

THE SENTINEL
OF THE
BLESSED SACRAMENT

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The Star of Bethlehem.

The star that shone o'er Bethlehem
Is surely shining yet,
Altho' unseen by mortal eye;
And never will it set
And leave the world without its light,
In darkness and regret.

The star that shone o'er Bethlehem
Was God's sweet star of love,
That showed itself when Christ was born,
The manger rude above,
And hung there in its mellow light
Like a fair silver dove.

The star that shone o'er Bethlehem,
The love of God divine,
Is shining now as it did then
In that dear heart of thine,
And there, as when the Lord was born,
That star will ever shine.



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Christmas Eve

'Tis midnight. On the globe dead silence sits,
And all is silent in the house of sleep;
Save when the hollow gust that swells by fits
In the dark wood roars fearfully and deep,
I wake alone to listen and to weep,
To watch my taper, thy pale beacon burn;
And as still memory does her vigils keep,
To think of days that never can return.

Back in imagination, through the long, dim vista of years, I wander, and again I stand beneath some grand and glorious cathedral; again the chant of the organ is heard upon the air, and softly, sweetly, heavenly, resounds the "Gloria in Excelsis Deo", filling those grand old aisles with richest harmony, echoing through the vaulted arches, and sending aloft a glorious hymn of praise to Christ the new-born king.

"Speak low! the place is holy to the breath
Of awful harmonies, of whispered prayer;
Tread lightly!—for the sanctity of death
Broods like a voiceless influence on the air,
Stern, yet serene!—a reconciling spell,
Each troubled billow of the soul to quell."

Yes, 'tis Christmas Eve. What memories awaken, what thoughts pass through the busy brain, memories whose skies are tinged with clouds of both joy and sorrow, and whose horizon is brightened by the star of hope. The year has passed, and bright dreams we cherished have vanished, the castles we built have crumbled to earth, the flowers that bloomed around us in beauty have faded and withered ere the cold, icy winds of winter blasted their gorgeous beauty. And the friends of our bosom, who but one short year ago greeted us with a "Merry Christmas," where are they now. A voice from the past answers: slumbering in the silent city of the dead.

Oh yes, what human heart has not some lost image enshrined within it, some blighted hope slumbering

in its depths, some withered garland or faded flower decking the bier of buried love. Thus the years come and go, and we journey onward, through days of clouds and sunshine, laughter and tears, and our vain ambitious hearts always seeking the golden vale of happiness. A well-known writer beautifully describes the feverish agitation of the human soul, thus longing for something which it never can find. "Oh, did we but know when we are unhappy? Could the restless, feverish ambitious heart be still, but for a moment still, and yield itself without one farther aspiring throb to its enjoyment—then were I happy—Yes thrice happy!" But no, this fluttering, struggling and imprisoned spirit beats the bars of its golden cage—disdains the silken fetter; it will not close the eye and fold its wing. As if time were not swift enough, its swifter thoughts outstrip his rapid flight and onward; onward, do they wing their way to distant mountains, to the fleeting clouds of the future; and yet I know that ere long, weary and way-worn and disappointed, they shall return to nestle in the bosom of the past. We cling to the past with fondness. In its desert spots there are fountains springing, whose waters often refreshed us through the toilsome journey of life, and its crushed and faded garlands send forth a fragrance that will be borne on the winds of the future, for many years to come. And this Christmas night when all the world rejoices, when angelic hosts are chanting the praises of the Redeemer, when cherubim and seraphim re-echo the glad hymns of praise, our own souls seem purified and elevated, as it were, above the things of earth and we go in spirit to the humble cradle of Bethlehem, and kneel down in adoration before that glorious King, and there we forgive and forget the transgressions of the past, and we offer that priceless jewel, more costly than pearl or diamond, or any treasure earth doth possess—the tear of penitence.

Fallen human nature can there find hope and consolation and redeem the past. The bleeding and broken heart there finds balm to heal the wounds of human woe. The man of crime, the calumniator, the wicked and jealous-hearted, those who through secret and cunning evils would injure the pure and innocent

there find a fount to purify them from the iniquities of the past; and to fortify them against the battles of the future. And when storms arise, when the billows of passion seems to encircle us and the ocean of life is like a dark angry sea, there is still one star of magnificent beauty peering through the dark clouds, that will guide us to the haven of rest.

When marshalled on the nightly plain,
The glittering host bestud the sky;
One star alone, of all the train,
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.
Hark! hark! to God the chorus breaks,
From every host, from every gem;
But one alone, the Saviour speaks,
It is the star of Bethlehem.

Spiritual welfare of Children.

Holy Scripture contains nothing more tenderly beautiful than the words spoken by Our Blessed Lord in reference to the little ones of the fold. "Suffer little children to come unto Me"—and, "Unless you become as little children you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." On the other hand nothing is more terrifying than His warning to those who scandalize these same little ones. Our Saviour's words should make parents fearful of the responsibility resting on them. "How often even the home becomes a source of danger and invites the curse of God on those 'who scandalize these little ones!'" Sometimes, too, negligent parents disregard the orders of Holy Church and keep their children from the reception of Holy Communion. They do nothing to encourage frequent Communion, which is so necessary a protection against the poison of sin and undoubtedly the best means of keeping the spirit of Christ alive in their hearts.

Not merely at home should this care be exercised. It is the Church's conviction that the whole life of the child be spent in a religious atmosphere that makes her demand so many sacrifices to provide a Catholic education for every child. Let us pray that all upon whom the responsibility falls may do their full duty in guarding the souls of children.

THE ONE TRUE FRIEND.

