

A sermon for Epiphany by Aelred of Rievaulx ¹

Rise up, be enlightened, Jerusalem, for your light has come. This is the Jerusalem which the Lord Jesus, who is the true and highest peace, is building up out of living stones, the Jerusalem that aspires to the vision of him and believes with utter certainty that it shall find its happiness in that vision. It is the holy Church. It is each and every holy gathering, each and every holy soul. *Rise up*, he said, *be enlightened, Jerusalem*. Rightly was it told: *Rise up*, for it was lying prostrate. Rightly is it told, *Be enlightened*, for it was blind. It was lying prostrate, blind, in darkness, in error, in sin. Therefore it was told: *Rise up*, because he who would raise it up had already stooped down. It is told: *Be enlightened*, because he who would enlighten it was already present. What else does that new star proclaim from the heavens but *Rise up, be enlightened*? The sign of the Lord's birth has appeared in the heavens so that we may rise from the love of earthly things to heaven. And this sign takes the form of a star so that we may know that by his birth we shall be enlightened.

But from where does this light come to them? *Rise up*, he says, *be enlightened, Jerusalem, for your light has come*. This is the whole reason why the holy Church is enlightened, first in those three kings and afterwards in all nations. This is the whole reason – what was said to her through the Prophet: *Because your light has come. For a light has arisen in the darkness*. But for whom? Not for the perverse of heart who remain in their darkness, but for the upright of heart who recognize the light and come to adore.

The heart that is empty and a waste is told to rise up – that is, to prepare itself for the things of heaven that are to be desired. And as if to someone who answers: “I do not see what things of heaven, what things of the spirit I ought to desire, is added: *Be enlightened*. And look how beautifully these two testaments agree in these two lessons – from the Prophet and from the Gospel – which are read in the Church today. We explicitly see the Gospel in the prophecy and the prophecy in the Gospel, like a wheel within a wheel. In the Prophecy the holy Church of the Gentiles is told: *Rise up, be enlightened, for your light has come*. In the Gospel the story is told of how there appeared to the same Church of the Gentiles a new star in the heavens which bade it raise itself from the things of earth and invited it to the true light newly born. In the Prophecy, *And the glory of the Lord has arisen over you* is added.

Before this time the carnal Jews were glorifying the Lord, but all that glory was beneath them, not beyond them. For when those carnal Jews glorified the Lord they did so because the Lord promised them the good things of earth. The only reward they sought was a temporal one. But today the Church is told: *Rise up, for the glory of the Lord has arisen over you*, so that the children of holy Church may turn their

hearts from the things of the earth to those of heaven and may serve and glorify God not for the things of earth but for the things of heaven.

The three kings of whom we have spoken came to Jerusalem and asked: *Where is he who is born King of the Jews?* As soon as Herod heard those words *he was dismayed*. Why, if not because he was earth and darkness covered the earth? He was afraid of losing his earthly kingdom. Because all he sought was an earthly kingdom, he thought that the newborn king would seek only an earthly kingdom.

It is no wonder that before the Lord's coming – when they had heard nothing of God, when they did not discern the light of Scripture – the pagans lay prostrate in their sins and in the darkness of their errors. But now lying prostrate in carnal desires and in the darkness of iniquities is a matter for great agitation, *for the true light that enlightens every one coming into the world, Christ Jesus, has now come*. We cannot have further excuse for our sins, for Christ, who takes away the sins of the world and justifies the wicked, now speaks to us openly. *Someone who follows me does not walk in darkness but will have the light of life*. And what is the way by which he walks and which leads to him? Let him tell you himself: *Anyone who chooses to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me*. The apostle also points out the way that leads to Christ; it is, he says, *through many tribulations that we must enter the kingdom of heaven*. Again, the Lord tells us in the Gospel: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*. This is the way by which Jesus walked and by which we shall come to him: the renunciation of our own will, the imitation of Christ's passion, the hardships of the present life, and voluntary poverty. This is the way which sacred Scripture shows us, which, as we said, appeared to the three kings.

