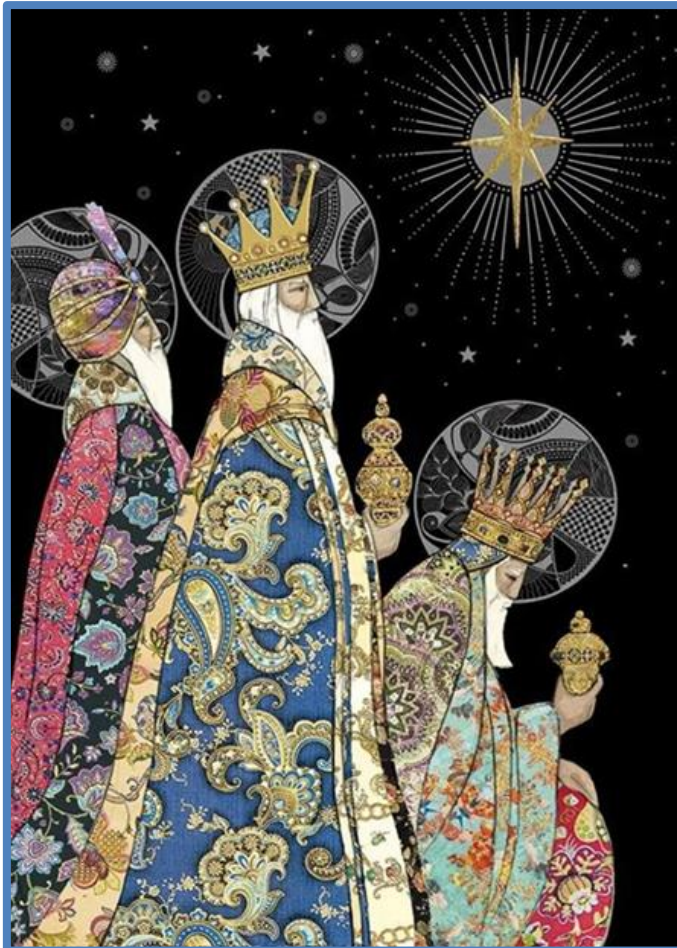


Unexpected gift for 2024

Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General

INFO SSCC Brothers No 181 – 2 January 2024



Dear brothers, sisters and lay member,

It is 2024. We are at the start of the new year. The beginning of the year offers itself in the form of a promise that it will be better than the previous one.

We count on the fidelity of the Lord who has promised to be with us until the end of time. We have shared our good wishes and prayers that this new year will be one of peace, health, reconciliation and happiness. Deep down, we hope that the Lord of history will become transparent in the times we live in, with all their perennial dramas and conflicts.

As we enter this coming year, anticipating it once again as a year of the Lord's grace, the figures of the wise men of the East can guide us.

These wise men are connected both to the cosmos and to the great history unfolding in their time. For this reason,

they know how to read the signs of the times and space. They do not remain trapped in their knowledge. What they come to understand translates into an urgency, a common quest that sets them on their way. They are moved by a keen sense of hope because they already see in a small and fragile child the presence of a great one who is to come: "Where is the child who was born to be king of the Jews? We saw his star in the East and have come to worship him" (Mt 2:2).

This quest is so important that it leads them leave behind their homeland. Their desire to find and adore this child king is so great that they are not afraid to challenge the established power. Herod senses a threat in this child having the pretensions of a king, and rightly so. What if this child-king of the Jews were to be God's messiah? It would be nothing less than 'God visiting his people'. In keeping with those familiar and yet strange ways of the human heart, Herod preferred to thwart God's plan as soon as possible rather than rejoice in collaborating with the fulfilment of his promises to his people.

Surely, it would have been a joy for the people if Herod had announced that God was visiting his people in this messiah of Bethlehem? Instead, he preferred to remain preserved in the sad memory of his people as the one responsible for the slaughter of the innocents: the delirium of power that sees in every new born child a threat.

The kings, for their part, following Herod's instructions, set out for Bethlehem. They are accompanied by the star that drives their desire: it stops over the place where they find Jesus and his mother. They rejoice that their search has not been in vain.

They are moved that such an event, one so decisive for the history of humanity, turned out to be so simple and domestic. They have taken risks in following an uncertain path and have fearlessly defied the established power and its skulduggery. All this they bring with them as gifts to Jesus and his mother. Their very presence is a gift. And these same men, transformed by their encounter, set out on their return journey changed.

So let us set out to travel through this year like the wise men. May the fidelity of the Lord who accompanies us make us tireless seekers of his presence and hopeful readers of the times and spaces that are ours. May the joy of seeking him and finding him, of his coming to meet us, be the gifts of hope that we offer to the men and women with whom we make our way.

Alberto Toutin ssc
Superior General

