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MESSAGE OF POPE LEO XIII TO THE "N.Z. TABLET."

Pergant Directores et Scriptores New Zealand Tablet, Apostolica Benedictione confortati, Religionis et Justitiae causam promovere per vias Veritatis et Pacis.

LEO XIII, P.M.

Die 4 Aprilis, 1900.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 23, 1925.

THE INCARNATION

IN one of his sermons Bossuet tells us that the Son of God has loved man with an all-embracing love. He has loved him as a father; He has loved him as a saviour; as a friend, a brother, a spouse; and His love holds all these different titles in order that we may learn that the love through which He came to die for us on the Cross was a perfect love. It is as strong as the love of a saviour; as cordial as the love of a brother; as true as the love of a friend; as ardent as the love of a spouse. It was through the force of this love that the world was created and that each of us came into existence. But the gift of existence did not exhaust His love for us. God is as magnificent in His presents as He is rich in goodness. He wished to mark His love for man by a gift, and no gift would satisfy Him but that of Himself. That is the theology of the Incarnation: God so-loved the world that He gave us His Only Begotten Son to be our Redeemer. The love of God was the cause of creation; it was also the cause of the Incarnation of the Word and of our Redemption.

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The Incarnation is a mystery. The lowering of the Divine Dignity which it implies can hardly be conceived. This humbling of the Godhead confounds our poor human reason. We could only understand it by understanding the infinite love which inspired it. "God so loved the world." There is the wonderful explanation of these wonderful effects. Jesus Christ became man; heaven and earth meet in Him; the shame of the Cross is blended with His glory. And the only reason for it all is His love. Even on earth, among weak men and women, love spurs souls to incredible efforts. The love of glory inspires untold deeds of heroism; the love of riches causes even the poorest types of manhood to run incredible risks; the love for father, mother, wife or friend has transformed our dust and raised it to the stars. Dangers do not count, nor toil nor hardship, nor hunger nor obloquy; love can overcome them all: *Amor omnia vincit*. Love is stronger than Death. If, then, men and women, in all their lowli-

ness and weakness, can achieve the impossible when stimulated by love, what cannot God Himself do? Hence, when we ponder on the clear, luminous words: *God so loved the world*, we know we have the key to all the mysteries of grace. In the light of that love; what lessons the Crib at which we shall kneel during the coming season contains for us! We can hear across the centuries the glad song of the angels; we can rejoice with the shepherds that "a Child is born to us and a Son given to us"—to us, for us, of our race, for our race, born a Saviour and a Redeemer, to raise the fallen by lifting up humanity and making it a sharer in Divinity. Let us go to Bethlehem, and adore the Infant who has made us all brothers in Himself, welding princes and peasants into one great family, and making them all equal in His sight.

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Choosing poverty rather than riches, He was born in a stable, because there was no room for Joseph and Mary in the inn. Humility and self-denial were, after love, the first lessons He taught us; and we have not learned them yet, although nearly two thousand years have flown. He poured Himself out, emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant: how the vivid inspired words reiterate that lesson of humility which the world needs so much! Before that Babe in the manger the angels of Heaven were present in adoration: *Natum videte Regem angelorum. venite adoremus*—"Lo, the King of angels, come let us adore Him!" And again, *Propter nos homines, et propter nostram salutem descendit de coelo*—"for us men and our salvation He came down from heaven." He is there for us, and it is our duty to come to Him and to lay our hearts at His feet, as the Kings laid their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh when the star led them to Him before He was very many days old. Christmas is His birthday, and we can make Him no offering more acceptable than that of ourselves. For it was in order to reign in our hearts, and to draw us to Him that He became man and was born of the Virgin Mary. Love is the key to it all.

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Peace on earth to men of good will. That was the burden of the song of the angels whose music filled the starry night around the cave in which He lay. He comes as the Prince of Peace—of that perfect peace which He alone can give. Peace was His message at birth; and peace was His final gift to His followers. As it was in the days of the disciples, so it has always been. They that have learned of Him to be meek and humble and pure and loving abide always in His peace: the peace with Him and with oneself which the world can neither give nor take away. It is guaranteed to men of good will; and to them only. When all men, or the majority of men, have been brought to love and adore Him, and to learn the lessons He teaches from the Crib, we may hope for universal peace. But as long as mankind rejects Him and follows its own idols there can never be peace. Worship of Mammon, pride, ambition, jealousy, filled the world with slaughter for five weary years. The scourge of war does not seem to have taught the nations as a whole the lesson they all needed. To-day, as of old, they think they can ignore

God and build a temple of peace in which He has no altar. But until statesmen and people alike go to Bethlehem and learn true wisdom there they will build on sand and their dreams will remain empty things devoid of reality. In that stable on the first Christmas night was written the charter of human brotherhood whereby the rights and dignities of every man whom Christ ennobled by sharing our nature were forever established. By virtue of that charter the world can obtain peace for ever whenever it will learn the simple lessons which the Child taught us all:

Almighty God to all mankind on Christmas Day, said He:

"I rent you from the old red hills, and, rending, made you free.

There was charter; there was challenge; in a blast of breath I gave:

You can be all things other; you cannot be a slave."

A GOOD RESOLUTION

Begin the New Year by ordering the *Tablet* for twelve months for a neighbor who is not a subscriber. You cannot spend a pound better; its results will be spread over the year; it will bring Catholic news, and Irish news, and news of the whole world, and spiritual reading to his home for fifty-two Sundays. We are engaged in the Apostolate of the Press and we want all the help we can get. Therefore, make a New Year's gift of the *Tablet* to at least one friend. Many Popes, more bishops than one could count in five minutes, missionaries and all sorts of good judges proclaim that a Catholic newspaper in every Catholic home is a powerful influence for good. Therefore, if you want to do good in your neighborhood spread the *Tablet* among your friends.

We could say a great deal about what trouble we take to make the *Tablet* all that it ought to be. But fortunately we have the testimony of the very best judges and we prefer to let them tell you what they think of New Zealand's Catholic weekly paper. First, two years ago we had a letter of special commendation from the Pope, giving his blessing to all the members of the staff and to all our readers. After the Pope come bishops, of whom we quote one: an Australian prelate, born and bred under the Southern Cross. He says that the *New Zealand Tablet* is the best Catholic paper he knows; and that the editor is conscious of his duty and does it. A distinguished Irish prelate writes to us: "To me it is a great pleasure to go through the *Tablet* now." Mr. William O'Brien says: "The *Tablet* is a high-class magazine." Mr. T. P. Gill: "I have some qualifications to judge, and I think the *New Zealand Tablet* is the best all-round Catholic paper I have come across." This, from a man who has been editor of reviews and magazines of the first class on both sides of the Atlantic, is enough to make even an editor blush. But there is a last word which is even higher praise. Writing to us thirteen months ago, a priest in the North Island said: "Some people forget, but I do not, that you stood all alone for Ireland when no other paper in this country defended her." So, you see, we are not asking you to take and spread the *Tablet* on our own word. Like the Ford car we seem to have got there.

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