

a Society of the Sacred Heart



Volume 5



December 7, 2012

Having a Blessed Advent

By Canon Glenn Gardner



When we pray the third Joyful Mystery of the Holy Rosary (the Nativity), it's traditional to pray for the grace of detachment from worldly things and from a spirit of the world...to pray for poverty of spirit. We pray that we can become one of

the *poor in spirit* spoken of in the beatitudes. In the holy season of Advent, we make it a practice to pray and to do penance but also to meditate on the coming of the Christ-child in a lowly manger in Bethlehem. Now during this time, this beatitude is perhaps the one that stands out above all the others. This is the grace of poverty of spirit *par excellence*. God created the Heavens and the earth. All that is in Heaven and under the heavens belong to Him. He could have come into this world in the most luxurious and extravagant way and no one would have had the right to accuse Him of being unjust. In the strict order of justice, every created reality

belongs to God; He can therefore do with all of creation as He wills. If He had chosen to use His creation lavishly and with copious indulgence, He would not have been any less just.

But the Mystery of the Incarnation, and the Nativity of Our Lord in a simple stable in Bethlehem, is not primarily a mystery of justice. God didn't claim His right to come into this world in the most lavish of palaces. Instead, He relinquished that right in order to come to us as the poorest and most fragile of children, in a place that not even a poor family would think of using to give birth to their child. A manger is a place for animals. It is a place where cattle and oxen dwell — not men, not even babies, and certainly not God Himself! In assuming our human nature in the Incarnation, God did not give to man what man merited ; God gave him what he in no way could truthfully claim to have a right to. It is not justice that brought God from Heaven to earth, but mercy. Mercy is about giving to another that which he does not merit. Mankind in no way merited the Incarnation; it was a pure gift of the liberality of God.

Mercy is linked to the beatitude of poverty in spirit, in a very profound way. By showing mercy to man, God at the same time displayed to the world that no one can be as poor in spirit as He. In the Mystery of the Incarnation, the Son of God emptied Himself of His Divinity, to use the image of St. Paul. He “gave

up” any prerogative that He had as God in order to assume our human nature in its fullness. To become fully human when He was fully divine is the supreme act of self-abasement. In doing thus, Our Lord shows us what the beatitude of poverty in spirit looks like when it is lived to its fullest extent. He is therefore for us the supreme example of the first (and arguably, the greatest) of the beatitudes.

Beati pauperes spiritu quoniam ipsorum est regnum caelorum, St. Matthew says (“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven,” Mt 5:3). It is essential that we take time during this season of Advent to meditate on the wisdom that is contained in this, the first of the beatitudes. The reason why poverty in spirit is so pleasing to God is that it is at the very heart of the Mystery of the Incarnation, God’s self-emptying in order to assume human flesh. With Mary, let us remain in that lowly stable in Bethlehem, contemplating the depths of Christ’s love for us — a love that goes so deep that Our Lord would even “give up” His Divinity in order to reveal it to us in all its fullness. Put another way, the Son of God put His Divinity at the service of Love. He is the All-Powerful, Omnipotent God, who created the Heavens and the earth. But as the Fathers of the Church tell us, His work of re-creation (that is, Redemption or the sanctification of man) is a much greater work than even the first creation (*ex nihilo*, out of nothing) itself! And so God chose to order even His omnipotence to love. Perhaps this is why the Beloved Apostle, St. John, tells us: *Deus caritas est* (God is charity, God is love - I Jn 4:16). Notice that he does not say, “God is power” or “God is omnipotence.” Yes, God is All-Powerful, but His power is always at the service of his love, because love is the essence of Who God is. And love is characterized by self-giving, self-emptying. It is the beatitude of the poor in spirit, which is supreme detachment from self, worldly things and supreme attachment to the things and ways of God.

A Christmas Prayer

(Said with an intention 15 times daily from St. Andrew’s Day--Nov 30--to Christmas)

Hail and blessed be the hour and moment in which the Son of God was born of the most pure Virgin Mary, at midnight, in Bethlehem, in piercing cold. In that hour, vouchsafe, O my God, to hear my prayers and grant my desires, through the merits of Our Savior Jesus Christ, and of His Blessed Mother. Amen.

from “Maxims of St. Francis”

Think of that great dereliction which our Master endured, and see how this dear Son, having asked consolation of his good Father, and seeing that He willed not to grant it, thought of it no more, ceased to seek it, but, as if He had never desired it, valiantly and courageously set about the work of our redemption. After you shall have prayed to your Heavenly Father for consolation, if it does not please Him to give it you, cease to think of it, but renew your courage to work out your salvation on the cross, as if you were never to descend therefrom.



The Dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed in 1854 by Pope Pius IX. “The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by the virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Savior of the human race, preserved immune from all stains of original sin.” In the plan of the salvation the Mother of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ, has a precise place, for “when the time was fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons, As because you sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’”(Gal. 4:4–6)

This fullness marks the moment when, with the entrance of the eternal into time, time itself is redeemed, and being filled with the mystery of Christ becomes definitively “salvation time.” And this fullness manifests the hidden beginning of the Church’s journey. So in the liturgy the Church celebrates the feast of the Immaculate Conception as the first solemn feast according to the Liturgical calendar. Mary appeared on the horizon of salvation history before Christ. The fact that she preceded the coming of Christ is reflected every year in the Liturgy of Advent. In this present season of Advent we wish to turn in a special way to Mary, the one who in the “night “of the Advent expectation began to shine like a true “Morning Star”. For just as this star, together with the “dawn,” precedes the rising of the sun, so Mary from the time of her Immaculate Conception preceded the coming of the Savior, the rising of the “Sun of Justice” in the history of the human race. Her presence in the midst of Israel– a

presence so discreet as to pass almost unnoticed by the eyes of her contemporaries– shone very clearly before the Eternal Father, who had associated this hidden “daughter of Sion” with the plan of salvation embracing the whole history of humanity. As the Church teaches, only in the mystery of the Incarnate Word does the mystery of man take on light, so only in the mystery of Christ is her mystery fully made clear. Thus the Council of Ephesus (431) was of decisive importance in clarifying this for during that Council, the truth of the divine motherhood of Mary was solemnly confirmed as a the truth of the Church’s Faith. Mary is the Mother of God, since by the power of the Holy spirit she conceived in her virginal womb and brought into the world Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who is of one being with the Father. In the pilgrimage of faith the Blessed Virgin advanced, fully preserving her union with Christ. Thus Mary has gone before, becoming a model of the Church in the matter of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ. We are still striving on earth to increase in holiness by conquering sin, so we should raise our eyes to Mary, who shines forth to the whole Church as a model of the virtues. Mary does not cease to be the Star of the Sea for those who are still on the journey of the faith. **O Mary conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee!**

Canon Raphael Ueda

Reflections on Advent and the Holy Family

James P. Sutherland, Jr, MD



Advent has always been one of my favorite times of year. For a child, the anticipation of the approach of Christmas can almost be too much to bear. The presence of four of the six Holy Days of Obligation from early November to New Year's Day give us extra opportunity to reflect on the true gifts that we have received through the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Mother, the cooperation and perseverance of the numerous saints and the silent wonders of the Incarnation and the Feast of the Circumcision. Unfortunately, the commercialism of our secular world increasingly threatens the peacefulness and the true meaning of the Advent and Christmas Season. It is therefore, important--no, essential--to make to time to reflect on the lessons of the season that are so abundant, and yet, in many ways, very simple.

The actions of the members of the Holy Family throughout this season as reflected in Scripture, can easily be summed up in two words--obedience and humility. Mary was certainly given a singular grace in her Immaculate Conception. However, as a member of the human race, she was also given free will. When, as a young girl--likely fourteen or so years of age--she was approached by the heavenly messenger Gabriel, she was given the choice, through her free will, to accept or to reject the opportunity to bear the Word Incarnate as her son. In her obedience and humility, she replied "Let it be done to me according to thy word." She accepted Christ in her womb and in her heart without first asking how her life would proceed. She asked for no assurances of an easy life. In fact, from an early point in her life, she was guaranteed a potentially difficult set of circumstances in that although she was betrothed to Joseph, she remained a virgin, and this would cause her no small social difficulties. We are told, in fact, that St. Joseph planned to divorce her quietly--until he received heavenly inspiration in a dream as to the Holy parentage of the infant in her womb.

And so Joseph, in his obedience and humility took Mary as his wife. While we know very little of the actual goings on in the life of St. Joseph, it certainly could not have been easy for him to understand--he was to be married to a young Jewish girl who was to bear a child under unusual and miraculous circumstances. And yet, he humbly accepted this situation--with some angelic prompting--and became "chaste guardian of the virgin" and "diligent protector of Christ" as is stated in the Litany of St. Joseph. Like Mary, he asked for no explanations or predictions of the future. His life as a young foster father was not easy either, for he had to travel, under obedience, with his pregnant wife to Bethlehem for the census only to have the experience of her going in to labor. How humbling for this earthly father to have to allow his wife to labor and his infant charge be delivered in a stable or a cave among the animals. However, he continued to provide for his wife and Heavenly child protecting them when he was directed to take the flight into Egypt and again bringing them back to Nazareth under obedience. The last we hear of St. Joseph in scripture, is when the Christ child becomes lost in the Temple around the age of twelve. There is a lesson here, too, of obedience in that Joseph and Mary were fulfilling the Jewish law in that they were traveling to Jerusalem in accordance with the custom.

