



SURGE ET ILLUMINARE

HOMILY ON THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

*Surge et illuminare, Jerusalem,
quia venit lumen tuum,
et gloria Domini super te orta est.*

Rise and shine, Jerusalem:
because your light has come
and the glory of the Lord has shone upon you.

Is 60:1

THIS GREAT FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY, which along with Easter, the Ascension, and Pentecost is called *this most holy day* in the Canon of the Mass, completes the feast of the Nativity of the Lord. If in the Holy Night we adored Emmanuel with the Angels and with the shepherds, today in the Child King we adore the *dominator Dominus*, at whose feet all peoples are called from every end of the earth. *Et adorabunt eum omnes reges terræ: omnes gentes servient ei*, says the Scripture: All the kings of the earth shall worship Him, and all peoples shall serve Him. We have sung it in the Introit: *Ecce, advenit dominator Dominus; et regnum in manu ejus, et potestas, et imperium*. Behold, the Lord who dominates comes: in his hand the kingdom, and kingly power and authority.

This is not merely a sentiment, a pious wish destined to be fulfilled only in part or to be shattered by the harsh reality of a rebellious world; it is instead a very certain affirmation, founded on the ontological necessity of Christ's triumph, which no one can ever oppose and which no one can ever prevent.

But while we are focused on the adoration of the Magi, who pay their tribute of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the King of kings after the poor homage of the shepherds, we must not forget that the Lord himself, with His Incarnation, came to this earth to offer to the Most Holy Trinity, and to the Eternal Father, the tribute of souls snatched from the dominion of Satan and conquered in His Passion and Death on the Cross. The Magi offer gold to the Kingship of Christ, frankincense to His Divinity, and myrrh to Christ the Sacrificial Victim. They are therefore a figure of

Our Lord, who offers all of us to the eternal Father, and along with us all those whom Providence has destined for the glory of Heaven, through the offering of Christ the Victim, raised on the altar of Calvary by Christ the Priest, who as King represents the humanity that belongs to Him by divine right, both of lineage and of conquest, and who as God is able to redeem by making reparation for our infinite sins and the infinite offense caused to God. The *Secreta* of today's Mass confirms this: *Ecclesie tuæ, quæsumus, Domine, dona propitius intueri: quibus non jam aurum, thus, et myrrha profertur: sed quod eisdem muneribus declaratur, immolatur, et sumitur, Jesus Christus Filius tuus Dominus noster*: Look with kindness, we beseech you, O Lord, upon the offerings of your Church, with which gold, frankincense, and myrrh is no longer offered, but rather the very One who through them is represented, offered, and received: Jesus Christ your Son and our Lord.

In the Magi – like in the three Angels who visited Abraham – we can also see a figure of the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity who are pleased to see their divine Will fulfilled in the Son: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* (Mt 3:17). What is signified by the treasures revealed by the Magi in the silence of Bethlehem – the divinity of *that* Child – is proclaimed by his Heavenly Father at the moment of his Baptism in the Jordan, which we also celebrate today together with the miracle of the water turned into wine at the wedding feast at Cana.

The solemnity of the divine manifestation of the Savior – this is the meaning of the word *epiphany* used in the Roman Church and of the word *theophany* of the Eastern Church – places us before the Divine Kingship of Christ under two aspects: His first coming and His second coming. The first coming was accomplished in poverty, in silence, in humble obedience to His Parents for thirty years, in preaching for three years, in facing the torments of His Passion, the ignominy of the Cross, His Death, and His Deposition in the tomb; and then in the Resurrection – carried out far from everyone's gaze, in the silence of the dawn of a Sunday nineteen hundred and ninety-two years ago, and concluded with the Ascension into Heaven and that promise of the Angel: *Men of Galilee, why are you looking at heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from among you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven* (Acts 1:11).

