



# CARMEL CLARION

Disalced Carmelite Secular Order

Washington, D.C.



## *The Child Jesus*

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## CARMEL CLARION

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### CARMEL CLARION

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Discalced Carmelite Secular Order, Washington, D.C.

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**A**s the year comes to an end we want to wish each of you a very blessed Christmas and New Year. The year 2005 has been a difficult year for the entire world with wars, terrorist attacks, the tsunami in Asia, the hurricane in the U.S and the Caribbean,



*Detail from a window in the Carmelite Monastery, Washington, DC.*

and earthquake in India and Pakistan and large populations suffering political unrest. As bad as it was, and it was bad, the world as the world has never been different. There have been wars, natural disasters and political unrest from the beginning of recorded history. Yet into this darkness has come a great light, in the person of Jesus Christ. He chose not to come as a conqueror, but as a small, vulnerable child, born not in a home but in a stable. He was born into a people subjected to a conquering foreign power. His mother and father had to flee with the new born to escape persecution, thus becoming refugees in Egypt. And finally, when they returned to their homeland they lived in a small poor village eking out a living.

In this issue of the *Clarion* we feature the history of the Infant of Prague statue. Devotion inspired by this statue and fostered by the Carmelite of Prague has over the years become a worldwide devotion. In this issue you will also read various reflections on the birth of Christ and how the feast of Christmas was celebrated by some of our Carmelite saints. The emphasis of the Christmas celebration was one of joy and enthusiasm. There was much singing and dancing in the Teresian communities.

I hope and pray that in celebrating Christmas you may experience the joy so wonderfully manifest in the lives and writings of the saints and blessed of Carmel. ■

Fr. Regis Jordan, O.C.D.

# Washington Province Appoints Provincial Council

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The following people have been selected and have agreed to serve on the OCDS Provincial Council.

Virginia Chromczak, OCDS - New England  
John Leidy, OCDS - Mid-West  
Annie Lex, OCDS - Mid-West  
Kathryn Blumhagen, OCDS - Florida  
Pedro Gonzales, OCDS - Florida  
Suzanne Treis, OCDS - Mid-Atlantic  
Thomas McCabe, OCDS - Mid-Atlantic

The OCDS Constitutions mandate the formation of Provincial Councils: “where there is an organized circumscription of the friars of the Order, the Secular Order is to form a Provincial Council to assist one another better in formation and the apostolate, but not for intervening in the government of the local communities.” In other words, the role of the Council is advisory. It will advise the Provincial and his Delegates on matters concerning the Secular Order and will assist local communities in cooperation with the Provincial Delegate. Its first order of business will be to draw up Provincial statutes. ■

# History of the Image of the Infant of Prague

Ludvik Nemeec

The history of the image is rich and colorful and provides a panoramic view of people, times and events beginning in Spain, extending to Prague, and thence to all parts of the world. It is not surprising that it should originate in Andalusia in Spain. According to Carmelite, legend and tradition, the image was carved by Brother Joseph, a Carmelite, after the Child Jesus had Himself appeared to serve as model for the sculpture. It was thought that the image had been given to Isabella de Bresagno, wife of Garcia Manriquez de Lara, a Castilian nobleman, and that it had been subsequently passed on as a wedding gift to her daughter, Maria.



In attempting to trace the origin of the statue, research led me to the conclusion that Isabella was not a sufficiently pious person to carry out this mission with such sacred purpose, and so it remains just “a strange story of the wedding gift.” A more creditable explanation is that St. Teresa of Avila, who first dressed the Infant as a king, probably gave the statue to Maria Manriquez de Lara. This conclusion is based on the historic facts of the close relationship existing between the Mendoza family and the Discalced Carmelites, and also on the personal friendship between Maria Manriquez de Lara and St. Teresa of Avila. It is evident that the idea of the Holy

Child having its inception in the depths of Carmelite contemplation reached its zenith in the mysticism of St. Teresa (1515-1582) and her protégé, St. John of the Cross (1542-1591). The chronology of persons and events supports this conclusion.

The historic fact is that in 1556, Maria Manriquez de Lara brought the image from Spain to Bohemia as a family heirloom and her private devotion was such as to give almost certain indication to the influence of the Carmelite mystic. Only seven of Maria’s twenty children lived to maturity, and into their hearts she instilled a great devotion to the Infant. Polyxena, one of her youngest daughters, was a brilliant and beautiful woman who like her moth-

er possessed a deep spiritual insight, and from her father acquired and maintained a great interest in his political ties with Spain. By her marriage to William of Rosenberg (1587), supreme burgrave of the kingdom of Bohemia, she had allied herself with one of the wealthiest and most influential houses in Europe. After his death, a second marriage, to Zdenek Adalbert Lobkowitz (1603), afforded her a widening sphere of influence. Polyxena utilized her position of prestige to unify the spiritually and politically divided kingdom of Bohemia. Unusually devout and a steadfastly loyal daughter of the Catholic Church, her determination, religious zeal, and spirit of self-sacrifice were typical of a Spain revitalized by the mystical vision of Teresa of Avila. It was in making her gift to the Discalced Carmelites of the miraculous statue, which she had inherited from her mother, that Princess Polyxena in 1628 laid the foundation for the first recognition of the Infant of Prague whose fame in our own day has become world wide.

### **The Enigma of the Times**

By this time, Protestantism had made steady and deep penetrations into the countries of the Czech crown and under Emperor Rudolph II had become so securely established that its adherents were sufficiently numerous and powerful to take up arms against the Catholic monarch, Ferdinand II (1578-1637). Fearful of the impending attack by the more powerful Protestant forces, the Catholic element, nevertheless, prepared to defend their faith, and in the battle of White Mountain, on November 8, 1620, a decisive victory was won by Ferdinand's forces, the Emperor having found inspiration in the crusading zeal of the Discalced Carmelite Venerable



Dominic a Jesu Maria. In a visit to the castle of Strakonice, the monk had found a painting of the Nativity deliberately defaced. Incensed at the desecration, he vowed to exert every effort in repairing the indignity and in seeing that the Infant Jesus would be fittingly honored. Hanging the painting about his neck, he led the vanguard of Catholic forces into battle with the cross in his hand and the crib on his breast. The picture later entitled Our Lady of Victory became a symbol of Catholic triumph.

Prague, the capital of Bohemia was the scene of struggle and strife throughout the period of the Thirty Years' War. The religious issues and the political upheaval resulting from the attempts at a balance of power were necessarily reflected in the opposing views of

the Reformation versus the Counter Reformation. Radicalism and excesses marked the policies of both sides. Unfortunately, the political reprisals insisted upon by Ferdinand II cast their ugly shadows across the brilliant dawning of a great spiritual renaissance. By his order twenty-seven of the nobility were executed, many of his Protestant adversaries exiled, property confiscated, and non-Catholic religious services drastically curtailed. It was understandable that a victorious Hapsburg would attempt to strengthen the Catholic position; not even the enemy could blame him for that. But history does indict him for the means he chose to attain this end.

