

LESSON SEVENTH.

ON THE INCARNATION AND REDEMPTION.

“**Incarnation**” means to take flesh, as a body. Here it means Our Lord’s taking flesh, that is, taking a body like ours, when He became man. “**Redemption**” means to buy back. Let us take an example. Slaves are men or women that belong entirely to their masters, just as horses, cows, or other animals do. Slaves are bought and sold, never receive any wages for their work, get their food and clothing and no more. As they never earn money for themselves, they can never purchase their own liberty. If ever they are to be free some one else must procure their liberty. Now, suppose I am in some country where slavery exists. I am free, but I want one hundred dollars; so I go to a slave owner and say: I want to sell myself for one hundred dollars. He buys me and I soon squander the one hundred dollars. Now I am his property, his slave; I shall never earn any wages and shall never be able to buy my freedom. No other slave can help me, for he is just in the same condition as I myself am. If I am to be free, a free man who has the money must pay for my liberty. This is exactly the condition in which all men were before Our Lord redeemed them. Adam sold himself and all his children to the devil by committing sin. He and they therefore became slaves. They could not earn any spiritual wages, that is, grace of God to purchase their liberty; and as all men were slaves one could not help another in this matter. Then Our Lord Himself came and purchased our freedom. He bought us back again, and the price He paid was His own life and blood given up upon the cross. In His goodness, He did more than redeem us; He gave us also the means of redeeming ourselves in case we should ever have the misfortune of falling

again into the slavery of the devil—into sin. He left us the Sacrament of Penance to which we can go as to a bank, and draw out enough of Our Lord's grace—merited for us and deposited in the power of His Church—to purchase our redemption from sin.

60 Q. Did God abandon man after he fell into sin?

A. God did not abandon man after he fell into sin, but promised him a Redeemer, who was to satisfy for man's sin and reopen to him the gates of heaven.

“Abandon” means to leave to one's self. Adam and his posterity were slaves, but God took pity on them. He did not leave them to themselves, but promised to help them.

“Gates of heaven.” Heaven has no gates, because it is not built of material—of stone, or iron, or wood. It is only our way of speaking; just as we say “hand of God,” although He has no hands. Heaven is the magnificent home God has prepared for us, and its gates are His power by which He keeps us out or lets us in as He pleases. Our Lord, therefore, obtained admittance for us.

61 Q. Who is the Redeemer?

A. Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the Redeemer of mankind.

62 Q. What do you believe of Jesus Christ?

A. I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the second Person of the Blessed Trinity, true God and true man.

“True God.” He was true God equal to His Father from all eternity. He became man when He came upon the earth about 2000 years ago, and was born on Christmas day. Now He is in heaven as God and man. Therefore, He was God always, but man only from the time of His incarnation.

\* 63 Q. Why is Jesus Christ true God?

A. Jesus Christ is true God because He is the true and only Son of God the Father.

God the Father, first Person of the Blessed Trinity, is His real Father, and St. Joseph was His foster-father, selected by the Heavenly Father to take care of Our Lord and watch over Him while on earth. A foster-father is not the same as a step-father. A step-father is a second father that one gets when his real father dies. A foster-father is one who takes a person, whether a relative or a stranger, and adopts him as his son. It was a very great honor for St. Joseph to be selected from among all men to take care of the Son of God; to carry in his arms the great One of whom the prophets spoke; the One for whom the whole world longed during so many thousand years; so that next to our Blessed Mother St. Joseph deserves our greatest honor.

\* 64 Q. Why is Jesus Christ true man?

A. Jesus Christ is true man because He is the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and has a body and soul like ours.

He has all that we have by nature, but not the things we have acquired; such as deformities, imperfections, and the like. Everything in Our Lord was perfect. Above all, He had no sin of any kind, nor even inclination to sin. He could be hungry, as He was when He fasted forty days in the desert (Matt. iv. 2). He was thirsty, as He said on the cross (John xix, 28). He could be wearied; as we read in the Holy Scripture (John iv. 6) that He sat down by a well to rest, while His disciples went into the city to buy food. All these sufferings come from our very nature. We say a thing comes from our very nature when everybody has it. Now, every one in the world may at times be hungry, thirsty, or tired; but everybody in the world need not have a toothache or headache, because such things are not common to human nature, but due to some defect in our body; and such defects Our Lord did not have, because He was a perfect man. Therefore, Our Lord had a body like ours, not as it usually is with defects, but as it should be, perfect in all things that belong to its nature, as Adam's was before he sinned,

\* 65 Q. How many natures are there in Jesus Christ?

