

“We saw his star in the East, and have come to worship him.” (Mt: 2:1–2)

These words can only be found in the Gospel of Matthew. They are said by “wise men” who have come from afar for a rather mysterious visit to the child Jesus.

They are a small group of people who have undertaken a long journey, following a far-off light. They are in search of a greater, universal light: the king who has been born and is already present in the world.

Nothing else is known about these men, but this episode is rich in ideas that call for reflection and are relevant to Christian life.

This phrase was chosen by Christians in the Middle East to guide the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity this year. It offers us a precious opportunity to set out again together, to be open to mutual acceptance, and, even more, to God's plan for us to be witnesses of his love for every person and nation on earth.

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This is what the Middle East Christians write in the document for this Week of Prayer: “The star that appeared in the sky of Judea is a long-awaited sign of hope which leads the Magi and, indeed, all the peoples of the earth, to the place where the true king and savior is revealed. The star is a gift, an indication of God's loving presence for all humanity...”

“The Magi reveal to us the unity of all peoples willed by God. They travel from distant countries and represent different cultures, yet they are all driven by the desire to see and know the newborn king. They gather in the grotto of Bethlehem to pay him homage and offer their gifts.”

“Christians are called to be a sign of the unity he desires for the world. Although they belong to different cultures, races and languages, Christians share a common search for Christ and a common desire to adore him.”

“The mission of Christians, therefore, is to be a sign, like the star, to guide God's humanity in its hunger for Christ and lead the way to him, and to be God's instruments to bring about the unity of all peoples.”

The star that brought light to the Magi is for everyone: at first it begins to shine in the depth of our consciences, and then love enables it to burn more brightly. We can all catch a glimpse of it, set out to follow it and reach the goal of meeting God and our brothers and sisters in our daily lives, sharing our riches with everyone.

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Paying homage to God is essential if we are to recognize who we truly are. We are fragile, small, and always in need of mercy and forgiveness. As a result, we are sincerely ready to show the same attitudes toward other people. This worship, due only to God, is fully expressed in adoration.

These words from Focolare founder Chiara Lubich in her Gospel commentary from February 2005 are helpful:

“What does it mean to ‘adore’ God? It is an attitude that is directed to him alone. To adore means to say to God: ‘You are everything,’ that is, ‘You are what you are,’ and life is giving me the immense privilege of recognizing this...

“It also means... ‘I am nothing.’ “And not just saying so with words. To adore God, we must set ourselves aside and let him triumph in us and in the world...

“But the surest way to proclaim with our lives that we are nothing and that God is everything is an entirely positive action. In the place of our own thoughts, we can simply think of God and his thoughts as revealed to us in the Gospel. In the place of our own will, we have only to do his will, which is shown to us in the present moment.

In the place of our wayward feelings, we need only to have love in our hearts for him and our neighbors, sharing their anxieties, their pain, problems and joys.

“If we are always love, without realizing it, we are empty of ourselves, and our lives affirm the superiority of God, his being everything, enabling us truly to adore him.”

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Lubich’s conclusion matches the invitation of the Middle East Christians. “After meeting the savior and adoring him together, the Magi were warned in a dream to return to their countries by another road. In the same way, the fellowship we share in common prayer should inspire us to go back to our lives, our churches and the whole world along new pathways...

“Serving the Gospel today requires a commitment to defend human dignity, especially that of the poorest, weakest and marginalized...

“The new road for the churches is the way of visible unity, which we pursue with sacrifice, courage and boldness so that, day after day, ‘God will indeed reign in all’ (1 Cor 15:28).”

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