

Chalking Them Up!

Isaiah 60¹⁻⁶; Psalm 72¹⁰⁻¹⁵; Ephesians 3¹⁻¹²; Matthew 2¹⁻¹²

*They left for their own country by another road.
[Matthew 1¹²]*

Happy New Year – another one to ‘chalk-up’! As we enter a New Year, will 2022 be like all the others for us? Are we aware of what God wants us to be or become, to initiate or to do? For us as with the Magi, you cannot meet Jesus and then carry on as you were; you carry on using **another road**.

In the Christmass story, just as we don't know the names of the shepherds who visited the Holy Family, so too we are ignorant about the Magi: we know that they came from the East; that they were well enough connected to get in to see the King and talked with Herod; we know that there were three gifts; and that they must have been wealthy enough to buy the rather extravagant gifts and to have the time away from whatever they did.

We can also be fairly sure that they ‘followed’ the star in that they were astrologers who read the stars rather than that star causing gravitational disaster in the universe with a sun and its accompanying solar system crashing through space: that said that arrived at the right place and about the right time to visit Jesus the toddler.

The fact that they were ‘seers’ is further revealed – **having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road** – which shows that they must have been powerful men in that Herod doesn't chase them: instead, he vents his wrath in the slaughter all the children under two years of age **in and around Bethlehem**.

Einstein is attributed as saying: *“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results.”* It is always a source of amazement to me that so many Christians take the same approach: rather than taking a different road – with regard to letting God, the Church, their brothers and sisters in Christ and themselves down – they keep finding themselves in the same situations, making the same choices and progressively feeling worse that they end up back in the same spiritual place.

It seems to me that, in the age of innovation, the **other road**, is the unattractive old-fashioned route of Christian discipleship:

- ✘ Of Reading your Bible every day – it astonishes me how many Christians are Biblically illiterate!
- ✘ Of Praying every day – simply spend time in God's presence and allow the things that concern you or the people you are worried about to arrive into your consciousness and hand it all over to God.
- ✘ Of joining the Church in Worship and making that a priority – you discover what your ‘god’ really is by what, in reality, displaces what.
- ✘ Of witnessing to your faith – a positive life will attract questions: if you have to tell people that you are different there may be some work yet to do. (as always, you will today take chalk with you – and that inevitably opens up a conversation or two through the year – *Christus Masionam Benidictat* is such a gentle introduction to faith).
- ✘ Of living as Jesus lived: caring for those who need it; acting for justice in every situation; of embodying God's love in a life of love.
- ✘ Of tithing – recognising that we only start giving when what we part with is beyond the 10% of our income Scripture requires.

The Bible is our map and the Holy Spirit our Sat-Nav – you can trust them!