How fully Jesus, our one true Friend, fulfils this condition of friendship. He loveth at all times. A love that is born in adversity outlasts the love that springs up in bright days of sunshine. Such is the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar. Jesus loved us in His life of poverty and toil in His dark hours of passion and crucifixion, even to the end, in the Blessed Eucharist. He loved us in our dark days of sin and sorrow, of wilfulness and rebellion. He is unchangeable, Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Our inconstancy cannot weaken His love; our indifference cannot quench it. He condescends to call us not servants but friends; but let us note the condition. "You are My friends if ye do the things I command you."

Thou Jesus, my Desired, who draweth me,
Thou hidden Love, who now art loving me;
Thou wounded Love, who once wast dead for me;
Thou sun-crowned Love, who art alive for me;
Thou patient Love who weariest not of me;
Alone of all, Thou weariest not of me;
Oh bear with me till I am lost in Thee,
Oh, bear with me till I am found in Thee,
Oh, bear with me till I see God in Thee.

Value the friendship of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the most Holy Sacrament; sacrifice all others if necessary.

Christmas in Rome

In no other church in Rome is Christmas kept with greater solemnity than in the Church of Ara Cœli, the venerable temple on the Campidoglio. Daily, from Christmas Day to the Epiphany, the great flight of steps—Rome's thank offering for delivery from the great pestilence—leading from the piazza below to the main entrance of the church, is thronged from sunrise to sunset with a constant stream of pilgrims eager to pay their homage before the Presepio, in which the world-famed Bambino is exposed to view. In its literal sense, the word presepio signifies a manger, but is commonly used to describe the customary Christmastide representation, with a scenery and figures of Christ's birth in the stable at Bethlehem. The first authentic presepio was that made by St. Francis at Assisi, whence the devotion spread in all parts of Europe.

Within the Church of Ara Cœli is treasured the Bambino (Infant), whose miracles have earned for it the significant title of "the best doctor in Rome." This Santo Bambino of Ara Cœli is a small, shapely wooden statue, some two and a half feet in height, of the Infant Saviour. According to the accepted legend, the figure was carved by a Franciscan lay brother in Jerusalem out of a log of olive wood grown on the Mount of Olives. Its features, now stained and worn by age, represent a baby of a few months old. During the Christmas season the Bambino is taken from the little chapel adjoining the sacristy, which serves as its home during the rest of the year, and placed in a large presepio fitted up in one of the side chapels of the church.

Along one side of the chapel a temporary stage is erected, and on it a pulpit; from which children every afternoon, deliver short sermons or recite snatches of verse or prose in honor of the Infant Jesus, and suggestive of the scene which lies depicted before them. These simple discourses attract immense crowds and it is no uncommon sight to find the steps leading up to the church

densely packed by anxious worshippers, awaiting admission to the sacred edifice. Some of these youthful orators prove themselves singularly proficient in their difficult task, and both by word and gesture readily win the attention of their listeners. Some on the other hand, are so overcome by nervousness that they are, perforce obliged to read the sentiments they cannot trust themselves to deliver.

Besides these juvenile sermons, it is also customary for the children to act short dramas, in which the action is indicative of the same sacred mystery.

On the feast of the Epiphany the Bambino is carried in state to the main entrance of the church, where, from the top of the historic flight of steps leading down to the piazza below, its blessing is given to the city and to the countless multitudes which throng every approach. Those who have spent Christmas in Rome are unlikely to readily forget the striking ceremonies of Ara Cœli.

Why Jesus is in the Blessed Sacrament.

Our Lord was so afraid that we would eventually forget Him that He took up His abode in the midst of us, made His home among us, placed His service within our reach, so that we might not be able to think of Him without calling to mind His love. Giving Himself thus, He hoped perhaps not to be forgotten.

Whoever reflects seriously on the Eucharist, but above all, whoever participates in It, must feel convinced that Our Lord loves him. He feels that he has in Him a Father. He feels that he is loved as a child. He feels that he has the right to go to Him as to a father and to speak freely with Him. When in church at the foot of the tabernacle, he is at home with his Father.

A Eucharistic Convert

A young Protestant had lost, at the University of Leyden, the little faith that he had received from his own family. He was now engaged in business and commercial enterprises. One day, he accompanied a friend to a religious ceremony.

It was the first time he had ever been inside a Catholic church. The music was solemn, the prayers plaintive, and above all, the Divine Sacrifice, with the marvel of the Real Presence, powerfully affected the Protestant free-thinker. Some indefinable emotion seized him. Not being able to restrain his feelings, he went, at the close of the ceremony, to see the Curé in the presbytery.

"Monsieur le Curé," he bagen, "I am a Protestant, but I have come to say to you I find your religion very beautiful."

"Monsieur," replied the priest, "you would find it still more beautiful if you were better acquainted with it."

"To know it, Monsieur le Curé, is my great desire. Tell me to whom I shall go for instruction and enlightenment."

The stranger was to remain in the city for some time so the priest introduced him to the Bishop's secretary. The latter received the young neophyte very kindly and, handing him a simple little catechism, began to instruct him. The young man listened; grace was visibly acting in his soul. Conference followed conference, and in them, the young man quickly learned the truths, which were now directing his life and satisfying his heart. Several months passed. At last the day for his Baptism and First Communion was fixed. It was to be on the 9th of June. The neophyte had a sister whom he tenderly loved, and he longed for her to share his happiness. He wrote to her, announcing his resolution, adding the words: "My joy would be complete

if it were shared by you. Oh, what happiness to think that you would be like myself a Catholic, and would communicate with me on the 9th of June!"

The answer to his letter was not long awaited. But what a sweet surprise for the newly converted. The letter received from his beloved sister was a real *Te Deum* of thanksgiving.

