

# Reflection

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*Offered by Sr. Diane Przyborowski  
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Feast of the Epiphany – Another Christmas story! This story is full of mystery – a strange star, strange wise men from the East, a humble family instead of a royal entourage, strange gifts to give a baby king, an unexpected dream with a new twist of how to proceed home. This Christmas story always leaves me asking all kinds of questions. Who were these men? They were obviously wealthy to fund such a long and arduous, trip? Were they astrologers who studied the stars? They were obviously learned men. Who came with them? Their wives and children, their servants, animals for food? Why did they set out on this journey to find the King of the Jews? What drew them to this relatively small, insignificant group of people who were under the rule of Rome? They came to do him homage, to adore the king of a subjugated people, to give him kingly and priestly gifts as well as a gift that foretold his future suffering. How old was Jesus? Maybe as old as two? We know that Mary and Joseph were now living in a house. What did their neighbors think when these visitors showed up? How long did these visitors stay? Surely for a while after making such a long trip. My imagination can go wild with the possibilities. And what did Mary and Joseph do with all this! Much to ponder, I am sure.

We usually interpret this story with the idea that God becoming manifest to not just the chosen Jewish people but to the stranger, to all the nations, to the Gentiles. That's us, by the way. God shows himself as a little child to all the world. Isaiah foretold this. "Arise, shine for your light has come....Nations shall come to your light and kings to the brightness of your dawn." Is Isaiah speaking of the Jewish nation or of Jesus the Christ? He says: "Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice." God is with us, God is made human with earthy flesh and bone, God is one of us. What were these wise persons expecting? Were they disappointed? Obviously not for the gospel says they were overwhelmed with joy. When is the last time you were overwhelmed with joy? When you could see and be radiant, when your heart was thrilled and rejoiced in God if even for a moment? I hope each of you has had that experience lately or will have it

soon. Let your heart experience God made flesh, God with us and God within us.

It seems that somehow this story starts with an inner nudge, an inspiration, dare we even say a call. They were wise because they listened and then responded. How did they keep that call and search alive after the first enthusiasm has worn off? What keep them on the journey? I think it was the spirit of God and that they were part of a dream together. They were part of a community with a common desire to do homage to this new king. They helped each other when spirits were lagging.

In a little over three short months some of us will follow a star and a call across the ocean to participate in the General Chapter of our Congregation. Just as the manifestation of the divine little king Jesus to these Eastern visitors changed the world for them, we know the General Chapter will bring about some kind of transformation for all of us on this planet and beyond because we are so connected in God. All of us have some part to play in the story of our Congregation and its service to the world, even those of you who are not officially Wheaton Franciscans. You are still part of us in faith. The theme of the Chapter is GO FORTH! BE A BLESSING IN THE HEART OF THE WORLD. Could this be the hidden message that the new king gave the magi as they were departing? They were filled with light and joy. How could they contain this just for themselves. They probably didn't understand it all but they had encountered the living, breathing manifestation of God. We don't know the rest of their story. Did they all make it back home? What happened to them? What we do know is that this God encounter had to have changed them. They would now be a blessing the rest of their lives. So I don't know the ending of our story or even the next chapter to our story. What I do know is that NOW is the time to "Arise, shine for your light has come." We are part of the Jesus story and are to share the good news that we are loved and that together we can make a difference. This is not the time to fall back to sleep. It is time to be awake, to follow our star, to make the journey, to share the Good News. Wake up, good people, the time is NOW.