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THE INCARNATION

By BRO.⁸ EDMUND ROCKS, O. P.

"Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace to men of good will."



HE days, the months of another year have sped swiftly by bringing again the joyful, holy feast of Christmas, that day set apart by Holy Mother Church to commemorate the Nativity of the Word made Flesh. Throughout the Christian world, in every land, from north to south, from east to west, all hearts today are quickened by this joyful spirit. Young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, statesman and laborer, all heartily welcome this most gladsome day of the year. "For, (in the words of the angel) this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke, II. 11.) This is why, on Christmas morning, all true followers of Jesus kneel in profound adoration at His crib pouring forth their sentiments of joy, love and gratitude. He is their Saviour! "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us, and we saw His glory, the glory as it were, of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John, I. 14.). This great mystery, then, is the cause of the world's joyful spirit; for this Babe is at the same time true God and true man, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Who, by the power of the Holy Ghost, assumed human nature from the pure and Immaculate Virgin Mary, becoming man to redeem the world from the bondage of sin. "Jesus Christ being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant; being made in the likeness of man and in habit found as a man." (Phil. II. 6.). The Athanasian Creed clearly states this doctrine of the Incarnation in these words:—"The right faith is that we believe and confess that Our Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, is both God and man. He is God from the substance of the Father, begotten be-

fore all ages; and man from the substance of His mother, born in time; Perfect God, perfect man, subsisting of a rational soul and human flesh: equal to the Father according to His Godhead; less than the Father according to His manhood; who though He be both God and man, nevertheless is not two but the one Christ; one, not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by the taking of the manhood unto God; one altogether, not by the confusion of substance, but by unity of person. For as the rational soul and the flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ." Here are the words of the Nicene Creed:—"I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages; God of God, light of light, true God of true God; begotten not made; consubstantial with the Father; by whom all things were made. Who for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost, of the Virgin Mary; and was made man." He, the Author of the Universe becomes a helpless little babe today. He Who preserves every creature in being depends on His mother, a creature, for food and nourishment. He, the Messias, longed for by the Patriarchs, foretold by the Prophets comes unto His own but His own receive Him not. "There was no room for them in the inn." (Luke, II. 7.). He, the Lord and God chooses poverty, becomes the poorest of the poor, a stable for His home, a manger for His bed. "Being rich He became poor for your sakes; that through His poverty you might be rich." (II. Cor. VII. 9.)

The gravity of an offence is measured by the dignity of the person offended. A simple example will illustrate this principle. A ruffian insults one of his pals. Though a serious offence in itself, it would not be considered as grave as the same insult committed against, say, the Governor of the State, and neither of these offences would be as serious as one levelled at the President of the United States. Why? Because his position should command greater respect from the subjects than the ordinary citizen. Another principle closely allied to the dignity offended, the greater the reparation exacted. Now apply these principles in the consideration of the gravity of man's sin against God and you will understand the necessity of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed

Trinity. Man, by committing sin, offended an Infinite God. We clearly see that the reparation demanded of man, in strict justice, must be infinite. But man, being only a finite creature, could never satisfy God's justice, neither could the whole human race because it too was corrupted by sin, and God could have justly condemned man to an eternity in hell as He did the rebellious angels. The salvation of man was not necessary for God's happiness for He was, is and always will be, infinitely happy in Himself. On the other hand, God could have, had He so willed, wiped out this debt by a single act of His Omnipotence. That God should deign to make reparation for man at all was purely a gratuitous act of His Infinite Mercy and that He should take this special way, the Incarnation of His Divine Son, but the manifestation of His generous, overwhelming love for man. "God so loved the world as to give His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting." (John, III. 16.)

The Incarnation of the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ, Our Lord and Saviour, then, is the cause of our joy, love, and gratitude on this blessed day because He came to redeem us from the bondage of sin, to make reparation for us who were incapable of making it. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross." (Phil. II. 8.). He, an Infinite Person, true God and true man, brought the remedy; satisfied for the sins of man; conquered the devil who had previously overpowered man; made us partakers of the Divine Nature which is the end of man and true beatitude; showed us, by assuming human nature, its true dignity; destroyed in us the presumption of self-sufficiency; taught us the value of poverty, self-denial and suffering: the necessity of humility, the splendor of purity, the reward of obedience, the power of charity; established for us a firm foundation for our faith; strengthened our hope in the acquisition of perfection; in a word, by becoming man, Jesus Christ redeemed us from the slavery of sin and taught us the means by which we were to obtain happiness. "Unless He was God, says the great Pope Leo, "He would not have brought a remedy, and unless He was man, He would not have set an example." Such manifestations of Divine Love deserve, in return our sincere love and gratitude.

In the Gospel according to St. Luke we find a detailed account of the first Christmas, how Mary and Joseph went up to Bethlehem in obedience to the decree of Caesar Augustus to be enrolled in their own city and while there were denied shelter in the inn, how the Infant Saviour was born in the stable, how the shepherds keeping the night watch over their sheep were informed by the angel of the birth of their Saviour, how the multitude of the heavenly army joined in praising God, how, after the disappearance of the angels, the shepherds made haste to go to Bethlehem and there found the Infant with Mary, His mother, and Joseph, how all wondered at those things the shepherds narrated "but Mary kept all these words, pondering them in her heart," and finally how the shepherds returned praising God. This, in a few words, was the first Christmas. Today, sad to say, we have the same conditions. Holy Mother Church invites all to go up to Bethlehem, but there are some who deny the Infant Saviour room in their hearts, some who just wonder at what they hear. However, there are others, thank God, who like the shepherds hasten to find the Saviour. They prepare their hearts in the Sacrament of Penance, go to Bethlehem, Holy Communion, with Mary they adore their God, with Mary they ponder in their hearts. Christmas for them, as it was for Mary, is truly happy for they have with them the Source of Happiness. Is Christmas going to be Happy for You?

The Harvest

By BRO. CELESTINE ROONEY, O. P.

Today, in life's wide fields
Of joy or sorrow
Free-willed,
We wheat or cockle sow,
To reap the prize—
Or vengeance of the morrow :
Forever friend of God—
Or foe.