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The R. C. Mission of Afghanistan Newsletter

Christmas 2017 AD

No. 4 (Winter)

عید میلاد ۲۰۱۷ میلادی

VIDIMUS GLORIAM EJUS

In the prologue of John's gospel, that we read in the Christmas Day Mass, at a certain point the evangelist says, "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth." Who is he referring to, when he says "we saw his glory"? Certainly to himself, who was eyewitness of so many events in which Jesus manifested his glory (the wedding at Cana; the transfiguration; the death on the cross; the empty tomb; the appearances of the Risen Lord); but most probably he is also referring to his former master, John the Baptist, who had been the eyewitness of the manifestation of Jesus' glory at the Jordan: "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him ... Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God" (Jn 1:32.34).

When the apostle John, at the beginning of his first letter, writes "What we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you," in all likelihood he refers, besides to other apostles, to himself and to the Baptist. They saw; and that is why they speak. What they say is not the result of their imagination, but the fruit of their personal experience. They saw; and so, they testify to what they saw, so that we too may know what they experienced.

Our wish for each of us, on this Christmas, is to see his glory, as they did, so that we too, like them, may find salvation in him: "These [signs] have been written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name" (Jn 20:31).

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Vidimus gloriam ejus

Abbiamo visto la sua gloria

We saw his glory

Wir haben seine Herrlichkeit gesehen

Nous avons vu sa gloire

Vimos su gloria

Vimos a sua glória

Nakita namin ang kanyang kaluwalhatian

جلال او را دیدیم

Joannes 1:14

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Rev. GIOVANNI SCALESE, CRSP

In Nativitate Domini 2017

“ORIETUR STELLA” THE MISSION’S MOTTO AND LOGO

The Motto

Orietur stella (“A star shall rise”) is taken from Numbers 24:17, according to the Septuagint and the Vulgate: “I shall see him: but not now. I shall behold him, but not near. A STAR SHALL RISE out of Jacob, and a scepter shall spring up from Israel: and shall strike the chiefs of Moab, and shall waste all the children of Seth” (*Douay-Rheims Version* = DR). This verse is part of the fourth oracle of the famous pagan prophet Balaam. It probably concerned David, victorious at Moab (2Sam 8:2); but, through him, it also referred to his whole dynasty and particularly to the Messiah. In the ancient East, star was a sign of gods and kings. In a Christian messianic interpretation, the star would refer to Jesus. When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem, looking for the king of the Jews, they said: “We have seen his star in the East” (Mt 2:2 DR and RSV; the NAB instead reads: “We saw his star at its rising”). It is a kind of fulfillment of the Balaam’s prophecy. Well, the Magi were astrologers coming from the East (Mt 2:1), probably from Mesopotamia and Persia. According to an ancient tradition, one of them—Caspar—hailed from the Kushan Empire, corresponding to present-day Afghanistan. So, it is possible that the star which led the Magi to Bethlehem rose in this remote land of central Asia (the “heart of Asia”). Our wish is that this star may rise again; plainly, that one day the Afghans may encounter Christ.

The Logo

Origin. Nowadays star and crescent are considered as a symbol of the Islamic world. Few know that the history of this symbol is much older. It dates back to the ancient Near East; we find it in the Mesopotamian iconography; we meet it again—an eight-rayed star within a crescent (*pic #1*)—at Byzantium, in the first century BC, as a symbol of the goddess Artemis. It later became the emblem of the Byzantine Empire and from there it was drawn by the Ottomans, who spread it in the whole Islamic world. Star and crescent were the arms (*pic #2*) of Isaac Komnenos of Cyprus († 1195); at his defeat, Richard the Lionheart appropriated the emblem and then granted it to the city of Portsmouth. We meet it as the coat of arms of many European cities.



pic #3

Description. The logo of the Roman Catholic Mission of Afghanistan consists in an eight-rayed star between the horns of a crescent pointing upward. Even though we usually print it in black and white, the star and crescent should be golden (or yellow) on a field azure (*pic #3*).

Meaning. It can be interpreted in many different ways.

a) It visually expresses the present condition of the Christian community in Afghanistan: the Church (the star) inside a Muslim country (the crescent). However, the star is not completely encircled by the crescent, but is rising from it: *Orietur stella*.

b) The eight-rayed star (“octagram”) is a symbol of Christ, the “Sun of justice” (Mal 3:20 or 4:2) and the “Morning Star” (Rev 2:28; 22:16). Even the Blessed Virgin Mary is invoked by the faithful as the “Morning Star” (*Stella matutina*). According to a folk etymology, *Mary* would mean “Star of the sea” (*Maris Stella*).

c) Christ is the *sun*, which radiates light; Mary is the *moon*, which reflects the sunlight. Jesus rises from the womb of the Virgin, “like a bridegroom coming from his tent” (Ps 19:6).

d) Mary, model of the Church (*typus Ecclesiae*), is the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet” (Rev 12:1).

e) There is a certain resemblance between our logo and the Arabic letter *nun* (ن), the initial of the word *Nasara* (the “Nazarenes”), whereby Christians are styled in many a Muslim country.