1Aelred of Rievaulx – The Liturgical Sermons – Cistercain Publications – Kalamazoo – 2001 – pg 106 f

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The second Sermon of Bl. Gueric on the Epiphany ¹

“Arise, be enlightened, Jerusalem, for your Light has come.” This present day of lights has been enlightened for us and consecrated by the Light of Light. He had lain hidden and unknown, but today he has vouchsafed to reveal himself to the world for the enlightenment of all nations. For today he revealed himself to the Chaldeans by the sign of a new star, dedicating in them as his first fruits the faith of all nations. Today he revealed himself to the Jews, by the witness not only of John but also of the Father and of the Holy Spirit, when, baptized in the Jordan, he consecrated the baptism of all. Today he manifested his glory before his disciples when by changing water into wine he prefigured that ineffable mystery in which by his word the substance of things are changed. The Holy Spirit, foreseeing that the Church's faith was to be enlightened by all these appearances of God, speaks to it under the figure and name of Jerusalem in the words: “Arise, be enlightened, Jerusalem, for your light has come.” The Lord indeed had come; he was in the world, and the world was made through him, but the world did not know him. He was born, but he was not known, until the day of light began to manifest him. So the Prophet says: “O new Jerusalem, great city of the new king, arise, be enlightened, for your light has come.” Arise, you who sit in darkness; look at the light which has risen up in the darkness but is not mastered by the darkness. Draw near to him and be enlightened, in his light you shall see the light, and it will be said to you: “You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.” Look upon the Eternal Light which has tempered itself to your gaze, so that he who dwells in inaccessible light affords access even to weak and bleary eyes. See the Light in a lamp of earthenware, the Sun in a cloud, God in man, the Splendor of Glory and Brightness of Eternal Light in the clay vessel of your flesh.

Majesty indeed lies hid in human nature, power in lowliness; but signs and prodigies break through the covering and leave no doubt as to their origin. “The works which I do,” he says, “bear witness to me.” Great indeed is the witness of John, who came to bear witness as a lamp to the light. But much greater is that heavenly witness which the Father and the Holy Spirit bore to the Son, the Father by his voice, the spirit in the form of a dove; since on the evidence of two witnesses every claim is established. But if even this be not accepted, the countless and unimpeachable works which I do bear witness to me. For what more God-like could be manifested to human senses than the prodigies which Jesus today exhibited, long before the beginning of his signs? A new-born child cries on earth while in the heavens he creates a new star, so that light may witness to Light, a star to the Sun, and so that kings in the splendor of its rising may be led to the Eternal Splendor which has also risen up. They come from the sunrise to the true Sunrise, that is to the man whose name is Sunrise. They are led by the star not as a star but as a rational being, going before them in the journey, coming to a halt at the end of the journey and pointing out as with a finger him whom they sought.

Thank you, Father of lights, who have called us out of darkness into your admirable light. Thanks be to you who bade light shine out of darkness and have kindled a light in our hearts whose shining is to make known your glory as you have revealed it in the features of Jesus Christ. This is the true Light, indeed eternal life; that we may know you the one God, and him whom you have sent, Jesus Christ. We know indeed through faith, holding on to it as to a trustworthy pledge so that we shall know by sight too. In the meantime increase our faith, leading us on from faith to faith, from brightness to brightness, by your Spirit, so that from day to day we may enter more deeply into the treasures of light, so that faith may become more all-embracing. Thus will knowledge be more full, charity more fervent and expansive, until, through faith, we are led to the vision of your face, as if led by a leading star to our Leader at Bethlehem.

1Guerric of Igny – Liturgical Sermons – vol. 1 – Cistercian Publications – Spencer, MA – 1970 – pg 76

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01.08.19

A Continuation of the Sermon by Bl. Gueric of Igny ¹

O with what joy does the faith of the Magi exult there as they look upon the babe now reigning in that heavenly Jerusalem, him whom they adored as a crying babe in Bethlehem. Here he was seen in the inn of the poor; there he is seen in the palace of the angels; here in the swaddling clothes of infants, there in the splendor of the saints; here in his mother's lap, there on his Father's throne. Truly the faith of the blessed Magi deserved to be rewarded with so blissful a sight. Their faith, although it saw in him only what was weak and contemptible, could not however find in that a stumbling-block to prevent them from worshiping God in man and man in God.