"The good news that you have announced to me is an answer from God. One year ago, on the 9th of June, I embraced the Catholic Faith, and I asked for you from the Holy Eucharist the happiness of knowing and loving It. God has heard me. Yes, I shall communicate with you on the 9th of June."

The young neophyte thanked God and became a fervent Catholic. He took up again the management of his business and resumed his journeys. The sister, looked upon with disfavor among her Protestant relatives, removed to another city where devoted friends found for her a position in which she could live according to her Faith, and follow her attraction for the Eucharist. But her heart was not yet satisfied.

"I have received so much," she said, "that I ought to return much." She is to-day in the cloister of the Sisters Reparatrice, where nothing can distract her from her love for the Holy Eucharist. And her brother, the free-thinker—he too said to himself:

"I have received so much, that I ought to give much."

He went to Rome and studied for the priesthood. He is now an apostle of the Eucharist.



Looking at the Host.

No one, probably, who has not spent some time in investigating the subject, will ever quite appreciate the extraordinary effect produced upon popular devotion to the Blessed Sacrament by the introduction, towards the end of the twelfth century, of the Elevation of the Sacred Host. Archbishop Peckman speaks of the great indulgences granted by many Bishops for venerating the Body of Christ at that moment. Bishop Quivil describes the looking upon the Host as a means of fostering devotion and increasing the merit of faith. The result of these and similar exhortations, was that the thought of seeing the Body of Christ at the moment of the *sacring*, (this was the popular term —) predominated over every thing else in the minds of the ruder populace. For them this was the essence of the hearing of Mass, and of course on a week-day it was an excellent thing if the hard-working peasantry could be prevailed upon to make the effort necessary to secure this one act of reverence. All sorts of popular rhymes set out at length the marvelous effect produced by this sight of the Host. It was believed that who had seen the Body of his Maker was specially protected that day against untoward accidents, that his work would prosper and be blessed, etc; and that even the food which he took would nourish his body more perfectly. From the Statutes of Eton College we learn that the scholars did not attend the collegiate Mass each day, but that when the bell gave warning of the "Elevation of the Body of Christ" all the scholars "were to enter the church, and there devoutly falling on their knees, to adore the Blessed Sacrament."—but for this purpose of warning there was no object of tolling the big bell, which could be heard a mile or more away. For the Sanctus a signal was used which could be heard just in the immediate neighbourhood; while at the Elevation itself, the big bell in the tower was rung, and those who heard

it as they worked in the fields, knew that the Body of Christ was at that moment being raised up to heaven in propitiation for their sins...

The history of the practice of looking at the Blessed Sacrament seems to show that however excellent a devotion may be in itself, it also has its dangers. "Noticing," say the assembled Bishops in the Council of Cologne, "that the rude and uneducated populace, ignorant of ancient and true religion, pay no attention to nothing which is done in the Sacrifice of the Mass except the offering of the Sacred Host; and that from this cause has grown up in towns where many Masses are said that people run from altar to altar without fully giving their minds to any one Sacrifice in particular, while in the hamlets and villages they stroll about the church yard, often discussing their worldly affairs, until the signal is given for the Elevation of the Host; and that when they have once seen and saluted this (the Host), even from a long way off, they consider that they have fully discharged the duty of a Christian... we have thought"...

To look devoutly at the sacramental species, the veils under which God hides His presence amongst us is a helpful thing. It develops that human sense of nearness and intimacy, which is such a power for good and evil. But clearly it may be abused. When the looking at the Sacred Host became so absorbing a devotion that people began to think that to see the Body of Christ at the Elevation was the same thing as hearing Mass, it is plain, that the essential was being swallowed up by the accidental, that the end was being subordinated to the means. It was a good thing to behold the Host when it was lifted by the priest, but it was a far better and more necessary thing to assist at Mass as a Sacrifice. This sort of disproportion is always something of a danger in our popular devotions admirable as they are as helps. By all means let us venerate and appreciate and use any such aid as comes in our way, whether it be the Rosary, or the Scapular, or the Nine Fridays, or the Cord of S. Francis, or the relics of Saints, or miracles, but let us not forget that even by such means

there is no royal road to heaven. The way must remain a steep and narrow way, and the one lesson we have to learn is to love God and our neighbour and to discharge earnestly and faithfully those plain duties of devout service, like hearing Mass and frequenting the Sacraments, which are incumbent on all Christians before any practices of mere devotion.

Under the Star

'Tis Christmas eve, and I am going to send my thoughts a-wandering;—will you bear them company? It will be a brief journey, I promise, and a blessed ending; just the ending for a Christmas eve.

Out into the star-sown, glittering night—follow the star, and swift as the twinkling above—over the sleeping woods and the vales,—and hush! we are here! It is dark here within, a soft and holy darkness,—what need to see? If only the star is glimmering still, we know all we need, all we wish. He is here; bend low and adore.

So helpless, so little, so poor! In a dwelling so unworthy and mean. Can this be He, whose omnipotent hand steadies yon awful, ponderous spheres that swing through the fathomless night? So quiet and so humble, and still,—never a sound of the voice whose "Fiat" woke the universal frame to be. Never a gleam of the piercing Light that the Seraphim shield off with their wings.

And those patient figures that kneel,—who are they? Why so few, and so poor? Does not a mighty city stir near by? And the whole vast world, with its millions, sleeping under the stars or toiling under the noon,—are not all His, His very own? And they leave Him so lonely, so loving! Does not the common heart of man yearn for Him, thirst for Him, languish and die

for lack of Him? Hath He not told in a thousand ways, "I am coming,"—"Lo I am here!"

And they sleep, or they feast, or they weep; and the Lord lieth here at their doors. Hungry and famishing they, and here is their food. Vexed and harassed with doubts and questions, and here is the Truth. Stumbling with burdens, and lo He speaks soft: "O ye that labor and are heavily burdened, come!"—and they come not. O my yearning Lord, they do not even know!

