



The Holy See

HOMILY OF JOHN PAUL II

**SOLEMN LITURGY IN ST PETER'S BASILICA
HOLY FATHER ORDAINS 12 BISHOPS ON THE SOLEMNITY OF THE EPIPHANY**

Thursday 6 January 2000

1. *"Arise, shine out Jerusalem, for your light has come. The glory of the Lord is rising on you" (Is 60: 1).*

The prophet Isaiah turns his gaze to the future. He is not looking so much at the secular future, but, enlightened by the Spirit, he directs his gaze to *the fullness of time*, to the fulfilment of God's plan in the messianic age.

The prediction uttered by the prophet concerns the Holy City, which he sees brightly shining: *"Though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples, above you the Lord now rises and above you his glory appears" (Is 60: 2)*. This is exactly what happened with the incarnation of the Word of God. With him "the true light that enlightens every man came into the world" (*Jn 1: 9*). From now on everyone's destiny will be decided by whether he accepts or rejects this light: for the life of men is found in him (cf. *Jn 1: 4*).

2. Today the light that appeared on Christmas extends its rays: *it is the light of God's epiphany*. It is no longer only the shepherds of Bethlehem who see and follow it; it is also the *Magi Kings*, who came to Jerusalem from the East to adore the newborn King (cf. *Mt 2: 1-12*). With the Magi came *the nations*, which begin their journey to the divine Light.

Today the Church celebrates this saving Epiphany by listening to the description of it in Matthew's Gospel. The well-known account of the Magi, who came from the East in search of the One who

was to be born, has always inspired popular piety as well, becoming a traditional part of the crib. Epiphany is both *an event* and *a symbol*. The event is described in detail by the Evangelist. The symbolic meaning, however, was gradually discovered as the Church reflected more and more on the event and celebrated it liturgically.

3. After 2,000 years, wherever Epiphany is celebrated, the Ecclesial Community draws from this precious liturgical and spiritual tradition ever new points for reflection.

Here in Rome, in accordance with a custom to which I have wanted to remain faithful since the beginning of my Pontificate, we celebrate this mystery *by consecrating new Bishops*. It is a tradition that has its own intrinsic theological and pastoral eloquence, and today we joyfully introduce it into the third millennium.

Dear Brothers who will shortly be consecrated, you come from various nations and represent the universality of the Church which adores the Word made flesh for our salvation. Thus the words of the responsorial psalm are fulfilled: *Lord, every nation on earth will adore you*.

Our liturgical assembly expresses this catholic nature of the Church in a remarkable way, thanks also to you, dear Bishops-elect. For around you are gathered in spirit the faithful from various parts of the world to whom you have been sent as successors of the Apostles.

4. Some of you will carry out the mission of Apostolic Nuncios: you, Archbishop Józef Wesolowski, in Bolivia; you, Archbishop Giacomo Guido Ottonello, in Panama; you, Archbishop George Panikulam, in Honduras; and you, Archbishop Alberto Bottari de Castello, in The Gambia, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. You will be papal representatives in these countries at the service of the local Churches and of the authentic human progress of their respective peoples.

You, Bishop Ivo Baldi, will lead the Diocese of Huaraz, Peru. You, Bishop Gabriel Mbilingi, have been chosen as Coadjutor Bishop of Lwena, Angola; and you, Bishop David Laurin Ricken, as Coadjutor Bishop of Cheyenne in the United States of America.

Episcopal ordination will confirm and strengthen you, Bishop Anton Cosa, in your service as Apostolic Administrator of Moldova, and you, Bishop Giuseppe Pasotto, as Apostolic Administrator of the Caucasus.

You, Bishop András Veres, will be Auxiliary Bishop to the Archbishop of Eger, Hungary; and you, Bishop Péter Erdo, will be Auxiliary to the Pastor of Székesfehérvár.

As for you, Bishop Franco Croci, you will continue your work as Secretary of the Prefecture for the Economic Affairs of the Holy See.

Be ever mindful of the grace of this Epiphany day! May *the light of Christ* always shine in your hearts and your pastoral ministry.

5. Today's liturgy urges us to be *joyful*. There is a reason for this: the light that shone from the Christmas star to lead the Magi from the East to Bethlehem continues to guide all the peoples and nations of the world on the same journey.

Let us give thanks for the men and women who have made this journey during the past 2,000 years. Let us praise Christ, *Lumen gentium*, who guided them and continues to guide the nations down the path of history!

To him, the Lord of time, God from God, Light from Light, we confidently address our prayer.

May his star, the Epiphany star, continually shine in our hearts, showing to individuals and nations the way of truth, love and peace in the third millennium. Amen.

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