

# TAUGHT BY A STAR

*An Advent Program by Fr Dan Kovalak, 2001*

## **CHARACTERS:**

Herod (H), in royal garments  
Herod's Wife (HW), in royal garments  
Wise Men (WM1, 2, 3) royal garments  
Shepherds (S 1-4) robes  
Narrators (N1,2)  
Stars (youngsters), dark clothes holding stars

## **PROPS:**

telescope (cardboard tube)  
stars (foil on sticks)  
Shepherd staffs (walking sticks)

## **SETS:**

- 1) Shepherds Field (left)
- 2) Herod's Court (right)

## **SCENE ONE: Shepherds Field Shepherds meandering backed by stars.**

STARS (together): We're shining in the night. We're shining to give light. We're shining up above. We're shining with God's love.

S1: Sure are a lot of stars out tonight.

S2: Yeah. That's about as exciting as this job gets.

S3: Seems a lot brighter than usual, (pointing) specially over there.

S4: Wonder what's happening?

N1: When the world was still very young, the stars were already an important part of God's creation. They had to shine brightly.

N2: People depended on the stars. They were the first night lights. They helped folks find their way in the darkness.

N1: The stars helped travelers figure out where they were going, especially sailors.

N2: People studied the stars and some even worshipped them. You can learn a lot from the stars.

S1: (reading from scroll) "And God made the two great lights, the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heavens to give light upon the earth." (Gen 1:16-17)

S2: Almighty God promised our father Abraham that his descendants would be like the stars of heaven. I guess that makes US kinda like the stars.

S3: David the shepherd said: "When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?" (Psalm 8:3,4)

S4: And God "gave to all the stars their names." (Psalm 147:4) I wonder how God remembers all their names. I can't even remember the names of our sheep?!

N1: It's important for the stars to be in their right places. And the stars took their work seriously. Without them, people would stumble in the dark or get totally lost.

N2: The stars' job was to shine. David said "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament proclaims His handiwork."

N1: The prophet Daniel said "And those who are WISE shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." (12:3)

N2: That means wise people give light to others. Now there's something to think about.

STARS (together): We're shining in the night. We're shining to give light. We're shining up above. We're shining with God's love.

S1: Did you hear something?

S2: Was that the stars talking?

S3: It's all in your head. You need some sleep.

S4: I've got to use some starlight now to find that one silly sheep that keeps trying to run away.

N1: In a distant land, Herod was doing his kingly business. He didn't have time to study the stars. He paid big royal bucks for professionals to do it.

N2: But Herod's wife was quite the amateur stargazer, looking to the heavens for all sorts of signs.

STARS (together): We're shining in the night. We're shining to give light. We're shining up above. We're shining with God's love.

**SCENE TWO: Herod's court.**  
**Herod sitting on throne and his wife looking through a telescope.**

HW: My, the constellations are in favorable alignment tonight. That means tomorrow we will have financial success from an unknown source.

H: That's what we like to hear, my dear. Tell me more.

HW: Let's see, what else? ... Well, the way Virgo is lining up with Gemini means ... oh my goodness, we will experience a romantic crisis. (to Herod) Is there something you're not telling me?

H: (angrily) Do you dare accuse me by looking at stars?! I'll have your head!

HW: Sorry. I must be mistaken. It's a bit cloudy. The stars say everything's fine and you're a wonderful king and there're no problems.

H: That's more like it.

HW: But Scorpio DOES show you will have a big victory soon.

H: Victory? Victory over who? Tell me, what band of barbarians do the stars say I will conquer this time?

HW: I don't know. You'll have to call in the professionals for details. Or maybe you could spring for a better telescope for me?

H: Nonsense. Guards, summon the royal astronomers. Enough from this amateur woman.

(enter Wise Men)

WM1: (bowing) At your command, your highness.

WM2: How may we be of service, O mighty master?

WM3 (to Herod's wife): Nice scope you got there, ma'am. Did you get it from Scopes-R-U's?

H: My wife tells me the stars show a coming victory for me. Do you concur? Tell me, what great nation shall I now conquer?

WM1: (looking tentative among each other) Well, to be terribly honest with you, O great one, our star data unfortunately shows no such victory.

WM2: Not that there's anything wrong with that. You're still the most powerful king, O magnificent monarch.

WM3: But the stars do say, if I may boldly relate... there's another king coming.

H: (enraged) What!! Don't fool with me. I'll have your eyes plucked out. Give me the whereabouts of this new king. Over what kingdom does he reign? I'll blow him away!

WM1: Relax, master. Not to worry. We could be mistaken. It is, after all, a bit cloudy tonight as I'm sure your beautiful wife has informed you.

