



Star Of Bethlehem

By Pat Haggerty

Christmas is so intrinsically tied to gifts and gift-giving. As young children we make lists and we send them to Santa. Now, the children are even watched by the “Elf on the Shelf” to make sure they are good! The adults make lists too---but, of those gifts they need to buy. We spend hours either shopping in malls or shopping on line looking for just the right things! It becomes an

obsession.

Let's get our priorities straight! Both before and after Christmas, let's focus on the Nativity scene; let us center our meditations in the manger. Perhaps you can concentrate on the image from a beautiful religious Christmas card you have received. You can gaze at a Nativity scene you may have placed in your home. You can visit your church where the manger scene is displayed. You might even do a visualization. Think of the manger scene as it might appear to you. Are you looking at a cave or more of a stable? Are animals around or not? Are shepherds kneeling in wonderment? Have the three Wise Men arrived yet? (My grand-daughter, who is four, insists that one of them is a Queen). At the center are Mary and Joseph looking lovingly at the Christ Child wrapped in swaddling clothes. There is such a mixture of emotion there that it is hard to imagine---wonderment, awe, humbleness, puzzlement, anxiety, and acceptance.

I think of the strength of Joseph and his ability to remain committed to Mary and Jesus. I think of the intense beauty of Mary's "yes" to this whole amazing process. I think of the Angels rejoicing and singing their Alleluias. I even think of the shepherds who came with nothing but their sheep to honor their newborn King. How shocked and humbled were they?

Luke recounts in his gospel (2:8-12): "Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angle said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' "

Despite their fear they proceeded onward to seek the Infant who was hailed as their Savior. Let us continually proceed onward to seek our Lord and Savior. We can approach in haste and bring nothing but ourselves. Jesus is our Supreme gift; we are his humble and undeserving offering. Let us offer whatever we have of ourselves to that little Babe in the manger. Let us follow Him with the simplicity of the shepherds and with a like commitment to our task---of constantly finding Jesus in whatever and whoever is placed in our path.