

speaking with contempt of the old-fashioned conservative methods followed by the Christian Church. For our part, we cannot help feeling that the system of teaching, contained in what is known as the Church's year, will stand favorable comparison with any mere secular system of instruction, in respect of simplicity, order, and completeness. So simple is it that even a young child can grasp the main facts of the Incarnation, by simply giving ordinary attention to the Church's services from Advent to Advent; so orderly is it, that each historical fact prepares for, and leads up to, the one immediately succeeding it; so complete is it, that all the facts and truths do not stand out singly as individual atoms, but every one has its own clearly defined place in one great whole—and one great idea—the Redemption of mankind—runs, like a golden thread, through all.

The Christian year begins with Advent, which this year commenced on November 28th. The name "Advent" means "coming," and refers, in the first place, to the first coming to earth, in great humility, of the Incarnate Son of God; and, in the next, to the second coming of the same Divine Being, at the last great day, to judge the world.

The observance of Advent is of very great antiquity, there being distinct reference to it, in Church history, before 450 A. D.

The Church calls upon us to keep this holy season by taking every advantage of the special means of grace provided, by using well the special opportunities for prayer that are afforded at this time in God's House, and by devout meditation on the special themes brought before us in the Church's services for this season.

If we are at all in earnest, we cannot avoid looking back over the Christian year that has gone; and, in so doing, we shall see much to regret, and, at the same time, many things for which to be thankful.

It is a good thing at the beginning of each new period in our lives to fix upon some thought which shall be our most frequent and favorite thought throughout that period, and give us something definite to aim at in our lives. A very suitable motto for those who are living in a climate that is somewhat stormy during the winter is this: "Rejoice in the Lord always." Do not wait till trouble comes before turning to Him, but try to live always in His Presence: think often of Him and His Love, and of what that Love has done for us all. Keep counting up God's Mercies; never say your prayers without giving thanks for something, and go to Church to do so again in public. Do not go to Church to get, but to give. This is the very first duty of all God's people, to give to Him—worship, thanks, praise, alms, and themselves. Constant giving to God cannot help bringing joy; and the Christian life was meant to be a life of joy, not of gloom, even in spite of affliction. Heaven was meant to begin in this life. God made this world beautiful in order that we might look upon it as the avenue, or outer and plainer part, of the glorious Garden of God, and this earthly life as but the first stage of the Heavenly Life. It was for this that our Lord Jesus Christ ordained the Sacrament of His Love, that we might get

more vivid glimpses of that future Heavenly Life as often as we like, and feel the bliss of His unending Companionship, and breathe the atmosphere of His Love, as well as take our share in His continual intercession now being offered in Heaven. He has not left out any possible means of helping us to live a life of joy in the Lord.

By observing the Holy season of Advent in this way, we shall make our Christmas a blessed time, in the truest sense of the word; and we shall be putting ourselves in the way to take the fullest advantage of all God's mercies throughout the year.

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### THE NATIVITY

"What means this glory round our feet,"

The Magi mused—"more bright than morn?"  
And voices chanted clear and sweet,

"To-day the Prince of Peace is born."

"What means that star?" the shepherds said,

That brightens through the rocky glen?"

And angels, answering overhead,

Sang "Peace on earth, good will to men,"

And they, who do their soul no wrong,

But keep at eve the faith of morn,

Shall daily hear the angels' song,

To-day the Prince of Peace is born.

—James Russell Lowell.

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### CHRISTMAS.

In spite of the strong tendency in certain quarters to secularize Christmas, and make it a mere social festival, the faithful Churchman will never forget that it is one of the three great festivals of the Catholic Church, and as such ought to be observed religiously and with deepest thankfulness. In bygone days the Puritans saw only the superstitions and disorderliness with which Christmas had become encumbered, and therefore tried hard to destroy it, but fortunately failed in the attempt. We hear it sometimes said that there is no clear and definite evidence to prove that our Blessed Lord was born on December 25; and it is often urged that, in the early Church, there was a diversity of usage in regard to the observance of the feast. These things need not disturb us. That there is an almost universal desire to celebrate the Nativity of the Child Jesus all will recognize; the question as to the exact date of the event may be left as an interesting study for the archaeologist. It is quite sufficient for us to know that, for 1400 years at least, December 25 has been observed as Christmas Day by the Christian Church. The "Christmas season" is sometimes used to designate the time between December 24 (Christmas Eve) and January 6. During this period there was formerly, and still continues to be, a spirit of joy and festivity, and we do well to perpetuate the Church's custom. The vigil of the Nativity was observed from very early days with exceptional devotion, doubtless because of