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Spumcduncan.com
FB@stpaulsumcduncan
stpaulsduncan@gmail.com



Pastor David Gardner

Leslie Primo writes for Art UK. I think he is part artist, part art historian and part art critic.

He writes:

“There have been pictorial representations of the Magi – the three wise men or kings who visited Jesus as a baby – from as early as at least the sixth century AD. Their depiction over this vast period of time has been anything but consistent. However, let us deal with the consistencies first – and there are many.

The most obvious is clearly the number of three Magi/kings who bring the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. The other constant is the Holy Family upon which the entire story rests. But there are some aspects that may at first seem to be consistent then turn out not to be on close examination of the images. For example, many images of this story feature the Holy Family – Jesus, Mary and Joseph – in humble surroundings. (Sometimes with ornate classical ruins or castles in the background.)

The meaning of these lean-tos and classical ruins seem to clearly point towards humility and the triumph of the new world order (represented by the Holy Family) over the crumbling old world order (the Roman world, represented by classical ruins).

However, what is consistent across centuries of depictions are the splendid sumptuous clothes worn by the Magi. If not resplendent in the decorative effects of their garments as we see in Strozzi's Adoration, they are made with beautiful fabrics as we see in Bassano's depiction.

According to legend the Magi/kings went by the names of Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar. Legend also tells us that there is an older king, the youngest king, and – of course – a black king.

In line with customs of respect, the eldest king is always first to present his gift of gold and is often given the name of Caspar. Artists familiar with this custom use the iconography of grey hair, a beard or both to depict old age (a convention which still holds true today).

In the case of the youngest king, a lack of facial hair points towards youth, and this king is usually associated with the name Melchior and the gift of frankincense. However, youthfulness, seen in the work of the Master of the Glasgow Adoration, can sometimes lead to Melchior being mistaken for a woman or girl.

Our route to identifying the next king should be easy, because not only do we have the process of elimination, but also the third king, Balthasar, is black. However, as we can see from our examples this is also an inconsistency – nobody has informed Zanobi Strozzi or Cosimo Rosselli that such a person should be included. Indeed, the only early sixteenth-century artist in our examples that received the memo is Gerard David.

Yet by the sixteenth century we start to become aware of the concept of the three kings, representing one for each root race (essentially representing the Christian continents of Europe, Asia and Africa), including the idea of a black king. Indeed, the element of difference in the form of turbans can be seen across many examples, clearly representing the European invention of 'the exotic'. Any figure that wears one of these is immediately transformed into the exotic, whether the character ever wore such an item in the supposed lands they came from.

The idea that the Magi were from distant lands and they were kings probably came about via the writings of the Christian theologian Tertullian (c.160–c.230 AD), who in the year 200 AD was the first to infer that magi in distant lands were more or less seen as kings. It is left to the third-century theologian Origen (d.254 AD) to say that there were three of them. Although this is also not mentioned in the Bible it seems a reasonable assumption as three gifts are mentioned – gold representing homage to Christ's kingship, frankincense representing homage to Christ's divinity, and myrrh, used in embalming, to foreshadow Christ's death.

The names, also not mentioned in biblical texts, are more than likely an invention of Origen. After much changing of names, depending on which part of the globe you were from – in Europe they finally settle by the seventh century on the names Balthasar, Gaspar (or Caspar) and Melchior.”

I am fascinated how The Word of God is transformed. We take an inference about the number of gifts and assign a Magi each. We also make our own “clarifications and assumptions” - some from artistic license - some from children's Christmas pageants.

The story goes:

Matthew 2:1-3 (Voice)

Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem, in the province of Judea, at the time when King Herod reigned. *Not long after Jesus was born*, magi, wise men or seers from the East, made their way from the East to Jerusalem. These wise men made inquiries.

These men from the East come looking for the One who has been born who will save His people from sin.

Wise Men: Where is this newborn, who is the King of the Jews? When we were far away in the East we saw His star, and we have followed its glisten and gleam all this way to worship Him.

