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THIRD SERMON BY HIS EMINENCE THE CARDINAL ARCHBISHOP OF WESTMINSTER,

Delivered in St. Mary's Church, Moorfields, on the Evening of Sunday, Feb. 6th, 1853.

SUBJECT:—DEVOTION TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST. (From the Catholic Standard.)

"Behold I will bring them; and they shall adore before thy feet, and they shall know that I have loved thee."—Apocalypse iii. 9.

If, my brethren, the Son of God, through love, gave Himself to us when He became man, He accepted at the same time the hard conditions which this gift required of Him. In like manner, we may equally assert that if, in the adorable Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, He also gives us Himself—in fact, individualises and brings home to every soul that same gift which He then more generally bestowed—it was not without conditions to which He was pleased to submit, the very contemplation whereof must necessarily, as in the case of His Incarnation, be to us painful. But the parallel which in my last discourse I established between the surrender which the Son of God made of Himself entirely and unreservedly to man by His coming down upon earth, and that second, and, in some respect, more perfect one, which He makes in the Blessed Eucharist, will enable us, no doubt, to see what these conditions were. And as in the one case we shall find that, although they may seem, in some sort, necessary for what He undertook, yet they added greatly to the immensity of the love which He displayed: so likewise in the other, there will be a reason indeed, and a necessity also for that to which He submits, and yet we shall be compelled to acknowledge, that in this submission He has been pleased to give us the most astonishing proof of His love. This will form the *third* motive which I wish to place before you for devotion to this adorable Sacrament.

Our Blessed Redeemer, on coming to earth, made Himself over to us in a two-fold manner. He gave Himself to us in His Incarnation; He gave Himself to us in His death and passion. Each of these gifts involved in it what must be considered a sacrifice upon His part. The first went no further indeed than submitting to what sprung from the circumstances of His appearance, from the very nature which He took upon Himself, and from external and accidental causes. Man has directly no share in what He subjected Himself to. The second involved Him in absolute suffering, produced entirely by the malice of man. Of the first, the Apostle tells us that whereas He, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" that is, of His own right, without usurpation, and without presumption, really did make Himself, and was equal to, and consubstantial with, the Father; yet He was pleased to "empty Himself," and to deprive Himself of all His majesty, and of all its rights; "taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and in habit found as a man"—(Phil. ii. 6, 7.) This, as I have said, was the necessary result of the manner in which it was almost essential that He should appear among us. He came as *man*, and it was necessary that He should come to us without any attraction around His humanity. He became little, He reduced Himself to the very form of an infant, and for a time stripped Himself of those attributes which essentially belonged to Him. He is the infinitely wise; and yet, He is not admitted into the counsels which directly concern Himself. He is not asked whether He would go. It needed not an angel to come from heaven to direct the steps of His Mother and his reputed Father. Nay, that angel could not leave his seat in heaven, and come to bring a message to Joseph without his own command. Yet this wisdom of the Father is treated as though He understood not. There is deliberation over Him as to what shall be done with Him. He is not asked if He will go to Egypt, or hide Himself in the desert—whether it is time to return again to Judea—whether it is safe to remain in Galilee, or whether an asylum must be found at Nazareth. All this is known to Him. All this is clear in His mind as the light of the sun in the firmament. Yet that wisdom is veiled, that knowledge is withheld from sight, and those who have to deal with Him, treat Him as the divine counsels require, as though He had it not.

And He is the all-powerful. He is the Almighty who bears in His hand the whole of this globe, and governs and rules by His Providence every single event that occurs on it. Herod cannot speak His command, or sign the decree of extermination against the infants of Bethlehem; his soldiers cannot stir one step against that glorious one, or aim a blow against those unoffending little ones, unless He shall give permission for their respective acts. Yet He is carried away, as if wholly unable to shield or protect Himself. He is borne in the arms of His Mother as if He could not take the wings of the morning and

fly away whithersoever He might. He is carried on a beast of burthen, as if He could not ask His Father for legions of angels, who would immediately surround Him, and defend Him, to the last, or bear Him triumphantly into His own regions of bliss. He is thus to be treated necessarily, and by the very conditional law of what He has undertaken for man, as though He had no longer power, and possessed no wisdom; as though He were no more than He appeared to be, a mere human babe.