Protestant vandalism, it is true, was extensive and seriously injurious, but retaliation in the same vein was unreasonable and unfortunately served only to label the period of the Counter Reformation one of "darkness." Such an evaluation must be termed unjust if one looks at the whole picture of the Counter Reformation as a defense against the thought as well as the practices of Protestant elements, and an attempt to restore traditional spiritual values. A reflection of this anomaly may be seen in the martial spirit of the Church of Our Lady of Victory in Prague, so symbolic of the victorious progress of the "Church militant." It is singularly paradoxical that an aura of militant Catholicism should thus pervade a church whose guardians were distinguished for their contemplative character. Here above the harsh echoes of war, the world would catch the gentle voice of the Holy Child; here, guarded by weapons of war would stand the throne of the Prince of Peace.

However contradictory it may appear, nevertheless, it is a clear-cut appraisal of the underlying factors in the conflict between the

Reformation and the Counter Reformation. Here Christian zeal in humility diametrically opposes the arrogance of the so-called reformers. It was altogether fitting then that the Holy Child—the King, should be brought to the Church of Our Lady of Victory, a symbol of triumph. This edifice, originally named the Church of the Holy Trinity, was built by Protestants, but by order of Emperor Ferdinand II was placed under the administration of the Discalced Carmelites and renamed in 1624 in honor of Our Lady of Victory. In specifying that the miraculous statue be placed in this church, Princess Polyxena, knowingly or unknowingly, indicated that behind the militant spirit of Catholicism, victory would best be preserved through a dedication to the Holy Child—the King.

Today, the historic statue of the Infant of Prague, mounted on a silver base, occupies the center of three altars on the epistle side of the church. Since the occasion of the historic ecclesiastical coronation on April 4, 1655, the head of the image has been adorned by a costly crown, the gift of an influential Czech nobleman, Bernard Ignatius Martinic. Dating from this historic occasion, the Infant of Prague has been honored as the King of nations and the universe, attesting to the fact that there is only one all-important victor—salvation—and that is attained through filial subjection to Christ the King. This is the lesson that has been drawn from the enigma of the seventeenth-century struggle for spiritual survival which culminated in the crowning victory of the Holy Child—the King. Historically the way had been paved for the devotional spirit of man to externalize the glory due the Son of God and to enable Him under His beloved title of the Infant of Prague to captivate the hearts of men.

## The Devotion

Of humble origin and nurtured under humble circumstances, devotion to the Infant—the King has real meaning only for the humble. It was the humble friars of the Carmel at Prague who bore first witness to the corollary—“To give glory to the Infant Jesus and hope to receive graces from Him in return.” This was the principle underlying the prophetic words of Princess Polyxena as she presented the image to the monks in 1628. “I give you,” she said, “what I prize most highly in this world. So long as you venerate this image, you shall not want.” Aware of the promise, the friars besought the Infant Jesus as the Good Provider in their daily needs. In His countenance could be read the look of authority and the loving glance of clemency inspiring all to trust in His providential care. This confidence was richly rewarded in the generous benefactions bestowed upon the community.

The very heart of the devotion, however, lies in invoking the Infant as a Master of Vocations. It was in having the doubts concerning his religious vocation resolved that Father Cyril was led to devote his life to the Infant and to spread the devotion through this apostolate. On Christmas day, 1629, this Carmelite friar, his soul tormented by doubts and anxiety about his vocation, knelt before the image, pleading for help from the Infant. Suddenly in answer to his prayer, a great calm came upon his soul and he experienced an overwhelming sense of peace. Since that time, thousands seeking a solution to the mystery of the divine call have received a reassuring answer from the Infant. Father Cyril of the Mother of God (1590-1675), already a Carmelite priest, had known years of discontent and uncertainty. Deeply

affected by the reform of his order and desiring a stricter observance, he left his monastery and in 1627 entered the Discalced Carmelite community in Prague. He became known as the zealous “procurator of the Infant,” composing his famous prayer to the Holy Child and recording for posterity the first miraculous events connected with this devotion. During the devastating period of the Thirty Years’ War (1618-1648) the people of Prague were petitioning the help of the Holy Child as their powerful Protector against the onslaught of the Protestant forces under the leadership of the Swedish king, Gustavus Adolphus, who had left the city practically in ruins. Nor had the monastery escaped the vandalism. Forcing an entry into the oratory, the invaders laughed with contempt at the sight of the little image of a child dressed in royal robes, and one among them had the unenviable distinction of being first to pitch from its place of honor the emblem of “popish superstition” the statue falling into the rubble behind the altar.

During the next seven years (1630-1637), with Father Cyril and his confreres reassigned to Munich, the statue lay forgotten. The people of Prague and the friars of Carmel were visited with one misfortune after another, and invasion followed invasion. Upon his return to Prague in 1637, Father Cyril’s first thought was for the beloved image. His diligent search revealed the statue, dust-laden and in need of repair, and he lovingly bore it back to his cell. After hearing the friar’s impassioned plea, the prior granted permission for the image to be enshrined in the oratory. Father Cyril’s love for the Infant soon communicated itself to his fellow religious and spread in a short time far beyond the monastery walls.

The image continued to exert its unusual appeal and many devoted clients were attracted to the devotion. On one occasion, being alone in the oratory, Father Cyril heard these words, "Have pity on Me, and I will pity you. Give Me My hands and I will give you peace. The more you honor Me, the more I will bless you." For Father Cyril the meaning was perfectly clear—the statue must be repaired and fittingly honored. Confidently approaching his superior with his request, he was unprepared for the lack of understanding evinced in the reply from the prior who evidently did not share Father Cyril's enthusiasm for spending what he considered needed funds on the repair of a statue. After all, he explained to the friar, "we need every bit of money we have for food." But a few days later, Father Cyril had occasion to mention



his problem to a sick man to whom he had just administered the last rites. The gentleman promptly gave Father Cyril the money for the repairs and the priest happily carried it back to the monastery. The superior, however, decided—over Father Cyril's protests—that the community would purchase a new statue of the Child Jesus instead of attempting to repair the old one. But just as the new statue was being installed, a heavy candlestick toppled over and smashed it. That seemed a clear sign

that the Infant wanted this particular statue and no other. The tiny Infant with the globe and the hand raised in blessing was somehow important in God's plan.

A new superior was assigned to the monastery. Like his predecessor, he could not see the sense of spending good money on the repair of a small battered statue. Then, one day while Father Cyril was praying before the statue, the Infant again spoke to him "Place Me near the entrance of the sacristy and you will find someone who will take pity on Me." The friar followed the command, and almost immediately an army officer, who had been praying in the church, stepped forward and offered to pay for the repairs.

Finally, then, the statue was restored and placed in its niche in the novices' chapel.

