

Duluth -- During the holiday season, many people are reminded of the bright star that led the three wisemen to the Christ child born in a manger in Bethlehem.

On Tuesday -- Christmas Eve -- Donald Jackson, director of UMD's Alworth Planetarium, discussed the Christmas skys as they will appear to Duluthians.

Jackson said the "Christmas Star" for 1968 will be the beautiful planet Venus which appears as a brilliant object in the southwestern sky just after sunset.

Other planets that will be visible include Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars.

"Saturn, the ringed planet, appears in the southern sky as darkness covers Duluth," Jackson noted. Its ring system can be seen with a moderate telescope.

Jupiter, with its four bright moons, follows Saturn. Jupiter is a bright object and with a small telescope the star watcher can see its moons.

Mars, the Red Planet rises about 2 a.m. It is first seen in the east and remains in good position for the rest of the night.

The real beauty of the December skies, according to Jackson, is in the stars of Pleiades (the Seven Sisters), the Orion complex, the stars of Gemini (Castor and Pollux, the Twins) and Leo (the Lion.).

The brightest star in the sky is Sirius which is seen to the south and east of Orion.

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Jackson discusses the Christmas skies

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Jackson also noted that the program for the coming month at Alworth Planetarium is entitled, "Galaxies-Beyond the Milky Way." The next regularly scheduled program will be Jan. 5 at 2:30 p.m.