

## A Journey of our Souls The Three Wise Men

I would like to invite us today to read the wise men's journey as a journey of our souls.

We have come a long way from Christmas. Starting at the manger in a humble stable, we walked through desert and plains, pausing at the threshold between the years. We have begun the new year, and from here we come back one more time to the manger scene.

In her Christmas meditations Hildegard of Bingen, a medieval theologian, invites us to translate the Epiphany story (when the three kings arrive at the manger, and mad King Herod fears the "new born king" might get all the attention..., Matthew 2,1-12) into the soul's journey towards new life.

The three kings, says Hildegard, symbolize the well-educated mind, filled with all sorts of worldly wisdom, power and knowledge.

But then a star in the East arises, just where the sun awakens, like a guide from beyond, from another world, pulling them on a journey towards their **"heart's knowledge."**

Following the promise of this star, led the wise men away from all the cherished stars (and values) they held before, even away from their own stardom (their homes and riches, their palaces, and their power).

This star "which went before them led them to "God's grace" lying there as an innocent child.

They found divine gifts in this little child, gifts which frighten rulers and threaten their worldly powers. The wise men's heart's knowledge enabled them to see the divine gifts and to follow the star.

When they found the "new king", surprised by the sight of a new born - they rejoiced in this new wisdom which they had found.

**"Their souls tasted heavenly things,"** says Hildegard.

Overcome by that very moment the wise men open their heart and offer their innermost riches: they see God, they see themselves, and they let God change them. Let me try to put this in our everyday 2022 context.

### I The Journey of the three kings - our inner pilgrimage

Hildegard helps us to see that we have, in our lives, all along, already been travelling with the wise men on their journey. This is the journey of the heart holding fast the hope of Christmas, the journey to the place where God's wisdom dwells, - away from

what we considered urgent and important and towards the living light, who wants to dwell in us.

It is a journey from “dead” knowledge to “living” wisdom, when God’s spirit becomes alive in the human heart. In our hearts – this Xmas and beyond.

## **II The little child – our birthing hope and grace**

So, who is the new king? A little tender child, symbol for peaceful innocence (or as the German theologian Paul Tillich has it: “dreaming innocence”) cradled by Mary, mother of all wisdom.

There is no doubt in Hildegard’s reading that this child is to be born in each of us, the spark of hope and peace, kindled by eternity.

This inner child is not childish, but offers childlike innocence, as when Jesus calls us to become childlike. Finding your inner child, as an adult, saves and heals us. Recognizing the little child, and God in the child, and the child we are ourselves, brings grace and hope into the hearts of all who seek a new way...

## **III To Bethlehem - our heart’s heart**

The wise men’s journey to Bethlehem becomes our inner pilgrimage to our heart’s heart. It clears us of all excess baggage and ballast, and lets us see who we really are, or who we could be, or who God wants us to be.

It is, so Hildegard, here at the manger in Bethlehem where we find our true self, not as something waiting to be picked up, to be possessed and held fast, but as something that travels with us and makes our hearts maturing on the way... We see who we are, as we journey through life, through a life with God who we met in the baby in the manger, and who lets us find the divine every day as the most precious purpose of our lives.

Our journey from Christmas on does not come in pre-packed wisdom bits and pieces, but instead becomes a constant gathering up, a process, a walking, and deepening every year anew - guided by a star from beyond...

Here is Hildegard’s good news.

We are all Bethlehem.

We are all vessels of the God.

We are all Mary.

We are all the womb able to deliver the good news into our time.

We are also the wise men on the way – let by stars, finding light, following the voice of our hearts.

At Christmas and on every day of the year that began yesterday and holds so much in store for us.

Amen.