

Balthasar, Melchior, Gaspar, and... Jérôme



Last Tuesday - the Presentation of the Lord - many of us took away all that was left of the Christmas decorations. Balthasar, Melchior, and Gaspar are, according to tradition, the names of the three Wise Men who, guided by a star, made their way to the manger in Bethlehem to adore the child Jesus. They are often regarded as ancient-time scientists, moved by their intellectual **search for the truth**. They were not only seekers after the truth, they were also 'wise', they were open to the 'transcendent', that is, to a deeper and loftier dimension of knowledge.

For the Church the Three Kings are only the beginning of a great long procession which winds throughout history. On 21st January, Pope Francis, added to this procession another 'king' called Jérôme, declaring him a Venerable, on the way to becoming a Saint.

In 1958, working from the discovery that humans have 46 chromosomes, the French Professor Jérôme Lejeune found an unexpected third chromosome on the 21st pair, a genetic abnormality he named trisomy 21, now called down-syndrome.

A devout Catholic and father of five, Jérôme Lejeune devoted his entire life to protecting unborn children with Down's Syndrome from so-called 'therapeutic abortion', encouraging families to see their children as created in God's image, made for eternity.

On May 13th 1981, when Professor Lejeune and his wife were visiting Rome, Pope John Paul II invited them to a private audience and lunch afterward. Later that same day, the Pope survived an assassination attempt. In 1994, John Paul II created the Pontifical Academy for Life, appointing Lejeune as its first president. By then suffering from cancer, he tried to decline, but when the Pope insisted, he replied: "I will die in action." The doctor died a short time later, on Easter Sunday. In 1997, during World Youth Day, Pope John Paul II insisted that his schedule be altered so he could travel to the small town of Châlo-Saint-Mars to pray at the grave of Professor Lejeune.

There is still a lot of 'darkness' around us; let us ask for the grace of a pure sight, able to 'see', 'find', and 'know' the presence of the Truth.

In honor.

Father Ivano