

Merry Christmas



My Christmas Card this year is an 1890 painting by James Tissot, *The Magi Journeying*, which is a symbol of our pilgrimages to find and worship our Infant King. Tissot was an impressionist painter who painted in a variety of social and political genres; but, for most of his life, was lukewarm towards religion. But in 1885 he underwent a religious vision which revived his Catholic Faith and led him to spend the rest of his life painting religious themes from the Old and New Testaments.

The names of the three kings are not found in Holy Scripture. However Christian legend in the West traditionally names them as Melchior, a Persian scholar; Gaspar; and Balthazar, a Babylonian scholar. Other sources claim that Melchior was king of Persia, Gaspar was king of India, and Balthazar was king of Arabia or Ethiopia. And their gifts we all know: gold, the symbol of his kingship; frankincense, the symbol of his divinity; and myrrh, the symbol of his manhood.

I chose this painting for a Christmas Card because we are all like the Magi: we are searching for our Saviour; we are searching for that stable in Bethlehem. The gifts we carry are *ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice*. Look at the card - again. The muted colors and rough landscape are symbols of the spiritual vicissitudes of this world through which we must pass to reach that stable. This is my Christmas wish for all of us: that we find our way to the Christ Child and offer ourselves to him.