HW: See, I told you the stars were giving some special sign.

H: Silence, woman!

WM2: Actually, the appearance of an extremely bright morning star suggests a new king has just been born.

WM3: But it'll be years and years before you'll have to deal with him.

H: The stars say this new king will be a threat to me? Explain yourselves!

WM1: In this matter, there's good news and bad news. The good news is you'll be a great king for a long, long time.

H: And the bad news?

WM2: Nothing personal, your greatness, but the new king is ... the King of kings.

H: I'll assemble my armies at once! Don't toy with me! What's this supposed to mean?

WM3: (reluctantly) Only -- forgive me, O great one -- that He'll be greater than even you.

H: (rises, upset) No way, no how! You stargazers have lost your minds. None is greater than I. And you call yourselves wise men!

WM1: Just doing our job, most excellent one. We can only tell YOU what the stars tell US.

WM2: And the appearance of the brightest star we have ever seen suggests the birth of the greatest of kings.

WM3: This is a MAJOR happening, for sure. BIG news. No doubt about it.

H (sitting and thinking): Well, then... I have a special job for you allegedly 'wise' men. I order you at once to track your bright star and return to me with a full report ... (grinning) so that I too may worship this new King of kings.

WM1: As you order, O great one. We shall follow the star as you command.

WM2: It may take a while, though. It's some distance away. And we'll need plenty of food and supplies.

WM3: And gifts. We'll need gifts for the king. Will we be on the royal expense account?

H: Just GO!!! Don't bother me with petty details. Find this king to which the star points and come back to tell me where He is ... and WHO he is. That's it. Now off with you!

WM (together): We're going. We're going. Have a nice day, master.

*(Wise men move toward Shepherds Field set, leaving Herod pondering and wife gazing through telescope.)*

HW: Herod, weren't you a little hard on your wise men? They're just doing their job.

H: Quiet! Go back to your stargazing. Or better yet, why don't you take up quilting or bingo or something. You have no talent with stars.

N1: So the wise men, following orders, left Herod's court to follow the brightest star among all the stars of heaven.

N2: Herod's wife continued to gaze at the stars, but she also took her husband's advice and took up other, less dangerous, hobbies.

STARS (together): We're shining in the night. We're shining to give light. We're shining up above. We're shining with God's love.

**SCENE THREE:**  
**Wise men enter shepherds' field set. Herod and wife exit stage**

S1 (to wise men): Hi there. You fellas look lost? Can we help you?

WM1: We're following the star that proclaims a new king.

WM2: We've been traveling for days. The star has been getting even brighter. Oy, the desert sand! It's in my ears!

WM3: Just where are we? And is there lodging available nearby?

S2: You're in Israel and there's only one hotel in these parts -- and that one's booked solid for the royal census. It's kinda like a homecoming going on.

S3: Nice threads you've got on. So where are you gentlemen from?

WM1: We come from the East to find the newborn king.

WM2: We believe the radiant star is pointing to his birthplace.

WM3: We were sent ... by Herod.

S1-4: (together) Herod! Oh, no!

S1: We ain't seen no star. Don't know what you're talkin' about.

S2: (to others) Did you see a star? I didn't see a star.

S3: We're just shepherds. We don't know anything.

S4: Why's Herod worrying about us? We pay our fair share to him. Nothing exciting ever happens around here. Why can't that old goat leave us alone?!

WM1: Calm down. We're on a mission of peace. Though Herod ordered us to follow the star, this journey has become personal.

WM2: We mean you no harm. We just want to meet this newborn king and worship him ourselves. The star has brought us here.

WM3: We have no weapons, only gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. We assure you our intentions are honorable.

S1: Oh, that's different. Yeah, we've seen the star, can't miss it... (pointing) over there.

S2: That's Bethlehem, the city of David; only a stone's throw away, near all those houses.

S3: And the star shines directly on a place they keep animals, behind the inn.

S4: Brightest star we've ever seen... and we've been in this field forever.

WM1: So what's the story?

WM2: Anything unusual going on?

WM3: Your sheep seem rather calm.

S1: Just between us, we heard some 'noise' in the heavens.

S2: Yeah. Angels singing something about peace on earth. And don't say we're crazy 'cause we all heard it.

S3: Could be a band playing at the inn.

S4: You guys can go see for yourselves.

WM1: Have you already been there?

WM2: What did you see?

WM3: Is there a new king or not?

S1: Yep, been there... and you've got to see it to believe it. It's the most amazing thing. Even in the dark, the star makes that place as bright as daytime.

S2: The mother is a VIRGIN from Nazareth ... a virgin! Name's Mary. Does the Prophet Isaiah ring any bells for you fellas?

