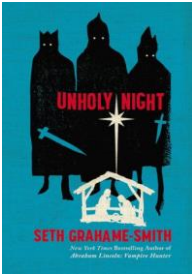




**Fr. Michael Goetz Library Learning Commons  
Teacher's Book Review**



***Unholy Night*, Seth Grahame-Smith  
Reviewed by Ms. Cosgrove, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012.**

The image of the Three Wise Men has long been associated with the Season of Advent, in the form of Christmas cards and carols, but what do we really know about these three ancient figures, apart from the brief mention of the Magi in the Gospel according to Matthew? Today's fiction explores the origins of the story and casts the Magi as three thieves who become entangled in a young couple's attempts to escape Herod's plot to kill their young infant.

The key figure in the narration is Balthazar, an Indiana Jones kind of character, who is driven to seek revenge against the Roman occupiers who murdered his little brother years ago. An avowed atheist, he finds himself in the unexpected position of being the protector of a newborn infant and his parents, while at the same time trying to avoid capture, for a daring theft of jewels. He and his band of fugitives must fight one obstacle after another, including swarms of killer locusts to hoards of mummified phantoms. Balthazar is irreverent and daring and always complex. It is through his intriguing conversations with Mary and Joseph, regarding the source and nature of religious faith, that the reader is provided a portal to understanding his character and motivation.

The book will add a new dimension to the way readers view the story of the nativity. Joseph is portrayed as a deeply religious man, puzzled as to why God would have chosen him to foster the Savior of the World. Mary, on the other hand, is drawn as a resilient young girl, confident in her role as the Mother of the Messiah. Woven through all this is a richly historic picture of the world during the time of Jesus – one that is filled with the excesses of wealth and the despair of poverty. It is against this tapestry that we are introduced to the maniacal King Herod and the Young Roman soldier, Pontius Pilate, who will meet Jesus, once again, three decades later, as his judge.

The author presents the story as a fictional adventure ride, but for some it will be more than that. Readers might be called upon to examine their faith and/or reaffirm their belief that the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, born two centuries ago in a manger, was indeed the long awaited Messiah. It's a wonderful story to read, especially at this time of the year. The somewhat misleading title of the book is *Unholy Night* and it's by Seth Grahame-Smith.