A. In Jesus Christ there are two natures; the nature of God and the nature of man.

He was perfect God and perfect man. His human nature was under the full power of His divine nature, and could not do anything contrary to His divine will. You cannot understand how there can be two natures and two wills in one person, because it is another of the great mysteries; but you must believe it, just as you believe there are three Persons in one God, though you do not understand it. Those who learn theology and study a great deal may understand it better than you, but never fully. It will be enough, therefore, for you to remember and believe that there are two natures—the divine nature and the human nature—in the one person of Our Lord.

\* 66 Q. Is Jesus Christ more than one person?

A. No, Jesus Christ is but one Divine Person.

“But one,” so that the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, the Son of God, the Messiah, Christ, Jesus, Our Lord, Our Saviour, Our Redeemer, etc., are all names for the one person; and, besides these, there are many other names given to Our Lord in the Holy Scripture, both in the Old and the New Testament.

\* 67 Q. Was Jesus Christ always God?

A. Jesus Christ was always God, as He is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, equal to His Father from all eternity.

\* 68 Q. Was Jesus Christ always man?

A. Jesus Christ was not always man, but became man at the time of His Incarnation.

69 Q. What do you mean by the Incarnation?

A. By the Incarnation I mean that the Son of God was made man.

70 Q. How was the Son of God made man?

A. The Son of God was conceived and made man by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

\* 71 Q. Is the Blessed Virgin Mary truly the Mother of God?

A. The Blessed Virgin Mary is truly the Mother of God, because the same Divine Person who is the Son of God is also the Son of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

\* 72 Q. Did the Son of God become man immediately after the sin of our first parents?

A. The Son of God did not become man immediately after the sin of our first parents, but He was promised to them as a Redeemer.

God did not say to Adam when He would send the Redeemer, and so the Redeemer did not come for about 4000 years after He was first promised. God permitted this long time to elapse in order that mankind might feel and know how great an evil sin is, and what misery it brought upon the world. During these 4000 years men were becoming gradually worse. At one time—about 1600 years after Adam's sin—they became so bad that God destroyed by a deluge, or great flood of water, all persons and living things upon the earth, except Noe, his wife, his three sons and their wives, and the animals they had in the ark with them (Genesis vi.). Let me now give you more particulars about this terrible punishment. After God determined to destroy all living things on account of the wickedness of men, He told Noe, who was a good man, to build a great ark, or ship, for himself and his family, and for some of all the living creatures upon the earth (Genesis vii.). When the ark was ready, Noe and his family went into it, and the animals that were to be saved came by God's power, and two by two were taken into the ark. Besides the two of each kind of animals, Noe was required to take with him five more of each kind of clean animals. Clean animals were certain animals which, according to God's law, could be offered in sacrifice or eaten; they were such animals as the ox, the sheep, the goat, etc. Therefore, seven of each of the clean animals, and two of each of the other kinds. Why did He have seven clean animals? Two were to be set free upon the dry earth with the other animals, and

