



January 2, 2022

## Christmastime—the Epiphany of Our lord

*"Caravans of Camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah;  
all from Sheba shall come...proclaiming the praises of the Lord." Isaiah 60:6*

Dear Friends;

Christ is born!

Last year I followed a series on Netflix called *The Silk Road*. For several thousand years people have traveled back and forth from China and India through central Asia, Persia (Iran) and Turkey to Greece and Italy. More than simply a trade route the Silk Road was a place for the interchange of culture, art, architecture, ideas and religion. Buddhism, Greek Philosophy, the Christian Church of the East, and Islam spread by this ancient trade route. Important cities and universities developed along this great road. There was a great cultural cross-pollination; one example, an ancient Muslim minaret was topped with a Buddhist symbol. We are all richer when we share each our knowledge and cultures.

One of the important cultures that prospered along the Silk Road was Persia (modern Iran). The Magi were high ranking political-religious advisors to the Median (Iraq) and Persian empires. They communicated with their high god in the name of their Great King. Over the centuries the Magi resisted Western imperial domination, first the Greeks then the Romans

In the year 66CE, (while the Romans were preoccupied with putting down an uprising in Judea) the Magi negotiated a treaty with Rome that recognized their candidate as the legitimate king of Armenia. The Romans then foot the bill, all expenses paid, nine-month pilgrimage of the new king, the magi, local kings and princes a great entourage to Rome to bend the knee before the Roman Emperor.

This procession of a legitimate Eastern King was burned in the memories of the peoples of the Eastern Mediterranean. Matthew uses this memory to create a story that recognizes Jesus as the legitimate heir of the throne of David. This story points out the illegitimate reign of Herod, the Roman puppet.

The Magi are not Jews, but they represent all who openly look for the truth wherever it may lead them. They are able to cross established borders to search for the true and good. Their openness contrasts with the worry and fear of Herod and the Jewish establishment. They are invested in keeping things just the way they are. Their faith is a solid fundamentalism of the past. They see Tradition as the preservation of ashes rather than passing on a living fire.

Globalization, as in the era of the Silk Road, is a time of great social, cultural, religious, intellectual and artistic interchange. Christ comes to incarnate in ALL. But many are afraid and want to cling to the certainties of the past. They are not willing to follow the star that God has charted for us. Cardinal Martini was a scripture scholar and Archbishop of Milan. Once he said, *"I am not so much afraid of people who do not have faith; what disturbs me are people who do not think."*

To think one has to have the capacity to let go of their personal certitude in order to listen with others who are also searching for truth. I have to confess that at times I have found more of a connection with local protestant pastors, those of other religions and agnostics than with Catholic fundamentalists, other priests or bishops (many who oppose our current pope). We cannot live in the past, it is gone.

We must look to the "signs of the times." Covid-19 has taught us that we are all interconnected. Let us confidently follow the star that leads to Christ. He is incarnate in every person, people, culture, language, religion and no religion. The star of Jesus calls us to embrace the unity that underlies our rich and colorful diversity. Trust in the star of hope and follow its road!

Joy and Peace!

*Fr Ron*

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