

The Family Circle

TO THE INFANT JESUS.

Sleep, Holy Babe,
Upon Thy Mother's breast;
Great Lord of Earth and Sea and Sky,
How sweet it is to see Thee lie
In such a place of rest!

Sleep, Holy Babe,
Thine angels watch around,
All bended low with folded wings,
Before the Incarnate King of Kings,
In reverent awe profound.

Sleep, Holy Babe,
While I with Mary gaze
In joy upon that face awhile,
Upon the loving Infant smile,
Which there divinely plays.

Sleep, Holy Babe,
Ah! take Thy brief repose;
Too quickly will Thy slumbers break,
And Thou to lengthened pains awake
That death alone shall close.

Then must those hands
Which now so fair I see,
Those little pearly feet of Thine,
So soft, so delicately fine,
Be pierced and rent for me!

Then must that brow
Its thorny crown receive;
That cheek, more lovely than the rose,
Be drenched with blood and marred with blows,
That I thereby may live.

—EDWARD C. CASWELL.



THE DIVINE CHILD.

The Divine Child, He Who is the splendor of heaven, lay in a crib. A little straw formed a bed for Him to Whom the earth and all it contains belong. And she who is Queen of Heaven and Earth is near that crib. There she watches and is attentive to all the wants of her Divine Son. With what respectful care she touches Him to be her Lord and her God! With what joy and confidence she embraces Him and presses Him to her bosom! She was the most humble of creatures, she was also the most prudent and watchful. She was never wanting in the most tender care for Him, and during His whole life upon earth she never failed in the least in the fulfilment of any duty toward Him.—St. Bonaventure.



THE CHRIST CHILD.

Over nineteen hundred years ago, in a cave in the heart of the hills of Bethlehem, Mary, the mother of God, "brought forth her first-born and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger."

The Word was made flesh and came to dwell amongst us. The heavens shone with glory and resounded with the song of angel choirs. A few shepherds, to whom the Angel of the Lord had announced tidings of great joy, knelt in reverence to the Saviour of mankind. Heaven and earth were united in the angelic message of "Peace on earth to men of good will."

To the Infant Christ, in the humility of the manger, the shepherds gave full possession of their hearts, for they were the children of God. The little Child of Bethlehem had come to His own and His own gladly received Him. There was no room for Him in the inn at Bethlehem, but there was welcome, peace, and adoration in the hearts of those who had been awaiting the fulfilment of the Words of the Prophet.

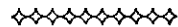
Pity, indeed, it were, if that welcome, peace and adoration were but for a day, and that Bethlehem should grow

cold to the hearts of men. But the coming of the Christ Child was not to be in vain. The Infant in swaddling clothes was to warm for all time the hearts of those who would but follow Him.

Down through the course of the centuries the host of shepherds multiplied and each recurring Christmas found at the crib of Bethlehem the increasing homage of a joyful world. The love of Christ was to endure forever, for the gates of hell could not prevail against it. Man could not but surrender his heart to Him who was to bring redemption.

May the present Christmas bring to humanity a lasting recognition of the only hope of salvation and a complete conversion to "The Way, the Truth, and the Life."

On Christmas the Christ Child is leading: it is the day of incarnate love, the day that has made us brothers in Christ, the day which fills our hearts with the peace of heaven. That peace, and that peace alone, has left the impress of true happiness on the World throughout the long, long years. It will never fail to warm the hearts of the children of light and be to them an inspiration and a benediction.—William Cardinal O'Connell.

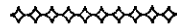


THE SLEEPING CHRIST.

O swing and sweep of circling angel wings,
O roseate sea of Heaven's transcendent grace!
Dear Bethlehem the Blest, white-wreathed place
Of this sad world's divinest visionings!
We seem to see the holy Light that flings
Celestial splendor on the narrow space
Where a glad Mother first beholds the Face
Of her rare Glory-Babe, our King of Kings.

And, as we gaze, a mighty wave of love
Still sweeps us on to unimagined deeps.
The Calvary-love has won us. From above
Garlanded cherubs smile! And still He sleeps,
The Virgin-Born, as pure as buds that spring
From ruddy stems in rose-white blossoming.

—CAROLINE D. SWAN.



THE INCARNATION.

On this day Our Saviour is born; let us rejoice, for there should be no sadness where life appears. This life removes all fear and gives us the joy of a promised eternity. This day should be a day of joy to all, because Our Lord, the destroyer of sin and death, has come to deliver us. Let saints rejoice because grace and perseverance are secured to them; let sinners rejoice because pardon has been purchased for them; let the Gentiles be filled with confidence, for they are called to eternal life. The Son of God—in the fulness of time, which He Himself in the inscrutable designs of His infinite wisdom had determined—took human nature to reconcile man with his Creator, in order that the demon, the author of death, might be vanquished by that which he had caused.—St. Basil.



CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS IN THE MIDDLE AGES.

The manner in which Christmas was celebrated by the people of the Middle Ages is a topic calculated to challenge much interest in these days when so much enthusiasm is shown for things medieval. There is something about the Christmas season which easily conjures up curiosity as to how the Catholic people of those picturesque days observed one of the greatest festivals of the Christian year.

The prevalence of the one faith in those days naturally gave to Christmas a flavor which is lacking to-day among the people as a whole. The great prominence of the Church in the life of the people is especially revealed in records of feast day observances of the time. It was a time of great pageantry, of great art, and of remarkable Catholic life, and it is easy to see how the facilities of the time afforded scope for striking celebrations of the great days of the Church.

The way in which Christmas was celebrated in a medieval English parish is indicated in Cardinal Gasquet's *Parish Life in Medieval England*. Christmas was observed with the customary three Masses, at midnight, preceded by Matins; in the early morning, and at the usual time of nine or ten o'clock.

Plays and sacred dramatic pieces were a prominent feature of the season. In many places, at Christmas time, a religious play appropriate to the season was given, and

S. F. Aburn

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