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## OUR LIVES, A REVELATION OF GOD

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The first time I heard the word “theophany”, it must have been when in school I was studying in sacred history about God appearing to Moses on Mount Horeb: God « showed » himself in power and majesty, amidst thunder and lightning. Some time before He had « manifested » Himself to Moses in the burning bush. No one could see God and live. Then some time after, there occurred the great happening of Elijah encountering God on Horeb. In the first book of Kings, we read that *« a strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the Lord - but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake - but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire -- but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice [spoke] to him... »* (1 Kings 19:11a-13).

### FEAST OF THE WISE MEN?

If the word « theophany » was strange to me, the second word was more familiar: it was the word « epiphany ». Sometimes we talked about the visit of the Three Kings or Three Wise Men, and other times we called the event the « feast of the Epiphany », and this way of saying made us look a lot more intelligent! One day I heard the priest say, in his sermon: « We must all become ‘epiphanies of God’ ». I was taken aback by this expression, and I tried to understand its meaning. The word wasn’t as plain, any more! Jesus had « shown » or « manifested » himself to the wise men coming from the East: a sign that God’s salvation was meant for all humankind and not only the Jews. The Good News of salvation had to reach all people all over the earth, for all time to come. A mission was given to us, to « show » or « manifest », to reveal God by our lives. That was the meaning of « becoming epiphanies of God »! It meant that by our love for one another, we were to reveal God and His goodness to us to those around us. We were to reveal God’s mercy to us through forgiving one another.

### WHERE THERE IS LOVE AND CHARITY

That was when I got a better understanding of the great hymn, « Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est », « Where there is charity and love, there is God. » These words remind me of Saint John who wrote: *« Beloved, let us love one another because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten of God. The man without love has known nothing of God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed in our midst in this way: He sent His only Son to the world, that we might have life through him. »* (1 John 4:7-9).

### LIKE A WATER DIVINER

The liturgical time of Christmas officially ends with the feast of Christ’s baptism, but I feel that our sense of wonder should continue throughout the year. We should be able to endlessly discover God’s « manifestations » day after day, and be ourselves revealers of God. Ours is a two-fold mission that can totally change our lives. These are like the lives of water diviners who can detect springs of water where others cannot see them. In writing to the Romans, Saint Paul said that what has been hidden since creation is revealed to human intelligence through God’s works, His eternal power, and His divinity (Cf. Romans 1:20).

## DISCOVERING GOD'S PRESENCE IN US

If Moses could recognize God in the burning bush and Elijah feel God's presence in the whispering sound; if the shepherds recognized the Saviour of humankind in the tiny child, and if the Magi let themselves be guided to the Saviour by the star, what signs could reveal God's presence in our midst, today? All of creation can be a revelation of God, if we are attentive. The Word of God can be revelation of God if we are attuned to it and attentive. Each sacrament is a sign revealing God to us. Each and every human life can reveal a facet of the mystery of God. « Every person is a sacred history: we are created in God's image. » « Wonders and signs by the thousands, traces of your glory, God in the midst of our history! » « Seeking your presence in my life, keeping my lamp lit; with you, choosing trust, loving and being loved in return ». These are invitations for us to discover the divine presence in our own lives.

### « CLOSE TO US »

Last November, a candidate for Confirmation wrote to me, and these are his words: « Jesus is always there for us. He helps us understand several things about life; he gives us good thoughts; he is always close to us; he loves us very much and wants us to love one another; he is close to us to look at our love. He will always wait for us, his beloved children; he will help us to forgive and live as children of God. » Another one wrote: « The Holy Spirit is a loving presence, a power that moves us to love. The Spirit enables us to understand the Word of God; he teaches us how to pray; he teaches us how to love as Jesus loved. My mission is important, but Jesus has not left me alone. He gives me his Spirit to help me grow in order to take on the responsibility of my mission. Everyone is called to work actively, according to his talents and ability, at making a better world for everyone. The Spirit brings gifts. These gifts are God's works of love, powerful tools for doing good. The gifts of the Spirit don't work like magic, but they work in those who are open and available to God's work in them. As for me, I use the gifts of the Spirit and share them with others, so that they may bear good fruit. »

## EPIPHANIES OF LOVE

May our words and actions be epiphanies of God's love in the midst of the world, throughout 2002! Ours is a wonderful but demanding mission, but with God's grace and the power of the Spirit, we are enabled to « return love for love ».

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