What can we do? O my God, we would cry in the highways that Thou liest here,—but would they believe?—would they hear?..

This at least we can do, leave our whole hearts here, to flicker and burn like the star. Constant at least and true, though twinkling and dim. And so, out again, ere the late winter's dawning points up a ruddy, warning finger, to show 'tis Christmas morn.

Out again, under the stars. And where have we been?—do you know?

"To His crib," you say, "to far-off Bethlehem, decades of centuries ago!"

Nay, look back again, where the chapel stands, small and poor in the wintry starlight. Bethlehem was indeed His shrine two thousand years ago, when He lay unknown.

But this Christmas morn, there be Bethlehems many as yonder gold points in the sky. And He waits, and they know not still; and He loves, and they come not.

And still He is little for them and weak and poor, and cold for their love. And the myriad angels wonder and pray. And men sleep—or revel—or weep!—



The Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

The Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is one of the simplest rites of the Church.

The priests enter and kneel down; one of them unlocks the tabernacle, takes out the Blessed Sacrament; inserts it upright in a monstrance of precious metal and sets it in a conspicuous place above the altar, in the midst of lights for all to see. The people then begin to sing; meanwhile the priest twice offers incense to the King of Heaven, before Whom he is kneeling. Then he takes the monstrance in his hands and, turning to the people, blesses them with the Most Holy in the form of a cross, while the bell is sounded to call attention to the ceremony. It is our Lord's Solemn Benediction of His people, as when He lifted up His hands over the children, or when He blessed His chosen ones, when He ascended from Mount Olivet. As sons might come before a parent before going to bed at night, so once or twice a week the great Catholic family comes before the Eternal Father, after the bustle and toil of the day, and He smiles upon them and sheds upon them the light of His countenance. It is a full accomplishment of what the priest invoked upon the Israelites, "The Lord bless thee and keep thee, the Lord show His face to thee and have mercy on thee, the Lord turn His countenance to thee and give thee peace." Can there be a more touching rite, even in the judgment of those who do not believe it? How many a man, not a Catholic, is moved on seeing it to say, "O that I did but believe it!" when he sees the priest take up the Fount of Mercy and the people bend low in adoration. It is one of the most beautiful, natural, and soothing actions of the Church.

SUBJECT OF ADORATION

EMMANUEL

I. ADORATION

Recognize and adore with all the might of your faith our Lord Jesus Christ, God and Man, really present in the Holy Sacrament. After having greeted Him with profound respect, as did the shepherds and the magi in the stable of Bethlehem, prepare to conceive and be deeply convinced of this capital truth, namely: that the Eucharist has been instituted to continue and extend the great benefit of the coming of God on earth. You know and profess the mystery of the Incarnation in which the Word, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the only Son of God took the nature of man, without ceasing to be God and began to dwell among us, like unto one of us.

By virtue of this fact, God Himself, God in Person dwelt bodily on earth. He ceased to be invisible and unapproachable. He was seen as Jesus, was approached, was spoken to, was touched as Jesus; for Jesus, however really man, was also really God.

Up to that time God was only to be seen in such imperfect images of Himself as inanimate creatures and reasonable beings. But as Jesus, He was seen in his reality, immediately and in person. However continuing to be diffused everywhere through His infinite being and the universal action of His power, He was nevertheless circumscribed as Jesus: He had a soul, a body, blood, a heart and human limbs, those of Jesus; He spoke and asked through the mouth and with the hands of Jesus. He was one of us, like unto us, born in poverty, from a mother, like unto us. He worked, wearied, was hungry and thirsty like unto us. He wrought miracles, put at the disposition of His goodness and compassion for our miseries, His marvellous omnipotence which commands sickness, afflictions and death and makes them retreat. He preached the truth for which human reason is so eager, the eternal truth unalloyed and unstained by error; he spoke of God, of His Majesty, His Goodness, His Mercifulness and our sublime destinies. Jesus was God come on earth, dwelling on it, trampling it under foot, bathing it in His sweat before bathing it in His Blood: He had come to reunite

in Himself these two extremes, the man sinner and God justly irritated: and He reconciled the world with Himself, giving by His Presence and His benefits, the pledge of the most complete pardon, the assurance of a future of peace and happiness. This fact of the coming of God on earth had been expected, longed for by the tribulations and sufferings of the creature and of the entire world during more than forty centuries: it was the work of works, the gift of gifts, the masterpiece of the power of God and the greatest benefit of His goodness. Without this coming, the world would have rushed to eternal death through the dark paths of suffering, sin and despair. Therefore the Incarnation of the Word is the end and reason of every thing in the works of God.

Moreover, this great benefit, this matchless masterpiece is still being continued on earth by the Eucahrist. By virtue of this Sacrament, God is Present in person, in body and in soul on all points of the globe: God is among us; God has dwellings; God can be seen, approached and addressed in prayer; He sees us with His eyes, hears us with His ears, loves us with His human heart like unto ours: and His Presence is not only at one point, as in Judea, but in all points of the globe at the same time; it is not to last a few years only, but always, until the end of the ages.

Adore therefore with faith, with grateful love, the Son of God made man, the Man-God, the Word Incarnate, Present and living in the Holy Eucharist: believe in the truth of His power, in the perfection of His life divine and human at the same time.

II. THANKSGIVING

It is impossible, indeed, to read in the Gospel of the innumerable benefits the Saviour bestowed on all around Him, without being envious of the happiness of those who could approach Him, see Him and receive from Him a word of peace or miraculous healing. His fellow-countrymen said, in their admiration: "No one speaks like that man!" and His life on earth can be summed up in these two words: He went about doing good: *Transiit benefaciendo*.

