

The Sovereign Great Priory of Canada

of the

United Religious and Military Orders
of St. John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes and
Malta and of the Temple



Office of the Supreme Grand Master
Most Eminent Knight William F. Mann, G.C.T.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FOR 2021

Sir Knights,

MATTHEW Chapter 2: Verses 1-12 - The Magi Visit the Messiah

1 After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 2 and asked, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 When he had called together all the people's chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 "In Bethlehem in Judea," they replied, "for this is what the prophet has written: 6 "But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'" 7 Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. 8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so that I too may go and worship him." 9 After they had heard the king, they went on their way, and the star they had seen when it rose went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. 10 When they saw the star, they were overjoyed. 11 On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their country by another route.

These simple words taken from the book of Matthew of the New Testament have come to symbolize an acceptance of all that is good and blessed within the World.

The Magi did not question the events leading up to the birth of Jesus. Instead, they opened their hearts and accepted what was, having absolute faith in God's Hand, which is represented in this case by the guiding Starlight.

Sir Knights, at a time of immense unrest and aggressive extremism around the world, in part due to the current pandemic, let us take comfort in the knowledge and understanding that this reading resounds stronger and more everlasting in our hearts and souls than ever before. Therefore, let us confirm within our own hearts the absolute belief as Christian Masons that God is guiding our hand as we make our way out of this pandemic.

I remember when I was quite young how this specific passage from Matthew somehow intrigued me beyond my imagination. The image of the brightest star in the sky leading the three wise men had somehow engrained itself into my very soul. How could a shapeless spiritual entity provide the subtle wisdom in the form of a star, which lead the three Magi across the desert at night to the Messiah? And, why did three obviously-wise and rich men bow down before a simple child, born within a manger?

How could the message be understood within the darkness of it all?

As Freemasons, we desire light, which leads to a higher level of knowledge and understanding and hence wisdom. As I've indicated previously, the thought of our savior taking the form of a small child, linked in bond with the Supreme Being – God – is incomprehensible to most nowadays. Of course, the darkness of the pandemic has not helped any of us understand the true meaning of sacrifice and commitment awaiting the newborn child.

It is not easy to comprehend in this day and age the vision of the three wise men paying tribute to the newborn child under the blazing star of Bethlehem. Only now, as we grow older (and wiser?), the spiritual message behind the story of the birth of Christ rings truer in our hearts and minds. Only now, can we comprehend the sacred knowledge and understanding associated with the three wise men following the guiding light of the Star of Bethlehem.

For centuries, Mankind has reasoned and thus learned powerful, yet simple, lessons through allegorical stories/biblical passages, in a way similar to the lessons contained within our own Christian Masonic rituals. Indeed, it was the earliest Christian monks

who realized very quickly that only through simple stories could the masses accept the conceptual existence of a higher level of godly spirituality.

Yet there continues this battle between spiritual faith and science even to this day, specifically as it pertains to the development of a COVID-19 vaccine. More and more, there appears to be this constant battle between Christian beliefs and pure science. Certainly, throughout today's society, there remains the argument that science cannot reconcile one's spiritual faith.

I happen to believe otherwise. I believe that science can truly demonstrate the Divine Nature of the Universe. In fact, I believe that the allegorical story associated with the three Magi and the Christmas Star can be explained through science; and, thus strengthen our Christian beliefs in all that is wondrous and spiritual in the world.

I hope that you will join me in reflecting upon this story and, as a result, it will work towards renewing your faith during this darkest period in our lives. Hopefully, this will help us understand the true meaning behind the Star of Bethlehem and practice true compassion and empathy toward our fellow man not only one day a year but across our entire life's spectrum. Only then will the world be a better place.

It is never too late to renew our spiritual faith in all that is good and kind, especially in times such as this. It is never too late to gaze up at the stars with child-like wonderment. It is never too late to open up our hearts to the Divine Nature of the Universe. It is never too late to reflect upon the darkness that we have encountered over the past year-and-a-half.

Sir Knights, I also implore you to open up your hearts not one day of the year but every day of the year to both the science and faith that surrounds you. Let us rejoice in the warmth of our partners, loved ones, family and friends. Let us rejoice and take pride in the knowledge that we are members of a brotherhood, which promotes understanding and knowledge, truth and wisdom, versus hate and jealousy. Let us rejoice and take pride in our ability to apply a higher level of reasoning to our everyday dealings with those around us.

From my family to yours, in lasting memory of all of those who have gone before us, including those three past Supreme Grand Masters, who we have lost in the past months, I wish each and every one of you a very Merry Christmas. I also wish for you a forever-increasing spiritual contentment and understanding for the New

Year and beyond. May we come together during the pandemic through our common bonds and thirst for sacred knowledge and understanding. Finally, may we soon once again come together in person and celebrate life.

Yours in the Bonds of our Order.

William F. Mann

Most Eminent Knight William F. Mann, GCT
Supreme Grand Master
Sovereign Great Priory – Knights Templar of Canada

WFM/wm