

CHRISTMAS.

"Come, Lord Jesus, come!" Such has been the burden of the Christian's song since the time of Advent commenced, and now arrives the day and the season when we commemorate the fruition of our hopes, and when the joyous song: "Christ is born in Bethlehem," bursts spontaneously from our lips, nay, from our very hearts.

Everything is mystery in this holy season. THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, is repeated in a thousand different ways in all the prayers of the Church, and these prayers find an echo in every Catholic heart. The splendor of this mystery dazzles the understanding, but it inundates the heart with joy. It is the consummation of the designs of God in time.

The four weeks of our preparation are over, and we have reached the twenty-fifth day of the month of December, the day on which the Western Church, from the very commencement, celebrated the Festival of our Saviour's Birth. The Church of Rome had every means of knowing the true date of this event, since the acts of the Enrolment taken at Judæa by command of Augustus (Luke: chap. ii., v. 1 to 5,) were kept in the public archives of Rome. It was not till the fourth century, however, that the Churches of the East began to keep this Feast in the month of December. At one time they had kept it on the sixth of January, uniting it with the *Manifestation* of our Saviour to the Magi, at another time they had kept it on May 15th, at another April 20th. St. John Chrysostom tells us, (in 386) that the Roman custom of celebrating the Birth of our Saviour, on the 25th December, had then only been observed ten years in the Church of Antioch. The Western Church, (the Church of Rome), celebrates the Nativity and Epiphany of our Lord as two distinct Festivals, and prolongs the Christmas time of rejoicing to Feb. 2nd, the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

During this holy season, the Church offers to the Infant God a fourfold tribute: adoration, joy, gratitude, and love, and her faithful children share in all these sentiments. There is nothing to prevent any one from approaching Him, for the Divine Word is here shown us under the appearance of a *Child*! a *simple Babe*! Were He seated on a throne we might fear to approach Him, but we are now invited to behold Him "lying on a crib in a stable!" Were we asked to contemplate Him on His Cross, at His Burial, or even in His Glory and His Victory, we might say we had not the courage, but what courage do we need to contemplate Him in Bethlehem where He is a *Little Babe*, all silence and sweetness? He is uttering *no reproaches for our ingratitude*, He is *threatening us with no terrors*, with His soft plaintive murmurings He is only asking for our love.

This is not a season for sighing and weeping. *For unto us a Child is born!* and He is come to dwell among us. We must rejoice and be glad at His coming, and sing round His crib with the angels.

The first of our duties is adoration. In Heaven, the angels veil their faces and prostrate themselves before the throne of Jehovah; let us emulate the angels in Heaven by prostrating ourselves before the Divine Infant, and offering Him the incense of our soul's adoration.

Our mother, the Church, looks on this mystery of Emmanuel *i. e.*, *God with us*, as a source of singular joy and again let us take pattern by the angels. Was it not at our Saviour's Birth that they intoned the *Gloria in excelsis* for the first time, and shall not our hearts echo the glad words and be filled with *Peace* which this lovely Babe brings to earth, *to men of good will!* Joy at Christmas is a Christian instinct, and one handed down to us from the ages of Faith, as is testified by the abundance of Christmas carols or *Noels* to be found in all languages and among all nations.

Fortunately, united with this joy, is the sentiment of *gratitude*, and gratitude is indeed His due who deigned to be born of His own creature and chose a stable for a birth-place. Gratefully, therefore, let us receive God's precious gift—this Divine Babe, our Deliverer. O, gift inestimable! How can we repay it, we who are so poor? Shall our debt never be paid? Ah, yes; we can pay it

by love and so with the church we will say to Him, "*How beautiful art Thou, my Beloved One, and how comely.*" (Cant. 1:15). How sweet to me is Thy rising, O Divine Sun of Justice! How my heart glows in the warmth of Thy beams!

Nor is our celebration of this great Feast complete until we have paid our tribute of *admiration* to the glorious Virgin Mother of an Infant God! The Church throughout the forty days of Christmas-tide makes special commemoration of the *fruitful virginity and inviolate purity* of the Mother of God, thus honouring the Son in the Mother. Did not He who chose the Day to be born on, choose also the Mother He was to be born from? He made both the Day and the Mother. Oh! Blessed Mother! Her happy task was that of ministering to the wants of the Incarnate Word whom she had conceived in her heart through her undivided love, the greatness of her profound humility and the incomparable merit of her virginity, and, oh! wonderful goodness of God! no member of the human race is excluded from the honour of imitating Mary in her maternity; though it is needless to say, at a humble and immeasurable distance. If we have *prepared the way of the Lord* (Is. xl.: 3) during the weeks of Advent, our hearts have conceived their Lord, and now at Christmas, our good works must bring Him forth. "If, O devout soul!" says St. Bonaventure, "thou art desirous of this birth, imagine thyself to be like Mary. Mary signifies *bitterness*, bitterly bewail thy sins; Mary signifies *illumination*, be thou illumined by thy virtues; and lastly, Mary signifies *mistress*, learn how to be mistress and controller of thy evil passions. Then will Christ be born of thee, and then shall thy soul taste and see how sweet is her Lord Jesus! She experiences this sweetness when, in holy meditation, she nourishes this Divine Infant; when she clothes Him with her holy longings, when she cherishes Him in the warmth of her glowing love."

Let us then go to *Bethlehem* and contemplate that *Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a crib*. Let us offer our souls to Him with confidence and love and He will enable us to keep those souls for Him. Thus shall we with Him become little children, and thus the graces we receive at Bethlehem will prepare us for the blissful *eternal union* which in the *plenitude and repose* of love will be our everlasting reward in Heaven.

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The Church in Canada.

Under this heading will be collected and preserved all obtainable data bearing upon the history and growth of the Church in Canada. Contributions are invited from those having in their possession a material that might properly come for publication in this department

CATHOLIC HISTORICAL NOTES.

WHERE WAS ORANGE?

In your issue of December 3rd you gave an extract from a communication of mine to the *Irish Canadian*, wherein the above question was asked. I can now give an answer, but am not certain the answer is correct, although probabilities seem in its favour. The city of Albany, N. Y., was at one time known by that name. In 1609, when Henry Hudson sailed up the river, the site was called *Aurania*. The Abbé Ferland, in his history of Canada, tells us that in 1718 an "action was commenced against certain persons for having gone to Orange (Albany) and carried furs there for the purpose of traffic." In another place he says that Orange was an enclosure, mounting several cannon, and containing about 300 people. In the days of the Dutch dynasty it was a great trading post. Here are two anecdotes illustrating the manners of those days. An Indian arrived on Sunday, and went round to sell his peltries; he was told the people had gone to church. "What they gone church for?" "To learn good things." Next day he was more successful, but since his last visit to the settlement the price of furs had fallen. "I can give only so much," said the merchant. All the other merchants told the same story.