the other five were for food or sacrifice. Noe spent a hundred years in making the ark. At that time men lived much longer than they do now. Adam lived over 900 years and Mathusala, the oldest man, lived to be 969 years old. There are many reasons why men live a shorter time now than then. When the door of the ark was closed, God sent a great rain that lasted for forty days and forty nights. All the springs of water broke forth, and all the rivers and lakes overflowed their banks. Men ran here and there to high places, while the water rose higher and higher till it covered the tops of the mountains, and all not in the ark were drowned. The big ark floated about for about a year; for although it stopped raining after forty days, just think of the quantity of water that must have fallen! Think of the rain that would fall during the whole of Lent from Ash Wednesday to Easter Sunday—forty days. It took a long time, therefore, for the waters to go down and finally disappear. When the waters began to go down, Noe, wishing to know if any land was as yet above the water, opened the little window, and sent out a raven or crow over the waters. The raven did not come back, because it is a bird that eats flesh, and it found plenty of dead bodies to feed upon. Then Noe sent out a dove, and the dove came back with the bough of an olive tree in its mouth. From this Noe knew that the earth was becoming dry again. After some days, the ark rested on the top of a mountain named Ararat. When all the waters had dried up, Noe and his family and all the animals passed out of the ark. He offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and he and his family settled once more upon the earth. For a while, the descendants of Noe were good, but when they became numerous they soon forgot the deluge and its punishments, and became very wicked. Many forgot the true God altogether, and began to worship the sun, moon, and stars. Some worshipped animals, and others idols of wood or stone. They offered up human victims and committed all kinds of sins most displeasing to God. Many were in slavery; masters were cruel; and things were becoming daily worse, till just before the coming of Our Lord the world was in a terrible condition of misery

and sin. The law-makers tried to remedy these evils by their laws, and the teachers and professors by their teaching; but all was of no avail. God Himself must save the world.

God gave many promises of the Redeemer. The first one was given in the garden to our first parents. God said (Genesis iii. 15) to the serpent: I will put enmities, that is hatred, between thee and the woman; that is, between the devil and the Blessed Virgin—whom the holy writers call the second Eve; because as the first Eve caused our fall, the second Eve helped us to rise again. I will put also a great hatred between the devil and your Redeemer. The next promise of the Redeemer was made to Abraham (Genesis xv). Another was made to Isaac, and another to Jacob; and later these promises were frequently renewed through the prophets; so that during the four thousand years God encouraged the good people, by promising from time to time the Redeemer.

Some of the prophets foretold to what family He would belong, and when He would be born, and when and what He would suffer, and how He would die. They also foretold signs or things that would come to pass just before the advent or coming of the Messiah (Genesis xlix. 10); so that when the people saw these things coming to pass, they could know that the time of the Messiah was at hand. Thus when Our Lord came the whole world was waiting and looking for the promised Redeemer, because the signs foretold had appeared or were taking place. But the majority did not recognize Our Lord when He came, on account of the quiet, humble, and poor way in which He came. They were expecting to see the Redeemer come as a great and powerful king, with mighty armies conquering the world; and in this they were mistaken. If they had studied the Holy Scriptures they would have learned how He was to come—poor and humble.

**\* 73 Q.** How could they be saved who lived before the Son of God became man?

**A.** They who lived before the Son of God became man could be saved by believing in the Redeemer to come, and by keeping the commandments.

We have seen that God promised the Redeemer during four thousand years. Now, those who believed these promises and kept all God's commandments, and observed all His laws as they knew them, could be saved. They could not, it is true, enter into heaven after their death, but they could wait in Limbo without suffering till Our Lord opened heaven for them. They were saved only through the merits of Our Lord. And how could this be when Our Lord was not yet born? Do you know what a promissory note is? It is this. When a man is not able to pay his debts just now but will be able afterwards, he gives those to whom he owes the money a promissory note, that is, a written promise that he will pay at a certain time. Now, those who died before Our Lord was born had the Holy Scriptures promising that Christ would pay for them and for their sins when He would come. So God saved them on account of this promise and kept them free from suffering till Our Lord came. If any died when they were little infants, their parents answered for them as godfathers and godmothers do now for infants at baptism.

**74 Q.** On what day was the Son of God conceived and made man?

**A.** The Son of God was conceived and made man on **Annunciation day**—the day on which the Angel Gabriel announced to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she was to be the Mother of God.

“**Annunciation day**” is the 25th of March. You can easily remember that feast. Everybody knows that St. Patrick's day is on the 17th of March, and therefore eight days after it comes Annunciation day. There is another feast coming in between them, the feast of St. Joseph, on the 19th of March. Therefore it is easy to remember these three feasts coming all in March and almost together. Annunciation is the name given to that day after the angel came, but it was not called so before. Annunciation means to tell or make known, and this is the day the angel made known to the Blessed Virgin that she was selected for the high office of Mother of God. The Blessed Virgin was expecting the Messiah, and was probably praying for His speedy arrival, as were the rest of her



people, when suddenly the angel came and said: Hail, full of grace. (See Hail Mary Expl.)

