



Sharing with you my heart ...

**The Wise Men weren't so wise ...
were they?**

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him."

(Matt. 2:1-2 ESV)

Dear Baptized in Christ,

On Nov. 17, 2011, my son, Joshua, Private First Class Baneck, graduated from Basic Training and Advanced Individual Training (AIT) from Fort Leonard Wood, Mo. I am very proud of my son, who graduated with the Warrior Award, as only three out of more than 170 soldiers received this award.

In Josh's training, he was taught the Seven Values of the Army: loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage. Who would disagree that these seven values are not only for those in the military but for everyone? When it comes to faith and life, these values are very biblical. It seems to me that as God grows His people in these values, they grow in *Wisdom*.

As I read and study the Book of Proverbs (in my daily devotions), the Early Church Fathers, Martin Luther and contemporary Lutheran commentators of the Holy Scripture, these values along with others characterize the child of God in Christ Jesus through the waters of Holy Baptism. As one grows in *Wisdom* through the Word, one grows in these godly attributes as well.

But what about the Wise Men of Matthew, chapter 2—how wise were they? The word used for these wise men is not the usual Greek word used for wisdom (*sophia*). Rather, the Greek word *magi* is used. The word *magi* is not so much connected with "godly wisdom" as it is with sorcery, astrology, interpretation of dreams and fortune telling. This same

Greek word, *magi*, is used of Simon the Sorcerer in Acts 8:9 and Bar-Jesus the sorcerer in Acts 13:6. Neither of these men were very godly or *wise* in terms of faith and life. So, the Wise Men from the east—how wise were they ... really?

First of all, we don't know much about the Wise Men. We don't know how many there were. They were not kings but astrologers. Also, more than likely they came from Persia and not the Orient. However, according to the world's standards, what we do know of them does not characterize them as truly *wise* in biblical terms.

First of all, these men from the East just got up and followed a star. This seems to be more impulsive than wise. And yet, the Scriptures reveal to us that these Wise Men knew and believed that this was a special star. They seemed to know that *this star* signified the birth of the King of the Jews. They seemed to know that *this star* was "His star," and they have come to worship *Him*.

Secondly, they came to worship this newborn King. Who worships a baby? For that matter, who worships anything other than self these days? Even Herod worshiped himself! Why would these men go such a distance to worship a drooling, burping baby who obviously has no power or ability to do anything for the Wise Men?

Thirdly, these Wise Men "foolishly" accepted the fact that such a supposed great king would not be born in Jerusalem but in Bethlehem. Bethlehem was an insignificant town of no stature and no importance. How wise were these Wise Men to think such a great king of the nations would be born in Bethlehem?

Worldly wisdom would demand for a king to be born in Jerusalem.

Finally, why would anyone give such expensive gifts to a baby they don't even know? Some would consider this act just "throwing away money." Perhaps these men were a little more wasteful than wise. What would Dave Ramsey say about giving away such wealth in such hard times?

(Continued on Page B.)



THE WISE MEN

(Continued from Page A.)

A bishop and priest of the Church, who died in 406 A.D., Chromatius, wrote this:

“Let us now observe how glorious was the dignity that attended the King after his birth, after the magi in their journey remained obedient to the star. For immediately the magi fell to their knees and adored the one born as Lord. There in His very cradle, they venerated him with offerings of gifts, though Jesus was merely a whimpering infant. [The Wise Men] perceived one thing with the eyes of their bodies but another with the eyes of the mind. The lowliness of the body he assumed was discerned, but the glory of his divinity is now made manifest. A boy he is, but it is God who is adored. How inexpressible is the mystery of his divine honor! The invisible and eternal nature did not hesitate to take on the weaknesses of the flesh on our behalf. The Son of God, who is God of the universe, is born a human being in the flesh. He permits himself to be placed in a manger, and the heavens are within the manger. He is kept in a cradle, a cradle that the world cannot hold.”

The Wise Men event of Matthew 2 is not about the men who came from the East. This visit from the magi is about the God in the cradle. He is the “immortal, invisible, God only *Wise*”—and the Wise Men from the East knew it! They were not foolish, they were men of wisdom because they knew and believed in Jesus who is God in the flesh.

Faith from the Holy Spirit made them *Wise* in their loyalty to God in coming from afar to worship Him. St. John Chrysostom writes, “The star of Bethlehem was not an ordinary star, for no other star has this capacity to guide, not merely to move but to beckon.” The Wise Men were loyal to God’s beckoning—a star that would lead to the Light of the World.