These first-fruits of the nations, then, these beginnings of the new-born Church, aptly prefigure the stages by which faith progresses in individuals. For just as they began with the sight of the star, advanced to the sight of the Child, arrived at the sight of God, so in us faith is born by the preaching of heavenly luminaries, it is strengthened by the sight of certain images which show us God incarnate, through a confused reflection in a mirror, and will be brought to its consummation when the naked truth of things will be seen as present and we shall contemplate face to face what now is scarcely seen for a fleeting moment now and then, as a confused reflection. Then faith itself will be transformed into knowledge, hope into possession, desire into enjoyment.

What are these stars? If you are in doubt, ask Daniel. "They who instruct many unto justice shall shine like stars for all eternity." Paul also calls those men luminaries who shine in the midst of a wicked and perverse nation and contain the word of life, like splendor borrowed from eternal light, with which they seem to enlighten the night of this world. Therefore the Lord said: "You are the light of the world"; and again: "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven". So they shine by their word, they shine by their example, and by these two rays of light they proclaim the rising of eternal Light. They preach with their voices one who is in heaven and commend him also by the resemblance of a heavenly life. - *over*

Look up, brethren, into heaven, for your true home is in heaven. Look up and direct the eyes of your mind at least on the brilliance of the stars, if you are not able yet to gaze upon the sun's disk. Admire the splendor of the saints, imitate their faith, emulate their holiness. Those stars blaze like a flame and show clearly that the Light of lights has risen. They lead to the cradle of the new King, to the bedchamber of the Virgin Mother, faith's inviolable mystery, indeed they lead to the temple of the King, to the sanctuary of God the father, faith's reward that surpasses all understanding. In the meantime however, while we are not able to search out the wisdom of God

which is hidden in mystery or to contemplate the majesty which is to be our reward, let us be content to wonder at the brightness of the saints.

The straightest way to finding Jesus is to follow the guiding light of the fathers who have gone before us. The path of the just has been made straight. He who follows the just man does not walk in darkness but will have the light of life and not only see it. He will see it for the comforting of his present life, he will have it to possess an eternal inheritance. Let us exercise ourselves in the works of light and He will show it to us now from time to time to encourage us in our work and afterwards will give it to us as a reward, He our Light, Christ Jesus who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

1Guerric of Igny – Liturgical Sermons – vol. 1 – Cistercian Publications – Spencer, MA – 1970 pg 79

TM-EPI02

01.09.2019

From Hymns on the Nativity, by St.Ephrem the Syrian.¹

The star of light that shone forth suddenly
beyond its nature is smaller than the sun
yet greater than the sun; it was smaller
in visible light; it was greater
in hidden power because of its symbol.
The morning star shed its rays
among the dark ones and led them
like blind men. They came and received
a great light. They gave offering
and received life and worshipped and returned.
Above and below there were two harbingers
for the Son: the star of light
shouted out joyfully from above, and John
proclaimed from below. Two harbingers:
both an earthly one and a heavenly one.
That heavenly one showed his nature
that is from God's Majesty. And the earthly one also
showed His nature that is from humanity.
O great wonder! - that His divinity
and His humanity were announced by them.
Whoever considered Him earthly -
the star of light would convince him
that He was heavenly. And whoever considered Him
spiritual - John
would convince him that He was also bodily.
Into the holy Temple Simeon carried Him
and sang a lullaby to Him, "You have come, Compassionate One,
having pity on my old age, making my bones enter
into Sheol in peace. By You I will be raised
out of the grave into paradise."

¹ Ephrem the Syrian, Hymns, Ephrem the Syrian, tr. Kathleen McVey, Paulist Press CWS, 1989. Hymn 6 p.112-3

Anna embraced Him; she placed her mouth
upon His lips, and then the Spirit rested
upon her lips, like Isaiah
whose mouth was silent until a coal drew near
to his lips and opened his mouth. (over)