And then, what else ensues? Why, that He is born to poverty and to suffering in every shape. It is not the choice of His blessed Mother, but it has pleased God so to arrange circumstances, so to dispose events, by His Providence, that He needs must be poor, destitute, and an outcast. She would not of her own choice have taken Him to a stable, or there brought Him to the light of day. She would have chosen, according to her humble means, what would, according to the world's phrase, have been "respectable," or, at the very least, decent. But God so disposes events, as that His first resting place shall be a stable. And although that Blessed Mother will take every care that there shall be the finest of linen which her means can command to wrap His infant limbs, and though she will do her utmost to cheer and warm that holy birth-place, still, in spite of herself, His first cradle is a manger, His first bed is straw.

In this manner does He not merely become a man, but man in the most simple meaning and force of the word. And I say this was necessary. It was a condition and law of that mission of love on which He came. For, my brethren, I ask you, was it through riches, was it through splendor, was it through the love of mankind that He came to save us? Or was it purely through that humanity which He assumed, and in which He was born, that person of God-Man in which He was to die? It was this alone, and this alone was He therefore to bring with Him into this world. We were not to think that any accessory possible with which He might be pleased to clothe Him, could have the least share in, the slightest influence upon, the work of salvation in which he engaged; and not only so, but in this way *only* could He be said to give Himself truly to mankind. For they who are born with the smallest possible distinctions, belong at once to a class. If the birth of one is announced by heralds in the public places of the city; and though he yet knows nothing of the world but its tears and its wails, he is proclaimed as a prince puissant and of royal lineage, he belongs to this exclusively; and they who claim him would spurn the desire of the poor to exhibit their love towards the royal infant. He who comes into life as the acknowledged child of a noble family, at once steps not merely into this world, but into its possessions. He is an heir at the moment of birth, perhaps to vast tracts of land, or great ancestral rights, or other distinguished privileges. He is at once inscribed among those of his own class. But the child that is born not even in a house, but in a stable; the child that nobody will smile upon, that nobody will own; the child, in fact, that is despised and rejected, and not admitted even beneath the shelter of the poorest cottage—that child belongs to no class. He is claimed by none save His loving Mother. For *he* is not claimed by any one who is rejected by all. And so it was with the Blessed Jesus. He gave Himself therefore, not to one class, but to all mankind—to the whole human race; and we have all an equal interest in Him. And thus our Blessed Saviour, in giving Himself to man at His birth, did necessarily give Himself purely as the Son of Man, not as God, made the rich man, or the great man, or the royal man; but simply as God made *Man* for our sakes.

And now, my brethren, if you consider how the Catholic Church looks upon that institution in which she teaches us that our Blessed Redeemer once more gives Himself to individual man, you will see how exactly what I have described represents to us her practice in all that regards Him in this institution of mercy and love. He reduces Himself to a form, which, while on the one hand, it may be said to belong to all mankind, most completely conceals and veils whatever there may be of grandeur and glory, not only in his divinity, for that was shrouded in His first coming, but also in the glorified humanity which He bore into heaven. He was born in Bethlehem. That very name told the Church what He was to be in His spiritual or sacramental birth: for it means "the House of Bread." How well the name applies to the Church, in which He is dispensed as bread, given to the faithful under that disguise, as before He was given, under the form of an infant—bread is not the food of the dainty; it is not the exclusive nourishment of the rich; it requires not hands skilful in luxury to prepare it, but, in many forms and varieties, it is the food of the richest and the poorest;

it may be found whiter upon the royal table, but it is still found, perhaps in a coarser, but equally wholesome form, at the meal of the poor; it is prepared beneath the snow in the wild regions of the north, and on the sands in the torrid zone of the south. It is, in fact a common property of mankind, the only universal diet. In what other possible shape could He have disguised Himself, if He wished to give Himself to us, more aptly, more usefully, or more becomingly than in this?

