

Dec. 18, 2016

The journey of the Magi

We've often been moved by the beautiful and wondrous story of the birth of Christ. But within this story is relatively little of the journey of the magi.

We know that they came from afar -- somewhere in the vicinity of the Orient, which I always assumed meant China, Japan or, as some scholars have theorized, "in the Satanta area, around Highway 56 and Tecumseh".

We know from scripture that the three men learned that a star would lead them to the place of Christ's birth. There are some schools of thought that indicate they may have read about this in their local newspaper. My own theory, based on both the subject material provided and the accuracy of the report, it that it was a Catholic newspaper.

Together, Melchior, Casper and Balthasar, along with their camels -- which we read in "Matthew" were named Mike, Horace and Carol -- ventured in the general direction of Bethlehem. But before finding the child Jesus, they first found themselves in an audience with King Herod in Jerusalem. *Let's you and I go there now, to the interior of King Herod's palace:*

Since learning of the three wise men's quest to find the boy who would be born "King of the Jews," Herod's stomach had rarely been still. An irritable guy, he had an irritable stomach. This was long before Mylanta, but they did have Tums. King Herod had hatched a plan. He told his assistant, Phil Burns, to fetch the three kings, to which Phil replied, "Will do".

"Greetings!" King Herod said upon their arrival. "Welcome to my palace! Phil, fetch some drinks. I think there's some Bosco in the cabinet by the sink."

"We three kings from Orient are," Balthasar said, the others nodding in agreement. "Oh ... um ... Herod am I," Herod responded. "Welcome my palace to."

"Why are you talking that way?" Casper asked.

"You started it," Herod replied as Phil brought in a tray of drinks. "Never mind. Listen. I heard about your quest and was hoping that when you find the child, maybe you could let me know so I could come and ... *and ... and, um ...* what's the word I'm looking for?"

Phil replied, "Murder? Kill? Annoy? ..."

"NO! Don't be silly! Heh, heh. No, of course, not. *Worship!* That's the word I'm looking for. Yesssss, *worship him*. Not harm him or anything like that. Just worship. That's really the only thing on my agenda -- juuuust to worship. ..."

"Well, I suppose --"

"Good. We'll supply you with some Tang, a few granola bars. You'll be all set."

The three wise men went on their way, smiling at their good fortune.

"That Herod was really nice," Casper said, munching on the granola bar, which in those days was made of tree bark and sand. "I was all nervous and everything at first, but then I felt, you know, okay."

"But did you notice his twitch?" Melchior asked as they made their way across the dunes. "Every time we mentioned the boy king he jumped around like a German step dancer. That struck me as odd."

"Yeah," Casper said. "And he kept breaking into maniacal laughter, even when nobody said anything funny ... or maniacal."

The three spoke for a long time about what they should do and finally came to a decision. They determined that they didn't believe that Herod meant to worship Jesus. In fact, they decided that he meant the child harm. As such, they decided to keep secret the place of Christ's birth.

As if to confirm their suspicions, that night they each had a dream in which God said unto them, "Smart move!"

Meanwhile, back at Herod's castle: "They actually believed that I mean to worship the Christ child, and that I don't mean him any harm" he told Phil, laughing maniacally before clutching his belly. "Tums -- now!"

Several nights into their long journey, the three kings looked into the sky and saw that the star that they followed was particularly bright; In the distance, Balthasar spied a village reflecting the light from the star.

The three men trembled. Under the brilliant light, warmed by its glow, would be the Christ Child. They made their way toward the village until, suddenly, Melchior came to a halt. "How could I have even imagined that we were worthy to gaze upon the Christ child?" he asked. "I mean, who are we to be called to this glorious journey? Three simple men bearing gifts for a baby boy."

"Melchior, you don't understand," said Casper. "The Savior was not put on this earth to accept our gifts; He is the gift!"