And what of the Christ Child? It is easy to see His humility and obedience to the will of the Father in descending from Heaven to become Incarnate at Christmas. But not only did the lord of the universe descend from Heaven to become a man, but he did so, not in a plush palace or stately setting, but in obscurity. He was attended not by earthly royalty but by shepherds and livestock. Scripture later tells us in Luke 2:51-52 "*Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. And he grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.*" So we see Christ humbling himself by being obedient to his parents--creatures He had created. Christ did not place Himself above the

Mosaic law of the Ten Commandments. He was obedient to the Fourth Commandment.

In all of scripture, very little is told about the actual events in the home of the Holy Family in Nazareth, and yet, the things we could learn from those few narratives could require a lifetime to put in to practice. There are critics who say that the Holy Family is not a model for today or any time because the Blessed Mother was conceived without original sin, the Holy Infant was conceived miraculously and Mary maintained her virginity and Joseph got lots of direction from Heavenly messengers. Yet despite these unusual circumstances, the family stayed together fulfilling their religious and societal obligations with Joseph teaching Jesus his carpenter's trade, with Mary performing her motherly duties and with the child, Jesus, being obedient to his earthly parents.

With God's will we will all have a blessed Advent and Christmas with our families, and through the Intercession of the Holy Family may humility and peace reign in our homes in the coming year.



Taken from “**The Virginity of the Mother of God**” in *Meditations for Advent*
by Jaques-Benigne Boussuet

The Word and the Son of God will be personally united to the body formed of your (Mary's) blood, and to its soul, according to the eternal laws imposed upon all of nature by its Creator. This being, this divine composite, will be altogether the Son of God and your own.

Here then is a new created dignity upon the earth, the dignity of the Mother of God, which includes graces so great that thought must not attempt or even hope to understand them. The perfect virginity of body and soul is a part of this high dignity. For if concupiscence, which since the Fall ordinarily attaches to the conception of men, had been found in this one, then Jesus Christ would have contracted the primitive stain, he, the one who, came to efface it. It was, therefore, necessary that Jesus Christ be the son of a virgin, and that he be conceived by the Holy Spirit. Thus also Mary remained a virgin and became a mother.

Chaste mysteries of Christianity, how pure must we be to understand them! Yet how much more pure must we be to express them in our lives by the sincere practice of Christian truth! We no longer belong to the earth, we whose faith is so exalted; “our commonwealth is in heaven”(Phil. 3:20).



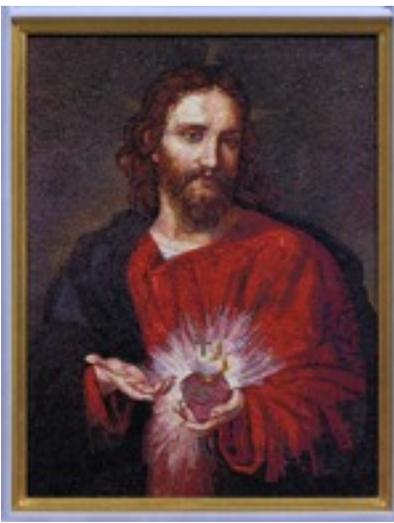
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

December 12, 2012

The Meaning of the Image of Our Lady of Guadalupe

The Image of Our Lady is actually an Aztec Pictograph which was read and understood quickly by the Aztec Indians.

1. *THE LADY STOOD IN FRONT OF THE SUN* — She was greater than their dreaded sun-god "Huitzilopochtli".
2. *HER FOOT RESTED ON THE CRESCENT MOON* — She had clearly vanquished their foremost deity, the feather serpent "Quetzalcoatl".
3. *THE STARS STREWN ACROSS THE MANTLE* — She was greater than the stars of heaven which they worshipped. She was a virgin and the Queen of the heavens for Virgo rests over her womb and the northern crown upon her head. She appeared on December 12, 1531, for the stars that she wore are the constellation of stars that appeared in the sky that day!
4. *THE BLUE-GREEN HUE OF HER MANTLE* — She was a Queen for she wears the color of royalty.
5. *THE BLACK CROSS ON THE BROOCH AT HER NECK* — Her God was that of the Spanish Missionaries, Jesus Christ her son.
6. *THE BLACK BELT* — She was with child for she wore the Aztec Maternity Belt.
7. *THE FOUR-PETAL FLOWER OVER THE WOMB* — She was the "Mother of God." The flower was a special symbol of life, movement and deity — the center of the universe.
8. *HER HANDS ARE JOINED IN PRAYER* — She was not God but clearly there was one greater than Her and she pointed her finger to the cross on her brooch.
9. *THE DESIGN ON HER ROSE-COLORED GARMENT* — She is the "Queen of the Earth," for she is wearing a map of Mexico telling the Indians exactly where the apparition took place.



CD's are now available of the recorded spiritual talks and sermons from the June, 2011 retreat. If you are interested, please e-mail to sacredheart@institute-christ-king.org. You will need to provide your return address, and a \$15 donation would be appreciated to help defray the cost of production.

Mark your calendars: Annual Retreat Dates have been scheduled for the weekend of June 14-16, 2013 at the Shrine of Christ the King in Chicago.

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