, as Bishop Barron says, "dangers of the road, or the length of the journey."

In the sinful, fallen world in which we live, we can be assured that our values and beliefs will be attacked at every turn, but we cannot be discouraged or forced from the path of righteousness to which we are called. This is another reason why preparation (knowing the faith and being able to defend it) and being surrounded by fellow believers is critical if we are to kneel at the crib of the Christ Child.

5. Give Great Gifts. The Magi placed before Jesus the most precious of gifts in the gold, frankincense, and myrrh they brought in honor of his kingship, priesthood, and humanity, respectively. Our very lives are our greatest gifts from God, and we owe all to Him. "When you come to Christ," says Bishop Barron, "don't give him your second best; break open the very best of yourself and make it a gift for him."

How do we use our talents, our unique abilities to honor God and further his kingdom? From the smallest act of kindness to the largest donation of money, the gifts we can lay at the feet of our King are innumerable and invaluable.

6. Embrace Change. We should let the encounter with Christ change how we progress through life—even if it means altering the course we've been traveling. In reflecting upon the dream in which the Magi were warned to not go back to Herod and so "they departed to their own country by another way" (Matt 2:12), Bishop Barron references Venerable Servant of God Fulton J.

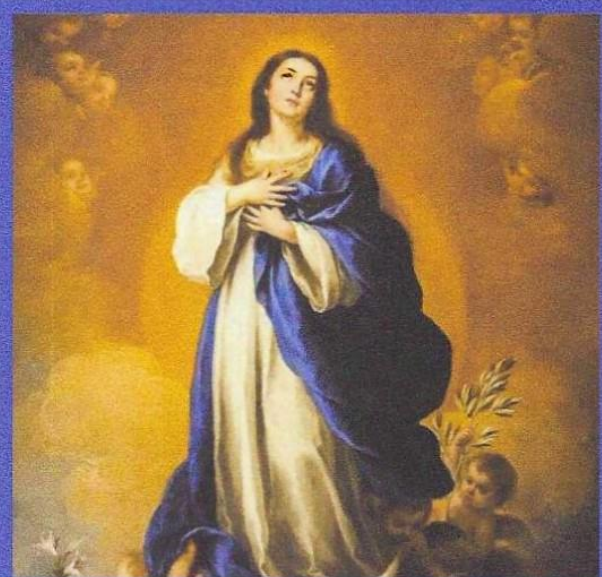
Sheen who commented so magnificently: "of course they [took another route]; for no one comes to Christ and goes back the same way he came!"

"If the truth doesn't change you, like the Magi were changed, then what's the point?" asks Fr. Nieva. "To seek and to find the truth, your heart shall grow and overflow. There is a Truth, and He is Jesus Christ."

If we've discovered Jesus, if we recognize the salvation He brings, if we accept Him as Lord, then we must be changed. "The key point is this: the wise men from the east are a new beginning," Pope Benedict XVI writes in *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*. "They represent the journeying of humanity toward Christ."

In the same way the Wise Men followed the star, we can follow them. This Epiphany, may we all imitate the actions of the Magi so that we, too, may throw ourselves down in worship of the One those ancient travelers sought, found, and adored. ♦

Parishioner Claudia Cangilla McAdam, MTh, is an award-winning author of Catholic books for kids and teens. Visit her at www.ClaudiaMcAdam.com.



**IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE
BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
MASS TIMES**

Thursday, December 7:
6:00PM (Anticipatory)

Friday, December 8:
6:30AM, 9:00AM, 12:00PM and 6:00PM