



They All Came To Bethlehem...

THE WISEMEN

By MONSIGNOR PATRICK J. FLYNN

THE WISEMEN FROM THE EAST were the last to find the Christ in Bethlehem. They were the last because of circumstances, because of the distance which they had to travel.

No doubt they would have liked to have been the first on the scene at Bethlehem if they could have had their own way about it. At least that is the way it seems from the gospel account of this story which St. Matthew gives us in twelve brief, even too brief, paragraphs.

Matthew tells the story of the Wisemen whom he calls Magi swiftly and wastes no time on details. The little things which we would like to know. But he tells us enough.

... when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of King Herod, behold, Magi came from the East to Jerusalem, saying: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him." (Matthew 2:1-2)

Even if this were all the story of the Magi it would be significant, almost sensational. The Magi were foreigners and Gentiles. Their presence at Bethlehem forecast the true role of Christ the Saviour. The Child born at Bethlehem was the Saviour not only of the House of Israel but of all nations.

This was the great truth that the aged prophet Simeon declared earlier when Mary presented the Child in the Temple. Taking the infant in his arms, Simeon hailed Him as the "salvation" which God "had prepared before the face of all peoples: a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and a glory for thy people Israel." (Luke 2:29-32)

The mission of Christ was to have a worldwide character. Christ was the Saviour of all mankind. This was the truth that the Jews had forgotten or had chosen to ignore even though God Himself had made it quite clear. "The kings of Tharsis and the Islands shall offer gifts, the kings of Arabia and Saba shall pay tribute. All the kings of the earth shall adore him." (Psalm 71:10)

The Magi from the East, therefore, were the first figures from the Gentile world to pay tribute to the Saviour, the first converts of His mission to all mankind.

WHO WERE THESE strange men from the East, these Magi? From where in the East did they come? Why were they called Magi? How did they know about Christ? What was the star that they saw?

St. Matthew does not bother to explain these details. Although this oversight annoys us, Matthew takes for granted that God had a providential hand in the adventure which brought these mysterious and majestic men on their quest for the new born King.

The fact that these foreigners are called Magi suggests

the Saviour. The Gentile world, in the shadows of darkness, had its dreams and hopes for salvation as well as the Chosen People who enjoyed the full light of God's divine guidance.

It is not surprising either that some rays of the light of God's truth had penetrated into the dark world of paganism. As learned scholars, hungry for truth, the Magi also knew the sacred writings and prophecies of the Jews. These told the Magi about The Messiah.

In any case, whether through a private revelation from God, or through their own study, or both, the Magi learned somehow about Christ. And the star which they saw in the East was God's signal to the Magi that Christ's hour had come. Whether it was a real star, or a flaming comet or a miraculous light, the star of the Magi was a divine sign that sent them off on a search for truth which took them to the other end of the world in Bethlehem.

THE ARRIVAL of the Magi in Jerusalem touched off a tense little drama. The Jews were not surprised to see strangers in their Holy City but they were shocked at what these sages from the East had to say.

"Your king is born," the Magi told the Jews. "We have come to adore him. Where have you got him? How do we find him?"

The Magi may have known the Jewish prophecies but it was evident that they were very ignorant of Jewish politics. That is why their frank questions, although they failed to arouse some Jewish curiosity, especially the curiosity of King Herod.

In Jerusalem, at least, nobody talked about a new king of the Jews, even a Messiah-King, when there was any danger that the ruthlessly jealous Herod might hear about it.

And of course Herod heard about the Magi, almost as soon as they arrived in the Holy City. The cruel and insanely suspicious puppet king had

Remember Your Dead

By Enrolling Them in the Carmelite Purgatorial Society

All members of the Society share in the Masses, prayers, Divine Office and other good work of the Carmelite Fathers and Sisters.

Yearly Individual \$ 1.00
Perpetual Individual \$ 5.00
Yearly Family \$ 3.00
Perpetual Family \$25.00

Write to:
CARMELITE FATHERS
Auburn, New York

See the All-American Catholic College Football Team for 1957

Picked for the Catholic Digest by Pulitzer Prize winner Arthur Daley and 11 top football coaches

Who are this year's best Catholic college football stars? You'll find their names and photographs in the January issue of Catholic Digest, now on sale at your newsstand or Church door. Chosen by Arthur Daley, Sports Columnist of the New York Times, and 11 top coaches, the roster includes the eleven members of the All-American Catholic College Football Team for 1957—plus the 66 players who made "honorable mention." Chances are, your favorite school made the honor list, since eighteen colleges—large and small—are represented. Be sure to read the interesting article how and why selections were made.

