

A note from Joan Steele, Mission Administrator & Dir. Of Religious Ed:

Follow the Star . . .

The three wise men set a good example for our Advent Season, and by extension, for our entire earthly life. These *wise* men, by their professions, by their *vocations*, looked to the heavens. They were alert and watchful – two mannerisms we are encouraged through Scripture to emulate – and reminded each Advent to adopt if we aren't already practicing them.

The *wise* among us live in anticipation, ready to move when God, in the heavens, gives the command. The *wise* remain focused on the true star . . . the Light of the World . . . instead of being distracted by the trials and discomforts of the journey.

How many of us, myself included, would be willing to jump onto a camel, or even into a car, and set out on a journey with an unknown destination? There would be no calling ahead for reservations at the Holiday Inn, no stopping by at friends and relatives along the way, no googling for gas stations, rest stops, etc. There would not even be any idea of how long the journey would be, or where it would end. Although the wise men were not portrayed by history as *religious* men, they certainly were open to the Holy Spirit's leading, whether or not they realized it at the time.

Pastoral Council
Mission San Antonio de Padua
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So where does this lead us? As we enter into another Christmas Season, what Star are we following?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. . . that the light came into the world . . .” John 3:16,

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“Whoever lives the truth comes to the light, so that his works may be clearly seen as done in God.” John 3:21

The light of that star, over two thousand years ago, shined brightly to lead the wise men to the infant Savior. The *Light of the World* was being born in a stable, bringing salvation to a dark and weary world. Sounds a lot like today, doesn't it? We are a weary, weary people, worn out from almost two years of a world-wide pandemic, increasing costs, global warming, ever rising inflation, etc. We need that same *Light* this Christmas.

There are many lights shining in our world today, many *stars* we could follow. We can focus on climbing the corporate ladder, making a name for ourselves in *our own little world*. We can focus on our health, or lack of, our wealth, or lack of, our addictions, from food to internet activity, binge watching shows . . . the list is endless. None of these *stars* will lead us to happiness; none of them will lead us to salvation.

So how do we become the *wise people* in this year's Christmas story? Where do we look to find the *star* to follow? To begin, the *star* is not a *what* but rather a *Who*. Let's step back two thousand years or so and take a clue from the original *wise men*. They were following the “*Light of the World*” and in doing so, found the face of God in the sleeping infant, Jesus. The God who loves us so much that He came stepped into our human experience to embrace us and lead us home. Jesus is *love incarnate*. God's *love for us*.

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Jesus was born in answer to our sin predicament. He came to reconcile us with our Father, knowing that it was impossible for us to repair the damage ourselves.

Several decades ago, there was a popular phrase that swept the Christian Faiths, namely, “*What Would Jesus Do?*” We were encouraged to model our behavior based on how we thought Jesus would behave in any given situation. So how would we figure out that behavior? We should, of course, study Scripture, to learn as much as we can about our God and His behavior towards us. The New Testament stories about Jesus give us multiple examples of how to interact with one another. When we look at these stories, what stands out to us?

I hope, that we are all able to see the absolute love that Jesus exhibits to *everyone*, especially those whom society tends to overlook or turn away from.

Everything that Jesus did, does, and will continue to do, is deeply rooted in love. The love of the Father, the love of the Son and the love of the Holy Spirit.

“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. The whole law and the prophets depend on these two commandments.’” Matthew 22:36-40

If we want to look to a star this Christmas, let it be the *Star of Love*, our *Everlasting God!* Let us consider how amazingly enormous our God's love for us is, that he would *choose* to enter into our broken world, our imperfect lives, our sometimes-hardened hearts, to bring the faith, the hope and the love that only He can offer.

1 *Corinthians 13:13* tells us, **“So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”**

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Instead of WWJD, let's temper our behavior by "What Would Love do?" How would this filter cause us to change how we treat one another? How would it cause us to change how we treat ourselves? If we began each day by asking ourselves, "If I truly loved this person (beginning with ourselves), as God loves me, how would I behave with them?"

It's a sobering thought . . . a difficult *star* to follow. It is, however, the *star* we are called to follow. Let's let *Love* lead the way this year. Let's let *Love* determine the priorities we set for ourselves.