Anna was aglow with the spirit of His mouth.
She sang him a lullaby, "Royal Son,
despised son, being silent, You hear;
hidden, You see; concealed, You know;
God-man, glory to Your name."
Even the barren heard and came running
with their provisions. The Magi are coming
with their treasures. The barren are coming
with their provisions. Provisions and treasures
were heaped up suddenly among the poor...
John approached with his parents
and bowed down to the Son, and brightness rested
on his face. He did not leap
as in the womb. A great wonder
that here he bows down and there he leaps for joy.
Even Herod, the despicable fox,
who swaggered as if he were a lion -
the fox lay down and howled when he heard
the roar of the Lion Who came to lie down
upon his kingdom, as it is written.
But the fox heard that the Lion was a cub
and was like a suckling, and he sharpened his teeth
so that while He was still a newborn, the fox might lie in wait
and the breadth of his mouth should destroy him.
All of creation became mouths
and cried out above Him: the Magi cried out
with their offerings; the barren cried out
with their offspring; the star of light
cried out in the air, "Behold the King's Son!"
The sky was opened; the water sparkled;
the Dove hovered over; the voice of the Father,
more weighty than thunder, said,
"This is My Beloved"; the Watchers proclaimed Him,

the children shouted joyfully with their hosannas.

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01.10.19

On Purity of Heart – From a Commentary on the Beatitudes by St Gregory of Nyssa 2

Now the divine nature, as it is in itself, according to its essence, transcends every act of comprehensive knowledge, and it cannot be approached or attained by our speculation. Mortals have never discovered a faculty to comprehend the incomprehensible; nor have we ever been able to devise an intellectual technique for grasping the incomprehensible. For this reason the great Apostle calls God's ways *unsearchable* (Rom 11:33), teaching us that the way that leads to knowledge of the divine nature is inaccessible to our reason; and hence none of those who have lived before us has given us the slightest hint of comprehension suggesting that we might know that which in itself is above all knowledge.

Yet the Lord does not deceive us when he promises that the pure of heart *shall see God*; nor does Paul deceive us when he teaches that no one has seen God nor can see Him. The Lord does not say that it is blessed to know something about God, but rather to possess God in oneself: *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God*. And this teaches us that the one who purifies his heart of every creature and of every passionate impulse will see the image of the divine nature in his own beauty. So too in this short sentence the Word, I think, is giving us the following advice: All you mortals who have within yourselves a desire to behold the supreme Good, when you are told that the majesty of God is exalted above the heavens, that the divine glory is inexpressible, its beauty indescribable, its nature inaccessible, do not despair at never being able to behold what you desire. For you do have within your grasp that degree of the knowledge of God which you can attain. For, when God made you, He at once endowed your nature with this perfection: upon the structure of your nature He imprinted an imitation of the perfections of His own nature, just as one would impress upon wax the outline of an emblem. But the wickedness that has been poured all over this divine engraving has made your perfection useless and hidden it with a vicious coating. You must then wash away, by a life of virtue, the dirt that has come to cling to your heart like plaster, and then your divine beauty will once again shine forth. - *over*

It is just like those who look at the sun in a mirror. Even though they cannot look up directly at the heavens, they do see the sun in the mirror's reflection just as much as those who look directly at the sun. So it is, says our Lord, with you. Even though you are not strong enough to see the light itself, yet you will find within yourselves what you are seeking, if you would but return to the grace of that image which was established within you from the beginning. For the Godhead is all purity, freedom from passion, the absence of all evil. And if you possess these qualities, God will surely be within you. When your mind is untainted by any evil, free of passion, purified of all stain, then will you be *blessed* because your eye is clear. Then because you have been purified you will perceive things that are invisible to the unpurified. The dark cloud of matter will be removed from the eye of your soul, and then you will see clearly the blessed vision within the pure brilliance of your own hearty. And what is this vision? It is purity, holiness, simplicity, and other such brilliant reflections of the nature of God; for it is in these that God is seen.

TM-EPH07

01.11.2019

**THE GLORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
from a Sermon by Blessed John H. Newman³**

"Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."(Is 60:1) Our Savior said to the woman of Samaria, "The hour comes, when you shall neither on this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."(Jn 4:21) And upon today's Festival I may say to you in His words on another occasion, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. " This day we commemorate the opening of the door of faith to the Gentiles, the extension of the Church of God through all lands, whereas, before Christ's coming, it had been confined to one nation only. This dissemination of the Truth throughout the world had been the subject of prophecy. "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine inhabitants; spare not, lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes; for you shall break forth on the right hand and on the left; and your seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited."(Is 54:2,3) In these words the Church is addressed as Catholic, which is the distinguishing title of the Christian Church, as contrasted with the Jewish. The Christian Church is so constituted as to be able to spread itself out in its separate branches into all regions of the earth; so that in every nation there may be found a representative and an offshoot of the sacred and gifted Society, set up once for all by our Lord after His resurrection.

