

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI

Recently I have been accused of attacking Christianity. There is little doubt in my mind that misunderstanding, and perhaps ignorance of the faith are behind such an accusation. It's hard to believe that anyone familiar with my work and writing would come up with such lunacy. I therefore refer to my recently published book, Luminaries In The Firmament (Gen. 1:15) which describes over forty stained glass windows from local churches. The book is profusely illustrated with religious images through stained glass and documents these images with lengthy scriptural text. This book, which is now available locally, enhances our local religious heritage and gives meaning to Christian imagery which has often been ignored. An attacker of Christianity? Not!

Here follows verbatim what is included in Luminaries In The Firmament on the window, The Adoration Of The Magi.

After Jesus had been born at Bethlehem in Judea during the reign of King Herod, there arrived wise men from Jerusalem from the east, inquiring "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and we have come to worship Him ..."

Herod then summoned the wise men for a private interview and ascertained from them just when the star appeared. As he sent them to Bethlehem he said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, report to me so that I too may go and worship Him."

After listening to the king they travelled on and, lo, the star they had seen in the east preceded them until it came and rested above the place where the young child was. And on observing the star their joy was boundless.

"Entering the house, they saw the little Child with his mother, Mary, and prostrating themselves they worshipped Him. And opening their treasure chests they offered Him presents: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Then, because of divine warning in a dream not to return to Herod, they went back to their own country by a different route."

Matt. 2:1-2, 7-12

This beautiful narrative window at St. Mary's C. Church in Medina is the only one in Orleans County of this subject which symbolizes the feast of the Epiphany. Innumerable artists throughout the centuries have depicted the "Gift of the Magi." This particular window and its imagery is typical and straight forward. The three Wise Men have just arrived at the home of Joseph and Mary and their infant son Jesus.

*"We three kings of Orient are;
Bearing gifts we traverse afar
Field and fountain, moor and mountain,
Following yonder star."*

We see in the left lancet Joseph standing in the background while Mary and Jesus form a center of interest. One of the wise men kneels in the foreground offering his gift of gold.

*"Born a King on Bethlehem's plain,
Gold I bring to crown Him again
King forever, ceasing never
Over us all to reign."*

The right lancet portrays the other two wise men



with their gifts. One is unmistakable as the bearer of incense with his smouldering censer, and is shown as a king. Note the crown.

*"Frankincense to offer have I;
Incense owns a Deity high
Prayer and praising all raising;
Worship Him, God on high."*

The third wise man is portrayed here as being older than the other two and kneels in adoration of the Child.

*"Myrrh is mine; its bitter perfume
Breathes a life of gathering gloom
Sorrowing, sighing, bleeding, dying,
Sealed in the stone-cold tomb."*

Not being sacred personages, we note that the three wise men are shown without halos while the sacred Holy Family is venerated with halos. The entire ambiance of the window expresses great joy by the facial expressions and vibrant colors. Mary is primarily dressed in blue, her traditional color, symbolic of truth.

*"O star of wonder, star of night
Star of royal beauty bright,
Westward leading, still proceeding
Guide us to the perfect light."*