

Christmas, Mystery of Love

My dear daughters,

Christmas Eve. We are very near the happy moment when, for the first time, Our Lord will appear visibly on earth. The Blessed Virgin, at this hour, withdrew in the most humble and most hidden grotto of Bethlehem, wrapped in prayer, expecting the Savior, so much desired by the prophets and the patriarchs, so much desired by her own heart, eager to see the Son of God in this world.

Very soon, when we shall assist at the sacred mysteries, when we receive Holy Communion, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Eternal, the All-Powerful, the Judge of the living and the dead, the Principle of all creation, will descend from heaven. We shall contemplate Him as a tiny infant, lying in a manger, submitting to the care of a Virgin; poor, hidden, full of tenderness for all men. Such is the love of God for the world.

It is the only thing we can say and I should like to say to each one of you: "Such is God's love for you, my dear daughter. It is for you that He came down from heaven, for you that He made Himself small, poor; for you that He took the form of a lovable divine infant extending His arms to you and asking you to come to Him in poverty, in fidelity, in innocence and perseverance. Above all, He asks of you one thing – never to doubt His Heart, to have absolute confidence in Him. Presently, you will renew your vows, you, professed Sisters; what do you promise, you, Novices, when you approach Jesus to offer your desires? You ask to belong entirely to Him, you want to make a sacrifice of yourselves and, if that is already done, to render it more profound, more perfect, more persevering. Rest assured that, if you do not forsake Jesus, He will never leave you, He Who has called you, He Who sought you by being born in Bethlehem where He gave Himself to you as much as to the whole world.

There is another form of nativity of which the Church speaks; it is the birth of the Saints. She calls "natalitia sanctorum" that moment when, having triumphed over difficulties, the souls agreeable to God leave this earth to enter into heaven. I address those of you who have lived longer: How many times have you seen this 'natalitia sanctorum'? Every time one of our Sisters arrives at the threshold of eternity, haven't we seen her transformed?

I cannot help recalling to your minds the nativity of Our Lord, especially at this moment when we have, in one of our houses, a Sister who seems ready for her nativity in heaven, a little after our Lord will have given Himself to her and to us on this earth. She also seems quite transformed. She had her defects as we all do, she had her weaknesses, but He Who has so loved her, has, during this last illness, completed her virtues, and transformed her imperfections. Those who approach her now find in her a spouse of Jesus Christ, a loving and faithful soul ready to possess God.

This is what we have always seen in our Sisters who have left us for heaven. So long as you never doubt Our Lord and that you are faithful, that you love Him with perseverance, rest assured that He Who loves you so tenderly will never refuse you any grace. He will prepare your sanctification; He will come in one form or another, in the form of trials, obscurities, or difficulties in prayer, and He will always continue His work in you, asking for your heart with more ardor, asking for more intimate confidence and fidelity, and He will achieve His work in you at the moment of your birth in eternity. When we know how much God loves us, what our Lord has done for us, how much easier it is to give ourselves to Him forever and to sacrifice all for Him. How we should tend with fervor towards Jesus Christ, either in the manger or in the Blessed Sacrament, in the midst of the daily duties which fill our life.

We have spoken recently of contemplation; one of the most precious graces of contemplation is what the saints call the flight of the soul, that is to say, while still living in the world, the soul seems to leave the body and fly towards God. The souls who have had this flight to God have a practical knowledge that God is their all, that He is their end and do not know any other way of living but in Him.

If the saints experience this sentiment by an extraordinary grace, you must realize that this is a law of nature for all those who leave this world. At the moment when the soul leaves the body, with more swiftness than an arrow towards its mark, the soul darts towards God. If it is rejected because of some imperfection, some fault or weakness, even if it were separated by a crime which you will never know, the soul will still retain that attraction, that need, that tendency towards God, for all eternity.

For the souls who are forever deprived of God, the greatest pain is that great desire to go to God while not being able to possess Him. But for those who have loved God on earth, this flight to God is most happy and swift. I tell you this to make you realize that it depends on you to tend towards God at all times, in your employments, in the class, in the refectory, in the kitchen, you can always turn to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament or to Jesus in the manger where you will find Him Who made Himself a little child for your sake. You can live in such a way that, in the midst of your occupations, you will be able to refresh your souls and set your hearts aflame before Jesus.

Our vocation is to seek Our Lord always, to live on His truth and to make Him the foundation of our whole life. We should always seek His glory and honor in our work, and not try to project our own selves. Ask Him this grace during this holy night, when, before the manger, you will renew your vows.

The renewal of vows is a great grace. The renewal of vows gives you the grace to become more obedient, more faithful in the perfection of chastity, which is none other than the perfection of love; poorer, more stripped of your own selves, more humble in imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ Who took the last place on earth. We become gentler because Our Lord taught us that He is gentle and humble of heart; more joyful because poverty gives joy and also because the nativity of Our Lord is the greatest source of joy that a Christian can find.

Today is Christmas. Joy and Christmas is the same thing. Our ancestors understood this well. Noel, Noel was their cry of joy and triumph. And surely, there is no greater joy than the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ on earth to be ours, all ours.

In the midst of these causes of joy, there is a sad truth we must remember. It is this: that after Jesus has given Himself to the world, there are men who have worked and are still working incessantly to persuade others that Jesus Christ is not God, that He is not the Son of the Eternal, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity; that all that we believe is vain and that nothing has been given us from heaven. Think what a misfortune this is for souls and what sorrow for Our Lord. This is the work of the old serpent whose head was crushed by the Virgin Mary's foot, but who still strives to strike men and drag them to the eternal abyss.

While you rejoice, think also of those who do not know the joys of this blessed night when the Savior is given to us, but instead lead others astray by their erroneous teachings.

Pray much for this country, for the triumph of the Church who will spread joy everywhere because she imparts to all the knowledge of God and His love.

What can be hard when one knows who God is and how much He loves us; when one knows that He is not hard on his poor creatures, that we should have faith in Him, trust Him, not abuse His graces. By living this way we trust that He prepares our entrance into heaven. It is this assurance, source of all joy, which the Church wants to give us, her children, and which the devil wants to destroy through incredulity.

That is why we must pray for the triumph of the Church, for the return of those who are deceived and are far from God. We should rejoice at our good fortune of being guarded from all error, from all lies, from occasions of sin. We should rejoice for being with Him Who is the object of our love, Who should be our joy on earth, our joy in eternity and who prepares our "natalitia sanctorum" by being born for us in a manger on this blessed night.