Now the same Presence must produce the same results. If Jesus continues and perpetuates Himself on earth, He will do it with the same power, the same goodness and for the same merciful and beneficent end. Therefore it can truly be said that as all blessing have been restored to the guilty world by the Incarnation, all these blessings are maintained in all times and everywhere

by the Eucharist: since it is the same Christ, the almighty Son of God, the all merciful Son of the Virgin Mother.—Truth, virtue, order, peace, harmony in the temporal and spiritual world, a continuation of the intercourse of earth, in spite of its crimes, with God justly irritated; everything is maintained for us, continued and unceasingly given by the fact of the power and admirable efficacy of the Presence of Jesus here below perpetuated by the Eucharist. Should this great benefit disappear for one moment, there would ensue in the spiritual world a chaos worse than that would be caused by the dissolving of the universe.

Let us therefore thank Jesus for the love that makes Him dwell here below for us and allows us to enjoy all the advantages of His Presence, as did those who lived with Him during His mortal life. Furthermore, if they saw Him and heard Him, you eat Him in reality, partake of, possess Him in a manner far more intimate. *Totus ad usus nostros expensus.*

III. PROPITIATION

The great crime of the Jews, at the time of the first coming of God on earth, was to thrust Him away, to refuse to recognize Him and notwithstanding His benefits, to persecute Him unto death on Calvary. Thence the malediction pursuing that nation for nineteen centuries. Alas, the great crime of nations at the present hour, is again to refuse the God of Eucharist, to reject the means of establishing His merciful reign and exercising it for the good of the souls. Ignored, pursued, they would expel Him from His material temples after having forced Him out of the souls of children and christians of all conditions of men by unbelief. Oh! make amend for this great crime by becoming more and more faithful to the Eucharist in bringing souls to Jesus, above all souls of children.

IV. PRAYER

Ask for the grace of an ardent, confident, hearty faith in the great fact of the Eucharist perpetuating for you on earth the Presence of the Word Incarnate. Ask to believe so easily and so eagerly that the Eucharist is Jesus in Person that that truth should bring you to Him, and that His Presence should impress you as deeply as if you saw the Saviour in the manger, or on the cross

Upon entering a church bow your head before Jesus in the Tabernacle, saying: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." Thou art our Emmanuel, dwelling among us for ever.

A Christmas Song for the little ones.

A little voice from Bethlehem
Calls sweetly on the Christmas air;
It does not ask for gold or gem,
For games, or books, or flowers fair.
To each of you it says apart:
"My child! My child! give Me thy heart!"

"O Baby dear, on Mary's breast!
Is it my tiny heart you crave?
Not for one moment will I rest;
This thing You ask me You must have.
Straight to Your manger will I go,
Even across the ice and snow.

"But Bethlehem's shed is far away,
Over the ocean cold and drear!
How can I reach You, Lord, today?
Would, would that You were dwelling near!
How can I cross the ocean wild,—
For I am just a little child!

"Yes, just a little child like You,
Dear Infant Lord in Bethlehem's shed!"
—Then that sweet voice still nearer drew,
And oh! methought it softly said:
"We are not very far apart,
Dear child! My heart is near your heart,

"Across the field is Bethlehem,
In every church where doth abide
My Sacrament, earth's fairest Gem.
There, through the joyous Christmas Tide,
I wait the sound of children's feet,
That come to Me along the street.

"Come, then, and I will give you rest.
 I love you well. Oh, love Me too!
 Once lay I on a Mother's breast;
 I was a little child like you!"
 Then many voices rose as one:
 "We love you, Jesus, Jesus, Mary's Son!"

And louder yet the voices rang
 In loyal love to God our King.
 "Praise, praise to Jesus Christ!" they sang.
 "We to His Heart all hearts would bring!
 We will defend His Holy Name.
 Praise to the Babe of Bethlehem!"

The Divine Presence

We say we believe that in the Tabernacle Jesus Christ is bodily present, dwelling quietly and patiently, a Prisoner of Love; but do we believe this? How can we believe this? How can we believe He is there and yet neglect to visit Him, to watch with Him?

Can it be really true, Dearest Lord, that Thou dost find delight in dwelling amongst the children of men?

In spite of the striking example of obedience and submission Thou givest us, and which we can not see, we remain as we were with hearts proud and rebellious. We grow hardened in the foolish conviction of our own importance, believing we are really someone to whom honor and respect is due.

We claim the right of imposing our will on others, and exacting obedience from them, meanwhile refusing to obey any one.

Alas, what strange foolishness, what deep-seated pride!

O Lord Jesus, have mercy on us!

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Bethlehem and the Tabernacle

*The Star of the Child shone over Bethlehem lowly,
And the Sages went in and knelt down and adored;
They saw but a Babe, yet they knew 'twas the Holy,
For the Star told the Sages the Babe was their Lord.*

*The Babe is the Bethlehemite Child on our altar,
The Star is the altar-lamp shining so mild;
The Sages are they who in faith never falter,
But adore in each church where a lamp shows the Child.*

Months had flown, since the day on which the Archangel Gabriel brought from Heaven, the message to the Blessed Virgin. She knew that the Saviour of the world was to be born in Bethlehem and not at her home in Nazareth; and so, without troubling herself as to *How it was to be done*, she was awaiting the sign that would make known to her the will of God.

The Emperor Augustus in his pride wished, at this time, to know the exact number of his subjects. Without intending it, he was furthering the designs of Divine Providence.

Mary and Joseph were both of the tribe of Juda and the family of David, so they were obliged to leave their quiet home at Nazareth, and go to be inscribed at Bethlehem. It was a long journey, and the travelers arrived at their destination worn out with fatigue. But in vain did they seek a shelter. They were everywhere repulsed and, at last, they withdraw into a poor, abandoned stable.