It was now time for the Infant's power to make itself felt. The superior of the monastery, Father Dominic of St. Nicholas, was the first one to experience the influence of the devotion. The plague still persisted in Prague, and Father Dominic contracted the disease. Doctors worked diligently over the sick man but it soon became clear that Father Dominic's case was hopeless, that death was imminent. Father Cyril then brought the statue to the superior's room and Father Dominic promised that, if he were



cured, he would spread devotion to the Infant. Christ heard the prayer; miraculously, Father Dominic was restored to health.

At last realizing what a priceless treasure he had in the miraculous statue, the prior ordered the entire community to participate in devotion to the Infant, who had proved Himself such a powerful Protector and had won a convincing victory over human hearts both in the Carmel and the city of Prague.

But in order to receive public recognition it appears that the Infant had to prove Himself a *Divine Physician*, working miracles for the physically afflicted and the spiritually distressed. Problems of all kinds were brought

to His attention and He was invoked under the affectionate and appropriate titles of *Guardian of Good Name and Reputation*, *Good Financier*, and *Patron of Families*. These miraculous events associated with the Infant are so numerous and varied as to render even a brief summarization at this time an impossible task.

It is interesting to note that in these miraculous occurrences, certain conditions were always present. The petitions made with sincerity, simplicity, and humility, in complete trust and confidence, are answered, while punishment is meted out to those whose motives are of a calculating or selfish nature. Numerous and costly gifts helped to beautify the shrine in Prague and remain to this day as public testimonials to the divine generosity of the Infant. The continuing popularity of the devotion hastened ecclesiastical approval given in the blessing of the new chapel on the feast of the Holy Name, January 14, 1644. It was not until 1721 that Pope Innocent XIII established for the universal Church the second Sunday after Epiphany as the feast of the Holy Name. On May 3, 1648, Ernest Adalbert Cardinal Harrach, Archbishop of Prague, was invited to pontificate at the ceremony of consecration at which time the prelate offered his personal gift of fifty ducats and granted permission to all religious and secular priests to offer Mass in the chapel. This occasion has great significance in the history of the image since it marks the date when the devotion received both public acceptance and ecclesiastical approval. This same year saw the close of the Thirty Years' War.

Devotion to the Infant of Prague had been put to the test during the second half of the seventeenth century and by its steady increase had been vindicated. There were

some persons, and not all of them enemies of the faith, who opposed the devotion. Some challenged it outright, holding that it smacked of superstition and idolatry, something not consonant with the times—the age of enlightenment. Others urged that it be tolerated merely as a private devotion and not be permitted to disturb the traditional order of the liturgy, which a few Carmelite dissenters feared about to happen.

A visitation by the Father General of the Discalced Carmelites removed every vestige of doubt. The primary purpose of the visitation by Father Francis of the Blessed Sacrament was to ascertain the background of the devotion, to evaluate its current status, and to make what recommendations were needed for the future. After consultations and conferences on the matter, he signed the decree of approval on July 28, 1651. The document hangs in the Talmberg Chapel, bearing in addition to the Father General's signature, those of the two definitors of the province, Fathers Peter Maria of St. Alexis and Cyril of the Mother of God.

On January 14, 1652, the feast of the Holy Name became the official feast of the Infant—the King. On this occasion, the image was transferred from the chapel to the church and the Holy Child publicly acclaimed the miraculous Infant Jesus. The official ecclesiastical coronation took place, April 4, 1655, when Bishop Joseph De Corti, acting in the place of the ailing Ernest Cardinal Harrach, crowned the image. A great increase in devotion followed upon the widespread fame of the Infant and the period became known as the "Golden Era." During this time thousands made pilgrimages to the Talmberg Chapel and many architectural additions and ex votos were donated, so that by January 13,

1741, all was in readiness for the Infant's solemn transition to His new abode.

In fighting for her right of succession as guaranteed by the Pragmatic Sanction of 1713, Empress Maria Theresa placed her cause in the hands of the Infant. When, eventually, the dispute was settled in her favor, she personally made a set of royal robes for the Infant and came on April 29, 1743, as the newly crowned monarch of the kingdom of Bohemia to pay homage to the Little King. This period of renewed fervor proved but a lull before the storm. In the conflict known as the Seven Years' War, Frederick of Prussia led his forces against the Austrian armies, attacking on all fronts, and once again Prague was under siege, her people prey to all the miseries and sufferings attendant upon war. In their necessity, they again turned to the Infant, addressed now as the Prince of Peace. In gratitude for the deliverance accorded them, a new altar throne was erected and solemnly dedicated on December 26, 1776, by Francis Xavier Tord, Bishop of Prague.

This ceremony, the last recorded by the Discalced Carmelite friars, was a colorful triumph for the Infant. The years preceding their expulsion from Prague in 1784 by order of Emperor Joseph II were ones of great progress with devotion to the Infant and replicas of the miraculous image having become well known throughout Europe and even in distant missionary lands. Before leaving Prague, the Carmelites had pledged themselves to exert every effort wherever they might go, and by every means at their command to spread the knowledge and love of the Holy Child.

This dedication, however, was soon offset by the vandalism of Josephinism and the various sociopolitical movements which fol-

lowed. The result was such an indifference to religion that it is surprising the devotion to the Infant survived at all. The spirit that engendered the French Revolution had rent society, poisoning the minds of the people with the false philosophy of Deism. Whole nations were lulled into spiritual lethargy by the substitution of a vague natural religion for Catholicism. Skepticism became fashionable; disrespect for the ancient faith was the prevailing spirit; miracles were ridiculed; the Bible discredited; and Catholic dogma repudiated as unsuitable for consideration by the rationalistic mind. As a consequence, a sophistication which considered prayer a waste of time became popular. Apparently there was no longer any need for trusting in an all-provident heavenly Father.

This was an age that could never reconcile the humility of the Infant Christ with its own pride of life. This so-called progress was taught in the schools and universities. Even some ecclesiastical circles—and certain prelates enjoyed membership in them—were penetrated by the “enlightenment.” In consequence, the spiritual life suffered serious regression. Meditation was deemed unprofitable, contemplative orders regarded as useless, the piety of the faithful ridiculed as reactionary sentiment. The entire Baroque era became classified as one of “darkness,” and the Infant, a symbol and product of this period, became a prime target for attack.

The liberalism of Voltaire and the radical doctrines of Jean Jacques Rousseau were in ascendancy over tradition and religion. Pope Pius VI made a personal visit to Vienna in a valiant effort to forestall the excessive reforms of Joseph II. The hypocrisy of the age was immediately apparent in the public reception accorded the Holy Father, while at

the same time, the civic authorities openly defied his papal jurisdiction.

These were trying times for the Infant of Prague, too. The monastery of the Discalced Carmelites was reduced to the status of a parish church and the priests of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, better known as the Knights of Malta, were named administrators by the office of Religious Government. Fortunately, the Knights of Malta continued the traditional celebrations honoring the Infant as they had been established by the Carmelites.

