

25 March: The Annunciation

Summary of the Morrow's Meditation

We will consider, in the mystery of the Incarnation: first, a mystery of love; second, a mystery of humility. We will then make the resolution: first, to renew our love of the Word Incarnate, and of the devotion to the angelus, which is the pious memorial of it; second, to practise humility, whether in our language, by keeping silence respecting all which might tend to our praise, and suffering in silence all that wounds us; whether it be as regards our manners, our clothes, or the whole of our exterior. Our spiritual nosegay shall be the words which St John brought down to us from heaven: "*The Word was made flesh*" (John 1:14).

Meditation for the Morning

Let us transport ourselves in spirit to the venerable oratory where Mary, at prayer, received the visit of the archangel Gabriel. To the enunciation of the heavenly will Mary replies by a humble compliance: "*Be it done to me according to thy word.*" Oh, how efficacious is this fiat! It is a word of submission and obedience, but it is more powerful than the word of command by which the world was created; for it gave being to the Creator Himself, and reconciled heaven with earth. Hardly had she uttered it than by the operation of the Holy Ghost the Eternal Word was incarnated in the womb of Mary, and Mary became the Mother of God. Let us prostrate ourselves in presence of these lofty mysteries; let us adore, let us admire, let us love.

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION IS A MYSTERY OF LOVE

In order to penetrate ourselves as we ought with this truth, let us first consider who He is who comes from heaven to save us. God does not send one of His angels to succour us; He comes Himself in person; Himself, the true Son of God, the true God, the Life Eternal, the beginning and the end of all things; Himself, the splendour of the Father, the image of His substance, in whom in habits the plenitude of the Divinity, and who does no injury to God, His Father, in saying that He is equal and consubstantial to Him. He comes, and how? By taking all that is vilest in us, and that merits only hatred and confusion; by making Himself flesh and clay like us; that is to say, the Omnipotent makes Himself weak, the Eternal makes Himself mortal, the Ancient of days takes a commencement, the Immense renders itself little, a God makes Himself man. Creation is doubtless a great work of love; the preservation of our being, which is, as it were, a creation of every moment, is not less so; but how much more is love revealed in the Incarnation! In order to create the world, it only cost God a single word; in order to preserve it, an act of His will; but here He descends from the heights of His eternal throne down to the lowest stage of this inferior world, there where He finds the most humiliation and the greatest suffering. O incomprehensible love! He comes thus; and for whom? For man, that being so little, that creature so weak, who crawls in this lower world at an infinite distance from His throne; for man, fallen from the dignity of his nature, poor, naked, despoiled, so that he is ashamed of himself (Gen. III:10); for man, who had made himself His enemy; for this worthless rebel, him whom justice demanded to strike, when mercy cast itself before him in order to ward off the blows; for man, whose insensibility, ingratitude, and relapses He foresaw, together with the malice which made him tread under

foot even the blood of his God, the obstinacy, carried to excess, which makes him lose his soul, in spite of all the means provided for his salvation. He comes; and at what a time? When this whole world, disfigured by hideous crimes, corruptions, and errors, was rolling itself in the mire of all the vices, and was adoring deified passions, God the Father loved this hideous world so incomparably as to give it His only Son (John III:16). God the Son loved it so incomparably as to become flesh for it. He might have left us all under the anathema of eternal damnation, like the rebel angels; but, O ineffable love! when we were His enemies, and when He owed us nothing but vengeance, He came to us from pure goodness and wholly gratuitous mercy (Eph. II:4). And what did He bring with Him? He brought us all blessings and graces, for Jesus Christ is all such (Coloss. III:14). By the Incarnation human nature is raised above the angels, since by it we may say that man is God and God is man. By the Incarnation we pass from the slavery of the devil to the rank of children of God, brothers of a God, heirs of heaven, co-heirs with Jesus Christ of an eternal kingdom. By the Incarnation our sins are pardoned, a single act of contrition introduces us into heaven, all our prayers and our good works acquire infinite value. Lastly, by the Incarnation we have light to know the truth, the highest examples to lead us to what is good, grace to enable us to act, strength to sustain us. Are not these abysses of love? And what soul, even though it were made of iron, would not be touched? (St Bernard)

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION IS A MYSTERY OF HUMILITY

First of all, what humility in Mary! The angel calls her "*full of grace*"; and she esteems herself nothing more than a poor, indigent person, who possesses nothing but what she has received from the Lord. The angel calls her "*blessed among women*"; and she looks upon herself as a woman of no account, whom God has raised through pure goodness. Second, the angel says to her, "*Thou hast found grace before God*"; and she replies: It is because He has had regard to my lowliness. Lastly, the angel tells her: "*Thou art the mother of God*"; and she replies: I am His servant. Such great humility made her become at that very moment, says St Bernard, the mother of God. Oh, how true it is, then, that the waters of grace descend into humble souls like the rains of heaven into deep valleys, and that as precious metals are found hidden in the bowels of the earth, and pearls in the depths of the sea, so it is that in humble souls God finds the loftiest virtues. Humility so greatly pleases God that, in coming upon earth, He made it His own special virtue. In order to understand it, let us rise above the highest heavens to that sublime solitude where the infinite excellence of His Being places Him at an incommensurable distance from all created beings. This will be the starting-point which will enable us to measure the humility of the Incarnate Word. He descends first to the dazzling order of the seraphim, which, for a God, is already an immense descent; it is to traverse the infinite; He still descends, and descends until He arrives at our nature. It is in our clay He wills His majesty to be. But in this clay there are different degrees. There is the clay which shines beneath the splendour of gold and of purple. It is doubtless a false splendour, but yet it shines; the Word of God will have none of it. He, therefore, descends yet lower; first, He finds a stable, then the dwelling of an artisan; He finds a poor woman, who gains her bread by labour. He descends even lower than this, and He hides Himself in her womb; He chooses this obscure person to be His first dwelling upon earth. O abyss of humility! Who, after this, would desire esteem and glory? who

would wish to appear in public, to attract notice, to make himself applauded? Who would not love a hidden life?

Resolutions and spiritual nosegay as above.