



The Holy See

JOHN PAUL II

GENERAL AUDIENCE

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Glory of the Trinity in the heavenly Jerusalem

1. "The Church on earth, like a pilgrim in a foreign land away from the Lord, sees herself as an exile. She seeks and is concerned about those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, where the life of the Church is hidden with Christ in God, until she appears in glory with her Spouse" (*Lumen gentium*, n. 6). These words of the Second Vatican Council describe the journey of the Church, which knows that she has "here no lasting city", but "seeks the city which is to come" (*Heb* 13: 14), the heavenly Jerusalem, "the city of the living God" (*ibid.*, 12: 22).

2. When we reach that final destination of history, as St Paul tells us, we will no longer "see in a mirror dimly, but face to face.... then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 *Cor* 13: 12). And John tells us again that "when [God] appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 *Jn* 3: 2).

Beyond the frontiers of history, then, the full, shining epiphany of the Trinity awaits us. In the new creation God will give us the intimate, perfect communion with him that the fourth Gospel calls "eternal life", the source of a "knowledge" which in biblical language is precisely a communion of love: "This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (*Jn* 17: 3).

3. Christ's Resurrection opens this horizon of light, which the First Testament had already extolled as a kingdom of peace and joy, in which "the Lord will wipe away the tears from all faces" (*Is* 25: 8). Then, at last, "kindness and truth shall meet; justice and peace shall kiss" (*Ps* 85: 11). But it

is especially the last pages of the Bible, that is, the final glorious vision of Revelation, which reveal to us the city that is the ultimate goal of our pilgrimage, the heavenly Jerusalem.

First of all we will meet the Father, "the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end" of all creation (*Rv 21: 6*). He will be fully manifest as Emmanuel, the God who dwells with humanity, wiping away tears and mourning, and making all things new (cf. *Rv 21: 3-5*). But the Lamb, Christ, to whom the Church is joined in marriage, will also rise up in the midst of the city. From him she will receive the light of glory; with him she will no longer be intimately joined through a temple but in a direct and total way (cf. *Rv 21: 9, 22, 23*). The Holy Spirit spurs us towards that city. It is he who sustains the loving dialogue between the elect and Christ: "The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come"" (*Rv 22: 17*).

4. Our gaze turns to this full manifestation of the Trinity's glory, looking beyond the limits of our human condition, beyond the weight of misery and guilt that pervade our human existence. For this meeting we pray each day for the grace of continual purification, knowing that "nothing unclean shall enter" the heavenly Jerusalem, "nor anyone who practises falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life" (*Rv 21: 27*). As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the liturgy we celebrate in the course of our days is a "taste" as it were of that light, of that contemplation, of that perfect love: "In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem towards which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, n. 8).

Therefore, we already turn to Christ so that through the Holy Spirit he will help us to stand pure before the Father. This is what Simeon Metaphrastes asks us to do in a prayer which the liturgy of the Eastern Churches offers the faithful: "You, who by the descent of the Consoler Spirit made your holy disciples vessels of honour, make me a worthy dwelling for his coming. You, who will come again to judge the world in justice, allow me also to come before you, my Judge and my Creator, with all your saints, to praise you and sing to you eternally, with your eternal Father and with your all-holy, good and life-giving Spirit, now and forever" (*Communion Prayer*).

God has promised us a new heaven and a new earth

5. Together with us, "the whole created world eagerly awaits the revelation of the sons of God... not without hope, because the world itself will be freed from its slavery to corruption and share in the glorious freedom of the children of God" (*Rom 8: 19-21*). The Book of Revelation proclaims "a new heaven and a new earth", because the first heaven and the first earth will pass away (cf. *Rv 21: 1*). And in his Second Letter, Peter uses traditional apocalyptic images to stress the same idea: "The heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (*2 Pt 3: 12-13*).

In expectation of this harmony and full praise, all creation must now sing with mankind a song of joy and hope. Let us do so as well in the words of a third-century hymn discovered in Egypt: "Together let none of God's marvellous creatures keep silent either morning or evening! Let none of the shining stars or the high mountains or the depths of the seas or the springs of the swift rivers keep silent as we sing our hymns to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Let all the angels of heaven respond: Amen! Amen! Amen!" (text published by A. Gastoné in *La Tribune de saint Gervais*, September-October 1922).

The Holy Father appealed for an end to the violence against Christians in the Moluccas and India.

Unfortunately, the wave of ethnic-religious disorders that has been sweeping Indonesia's Molucca Islands since January 1999 shows no sign of abating. The repeated armed, lethal attacks of Muslim extremists on Christian villages are claiming many victims and causing endless ruin.

Equally worrying news is coming from India where multiple acts of aggression have recently been committed against Christian communities and other minorities, "the worst", the Bishops say, "since the country's independence".

I renew my heartfelt appeal for an end to these brutal acts of violence. I dare to hope that those who carry out and instigate such acts will understand that one cannot kill and destroy in the name of religion, or manipulate religion for one's own interests. I ask the authorities to take firm measures to improve the situation; I also ask everyone to put aside hatred and to work tirelessly to restore religious harmony with mutual respect and love. I invite those of you present here to pray with faith for these intentions.

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I extend a warm greeting to all the English-speaking pilgrims and visitors, especially the groups from Ireland, Malta, Indonesia, Korea and the United States. I welcome the *Laudate Dominum* Choir from Norway, and the *Nichiren-shu* group from Japan. Upon everyone present I invoke the abundant gifts of Almighty God.

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