

28 December 2024 - Feast of the Holy Innocents

[1 John 1, 5 - 2, 2; Matthew 2, 13-18](#)

Homily

The Gospel of Matthew, from which the Gospel account of today's Mass is taken, begins with the words: 'Book of the **Origins** of Jesus Christ, Son of David'. (*" Biblios genesis Jesou Christou "*). By this, Matthew wants to emphasise the fact that the birth of Jesus is a new genesis, a new beginning, for the whole of humanity.

The book of Genesis began with a description of the creation of the world. In the beginning, in the initial chaos, everything was darkness, and the Creator's task on the first day of creation was to separate the light from the darkness. God created light and saw that the light was good.

The Evangelist John also sees the birth of Jesus as a new genesis, so it's not surprising that his whole Gospel is structured as an ongoing struggle between the kingdom of darkness and the kingdom of light, with the final victory of the light of the risen Christ.

This same theme of light and darkness recurs at the beginning of the First Letter of John, which we have just heard (first reading): '*God is light, and in him there is no trace of darkness*'. And all John's moral teaching can be summed up in a single phrase: walk in the light and not in darkness. For John, '*walking in the light* " and " *being in communion with God* ' are one and the same thing; that's why anyone who claims to be in communion with God and walks in darkness is a liar, like the prince of darkness. Furthermore, in an admirable shortcut, John identifies communion with God with communion with others: '*If we walk in the light as (God) himself is in the light, we have communion with one another* '.

The Gospel story we have just read from Matthew shows us that from the moment of his birth, Jesus found himself in the midst of the struggle between the world of darkness and the world of light: still a small child, he experienced in his flesh the difficulties and trials of the poor and oppressed, with whom he identified throughout his life. How many families today, as throughout the centuries, are dislocated by war, forced population movements and exile? Moreover, most of the characters who appear in this second chapter of Matthew's Gospel are emblematic figures rather than historical figures. The 'Magi' represent a restless humanity in search of salvation, capable of recognising God in history and ready to leave its security behind and go out to meet God. Herod and his son Archelaus represent an

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exploitative and oppressive power, jealous of its hegemony and afraid of losing it, ready to use any cruelty to defend its privileges. As for the children of Bethlehem, they represent all those who, throughout the ages right up to the present day, have been victims of the power of darkness, because they belong to the kingdom of light, whether they have known Christ personally or not.

Even if we walk in the light, this does not mean that we are necessarily pure as angels. On the contrary, anyone who believes himself to be without sin is lying to himself and is therefore walking in darkness. But if we acknowledge that we are sinners, we have, says Saint John, an advocate with the Father. It is this defender whose birth we celebrate in these days and who died to obtain for us the forgiveness of our sins. We will remember him as we continue our Eucharistic celebration.

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