The indifferentism of the times was reflected in the almost-empty churches. Modernism and Socialism followed Josephinism in quick succession making their impact not only on the political scene but on religion as well. During the whole of the nineteenth century, the great drama of the suffering Church was enacted against a background of human pride and arrogance. During these difficult times, great masterpieces of diplomacy were accomplished as the popes, despite opposition and humiliation, stood firm in their defense of the faith. Eventually it was the keen mind and the diplomatic skill of Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) that effected this restoration to the Church of some degree of the respect and glory she had known in the past. For this brilliant Pontiff, fearlessly challenging the enemies of the Church, took the initiative in instituting reforms and in assuming a rightful leadership in world affairs.

What the Christian world needed most was the exercise of humility as an antidote for its pride. For this reason, His Holiness favored the Infant of Prague and endorsed the devotion. When Francis Cardinal Schoenborn, Archbishop of Prague, sent the statutes of the newly founded sodality of the Infant of Prague to him for approval, Pope Leo XIII



gave it world-wide approbation on March 13, 1895, and endowed it with rich indulgences.

Because other countries endeavored to share also in these indults, Pope St. Pius X unified the then existing sodalities under one set of rules. Realizing the inspiration to be derived through devotion to the Infant, especially in the children's apostolate, the Holy

Father issued the necessary apostolic decree on March 30, 1913, regarding the Confraternity of the Infant of Prague, while the Sacred Congregation of the Council by degree of July 24, 1913, provided a full scale of requirements and conditions for its membership. Finally, the supervision of all confraternities was defined in terms of the apostolic letter of Pope Pius XI in 1923, when he placed them under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Discalced Carmelites. Earlier, on the feast of St. John of the Cross, November 24, 1920, Pope Benedict XV granted permission for a votive Mass of the Holy Name to be offered wherever the Confraternity of the Infant of Prague was canonically erected.

When it became evident that devotion to the Infant of Prague had won not only approval,

but enthusiastic support from the Holy See, the spiritual revival as planned by the Order of Carmel continued its expansion to all parts of the Catholic world. With objections removed and the devotion established as being theologically sound, the twentieth century was to see a spectacular growth in the popularity of the Infant on every conti-

ment. With the proclamation of the feast of Christ the King, by Pope Pius XI in 1925, attention was once again focused on the aspect of Divine Royalty as expressed in the image of the Infant of Prague. Christians were reminded of the age-old truth that spiritual childhood is a requisite for breathing the air of the city of God upon earth. It came as a timely warning to Christians in an age when inordinate emphasis on material possessions had paved the way for Communism and Socialism, when exaggerated ideals of racial pride paraded as Nazism, and where spiritual values were attacked by Fascist Secularism.

If the modern world has learned a lesson from its experience with false ideologies it is this: men must “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” This is the precise lesson emphasized by Divine Kingship so dramatically expressed by the Infant of Prague. But even in the darkest moments of political upheaval and religious doubts, chaos and gloom gave way before the heartening promise of the Infant of Prague, “The more you honor Me, the more I will bless you,” for individuals and nations had already experienced its fulfillment.

And so in the continued search for problems, man is brought to the realization that he must “seek first the Kingdom of God...” Understanding the implications of spiritual childhood, the devotion to the Infant of Prague becomes at once a means to the attainment of the goal, and the end or goal itself. The “little way” of St. Therese of Lisieux, the Little Flower, is perhaps one of the best examples of littleness in this life meriting the crown of victory in eternity. Her daily prayer to the Holy Child gives ev-



idence of the spiritual efficacy of devotion to the Holy Infancy. “O Jesus, dear Holy Child, my only Treasure, I abandon myself to Thy every whim. I seek no other joy than that of calling forth Thy sweet smile. Grant me the graces and the virtues of Thy Holy Childhood, so that on the day of my birth into heaven, the angels and saints may recognize Thy spouse, Therese of the Child Jesus.” Here is an echo of the mysticism of St. Teresa of Avila who four centuries earlier had attained to heights of mystical communication with the Holy Child—the King.

As the “little way” of St. Therese became better known, efforts were intensified to further propagate devotion to the Infant of Prague. In the providence of God, the

shrine in Prague became a great center of devotion. Many things contributed to this renewed interest. Among the most noteworthy were the inspiring pastoral letters of Charles Cardinal Kaspar, Archbishop of Prague, who kept the cause of the Infant before the attention of the people. At the same time, the Carmelites were actively engaged in preparing for the third centenary celebration of the devotion to be held in 1928. Emigrants to all parts of the world from 1848 to 1913 helped to place replicas of the little statue in their adopted lands, while devotionals, booklets, and novena leaflets honoring the Infant were in surprising demand. Artists in Prague and elsewhere were hard-pressed to satisfy the newly awakened interest in the Infant. Literary efforts mushroomed in Czechoslovakia, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the United States in response to the popular demand for information about the little King of Prague. The Infant was soon included among the devotional favorites of most religious orders and congregations, and the image first seen in their chapels soon appeared in parish churches. Hymns and poems honoring the Holy Child became popular and began to appear in prayer books and manuals. In fact it was through the medium of poetry that the first successful attempts were made to communicate all the lovely and tender meaning of the devotion. *Prager Lied (Song of Prague)* written in 1636 is one example. Another is *L'Enfant Jesus de Prague*, written in 1909 by the French poet and diplomat, Paul Claudel. At his suggestion this was used as the theme for the International Poetry Contest held in 1927 which focused the attention of literary circles throughout the world on the Infant of Prague. It was this same Paul Claudel who

on April 29, 1950, in an audience with the late Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, could find in his vast repertoire of compositions nothing so eloquent or so impressive as his poem about the Infant. His recitation won for him great applause from the assembled diplomats, cardinals, and artists, and high praise from the Holy Father.

The musical oratorio, composed by Jilji Walter and presented for the first time at the Pontifical Mass celebrated April 5, 1948, by Joseph Beran, Archbishop of Prague, is a beautiful and deeply stirring composition expressive of the great love of the Czechoslovak people for their little King.

It is interesting to note that the Communists in Czechoslovakia, despite their total persecution of the Church, must tolerate such "popish superstition," a proof of their awareness of the esteem in which the devotion is held and of their unwillingness to arouse an unfavorable popular reaction by any attempt to suppress it. In their hypocritical efforts to present to the world an appearance of freedom, which in reality is nonexistent in the homeland of the Infant of Prague today, they have permitted the publication of two books which publicize the Infant and the popularity of the devotion. *Unto the Glory of God*, published in 1955 is written in English, the other a French booklet was published in 1957.

The gratifying fact remains that the Infant of Prague continues to play His magnificent role behind the Iron Curtain of Atheistic Communism, still blessing the faithful of the Church of Silence. Among his devoted clients is the Archbishop of Prague, Joseph Beran, who from June 19, 1949, to March 10, 1951, was under constant police surveillance, and from this latter date, when he

was expelled from his See, has been transported from one prison to another to prevent knowledge of his whereabouts from reaching the free world.

