

## REFLECTION FOR THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD

Today we celebrate the Sunday of the “epiphany” of the Lord, that is, the manifestation of Jesus to the world, to all humanity. The Child of the manger is a “light” that is kindled in the night of the world and draws to himself all the peoples of the earth. This “light” became incarnate in our history and in our world, illuminated the paths of humanity, and led them to the encounter with salvation and the fullness of life.

The first reading announces to Jerusalem the arrival of the saving light of God. The people live in the darkness of destruction and violence, as a result of the capture and devastation of Jerusalem by the troops of the King of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar. The people feel disoriented and discouraged, but the prophet announces to them that a “light” will come: the glory of the Lord will shine upon Jerusalem; the people who walked in darkness “have seen a great light.” This light will not illuminate only the People of God, but all the peoples of the earth.

In the second reading, Saint Paul, writing to the Christians of Ephesus, confirms this saving plan of God as a reality that will reach all humanity, bringing together Jews and Gentiles in the same community of brothers and sisters—the community of Jesus: “the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” Jesus came to be “light” for all peoples, to make all humanity one single family, one single people.

In the Gospel, we see the fulfillment of this plan of God: “magi” from the east come to meet Jesus, representing all the peoples of the earth. Attentive to the signs of the coming of the Messiah, these “magi” seek him. They leave their lands and come to adore the “King of the Jews who has just been born.” A star guides them, a star that disappears over the skies of Jerusalem. In Jerusalem reigns the “star” of Herod, the “star” of power and violence, and where Herod reigns, the star of God is extinguished. Meanwhile, the “magi” are directed to Bethlehem, because thus had the prophets foretold:

“You, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;

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for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel."

It is in the humility of Bethlehem, in a poor manger, that the Savior of the world comes to us, and only those who have a poor heart and are able to let themselves be guided by his light will succeed in finding him, adoring him, and offering him gifts.

God comes as light for all nations, "but the darkness did not receive it." The world continues to live in the darkness of hatred, violence, war, and division. The Herods of this world continue to build grand palaces, to exploit the poorest, to sow terror and violence, but God will always make himself a child among us, illuminating the hearts of all who seek him and sowing hope in humanity. As a Portuguese poet says:

*And it was enough—*

*That small span of a dream—*

*To fill the world with joy.*

In the darkness of our world, the Child of the manger continues to be a flame of hope for all, because he affirms that God has not forgotten us; he has come to us. Let us allow ourselves to be guided by his light, and let us illuminate the world with hope. Let us pray:

"Where there is hatred, let me bring love.

Where there is offense, let me bring forgiveness.

Where there is discord, let me bring unity.

Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.

Where there is error, let me bring truth.

Where there is despair, let me bring hope.

Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

Where there is darkness, let me bring light."

"In the nights of fear without stars

Trust, the Lord is your light.

On the paths of silence and searching

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Trust, the Lord is your light.

When you feel lost and without direction

Trust, the Lord is your light.

When the deserts of life crush you

Trust, the Lord is your light.

When loneliness takes up residence in your heart

Trust, the Lord is your light.

But one must set out without fear

To meet a Child in Bethlehem

Who, cradled by his mother,

Tells us a secret:

In the humility of a manger

God sleeps.

Glory in the highest to our King and Lord

Who became a child among us

For love!"

AMEN.