

# JESUS AND THE NEW COVENANT

## UNIT ONE: THE WAY IS PREPARED

### Lesson 2:

### The Magi's Visit: From Star-Reading to Worshipping the Star

#### CONTENT:

1. The Magi (*pronounced 'may-jai'*) were originally 'astrologers', highly respected men from the East who studied the stars. God led them to the true Light, the 'star of Israel' foretold by the Prophet Balaam. When they saw Jesus they recognised him as God and worshipped him.
2. This story reminds us of an important teaching of the Church: We are called to offer true worship to God and to have nothing to do with divination of any kind. [First Commandment]

"All forms of divination are to be rejected: recourse to Satan or demons, conjuring up the dead, or other practices falsely supposed to 'unveil' the future.

Consulting horoscopes, astrology, palm reading, interpretation of omens and lots, the phenomena of clairvoyance, and recourse to mediums all conceal a desire for power over time, history, and, in the last analysis, other human beings, as well as a wish to conciliate hidden powers. They contradict the honor, respect, and loving fear that we owe to God alone" (CCC 2116).

3. The personal conversion story of an American woman, Lucy Tucker, is similar to that of the Magi, showing her journey from darkness to the true Light.

-  4. We too must refuse to trust in any of the practices mentioned, but place our complete trust in God.

ASSIGNMENT: 1. Find out the significance of the gifts brought by the Magi.

2. Look for any object that you feel says something about Jesus: a symbol of Christ. Bring it to our next RE class. Be ready to share why you chose that object.

REFERENCES: Matthew 2:1-12. CCC 2116.

To the Edge of the Abyss ['This Rock', May 1998] By Lucy Tucker

#### I. STARTER:

- Hands up those who know which zodiac sign you come under!... [*Students say which signs they come under.*]
- Depending on when you are born, you are told what kind of person you are, what your nature is like. Each week the papers tell us what will happen to us and what to avoid... These zodiac signs are based on astrology or a study of the stars.
- Today we are going to read about some astrologers who enter into the story of Jesus. We will also read the story of a modern-day astrologer. We'll then find out what the Church teaches us about astrology and other practices like it.

## II. DEVELOPMENT: *[Give out handouts at this point]*

- The men who studied the stars are also called 'Magi' in Greek (*we pronounce the word 'may-jai' not Maggie as in Maggi noodles!*). We normally speak of them as the Wise Men. They were very important people, and were normally advisors to the rulers.
- Your handout has 2 true stories. The first is from the Gospel, and is one you know well. Read the story [1] and pay special attention to the behaviour, feelings and actions of the Magi. Then write down anything you observed about them.

[Write on blackboard: WHAT DO YOU NOTICE ABOUT THE 'MAGI'? ...THEIR FEELINGS, BEHAVIOUR, CHARACTER, ACTIONS?]

Students work in pairs. They write their observations on the reverse side of their handouts. After about 5-7 minutes, allow students to share what they have written. Bring out:]

1. The Magi were people who were searching. They were very serious about their search. We realise this because they travelled far, and wouldn't give up their search easily.
  2. They obeyed God's instructions rather than the instructions of King Herod. This showed their wisdom: they put God above human beings.
  3. They were filled with joy to see the star again.
  4. Though they were wealthy, they were able to recognise God in the simple little child. They bowed down before him and worshipped him.
  5. They gave gifts to this new-born king.
- Let us now look at a modern-day story written by a lady called Lucy Tucker. As you read, see if you can find any similarities between the 2 stories.  
[Students read the second story [2] and note down any similarities they find. They write on the reverse of their handouts. Bring out with the help of the students' answers:]
    1. Like the Magi, Lucy was also searching for something. She too persisted in her search.
    2. In both cases, it was God who revealed Himself to the 'seekers'.
    3. Like the wise men, Lucy experienced deep happiness when she finally came to God.
    4. The Magi gave gifts to Jesus. Lucy gave her heart to God.
  - Let us finally look at what the Church tells us about all this. [Read [3] aloud]
    - The Church tells us that God deserves all our trust, our worship, our respect. If we truly trust him, we would not be looking anywhere else for answers to our questions.
    - The Church tells us that 'divination' is wrong. It then explains what comes under 'divination'. What are the practices we must avoid? *[Calling on Satan or demons, calling the dead, consulting horoscopes, palm-reading, looking at 'signs' to tell the future.]*
    - All these practices are really a way of getting power. Nowadays there are many new practices which take us away from God and make us feel as if we are God. This is very harmful to us, because we fall into the power of evil. Right through the Old Testament times and the history of the Church these practices have been recognised as against God and harmful to us.

## III. REFLECTION & PRAYER:

- Close your eyes now and think of all we have been reading and talking about. Imagine God speaking to you and calling you to give him all your trust... Decide that you will never do any of the things that would take you away from Him... Tell God of your decision.

[Students pray in silence]

**Home assignment:** The Magi brought gifts for Jesus which showed us something about him.

1. Find out the meaning of the gifts. What do they tell us about Jesus?
2. Also look for any object that you feel says something about Jesus: a symbol of Christ. It could be something ordinary, from nature or around the house, not a holy picture. Bring it to our next RE class. Be ready to share why you chose that object.