

Newsletter

Knights of Columbus
Council 12833
Mater Ecclesiae

Although meetings are usually held on the second and fourth Mondays of every month, this month's meetings will be on the **third** and fourth Mondays.

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OFFICERS a. D. 2008-2009

Grand Knight:.....James J Delaney	Deputy G. K.: William Murphy	Chancellor:..... Richard Werkley
Treasurer:..... Donald Marion	Advocate:..... Sam DiStefano	Recorder: William Gedgard
Warden:..... William Roscioli	Inside Guard: Lou DiLoreto	Outside Guard:.....Dominick Schuster
Trustee (1 st Year):Carmen DeGiacomo	Trustee (2 nd Year): ...David O'Kane	Trustee (3 rd Year): ..Benedict Paratore
	Lecturer: Ronald Coppola	

December a.D. 2008

NOCTURNAL ADORATION

"Could you not watch one hour with me?" says Jesus (Matthew 26:40).

Adoration is a sacrifice and a commitment. All are welcome to participate. So please consider volunteering for that one hour at night which might very well become your most precious hour of the month, one hour of adoration, in complete silence and peace with our Lord.

This month's Nocturnal Adoration will begin at 10:00 p.m. on First Friday, 5th December, and continue until 7:00 a.m. on First Saturday, 6th December.

Contact our Nocturnal Adoration coordinator, PGK Danny Fean, on +1 856 981 3258 for details. All new members are encouraged to schedule a time for adoration.

COLOUR CORPS

There will be a Colour Corps on Monday, 8th December, at the 7:30 p.m. Mass for the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

We have two extra sets of Regalia, so if you have taken the Fourth Degree and own a tuxedo, you are welcome to participate in this and future events. Contact our Colour Corps commander, GK Jim Delaney, on +1 856 693 1143 for details.

HOAGIE SALES

Our next Hoagie sale will take place on Saturday, 6th December, at the usual location, the intersection of Branch Avenue and Erial Road in the center of Pine Hill. We will begin at 10:00 a.m. Please plan to come out for these sales and help your Council earn funds needed for the various activities which we support.

LECTURER'S CORNER

by Ron Coppola

Is the star of Bethlehem myth, mystery accepted on faith, or fact? A non-profit organization called the "Star Project" has combined historical scholarship, astronomical fact, and biblical writings, including St. Matthew's account of Jesus' birth, to find out.

There are three factors they state that lead to modern evidence of the star's actual existence, namely Johannes Kepler's discovery of how the solar system worked, improvements in knowledge of first century history, and computers.

The first factor in trying to find the Bethlehem star starts with astronomy. Johannes Kepler (a.D. 1571 – a.D. 1630) was one of the greatest mathematical minds ever. He was able to calculate the exact positions of all the stars and planets in the night sky and not just for one night but for any day in history as viewed from any place on earth. And thanks to Kepler we can locate celestial objects with great precision and therefore can calculate what the sky over Jerusalem looked like 2000 years ago.

The second factor is the historical and accurate dating of Jesus' birth. Most of the ancients contended that Jesus was born in 3 or 2 BC. However, in Kepler's time a misinterpretation of the writings of the ancient Jewish historian Flavius Josephus (a.D. 37 - a.D. 95) concluded that Christ was born before 4 BC. Kepler had an interest in finding the star but never was able to do so due to this misinterpretation. But a recent study of the earliest manuscripts of Josephus held by the British library revealed that a copying error was the primary cause of the confusion. Josephus' writings infer that Herod died in 1 BC shortly after Jesus' birth. Therefore, Jesus was born in 3 or 2 BC. Thus, the modern search for the "star" by the Star Project was limited to the night skies of these years.

The third factor in discovering the Bethlehem star is the use of modern day computers to locate it in the night skies over Jerusalem 2000 years ago. With computer software that incorporates Kepler's equations, we can now view the sky precisely as it moved over Jerusalem then.