Here it was, dear little children, that about midnight the Word Incarnate, the Son of God, came into the world. Suddenly, He appeared to the enraptured eyes of His Mother, lying on a little straw. O how eagerly she took Him up in her arms, pressed Him to her virginal heart, and addressed Him by turn, "My Son!" and "My God!"

O dear children, can you read this Gospel story without thinking how glad you would have been, to be able at that blessed moment, to draw near to the Blessed Virgin

and offer your homage to her little Jesus? That is a most natural desire. God Himself has put it into your hearts, and He desires to satisfy it. And how? Listen, and I shall tell you.

The whole life of Jesus is perpetuated and renewed among us, and it will continue to be so until the end of the world. The church is for us a real Bethlehem. In it, Jesus is born anew every day in the hands of the priest. Has not the tabernacle too often a great resemblance to the stable of Bethlehem? Jesus remains there sometimes in the greatest poverty without glory, without anything to give the least suspicion of His greatness. The angels are often the only adorers. Sometimes a few devout souls try, like Mary and Joseph, to console Him by their faith and love for the forgetfulness of ungrateful men.

And you, dear children, would you not like to be of the number of those privileged souls? Come, then, and visit this new Crib, where you may be certain of finding your sweet Saviour. Try to picture Him there before your eyes just as He really is, the beautiful little Jesus of the stable of Bethlehem. He is smiling on you. He is stretching out His arms to you to give you confidence in Him. He is begging you to come and dry the tears which the sins of men have caused Him to shed.


Come, draw near! Do not be afraid! Ask His Immaculate Mother to lay Him in your arms. Then with great love and holy respect, press Him to your heart, and say to Him, like the little children that you are: "My little Jesus, I want to love Thee! Keep me from ever separating from Thee. Grant that I may never sadden Thy dear Heart by the least fault! I want to be a beautiful white lily sending up its perfume before Thy Tabernacle. Attract me often to Thy feet that I may pass through this world without stain, that I may take to heaven my baptismal innocence. But, above all, sweet Jesus, grant that I may prepare for Thee in my heart a dwelling-place less cold than that of the stable of Bethlehem."

THE GENUFLEXION

When you bend the knee, as you enter the church, do you realize what the act means? Not all Catholics do, if we may judge by the quick little jerk that they give by way of genuflection. We are instructed to bow the head with respect to the House of God, even if the Blessed Sacrament is not there, but in the Presence of our Lord we must give a greater mark of reverence. This is why we are told to bend the knee to the ground. The lighted lamp, glowing on the altar, proclaims that the Blessed Sacrament is in the tabernacle. Surely no other warning should be needed to draw from us every outward mark of love and reverence. "When you see this lighted lamp, on entering the Church," says a zealous prelate, "bend your right knee to the ground, down to the ground, remember. That is the rightful way to adore our Lord present in the Sacrament. It is an act of the highest worship, and you should make it with all reverence. If you do not call to mind, or notice that you are in the Presence of our Lord Himself, you will not feel humbled as you ought, or show the reverence you owe Him, all the time you are in His House."

When the Wise Men came to Bethlehem, what was their first act? The Scripture tells us: "Falling down they adored Him."

We do the same thing before the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, when you come into the church, never forget this act of reverence, never forget the homage due to the great God, Who reposes there in the tabernacle, waiting for you and for me to come to Him. He watches with a Father's love for the little signs of true Catholic devotion that prove how close He is held in the hearts of His children. If we truly love God, we can never be heedless of His Presence.



An Altar-boy's Christmas offering.

Vespers of the third Sunday in Advent were over, and twenty altar boys of St. Joseph's church were struggling their difficult way out of cassock and surplice, in a vestry far too dark and small for convenience. Pious people outside said sometimes: "What noisy boys! and just down from the altar, too!" But those in charge thought, even when sometimes finding fault, that perhaps the recording angel saw grounds for excuse.

Nevertheless the noise was worse than ordinary this Sunday. Christmas would come in ten days. On Friday night would be the final rehearsal for Solemn High Mass and Solemn Vespers. Who would be chosen for acolytes? Who for thurifers? Who to carry the torches?

Not a boy present but was a member of St. John Berchmans' Sodality. There was the rule, plain as words can make it:

"Let them endeavor to check, as far as they can do so prudently, all disorderly conduct in the sacristy or church."

Was nobody thinking of the rule? What a hulla-baloo there was!

"Boys!"

It was only the moderator, Stephen Clisson, last year an altar-boy like themselves. However, they all became silent, for they liked him; and, besides, his word might make things go hard with them when the longed-for decision came.

"What's all the talk about?"

"I tell you what, Steve!" spoke out a big curly-headed boy from a corner, where he was busily engaged in lacing up his shoes, after flinging his slippers into his bag, "If I don't get a torch this year, I'll leave and be done with it."

"All right," answered Steve. "Suit yourself. You can't all have torches, that's sure."

"Make him an acolyte, and be done with it?" somebody suggested provokingly.

"Or give him the censer anyhow!" said another. "He has been on the altar just one year Christmas to a day."

"Here's the censer," piped up a gentle voice. And the boy whose duty it was that Sunday to empty it, came suddenly into the noisy throng.

He was very short, very small, very boyish for his years. He was really fifteen and he looked scarcely twelve. He was singularly placid, easy, gentle in his appearance and he made his way straight through the crowd and up to the moderator, holding out the censer to him with a swing.

"Who wants it?"

"Lawrence O'Keefe," a dozen voices answered.

The boy with the censer turned and saw the dark face glowering in the corner, the teeth hard set, the eyes full of a dull fire.