The Archbishop's attempt in 1948 to replace the Knights of Malta by the Comforters of the Sacred Heart as guardians of the shrine of the Infant of Prague, and to change the name of the church to that of Our Lady of the Infant of Prague, were frustrated by the Communists by jailing the newly appointed guardians on Easter Sunday, 1950, and remanding the ecclesiastical order by reassigning the Knights of Malta and placing them under the strict control of the government's Ecclesiastical Bureau. While the Infant of Prague, in His own homeland is denied the full measure of glory that is His due, the free world continues to lavish its love and honor upon Him.

### **Conclusion**

Even after such a brief consideration of these historical facts concerning the Infant of Prague, it would be hard to think of a more solid or fundamental devotion, since it is rooted in the mystery of the Incarnation Itself, and directs us immediately to the humanity of Christ. This devotion has proved

an effective means of penetrating the profound meaning of the Holy Infancy. Although the Church has always revered, honored, and loved the Infant King, it would seem that in the providence of God, an understanding of the full depth of this mystery was reserved to the past four centuries. The story of the Infant King and the role the small and artistically executed statue in Prague had to play in it is fascinating indeed. It is a beautiful account of the unfolding of God's plan for spreading this devotion by an unconditional surrender of ourselves to the Eternal King without putting undue pressure on our weak human nature. As Caryll Houselander puts it "there is nothing more mysterious than Infancy, nothing so small, and yet so imperious. . . ." The influence of the Holy Child sets the tone, so to speak, of Divine Providence and heralds the Holy Childhood of Jesus Christ as the mystery of salvation for all. The miraculous image of the Infant of Prague, that of a smiling, seemingly helpless Child, whose only weapon for world conquest is littleness itself, somehow enables us to fathom the mystery of the Holy Childhood for what it is—the source of spiritual rebirth for the modern world. ■

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# St. Teresa and Devotion to the Infant Jesus

*Gratiniano Turiño*



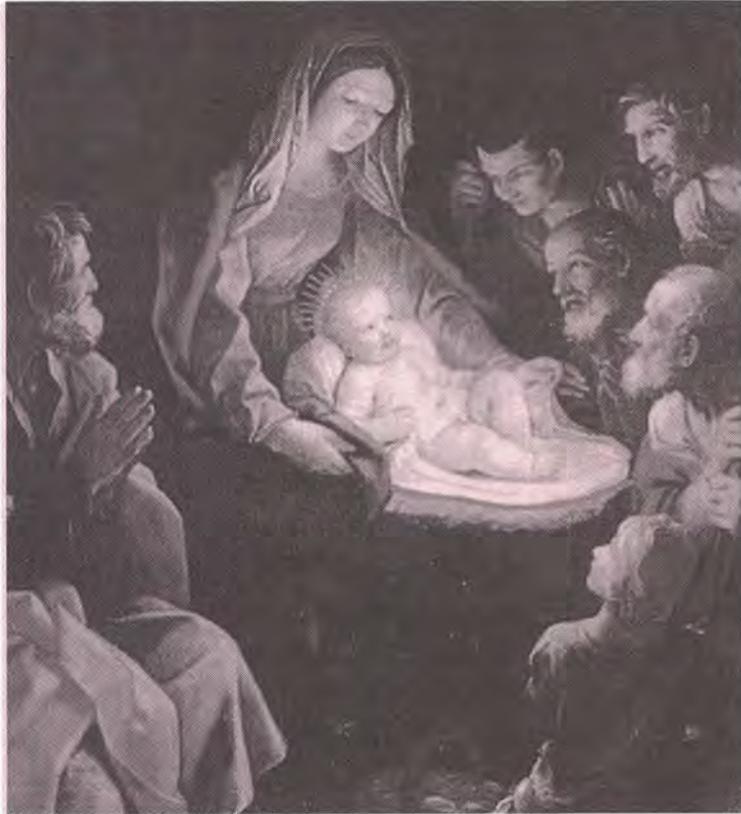
A favorite Teresian story tells of an encounter of Teresa with Jesus that took place at the convent of the Incarnation. As the story goes, Teresa walking in the convent's cloister met a young boy. She asked him who he was. He responded, "I am Jesus of Teresa." He then asked, "And who are you." Teresa answered, "I am Teresa of Jesus."

Devotion to the Child Jesus, so alive in the hearts of Teresa and John of the Cross, is a permanent richness of the Teresian Carmel. In the Carmelite monastery of Prague, the devotion to the infant was established, thanks to Fr. Cyril of the Mother of God, and his confreres who venerated a small statue of Jesus. This statue, of Spanish origin, was donated to the monastery in 1628 by Polyxena de Lobkovic, the daughter of Señora Maria Manrique de Lara. The faithful throughout the world are witnesses that Prague will always be the city of the Infant Jesus. And this continues to be so because of the Teresian Carmelites. The infancy of Jesus, from the time of St. Teresa, is a part of Carmel's familial patrimony.

## **The "Humanity" of Christ**

All of the studies of Teresa's writings show that the Saint discovered that Christ's "humanity" is essential throughout the entire spiritual process. This she maintained despite the famous theologians who thought that Christ's humanity was an obstacle to the higher realms of the spiritual life. Christ's humanity, as for all humans, begins in "infancy."

Teresa writes of the "humanity," of "Jesus Christ," of "Jesus." This is especially so in some of the poems composed for Christmas. We find numerous texts concerning Christ's humanity which do not exclude his infancy, rather to the contrary, "The soul can place itself in the presence of Christ and grow accustomed to being inflamed with love for His sacred humanity. It can keep Him ever present and speak with Him..." (L12,2). This act of "inflam-



ing” can arise when we are found with the Child in the company of his parents, in Bethlehem or in Nazareth. The times which Teresa writes of the “beauty” of the humanity, and they are many, are not limited to a determined time during Jesus’ existence. They can be applied, without distorting the meaning, to the “Child” Jesus. His parents “were amazed at what was said of the child: (Lk 2,33), and also of the remarks he was making. St. Augustine dared to write of the Incarnate God: “Beautiful in the breast of the Virgin...beautiful the boy brought forth...Beautiful in heaven, beautiful on earth, beautiful in the arms of his Father.”

### **The “Infancy” Gospel**

Teresa of Jesus, who had great love for the Gospels, and was so advanced on the road of prayer, came across the infancy narrative in Luke’s Gospel. On more than one occa-

sion she would meditate on the mystery of the smallness, of the total need of the child, of his tears, of his diapers... a school—of the infancy—which helped her so much to understand the secrets of the humanity, the understanding, the roots of humanism. Teresa could be taken up with the child Jesus and wrote: “Let us consider the glorious St. Paul: it doesn’t seem that any other name fell from his lips than that of Jesus, as coming from one who kept the Lord close to his heart” (L22.7).

When Teresa refers to St. Joseph and the Virgin, she bears in mind the “small” Jesus: “For I don’t know how one can think about the Queen of Angels and about the time she went through so much with the Infant Jesus without giving thanks to St. Joseph for the good assistance he provided them” (L6,8). She recalls the journey into Egypt, with Mary, Joseph and the Child, as pilgrims

against their will, when she had to encourage Doña Luisa de la Cerda who was about to take a distant trip: "And as a favor to me, be brave in those strange lands. Recall how our Lady and our Father St. Joseph went about in Egypt" (Let 8,9). Their companion was the child Jesus.