Hopefully, our logo and motto will be soon converted by some heraldist into a proper coat of arms, respectful of heraldic rules.

— Giovanni Scalese, CRSP



pic #1



pic #2

LATEST NEWS

CONSECRATION TO THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

As announced in the previous issue (No. 3, p. 2), on October 13, the hundredth anniversary of the last apparition of the Blessed Virgin at Fatima, our Mission and the whole Afghanistan were consecrated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. We had prepared for the consecration with the recitation of the Rosary on the 13th of the month from May to October. The act of consecration was made at the end of the Mass, attended by a number of representatives of our small community. The missionary Agency *Asia News* reported the event. In order to keep alive the remembrance of the consecration, we decided to pray the Rosary on the first Saturday of each month.



Eve, after the Novena and the announcement of the Lord's Nativity (the so-called "Kalenda") and the unveiling of the Infant Jesus in front of the altar, during the Vigil Mass (which for us replaced the Night Mass) the Manger (or Crib or Crèche or Nativity Scene) was blessed. The climax of the celebrations was the Solemn Mass on December 25, which ended with the Apostolic Blessing.



VISIT OF THE ITALIAN MILITARY ORDINARY

Also on Christmas day, before the community Mass, our church hosted the Mass celebrated by the Italian Military Ordinary, Bishop Santo Marciànò, visiting the Italian contingent in Kabul (quartered at "Resolute Support" Headquarters). He had celebrated the Night Mass in Herat, where the most of the Italian troops in Afghanistan are stationed. The soldiers were led by the Italian highest ranking military authority in Afghanistan, Gen. Antonio Bettelli, deputy chief of staff support and senior national representative at RS-HQ. The Italian Embassy was represented by the First Secretary Mr. Vincenzo Termine.

PAINTING OF THE CHURCH

In the course of the works of renovation of the Embassy, on November 27 to 30, even our church was painted. Now it looks cleaner, brighter and warmer. Heartfelt thanks to H. E. the Ambassador, Mr. Roberto Cantone, for his kindness.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

We prepared for Christmas, during Advent, with a series of celebrations. We began, on December 3, first Sunday of Advent, with the blessing of the Advent Wreath. On December 8, we celebrated the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. (the "Dawn" announcing the "Sun of Justice"). From December 16 to 24, before Mass, we chanted the traditional Christmas Novena in Latin. On December 17, "Gaudete" Sunday, we blessed the Christmas Tree in front of the church. On December 24, Christmas



WEEKLY & MONTHLY SCHEDULE

EVERYDAY

5:30 pm: HOLY MASS

On Saturdays, the Sunday Mass is celebrated, whereby the obligation can be satisfied.

FRIDAY

5:00 pm: EUCHARISTIC ADORATION

On the first Friday of the month, the adoration takes on a character of reparation and the litany of the Sacred Heart is recited.

During Lent, the Eucharistic Adoration is substituted with the “Way of the Cross” devotion.

FIRST SATURDAY OF THE MONTH

5:00 pm: HOLY ROSARY

MASS INTENTIONS

Mass is usually offered for some specific intention.

As a rule, on Sundays, Mass is celebrated for the people (*pro populo*).

On weekdays, the faithful can ask that Mass be offered for their own intentions, both for the living and the dead.

In accordance with the approved custom of the Church, the request is usually accompanied with an offering, whereby the faithful contribute to the good of the Church, supporting its ministers and activities.

In our Mission, the approximate offering for a Mass is **10 USD** or **10 EUR** or **500 AFS**.

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The Roman Catholic
MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN
رسالت کاتولیک افغانستان
MISSIO SUI JURIS AFGHANISTANIENSIS

Mission Church & Office:

Embassy of Italy, Great Massoud Road, Kabul

Mailing Address:

P. O. Box 21438, Kabul, Afghanistan

Phone: +93 799 315 460

Email: afghan.catholic.mission@gmail.com

Ecclesiastical Superior & Newsletter's Editor:

Rt. Rev. GIOVANNI SCALESE, CRSP

ORIETUR STELLA



ستاره‌ای طلوع خواهد کرد

The INDEPENDENT MISSION OF AFGHANISTAN (*Missio sui juris Afghanistaniensis*) is a jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church, immediately subject to the Holy See, covering the whole territory of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. It is a “particular church”—that is to say, a portion of the people of God—likened to a Diocese (Can. 368). By the law itself, it possesses juridical personality (Can. 373). It was established by the Holy See on the 16th of May, 2002 and entrusted to the care of the ORDER OF CLERICS REGULAR OF SAINT PAUL—BARNABITES (CRSP). It is presided by an Ecclesiastical Superior (*Superior ecclesiasticus*), who acts as the Local Ordinary (Can. 134 §2).