

AWARENESS

*It is good to give thanks to the Lord
To make music to your name, O Most High,
To proclaim your love truth in the morning
And your truth in the watches of the night. (psalm 92)*

I am reading a book written by an astronomer who is also a roman Catholic Priest, Fr. Douglas McGonagle. The book is entitled "*The STAR of BETHLEHEM*" and he asks the question, "What did the Magi see?" He puts forward a few possible explanations. Although it is very well written, I must admit that I am struggling to get through it as I know nothing about astronomy or astrology and my failing eyesight prevents me from reading fluently. Also, my attention span is not what it used to be, so, it will take me longer to get through it but I will get there.

Fr. McGonagle points out that in only one of the gospels, Matthew's, are the Magi and the star mentioned. He only began to really study the phenomena after reading a book written by Doctor Michael Molinar who claimed that there were four types of explanations for the star. The categories are supernatural, natural, mythical or astrological. In other words, it was a miracle or an Angel of God; a natural event such as a comet or a supernova; something the wise men read in the stars for they were astrologers or, did Matthew include the star to underline the importance of the birth of Jesus?

I am not knowledgeable enough to answer these questions but it made me recall some of the questions I have asked myself in the past. The Magi were wise and learned men and obviously rich for they brought valuable gifts with them. Although they were not Jews, they proved themselves to be familiar with the scriptures. What inspired them to make such a long and arduous journey and when they arrived in Bethlehem and found a poor new-born baby lying on straw in a manger, in a shed that housed cattle, why did they immediately fall on their knees to worship him? Why were Herod and his advisers unable to see the star?

I began to think of my own life. Almost every day, some little thing occurs which I interpret as being a sign that God is present in my life. Others would say they are just coincidental. I believe that in recent years, as I have aged, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, I have become more acutely aware of the presence of God in my life, not just in the big things but also in the trivia. I am not claiming to have a hotline to God nor am I better than the next man for I have also become more aware of my own failings and my shortcomings. I know that I am still a sinner but I pray that with my new found awareness I may become a better person. My mother used to say, "take care of the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves." I think that if we are aware of the little temptations and can resist them, then when the greater temptations confront us, we are more able to overcome them. I think that, perhaps, the wise men, after studying the Universe, had become aware of the presence and the magnificence of God, and recognised in the configuration of the stars at that time, the signs that something lifechanging was about to happen and I am sure they were guided from above to that stable in Bethlehem.

O Jesus help me. You have given me so much and I have so little to give to you in return. I have only myself and I offer my self to you, all that I have, all that I do and all that I am.

*We bless you, Father, Lord of Life,
To whom all living beings tend,
The source of holiness and grace,
Our first beginning and our end.*

O Lord, may I approach you to receive you in the Blessed sacrament with absolute faith, hope and love; complete trust; utter humility, gratitude and devotion.