

## **PRAYER 1.**

*A devout Meditation and Thanksgiving on the Incarnation and Life of Jesus.*

I ADORE You, O Jesus Christ, You King of Israel, Light of the people, Lord of lords, Prince of peace, Power of God Almighty, Wisdom of the Father. I adore You, O Reconciler of men, most tender Advocate of sinners, the refreshment of those who labor, the comfort of those who are oppressed, the reward of all the just. I adore You, O Bread of Life, Medicine of the soul, Peace-maker of the people, Redeemer of the world, Joy of heaven, grateful Peace-offering and Sacrifice, peace-giving Victim, Who by the sweet smell of Your vestments have graciously bowed down and moved Your Father, Who lives on high, to look upon our weakness and wretchedness, and to hear our groans and lamentations, and to take us back into His favor. O most merciful Jesus! behold, I confess Your exceeding tenderness and grace, which out of Your own essential goodness, and for no merits of ours, You have poured out upon us; and I offer You the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for all Your benefits, which You have bestowed upon us, who are but an evil seed, vessels of wrath, corrupt children, useless servants, and sinners worthy of damnation and death. Behold! I praise, and exalt, and bless You, and give thanks unto You with my whole soul and heart, and all the powers and faculties of my mind. Of a truth, Your mercy over us is exceedingly great! For when we were all children of damnation and wrath, and enemies to You, spotted with the stain of original sin, destroyers of Your image in our souls, violators of Your temple; when, I say, the old serpent had infected us with his poison, You were mindful of Your mercy, and looked down from Your dwelling-place in heaven upon this valley of tears, and had compassion on our tears, and heard our groans, touched in Your deepest parts with sorrow of heart, and moved by pity for the wretchedness of Your people;—indeed, at the same time, Your heart was kindled with love. And although You were the very Son of God, dwelling in light inaccessible, and upholding all things by Your divine

power, and governing and ruling all things by Your divine wisdom, in Whose sight the angels tremble, at Whose name every knee is bent; yet in no way You disdained to bow down Your lofty power to the dark prison-house of this wicked world, and to be made partaker of our weakness and misery, and to be clothed with the sackcloth of our mortality; and all this, that You might swallow up our wretchedness and weakness in Your own divine power, and enrich our poverty, and cause our mortality to rise unto life eternal, and wash away and blot out our sins, and restore our nature to its first innocence, and lead us out of captivity into freedom of spirit, and make good again our ruin by bestowing on us glory everlasting. Nor to accomplish the work of our redemption You sent any of Your angels, no, not even from the Cherubim, or Seraphim, but You Yourself came at the request and by the will of Your Father,—of Whose indescribable goodness we have had experience in You, His Eternal Word,— not for change of place, but that You might show us Your Presence by taking upon You our humanity. From the bosom of the Father You came down into the most pure, and virgin, chaste and sweet Virgin Mary; in whose most sacred womb the power of the Holy Ghost alone caused You to be conceived and, born in the nature of man;—yet, in such, a way, that this birth of Yours in no way detracted from Your Majesty, nor lessened the chaste integrity, of that most-blessed Virgin.

O wonderful and incomprehensible exchange! The Lord of glory, for our poor human weakness, gave His own most high Godhead! The Maker of all creatures did not despise taking upon Him the form of a servant! Nor was it, alone, the form of a servant that He took upon Him, but He was even humbled, like a wretched worm, and held of no account, and condemned as a transgressor, and a wicked man, to the shameful death of the cross,—He, Who is one day to judge the living and the dead! O most loving Jesus; how, from the very beginning, You have loved us! It was not enough for You to be our Lord, and Maker, and Guardian, but You have also become our Redeemer, fellow-worker, brother,—our own flesh and blood! You have had a share in our weakness, and poverty, and mortality,—You who stood in no need of anything whatsoever! And, so poor You were made, and so

