

January 3, 2021

**The Three Kings**

Christmas is about awe and wonder! All who see the newborn Christ child are speechless. They can only stand and gaze upon him. What is there to say? One of the problems with the modern celebration of Christmas is the fact that we seem to have lost a sense of amazement at this unexplainable event. Our world has grown up and, in the process, has lost its sense of childlike wonder. I had an experience over twenty years ago which convinced me of this fact. I was confronted by The Three Kings!

In 1997 I was called to active duty in the United States Army and, subsequently, deployed with my unit to Germany. While there, I had the opportunity to visit several times the famous cathedral in Cologne which stands on the east bank of the Rhine River. By some miracle, it was spared during World War II. Construction on this marvelous example of Gothic architecture began in 1254. It is an enormous building! Its arches reach almost to heaven.

What surprised me the first time I visited the cathedral was the discovery that there is a large gold reliquary hanging over the altar in which, it is believed, are the bones of The Three Kings. I stood there looking at it in awe, thinking, is this possible? The Wise Men? The Three Kings? Here?

The story of the Three Kings begins very simply. We read their brief history in the first twelve verses of the 2nd chapter of Matthew’s Gospel.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea,

in the days of Herod the King, behold there

came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying,

where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we

have seen his star in the east and are come to worship him.

We notice when we hear this beloved story that it does not tell us how many wise men or kings there were. Legend has fixed their number at three and has even given them names: Gaspard, Melchior, and Balthazar. They appear on the stage of history for a moment and then they disappear. And yet their story continues to be told and acted out yearly because they are an important part of what has been called the greatest story ever told.

Since my awestruck moment in the great cathedral in Cologne, I have developed a deep sense of reverence for the Three Kings. Why? It is because of the journey of the Magi. What were they really searching for? They wanted to see confirmation of the hand of God in the world. We all need to make the same journey. The star still beckons us. Follow it! **Amen**.

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