"Lawrence O'Keefe?" he repeated slowly. "Why, I don't think he ever swung a censer in his life."

"No more he didn't!" cried Pat Lynch. "Nor did any thing else worth doing, since he came on."

"That's so!" said Louis Capelle. "That's a fact. He never takes his week-day Mass, or only once in an age, and you know it, Martin."

"No matter," explained Lawrence fiercely. "I'll carry a torch at least, or I'll leave the altar. I'll not stand like a stick with the little kids, before everybody, at High Mass Christmas Day."

Martin was silent a minute, then said gently, "It's rather noisy here, isn't it, Steve? I wonder what St. John would say to it?"

"You are right, Martin. Only I thought it might be best to hear them out and have it over."

"I say, boys, be quiet, and get sense if you can! It will all come square, O'Keefe, if you behave yourself."

"Square or not square, I'll carry a torch," O'Keefe growled as he passed him. "That chap there is always put ahead, and he's nothing but a baby, a grasshopper!"

"I wish we had more such," said Clisson, turning on his heel. "And we'd be better off without you, I'm thinking, O'Keefe."

He strode up stairs, and put away the vestments, covered the altars, and saw that everything was in order for the night. "It's always a bother about positions," he said to himself, "but that O'Keefe is worse than anybody yet. He is no honor to the altar or to the Sodality and I wish he had never come on. I wonder what St. John Berchmans thinks of him? I've been an altar boy eleven years, and never did I see one of us so hard to put up with as he is. Heigho!"

And then Stephen went down on his knees and said "the St. John Berchmans' prayer," which had become to him like familiar music, and which had helped to place him where he was in his well-earned position of trust:

"O St. John Berchmans, so distinguished for thy modesty and purity, for thy reverence for holy places, for thy devotion toward the Blessed Sacrament, the Blessed Virgin and St. Aloysius, obtain for us the grace of imitating these thy virtues, that they who behold us in church may think that they see thee, and thus give due honor to thee and to our God. Amen."

He came down stairs again, after that, to the dark silent chapel where the Blessed Sacrament was kept. How peaceful it was, with the red light burning softly before the Holy Shrine, and the intense, unbroken silence after the chatter of those noisy boys to whose ranks, so short a time ago, he had belonged. A faint breath of incense still lingered on the air. Stephen felt in no haste to get away. As he passed the altar in the darkness, he nearly stumbled over a small figure kneeling there.

"Why, Martin," he exclaimed, "ain't you gone yet?"

The placid little face looked up at his kindly one. They had been seven years together on the altar and

loved each other well. "I want to say something to you, Stephen," Martin said.

"Right here?" asked Clisson. "What is it?"

"I guess it wont do any harm here. I guess the Sacred Heart knows all about it. Stevie, don't give my name to Father Harkins for any place at all, this time."

"Not give your name! Of course I shall," cried Stephen. "Come into the sacristy, and tell me what's up now. Why, you love to be acolyte on Christmas Day! You've earned it too. You're the best boy here, by all odds."

Martin freed himself gently from the kind, firm grasp, that was playfully throttling him. "Yes Stevie," he said, "you will do it. See here: our Lord would like it."

"How do you know?" And then suddenly Stephen's face changed. Something in the sweet young eyes before him seemed to tell its own story to the older boy, who had again and again his own talks with the Sacred Heart, in the vesper twilight when day was done. "You think our Lord would like it, Martin?" he asked.

Martin spoke slowly, as if he found it a little difficult to put his thought into words, although not at all because he feared to tell it to Stephen who, next to his mother and their pastor, had won his loving heart.

"I was saying the St. John Berchmans' prayers," he said, "the *five* prayers, you know."

Stephen nodded. He was very fond of the short prayer which all of them said together after High Mass, but those "*five* prayers" he knew he did not say nearly so often as this most faithful little sodalist did. "Go ahead, Martin."

"It says, you know, '*That I may ever and everywhere glory in His cross*'. I was saying that and thinking how I would love to be acolyte on Christmas, because we get so near the priest and the altar and the Sacred Host; and oh! it seems like getting near the Infant Jesus. Suddenly, something made me think that to get near a cross—to *have* a cross—is a sure way to get near the crib. Do you understand?"

Again Stephen nodded.

"It *would* be a little cross to give it up, Stevie; but perhaps it would help Lawrence to be better, if *he* came up close to the altar that day."

The darkness happily hid Stephen's eyes. Perhaps he would hardly have liked even Martin to see how dim they suddenly became. He remembered how hard he had found it to give up his place at any time. He knew it would be a fight now with himself, if such a thing were even suggested. How simply this child was doing it!

"Lawrence isn't half bad," Martin began again. "Somehow I think if you would let him do it once you could do almost anything with him afterwards; and, if he leaves, his mother will be so sorry just at Christmas time."

"Then you shall be crucifer, or a torch-bearer, anyhow."

"No," Martin persisted gently. "Nothing this year, Stephen, I think—the Sacred Heart will like it."

"Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like unto Thine." The well-known prayer flashed through Clisson's brain. He stood up silently and they went their way, but a new link was added to the chain that had bound them together for so many years in the service of their Lord. Through snow and rain, in summer heat, at the cost of many little sacrifices, how often they had met in their Master's house! Ah, well! they will meet forever in His heavenly house, one day, please God.

The eventful Friday evening came. Not a boy was absent then. The twenty of Sunday were thirty now. Father Harkins himself was present when Stephen Clisson read out the positions.

"John Shea, *crucifer*;

"John Byrnes and Frank How, *thurifers*;

"Lawrence O'Keefe and Michael O'Brien, *acolytes*;

"Harrington, Daley, Capelle, Smith, Henry Dorr, McGrath, *torch-bearers*."