Based on the above and working with the biblical account of St. Matthew a list of nine (9) "qualifications" for the Bethlehem star was compiled:

1. It signified birth.
2. It signified kingship.
3. It had a connection to the Jewish nation.
4. It rose in the east, like other stars.
5. It appeared at a precise time.
6. Herod didn't know when it appeared.
7. It endured over time.
8. It was ahead of the Magi as they went south from Jerusalem to Bethlehem.
9. It stopped over Bethlehem.

Using these qualifications to find the star in the night sky over Bethlehem the night that Jesus was born, meteors, comets and novas were eliminated since they do not meet all of the "qualifications". So what does this leave? A reasonable hypothesis is that the star must have been something in the normal night sky which anyone could see but was striking when explained. As you can recall King Herod had to ask the Magi when the star had appeared.

What then is left to identify the Bethlehem star in that "normal night sky" 2000 years ago? That leaves planets. The search leads to Jupiter which is the largest planet of our solar system. It was called from ancient times, the King Planet and was considered a "wandering star" as were all planets in those days. And since Jupiter was considered kingly (qualification #1), it also suggested the announcement of a kingly birth (qualification #2). But to be the star of Bethlehem [thus connected with the Jewish nation (qualification #3)], Jupiter would also need to do some peculiar things as seen from earth by the Magi and would need to satisfy all six remaining qualifications.

In September of 3 BC (qualification #5) at the time of the Jewish New Year, Rosh ha-Shanah, Jupiter began to do peculiar things. The Magi that September would have observed two objects moving so close to each other that they appeared to touch. This close approach of celestial bodies is sometimes called a "conjunction". Thus they saw Jupiter coming into close conjunction with the star "Regulus" meaning regal or kingly. This conjunction of the "King of Planets" and the "Star of Kings" may have indicated kingship in a forceful way to the Magi. Because Jupiter glides slowly past Regulus about every 12 years, the Magi may, depending on their age, have seen such a pass two or three times before. Jupiter moves over time and rises like other stars from the east (qualification #4) and passes through the starry sky. Jupiter also appears to reverse course and move backward. In astronomy this optical effect is called retrograde motion. And in 3 BC (qualification #5), Jupiter had such a conjunction with Regulus and then went into retrograde and then back to Regulus a second time. Finally it did this a third time which apparently is rare. Thus the Magi watching this would have seen Jupiter "dance" above the Star of Kings (Regulus). This peculiar thing would certainly have caught the Magi's attention and they would have seen this as a "coronation", if you will.

By the following June, Jupiter had a rendezvous with Venus. **THIS CONJUNCTION WAS SO BRIGHT** that the planets could not be distinguished from each other. This is displayed today in hundreds of planetaria around the world, not because of Jesus' birth, but because what Jupiter did at that time makes such a great show.

When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem presumably describing the timing of events starting in September of 3 BC and continuing through June of 2 BC (qualification #7), Herod wanted to know when the star had appeared (qualification #6)

As the Magi made their way south from Jerusalem to Bethlehem in December of 2 BC, the Magi in the wee hours of the morning would have seen the Planet of Kings, Jupiter hanging (due to its retrograde motion) over the city of the Messiah's birth (qualification #7).

And as you probably have guessed, in retrograde, Jupiter, the "wandering star", stopped over the little town of Bethlehem on December 25th in 2 BC!

NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION

It is the intent of the Council that distribution of this monthly newsletter is to be by e-mail to the greatest extent possible to reduce expenses. If you received this month's newsletter by surface mail but do have internet access, it is requested that you send an e-mail to: wrtg@verizon.net. In this way future editions of the newsletter can be sent to you by e-mail. This month **10** copies of the newsletter have to be sent by surface mail.

Our next meeting is on Monday, 15th December.

Join with your brother Knights in reciting Our Lady's Rosary at 7:30 p.m.; the meeting follows at 8:00 p.m.

Vivat Jesus!