

12 December 1886

The Abasement of Our Lord Jesus Christ

My dear daughters,

At this moment, we reflect on the abasement of Our Lord Jesus Christ. We do right in meditating them since we have so much difficulty, we, poor beings, in counting ourselves as nothing, in lowering ourselves, while we see God, the King of eternity, who lowers Himself, who humbles Himself, who annihilates Himself out of love for us!

I would like to recommend to you today something important for meditation. It is to ask, when we are at Our Lord's feet: "Who is there and for whom does He abase Himself?" You would of course answer: "It is for me!"

Each one of us has the right to consider the mysteries of faith and the life of Our Lord as done for her alone.

What Our Lord does for each soul, He does for ours in particular. In eternal love for you whom He foresaw, He became man. For you He hid in the womb of the Virgin Mary. For you He was born in a manger. You understand the great gratitude you have in considering these things done for each one of you in particular.

Who then, Sisters, is He Who lay on a bit of straw? As the Holy Church sings, He did not shrink from the Virgin's womb and became man. Well, it is the only Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, Him by Whom all things were made, He Who will judge the living and the dead. He Who is infinite Wisdom, infinite Perfection, the Supreme Being. This is He Who abased Himself thus and became a child.

When He came down to earth, would it have been too much to receive Him in basilicas like St. Peter's in Rome, the Cathedral of Reims, Notre Dame in Paris, or all that we can imagine that is greatest and most beautiful? Certainly this would not have been too much for the King of Ages, and later, in fact, these magnificent temples were built for Him.

If Jesus, coming down from heaven, had been received in St. Peter's in Rome, if men had agreed and done what was most splendid to acclaim His coming, it would still not be in proportion to what He is. But finally there must be some convenience in saying: "Men do what they can, even if they don't have great means." But no, it is in a totally abandoned place, on a bit of straw, in a manger, in a place inhabited by animas that Jesus Christ was welcomed. That is all that the earth offered Him. He wanted it, He accepted it. It was by the design of His wisdom that things happen that way. It is He Who wanted to descend to this extreme abasement.

There are, my dear Sisters, several conclusions to draw from this. What is this infinite wisdom that prefers the greatest abasement, the greatest deprivation, the greatest humiliation, that prefers to be rejected as much as possible by creatures? It is the wisdom of our Spouse, the wisdom of our God. And why do we take such a small part in this wisdom? When we dream of something, it is rare, very rare, that we take its side.

In all the houses of Bethlehem, there was no place either for Him or for the Blessed Virgin, this marvel of grace, or for St Joseph, the protector of the Holy Family, he who was honored with the greatest mission on earth since he was taken to be the father of Jesus Christ. They were not wanted. They said: "Who are these people? Why should we receive them? The house is full. Go away!" They were absolutely forsaken, despised. Having nowhere to go, they found a sheltered place opening onto a cave, as one can still see in the outskirts of cities in Palestine.

The shelter served for people and the cave hollowed out in the rock was the place for the beasts of burden.

The Blessed Virgin, who desired solitude in order to pray, did not stay in the first part of the cave. She retired to where the animals were. It was there that she gave birth to Our Lord. Between a donkey and an ox, and maybe other animals, she brought Our Lord Jesus Christ into

the world, laying Him on a bit of straw and wrapping Him in swaddling clothes. There He experienced the most extreme poverty and abandonment! It is true that there the angels sang: *Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of goodwill*. It was by the continuous sacrifice of Himself that Our Lord gave glory to His Father and brought peace to those of goodwill.

It is good to recall these things, Sisters. It is good to tell ourselves that it is for us that Our Lord did all that. I suppose that we have the joy of being despised, forsaken, sent from the house – although this is not something ordinary – at least of being treated as insignificant in the house. We must tell ourselves: “What proportion is there between God and me? if Jesus, the Son of God made man to Whom all honor and all glory is due, has desired out of love for me to be despised and rejected by the men He came to save, what should I not accept, I a sinner, in terms of desertion, humiliations and contempt. Should I not desire to replace you, my Master and my King, to suffer in your place this so cruel dependence on human nature?”

We sometimes say: “What to do during meditation?” Well, we must always say: “Who is He and who am I? He loves me so much at His expense that He did all that for me: what then shall I do for Him?”

Those are very practical meditations. They more or less console depending on whether the heart is more sensitive to what Our Lord has suffered for us. They prepare us to accept in this world and even to desire a humble and hidden place, a place of sacrifice, of poverty, of obedience that puts us in the last place, whereas I don't know by what madness, we who are but ephemeral beings, we have the pretention of being something. We have this presumption since childhood. It is even greater in our youth than in old age. We want to be something, someone, as this young girl who thought herself *a deal of people*. We cannot bear being unknown, being counted for nothing. Yet that is what we must aim at: *To love to be unknown and counted for nothing* as the Imitation says. The religious who does this will soon enough be a perfect religious.