

Three Kings

A reflection by Rev. Jackie Clement
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Today we are celebrating the three kings, and rightly so I think. These are some guys worthy of celebration, and not just because they bring us presents every year.

In the first place they get pretty short shrift in the biblical account. They appear in only one gospel in twelve short verses, their number is never given, nor are they given the title of “king,” but are known merely as wise men or magi. Yet, they play a pivotal role in the birth story and in worldwide celebrations each year.

For the three wise men stand as an inspiration and model for how to do many things right. These are some very hardworking fellows. They have a lot of territory to cover, both in the original pilgrimage to pay homage to Jesus at his birth and in their yearly pilgrimage bringing gifts, good fortune and honor to children around the world. These are some very persistent kings. They have many hardships to overcome. I don't know if you've ever ridden a camel, but it is neither the fastest nor most comfortable means of travel, and I don't even want to speculate on the logistics of getting camels from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico, let alone to Boston.

But the three kings set the model for pilgrimage, for every seeker who sets out on little information and a great deal of faith. With nothing but a star to follow they sought the new born king of whom they had heard. The journey was both long and tough. When the magi stopped in Jerusalem to ask where the new born king could be found, Herod enlisted them as unknowing spies to bring him word of the birth so that he might kill the baby. But Herod underestimated both their wisdom and integrity, for when they realized his true aim, the magi returned to their own countries by a different route and never told Herod where the king of the Jews was to be found. They refused to collude in oppression and persecution.

But perhaps what we can most admire in the three kings is not their hard work or their integrity, but their generosity. For they not only practice generosity, but also inspire it. In some traditions the kings bring gifts and in others they bring good fortune, but in every tradition they inspire us to generosity as well. We recognize the care demonstrated for each child and we must respond. We leave grass or hay or water for the camels that the visit will not go unrecognized. We offer care in return for care, giving of what we have to make things easier for others.

There are many more reasons I'm sure why the three kings, los Santos Reyes Magos, the three magi, deserve our attention and praise. But mostly they deserve emulation. We are all pilgrims on one journey or another, whether from one place to another, from one spiritual place to another, or simply from one time in our lives to another. We could do worse than to take the three kings as our model. Will we make the journey with

perseverance, overcoming the cold, the heat, the fatigue, climbing the mountains and fording the torrents? Will we make the journey with integrity, refusing to be sidetracked into intrigue, betraying the innocent and serving the purposes of the unscrupulous? Will we at the end of the day act in generosity so that we inspire others to generosity?

In the new year just beginning may we strive to uphold the perseverance, elegance, generosity and integrity of los tres reyes. May your year be blessed always with the many gifts of life.

Namaste.

Por lo tanto, puede ser.

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