

By Pastor Chris Costrini

Venango Community Church

Which would have been harder? To follow a star or follow the directions of angels?

The magi, probably stargazers from Persia, followed a star. No one can be sure what the magi saw in the sky, leading them to Jerusalem. Some say a comet, others a conjunction of planets. Tradition makes it a bright light in the night. Whatever it was, the meaning was clear to the magi. A king had been born.

The magi were wise; we might almost think of them as scientists, whose study and knowledge we have come to trust. Their following of the star came of their knowledge and learning.

On the other hand, we have the shepherds, uneducated and certainly not respected. But then, their vision in the sky was of another order, too. Angels, with a strange message: look for a baby in a manger.

Seemingly, the instruction of angels in a majestic and supernatural encounter must have been easy to obey, and surely was compelling. Yet there was no GPS then, and while Bethlehem wasn't a big town, wandering the streets looking for a baby in a manger must have been an odd experience.

Apparently, following the star was a bit confusing as well. The magi made it to the capital city, where one might expect a king to be born. They needed help to learn of Bethlehem.

Without completely knowing where they were going, the shepherds and the magi went off in search of the Christ, the Son of God. And they found Him.

Christmas invites us to find Him, for God calls us. Some will not seek unless they see, like the shepherds, a miracle, a vision. Others look for signs in the stars, Mother Earth, or some other bit of the world to find God.

The place to seek Him, though, is not in the spectacular. It isn't in signs and wonders or even in the vast magnificence of the created order.

We find Him instead as the magi and the shepherds did, as a baby in a manger, weak, small, powerless.

For in this is the greatest of miracles, God made flesh. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us... No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, He has made Him known" (John 1: 14, 18).

Wise and simple alike shall find God in the manger.