When we, like the first *wise men*, arrive at our destination, may we be blessed to have followed the correct star. May we find ourselves with the *Light of the World*, the *Love of the Creator* . . . may we find ourselves truly blessed to have followed the *Star* . . . *Home!*

May you and yours experience a wonderful, enlightened and love-filled Christmas Season and an abundantly blessed New Year! Love, Joan

Don't Forget the Star

By Sidewalk Prophets

Little boy 6 years old
Sitting on his grandpa's knee
Little did he know it way back then
But he was making
Christmas memories
Grandpa asked that little boy
What does Christmas
Really mean to you
And the boy talked of snow
And stockings
And toys
All shiny and new
Grandpa laughed
And shook his head said
Let me tell you what it means to me
And he held that little boy close
As he pointed
To the top of the Christmas tree

He said

Don't forget the star this Christmas
Don't forget the greatest gift of all
The One who came
To shine away the dark
Bringing hope for every heart
This Christmas
Don't forget the star

Little boys grow up too fast
And those memories
They sure do fade
And that Christmas Eve with Grandpa
Seems about
A million miles away

These days the bills are piling up
And the world is weighing down
He's got a little girl of his own
And he knows grown men don't cry
But as that girl looks in his eyes
He remembers his grandpa's song

Don't forget the star this Christmas
Don't forget the greatest gift of all
The One who came
To shine away the dark
Bringing hope for every heart
This Christmas
Don't forget the star

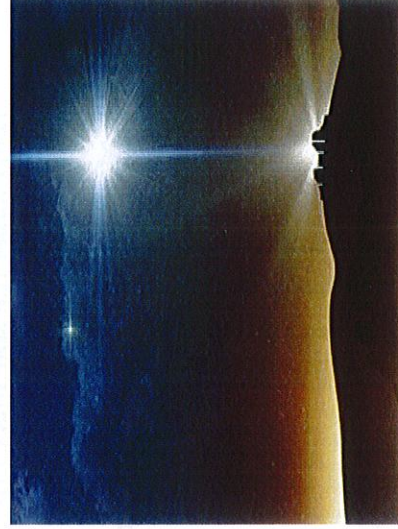
It was shining bright
In the eastern sky
Above a manger
2,000 years ago
And it fills my heart with joy
To realize that star is still guiding
Lost souls home
And I think about Grandpa

As I raise my daughter high
And she hangs a star upon the tree
And a tear comes to my eye
As I think about the way that
Jesus was born for you and me

Don't forget the star this Christmas
Don't forget the greatest gift of all
The One who came
To shine away the dark
Bringing hope for every heart

Don't forget the star this Christmas
Don't forget the greatest gift of all
The One who came
To shine away the dark
Bringing hope for every heart
This Christmas
Don't forget the star

Little boy 6 years old
Sitting on his grandpa's knee



What the world needs now...

A few weeks ago, I was driving to town with my favorite Southern Gospel station playing on the radio. A song I hadn't heard before came on and it really caught my attention. It wasn't a belt it out praise song where you want to raise your hands along with your voice. It had a slight country flair and a quiet but powerful message:

Pastor Rick was known for his long sermons
But we knew that he would give us
Something we could hold on to

He walked up to the pulpit
And we sat up in our seats
He slowly looked around
And made us wait to hear him speak

Then he said
Love. Love. Love.

Then he sat back down
It wasn't much but man it was enough
Cause the one thing we all could use more of

Is Love, Love, Love
Excerpt from: Love Love Love
Gordon Mote 2018

I wondered how many songs had been written about love, how many sermons, how many books. I imagine millions. Love, it is the one thing that we all seek. It is the one thing that brings us to our knees and raises us up to our highest highs. Love. And it all began when our God loved us enough to become like us. He left His heaven with scores of celestial beings praising Him unceasingly, to enter a world where sin and pain and sorrow awaited Him. He loved us so much that He endured ridicule and poverty and humiliation and an agonizing death just to **be love** for us. Just to show us love. Just to love. And what did He want in return from us? Love. Love for ourself. Love for our family. Love for our friends. Love for our enemies. Love. Love for the God who lovingly created us. Love for our God who became like us to show us how to love. Love for our God who has never, and will never, stop loving us. Love!

Outreach Ministry

Mission San Antonio de Padua supports several outreach programs. We are looking for someone to help us grow this ministry. It won't take a lot of time; you do not need any training and you will be answering God's call to minister to your brothers and sisters.

Programs:

Communion Service for the Homebound: Please let us know if you need communion brought to you. Receiving the Eucharist is fundamental to our Catholic beliefs.

Prayer Circle: Are you willing to pray for those in need? Do you need special prayer? The prayer circle is a great way to reach out and reach up! You don't need to be able to travel; prayer requests can be shared within the group via the telephone or email. A scheduled prayer time of 8 a.m., 12 noon and 8 p.m. unites those offered prayers. Join in any time or all times to add your united voice of prayer for those in our parish family who are in need.

Meals during a family illness/hospitalization: Would you be able to provide a meal for someone who is in need? Are you in need of some help while you deal with health issues?

Carpooling services for Mass: If you need a ride to Mass or if you can provide a ride, this might be the ministry for you.

If you are interested in lending a hand or would like to be remembered in any of these ministries, please contact Joan at the office.

Mission San Antonio

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