

## EPIPHANY 2017

# Where is the King of the Jews?



Mt. 2:1-12

In telling a story that blends fact and fiction, the evangelist Matthew offers us one of the most beautiful pages in his Gospel. Those who followed the star to Bethlehem were neither three in number, nor were they kings. Rather, they were courageous pilgrims seeking the truth. As Edith Stein said: "Those who seek the truth, seek God." Accustomed as they were to the silence of the desert, to contemplating the stars, and to interpreting the signs of the times, the Magi witnessed to the fact that they were seekers of the Mystery of God, but the route they followed was strewn with obstacles....

Even though guided by a star, these travelers from the East wound up in the wrong place. Instead of arriving in Bethlehem, they entered the gates of Jerusalem. But their mistake had a positive outcome and teaches us that it is not enough to simply follow one's good intentions, preferred choices, or the power of knowledge. To find the "king of the Jews," the guidance of God is necessary and that guidance can be found in the Scriptures. Plot twist: even the inhabitants of Jerusalem "got it wrong"! They had the Scriptures but didn't listen to them. Consequently they didn't understand them and thus make no move to seek the king foretold to them.

Leaving Jerusalem, the Magi quickly resumed their journey, this time enlightened and helped by the Scriptures. Their joys knew no bounds when the star reappeared and led them to Bethlehem. It was the only time that the "king of the Jews" would receive the precious gift of prayerful adoration, offered to him by noble figures from distant lands, who knelt before him in homage.

This regal atmosphere, marked by gold and perfumed by frankincense and myrrh, would later give way to the drama of the Passion. Like the Magi, others would seek "the king of the Jews" but this time in order to insult him, spit on him and crucify him. In fact, they even nailed at the top of his cross the reason for his execution: "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews" (Mt. 27:37).



*Francesca Pratillo, fsp*