Get the next six issues of Catholic Digest—including the huge January "All-American" issue—delivered right to your door for only \$1.00. This means you get each copy at less than half the newsstand price. What's more, you'll be sure not to miss the exciting sports features and general articles the editors have lined up through the basketball season.

RUSH \$1.00 FOR 6 ISSUES. Just pin a dollar bill to a piece of paper with your name and address, and mail to: Father Ryan, Catholic Digest, St. Paul 13, Minn., Dept. 37. The January issue will be rushed to you!

Family Affair

Brussels—(NC)

A prize-winning design to be displayed in the Vatican Civitas Dei (City of God) Exhibit at the 1,958 Brussels International Exposition, is titled "The Family." It is the work of Albert Seola, of Bruges, Belgium, and was a winning entry from work of 26 competitors.



a way of hearing everything, especially anything which was a threat to himself. The Magi's talk about a new born king disturbed Herod.

While most of the Jewish leaders were content to smile with amusement at the Magi's story, Herod could not suppress his suspicions that at maybe there was something to the Magi's story.

The evil Herod was too much of a freethinker, even

an atheist, not to be frightened and haunted by the report that the Messiah had come into the world.

Therefore, Herod called in the religious authorities of Israel, the chief priests and scribes, and asked them where the Christ was to be born. They gave a ready answer. According to the prophet Micah, they said, the Christ was to be born in the nearby town of Bethlehem.

Secretly Herod gave the information to the Magi and secretly he plotted to kill any king they might find.

As they started out on the short journey to Bethlehem, the Magi were delighted to see the star which they had first seen in the East shine before them. They followed it until it stood above the cave where the Christ Child was.

Here at the end of a road outside Bethlehem the men

from the East ended their long quest. Here in the cave they found the Child with His Mother, and falling down they adored Him. And opening their treasures they offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

This was the first hour of grace for the Gentile world before the throne of the Divine King, the Son of God.

The Magi were warned in a dream by God not to return to Herod. So, they took new roads back to the East. They vanished back into their own world and we hear of them no more.

THIS CRISP, terse story of the Magi's quest points up the whole mystery of historic conflict between the Jewish world and the Gentile world around the Kingly figure of Christ.

The Magi's search for Christ illuminates the mystery of His tragic rejection by His own people and His happy acceptance by the Gentile nations.

The Jewish world seemed content to wait for Christ to come to them. The Gentile world, in the person of the Magi, was restless and went out in search of Christ.

The Messias, the Jews believed, would save only Israel. The Magi were ready to believe that the Messias would also save everybody. The Magi were the first Catholics in a true sense. At least, they were Catholic enough to think that the King who could save the Jews could also be the King that would save the Gentiles.

And the Magi were eager searchers for the Truth. While the leaders in Jerusalem knew

all about the Messias, they were too indifferent to even bother to look for him, even as far as Bethlehem.

The Magi had expected to find the Christ in the Holy City of Israel, but they were not surprised when they were told that they might find Him down a back road near Bethlehem.

While the Jews expected to see Christ coming with an army or reigning in a palace, the Magi were not surprised to find their King hidden in a cave at the end of the world.