75 Q. On what day was Christ born?

A. Christ was born on Christmas day in a stable at Bethlehem, nearly nineteen hundred years ago.

“Christmas day” is the 25th of December, one week before the New Year. It is called Christmas day since the time Our Lord was born, nearly nineteen hundred years ago. “In a stable at Bethlehem.” The story of Our Lord’s birth is in every way a very sad one. The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph lived in Palestine—called also the Holy Land since Our Lord lived there. Palestine was the country where God’s people, the Jews, lived, and at the time we are speaking of it was under the power of the Roman Emperor, who had his soldiers and governor there. He wished to find out how many people were there, and so he ordered a census or count of the people to be made (Luke ii.). We take the census very differently now from what they did then. We in the United States, by order of the government, send men around from house to house to write down the names; but in Palestine, when they wanted the number of the people, every one, no matter where he lived, had to go to the city or town where his forefathers had lived and there register his name with all the others who belonged to the same tribe or family. Now, the forefathers of St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin belonged to the little town of Bethlehem (Luke ii.); so they had to leave Nazareth where they were then living and go to Bethlehem. This was shortly before Christmas. When they got to Bethlehem, they found the place crowded with people who also came to enrol their names. They went to the inn or hotel to seek for lodging for the night. The hotels there were not like ours. They were simply large buildings with small rooms and no furniture; they were called caravansaries. A man was in charge of the building, and by paying him something persons were allowed the use of a room. No food was sold there, so travellers had to do their cooking at home and bring whatever they needed with them. When the Blessed Virgin

and St. Joseph went to the inn they found all the rooms occupied. Then they went up and down the streets looking for some house where they might stay. Nobody would take them in, because St. Joseph was old and poor and had no money, or little, to give. They were refused at every door, a very sad thing indeed. What were they to do? It was growing dark, and the lights most likely were being lighted here and there in the houses. The old towns were not built as ours are, with houses on the outskirts growing fewer as we advance into the country. They were surrounded by great walls to keep out their enemies. There were several large gates in these walls, through which the people entered or left the city. At night these gates were closed and guarded. Nearly all the people lived within the walls and the country was lonely and almost deserted. Only shepherds were to be found in the country, and they lived in tents, which they carried about from place to place, as soldiers do in time of war. Such was the country about Bethlehem. As St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin could not find any place to stay in the town they were forced to go into the country. They must have suffered also from fear because the country was infested with wolves and wild dogs, so fierce that they sometimes came into the towns and attacked the people in the streets. Besides, many robbers were wandering about waiting for victims. Palestine is a hilly country and there were on the sides of some of the hills large caves in which these robbers frequently took refuge or divided their spoils. Because the shepherds at times, especially in bad weather, brought their animals into these caves, they are often called stables. The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph found, we are told, one of these cold, dark places, went into it for the night, and there Our Lord was born.

It was the month of December and must have been quite cold, so the little Infant Jesus must have suffered greatly from the cold. If it had been a stable such as we see in our days it would have been bad enough; but think of this cold, dark, miserable cave, and yet it was Our Lord, the King of heaven and earth, who was born there. There are few people so poor that they have to live in a cave. What wonderful

numility, then, on the part of Our Lord. He could have been born, if He wished, in the grandest palace man could construct and have had thousands of angels to bring Him whatever He needed, for they are His servants in heaven. But Our Lord became so humble to teach us. What impression should this make on those who are too fond of dress and too vain about their homes.

It was foretold by the prophets that Our Lord would be born in Bethlehem, and when the time was near at hand His parents were living in Nazareth; then the Roman Emperor gave the decree that the census be taken, which obliged Our Lord's parents to go to Bethlehem, and thus Our Lord was born there, and the words of the prophets fulfilled. See how God moves the whole world, if necessary, to accomplish what He desires. But how naturally He does everything. Nobody knew—not even the Roman Emperor himself—that he was giving an edict to fulfil the prophecies and the promises of God. So, at times, people do many things to carry out the designs of God, though they know it not. We should never complain therefore or do unwillingly whatever work we have to perform, because it may be something that God wishes us to do for some very special end. If you look back upon your lives, you can see that God guided and directed you upon many occasions.

