

## Fourth Sunday in Advent, 2008

*“Come, O Lord, and show us Thy face, Thou that art enthroned upon the Cherubim:  
and we shall be saved.”*

(Ps. 79)

The Sacred Word of God puts a petition into our mouths which here and now should express our real desire to see the face of Christ — to see the face of Him that “is enthroned upon the Cherubim”. Each one of us must know in our hearts whether this is a genuine yearning or a mere sentimental emotion. Yet God’s promise is true — if we gaze upon His face “we shall be saved”. St John the Evangelist is represented by the Eagle, signifying the heights of contemplation that inspired him to write a scripture that told us of the Divinity of Jesus Christ — he saw God in Christ. The opening words of his gospel bring this home to us very clearly.



At every Holy Mass we recite much of those sacred words; and we have become familiar with the conclusion of the Last Gospel — “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.” The thrice-daily Angelus reminds us of this — but how much thought do we give to the “Word made flesh dwelling in our midst”; how much does it mean to us? The Gospel puts upon our lips a confession of faith: “And we saw His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The shepherds of Bethlehem saw this glory in the skies where heaven was opened and the Angels proclaimed the birth of “a Saviour who is Christ the Lord”. Every time you come to Mass, the priest leads you to “the altar of God”, a humble altar on this earth that becomes mystically one with the altar of our Saviour in heaven; and with all the Angels and Saints — with all the souls who are safe in God’s keeping. Are we really aware of their presence as we celebrate the “New and eternal Sacrifice of the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus our Redeemer”? It is here that we become truly witnesses to “His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” This means an effort of contemplation, which by the gift of the Holy Ghost given to each one of us is made possible. But we must use the means that the Church gives to us — first the powerful grace of the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist; then the prayers and devotions of the Church; prayerful reading of the Scriptures according to the Church’s seasons of the year, especially in the Liturgy; the writings of authorised masters in spirituality; devotions and sacred images provided by the Church. When we look at the image of the Child Jesus in the manger, our hearts should reach out to the reality, as did the shepherds, as did the Magi. The hymn of today’s Office can be a help:

*“Jesus, loving Creator of the heavenly bodies, eternal light of the faithful and Redeemer of all men ... urged on by generous love, Thou didst become a healing power to a sick world, to prevent it being through the devil’s wiles, sick even to its death.”*

There we get a glimpse of that glory — full of grace and truth; virtues which the Divine Child wishes each of us to imitate so as to fulfil our vocation; that divine call to holiness. Christmas must be for us a Holy Feast — we must prepare ourselves for that coming of our Saviour, for His dwelling in our midst: there lies our true happiness — a happiness like to that of the shepherds who wished all the world to know of the wonders of God that they had seen and heard. Our souls should be as ecstatic when we unite ourselves to Him in the heavenly worship of God through the Sacrifice of the Mass.

What a great privilege it would be to gaze upon the face of the Child Jesus through the eyes of Mary. In our Rosaries let us ask our Blessed Mother to help us to bring the grace and truth, the peace and love of the first Christmas night at Bethlehem into our hearts and into our homes, so that we may be truly “holy families”.

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