### **Composing Christmas Carols**

The Christmas carols which Teresa wrote are not examples of metric composition, nor must they have value principally by their "communitarian" motivation. It is an undeniable truth that the Saint did everything possible to enliven the life of her Carmels and her nuns. The Teresian Christmas carols have a deep value: they reveal the mystical experience of their author. Throughout the verses, which she writes or dictates, there is a knowledge of the mystery of love which the first Nativity presupposes, and that we recall each Christmas. Teresa discovered in the depth of her being the meaning of "a child is born to us, a son has been given us..." "The grace of God has appeared..." Today is born for us a savior, the Lord..." It has made her rejoice—and the amazement of the shepherds, the enchantment of the Magi, and even the "astonishment" of Mary—and of Joseph. The mystic—within the limits of the ineffable—is spontaneous in communicating what burns within: "Ah, shepherds watching, guarding your flocks! Behold, a Lamb born for you, Son of our Sovereign God" (Poem 11). Teresa serves as the "angel" before the shepherds of the past and for those who today continue hoping in the Good News. Her message is biblical since only in these holy pages do we find the expression of "lamb" and "Son of God" referring to the recently born child.

A child who, from the beginning, is looked at by Teresa from the perspective of love and death, which is seldom heard during Christmas: "If by sin we are banished, in His hand all good lies, since to suffer He came, This God truly sovereign" (P11). In several of her poems/Christmas carols the "blood" appears, which is the expression of surrender and love of man in the child Jesus and in the Crucified of Calvary - "Then after He was born, Why did they torment Him? — Yes, for He is dying to cast out evil" (P15). Teresa contemplates and experiences the Savior's infancy in the realism of the Gospels, where it appears without reducing the humiliation, the detachment, dispossession, and annihilation He experienced.

It appears that this vision that Teresa outlines is very important for us. She, from her deep living experience, does not contemplate Jesus Christ in isolated incidents such as the Incarnation of the child or adolescent in Nazareth, in his apostolic journeys throughout Judea and Galilee, crucified on Calvary, or resurrected. It is the entire humanity of Christ which breaks into her being, through the mystery of the infancy or in the mystery of the cross or in His resurrected flesh.

For the Saint, in the birth of the "Child," pilgrim man in this valley of tears and deficiencies discovers God's goodness and tenderness. She describes the Nativity, in her commentary on one of the verses of the Song of Songs: "Kiss me with the kiss of your mouth," as the "kiss of God." In one of her Christmas poems the Incarnation turns out to be the work of the Father's love for man: "The Father gives us His only Son, Born this day in a stable poor,..." (13). ■

# “Spiritual Childhood” Therese of Lisieux on the Road to God’s Heart

*Emilio Gonzalez*



**F**rom the time of St. Therese of the Child Jesus’ life and death until the present time her spirituality has been misunderstood and often distorted. One of its key points “the spiritual childhood” has been interpreted as to make it an immature way. Those who are of this opinion do so from ignorance, not only of her spiritual system but also of her life. As Pope John Paul said, Therese defined herself as a “little white flower,” but her life resembled rather “a bar of steel.” She marked out clear objectives and she did not spare any effort to attain them when obstacles presented themselves.

## **The Dynamic of Spiritual Childhood**

It is precisely this dynamic of objectives and the means to attain them that moves Therese to propose spiritual childhood as a more certain way to achieve what she truly desires: sanctity. Other ways which the spirituality of her time proposed to attain sanctity were not valid for her; after a long process, she assumes, with conviction that spiritual childhood is the only way one can reach God.

Spiritual childhood is not the fruit of a rash decision of a Therese who denies growth and maturity. It is certain that the way of spiritual childhood is the summit of her spirituality, the highest and at the same time the deepest point, coming from her experience of God and verified in Sacred Scripture.

Therese, as we said, desired to be a saint. But her living experience spoke to her of the radical frustration of trying to do it by one’s own power, based on penances and rigors of the spirituality of her day.

## **A Biblical Attitude**

The basic foundation of spiritual childhood is Sacred Scripture. Actually, included in the Christian environment, the piety does not appear to have good press. To speak of a ‘pious’ person is burdened with a certain negative connotation.

Piety, nevertheless, a gift of the Holy Spirit, has deep biblical roots. The personages of Sacred Scripture are, above all, ‘pious.’ That

is to say, they recognize God as the Father and the Creator of the People or of themselves. In Him they have their existence and from Him they obtain mercy and help. Thus the *Psalms* sing:

“My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Ps 121:2).

“Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the Lord our God” (Ps 20:7).

The ‘pius’ are also the *anawim*, the poor of Yahweh, who hope in God and present themselves before God with a confident attitude as a child before its father. In Jesus, God is converted forever into *Abba* (Father). This is the great revelation of the New Testament, completing the traces contained in the Old Testament: God is a merciful Father who loves man, accepting and exalting him in his weakness.

### **The Offering to Merciful Love**

Many of Therese’s contemporaries offered themselves to God’s anger in order to repair with their sufferings the punishment merited by an ungrateful humanity, handed over to sin, and turning their back to the Creator. Although perceiving this a noble offering, Therese did not feel called to follow this way.

“This year, June 9, the feast of the Holy Trinity, I received the grace to understand more than ever before how much Jesus desires to be loved.

I was thinking about the souls who offer themselves as victims of God’s Justice in order to turn away the punishments reserved to sinners, drawing them upon themselves. This offering

seemed great and very generous to me, but I was far from feeling attracted to making it” (SOS, 180).

For Therese, an attitude of offering to justice in the terms in which it is made in her time supposes a radical rejection of the merciful God, which for her is the only God. Therese places herself in the heart of God, seeing the pain of the lover who is going to be rejected.

“From the depths of my heart, I cried out: ‘O my God! Will Your Justice alone find souls willing to immolate themselves as victims? Does not Your Merciful Love need them too? On every side this love is unknown, rejected; those hearts upon whom You would lavish it turn to creatures seeking happiness from them with their miserable affection; they do this instead of throwing themselves into Your arms and accepting Your infinite Love.

O my God! Is Your disdained Love going to remain closed up within Your Heart? It seems to me that if You were to find souls offering themselves as victims of holocaust to Your Love, You would consume them rapidly; it seems to me, too, that You would be happy not to hold back the waves of infinite tenderness within You....” (SOS, 180-181).

Therese always dreamed of being a saint. But the intensity of her dream always interfered with her incapacity for reaching her goal. The only way, then, is absolute surrender and confidence in God, into whose arms Therese threw herself as a child into her

mother's arms. In the *Oblation* we contemplate the basic points of the way of spiritual childhood as emphasized by the Carmelite, Conrad de Meester:

1. Desire of sanctity.
2. Experience of one's own impotence.
3. Abandonment to God's action; He Himself will be her sanctify.
4. Hope in the mediation of Jesus and His salvific love as a guarantee of her reasonable desires.