The second coming of the Lord will take place in glory: *et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos*, we proclaim in the Creed. And it will again be that Divine King who closes the flow of time and history in the Last Judgment, to end the phase of trial, *et seculum per ignem*. Then what was announced in the passage from the Prophet Isaiah that we have just heard will be definitively fulfilled: *Arise, O Jerusalem, and be clothed with light, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord shines upon you* (Is 60:1). This Light, which came into the world two thousand and twenty-five years ago, will shine in the Mystical Body, of which Christ is the

Divine Head, after these dark times of apostasy and after the *Passio Ecclesiae: For, behold, darkness covers the earth, thick fog envelops the nations; but the Lord shines upon you, his glory appears upon you.* Just as in the disfigured and suffering Christ the glory that shone in the Resurrection was obscured, so in His Mystical Body, now disfigured, the glory that awaits Him is eclipsed.

The persecution foretold by the Scriptures will be the last battle that humanity will have to face, siding with God or against Him, and the fate of that epochal clash is already marked by Christ's victory on the Cross: *o mors ero mors tua; morsus tuus ero, inferne*, says the prophet Hosea (Hos 13:14), taken up by the Apostle Paul. But before that persecution we will see the kings of the earth and the mighty of the nations ally themselves with the Antichrist and have the power to *blaspheme his Name, and his tabernacle, and the inhabitants of heaven* (Rev 13:6), that is, God, the Holy Church and the elects. *And it was granted [to the Beast] to make war against the saints, and to conquer them. And it was given power over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation. And all those who dwell in the earth worshipped it, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb, who was slain from the beginning of the world. He who has ears, let him hear* (Rev 13:7-9). Christ is the Lamb who suffers and triumphs in those who believe in him: in Abel he is killed by his brother, in Noah he is mocked by his son, in Abraham he was a pilgrim, in Isaac he was offered, in Joseph he was sold, in Moses he was exposed and driven out, in the Prophets stoned and mutilated, in the Apostles tossed about by land and sea, and in the Martyrs so many times and in many ways killed.

Yet, this parenthesis of Satan's apparent triumph is destined to end with the killing of the Antichrist by the Archangel St. Michael and with the head of the Serpent crushed by the Immaculate Virgin. The prophet Isaiah reassures us once again: *The peoples will walk in your light, and kings in the splendor of your rising. Lift up your eyes around and see: all these are gathered, they are coming to you. Your sons come from afar, your daughters are carried in your arms. At that sight you will be radiant, your heart will throb and expand, because the riches of the sea will pour down on you, the goods of the peoples will come to you. A crowd of camels will invade you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah, all of them will come from Sheba, bringing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the glories of the Lord* (Is 60:3-6). A little further on, the Prophet Isaiah addresses the Holy Church, the new Jerusalem: *Your gates will always be open; they will not be closed day or night, so that the wealth of the nations and their kings in procession may enter into you. For the nation and the kingdom that will not serve you will perish; those nations will be completely destroyed* (Is 60:10-11). When we look with dismay at the political and economic upheavals of states, we must remember the doom of ruin foretold for nations that rebel against the Lord.

At the beginning and at the end of the liturgical year, Holy Church reminds us of the Lord's second coming and exhorts us to be ready, as the Jews faithful to the prophecies of the Old Testament were ready for the first coming: *You also must be ready, for the Son of Man will come at an hour you do not expect* (Lk 12:40). And this warning should make all of us tremble, but especially those whom the Lord has constituted in authority, both in the Church and in civil society: *the master of that servant will arrive on the day when he least expects it and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him rigorously by assigning him a place among the infidels* (Lk 12:46).

The Virgin Mother, most august Queen and Lady, is present today at the act of adoration of the Magi to her Divine Son. Tomorrow she will attend, crowned with stars and seated on Her throne of glory on which she sits from her Assumption into heaven, the adoration of those who did not recognize Him at the first coming of Christ and of the pagan peoples who will be converted to Her Son. And just as the Father will place the enemies of Christ as a stool for His feet, so will Our Lord do with the *Mater Ecclesiae*, humiliating the enemies of the Virgin His Mother and of the Church His Bride: *The children of those who have oppressed you will come to you, humbling themselves; all those who have despised you will bow down to the soles of your feet and will call you the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel* (Is 60:14). May the intercession of Mary Most Holy, Queen of the Cross, protect us in our moment of trial and grant us the grace of perseverance. And so may it be.

+ Carlo Maria Viganò, *Archbishop*

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In Epiphania Domini