

Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

THE INCARNATION—(Continued.)

There existed at that time in Judea a sect called the Pharisees, perverse hypocritical men, who exercised great influence over the people. This sect was composed of the higher classes of the people, and numbered amongst its members most of the doctors of the law, the priests, and the ancients, who were senators, composing the Sanhedrim or great council of the nation. These Pharisees declared against Jesus Christ. Jealous of His popularity, and wounded in their pride by the superiority of His doctrine; embittered by the freedom with which He condemned their errors and unveiled their hypocrisy,—they conceived a great aversion towards Him, which soon deepened into a mortal hatred.

Blinded by their hatred and by the perversity of their hearts, instead of recognising in Jesus the character of Messiah, which shone so clearly through all His works, they persisted in despising His poverty and degrading His virtues and miracles; and finally they seized upon His Person to deliver Him up to death.

Dragged before Caiphas, the high-priest and president of the Sanhedrim, and judicially interrogated by him as to whether He was really the Christ, Jesus declared that He was so. His enemies took His words as imposture and blasphemy, without examination, and condemned Him to death, delivering Him up to Pilate, the Roman governor, to suffer the torment of the cross.

Jesus was then put to death according to the custom of the Romans. After having been cruelly scourged, and submitted to other most painful and ignominious tortures, He was at last nailed to the cross, on which He expired about three o'clock in the afternoon of the Friday, which is supposed by some to have fallen on March 25 of the year 29, or, according to others, in the year 33 of our era, and the eighteenth year of the reign of Tiberius at Rome.

Towards evening of the same day He was laid in a new sepulchre hewn out of a rock; and because He had said publicly that He would rise again three days after His death, the princes of the Jews sealed the entrance to the tomb with the public seal, and caused it to be guarded by soldiers.

But on the third day, the Sunday morning, a little before daybreak, Jesus, in spite of His enemies, rose alive from His tomb, and showed Himself to His disciples, consoling and filling them with joy. He remained forty days among them, completing their instruction and delivering His Sacraments to them, and explaining to them the whole system of His Church, which they were chosen to establish in the world.

On the fortieth day after His resurrection He led them to the Mount of Olives; and there, after promising to send them the Holy Ghost, He raised His hands to bless them, and ascended into heaven in the sight of them all.

III. The Immortal Existence of Jesus Christ.

9. Though the immortal existence of Christ commences really from the moment of His resurrection, we shall take it from the time of His ascension, when He ceased to converse visibly with men.

Christ, risen from the dead, and living an immortal life in heaven, does not, however, cease to be present on the earth.

Visible in heaven to all the blessed, and sitting in supreme glory at the right hand of the Father, He intercedes for us, and sends the Holy Ghost the Paraclete to His Church, "to abide with her for ever." Such was the decree of God the Father. He wished that His only Son, after accomplishing the redemption of the world, should return to heaven and sit on His right hand, thence to govern the Church throughout all ages. David had so predicted in these words: "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. cix.).

Jesus Christ, though invisible, is present on the earth (1) *corporally* in the Holy Eucharist; (2) *spiritually* in all His Church; which He assists continually by the Holy Ghost; (3) *morally*, in a representative manner, in the persons of His Vicars, the Roman Pontiffs, the bishops, and other ministers of His Church. In this way, whilst reign-

ing in heaven, He still abides with His own on the earth to the end of the world. "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20).

When the end of the world comes, at the great day of universal resurrection, when the dead shall be risen and awaiting their Judge, He will come down from heaven visible, in the splendor of His majesty, and will sit on His throne of justice, to render to all men, sinners and the just, according to their works. The wicked He will condemn to everlasting torments, but to the good He will award the kingdom of heaven. Then, at the head of His elect, the King of Glory will make His entry into the celestial Jerusalem, the city of eternal life.

"FOLLOW ME"

(John 21: 19)

In these two words, "follow Me," our Divine Lord gives us not only a compendium of Christianity, a code of morals and a practical rule of life, but also the application of a fundamental truth. In these two words Christ holds out before us an ideal and exhorts us to follow it according to our power. It is a fundamental truth of human nature that every man has an ideal, which he endeavors to copy as often as he acts with deliberation and purpose. This ideal serves him as a model which he endeavors to imitate, for man is by nature a creature of imitation. Without such a model man's actions and his life would be aimless and irrational. Consequently an ideal of some kind is indispensable. Man's ideals are the parents of his acts, and hence the first thing to be done in any work is to acquire an ideal. All the rest is but the executing and realising of this ideal. The painter begins with his ideal which he gradually expresses on the canvas. The sculptor patiently chisels the block of granite, shaping and polishing it according to the ideal, until, at last, the rugged stone is transformed into a work of art. The architect labors long and patiently before he sees the edifice rise out of the shapeless mass of brick and stone and timber; yet it is thus he realises the ideal with which he started out, and so it is with life. Just as our language is the expression and equivalent of our thoughts, so our actions and our life are but the outward expression and equivalent of our ideals. It is a diversity of ideals that accounts largely for the difference among men. Some men have fanciful and impossible ideals, and we call them dreamers, because they are always building castles in the air. Others have low and sordid ideals, and we call them degenerates and people of depraved taste. Others again, observing the golden mean, have elevated and practical ideals, and we call them successful men and women because their ideals are well chosen and faithfully executed. As men seldom rise above their ideals and often fall below them, it is well to know and to calculate on this tendency in human nature of falling below the mark.

The artist who places before his pupil a masterpiece as a model does not expect a perfect reproduction, but rather a more or less imperfect copy, according to the skill and capacity of the student. Yet he keeps before him a masterpiece to educate his taste and form his ideals after a perfect model. So our divine Lord, the great teacher of Christianity, has given us in Himself a perfect model, and in these words "follow Me" applies that fundamental law of human nature and furnishes us a masterpiece which we should imitate and reproduce according to our capacity. In that short sentence, "follow Me," Christ gives us the essence of Christianity, for Christianity is not a mere theory, it is a practice. It is not a mere science, it is an art, and every man who is a Christian in reality and not merely in name, is an artist, with Christ as his model, and is striving to reproduce in himself in some degree, at least, an image of this great masterpiece.—*Truth N.Y.*

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