We can see it in a clear statement in her writings:

Offering myself as a Victim of Holocaust to God's Merciful Love

O My God! Most Blessed Trinity, I desire to Love You and make You Loved, to work for the glory of Holy Church by saving souls on earth and liberating those suffering in purgatory. I desire to accomplish Your will perfectly and to reach the degree of glory You have prepared for me in Your Kingdom. I desire, in a word, to be a saint, but I feel my helplessness and I beg You, O my God! to be Yourself my Sanctity!

Since You loved me so much as to give me Your only Son as my Savior and my Spouse, the infinite treasures of His merits are mine. I offer them to You with gladness, begging You to look upon me only in the Face of Jesus and in His heart burning with Love.

In the evening of this life, I shall appear before You with empty hands, for I do not ask You, Lord, to count my works. All our justice is stained in Your eyes. I wish, then, to be clothed in Your own Justice and to receive from

Your Love the eternal possession of Yourself. I want no other Throne, no other Crown but You, my Beloved! (SOS, 276-7)

The *empty hands* belong to those who have the soul of a child and place themselves before God, knowing the uselessness of their merits before God. Spiritual infancy is an invitation to liberty with respect to our own works, knowing that God does not value us because of what we do but who we are, His adopted children. The initiative of adoption is absolute on the part of the Father. It is He who makes the first step and He who completes the work. It remains for us only to recognize that we are children and to work as such, not with useless striving that our acts might accumulate merits before God, but thankfulness for His intimate mercy.

The dream of her entire life, sanctity, takes here the form which she will finally expound in *Manuscript B*: to be holy is for her to love and to be loved by Jesus: in order to follow Him, she must not do many things, but, simply abandon herself in God, with filial confidence, in order that He might be the one to do all.

### ***Manuscript B, The Summit of Spiritual Childhood***

Therese wrote an explanation of her *doctrine* during her annual retreat in September 1896. Writing to her sister Marie she gave the foundation of her spiritual childhood:

"I understand so well that it is only love which makes us acceptable to God that this love is the only good I ambition. Jesus deigned to show me the road that leads to this Divine Fur-



nance, and this road is the surrender of the little child who sleeps without fear in its Father's arms... 'Whoever is a little one, let him come to me.' So speaks the Holy Spirit through the mouth of Solomon. This same Spirit of Love also says: 'For to him that is little, mercy will be shown.'... As though these promises were not sufficient, this same prophet whose gaze was already plunged into the eternal depths cried out in the Lord's name: 'As one whom a mother caresses, so will I comfort you; you shall be carried at the breasts and upon the knees they will caress you.'" (SOS, 188)

After having listened to words such as these, dear godmother, there is nothing to do but to be silent and to weep with gratitude and love." (SOS, 188)

Effectively, Therese must not do anything more... She must stop that God might be the one to do all. In July of that same year she wrote to her sister Leonie:

"I assure you that God is much better than you believe. He is content with a glance, a sigh of love...As for me, I find perfection very easy to practice because I have understood it is a matter of taking hold of Jesus by His Heart....Look at a little child who has just annoyed his mother by flying into a temper or by disobeying her. If he hides away in a corner in a sulky mood and if he cries in fear of being punished, his mamma will not pardon him, certainly, not his fault. But if he comes to her, holding out his lit-

tle arms, smiling, and saying: "Kiss me, I will not do it again," will his mother be able not to press him to her heart tenderly and forget his childish mischief?... However, she knows her dear little one will do it again on the next occasion, but this does not matter; if he takes her again by her heart, he will not be punished...." (LT 191).

Leonie had expressed her surprise at the lack of Therese's fear before the possible judgment of God. Therese gave as the spiritual foundation of her confidence, based on her own experience, which Jesus explains in the Gospel in the parable of the prodigal son—or the merciful father—and Therese recreates it here. That is his merit: the doctrine of spiritual childhood contributes to awaken in us the Gospel; since spiritual childhood is nothing else than the Gospel of mercy, which Therese experienced in herself and offers to us. This is the way of spiritual childhood, the dynamic of confidence, the basis of the Gospel: to open life fixed on the

God of life, to risk it with the security of the child in its mother's arms.

### **Spiritual Childhood, an Apostolic Activity**

We cannot think that spiritual childhood is a pious and static movement, which remains in simple contemplation of God's love. In *Manuscript B*, Therese told Marie of her desires to respond to the merciful love of the Father, her ardor for communicating to others the passion that consumed her. In her heart beat a thousand vocations, a thousand services with which she desired to please the love by whom she felt loved (SOS, 191). The answer to such effusion was going to come, nevertheless, from her poverty, from her own littleness of spiritual childhood, since we already know that it is not works which save us, but only confidence and love. Therese evokes Magdalene, the sinner:

“Just as Mary Magdalene found what she was seeking by always stooping down and looking into the empty tomb, so I, abasing myself to the very depths of my nothingness, raised myself so high that I was able to attain my end. Without becoming discouraged, I continued my reading, and this sentence consoled me:...

Charity gave me the key to my vocation. I understood that if the Church had a body composed of different members, the most necessary and most noble of all could not be lacking to it, and so I understood that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was BURNING WITH LOVE....

Then, in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: O Jesus, my Love ....

my vocation, at last I have found it .... MY VOCATION IS LOVE!” (SOS, 194).

The experience of her poverty taught her how God loved those who became small, how He exercises His mercy with them. She felt herself loved by Jesus as nobody can love: forgiven, justified, loved in spite of her miseries, her sins. Her vocation was to recall for all that the essence of God is mercy and love, smallness and intimate goodness, understanding and compassion. Thus, He came through the centuries: by the mouth of the prophets, incarnating Himself in a handmaiden, dying on the cross, becoming Himself the Eucharist.... What more can the good God do for us in order to bury the fear and draw us close to Him with love and confidence? This is what Therese asks herself and us, praying that we see He who became small on the night in Bethlehem and that we allow to enter into our hearts the confidence of Him who loves without asking for anything; in a word: that we might embrace spiritual childhood.

“The heart of a child does not seek riches and glory (even the glory of heaven)...

What this child asks for is Love. She knows only one thing: to love You...

