



X.A. H. KNOEFLER.

AM. S. 1866

DIE HEILIGEN DREI KOENIGE

DOMINICANA

Vol. XLI

December, 1956

No. 4

EDITORIAL



HE MYSTERY of Christmas is a mystery of humility and love—God humbling Himself for love of men. To the mystery of divine humility St. Paul refers when, speaking of Christ, he writes: "Who, 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 men, and in habit found as a man." And to the mystery of divine love St. John calls attention when he says that "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." But perhaps the most concise, and yet significant, expression of this twofold mystery is found in the *Credo* of the Mass: "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven."

"Who for us . . . came down." There in fine is the twin mystery of Bethlehem. Prompted by love ("for us") the august Second Person of the Blessed Trinity humbled Himself by assuming a human nature ("came down"). When we profess then that the Son of God "came down from heaven," we ought to see in these words not only the declaration of His visible mission among men, but also the very heart of the mystery of His Incarnation. "Who for us came down"—this epitomizes the paradoxes by which the Fathers of the Church delighted to extoll the stable's wonder of divine love through divine humiliation.

What are some of the paradoxes implied in this simple but profound formula? To make men the sons of God, the Son of God became the "Son of man." Stooping to lift His fallen creature, the Creator Himself became a creature. To enrich men with grace and glory, He Who is rich with all the royalty of the Godhead became poor; in the words of St. Paul, "being rich he became poor for your sakes: that through his poverty you might

become rich." To make men strong, Omnipotence became weak, and so we see Him Who holds all things in the palm of His hand lying in the arms of His maiden mother. At Bethlehem He "Who sits above the Cherubim" lay at the feet of shepherds, made "a little less than the angels." The Word of God "Who is in the bosom of the Father" became a mute infant in the bosom of his mother, speechless with love for men, and uttering by His very silence a word of love whose depths will never be fathomed.

To anyone who ponders this mystery of our divine Lord's loving *condescension* the moral is obvious. Our debt to the Son of God, Who "for us came down from heaven," is a debt of gratitude, to be paid by loving Him with our whole mind, with our whole heart and with all our soul.

DIVINE DESCENT

"The Word of God, therefore, God, the Son of God, Who in the beginning was with God, by Whom all things were made, and without Whom was made nothing that was made, became Man, that He might free man from eternal death; bending down to the taking of our lowliness, without diminution of His own Majesty, so that remaining what He was, and taking upon Himself what He was not, He might join the form of a true servant to that form in which He is equal to God the Father; and by such a bond so link both natures, that this exaltation might not swallow up the lesser, nor adoption lessen the Higher."

Homily of St. Leo, Pope and Doctor

GOD AUDIBLE

"As our word becomes in a manner the voice of the body, assuming that by which it is made manifest to mens' ears, so the Word of God became flesh, taking that form in which It likewise is made visible to men's eyes. And as our word becomes a voice, so the Word of God is indeed made flesh: but let no one say that It is changed into flesh: by taking on that form, not by being changed into it, does our word become a voice, and the Word of God become flesh."

St. Augustine, *De Trinitate*

DIVINITY UNCHANGED

"This day He Who is, is Born; and He Who is, becomes what He was not. For when He was God, He became man; yet not departing from the Godhead that is His. Nor yet by any loss of divinity became He man; but being the Word He became flesh, His nature, because of impassibility, remaining unchanged."

Homily of St. John Chrysostom,
Bishop and Doctor