



DAY 21: Contemplation

The Magi

1 – INTRODUCTION: The mystery of Christ in us and in the Church

“We must continue and complete in ourselves the states and mysteries of the life of Christ, and frequently implore Him to consummate and perfect them in us and in His entire Church. For the mysteries of Jesus have not yet reached their total perfection and fullness. They have certainly reached their perfection and fullness in the person of Jesus, but not in us, who are His members, nor in His Church, which is His mystical body. The Son of God wishes to communicate and extend in a certain way and continue His mysteries in us and in His whole Church, either through the graces He has determined to grant us, or through the effects He wants to produce in us through these mysteries. In this sense, He wishes to perfect them in us.” -St. John Eudes

THE MYSTERIES OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST OUR LORD [261]

Note: It should be observed in all the following mysteries that all the words included in parentheses are from the Gospel itself, and not those outside them; and in each mystery, for the most part, you will find three points (*punctos*) for meditating and contemplating more easily.

2 – THE ONLY ONE FORETOLD

“The history of mankind is full of men who claimed to come from God, or who were gods, or bearers of messages from God, such as Buddha, Muhammad, Confucius, Christ, Lao-tse, and thousands of others, and each of them has a right to be listened to and considered.” (Fulton Sheen)

Three facts make Jesus unique. The first is that He has a presentation unlike any other; He was foretold, and not only among the Jewish people:

“Let us return to the testimony of paganism. Tacitus, speaking on behalf of the ancient Romans, tells us: ‘People were generally persuaded, based on ancient prophecies, that the East would prevail, and that from Judea would come the Master and Sovereign of the world.’ Suetonius, recounting the life of Vespasian, reports the Roman tradition as follows: ‘Throughout the East there was an ancient and constant belief that, with the support of unquestionably certain prophecies, the Jews would attain supreme power.’

China was in a similar state of expectation, but, being on the other side of the world, believed that the great Sage would be born in the West. The annals of the Celestial Empire contain this declaration:

‘In the 24th year of Chao Wang, of the dynasty of Cheou, on the 8th day of the 4th moon, a light appeared in the southwest, illuminating the king’s palace. The monarch, surprised by such a glow, questioned the wise men. They showed him books indicating that this prodigy signified the appearance of the great Saint of the West, whose religion was to be introduced into their country.’

The Greeks awaited Him, since Aeschylus, in his *Prometheus*, six centuries before His coming, wrote: 'Do not expect an end to this curse until God comes to take upon Himself the pains of your own sins, as a form of atonement.'

How did the Magi from the East know that He would come one day? Probably through the numerous prophecies circulated by the Jews throughout the world, as well as Daniel's prophecy to the Gentiles, centuries before the birth of the One who was to come.

After recounting the sayings of oracles and sibyls about a 'king whom we must recognize in order to be saved,' Cicero, in anticipation, asked: 'To what man and to what period of time do these predictions point?' The Fourth Eclogue of Virgil recorded the same tradition, speaking of a 'chaste woman, who smiles at her little child, by whom the age of iron will disappear.'

Suetonius cited a contemporary author to indicate that the Romans were so fearful of a king who would rule the world that they ordered all children born that year to be killed. And this was an order that only Herod carried out.

Not only did the Jews await the birth of a great king, a sage, and a savior, but also Plato and Socrates spoke of the Logos and the universal sage 'who was to come.' Confucius spoke of the 'holy one'; the sibyls of a 'universal king'; the famous Greek dramatist of a savior and redeemer who would free mankind from the 'original curse.' All these people were on the side of pagan expectation. What sets Christ apart from all men is that He was above all awaited; even the Gentiles longed for a liberator or redeemer. This single fact already distinguishes Him from all other religious leaders." (Fulton Sheen)

The other two facts that make the Lord stand out above all are:

"A second fact that distinguishes Him is that, once He appeared, the impact He had on history was such that it divided it into two periods: one before His coming and the other after it. This was not done by Buddha or any of the great Indian philosophers. Even those who deny God have to date their attacks against Him based on an era anchored in His coming into this world.

