

*Lauds – Homily of S.E.R. Stanisław Gądecki,  
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*A shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse,  
and from his roots a bud shall blossom (Is 11,1)*

FROM THE HUMAN HEART ALWAYS FLOWS HOPE

*1. Hezekiah*

a.) For the prophet Isaiah, such hope was closely related to the Davidic dynasty. Therefore, the prophet Isaiah (Is 11:1-10) foreshadows that time thanks to the birth of King Hezekiah (728-699 BC), son of King Ahaz. This ruler, endowed with the gifts of God's Spirit, will bring a paradisaical order to God's people; he will bring justice and peace (Is 42:4). He will do this not only in Judah but all over the world: "He shall reign from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth" (Ps 72:8).

With the justice of his reign, he will help to resolve social life's irreconcilable contradictions. "Then the wolf will live with the lamb, [...] The baby shall play by the viper's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair". Later the Book of Sirach will make the following comment on this messianic vision: "Every living being keeps close to its own kind; and people associate with their own kind. Is a wolf ever allied with a lamb? So, the sinner with the righteous?" (Sir 13:15-17).

Indeed, the prophet's historical hopes for the righteous rule of King Hezekiah were fulfilled. He carried out the first great religious reform in Judea: "he who removed the high places, shattered the pillars, cut down the *asherah*, and smashed the bronze serpent [...]. He held fast to the Lord and never turned away from following him but observed the commandments the LORD had given Moses. The LORD was with him, and he succeeded in all he set out to do" (2 Kgs 18:4-6-7).

b.) What does this distant story teach us? First, that – while the world usually tries to guarantee peace by preparing for war – there is a wiser solution. Isaiah encourages us to build peace by changing the human mindset. Only when the nations come in spirit to the summit of Mount Zion (Ps 87:7), when God’s Law reaches people’s hearts and is put into practice, will humankind know the peace that it has always been expecting and has dreamed of. Only then will the instruments of war be transformed into instruments of peace, swords forged into plowshares and spears into sickles. Hatred will be destroyed, there will be *shalom*, that is, messianic peace, which will not be simply the absence of war but harmony of humankind with God, of people with each other, of man with nature.

Secondly, this story teaches us that all the dignity of human authority derives from the fact that it “it carries out its tasks within the limits of the moral order, whose source and end is God”. Authority, because of its necessary reference to that order which precedes and underlies it, because of its aims and its addressees, cannot be understood as a force determined by purely sociological and historical criteria. Some conceptions unfortunately “go so far as to deny the existence of a moral order which is transcendent, absolute, universal and equally binding upon all. And where the same law of justice is not adhered to by all, men cannot hope to come to open and full agreement on vital issues. This order has no existence except in God; cut off from God it must necessarily disintegrate” (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 396-397).

## 2. *Jesus*

a.) Yet, the New Testament goes further than the prophet Isaiah. It recognizes the true fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy only in the person of Jesus Christ, who says about himself: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me [...] Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing” (Lk 4:18.21). Christ is the Father’s Anointed Messiah, who alone has the fullness of the Holy Spirit, revealed in his sevenfold action. Only He has the fullness of the Holy Spirit; as for the saints, they receive not “the fullness of His Spirit” but “of His fullness”. “To one is given through the

Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge...” (1 Cor 12:8-11); (Bede, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 1,2).

It is Christ – led by the Holy Spirit – who refuses all forms of violence as means to achieve his goals: “He will not cry out, nor shout, nor make his voice heard in the street” (Is 42:2-3). It is he who will bring peace through limitless merciful love, going even as far as shedding his own blood for our sins.

With the death and resurrection of our Savior, all nations began an endless pilgrimage to “Mount Zion” (Ps 87:1-7), that is, to the Church from whom the light of the Gospel shines forth, who teaches peacemaking through merciful love (Acts 2:5-12). And henceforth, in the Church, we can draw “from the fullness of Christ” in every Eucharist. St. Bonaventure taught: “That Christ is present in the sacrament as a sign presents no difficulty, but that he is in the sacrament truly, as in heaven, presents the utmost difficulty; and, so, to believe this is the most deserving thing. Our encounter with Jesus cannot be limited to moments spent in the Eucharist, we need to live the Mass each day. We need to strive to make our lives truly Eucharistic, that is, a thanksgiving, and our actions testify to the Jesus we carry in our hearts.”

Unless there is first a real change of heart, making peace among people will always be nothing more than a dream. Social harmony and peace between nations will be endangered until each person and every group begins to serve Christ. Without conversion of heart, peace will be at risk because of the natural limitations of the economic, political, and social structures. Peace will be threatened because of the personal selfishness and human pride that have an adverse effect on social structures.

This is confirmed in the post-apostolic times by the experience of St. Justin martyr, who wrote in his *Apology* (towards 153 AD): “from Jerusalem men, twelve in number, went out into the world; they were uneducated and without any ability in speaking: but by the power of God they proclaimed to every race of men that they were sent by Christ to teach to all the word of God; and, we, who formerly were accustomed to murdering one another, not only now refrain from making war against our enemies, but also, to avoid lying or misleading those who question

us, we die willingly, confessing Christ” (*First Apology* 39.3). Hence, we, as Christians, are called in a special way to build a civilization of peace.

b.) The prophecy of Isaiah ultimately speaks of Christ, but – through a likeness – the tradition of the Church later also applied it to Mary, whose birth has come to be spoken of in terms analogous to the birth of Christ. The Mother’s birth was a copy of the birth of her Son. “We, however, recognize that the Holy Virgin Mary is the rod of the root of Jesse” (Jerome, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 4,11,1-3).

Today’s feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary reminds us that in every person, even after becoming an adult, even when he or she becomes a parent or elderly, or assumes a position of responsibility, in all of this the identity of the child remains hidden. Each of us is someone’s child, and this always reminds us that we did not give life to ourselves but received it. The great gift of life is the first gift we have received (cf. *Amoris Laetitia*, 188).

“Review once again, dear sons and daughters, the history of your lives”, urged Pope Pius XII. – “Can you not see the intertwining of God’s graces? If you can, you may think: Mary has entered into these graces. Flowers bloomed and the fruit ripened in my life thanks to the warmth of this Lady, blazing like the sun” (Pius XII, *Radio Message for the Opening of the Marian Year*, December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1953).

### *Conclusion*

So, let us all rejoice in today’s feast: “Today, the tabernacle of the Creator of the universe has been erected; today, creation prepares, by the power of God’s incomprehensible plan, a new dwelling for the Creator” (St. Andrew of Crete, *Sermon* 1). Let us celebrate the birth of Mary, our Mother, together because we are all her children. Let us celebrate the birth of the Mother of the One who has become our peace. Let us celebrate the birth of the Mother of Peace. Amen.