

Be Not Afraid

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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WISE MEN LOOK UP



“They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” – Matthew 2:10-11

The story of the Magi has been told for centuries, and though mentioned only briefly in Sacred Scripture, their journey remains a model and inspiration for all generations. Advent is upon us, and it is a time of hopeful anticipation as we prepare our own hearts and homes for the birth of Our Lord on Christmas Day. The Magi didn’t encounter Christ by accident; they recognized the signs and made great preparations to travel, pay homage, and bring gifts to the newborn King (Matthew 2:2).

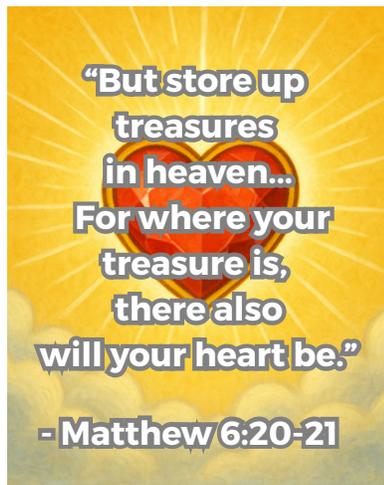
Advent is our sign—our “star”—that not only points to Christ’s birth in the past but also invites us to encounter Him today and to prepare for His coming at the end of time. This season is our opportunity to

disconnect from distractions and to look up, like the Wise Men, and journey toward a profound encounter with Our Lord on Christmas Day.

WHAT WE TREASURE

The Wise Men journeyed from a distant land. They had to prepare for the long road and the dangers they might face along the way. It is easy for us to be swept up in the busyness of the holiday season—from the allure of new products we see on social media, to notifications about the best seasonal deals, to the pressures of travel. Advent is our invitation not only to slow down and remember the true meaning of Christmas but also to ensure that we and our families are on the right path to hear the words, “well done, my good and faithful servant,” (Matthew 25:21) at the end of our earthly lives.

The intentionality and planning of the Magi are reflected even in their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. St. Irenaeus of Lyons wrote that these gifts represented Christ’s kingship, divinity, and His passion and death (Against Heresies, 3,9,2). This season should carry that same intentionality in our decision-making. Whether choosing gifts for family members or deciding how we celebrate Christmas Day, we should pause and ask: Does this activity or gift bring my family and me closer to Jesus, or does it pull us away?

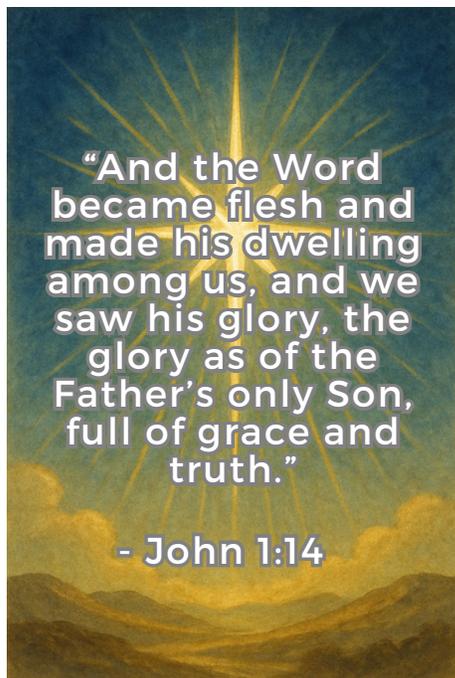


Prioritize Family and values.
Delay Social Media.

Delay Smartphones.
Phone Free School Day.



ENCOUNTERING CHRIST



The lives of the Magi show that our actions reveal what we treasure. Our choices, habits, and daily rhythms disclose our priorities. When our family members enter a room, do we greet them with eye contact, love, and affection, or are we hidden behind screens? Do we cultivate family rituals and traditions that show we value prayer and time together? Have extracurriculars or the busyness of the year prevented our family from connecting, growing, and deepening our faith?

Christ is truly present among us, and Advent is an invitation to encounter Him in a real and objective way. He is present in the sacramental life of the Church—especially the Eucharist and the liturgy. He is present in our prayers and in Scripture, and He is present in serving those who suffer physically and spiritually (CCC 1373). There are many areas of our lives we can reflect on to ensure that, like the Magi, we are prepared for the journey of being in Jesus' presence this Christmas.

Just as the Star of Bethlehem guided the Magi, we want to give your family its own "star" to help prepare to encounter the newborn King. The following page contains a Christmas star for your family to decorate. Gather together and discuss how you will prepare to remain in Christ's presence this season. Under the star, identify and write down a behavior that needs to change or something you want to do to concretely encounter Christ. Then list how your family can be more present with one another.

For example, if you notice that screens are distracting during family meals, consider making the dining room a tech-free zone, with a designated box for phones before entering. If your family wants to encounter Christ through prayer and service, look into additional parish opportunities, begin a family Bible study, visit an elderly relative, or volunteer at a local food bank. Take time with your family and be intentional about the decisions that will keep you close to Jesus this season.



LET US PRAY

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and **lead us not into temptation**, but deliver us from evil. **Amen.**

Smart Families is partnered with your church and/or school to educate, encourage and empower your community about the importance of delaying smartphones. To learn more, visit www.smart-families.org



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Look up and Follow the Star.

Under the star, write actionable ways your family can be more present with Christ and one another this Christmas season. Use pg. 2 of this issue of *Be Not Afraid* for guidance to get ideas flowing.

