

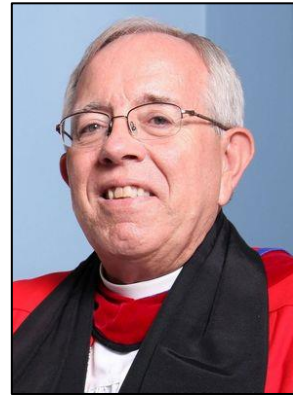
Christmas 2019 Meditation

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"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, 'Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.'" (Matthew 2:1-2, NRSV)

When I was a young child, long before I had any good training in how to interpret the Bible stories I heard in church, I became something of an early mystic. As I had heard the above scripture being read during worship services I became captivated by the thought of a star the "Christmas star." This captivation became even greater when we children were instructed in how to act out the story for our parish Christmas pageant. How well I still remember wearing colorful bathrobes with shiny papier-mâché crowns on our heads. My participation in the pageant continued to pique my curiosity about a unique star which led the "...wise men from the East..." to Bethlehem in search of the newborn king of the Jews.



Clearly I remember my youthful and wistful imaginings on both Christmas Eve and Christmas night. For several years during my childhood I made it a practice to sit alone on a hill beside our home in the mountains of Western North Carolina and look for the star. Each night used my rudimentary binoculars to search the night sky in hopes that I would see the star. At the age of 7 or 8 I knew little about astronomy or about the universe. Certainly I knew nothing about the seemingly infinite complexity of the multiverse. Yet I looked, and in fact yearned for the star.

Even at an early age I knew that the star represented my yearning for a mystical connection with God. My search was the vehicle that took me out of a sometimes very challenging life of living with two parents who struggled with their addictions. Even if only it was for a brief period of time on those two nights each year, I pined for a glimpse of the star that had once beckoned God's people to Bethlehem. My search took me away from my life situation and gave me confidence that there was an eternal God who could transcend even my life circumstances.

Today many years later, and after years of graduate and post-graduate theological education, I have once returned to my pursuit of a guiding star in the east. As it did during my childhood, today my longing for the star gives me the hopeful assurance that the eternal God of my youth continues to be there; that the transcendent God in Christ whom we anticipate throughout the four weeks of Advent is still able to assure us that the niggly struggles of this life will someday pale into insignificance as we meet our Creator in the Kingdom of Heaven.

My prayer for you is that a star in the East will guide you to Christ during this holy and mystical season.

Peace,
+Jay