

## CHRISTMAS AND THE EUCHARIST

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A child is born to us. CHRISTMAS is a lovely feast. We always greet it with joy. Our love gives it a new life, and the Eucharist is its continuation. Bethlehem and the Cenacle are inseparably linked together; they complete each other. Let us study the relations that exist between the two.

The Eucharist was sown at Bethlehem. What is the Eucharist but “the wheat of the elect and the living bread?” Now, wheat must be sown. It must fall into the soil, and spring up, and ripen, and be harvested, and be ground before it can be made into good bread.

When He was born on the straw of the stable, the Word was preparing His Eucharist, which He considered the complement of all His other mysteries. He was coming to be united to man. During His life, He would establish with man a union of grace, a union of examples and of merit; but only in the Eucharist would He consummate the most perfect union of which man is capable here below. If we want to understand the divine plan, we must not lose sight of the divine idea, of the purpose our Lord had in mind: a union of grace through the mysteries of His life and death; a physical and personal union through the Eucharist. Both unions were to prepare the consummation of union in glory. Just as a traveler never loses sight of the goal of his journey and directs every step towards it, so throughout His whole life our Lord secretly prepared the Eucharist and brought it ever nearer. This heavenly wheat was as it was sown at Bethlehem the “House of bread”. See the wheat on the straw. Trodden down and crushed, this straw represents poor humanity. Of itself it is barren. But Jesus will lift it into position in Himself, will restore it to life, and will make it fruitful. Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground . . .

This divine grain has been sown. The tears of Jesus are the moisture that will make it grow into beautiful wheat. Bethlehem is built on a hill facing Jerusalem. When this ear of wheat has ripened, it shall lean towards Calvary where it shall be ground and shall be set on the fire of suffering to become a living bread.

The relations between our Savior’s birth at Bethlehem and the Eucharist considered as Sacrament exist also between our Savior's birth and the Eucharist considered as Sacrifice. It was truly a lambkin that was born at Bethlehem. Jesus was born like a lamb in a stable, and like a lamb knew no one but His mother. He was already offering Himself for the sacrifice; it was His first cry: Father, thou no longer desire the sacrifices and oblations of the Law, but a body has Thou given Me. Here I am. Jesus needed that body in order to be immolated; He offered it to His Father. This little Lamb was to grow up close to its Mother; in forty days she would learn the secret of its immolation. She would feed it with her pure and virginal milk, and would preserve it for the day of sacrifice.



This characteristic of victim was so evident in our Lord that when Saint John the Baptist saw Him in the early days of His public life, he had no other name for Him than that of “Lamb of God”. Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sin of the world.

The sacrifice begun at Bethlehem is consummated on the altar at Holy Mass. Oh! How touching is the Midnight Mass in the Christian world! We greet it long beforehand and are always glad to see it come around again. What is it that gives to our feast of Christmas its charm and that pours joy into our carols and rapture into our hearts, if not that on the altar Jesus is really born again, although in a different state? Do not our carols and our homages go straight to His very Person? The object of our festive celebration as of our love present. We really go to Bethlehem and we find there, not a memory, not a picture, but the divine Infant Himself. And see how the Eucharist began at Bethlehem. He was, even then, the Emmanuel, “God with us,” Who was come to dwell among His people. On the first Christmas Day, He began to live in our midst; the Eucharist perpetuates His presence. At Bethlehem, the Word was made flesh; in the Sacrament He is made bread in order to give us His flesh without stirring any feeling of repugnance in us.

At Bethlehem He also began practicing the virtues of His sacramental state. He concealed His divinity in order to familiarize man with God. He veiled His divine glory as a first step to the veiling of His humanity. He bound His power in the weakness of a child’s body; later He would bind it beneath the Sacred species. He was poor; He stripped Himself of every possession; He, the Creator and Sovereign Master of all things. The stable was not His own; charity let Him have the use of it. He lived with His Mother on the offerings of the shepherds and the gifts of the Magi; later in the Eucharist, He would ask man for a shelter for Himself, the matter for His Sacrament, vestments for His priest and His altar. This is how Bethlehem heralds the Eucharist. We even find there the inauguration of Eucharistic worship in its chief form, adoration.

Mary and Joseph were the first adorers of the Word Incarnate. They believed firmly; their faith was their virtue: Blessed are you that has believed. They adored Him by the virtue of their faith. The shepherds and the Magi also adored Him in union with Mary and Joseph. Mary was entirely devoted to the service of Her Son. She was all intent on His service, anticipating His least wishes to satisfy them. The shepherds offered their plain and simple presents, and the Magi their magnificent gifts. They adored Him by the homage of their gifts.

The Eucharist also is the meeting place for persons of all conditions; it is the center of the Catholic world. It is the object of that twofold worship of adoration: the interior adoration of faith and love and the exterior adoration through the magnificence of gifts, of churches, and of the thrones on which the divine Host will be posed.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

Fr. Zaldy, Fr. Victor and the Parish Staff