**\* 76 Q. How long did Christ live on earth?**

**A. Christ lived on earth about thirty-three years, and led a most holy life in poverty and suffering.**

The life of Our Lord was spent in the following manner. At the time Our Lord was born in Bethlehem wise men or kings, called Maji, came from the East—perhaps from Persia or Arabia—to adore Him. They saw a strange star, and leaving their own country came to Palestine. When they came as far as Jerusalem, they went to King Herod and asked him where the young King was born. Herod was troubled, for he was afraid the new King would deprive him of his throne. He called together all the priests and asked them about this royal child. They told him and the Maji that, according to

the prophecies, the Saviour should be born in Bethlehem. The Wise Men saw the star once more, and followed it to Bethlehem, where it stood over the stable in which Our Lord lay. They entered, and adored the Infant Jesus, and offered Him presents. Now, Herod told them to come back after they had found the new-born King, and tell him where He was, that he too might go and adore Him. But such was not Herod's real intention. He wished not to adore but to kill Him. See, then, how the wicked pretend at times to do good, that they may deceive us and lead us astray. Be always on your guard against a person if you suspect his goodness. But Herod could not deceive God, Who, knowing his heart, warned the Wise Men not to return to Herod, but to go back to their own country by another way, which they did. We celebrate the day on which the Wise Men adored the Infant Jesus on the feast of the Epiphany (six days after New Year's day). When the Maji did not return, Herod knew that they had avoided him. He was very angry indeed, and in order to be sure of killing the poor little infant Jesus, he had all the infants or children in or near Bethlehem who were not over two years old put to death. We honor these first little martyrs who suffered for Christ on the feast of Holy Innocents—three days after Christmas.

After the departure of the Wise Men, God sent an angel to St. Joseph warning him of Herod's evil designs, and telling him to fly with Jesus and Mary into Egypt. Then St. Joseph, with the Blessed Virgin and the Infant, set out for Egypt. St. Joseph did not ask the angel how long he would have to stay there; nor did he ask to be allowed to wait till morning. He obeyed promptly; he arose in the night, and started at once. What an example of obedience for us! They must have had many hardships on the way. They must have suffered much from hunger, cold, and fear. They dare not go on the best roads, for we may well suppose that Herod had his spies out watching for any that might escape. So they went by the roughest roads and longest way. In Egypt they were among strangers, and how could a poor old carpenter like St. Joseph find enough work there! The Holy Family must at

times have suffered greatly from want. They remained in Egypt for some time. Afterwards, when Herod died, they returned to Nazareth (Matt. ii.).

At twelve years of age Our Lord went to the Temple of Jerusalem to offer sacrifice with His parents (Luke ii. 42). He afterwards returned to Nazareth, and then for eighteen years—called His hidden life—we do not hear anything of Him. Most likely He worked in the carpenter shop with His foster-father, St. Joseph.

At the age of thirty (Luke iii. 23), Our Lord began His public life ; that is, His preaching, miracles, etc. His public life lasted a little over three years, and then He was put to death on the cross.

**\* 77 Q. Why did Christ live so long on earth ?**

**A. Christ lived so long on earth to show us the way to heaven by His teaching and example.**

Christ went through all the stages of life that each might have an example. He was an infant; then a child; then a young man, and finally a man. He did not become an old man to set an example to the old, because if men follow His example in their youth and manhood they will be good in old age. Youth is the all-important time to learn. If you want a tree to grow straight, you must keep it straight while it is only a little twig. You cannot straighten an old oak-tree that has grown up crooked. So you must be taught to do right in your youth, that you may do the same when old. Of the hidden or private life of Our Lord we, as I have said, know nothing, except that He was obedient to His parents; for He wished to give an example also to those holy persons who lead a life hidden from the world. Some books have given stories about what Our Lord did in school, etc., but these stories are not true. The only true things we know of Our Lord are those told in the Holy Scripture, or handed down to us by the Church in her teachings, or those certainly revealed to God's saints. Remember, then, that others are taught best by example, and be careful of the example you give.