

The Nativity of the Lord

Christmas Day

Monday 25 December 2017

“Glory to God in the Highest and peace on earth among men of good will.” Lk. 2:14

The Servant of God Dom Prosper Gueranger in his book, *The Liturgical Life Vol. 2* calls out to us from the 19th Century with the real meaning of Christmas revealed in the three Masses of Christmas Day, Midnight Mass, Aurora (Dawn) Mass and Mass in the Day: **“It is now time to offer the Great Sacrifice, and to call down Emanuel (“God with us”) from heaven: he alone can fully pay the debt of gratitude which mankind owes to the Eternal Father. He will intercede for us on the Altar, as he did in his Crib. We will approach him with love, and he will give himself to us.**

“But such is the greatness of today’s Mystery, that the Church is not satisfied with only once offering up the Holy Sacrifice. The long-expected and precious Gift deserves an unusual welcome. God the *Father* has given his Son to us; and it is by the operation of the *Holy Ghost* that the grant Portent is produced; let there be, then to the ever Blessed Three, the homage of a triple Sacrifice!

“Besides, this Jesus, who is born tonight, is born thrice. He is born of the Blessed Virgin, in the stable of Bethlehem; he is born by grace, in the hearts of the Shepherds, who are the first fruits of the Christian Church; and he is born eternally from the Bosom of the Father, *in the brightness of the Saints*; to the triple Birth, therefore, let there be the homage of a triple sacrifice.

“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light” Is. 9:2

“The first Mass honours the Birth according to the Flesh, which, like the other two, is an effusion of the Divine Light. The hour is come: *‘The people that walked in darkness have seen a great Light; Light is risen to them that dwelt in the region of the shadow of death.’* Is. 9:2 Outside the holy place, where we are now by reason of the sins of men, who either sleep in the forgetfulness of God, or wake to the commission of crime. At Bethlehem, round the Stable, and in the City, all is deep darkness, and the inhabitants, who would not find room for the

Divine Babe, are sleeping heavily: will they awaken when the Angels begin to sing?

“Midnight comes. The Holy Virgin has been longing for this happy moment. Her heart is suddenly overwhelmed with a delight which is new even to her. She falls into an ecstasy of love. As her Child will one day, in his almighty power, rise through the unmoved barrier of his Sepulchre; so now, as a sunbeam gleaming through purest crystal, he is born, and lies on the ground before her. With arms outstretched to embrace her, and smiling upon her: this is her first sight of her Son, who is Son also of the Eternal Father! She adores—takes him into her arms—presses him to her heart—swathes his infant limbs—and lays him down in the manger. Her faithful Joseph unites his adoration with hers; and so, too, do the Angels in heaven, for the Royal Psalmist had sung this prophecy of their adoring him on his entrance into the world. (cf. Ps. 96:7; Heb. 1:6). Heaven opens over this spot of earth, which men call a Stable; and from it there mount to the Throne of the Eternal Father the first prayer, the first tear, the first sob of this Son, our Jesus, who thus begins the world’s salvation.” Gueranger, p. 166-168.

“This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!” Lk. 2:11

In the Epistle (Titus 3:4,7) and Gospel (Luke 2:15-20) in the Second Mass at Dawn (Aurora) Dom Gueranger comments on the birth of grace first in the hearts of the Shepherds and then in the hearts of all men who believe in Jesus Christ: **“The Sun which has appeared on our earth is God our Saviour, full of tenderest mercy. We were far off from God, and were sitting in the shades of death; the rays of divine Light had to reach down to us, in the deep abyss of our sins; and now, praise be to this Infinite Mercy! we are set free, and with our freedom have received regeneration, justification and heirship to eternal life. Who shall henceforth separate us from the love of the Infant Jesus? Is it possible that we ourselves can ever frustrate the designs of that love, by rendering all that it has done for us useless, and becoming once more the slaves of darkness and death? May God forbid it! And grant us grace to maintain our hope of everlasting life, which the Mystery of our Redemption has purchased for us.**

“Let us imitate the earnestness of the Shepherds in hastening to Jesus. No sooner do they hear the Angel’s words, than they start for

the holy Stable in Bethlehem. Once in the presence of the Divine Infant, they know him by the sign (*'Child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger,'* Lk. 2:12) that had been given them by the Angel; and Jesus is born in their souls by his grace. These happy men delight now in their poverty, for they find that he too is poor. They feel that they are united to him forever, and their whole lives shall testify to the change that this December Night has worked in them. They do not keep the great event to themselves; they tell everyone about the Babe of Bethlehem, they become his Apostles, and their burning words fill their listeners with astonishment. Like them, let us glorify the great God, who has set it in the very centre of our hearts by uniting us to himself. Let us often think of the Mysteries of this glorious night, after the example of Mary, who keeps unceasingly in her most pure Heart the wonderful things that God has been accomplishing by her and in her." Gueranger, p. 191-3.

