

**Epiphany: feast of hope and courage**

In a period of fear and insecurity for the future and of isolation and suspicion towards others, on the feast of the Epiphany, we are invited to come together on a journey towards a common goal that gives meaning to our life. In several poems, from the Odyssey to the Divine Comedy, the literary image of the journey has been used to describe the human adventure as a journey in search of something that gives security and peace.

The Magi of the East, representatives of all nations, who inaugurate the journey of peoples towards Christ, are emblematic figures of those who seek the answer to the great questions about man, the universe and God. To this aspiration of all peoples, the paradoxical manifestation of a God made a child provides the answer. The recognition that the Son of God became man out of love for all men and for each of them, offers us a precious criterion for our time. Epiphany is the fulfilment of the promise that sustained the journey of the Magi and supports the journey of each person. Epiphany is the feast of hope.

On Christmas 1940, in the Trier concentration camp, the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre made the Wise King Belshazzar say in response to the desperate Bariona:

‘It is true that we Magi are very old and very wise and we know all the evil on earth. However, when we saw that star in the sky, our hearts leapt for joy like those of children, and we were like children, and we set out on the journey because we wanted to fulfil our duty as men, which is to hope’.

Today, faced with the abyss of evil that seems to overwhelm us, when even the growing number of victims of the pandemic leaves us indifferent, we need a greater hope, which allows us to prefer the common good of all to the luxury of a few and the misery and despair of many. For this there is a need for men and women who nourish great hope and therefore possess great courage: the courage of the Magi, who embarked on a long journey following a star, and who knew how to kneel before a Child who gave them a "great joy”, and to whom they offered their precious gifts.

We all need this courage, anchored in a firm hope that makes us move from isolation to communion, from the culture of selfish gain to the culture of giving, understood as a free action of self-giving as a response to the gift of life that we receive every day. The season of Epiphany, of which the Magi are a symbol, is an invitation to all of us to face the current situation of our multi-ethnic and multi-religious society starting from what Pope Francis calls "the mysticism of fraternity", because it gives us the certainty and joy that God is with us and we are with him, all children of the same Father, brothers and sisters together, because we are brothers and sisters of that Child, Son of God and of the Virgin Mary, who generates a newness of life and opens us to hope.

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