He is again concealed, circumscribed, and humbled, as when an infant. All His attributes, seem to be, in this form, taken from him. His Church deliberates as to what shall be done with him. It is determined by her whether He shall be born in one manner or another,—whether He shall repose in His tabernacle, or be brought forth for the adoration of the faithful,—whether He shall be exposed to their worship by a more solemn and splendid rite, or in a more homely and humble guise,—whether He shall be the more or less frequently bestowed on those who ask for Him. The Church is not only our mother, but she seems to become and act as *His* mother, to have a right to decide for Him, and to make laws concerning Him, without consulting more than that wisdom which He has given to her, doing what the instinctive affection of her tender heart considers pleasing to Him, and determined in what way He shall best love to be in the midst of the faithful.

And then, as though not only without wisdom, but without power, He is borne about in our poor and unworthy hands. He is pleased to let us take hold of Him, and carry Him with us however respectfully and reverently, still without pomp, to the poorest of His people. He prevents us not; He chides us not. And O, we know He is not displeased with us, when, even without outward show, we thus take Him as though still a helpless infant, and unable Himself to move, to those places in which His presence is acceptable, and profitable to the salvation of His people.

And though the Church, in the tender, but awful relation, in which this Sacrament places her, in His regard, is most careful of His honor, and will jealously secure to Him all possible reverence; though she will have the house wherein He dwells as beautiful, and the tabernacle in which He reposes as rich, as she can afford; yet is she often constrained, as was His loving Mother, to give Him a lodging where her heart is sore to see Him, and a place of rest from which her soul recoils. It requires a necessity to force her to do this; the necessity arising from her obligation to comply with the first law of this divine institution, the law of His love for man. Oh! my brethren, poor as may be some of the chapels in this city, many of you scarcely can know, the painful straits to which we are driven, especially in establishing a new mission, in what unseemly places we are obliged to celebrate our heavenly mysteries; in lofts, and workshops, in assembly-rooms and warehouses, in cottages, or outhouses. For we are bound, in spite of all repugnance to our feelings, to bring the Lord of Glory into the meanest abode, when His inexhaustible love for man, and his desire to give Himself to His children can in no other way be satisfied.

Yea, even let it be a stable, in which some houseless wanderer, like Joseph and Mary, has found a night's shelter, and has been seized with the pangs of death, and the priest of God will not hesitate once more to make the glorified Child of Bethlehem return to the company of the dumb animals, with which he there consorted, for the same reason—love of man. Shepherds may perhaps enter in again, and humbly adore him; but be sure that, at any rate, angels will hover round, though invisible, and sing glory to the God that grants, and peace to the man that receives, the inestimable gifts.

In the same manner, therefore, as it was necessary for our Lord to humble Himself that His great work of love, the giving Himself for man, should be accomplished, so likewise can we not conceive any other way in which He could have made Himself over to us sacramentally, to be our food, than what we find most appropriately in the Church.

And now, my brethren, if in either case there is a necessity, yet, does not this very necessity increase the motives of love which the gift itself ought to inspire? For, no doubt, when in the eternal counsels of the most Adorable Trinity, this mystery of the Incarnation and its consequences was decided upon, this necessity was contemplated, was determined, and was made a part of the sublime mystery. Then, that God, with these consequences, should for our sakes command so much to be done, and should do it, is surely a motive that increases, far more than our hearts can ever express, the love which the mere fact of the Incarnation itself, had it not been thus accomplished, would have properly suggested. And so it is here. But, after all, whatever there may be of what we choose to call "necessity," that is, a fitness