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Jn. 1: 14

"The mystery which the Church honours in this Third Mass is the eternal generation or Birth of the Son of God in the Bosom of the Father. At midnight she celebrated the God-Man, born in the Stable from the Womb of the glorious Virgin Mary; at the Aurora (dawn) this same Divine infant, born in the souls of the Shepherds; and there still remains for her adoration and praise a Birth more wonderful than these other two; a Birth, which dazzles the eyes of Angels by its splendour, and bears its eternal witness to the inward fruitfulness of God. The Son of Mary is also the Son of God; and a grand duty of today is that we hymn aloud the glory of this ineffable Generation, which makes him consubstantial to his Father, God of God, Light of Light. Let us then, raise up our thoughts even to the eternal Word, who *'was in the beginning with God, and was himself God,'* (Jn. 1:1) for he is the *'brightness of his Father's glory, and the figure of his substance.'*" (Jn. 1:3) Gueranger, p. 201-2

***... the brightness of His glory, and the figure of His substance.'* Heb. 1:1-3**

In this Mass of the Day, Dom Gueranger comments on the relationship of the Epistle (Hebrews 1:1-12) and Gospel (John 1:1-14) to the

eternal generation of the Son of God. "The great Apostle, in this magnificent opening of his Epistle to his former brethren of the Synagogue, lays great stress on the Eternal Generation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Whilst our eyes are fixed on the sweet Infant in his Crib, St. Paul bids us raise our thoughts up to that infinite Light, from the midst of which the Eternal Father thus speaks to this Child of Mary: *'Thou art my Son; today have I begotten thee'*: this today is the Day of Eternity, a Day which neither morning nor evening, neither rising nor setting. If the Human Nature which he has vouchsafed to assume places him below Angels; he is infinitely above them by his own essence, whereby he is the Son of God. He is God, he is Lord, and no change can come upon him. He may be wrapped in swaddling-bands or nailed to a Cross, or put to a most ignominious death; all this is only in his human nature; in his Divinity he remains impassable (as to suffering) and immortal, for he was born of the Father from all eternity....

"O Eternal Son of God! In presence of the Crib, where for the love of us thou vouchsafest this day to show thyself to thy creatures, we confess thy eternity, thy omnipotence, thy divinity, and most profoundly do we adore thee. Thou wast in the beginning; thou wast in God; and thyself wast God. Everything was made by thee, and we are the work of thy hands. O Light infinite and eternal! O Sun of Justice! Enlighten us, for we are but darkness. Too long have we loved our darkness, and thee we have not comprehended; forgive us our blindness and our errors. Thou hast been long knocking at the door of our hearts, and we have refused to let thee in. Today, thanks to the wonderful ways of thy love, we have received thee: for who could refuse to receive thee, sweet gentle Infant Jesus! But leave us not; abide with us and perfect the New Birth which thou hast begun in us. We wish henceforth to be neither of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, by thee and in thee. Thou hast been made Flesh, O Word Eternal! In order that we may become sons of God. We beseech thee, support our weak human nature, and fit us for this our sublime destiny. Thou art born of God thy Father; thou art born of Mary, thou art born in our hearts; thrice glorified be thou for this thy triple Birth, O Jesus! so merciful in thy Divinity, and so divine in thy self-sought humiliations." Gueranger p. 206-7

Christmas Novena:

Christmas Novena of Masses from Christmas Day 25th December 2017 to 2 January 2018 This Novena of Masses will be for all of the benefactors, friends and relatives of the Franciscan Friars and Sisters of St. Mary's Church in Gosport and St. Columba's Church in Bridge Mary. Thank you for all of your kind donations of alms and providence for us here in St. Mary's and St. Columba's

Christmas of Another Year

The Twelve Days of Christmas was written to help young Catholics remember the tenets of their faith through symbols. Below are the hidden meanings.

- 1. The Partridge in the Pear Tree - the one and only Son of God, Our Lord Jesus Christ**
- 2. Two Turtle Doves - the Old and New Testaments**
- 3. Three French Hens - the Theological Virtues, Faith, Hope and Love**
- 4. Four Calling Birds – the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John**
- 5. Five Golden Rings - the Torah, the first five books of the Old Testament**
- 6. Six Geese a-Laying - the six days of creation.**
- 7. Seven Swans a-Swimming - the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: Wisdom, Understanding, Right Judgment, Knowledge, Courage, Reverence, Wonder & Awe**
- 8. Eight Maids a-Milking - the eight beatitudes.**

- 9. Nine Ladies Dancing - the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self- Control. Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness.**
- 10. Ten Lords a-Leaping - the Ten Commandments.**
- 11. Eleven Pipers Piping - the eleven faithful Apostles.**
- 12. Twelve Drummers Drumming - the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed**