

TRINITY NEWS

The Epiphany of Christ after the Nativity at Bethlehem

The appearance of the wise men in Bethlehem is a Middle-Eastern story that was originally told in Aramaic and presented in the Gospels in Greek and read today in an English translation. We are always involved in translation and interpretation when we are drawn into the Gospels. Wise men come with their three gifts after a hazardous journey to a place unknown previously to them. They are clearly led there by something inside them of which the star that goes before them is a luminous symbol that guides them to their destination. Their gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh carry rich symbolism, and so does the story.

Pilgrimage:

The journey of the Magi is the original Christian pilgrimage. The Magi were Zoroastrians, with their eyes luminous with their belief in God and in the yearning in their hearts from their own traditions of someone who was to come. TS Eliot's poem The Journey of the Magi paints in literary colours both the dangers and the seductions of such a journey. Jesus own journey began with God and ended in God. He was a passionate believer in the one he called Abba and that passion is transparent in every word that is reported about him and from him. Pilgrimage requires a motivation and a focus.

Baggage:

The Magi carried in the saddlebags of their swaying-gaited camels gifts for the sacred one at the end of their journey. We have just rejoiced in receiving gifts for Christmas, sometimes more entranced by the words in the cards that backed up the heart gift. One of the greatest gifts is presence and the presence of the Magi fills the house that they enter in Bethlehem, probably a floor above the stable beneath where Jesus was first laid to sleep after his birth.

They loom above the small child until they prostrate themselves before him and try to enter his heart with their pulsing perceptions to find the treasures of Spirit and renewal thinking that he himself brings. They are perceptive people, not mindless wanderers. They are the bearers of the reflections in history of their own people just as we all are in our traditions.

Gifts:

1. **Gold:** "The golden crown that makes a man a king" as in the words of an old song called Love is a Many-Splendoured Thing. Yeshua will be wounded and humiliated with the imposition of a piercing crown of thorns at his trial.
2. **Frankincense:** There is an altar of incense in the Temple when Jesus is presented to God, as in the case of the Baptizer. The rising smoke is a symbol of prayers encircling God.
3. **Myrrh:** Liquid ointment oily in substance, similar in usage to the expensive nard used at the anointing years later at Bethany when Jesus is anointed prior to the suffering that leads to his death.

We are all this on pilgrimage to journey's end and beyond to the nearer presence of Christ in another pilgrimage that never ends. What we have accrued in our pockets as baggage will not count except to our descendants. What we have accrued in the inner sanctum of our being where God alone knows our true story, now that will count for everything. Life-Gifts that we have been given and gifts that we have brought to the table of life will dissolve in the shaping of 'new being' that is the only lasting gift created by Ultimate Love, the love that 'remains'.

Bishop Arthur Jones

NEXT SUNDAY'S READINGS:

Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 89; Act 10:34-38; Luke 3:15-16,21-22

THIS WEEK:

Thursday. Midweek Eucharist, 10am, Chapel

TO PLAN:

AGM: January 31st after the 9:30 service