Astounding works are forbidden to her... Yes, my Beloved, this is how my life will be consumed. I have no other means of proving my love for you other than that of strewing flowers, that is, not allowing one little sacrifice to escape, not one look, one word, profiting by all the smallest things and doing them through love. I desire to suffer for love and even to rejoice through love;...” (SOS, 196). ■

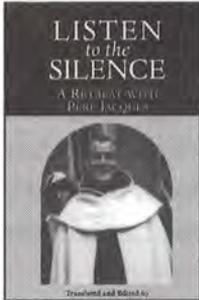
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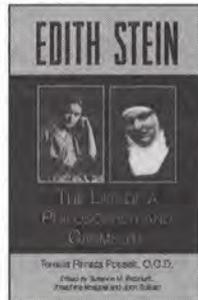
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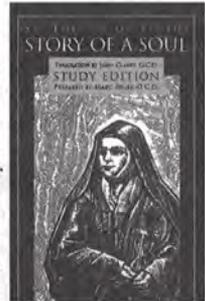


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# The Mystery Of Christmas

## St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein)

### Incarnation and Humanity Advent and Christmas

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**W**hen the days grow shorter and shorter, when—in a normal winter—the first snowflakes fall, then quietly and softly thoughts of Christmas begin to surface, and from the mere word a certain magic exudes that affects every heart. Even those of other faiths, or of no faith at all, to whom the story of the child of Bethlehem has no meaning, prepare for the feast and even make plans to convey its joy here or there. Months and weeks in advance, there flows a warmth like a stream of love over the whole world. A festival of love and joy—that is the star which beckons all mankind in the first winter months.



For the Christian, and especially for the Catholic Christian, it is yet something else. Him the star leads to the manger with the little Child Who brings peace to earth. In countless endearing pictures, artists have created the scene for our eyes; ancient legends, replete with all the magic of childhood, sing to us about it. Whoever lives along with the Church hears the ancient chants and feels the longing of the spirit of the Advent hymns; and whoever is familiar with the inexhaustible fount of sacred liturgy is daily confronted by the great prophet of the Incarnation with his powerful words of warning and promise: “Drop down dew from above and let the clouds rain the Just One! The Lord is near! Let us adore Him! Come, Lord, and do not delay! Jerusalem, rejoice with great joy, for your Savior comes to you!” From the 17th to the 24th of December, the great Antiphons to the Magnificat call out with ever greater longing and fervor their: “Come, to set us free.” And with still more promise (on the last Advent Sunday): “Behold, all is fulfilled;” then, finally: “Today you shall know that the Lord is coming and tomorrow you shall see His splendor.”

Yes, on that evening when the lights on the tree are lit and the gifts are being exchanged, that unfulfilled longing is still there groping for another ray of Light until the bells for Midnight Mass ring out, and the miracle of that Holy Night is renewed upon altars bedecked with lights and flowers: “And the Word was made flesh.” Now the moment of blessed fulfillment has arrived.

## **The Followers Of The Incarnate Son Of God**

Each of us has no doubt already experienced such Christmas bliss. Still, heaven and earth are not yet united. The star of Bethlehem remains a star in the dark night even today. On the day after Christmas the Church removes her white garments and clothes herself in the color of blood, and on the fourth day in the violet of mourning: Stephen, the first martyr, the first to follow his Lord to death, and the infants of Bethlehem and Judea who were brutally slaughtered by crude henchmen, all have a place around the Child in the manger. What is the meaning of this message? Where now are the jubilant sounds of the heavenly choir? Where the peaceful bliss of Holy Night? Where is the peace on earth? Peace to those of good will; but not all are of good will. Therefore, the Son of the Eternal Father must leave the splendor of heaven because the mystery of evil has wrapped the earth in dark night.

Darkness covered the earth and He came as light to illumine the darkness, but the darkness did not comprehend Him. To those who received Him, He brought light and peace; peace with the Father in heaven, peace with everyone who like them are children of light and children of the heavenly Father, a deep interior peace of the heart; but no peace with the children of darkness. To them the Prince of peace brings no peace but the sword. He remains for them the stumbling block of scandal against which they charge and are smashed. That is the one hard and serious fact which we may not allow to be obscured by the visible attraction of the Child in the manger. The mystery of the Incarnation and the mystery of evil belong together. The dark night of sin stands in stark

and sinister contrast with the Light which came down from heaven. The Child in the manger extends its little hands and its smile seems to be saying what would come forth later from the lips of the man: "Come to Me all you who are weary and heavy burdened;" and the poor shepherds out of the hills of Bethlehem, who heard the good news of the angel, follow His call and make their way with the simple answer: "Let us go to Bethlehem." Also upon the kings from the orient lands, who followed the wondrous star with like simplicity, there dropped from the Infant Hands the dew of Grace, and "they rejoiced with great joy." These Hands give and request at the same time: you wise men, lay down your wisdom and become like children; you kings, give up your crowns and your treasures and bow down meekly before the King of kings; do not hesitate to take up the burdens, sorrows and weariness which His service demands. You children, who as yet cannot give of your own free will, of you these little Hands will request your gentle life before it has even begun; it can serve no better purpose than sacrifice in praise of the Lord.

"Follow Me" say the little Hands, words which later would come from the lips of the Man. Thus they spoke to the disciple whom the Lord loved and who is now also part of the group at the manger. St. John, the young man with the pure, youthful heart followed without asking, "where to? why?" He left his father's boat and went with the Lord along all His ways, even to Golgatha. "Follow Me"—young Stephen understood this also. He followed the Lord in the struggle against the powers of darkness, the blindness of obstinate unbelief; he bore witness to Him with his word and his blood; he followed Him in

His Spirit, the Spirit of love, which resists sin but loves the sinner, and even in death intercedes with God on behalf of the murderer. These are the figures of light who kneel around the Manger: the gentle, innocent children, the faithful shepherds, the humble kings, Stephen, the enthusiastic youth and beloved apostle, John—all of them followed the call of the Lord.

In contrast to them, there is the night of incomprehensible callousness and blindness: the scribes who have information as to the time and place where the Savior of the world was to be born, but who say nothing about “Let us go to Bethlehem!,” and King Herod who wants to kill the Lord of life. In the presence of the Child in the manger, the spirits line up to take sides. He is the King of kings and Lord of life and death. He utters His “follow Me” and whoever is not for Him is against Him. He also speaks for us and invites us to choose between light and darkness.

### **The Mystical Body Of Christ Oneness with God**

Wherever that will lead us on this earth we do not know and should not ask beforehand. Only this do we know: that for those who love the Lord, all things work out for good, and in addition, the paths which the Lord di-

rects lead out beyond this earth.

O wonderful exchange! The Creator of mankind, by taking on a human body, imparts to us His divinity. It is for this wondrous task that the Savior came into this world. God became a Child of man so that the human race could become children of God. One of our race severed the bond of our divine adoption; one of our race had to bind it up again and pay for the sin. No one from the ancient, sick and degenerate race could do it. A new, healthy and noble sprout had to be grafted. He became one of us; but even more than that: one with us. That is precisely the wonderful thing about the human race—that we are all one. If it were otherwise, were we all to exist as independent and separate individuals, then the fall of one could not have brought about the fall of all. Then, on the other hand, the price of sin could probably have been paid for us and charged to us, but His justification would not have passed on to sinners; no vindication would have been possible. But He came to be a mysterious Body with us: He as head, we as members. Let us place our hands in the Hands of the Divine Child, let us speak our “yes” to His “follow Me.” Thus we shall be His and the path shall be open for His divine Life to pass over upon us. ■

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