King Herod began to hear rumors of the wise men's quest, and he, and all of his followers in Jerusalem, were worried.

Dear God, I don't have to be the young one or the old one or even the African. Those things don't matter - but I do want to be one of the ones seeking You - wanting to acknowledge You as King of my heart. I want to be one of the ones that move in community as we seek You and worship You in 2019. Amen.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Have you seen our new online giving program? We're excited about the new things happening at Saint Paul's through our online community. You can securely give from our website at spumcduncan.com and via text message by messaging "walkthetalk" to 73256. You can even set up recurring donations. If you need help with this just contact the office.

We now have a Calendar in the Copy Room for you to put upcoming Events/Church activities on and to see when the church is Reserved for special occasions. Thank you.

Faithweavers will resume this Wednesday evening at 5:30 pm.

DHS Student Lunch will be January 16th from 11:15 am - 1:00 pm.

The East Missional Area Strategy Team will be holding a Chili Cookoff on Jan. 24th at 6 pm here at Saint Paul's. All the churches in the District will be providing crockpots of Chili. Saint Paul's will be responsible for providing 6 of them. Prizes will be awarded. Everyone is invited to come and sample some chili.

The next Leadership Table Meeting will be January 31st at 6:30 pm.

Men's Emmaus Walk will be Feb. 21-24. Women's Emmaus will be Feb 28-Mar.3.

For King and Country will be in Concert in Wichita Falls on April 11th at 7 pm. Contact the office if you are interested in going.



Dennis Loafman out of the hospital
Marcia healing well after Surgery
Pulpit Candy
Victor Mortson's Audition

Prayer For Healing

Lord, You invite all who are burdened to come to you. Allow your healing hand to heal me. Touch my soul with your compassion for others. Touch my heart with your courage and infinite love for all. Touch my mind with your wisdom that my mouth may always proclaim your praise. Teach me to reach out to you in my need, and help me to lead others to you by my example. Most loving heart of Jesus bring me health in body and spirit that I may serve you with all my strength. Touch gently this life which you have created, now and forever. Amen

Schlein Family – loss of Terry
Louise Golden’s Sister – Eye Surgery
All going through trials either illness or other
Parker Bowles- Determination and Focus
Stacy Mettler – Double Mastectomy

Jason Poorman – (Edith Suiters nephew) starting chemo for Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma
Addie’s friend and relative on Hospice. Peace in her Family
Victor and Rebecca – Working on Dissertations
Ron Martin’s friend in Norman – Back Surgery
Beth Horn – Illness regressing
RJ and Carla – for the loss of his son in law
Kathy Allred – recovering from Surgery
Trish Lister – Prayers that she will receive money either from Disability or Insurance this month to pay bills.
Lisa Hill – lost her mom
Ann Johnson – Trish Lister’s Mom moving to assisted living.
Farah Doorman – Back Surgery
James Benkley – continued recovery
Sara Riggs – Going to Court on Jan 16th for Divorce
Jim and Edith Suiter – Jim is getting increasingly weary – he is beginning to talk of dying. It is a difficult time for both of them.
Paula McConnell – Trying to get to the bottom of some health issues, involving lungs primarily.
Courtney - The Allred’s 11 yr. old grandchild with neurological issues.
Karen Gibson – Cancer
Gary Gibson – Cancer
Jan Smith – Cancer
Jennifer Shahan – Heart Problems
Iva Johnson – Hospice
Christy Thurston
Addie McMurrin
Karen Stanfill – Cancer
Rebecca’s cousin has eating disorder, liver failure and on transplant list
Kathy Bridges – Cancer
Joe Perry – Kidney cancer
Stacy Mettler – Breast Cancer
Margaret Averre – Throat cancer
Daniel Whitney – Colon cancer; now liver cancer
Jennifer Allred – Spinal pain and fibromyalgia
Melinda Douglas – Lung Cancer