This characteristic blessing of the Church of Christ, its Catholic nature, is a frequent subject of rejoicing with St Paul, who was the chief instrument of its propagation. In one Epistle he speaks of Gentiles being "fellow heirs" with the Jews, "and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel." In another he enlarges on "the mystery now made manifest to the saints," viz. "Christ among the Gentiles, the hope of glory."(Eph 3:6)

The day on which we commemorate this gracious appointment of God's providence, is called the Epiphany, or bright manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles; being the day on which the wise men came from the East under

³Parochial & Plain Sermons. John Henry Newman (Ignatius Press, CA 1987) pp. 276-277.

guidance of a star, to worship Him, and thus became the first-fruits of the heathen world. The name is explained by the words of the text, which occur in one of the lessons selected for to-day's service, and in which the Church is addressed. "Arise, shine; for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon you, and His glory shall be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising... Your people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified."(Is 60:1-3)

That this and other similar prophecies had their measure of fulfilment when Christ came, we all know; when His Church, built upon the Apostles and Prophets, wonderfully branched out from Jerusalem as a center into the heathen world round about, and gathering into it men and women of all ranks, languages, and characters, molded them upon one pattern, the pattern of their Saviour, in truth and righteousness.

01sn1203
01.12.19

**The prayer of an abbot for himself and for his household: a reading
from *The Pastoral Prayer* of St. Aelred of Reivaulx.**

O Jesus, good Shepherd, O Jesus, kind and loving shepherd, a wretched and miserable shepherd cries out to you. Although he is weak, ignorant, and useless, still he is the shepherd of your sheep. O good Shepherd, a shepherd who is not good cries out to you, anxious for himself, anxious for your sheep.

You, dear Lord, have entrusted such a one with the care of the household, you have appointed such a one over the sheep of your pasture. You order me who am too little solicitous for myself to be solicitous for them; who am not able to pray for my own sins to pray for them; and to teach them when I have not sufficiently taught myself. Why do you, Fountain of mercy, why do you wish to entrust those who are so dear to you to one whom your watchful care has lost sight of? Did you appoint such a one over your family that your mercy might be made manifest and your wisdom known? If by chance it is pleasing to your goodness for such a one to rule your family well, may he not boast as a wise man in his own wisdom, or as a strong man in his own strength, or as a just man in his own justice, since when he rules your people well, you rule rather than he. *Not to us, Lord, not to us the glory; let your name alone be honored.*

Since you have given them this blind leader, this unlearned teacher and ignorant guide, if not for my sake then for theirs, teach him whom you have commanded to teach others, lead him whom you have commanded to lead others, direct him whom you have set over others to guide. Our merciful God, hear me when I pray for them through affection and duty or from the consideration of your kindness. You know, sweet Lord, how I love them, how my heart is poured out on them, how my affection melts over them. You know, My Lord, that I do not command by austerity or by the power of my spirit. You know how I wish in charity to be useful to them rather than to rule over them; in humility to be under them but by affection to be in them. This I ask, that your eyes should be ever watching, night and day. Spread your wings most lovingly to protect them, extend your holy right hand to

bless them, infuse your holy Spirit into their hearts, until we all realize our common unity through faith. - *over*

O sweet Lord, by the working of your holy Spirit may they be at peace with themselves, with one another, and with me. May they be modest, kind, and obedient; serving and supporting one another; fervent in spirit, rejoicing in hope. Be in their midst according to your faithful promise. Since you know what is necessary for each, I beseech you to strengthen what is weak in them, support what is warm, make firm what is unstable, so that each one may feel that your grace is not lacking in his necessities and temptations.

This one thing I ask of your loving kindness, my Lord, that you make your servant the faithful steward, wise procurator, and prudent provider of all the things which you will give, whether little or much. Inspire them, my God, to suffer patiently when you do not give, and to use moderately when you do C that they may always believe and know what is useful for them concerning me, your servant and theirs for your sake, that they may love and fear me as much as you see is expedient for them.

I entrust them to your holy hands and your loving providence. No one can tear away from your hand or from the hand of your servant to whom you have entrusted them, but may they happily persevere in their holy purpose and B persevering B obtain eternal life through you, our dearest Lord, who lives and reigns, world without end. Amen.

