

Dear Friends,

Guidance systems on modern planes are incredibly powerful and extremely complicated. Designed to ensure the safety of passengers, and using information from both satellites in space and sources on the ground, they are able to pinpoint the position of the plane with precise accuracy and avoid other planes of hazards in the vicinity and obstacles on the ground. From holiday flights, thru cargo journeys, to aid and rescue missions, our modern world would be very different without them. To a large extent, we depend on such systems to ensure the viability of our modern way of travel.

The magi were guided on their journey to Bethlehem by a more ancient form of travel guidance: a bright shining star. That journey involved them in leaving the familiarity of their homelands and embarking on a risky, uncertain voyage to an unclear destination. Trusting in the star, and in their own insight and instincts, they were invited to take risk. They travelled from town to town, as did the trading caravans in that part of the world. No doubt they met individuals offering helpful and not so helpful advice on the route they should take. The questions asked of them by King Herod seem at first motivated by interest, but we know there was an ulterior motive to his enquiring. Fear and jealousy were at the root of his interrogation.

On reaching their destination it turned out that they were guided not to a place but to an individual, a newborn infant king, Jesus Christ, who was revealed to them as the one whom they should worship. That worship was underpinned by the offering of gifts symbolizing his nature. But the difficulties of their journey were not over, as they were warned in a dream that were to travel home by another unfamiliar route. One can only imagine their arrival back home in their own country, exhausted by their travels, amazed and intrigued by what they had seen, and changed thru their experience.

On any journey we need reference points to stay safe or to avoid getting lost. For Christians, guidance is provided not by a star but by an individual, Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are invited to leave the comfort of our familiar surroundings and travel thru a world that can be quite hostile and in which we will find much to concern us, challenge us and sometimes even scare us. However, with our hearts and minds fixed on Jesus we have a sure, safe and certain means of travelling thru life. Sharing the gifts he has given us with others, opening the treasures of our faith, hope and love, we can traverse the landscape of life, bringing the light of Christ to others. Wherever life takes us, if we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, we will truly be his disciples, making our way, sometimes by unexpected routes, back to our heavenly homeland.

How do we pinpoint our position in life as we seek to witness to Christ? How do we navigate our way along the journey of life trying to avoid obstacles and pitfalls? How do we offer the gift of our lives as an encouragement and example to others? Today perhaps we can learn from magi, continuing our travels with trust in guiding light of Christ in word and sacrament, and believing that he really is the way, the truth and the life.

Your friend in Jesus
Msgr. Zach