



*After [the Magi's] audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.*

*They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage.*

*Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.*

# THE MAGI SET UP CAMP

As you consider the image of the Wisemen, where do your eyes linger? What do you notice? Can you place yourself there on the road to Bethlehem? Perhaps with sore muscles and an aching back, you can feel the strain of a day walking and riding. What feelings or thoughts do you imagine them to be having: Are they excited to be near their journey's end, anxious about what they may find or frustrated by another change in plan? After being warned in a dream, do they remember it the same way? Or are their ideas for who and what they might find under the star conflicting or fading?

In beginning their journey, the Magi take a not insignificant leap of faith. They see a new star rising, read the signs and set out in search of that which is wonderfully mysterious. Steadily and faithfully, the three make their way toward Bethlehem in search of something hoped for but yet unknown.

Each of us also has some similar “call” placed on our hearts — an unexplainable desire or vocation from God that can be difficult to articulate to others. It may be our call to serve in health care, to work for justice, to care for a family, to advocate for the environment, to serve the elderly. Whatever the call, it is ours to follow or ignore. Like the Wisemen, we can't know where it will lead us or how it will end. Indeed, living out our unique vocation is our participation in God's work in the world. Especially during Advent, we are called to find and live our vocation, and uncover how we can bear Christ into the world in our actions and words.

Importantly, we do not do it alone. God doesn't call the Wisemen on a fool's errand. They journey at the same time Gabriel journeys to make his announcement to Mary. As Joseph frets about ending his engagement, and Mary is on her way to Elizabeth, the Magi faithfully follow the promise of the star. Each of them individually face their personal calling from God, but also find comfort in the community of one another and those with whom they travel.

Neither does God call **us** on a fool's errand.

The vocation of Catholic health care — to bring God's healing to life in the world — comes with its own challenges and struggles, exhaustions and bumps in the road. We, too, perhaps, experience the sore muscles, the aching back, the physical and emotional strain of the work no matter how good the work is. Just as the Wisemen don't travel alone, neither do we. We move forward together. We never know how our journeys and paths will cross with others or where our gifts and talents might be needed. Like the Wisemen and other characters of the Advent Christmas story, we have those serving alongside us to share the joys, sorrows and frustrations of the journey.

In these last two weeks of Advent, consider what the star is that you are following. What is the vocation that God is asking you to give life to in the world today? What are the gifts you bring to the ministry? Who are your traveling companions and how can you continue to support each other in the strain of the work?