



In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

(Jn 1: 4-5)

Beloved sons and daughters in Christ our Savior,

The Light shines in the darkness, says the Prologue to the Gospel of John. What is this darkness if not the darkness engulfing the world and the heart of all those who do not know God? Let's take a close look at the icon of the Nativity. The luminous birth of the Child-God stands out in marked contrast to the grotto's gloomy background. This obscurity symbolizes mankind's despair in a world left without a guide and helpless.

At the time of the persecution of the Hebrews in Egypt, Moses saw the Light revealing itself to men in the Burning Bush on Mount Sinai. Commenting on this theophany, Saint Ephrem said: "This bush on the summit of the mountain is the Child of the Most-High who came into existence in the womb of the Virgin Mary and who illuminated the world at His coming."

Out of His Love, God descended into the depths of each man's heart to dwell there and make Himself available to all those who want to recognize this Light. There, in the dark cave of our anguish, weakness and despair, He decided to meet us by taking on our flesh and becoming like one of us by espousing everything human. We are no longer – nor ever will be – alone, “for God is with us,” as we sing in a hymn of the Vigil of the Feast.

Following the Wise Men, and by an intuitive conviction, many seekers of truth perceived this light as a “star” which guided their quest, but as yet in an exterior way. On watch during the night of the world, the humble shepherds met the Child-God in an intimate experience, in an authentic communion. That is why, as the Gospel relates, “They returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.” (Luke 2:20)

This is the life that the Feast of the Nativity proposes to us: to understand and see that which has been announced to us! We often seek on the outside what is within. In the silence of this marvelous night, let us listen to the voice of the angels, and let us look within our heart where the Grotto of the Nativity is to be found. Still hidden, this Light must reveal itself so that we can proclaim with the world: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, the glory as of a Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

May the blessing of God Almighty grant us the grace of stepping over the threshold of the Grotto of the Nativity, of contemplating our Saviour, and of following Him according to our life in His Life!

A Joyful and Holy Christmas to all!

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