DAY 19

MATTHEW 2:1–2

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem 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."

These two verses herald the outcome of learning, wisdom, and assumption. These Wise Ones (or Magi) probably had spent many years studying the signs of nature and the heavens to understand the world around them. Weather forecasting, particularly for the months and year ahead, probably depended on people like these Wise Ones reading the signs long before science began to model the physics of our atmosphere, sun and moon.

To them the sign was clear—"We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." It was a sign of hope in a challenging world. Why else bring special gifts to honor this foreign ruler? Some suggest the Magi came from Chaldea or Arabia—places of great learning and exotic woods and spices—and may have even been of Abraham's line. But that's based on likely connections. Maybe even on assumptions—just like the Magi assumed such an important king would be in Jerusalem, the region's seat of power and authority. Even today, many know the story of three wise men who visited baby Jesus in the stable in Bethlehem. Yet only the location and that they were Magi is part of the recorded story of this visit to Jesus. The scriptures don't tell us other details about this encounter.

Jesus doesn't fit our stereotypes or our expectations formed based on worldly practice or standards. He is happy to be born in a little town. The God of the Universe is here—vulnerable, dependent on the protection and care of new (and probably bemused) parents.

Yet these Wise Ones are not disappointed when they do locate the young child. They recognize the one who would save God's people, defeat the darkest forces of evil and death, and usher in the Kingdom of God on earth. How do they respond? They bow—and they worship with all they have and are.

REFLECT

When we turn our mind to Jesus, what do we expect to find? When was the last time you were filled with awe and wonder, like the Magi, when you were in the presence of Jesus? Is there anything holding you back from worshiping Jesus fully this Advent?

PRAY

Loving God, as we go through these days of anticipation and beyond, may I be always ready to discover your presence in unexpected places, encounters or experiences. Please give me a heart that readily opens to your embracing love and inspiration—in worship. Amen.