

Epiphany 2018

True or False: In Matthew's Gospel, there were three Kings who came in search of a New born King.

True or False: In Matthew's Gospel, the Magi are led by the light of a star to the manger where they find the new born.

Looking at the manger scene here, you might be tempted to answer "True". These guys certainly look like "Kings and there are three" of them. But wait, we have an "eye witness" here, Christopher Camel. Let me ask him the answers.

Christopher says " the answers are false, at least if you listen to the Gospel. The gospel refers to Magi, astronomers and there could have been two or 4. There is only mention of 3 gifts, not three Magi. And if you listen closely, Christopher tells me, the Magi encounter Jesus, Mary and Joseph in a "House".

True or False: The story of the visit in Magi in Matthew's Gospel is a "true" story.

That's a trick question! The answer depends on the answer to the question: What is truth? Can something be "true" that in fact never happened?

We live in a world where it is becoming more and more difficult to know the "truth". Fake news, Fire and Fury, False Advertising. How do we know whom to believe? How do we know what we read on the internet or if statements like "a man who has less credibility than, perhaps, anyone who has ever walked on earth." are true? Or is the speaker of the quote the less credible?

So here we are on the feast of the Epiphany, singing songs about Three Kings, who weren't kings at all and telling stories of "magi". Eastern astrologers who visited the house where Mary, Joseph and Jesus were and all of this coming from the I-Magi-nation of the Gospel writer Matthew.

What in fact are we celebrating today? We are not commemorating an historical event but the truth of why we are here today is so much more than we can imagine. God has given himself as gift to the world, to all nations. God in Jesus is not exclusive to one but for all.

In this world in which we live where truth seems to be so relative and fake news, and fire and fury and false advertising abounds, we hold on to the central truth that grounds us and that we hear over and over in this Christmas season. In Christ Jesus God is Emmanuel. God is with us, journeying with us, God is born in flesh and blood in the birth of Jesus. If you look closely I did a switch today and took the blond, blue eyed God-baby and replaced him with a child of color, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Although this is just a doll, it invites you to hold it and embrace it with love. It's a reminder that God enters into this world as vulnerable and as needy as any newborn.

So before we finish our Christmas season, I thought we could take a few moments for a little "Examen" in the Ignatian Tradition. The paschal Candle is lit today since the earliest Christmas celebrations before the one that takes place on the 25th in the Roman Church happened in the Eastern churches. It was the Theophany or God appearance commemorating the baptism of Jesus. Hence the baptismal candle. And that's why the Christmas season continues through the feast of the Baptism which we celebrate tomorrow.

So now in the light of the paschal candle and the stars shining, I invite you to reflect on these days of the Christmas Season. Think of the gifts you have received and the people who have been with you as gift. Ask yourself if you have been open to receive the truth of who you are as someone beloved of God and gift for others. Give thanks to God for all the blessings of this season.

(Singing) Star or wonder star of night, star with royal beauty bright.
Westward leading, still proceeding. Guide us to thy perfect light!