

Our Gospel today speaks of a light that shines in the darkness and of a journey. The Wise Men followed a guiding star that ultimately would lead them to the Christ Child.

Pope Benedict XVI has taught that, in the feast of the Epiphany we encounter the mystery of God's call...the mystery of vocation. God has given each of us our own star to follow. A unique star for each one of us that the Lord knows will lead us safely home to Jesus, if we follow it steadfastly.

When we think of the particular journey undertaken by the Wise Men, we picture a bright star leading them unfailingly to where the baby Jesus lay. If we read the passage closely however, we will notice that the Wise Men only saw the star on 2 occasions. They saw it first, 'as it rose,' beckoning to them. They next saw it, at journey's end, when they neared Bethlehem. Between the first sighting and the last, the Wise men travelled on but without a star to guide them. They travelled on, fortified by a sure **hope**, and firm **trust** in God. They were lead-on by the Star that shone in their hearts' and like a lantern guided them in through the darkness.

Like the Wise Men, we too, are called to chart a spiritual course. Like theirs, our journey will also climax in meeting Jesus, face to face, at the end of life's journey. Before we meet the Lord however, paying him homage, we too must travel. Sometimes we will travel by the light of a shining star. During these times we will feel God's presence with us. At other times however God may seem to be remote or even absent. These are the times when clouds obscure God's light from our view. Clouds of loss and clouds of sadness, that force us to feel our way in the dark.

We must not be disturbed or discouraged, when this happens, nor give up. During these times, when there is no star to guide us, we must travel on, as they did, with **hope** in our hearts'. We must travel on knowing that the star will rise again in our firmament. We must steadfastly **trust** in the love that Jesus poured out for us on the cross.

God does not create this darkness, this desolation, but he does allow it. He allows it because it is one of the most powerful ways by which we, stubborn and hard-hearted creatures that we are, come to realise how much we need him. During these times, when we cannot see the star, we must not change course. We must keep pushing forward, in the sure and certain knowledge that God has not abandoned us.

“Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!” (Isaiah 49:15)

The darkness will pass. We will glimpse again the star that beckoned to us at the first, and ultimately this star will lead us home to Christ.