A third fact that separates Him from all other persons is the following: any other person came into this world to live, whereas He came to die. Death was a stumbling block for Socrates, as it interrupted his teaching. But for Christ, death was the goal and fulfillment of His life's purpose, the gold He was seeking. Few of His words or actions are understandable if reference is not made to His cross. He presented Himself more as a Savior than simply as a Teacher. Nothing meant teaching men to be good, unless He also gave them the power to be good after rescuing them from the frustration of guilt." (Fulton Sheen)

3 – THE MYSTERY: THE VISIT OF THE MAGI

PREPARATORY ACTS

Presence of God and Preparatory Prayer:

The preparatory prayer is to ask grace from God our Lord, so that all my intentions, actions, and operations may be purely ordered in the service and praise of His divine majesty. [46]

1st Preamble: The History**History**

[267] ABOUT THE THREE MAGI, SAINT MATTHEW WRITES IN CHAPTER 2, 1-12:

“Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the time of King Herod. Some magi from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is the King of the Jews who has been born? For we saw His star in the East and have come to worship Him.’ When King Herod heard this, he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. He called together all the chief priests and scribes of the people and inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.’ Then Herod summoned the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time the star had appeared. Sending them to Bethlehem, he said, ‘Go and search carefully for the child; and when you find Him, report back to me, so that I may also come and worship Him.’ After hearing the king, they set out, and behold, the star they had seen in the East went ahead of them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. Upon seeing the star, they rejoiced exceedingly. They entered the house and saw the child with Mary His mother, and they knelt and worshiped Him; then they opened their treasures and offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another route.” (Mt 2:1-12)

2nd Preamble (Composition of Place):**Composition of Place**

Saint Matthew, the only evangelist who speaks of the Magi in the Bible, explains that they came from the “East,” a region which for the Jews meant the territories of Arabia, Persia, or Chaldea—that is, all lands beyond the Jordan. Moreover, the Easterners called “magoi” (*magicians*) the learned men or priests.

“In Persia, by local tradition, a kind of savior was expected, and it was also known that a similar expectation existed in Palestine.” They saw the star “and understanding that it was the star of the King of the Jews, set out from the East to worship Him.” (Ricciotti)

Their Journey...

Request: Inner knowledge of the Lord...

BODY OF THE CONTEMPLATION**I. COME FROM THE EAST**

1st Point: The three magi, guided by the star, came to worship Jesus, saying: “We saw His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”

The Miraculous Star

“Was the star that appeared to the Magi one of the heavenly bodies?”

Argument from Authority: Augustine, in *Contra Faustum*, says: It was not one of the stars which, from the beginning of creation, maintain their course according to the law of the Creator; rather, at the time of the new birth of the Virgin, a new star appeared.

Solution: As Chrysostom explains in *Super Mt. 49*, the star that appeared to the Magi was not one of the heavenly bodies. This is clear for many reasons.

First, because no other star travels this path, since it moved from north to south, corresponding to the position of Judea relative to Persia, whence the Magi came.

Second, because of the timing—it could be seen not only at night, but also at midday. No ordinary star, not even the moon, could do this.

Third, because it sometimes appeared and sometimes disappeared. When they entered Jerusalem, it disappeared; then, when they left Herod, it reappeared.

Fourth, because it did not move continuously, but only when it was convenient for the Magi to travel, it moved; when it was convenient for them to stop, it also stopped, just like the pillar of cloud in the desert (Ex 40:34; Dt 1:33).

Fifth, because it did not show the birth of the Virgin from above, but descended to a lower place. In Mt 2:9, it is said that the star they had seen in the East went before them until it came to the place where the child was and stopped. Hence, it is clear that the Magi’s expression, ‘We saw His star in the East,’ should not be understood as meaning that, being in the East, the star appeared in Judea, but that they saw it in the East, preceding them to Judea (though some have doubts about this). It could not have pointed to the house clearly if it had not been close to the ground. And as Chrysostom himself says, this behavior seems not proper to a star, but to a rational power. Thus, one is left with the impression that this star was an invisible power transformed into that figure.

“And the star... went before them until it came and stopped over the place where the child was’ (Mt 2:9). The Magi arrived in Bethlehem because they allowed themselves to be guided obediently by the star. Moreover, ‘upon seeing the star, they rejoiced exceedingly’ (Mt 2:10). It is important, dear friends, to learn to discern the signs by which God calls and guides us. When one is conscious of being guided by Him, the heart experiences true and deep joy, accompanied by a lively desire to find Him and a persevering effort to follow Him obediently.” (John Paul II)

II. THEY CAME TO WORSHIP HIM

2nd Point: They worshiped Him and offered gifts: “And falling to the ground, they worshiped Him, and presented gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

