

2021



A bright, multi-pointed star is depicted in the upper left corner of the image, set against a light blue, textured background.

When they saw the star, they were filled with joy. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary his mother. Falling to their knees, they honored him. Then they opened their treasure chests and presented him with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. - *Matthew 2:10-12*









The journey of the wise men

- **The wise men trusted their intuition and science and followed the star through foreign terrain, experiencing unfamiliar customs and cultures. Despite difficulties they followed their true north and they were rewarded with an epiphany, a vision that would change their lives and the lives of all non-Jews. They would forever represent the bringing of the gospel beyond Israel to Greece, from there to Rome and to all Europe**

The gifts

- **The gifts were luxurious and were given by figures of authority – wise men. Gold was associated with kingship but Jesus’ kingship and kingdom would be different, it would be peopled by the the poor, the meek, the pure in heart, those who have suffered. This links with myrrh which was used to anoint dead bodies and points to Jesus’ death which would save humanity. Frankincense as a symbol of God, would tell us that this is what God is like, a God who suffers with us to set us free, this is the epiphany - the showing of who the real God is, a God of love and mercy in contrast to the tyrant, Herod.**



The journey of Joseph and Mary to Egypt

- **The Christmas story happens in the shadow of great conflict and suffering. The people of Israel are subject to a great empire whose methods of suppression are cruel and effective. They appointed a puppet king , Herod who was unstable and constantly afraid of being usurped. The news of a future Messiah sends him into an outrage that culminates in the slaughtering of the innocents. This threat sends Joseph and Mary into exile, to Egypt with all its connotations with the Jewish story of exile. The birth of Jesus didn't happen in the context of peace, it was a world of violence, conflict and the suppression of the poor at the hands of the rich and powerful.**



This is Christian hope,
that the future is in
God's hands.

Pope Francis

Be who God meant
you to be and you will
set the world on fire.

St. Catherine of Siena

Matthew 2:1-12

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the time when Herod was king. Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem ² and asked, “Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him.”

When King Herod heard about this, he was very upset, and so was everyone else in Jerusalem. He called together all the chief priests and the teachers of the Law and asked them, “Where will the Messiah be born?” “In the town of Bethlehem in Judea,” they answered. “For this is what the prophet wrote: ‘Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means the least of the leading cities of Judah; for from you will come a leader who will guide my people Israel.’”

Herod called the visitors from the East to a secret meeting and found out from them the exact time the star had appeared. ⁸ Then he sent them to Bethlehem with these instructions: “Go and make a careful search for the child; and when you find him, let me know, so that I too may go and worship him.”

And so they left, and on their way they saw the same star they had seen in the East. When they saw it, how happy they were, what joy was theirs! It went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹¹ They went into the house, and when they saw the child with his mother Mary, they knelt down and worshiped him. They brought out their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and presented them to him.

Then they returned to their country by another road, since God had warned them in a dream not to go back to Herod.

Let us pray: As we begin the countdown to our GCSEs, we pray for ourselves, our families, for all our teachers and all the staff who support us on this important journey;

may we work together to deepen our wisdom and knowledge, especially the knowledge and love of Christ so that we fully develop the gifts and talents that he has given us. We pray that with the magi, we come to the manger to offer our gifts in the service of others.

Lord, in your mercy.

Hear our prayer.