

# Do not be afraid of the light of Christ

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Benedict XVI said the age of globalization is challenging political, scientific and religious leaders to shape a new world order based on spiritual values.

This means an encounter with the “light of Christ,” which can reveal the deepest values of all cultures, the pope said.

“To all people of our time, I want to repeat today: Do not be afraid of the light of Christ!” he said.

The pope made the remarks at a Mass Jan. 6 on the feast of the Epiphany, which marks the manifestation of Jesus as savior to the world. In his sermon, he recalled the New Testament account of the three Wise Men or Magi, guided to Bethlehem by a star, who were the first to come and adore Jesus.

The Wise Men were mysterious but important figures as the church began its mission of bringing Christ to the world, he said. Then he posed the question, “Who are the Wise Men of today?”

He answered by identifying three classes of leaders: political authorities, people of intellect and science, and the leaders of the world’s faiths. All three categories are important as the church continues its task of transforming the world, he said.

“Two thousand years later, we can recognize in the Magi a sort of prefiguration of these three dimensions that make up modern humanism: the political, scientific and religious dimensions. The Epiphany shows them in a state of ‘pilgrimage’, that is, a movement of searching that has its ultimate point of arrival in Christ,” he said.

The world has changed dramatically since the birth of Christ, the pope said. Today a global civilization is emerging that no longer has Europe or even the West at its center, he said.

The explosion of mass media, a key component of this new civilization, has connected people around the globe and created an immense flow of information, but also seems to obscure humanity's ultimate goals and weaken the capacity for critical judgment, he said.

The pope noted that the Second Vatican Council in its closing messages in 1965 made a point to address politicians and scientists, asking them not to forget God in their work and not to forget Christ as the great builder of peace and order in the world.

Today, he said, it is particularly important to add to this list the leaders of the great non-Christian religions, "inviting them to confront themselves with the light of Christ, which came not to abolish but to bring to completion what the hand of God has written in the religious history of civilizations."

"Christ is the light, and light cannot obscure but only enlighten, clear up, reveal. No one therefore should be afraid of Christ and his message!" he said.

He added that, even if Christians through the centuries had fallen short of Christ's own teachings and betrayed him with their behavior, that does not lessen the importance of his message but only throws it into higher relief.

After the Mass, tens of thousands of Italians streamed to St. Peter's Square to listen to the pope's noon prayer and to visit the Vatican's giant Nativity scene. The Epiphany, a national holiday in Italy, is largely dedicated to children, and the square was full of young people.

The pope said it was important for parents and educators to promote a missionary spirit among Catholic children. He noted that the Epiphany was dedicated to the Holy Childhood Association, a children-supported missionary organization that works in 110 countries, and thanked young people for their support of works that are designed to aid the world's needy.

The pope also extended a Christmas greeting to Eastern Christians who follow the Julian calendar and were preparing to celebrate the birth of Christ Jan. 7.