

“The greatest mystery” Micah 5:2-5

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth; then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace.

We live in mysterious world. Or at least this is how we perceive it. Since the ancient times people have had this drive, this incredibly powerful, almost irresistible drive to explore, to discover, to understand.

To find out what is there behind the horizon. Or on the other side of the ocean. Look up at the starry skies! What about those other galaxies? Who is there? Is anyone there? Are we completely alone in this vast Universe, or hopefully not?

If only we could lift the curtain of time and see far, far back to find out about our beginnings? If only we could lift the curtain of space and see what is out there? But we can't. We are too bound by time and space.

Have you ever wondered, – what are we searching for? Where does this drive come from? It seems that it has to do with who we are created to be and what we have lost as the humanity.

We are created to subdue the earth and to have dominion over it. And if we want to subdue anything and have dominion over it, we first need to explore and understand it. This is one source for this powerful drive.

The other source is the lost connection with our Creator. We are created to be in relationships with Him. Without Him we are like orphans in this vast Universe. This is why since technology has enabled us, we have been looking for others. Listening to the Universe.

Searching for any sign that we are not orphans in this cosmos. Have you noticed how intrigued people can get when talking about possible life forms outside the Earth? How excited to contemplate mysteries of the Universe?

However, regardless of how long we have listened, the only thing we have heard is ... deafening silence. Not a single sign from anyone outside the Earth... and it seems that scientific odds are more and more stacked against those who are still searching and hoping.

All of this characterizes humanity on the one hand. This longing for something we can't even fully understand. However, on the other hand, and this is much more puzzling. We are deaf and blind when the One, who stands behind everything that exists, who is the cause of everything that exists, when He

comes to us and reveals Himself. The humanity seems unable to hear and see when the Creator comes to us, revealing Himself and speaking to us.

The same people who are passionate about discovering where the Universe came from, or whether there is any life out there, are often strangely disinterested when the Living One, the source of all life, the One who was there in the beginning comes to us.

They may look at Christians and sneer. ‘What are you people doing? Why are you reading this ancient book, written thousands of years ago? What is there to reflect on?’

And it is clear, that for them what Christians do doesn’t make any sense. To be fair, we need to admit that we fail in this respect as well. The truth is that even we can’t fully comprehend what is revealed to us.

We fail to appreciate it. And therefore we struggle to rejoice when we should be abounding in our excitement and desire to share what we have just learn with the whole world. We are not the best listeners either.

Our today’s reading from book of Micah the prophet serves as great a reminder about the incomprehensible treasure that is given to us, to the Church. The Gospel of Jesus Christ. The truth about who the true God is, what He has done and what He is about to do.

Humanity has always been searching... and God has always been speaking to us. He has never been absent. Since the very beginning. He has never stopped revealing Himself. He has never stopped foretelling what is going to happen.

This is how Peter the apostle describes it: “... the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.”

See even the prophets of the old, they didn’t know what is now revealed to each one of us. They were inquiring what person and what time the Spirit in them was indicating. They wanted to know. Thus the Spirit revealed to Micah that this greatest mystery of all will unfold in Bethlehem.

That in this little town of Bethlehem, 10 km from Jerusalem, will be born someone who will be ruler of all God’s people. However, this person was described in a mysterious way. “His coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.” How could this be?

He will be born... but His coming is from ancient days. It gets even stranger. He shall shepherd the flock of all God’s people, and He will do it... in the strength of the Lord. In the strength of God Yahweh.

In the majesty of the name of God Yahweh, His God. And when this happens, then all God's people will dwell secure, and He shall be great to the ends of the Earth. And He, this mysterious person, shall be their peace.

Micah received this message. But what did it mean? It sounds so obscure. So unclear. What could he make of it seven centuries before Jesus was even born? This is how Peter the apostle explains the situation:

“It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.” (1Pe 1:10-12)

O we poor sinners, how darkened is our mind! How confused are our hearts! If only we could clearly understand what we just heard. Even the prophets of the old served us, according to God's plan. They were God's servants for our sake.

Since the beginnings of time God has spoken to us. Those who were God's messengers often couldn't fully understand the message. How could they? For it was the greatest mystery that eternal God begun to reveal through them.

This is how Paul the apostle tries to describe this mystery: “... the mystery that was kept secret for long ages, but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God...” (Rom 16:25-27) And also: “To me ... this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known ...” (Eph 3:8-10)

The mystery that was kept secret for long ages... The mystery hidden for ages in God... and now it has been made known to you. How can we not feel very special and privileged? As God's chosen people! How can we not rejoice?

How can we not be overwhelmed, excited to hear more and learn more about this mystery, and then impatient to tell what we have heard to those who are less fortunate, who haven't yet heard the greatest mystery revealed.

There was something else, that should make shivers run down the spine. To us this greatest mystery is reveal, and too many despise and reject it, thus showing how much darkness dwells in them and what masters they serve.

But who else long to look into the secrets of the Gospel? The angels. That's right. The angels! This is what Peter wrote, that even angels long to look into these things which are preached and taught to you. To us they are revealed.

We know who was born in Bethlehem. Jesus. We know who Jesus was and is, and why He was so strangely described by Micah. “Whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days.”

Yes, now we can at least try to understand it. Sure, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. But the One who was born as Jesus, had no beginning. He was there at the beginning. Through Him was made everything that was made. And in Him still everything holds together.

He does shepherd all God's people in the strength of God, in the majesty of God, for He Himself is true God, the only-begotten Son of the eternal Father. God who become man. Creator who become creature.

The Almighty One who humbled Himself to become the servant of all. And let your ears hear these words and let your hearts rejoice. He has come for you. It is you who now will dwell secure. Because now you belong to Jesus Christ. He is your shepherd.

And nothing in whole creation can separate you from His love. He is our peace. He is the fulfillment of all God's promises. United with Jesus by His own Spirit we will return again where we are meant to be, in God's presence.

Things are good for us. We don't need to desperately look for mysteries where there is only darkness and silence. We don't need to wonder whether we are orphans in this Universe, or not. For we have been found. We have heard the voice of the One who makes us alive.

He has come and has adopted us in His family, and the day is coming when all the curtains will be lifted, when we will see the Son of God, Jesus Christ, our brother, when the secrets of the past will be ours to explore, and the furthest corners of God's creation will be ours to discover.

Then through the One, who Himself is the greatest mystery, all the other mysteries will be revealed to us, and the deepest longings of our hearts will be at peace. Dwelling secure with our God. Forever. Amen.