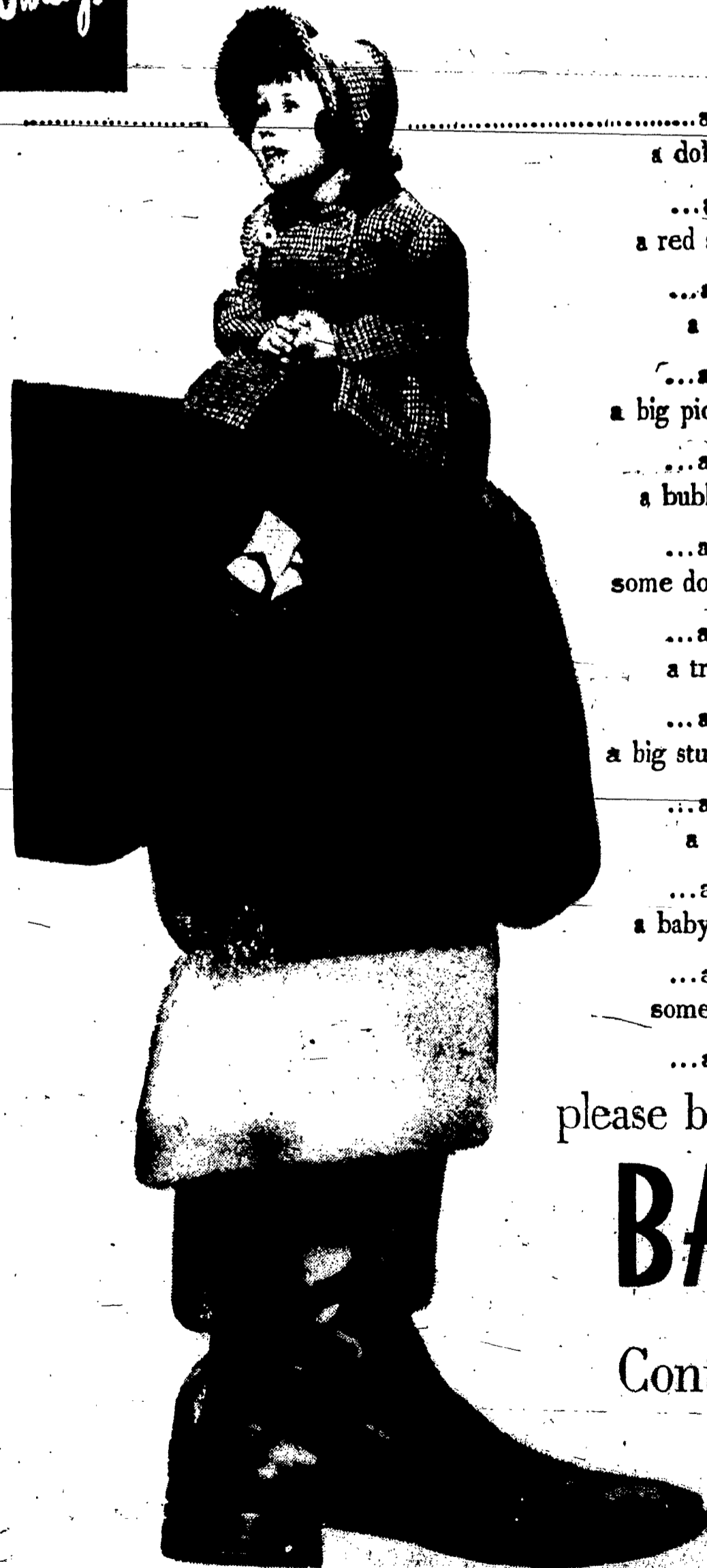
Like all honest intellectuals, like all sincere seekers after truth, the Magi faced up to the truth when they found it. They did not hesitate to bow their necks to enter the lowly cave. They did not refuse to bend their knees before the Divine Infant.

The story of the Magi is the story of truthseekers finding the Truth. The Magi are the Wisemen who found Divine Wisdom. At the end of a long and tiresome quest, the Wisemen found the Word of God made flesh.

Dryden Mission Unit Christmas Fete Held

Dryden—The Adult Christmas party was held at Forces Lodge for members of Dryden Catholic Mission. Round and square dancing led by Don Miller of Itasca was enjoyed.

Singing of Christmas carols and a grab bag completed the program. Mr. and Mrs. Fred Cape were co-chairmen.



- ...and a doll house
- ...and a red snow suit
- ...and a sled
- ...and a big picture book
- ...and a bubble pipe
- ...and some doll's dishes
- ...and a tricycle
- ...and a big stuffed panda
- ...and a doll
- ...and a baby carriage
- ...and some blocks
- ...and

please bring mommy and daddy

BARTON'S

bombonniere
Continental Chocolates

McCurdys Barton's Bombonniere
Street Floor, Northgate
McCurdys of Geneva

yours free!
when you open a Savings Account

COLORFUL, ALL-METAL
SANTA CLAUS BANK

Give a gift of thrift for Christmas! Open a Savings Account for \$5 or more at any Rochester Savings Bank Office for yourself, your family or a friend. You'll receive free a colorful, all-metal Santa-Claus Bank. These banks are six inches high and attractively finished in red, black, and gold—a perfect gift for any youngster. Hurry! The supply is limited.



ROCHESTER Savings Bank

40 Franklin St. • 47 Main St. West • 1775 Clinton Ave. N.