

Faith of Our Fathers

[A WEEKLY INSTRUCTION FOR YOUNG AND OLD.]

THE INCARNATION.—(Continued.)

(2) Men, considered individually, are raised to the highest possible dignity, to the dignity of the children of God. "The Word was made flesh," says St. John, and He has given to men, His brethren, "the power to be made the children of God." And again, in his first Epistle (iii. 1), he says: "Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God."

This is the mystery of divine adoption. The only Son of God having become Son of Man and our Brother, His Heavenly Father has in consequence adopted us for children.

This adoption, merited for us by our Saviour on the Cross, takes place at baptism, which for that reason is called the Sacrament of Regeneration. In it we are born again spiritually as the adopted children of God. In baptism we are begotten of God according to the Spirit, as we had been begotten of the old Adam according to the flesh.

Regeneration by water and the Holy Ghost produces a twofold effect on those who are spiritually born anew: it imprints on their souls the image of God the Father, as also a resemblance to Jesus Christ their Brother; and it also bestows on them a right to the heavenly inheritance. This image of God and resemblance to Jesus Christ consists in the baptismal character and sanctifying grace, which St. Peter calls a participation in the divine nature.

This grace, light, beauty—this spiritual life—contains the germs of every virtue. It is altogether interior and hidden in the soul, as seed is in the earth. "Dearly beloved," again writes the beloved disciple, "we are now the sons of God, and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be." We shall one day partake of His glory and beauty; but now all is hidden beneath the dark veil of our mortality.

Externally Jesus Christ was poor and like other men; within Him there dwelt all the majesty of a God. He "dwelt amongst us," says the Evangelist, "and we saw His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father."

After the same manner should a Christian, the brother of Jesus Christ and adopted son of God, make manifest his nobility of birth to the eyes of the world. His conduct, his works, and his virtues ought to be those of a child of God, and a copy of the conduct, works, and virtues of Christ, the only Son of God.

To the character of a child of God is attached the right of inheritance. "As the adopted sons of God," says St. Paul, "we are heirs of God," our Father, "and co-heirs with Jesus Christ," our brother. Whosoever shall conduct himself as a worthy son of God will enter into possession of his inheritance. He will receive a portion of it even in this life; and will enjoy it in its plenitude in the next.

This inheritance constitutes the happiness that Christ has communicated to mankind.

27. (2) Happiness of man.—Christ is our happiness by His person and by His possessions. We are happy because we possess Him Himself, and because we share all His riches.

28. (a) Possession of Jesus Christ.—Christ, the divine Emmanuel, belongs to us, and we possess Him.

(1) He belongs to us, because He has been given to us. Christ is a gift bestowed on man, an ineffable gift of divine love: "God so loved the world as to bestow His only Son upon it."

He belongs to us by birth, as a child born in a family belongs to that family, and is bound to his brothers by indissoluble ties. He is, moreover, to us what a father is to his children, a king to his subjects, a friend to his friends, a husband to his wife, what a guide, a protector is to him whom he has undertaken to guide and protect.

(2) We possess Christ. We possess Him everywhere and in every way. We possess Him in heaven, where He is our advocate with the Father. We possess Him on earth in the person of His Vicar the Roman Pontiff; in the person of His bishops, of His priests; in the person of the poor and of every individual member of the Church, which is His mystical body. We possess Him in His divine nature, by which He is present everywhere as

God. We possess Him in His human nature, with which he dwells in the midst of us as man, in the adorable Eucharist. O, what a presence is that! His delight is to be with the children of men, His well-beloved brothers. O, what a happiness for us in this valley of tears to possess such a Father, such a Friend, such a Protector, such a Consoler! With Him our hearts know neither sadness nor fear; and we can say with the prophet-king, "If I should walk in the midst of the shadows of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me" (Ps. xxii.).

29. (b) Participation in the riches of Jesus Christ.—Jesus Christ recognises us as His brothers and co-heirs, and communicates to us all the goods that constitute His inheritance, (1) during life; (2) at the moment of death; and (3) at the day of the future resurrection.

(1) During life He bestows on us the riches of grace: His holy word, which is the light of our souls; His divine Sacraments, which are their nourishment; and the hierarchy of His church for their safeguard and direction. These exercise the most important influence over the happiness of man, even in the natural order: for whenever Christianity is allowed free action, it promotes real individual, family, and social happiness. Nevertheless, great as are these various effects of grace, they do not alter the condition of our fallen nature, and we still remain subject to the miseries of this mortal life.

(2) The moment of death is that of the beginning of glory: the soul of the just man, disengaged from its bonds, is freed from the darkness of its earthly prison-house, and enters into eternal life. There it is transformed in glory, and appears as a bride of exquisite beauty in the presence of the Eternal Bridegroom.

"When the veil shall be withdrawn," says St. John, "and the Lord shall show us His face, we shall be like unto Him, for we shall see Him as He is." In this manner the soul will participate in the good things with which the glorious soul of Jesus Christ is endowed; and the human body will also participate in the good things bestowed on His glorious body.

(3) At the great day of Resurrection our blessed souls will receive this fulness of beatitude when they are again united to their glorified bodies. Then will the grand promise of Christ be fulfilled: "I am the resurrection and the life. Whosoever believeth in Me shall live. I will raise him up at the last day. . . . Then shall the just shine as stars in the kingdom of their Heavenly Father." Then will the children of God appear in all the beauty, both spiritual and corporal, of their divine origin. Then will all that remained in them of the old Adam be effaced; the corruptible shall put on incorruptibility, and the mortal body shall put on immortality; death shall be totally absorbed by life: *Et absorbeatur quod mortale est a vita* (2 Cor. v. 4).

Then will the son of God, who made Himself poor and preached poverty in order to enrich us, load us with true riches, and clothe us with His own glory; He will give to our now abject bodies so new an appearance, that they will become like to His own glorious body: *Qui reformabit corpus humilitatis nostrae, configuratum corpori claritatis suae* (Phil. iii. 21).

Then all the elect will shine like innumerable stars, each with his own splendor; and at their head will shine Jesus Christ, the King of glory, who will introduce them into the kingdom of His Father, to put them in possession of all His treasures, all His glory, all His joys and never-ending delights. This will be the perfect felicity of man glorified by Christ.

American Akron Tyres

—SPECIAL OFFER TO TABLET READERS—
30 x 3½ FABRIC TYRE, 3000 miles guarantee. Cost £7 16s 6d, less 20 per cent; £6 5s, postage paid anywhere in New Zealand.

The Para Rubber Company Ltd

175 CASHIEL ST. — CHRISTCHURCH.
286 CUMBERLAND ST. — DUNEDIN.
175 DEE ST. — INVERCARGILL.
PRINCES & HIGH STS. — HAWERA.
VICTORIA ST. — HAMILTON.
WELLESLEY ST. — AUCKLAND.
321 MAIN ST. — PALMERSTON NORTH.