

Ad orientem. In the Mass, we look to the east. The sun rises in the east. In the Liturgy of the Hours, we pray: "Like the sun in the morning sky, the Savior of the world will dawn . . ." ¹ Also in the Liturgy of the Hours is this beautiful O Antiphon: "O Radiant Dawn, splendor of eternal light, sun of justice: come, shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death." ² These are two examples of how the Church, in her liturgy, has a long-standing tradition of looking to the east - to the rising sun—for the coming of the Christ. In the Tolkien trilogy, since Gandalf is a Christ-figure, it should come as no surprise to see him coming at dawn from the east to save King Theoden and the people of Rohan.

There suddenly upon the ridge appeared a rider, clad in white, *shining in the rising sun*. Over the low hills the horns were sounding. Behind him, hastening down the long slopes, were a thousand men on foot; their swords were in their hands . . .

"Behold the White Rider!" cried Aragorn. "Gandalf is come again!" ³

How common is the "Christ-figure"?

Tolkien does not portray God in *The Lord of the Rings*, as he does in the *Silmarillion*; he writes of times long before the Incarnation, so there is no portrayal of Christ. But there are Christ figures . . . In fact, there are Christ figures everywhere in literature and life. This should not surprise us. For Christ was not an emergency afterthought . . . but the central point of the whole human story from the beginning in the Mind of its Author. In fact, Christ is the Mind of the author, the inner Word of God, the Logos. ⁴

¹ Catholic Church, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, December 19, Antiphon from the *Benedictus*.

² *Ibid.* December 21, Antiphon from the *Magnificat*.

³ J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Two Towers* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1994) page 158. Emphasis added.

⁴ Peter J. Kreeft, *The Philosophy of Tolkien* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005) page 54.