“May you, therefore, my dear Hugo, be imbued with calm and adoration. This last little word is what I most wish to emphasize: adoration. To try to grasp the immense greatness of God, something visible in the Old Testament, which an overly sentimental explanation sometimes makes us forget. It is absolutely necessary to be intimate with Christ, the sense of a fraternity with Him, but nothing

should make us forget the infinite distance that separates us; that if He calls us His children, it is not because we have a right, but because of a gesture of His infinite goodness.” (St. Alberto Hurtado)

“I would say that adoration is recognizing that Jesus is my Lord, that Jesus points out the path I must take, makes me understand that I live rightly only if I follow the path He shows me, only if I walk the way He indicates. Thus, to adore is to say: Jesus, I am Yours and I follow You in my life; I would never want to lose that friendship, this communion with You. I could also say that adoration is, in essence, an embrace with Jesus, in which I say: I am Yours, and I ask You to always be with me as well.” (Benedict XVI)

“**They opened their treasures and offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh’ (Mt 2:11) (...)** Be worshipers of the one true God, recognizing Him as first in your life! Idolatry is a constant temptation for humanity. Unfortunately, some seek solutions to their problems in religious practices incompatible with the Christian faith. There is a strong impulse to believe in false myths of success and power; it is dangerous to embrace fleeting concepts of the sacred that present God as cosmic energy, or in other ways incompatible with Catholic doctrine.

Young people, do not believe in false illusions and ephemeral fads that often leave a tragic spiritual void! Reject the seductions of money, consumerism, and the hidden violence sometimes propagated by the media.

The worship of the true God is a genuine act of resistance against all forms of idolatry. Worship Christ: He is the Rock upon which to build your future and a more just and compassionate world. Jesus is the Prince of Peace, the source of forgiveness and reconciliation, who can make all members of the human family brothers.” (John Paul II)

The Eucharist:

“**And falling down they worshiped Him’ (Mt 2:11).** If in the Child whom Mary holds in her arms the Magi recognize and adore the One long-awaited by the nations and announced by the prophets, we too can adore Him today in the Eucharist and recognize Him as our Creator, our only Lord and Savior.” (John Paul II)

III. WARNED IN DREAMS

3rd Point: “Being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another route.”

The Magi give us an example by following the star and the inner motion, leaving behind their comforts and securities. They also give us an example when, once the star disappeared from their sight, they consulted in Jerusalem (when consolation does not guide or confirm God’s will, we must consult). Then, once they had met Jesus, they set an example for us because they did not return the same way; in our case too, to the extent that we know the Lord, our lives will take a different direction.

We also see how God protects them especially; we must convince ourselves that we too are loved and protected by God; He loves and watches over us, attentive to us as if we were the only ones in the universe... do we believe that?

“Herod will always be the model of those who investigate religion but never act correctly according to the knowledge they receive. Just as those who know all the stations of a journey but do not go to

any. Knowledge of the mind is of no use unless accompanied by submission of the will and right action.” (Fulton Sheen)

The Beauty of Jesus

Saint John of Ávila shows how the phrase “we saw Him, and He had no form or comeliness” applies only to the eyes of the body—those of the Jews who had no faith—because in the eyes of the soul, Christ is always beautiful. He then adds:

“And thus it is, may Christ the Spouse appear beautiful to you, being God, the Word of the Father. Beautiful also in the womb of the Mother, where He did not lose divinity and took on humanity. Beautiful, the Word born an infant, for although He was an infant who could not speak, when He nursed, when carried in arms, the heavens spoke, the angels sang praises, the star brought the Magi, He was adored in the manger, placed as food for tame animals. Beautiful in heaven, beautiful on earth, beautiful in the Mother’s womb, beautiful in her arms; beautiful in miracles, beautiful in scourging, beautiful in inviting to life, beautiful in being unconquered by death; beautiful leaving His soul when He expired, beautiful taking it again when He rose, beautiful on the cross, beautiful in the tomb, beautiful in heaven, beautiful in understanding. The sum and true beauty is justice. There you will not see Him beautiful where He is not just. And since He is just everywhere, He is beautiful everywhere.” All this is said by Saint Augustine (Serm. 44,1ss: ML 38,258). (Saint John of Ávila)



To the one who knew this beauty most and reflected it most in her life, let us ask her to help us know and love her Divine Son more, our King, whom we want to follow, knowing and doing His most holy will.

Colloquy

I will think over what I ought to say the Three Divine Persons, or the eternal Word incarnate, or to His Mother, our Lady. According to the light I have received, I will beg for grace to follow and imitate more closely our Lord, who has just become man for me. Close with an Our Father.