Herod had his scholars search the Scriptures to see where the King of the Jews would be born. The answer was Bethlehem, David’s City. Believing in the integrity of the prophets is evidence that the Wise men were wise. The Word is true, and the Wise Men followed the star to worship the Word made flesh.

An anonymous Church Father wrote this, “[The Wise Men] opened their treasure chests. They displayed their offerings, gifts in themselves fit for nations to give. For realizing that he was king, they offered him

their elegant and costly first fruits, fit for the Holy One.” Wisdom is evident in these magi in their selfless service in giving such extravagant gifts to the King who owns all things.

The Wise Men were *not* wise according to the world’s measurements or standards. The Wise Men were *indeed* wise according to the standards of God. Their wisdom did not come from an army manual. Their wisdom came from God. Our wisdom comes from God as well. God’s wisdom is put into us as His Word enters our ears and our eyes and the Holy Spirit works faith in us. God’s wisdom comes to us as we eat and drink God in His flesh and blood. Filled with divine wisdom, we grow in this wisdom and we live it each and every day of our lives.

King Solomon prayed for *Wisdom*. We pray for *Wisdom*. Advent is past, but the Church continues to pray the Advent song:

*O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who ord’rest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.*

In the name of Jesus,
President Baneck
Gal. 2:20

North Dakota District, this is YOUR news!

LWML • Sunday school • LLL • Bible school
Youth group • Servant events • Mission trips
Special birthdays • Retreats • Campus ministry
Community events • Anniversaries
Awards accomplishments • Camp events

We want to hear from YOU! Send photos, news items, feature stories, new subscriptions, etc., to

**Denise Wolfram, 1720 Burnt Boat Drive,
Suite #100, Bismarck, ND 58503**

Phone 701-751-3424 • Fax 701-751-3425

Email ndlcmssec@midconetwork.com

March issue deadline: Jan. 15



Remember in your prayers:



LCMS NORTH DAKOTA DISTRICT CONVENTION
NOW YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD
Faithful Pastors • Bold Witnesses • Empowered Stewards

Jan. 22-25, 2012
Alerus Center, Grand Forks, N.D.

Opening Worship

9 a.m., Monday, Jan. 23

Guest preacher:

The Rev. Matthew C. Harrison,
President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
with the Rev. Mark Chepulis assisting

Evening Meal with President Harrison
with Q&A session to follow

6:30 - 8:30 p.m., Monday, Jan. 23

Convention Essayist

The Rev. Randy Golter,
President of the LCMS Rocky Mountain District

<i>Let's Talk about Church</i>	11:20 a.m. – Monday, Jan. 23
<i>Looking at God's First Church</i>	8:35 a.m. – Tuesday, Jan. 24
<i>The Church is One</i>	2:25 p.m. – Wednesday, Jan. 24
<i>Seeking Conversation Partners</i>	8:30 a.m. – Thursday, Jan. 25

Convention Parliamentarian

The Rev. Dr. Raymond Hartwig,
Secretary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

NEWS



Marie Johnson from St. Matthew, Hazen, donned a costume for both her and her unborn baby!

'Trunk or Treat' in North Dakota

While Lutherans tend to think of Oct. 31 as Reformation Day, our world is observing the traditions of Halloween.

As a means to serve members in the community and witness to the light of Christ in a positive, non-frightening way, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church, Bismarck, and St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Hazen, coordinated "Trunk or Treat" events at their churches.

People decorated their vehicles and themselves with a theme and gave out goodies and witness materials to the trick or treaters. Some kids even got to have their pictures taken in the pay loader that Brent Purdy (bottom right), a Shepherd member, brought as part of his "construction zone" theme.

Doug and Pat Hintz (top right) also were caught "clowning around" as they participated in Trunk or Treat.



Marriage Retreat at Shepherd's Hill at the Crossroads

Jan. 27-29, 2012

Friday night around 9 p.m. to noon on Sunday
Hosted by the North Dakota District President James Baneck
and his wife, Myrna

\$150 per couple

Nights in private rooms • two brunches • one evening meal
Fellowship • food • relaxation • cozy fire • fun!
No-pressure conversation about marriage



To reserve your room,
email Denise at ndlcmsssec@midconetwork.com.
Retreat information will be sent to those who register
for the event.