



## The Magi's Reminder

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Adapted from Dr. Scott Peck, *A Road Less Traveled*

Once an oasis of profound learning and beauty, a large abbey that housed both a convent and monastery within its grounds, now had only two nuns and three monks left, all elderly. The order was dying. In the surrounding deep woods, there was a little hut that a Zoroastrian Magi used when she came down from the mountain top during the winter months. The nuns and monks always knew the mage was home when they saw the clean smoke of her sacred fire rise above the treetops and smelled the pervading scent of sandalwood.

As the Abbott and Abbess sat together, agonizing over the imminent death of their order, it occurred to them to ask the mage for advice. Tradition had it that the Magi had been the first to greet Jesus at his birth; perhaps this mage could offer wisdom that might save the order. The Abbott volunteered to go ask.

The Magi graciously welcomed the Abbott to her hut and served him freshly brewed honey ginger lemon tea to warm himself and his favorite delectables. It was as though she knew he was coming. When the Abbott explained the reason for his visit, the mage could only commiserate with him. "I know how it is," she exclaimed. "The spirit has gone out of the people. It is the same in my community. Almost no one comes to gaze into the fire and contemplate the teachings of Ahura Mazda."

So, the Abbott and the Magi sat together discussing their faiths. The time came when the Abbott had to leave. "It has been a wonderful visit," said the Abbott, "but I have failed in my purpose. Is there nothing you can tell me to help save my dying order?" "The only thing I can tell you," said the Magi, "is that the Messiah is among you."

When the Abbott returned to the abbey, he went to the Abbess, and all the others gathered around them asking, "What did the Magi say?"

“She couldn’t help,” the Abbott answered. “The only thing she did say, as I was leaving was that the Messiah is among us. Though I do not know what these words mean.”

In the months that followed, the nuns and monks pondered this and wondered whether there was any possible significance to the mage’s words: The Messiah is among us? Could she possibly have meant that the Messiah is one of us monks and nuns here at the abbey? If that’s the case, which one of us is the Messiah? Do you suppose she meant the Abbott? Yes, if she meant anyone, she probably meant Father Abbott. She could not have meant Mother Superior—but could the Messiah be a woman? More than anyone, the Abbess does have immeasurable wisdom and compassion. Certainly, she could not have meant Brother Alfred! Alfred gets crotchety at times. But come to think of it, even so, Alfred is virtually always insightful and caring. Maybe the mage did mean Brother Alfred.

Of course, the Magi didn’t mean me. She couldn’t possibly have meant me. I’m just an ordinary person. Yet supposing she did? *Suppose I am the Messiah?*

As they contemplated in this manner, the nuns and monks began to treat each other with extraordinary respect on the off chance that one among them might be the Messiah and in turn, they began to treat themselves with extraordinary respect.

It so happened that people still occasionally came to visit the beautiful forest and abbey. Without even being conscious of it, visitors began to sense a powerful spiritual aura. They were sensing the extraordinary respect that now filled the abbey. Hardly knowing why, people began to come to the abbey grounds frequently to picnic, to play, and to pray. They began to bring their friends, and their friends brought their friends.

Then it happened that some of the younger men and women who came to visit started to talk more and more with the older monks and nuns. After a while, one asked if they could join them. Then, another and another asked if they too could join. Within a few years, the abbey once again became a thriving order, a vibrant center of Light and spirituality in the realm.

## **The Messiah is Among You**

