

HUMILITY ANNOUNCED

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HIS IS MARY'S AGE. God wishes it to be so. His Church, happily bowing before His good pleasure, gladly encourages the faithful in their growing devotion to Mary. To this encouragement the simple faithful are responding with a gratifying increase in their veneration to Our Lady through her Rosary. And why not? This proud century needs Mary. It needs to learn the ignorance of pride and the wisdom of humility. It urgently needs to learn these lessons of loving mercy which flow forth unceasingly from Her Immaculate Heart.

The history of man has always been marred by pride and selfishness. Adam's sin accounts for their chronic presence. But modern man, enthralled with the creations wrought so wonderfully with his head and hands, is almost completely convinced that he is sufficient unto himself. In the self-confidence into which his phenomenal temporal progress has enticed him, he has forgotten that he is still subject to God, without whom he can do nothing. The consequences of this disguised ignorance are omnipresent. Amid luxury and comfort, crawl hate and sadness. In the midst of ambitious progress, sits modern man, alone, aloof, and lonely.

GOD'S REMEDY

God has a cure, however, for this modern madness. He is going to bring man back to the community of His love. He is going to dispel the stupidity of human pride by renewing, as it were, the eternally new offering of humility. God is again offering to man Humility Itself, Jesus Christ. But for an age which deserves only the most terrifying chastisements of Divine Justice, it seems pleasing to God to teach the world the Humbleness of Christ through a creature whose whole being sparkles forth as a font of mercy, Mary, the Mother of God, and the Mother of Mercy. This, then, is the rôle Divine Providence has graciously bestowed upon Mary. In her love, she shall teach men the wisdom of humility by teaching them the humility of Her Son.

She is effecting this plan of Providence through her favorite

devotion—the Rosary. The Rosary is her book. In this book, there is contained meditation material for the whole of Christian Life, since each chapter overflows with some virtue of Christ capable of imitation. Humility, however, is a fundamental virtue. Through this virtue, man turns away from his self-exaltation and subjects himself to His Creator. He begins his supernatural life. It is not surprising, therefore, that the first chapter of Mary's Psalter, the Annunciation, should be singled out as the Mystery of Humility.

The story of the Annunciation, as described by St. Luke, for all its awesome uniqueness, conveys a note of quiet and unpretentiousness. A young virgin, hidden away in the little town of Nazareth, far from the grandeur and bustle of Jerusalem, was visited by an angel and asked to become the Mother of God. With her answer, the perfect expression of humbleness, there entered into her womb the Eternal Word of God. With her "Fiat" the ineffable work of Man's Redemption was begun. God was introduced into the world as a humble human creature.

CHRIST KNEW HUMILITY

From the first instant of His confinement in the womb of Mary, Christ could say "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart." He knew what humility involves. With beatific clarity, He appreciated the profundity of the truth that there exists an infinite abyss between the Provident God and the totally dependent creature. He contemplated, too, the actions of men that should flow from their consideration of this eternal truth.

Man, the creature of God, is given everything. On the natural plane, he is entirely dependent upon His Creator. God has given him his human nature and his existence in this world. His body, soul, along with their ability to act are gifts. Since, however, even this subjugation would not involve an absolute dependence, he is also given the push by which these powers are actualized; and while he is acting, it is God who sustains him in his action. In the supernatural order, God has revealed to him that the entire chain of grace is a gift, freely given, not because man deserves it, but because, in His superabundant Goodness, God has chosen to offer it to him. The fact is that man couldn't even hope to attain heaven, nor carry out one virtuous action to get there if God had not given him the requisite graces.

All of this Christ knew perfectly. In the womb of Mary, He appreciated keenly the benefits creatures would reap from the

realization of their personal insufficiency. Now they would be able to make a true evaluation of the limited talents given them by God. For the man who knows himself thoroughly will know just what are the limits of his capabilities. He will not ambitiously reach out beyond the measure of his talents, nor will he be content to act short of his strength. He acts with confidence, knowing from whence his power comes and convinced that he is operating according to it. By himself, however, man is powerless.

Lest this realization of his own insecurity thrust man into the confusion of despair, Christ rejoiced in the awareness that personal helplessness is only the negative and lesser half of the knowledge that cultivates humbleness of heart. He was consoled, as it were, by contemplating the all-inclusive Providence of God, which "reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisd. 8, 1). He knew that the key to understanding the greatness of humility is hidden in the constant consideration of God's all-embracing guidance of the universe and of all the creatures therein. True, it may be difficult to consider the entire universe and man's station in it from the Creator's point of view. But all that is necessary is to review as often as possible the realization that God freely, from His Infinite Goodness, created the entire order of things for a definite purpose. Every moment, each happening, is eternally determined to reflect Divine Wisdom in some way.

