

Travel Blog of an East-bound Magus

The star they had observed at its rising went ahead of them until it came to a standstill over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house, found the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage.

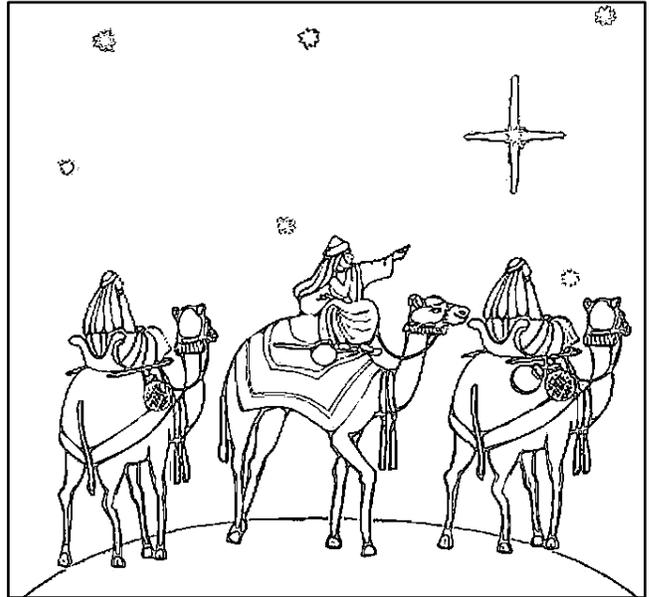
Matthew 2:9-11

The star...that star we had seen that night months before. We searched our charts, we consulted others, but there was no information. But the star—the star was like nothing we had ever seen. And so we started out, we set out in some sort of faith, looking for something, for we said: 'Surely this star is meant to announce something great.'

It was wet and cold but with no snow when we arrived in the royal city. The wind came up, and it began to clear. I looked up at the sky, and a moan escaped my lips. My companions were also looking at the sky, and I saw there on their faces despair, anger, and deep tiredness. For there was no star. It was not there. But we had come all this way. Oh, please, let it not be for nothing! The morning before our audience with the king, we discussed among ourselves whether we should just stay here for a while and enjoy this and go no further. It was like home: contentment, safety, sane by the standards of the world.

When we mentioned the birth of a king to the king of this place, he suddenly jumped out of his seat and called loudly for his court astrologers and magicians. And it was they who read us the prophecy about where this king would be born, in a town not too far from this city. This quickened our interest, and we decided to give this one more chance, one more stab at giving this trip some meaning. The king asked us to stop by on the way home if we did find this king, so that he could go himself to give him homage. Then suddenly, looking around me, I felt no longer at home, ill at ease, that I must leave, and so we went out into the night, and we looked into the sky—and there it was again.

I shall never forget the light of that star, and it sounds strange to say that it led us to that place—but it did. And when we arrived—what can one say? That it was not what we expected? That is an understatement. We did not expect that palace and that king. But this! But this! The woman holding the child to her breast, the man standing over them, the smell somehow of straw and animals, a manger of wood. Is this what we came all this way for, is this what we had suffered for, the cold, the stench, the weariness? I thought we had come all this way for a birth, but this seemed in its own way like death—this birth, so hard. We went in and saw the child. The light of the star shone on his face. And what we saw there: how can I explain it to you? What can I say? But what we did was to fall down there before this child and prostrate ourselves before him, for what we saw there was something we never dreamed of in our wildest dreams. It was all that we had hoped for, but I cannot explain. All I can tell you is what we did. Our gifts yet unopened, we fell down and worshipped him. And as we did, the star vanished—but the light remained.



*From a Homily by Father Richard G. Cipolla
Preached at the Church of the Holy Innocents, New York City
Feast of Epiphany 2014*