S3: They named the baby Jesus. He's the Promised Messiah: the Christ. That's what the star's all about. He's gonna save us from ... the tyranny of Herod ... nothing personal.

S4: We've been waiting for Him for centuries. And He's such a cute little baby. Hope He grows up fast. We're not getting any younger.

WM1: Now, let me get this straight. You've seen where the star shines, heard angels, and the new king, you say is the Christ, is a newborn baby?!

WM2: And He was born in the animal shelter BEHIND the inn?! How unsanitary!

WM3: And the mother is a VIRGIN? That's just not possible. You've got to be kidding.

WM1: That's the most unheard of thing I've ever heard of!

WM2: I suppose you don't doubt any of this.

WM3: Let's just go see already. My back's killing me from the trip.

S1: Go see for yourselves. And remember that, with God, nothing is impossible!

S2: We're convinced all this is true. The prophets foretold this hundreds of years ago and we believe them. We've got to watch our sheep. You go ahead.

S3: We'll be visiting again as soon as the second shift comes on. But they're always late.

S4: Do you mean to tell me you guys came all this way just by following the star?

WM1: How else could we have found this desolate place in the middle of nowhere?!

WM2: We don't know sheep like you but we know our stars. And (pointing) that star is beyond description, no question about it. There's nothing like it in any of our research.

WM3: That one's brighter than all the candles of Persia put together. And you know how we love our candles. I've never seen such a great light!

S1: This is incredible. We heard Herod's wife was 'into' stargazing.

S2: That woman doesn't go out of the palace unless the stars are just right.

S3: (pointing) That star must've made her crazy.

S4: Herod probably took away her telescope. And YOU men actually get paid by Herod to look at stars?!

WM1: Gotta earn a living somehow. But ... it seems to me that THAT star presents a bit of a problem for us.

WM2: Yeah, as long as the stars are favorable to Herod, NO problem.

WM3: But THIS star.... Herod's not going to be pleased.

WM1: We may lose our jobs.

WM2: Jobs, nothing. We might lose our heads!

WM3: A permanent relocation may be in order for us. I don't think Herod was serious about worshipping anybody other than himself.

S1: You fellas considering a career change?

S2: Shepherding doesn't pay much but it's honest work.

S3: Doesn't sound like there's much of a future for you in stargazing. Maybe you could start up a "STAR"bucks franchise?!

S4: (laughing) Or you can get a job writing a column in the Bethlehem Gazette.

WM1: You simple shepherds don't understand.

WM2: We've studied the stars for years and years. They have much to teach us.

WM3: We're professionals. Could you poor shepherds afford such gifts as those we bring?

S1: Our lives are humble. We don't require much.

S2: Just to do our work, provide for our families, worship our God and be able to LOOK at the stars is enough.

S3: Yeah, you professionals with all your wisdom... What good has it done you?

S4: You worship the stars only to be taught by a star... to worship God, the Maker of the stars! We already knew that!

STARS (together): We're shining in the night. We're shining to give light. We're shining up above. We're shining with God's love.

WM1: For shepherds, you're pretty smart. The stars have taught you well.

WM2: We better get moving, it's getting late. And I'm so hungry I could eat a camel ... with two humps!

WM3: Maybe, just maybe, the newborn king will have some bearing on our future. Let's go see what the star will teach US.

N1: And so the wise men left the shepherds in the field and went to Bethlehem where they found the little child of Mary, wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger, surrounded by animals.

N2: The star had brought them a great distance and presented them with a great dilemma. If they did as ordered, Herod would certainly seek to kill the newborn King. If they didn't return, Herod would hunt THEM down.

N1: In any case, life would never be the same again; not for the wise men, not for the shepherds or Herod, and not for the world!

N2: Those who worshipped the stars were taught by a star to adore the Sun of Righteousness: the Orient from on high.

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### **SONG: WE THREE KINGS**

N1: "Star of wonder. Star of light. Star with ROYAL beauty bright." So much for the royalty of Herod. Suddenly, his star isn't so bright anymore.

N2: The wise men presented their gifts to the King of Kings to which the star had led them. They had learned from the star. They were taught by the star. And they went back to their country the long way around -- the VERY long way around.

N1: Still today, the star that pointed to Christmas shines. Sometimes, we can't see it through the clouds. But if, as the prophet Daniel said, we are truly wise, we will see it's great light bouncing off all the other lesser stars.

N2: Our Savior, the morning star rising out of the East, has visited us in the flesh. The Light has come down to shine on the whole world and each of us. Let us show OUR wisdom by sharing the Light with others.

STARS (together): We're shining in the night. We're shining to give light. We're shining up above. We're shining with God's love.

All: CHRIST IS BORN. GLORIFY HIM