

Although it may feel like Christmas is behind us, I realize that many children just had the joy of having been visited by the three kings last night. We sometimes refer to them as kings, but the Gospel of St. Matthew specifically refers to them as Magi. Matthew doesn't tell us how many there were, but eventually it was deduced that there were three, because of gifts given to the child Jesus—three gifts, therefore, three Magi. Later medieval accounts filled in the details about these men, regarded as representatives of all the nations: One named Melchior, another named Gaspar, and a third, Balthasar.

So, what was special about these men that they were able to see something that apparently no one else could see? More than anything, it was that they were men who had eyes to see and ears to hear. Like many people of the ancient world, they were accustomed to looking for signs in the sky, open to manifestations of the divine.

They saw the star and pursued it for perhaps as long as two years. They looked at the star in the same way as we should look at everything in God's creation: not merely as a thing but as a sign. They follow the sign, in the way we follow street signs or printed words on a page. As Jesus promised, "the one who seeks, finds" (Matt. 7:8).<sup>1</sup>

The star directed them to the house where the child and his mother were. For all the fear that the announcement of his birth aroused in the heart of King Herod, what the wise men found and beheld was just a baby, no different from any baby you or I have seen. Herod had wealth and power, while this baby, unable to speak a single command, depended on the care of others.

I remind us that the magi weren't Jews, living in anticipation of a Messiah, yet they prostrated themselves and did him homage. And though no length of time is mentioned, I imagine it was more than just a perfunctory gesture. I imagine that they gazed in awe at the baby held by his mother, a stillness and silence. I imagine that for the Magi, the earth stopped spinning in that moment, as though all other reality moves to the background, perhaps not so different than those who rest in Eucharistic Adoration.

For us who are so busy with life that we can't stop to rest in God for prayer—just to be reminded of how much we are loved, to express our gratitude, to acknowledge how we need his help. For us who are perhaps so prideful and worldly that we've lost our sense of humble reverence, the response of the Magi reminds us to open our eyes and our hearts, to recognize what's before us, in this act of worship in his Mass—to bear in mind in whose presence we are, to be present to him and to do him homage. You are (I am) not God—but he is. And everything we have that we can count as blessing and cause for gratitude, came through him.

The magi model for us a fitting response, as we meet Jesus in the Eucharist. Though with the eyes of our bodies we see what appears to be only bread, with the eyes of faith we know it to be the same Lord that they saw. We can show Jesus great reverence when we kneel before his Real Presence in the Eucharist.<sup>2</sup>

May their example inspire us to seek out time for quiet stillness with him. As we encounter from this altar, the very one the Magi traveled so far to see, let us bring him our gifts, all that we are, that we might give him fitting homage. Let us humbly adore him, Christ the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> Kreeft, Peter. *Food for the Soul: Reflections on the Mass Readings (Cycle B)* (Food for the Soul Series Book 2). Word on Fire. Kindle Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Mitch, Curtis; Sri, Edward. *The Gospel of Matthew (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture): (A Catholic Bible Commentary on the New Testament by Trusted Catholic Biblical Scholars - CCSS)*. Baker Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.