

Month of the Holy Infancy.

THIS month is like a mile-stone on the road of life. It tells us how far we have travelled on that road, but it cannot say how far it will extend into the hidden future ere it reaches the grave that lies open and ready for each of us. Time is the road to eternity, and each day is as a march on that road :

"To these walks on the journey to eternity," says St. Bonaventure, "our spirit is invited and encouraged to God, who offers Himself as our companion on the way, for He is the way by which we should go. As Isaac says, 'This is the way, walk in it.' For thus the spirit heareth. Come, my beloved, begin with thirsty longing for eternal things, which answers to the first stage of right intention. Let us enter on the plain by devout meditation of eternal things, which constitutes the second journey. Let us range the valleys by limpid contemplation of eternal things, and so accomplish the third journey. Let us rise up early to fulfil the fourth by incbristening love of eternal things. Let us observe if the vines have flourished by the spreading revelations of eternal things, which corresponds to the fifth journey; and provide they, the flowers, bear fruits by the experiments; forestate of eternal things, according to the sixth journey; and that the harvest of virtue may clothe the hills by the uniform operation of eternal things, which completes the seventh journey. Thus man will enter the house of his eternity, in which there will be a manifest vision, full cognition, true love, undivided society, perfect similitude, and life blessed for ever and ever through all the eternal years. But the order and sweetness of these things being partly enjoyed with forestate by the spiritual travellers, they run on quicker till at length they are dissolved and forever fixed in the eternal rest of that beatitude, to which house of eternity may His hand guide and conduct us, who is the one and true God, blessed forever."

Let us walk on this road of life with unflinching steps under the guidance of the Holy Catholic Church. She will be to us as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, safely conducting us amid the perils and fatigues of the desert places of life, guiding us, it may be, through a red sea of sorrows, sufferings and afflictions until we enter at last into the plenty, security and happiness of the promised land, yea, even God's eternal kingdom, the joys of which neither eye hath seen nor ear heard, nor hath it entered unto the heart of man to conceive.

The land beyond the sea;
Sweet is thine endless rest,
But sweeter far that Father's breast,
Upon Thy shores eternally possess;
For Jesus reigns o'er thee,
Calm land beyond the sea.—Faber.

Devotion to Jesus in His holy infancy is that which should be uppermost in our minds during this month. The mysteries of the Divine Infancy which the Church now commemorates contain for us lessons of the deepest import. In the feast

of the Circumcision the Divine Child, shedding already His precious blood in expiation of human guilt and in obedience to a law which had no obligation for Him, but which He gladly obeyed, teaches us lessons of humility, obedience and mortification. We, in this age, are very delicate Christians. We shrink from pain, loath mortification, and think and act as if the way to heaven were a mere holiday excursion, and should be smooth and broad and lined with flowers and fruits, instead of being a narrow way to be trodden with bleeding feet. The first condition of the discipleship of Him who was born in a stable in cold and darkness and poverty, and who, even in His infancy, submitted to the knife of circumcision, is self-denial and mortification. "If any man," says Our Lord, "wishes to be my disciple let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke ix., 23.) "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it until life eternal." (John xii., 25.) Self-denial, mortification, a spirit of penance and a willingness to suffer for sin must be the livery of the true Christian, and are the lessons taught by the Divine Child in His circumcision. The great Feast of the Epiphany occurs at this time. This feast was known in Ireland as "Little Christmas," because, as the birth of Our Lord was manifested to the Jews on Christmas Day, it was manifested to the Gentile world only on the Feast of the Epiphany. It occurred in this way: There appeared in Jerusalem three men whose dress and language and manners indicated that they had come from some far eastern land. And the story they told was strange and startling. They said that in their country there prevailed a cherished tradition, handed down from sire to son for many generations, that a Saviour would be born for the salvation of the world, and His birth would be announced to them by the rise of a new star flashing with unwonted brilliancy in their skies; and that under the guidance of that star, and illumined by the interior light of Divine grace,