

## Christmas 2018 SML

Why do so few ever find Our Blessed Lord? The technology fads of the day (with their iPads and smart phones, and this pad and that phone) attract so many, and Our Blessed Lord attracts so few?

The reason is that minds who seek Him are either not simple enough or they are not learned enough. From the beginning, Our Blessed Lord has been found only by two classes: those who know, and those who do not know – but never by those who think they know. The Divine is so profound that it can only be grasped by the extremes of simplicity and wisdom. This is why Our Blessed Lord said, “Be wise as serpents and as simple as doves.” MT 10:16

There is something in common between the wise and the simple, and that is humility.

- ✓ The wise man is humble because he realizes that regardless of how deep he digs, the Divine is always deeper;
- ✓ the simple man is humble, because He knows the Divine is so deep there is no use digging; he gladly accepts

But that self-wise inquirer, with his mind so filled with the pride of his little learning, is so full of himself that he will not dig because he thinks that nothing can be deeper than himself.

Only the simple and the wise found the Christ Child, namely, the shepherds and the Wise Men. The angels and a star caught the reflection of Christ's light, and passed it on to the watchers of sheep and the searchers of skies.

The shepherds were the simple souls who knew:

- ✓ nothing of the politics of the world,
- ✓ nothing of its art,
- ✓ nothing of its literature.
- ✓ Not one of them could recite a single line of Virgil, though there was hardly an educated person in the Roman Empire who was ignorant of his poetry.

Into their fields and their simple lives,

- ✓ there never came a rumor of the scandals of Herod's voluptuous court,
- ✓ nor a word about the learned rabbis, who sat in the Temple teaching.

The great world of public opinion passed them by. And yet, these simple shepherds, whose ancestral King David was a shepherd, did know two very important things:

- ✓ the God above their heads,
- ✓ and the sheep below their feet.

That was enough for the simple to know and to just accept, and on that night when the heavens were so bright, an angel

announced that the One for whom they waited was now born among:

- ✓ common people
- ✓ in a common stable,
- ✓ in the common little town of Bethlehem.

At last, the shepherds had found their Shepherd.

The other class who found the Christ were Wise Men:

- ✓ not kings but advisors of kings,
- ✓ not mere lovers of knowledge, but searchers of the heavens and discoverers of the stars.

In their nations the wise men held first rank. The kings consulted them before they went to war, and the peasants before they tilled their land.

One night a new star appeared in the heavens.

Thousands of others besides the Wise Men saw its brilliant light, but these thousands were not full of the wisdom of the Wise Men; they were full of themselves. They saw only a star, but the Wise Men saw a star and imagined the face of God. To the proud man, the star is only a star, but to the wise man the star is the handiwork of God, a revelation of something beyond, or should I say, "Someone" beyond. And so they

followed the star, which led these three men on a voyage to discover God. These wise men, learned and mighty, kneeling in kingly robes upon a bed of straw, before a Babe who could neither ask nor answer questions, offered their gifts of:

- ✓ gold, because he would rule as a King;
- ✓ frankincense, because He would live as a priest,
- ✓ and myrrh, because he would die like a man.

At last, as the shepherds had found their Shepherd, so the the Wise Men had found their King. Only the shepherds and the Wise Men found the Christ Child, but think of the thousands so full of themselves who did not.

The world in those days, and today in 2018, was and is full of the worldly wise, who are so full of themselves and none of them discover God. There were:

- ✓ many agnostics in Rome telling a young Pilate that there is no such thing as truth;
- ✓ there were many scholars in Athens teaching that man could dispense with the gods;
- ✓ there were many a money changer in the temple diminishing the ephah so as to add to their shekel, all in the name of profit,

but to none of these did there come the vision of an angel or the light of a star. Why? Because the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, of healing, grace and salvation, are reserved for the extremes, intellectually and morally.

When God was a Babe, only the intellectual extremes of simple shepherds and wise men found their way to the crib. When God was a Man, only the moral extremes of sinners and the innocent found their way to His cross:

- ✓ the innocent, like John the Beloved, came to Him because they did not need to be cleansed;
- ✓ and the sinners, like Mary Magdalene, came to Him because of they needed to be cleansed.

But that middle group of Pharisees:

- ✓ who reprimanded the Apostles because they did not wash their hands before eating,
- ✓ hypocrites who were like white washed tombs, outside clean, but on the inside, full of dead man's bones;
- ✓ the self righteous who were half depraved and half intact,
- ✓ who were neither hot with love nor cold with hate,

these never knelt before crib nor cross. They are the kind that, scriptures says, were vomited from the very mouth of God.

Minds today rely on their own research, their own thought, their own reading. Some think they can find the truth entirely by

themselves and laugh at the idea that God might be of some help. Aisle after aisle of self-help books at Barnes & Noble tell us as much.

Our Blessed Lord was not born under an open sky, under which men might walk erect, but under the roof of a stable, the entrance of which can be gained only by stooping. The stoop is the stoop of humility.

As you know, we were in the Holy Land this past year. The door for tourists at the Church of the Nativity in current day Bethlehem is low. To enter that Church, you must stoop through the doorway, as if to stoop before the Christ Child.

Some are just too proud to stoop, and so they miss the true Joy of Christmas. But the shepherds and the Wise Men were humble enough to not only stoop, but to kneel prostrate in adoration. And as they knelt in adoration, I wonder whether the wise envied the simple or the simple envied the wise, for I'm sure neither envied the ignorant thousands. If I had to choose, I imagine the Wise Men envied the shepherds, because their way was quicker – it did not take the simple as long to discover the Wisdom of the Christ Child, Who is God.