A look of amazement passed over the boys' faces, but no remarks were allowed on Father Harkins' ulti-

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mate decisions. Everybody, however, felt fully justified in staring at Martin, whose face remained utterly oblivious of the attention paid him.

"Martin Schaeffer," said Father Harkins, "take O'Keefe to our Lady's altar and put him through his part. There will be an extra rehearsal of the acolytes and thurifers after the other boys are gone."

There could be no appeal from this. The big boy followed the little boy; and patiently, sweetly, Martin performed his task. He found a more docile pupil than even he, in his gentle charity, had foreseen. O'Keefe for all his seeming inattention, had not been entirely heedless in past days. The task was completed before the others were ready. Then, in sheer amazement Lawrence spoke.

"Haven't I got your place?"

"It's your place," was the reply.

"*Haven't I got your place?*"

"It doesn't make any difference."

"No difference!"

"No."

"And you have'nt got any place."

"Why yes, I have."

"I should like to know what?"

With a sort of holy pride the answer rang out from the little chap, whom O'Keefe had often thought too small and meek and quiet for notice.

"*I am an altar-boy.*"

And then the small hand was lifted up, with a sudden graceful gesture, to the beautiful statue of the Blessed Mother and the divine Child enthroned upon her knee, His loving Sacred Heart laid open to their gaze.

"Isn't it enough," Martin said joyfully, "to be their servant anyhow? Nothing makes any difference but the will of God, Lawrence."

O'Keefe's dark eyes shone again with a far different fire from what usually burned there.

"See here, Martin Schaeffer," he cried, "is there anything I can do for you?"

Martin paused, then answered gravely, "Yes, Lawrence go to confession very soon."

Their eyes met, and the big boy's fell before the little one's. He knew Martin had heard him swear that very day. Why had he not told on him? What strange thing had made him have this patience, this kindness, this charity?

"Do it to please the Sacred Heart," Martin pleaded, "and never swear again. You know you cannot stay on the altar if they find that out. But there's another reason. Our Lord loves you."

"I believe He does," cried Lawrence suddenly, "if He's anything like you, Martin."

S. L. EMERY

TRANSFORMATION OF FRANCE. Cardinal Logue pays the following glowing tribute to the priest-soldiers of France.

"By Catholics, at least, the transformation wrought by the war on the religious spirit of France is hailed with joy and gratitude.

...France rings with the fame of her soldier-priests. The praise of their heroism and devotedness is on every tongue. They not only lead, in fidelity to duty and unshrinking courage in the face of danger, but they have breathed a spirit of faith and fervor, into the most thoughtless of their comrades and officers. Chaplains may be found, among the bursting shells and hail of bullets, consoling the dying succoring the wounded, even acting as stretcher-bearers to rescue the helpless from danger. Whatever other effect the war may have upon France, it will certainly lead many who have hitherto been careless, to take a new view of the priestly character, and appreciate more thoroughly the ministrations of religion."

A JESUIT CHAPLAIN with the Field Ambulance of the British Expeditionary Force writes:

"We Catholics are remarkably well-off in this country, since every village, no matter how tiny, has a fine church, which is invariably placed at the disposal of the Catholic soldiers for Mass and confessions. I have found the priests both in France, and Belgium, exceedingly courteous and anxious to help us. I am afraid we at home should, by this time, have become excessively bored, even we priests, by the everlasting presence of Tommy, even Catholic Tommy. Also in nearly every church there is at least one priest who can speak English more or less, and our boys can thus go to confession even in the absence of a chaplain.

...They come on in good numbers and, I assure you, many of them are very good boys, remarkably good, some even to saintliness. They have no delusions as to the seriousness of the task on which they are engaged... The reverence shown by our Catholic soldiers at Mass and Benediction is great... I am proud to say that the outward reverence of our British Catholic soldiers is of the very best in presence of the Blessed Sacrament. It is an indication of and a stimulus to recollection, and has constantly been remarked by those people who did not believe until we rubbed it in, that a Britisher could really be a Catholic... We find much to edify us. The daily sung Mass and the full church, both at Mass every morning and at Benediction every evening; the little knots of women and children gathered in the churches at all hours saying their Rosary together for the absent men and boys, or praying with arms in the form of a Cross for the blessing of a speedy peace with victory. They have the Faith, these people, no doubt of that, and I think our own Catholic soldiers and those that are not Catholics will be—are already the better for living among them."

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

The day, the happy day is dawning,
The glorious feast of Mary's chiefest praise,
That brightens like a second morning,
The clouded evening of these latter days.

High up, the realms of angels ringeth
With hymns of triumph to its mortal Queen,
While earth its song of welcome singeth
In every shady grove and valley green.

Hail, Queen, whose life is just beginning,
Thrice welcome, Mother of a fallen race!
The sinless come to save the sinning,
Thyself the chosen aqueduct of grace!

Immaculate! O dear exemption!
A spotless soul for God, entire and free,
Redeemed with such a choice redemption,
Angel nor saint can share the praise with thee.

O Virgin brighter than the brightest,
'Mid all the beauteous throngs that shine above:
O maiden whiter than the whitest
Of lily flowers in Eden's sacred grove!

Chief miracle of God's compassion,
Choice mirror of His burning holiness,
Whose heart His mercy deigned to fashion
Far more than Eve's sad ruin to redress.

Earth's cities! let your bells be reeling,
And all your temple-gates wide open fling,
With banners flying, cannon pealing,
The blessed Queen of our Redemption sing.

See! Mary comes! O jubilation!
She comes with love to cheer a guilty race;
O triumph, triumph, all creations!
O Christians! triumph in redeeming grace.

F. W. FABER