This approach explains why modern man is ignorant of the grandeur of humility. He is constantly analyzing his "own" thoughts and his "own" actions. He is forever trying to find out why he behaves as he does. With his modern methods of self-analysis he is constantly digging deeper into his "ego" to explain his inexplicable behavior. Granted, self-analysis is important and necessary. But it is only a small portion of the wholeness of knowledge required for humility. The way to get a true picture of self, without fear of self-deception, is by meditating often upon the all-inclusive Providence of God in making the world and the men in it behave as they do.

Christ reflected upon this tremendous truth, even as He thought upon the freedom which human beings enjoy. The Saviour understood how man can exercise his free will in subjecting himself to God and by so doing can understand himself. Or, on the other hand, man can fix all of his thoughts upon himself and thereby understand nothing. Happily, however, even the use or abuse which man may make of his freedom is included in

the Divine Plan. God knows whether man will elect to act humbly and add to the harmony of the universe, or act proudly and add to the cacophony of hell.

Humility, then, is essentially concerned with action. Appreciating the Goodness of Divine Providence and his entire dependence upon this Providence, man tries as best he can to carry out each action in accordance with this knowledge. Acting humbly, he restrains his ambitious self from reaching out for more than he is granted to enjoy. His every wish, every movement of his body, is effected with the quiet serenity that comes from the appreciation of the Absolute Sovereignty of God guiding the helpless creature. Life now makes sense. Every joy or sadness, each favor or misfortune, all the circumstances of life are accepted with the peace of soul that comes from the knowledge that every last detail is included in the Eternal Providence of God.

CHRIST, THE PERFECTION OF HUMILITY

Christ knew all this. And He knew, from the first instant of His Incarnation that He was the Perfection of this virtue. It would be impossible to think of humility as existing in the Divine Nature of Christ, for God cannot be subjected to God. But Christ was also perfectly a man; He was the Perfect Man. He had all the perfections of man in the most eminent degree. He had intellect and will, and a body capable of feeling hunger, thirst, and pain. He had, in fact, everything man was capable of having, save sin. From the first moment of His temporal existence He understood clearly the pervading truth of the Merciful Providence of God and the weakness of creatures.

He knew God. He was cognizant of the fact that the Blessed Trinity is Happiness Itself, and that It has no need whatsoever of all of creation to add to Its Happiness. He knew Man. He knew that God, from the super-abundance of His loving goodness, created man to His Image and Likeness, and destined him for eternal life. He keenly appreciated Divine Providence. He understood the eternal consequences of His own Incarnation in this Plan; for in knowing Himself, He knew the Perfect God, the Perfect Man.

He knew that He was the Promised Saviour of mankind. By His life and death, man was to be redeemed. By imitating Him, man was to learn how to live. He dwelt upon the truth that He was the greatest of all men of every age; greater even than David who called Him Lord. In Him was contained the Law for

all ages, for He was the Supreme Lawgiver. He was to claim the power to forgive sins and He performed miracles to substantiate this claim. He was well aware that to Him and Him alone was due the humble obedience of men, and that at the end of time He would judge man for his fidelity to this obedience, or for his lack of it. Yet He, the sinless "Sun of Justice," chose to be born as if He were a sinful son of Adam. He could have been king; He could have been rich; He could have redeemed the world by one drop of His blood. But He chose to be a poor slave, and to die in the most horrible way possible. Why? Because God wished it to be so. His Incarnation, life, and death with all their tremendous consequences were included in the Infinite Providence of God.

All this He knew and He rejoiced in this knowledge. For He had freely chosen every second of it. Now all His actions were to be performed in perfect accord with this knowledge. His mind, His will, His entire being were in harmony with the Mind and Will of God. There could not be found in His wishes a single motion that even suggested a deviation from the Will of His Father. His entire life could be summed up in the words He was soon to utter in the Garden "not my will but Thine be done." And because of this absolute subjection of mind and will to His Father, Christ is the perfection of Humility.

This is He Whom Mary carried within her virginal womb, the God-Man, the model of humility. It is He Whom she is now carrying to the world through Her Rosary. Man is being delivered from his ignorance. He is being taught the happiness of humility. The future looks bright. This is Mary's Age.