of things in what God decrees, still there is in it His Divine will, and that will is regulated by His love to us. Our Blessed Saviour was glad to embrace this lowly character for our sakes: "He rejoiced as a giant, to run His course."—(Ps.) For, after all, we may easily understand, and our hearts tell us, and we feel it, that it was in order to secure our love the more effectually that He was pleased thus to assume so humble a form in appearing on earth. What should we have cared for Him, comparatively, had He appeared as great, rich, noble, and royal? But when we see Him stooping to the very lowest possible condition of man, so that there is no one more abject, more despised, we feel that there is no person, however in this world unknown and uncared for, who does not find his Saviour and God lowlier than himself in the social scale, poorer and more afflicted than he can be. He surely must sympathise with Him, for sympathy descends and rises not; and even they who are victims of misery and wretchedness in this world, can find consolation and afford love for one whom they see more an outcast, and still more abject than they are themselves.

We may imagine to ourselves our Blessed Saviour wishing to engage our love in somewhat the same way as a person, endowed with noble intellect, accomplished, and educated amidst all the graces of civilisation, delicate in sentiment, refined in mind, should undertake a mission of love among the wildest and most brutal savages in the world. Do you suppose that if this was truly a mission on his part of love, if he was solely actuated by a disinterested desire of being their benefactor, their civiliser, their saviour, he would go among them clothed in the most splendid attire which civilization could afford, surrounded with all the appurtenances of luxury, that he would spread before them a banquet of dainties and choice delicacies, the very names of which they knew not, that he would speak to them of the heavens, or their complicated movements, or of the laws of nature, or of the habits of distant countries, all of which they understood not? Oh no! he would strip himself of all that distinguished him from them; he would submit, if necessary, to disfigure himself with those marks which would incorporate him with them as a brother; he would suppress the revolting feelings of his nature, and force himself to partake of their nauseous food; he would seem to exult more than they in what appeared to them noble, though to him it was often ridiculous or even disgusting; he would speak to them in tones of their barbarous language, and hush their rude ideas as a child, and thus put off his own glory and renounce every advantage, that by stooping so low he might gain them.

And our blessed Saviour, coming from heaven among us to save us, would have those same feelings; and, wishing to gain our hearts, desiring us to hear Him, and still more to love Him, (and who doubts for a moment that *love* was the impelling motive of His errand?) He stripped Himself of all that could distinguish Him from us, clothed Himself like us, and descended to what may truly be called our weakness and our misery.

It is thus also in the blessed Eucharist. He most completely despoils Himself of whatever Divinity might linger about His simple humanity, in order that we may not be scared away, but that our love may be more inflamed in proportion as our familiarity increases. The more He stoops, the more He lowers Himself, the more likewise should our hearts expand; and in the adorable Sacrament we shall find the deeper, more earnest, and more sincere motives of devotion and affection in proportion as it approximates to the humiliation, the abasement of the Lord of glory in the mystery of His Incarnation.

Our blessed Lord advances forward always in His career of love, till its accomplishment. He may be said to pass in it through three distinct stages of suffering: First, He is surrounded by ignorance; He is unknown; He is unvalued. This is while He dwells at Nazareth. His neighbors do not even trouble themselves to learn what He is, or who He is. They know that those who are more intimate with Him, love Him, esteem Him, and think most highly of Him. But they do not care for all this, and do not enquire further concerning Him. To them He is but the carpenter's son.

And then, He passes through three years, no longer of ignorance, but of opposition. When He proclaims what He is, and what He has come to do; and when there is no longer ignorance, there is rage, there is disdain at being told of such a mystery.—There is repugnance to its evidences; everything is done to crush the doctrine. Every species of captious objections is made to the former; all the prejudices of human reason and human feelings are roused, and fomented against the latter. There is, in fact, persecution raised against Him who maintains it.

But this is not all. When this does not suffice,