deeply You tasted the bitterness of our wretchedness, that at the very time of Your birth, You did not even have any little thing belonging to You by inheritance, where Your tender and infant limbs might have been laid and sheltered—You Who are the Lord of heaven and earth! In a stable You were born, and the rough manger and coarse little clothes were all that You suffered to be a resting-place and a covering for Your tender members! Even Your poor unworthy resting-place, was borrowed by Your blessed and truly-loving Mother, from the beasts of the field that cannot reason. O good Jesus, whose heart would not be softened and kindled with love, and stirred up to devotion, and moved to compassion, when he beheld such exceeding poverty, and marvelous lowliness, and burning love towards man? O how quickly You began to work at our salvation! How zealously You accomplished it! Not even one moment of time You have lost, for not a moment was there which was not perfectly spent by You in saving us according to Your Father's Will. Straightaway, from the very first moment of Your birth, You began to give Yourself up to pain and suffering.

But why, O sweet Jesus, was it Your Will to become so lowly, and poor, and helpless, and meek, except to teach us lowliness, and to commend to us holy poverty? You took our human nature, that we might be made partakers of Your Godhead. You were made the Son of Man, that we might be made the sons of God, that we might become, by adoption and grace, what You were from all eternity by nature. You were born in a stable, that You might preserve not men only, but beasts, (for men had become beasts.) You were placed in a manger, and Yourself were made grass, that You might become the food of poor beasts. Yes, O Lord, it needed to be that You were made grass, when men themselves had become beasts. For a certain prophet said: "The beasts have become rotten in their own dung," that is, in the filth of their sins. In order, then, that these animal men might feed, the Word was made grass, (that is, flesh.) For all flesh is grass; and that they might be led out of the stable of their filthy sins, Christ was born in a stable. Now, then, O man given up to Your senses, adore Him lying in a stable, Whom You have despised as the Ruler of heaven; adore as a beast, and as one of the cattle of the field, Him Whom, in Your character as man, You did not recognize. Turn

now to Him, in the wretchedness and banishment of this world, from Whom You turned away in the paradise of delights. Honor now His manger, Whose commandment You have broken. Feed, now, upon the grass, who have turned aside from, and left the Bread of angels. O Almighty King of glory, what love have overcome You, that You would make Yourself so poor, so lowly, so humble for me, who am but a sinner and a poor worm; that You would be placed in a filthy stable among brute beasts, Who are adored by the angels in heaven; that You would be nourished with milk, Who are Yourself the Bread of angels, that You would be wrapped in coarse swaddling clothes, Who adorned the heaven with stars, and clothed Your holy ones in stoles of gold?

Surely, even in Your very harmless infancy Your enemies did not withhold their cruel hands from Your tender members. Scarcely were You born, and while as yet You were laid in the chaste arms of Your sweet Mother, taking pleasant rest on her maternal bosom, as in Your hunger she gave to You her virgin milk; when not as yet You had spoken a word to anyone, even then cruel and wicked men seek after Your life to destroy it. O sweet Jesus, how quickly they rose up against You, those wicked enemies of Yours! How young You began to suffer! As You grew in age, so, too, grew Your suffering. Eight days had barely passed away, when You shed Your infant and innocent Blood for me, and as if under sin and the law, were circumcised according to the law, that You might uphold, and build up, and sanctify the law. So, too, that Your infancy and boyhood might be an example of religion and the mirror of virtues, You did not follow the vain ways of this world. You did not seek comfort or relaxation of mind in boyish games, or in the company and meeting-places of talkative men, where nothing but temporal and vain things are spoken of. But in the temple, and worship and service of Your Father, You were found amidst the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions,—You Who are the very Wisdom of the Father, the Lord of knowledge, the Eternal Truth, and the Word of God, which was in the beginning. And that You might deliver unto us a certain form of obedience, You placed Yourself under Your parents, being made subject to them, You to Whom all

the elements are subject to, Whom all power is given in heaven and in earth, and Who has the keys of death and hell.

Then, when the fullness of age had come to You, and the time was at hand when You were to put out Your hand to strong things, You went forth in the morning for the salvation of Your people, and rejoiced as a strong giant to run the course of our poverty. And that, first of all, You might teach us the virtue of blessed humility, which is the beginning and ground-work of all virtues, You went forth, an innocent lamb, to Your servant John the Baptist, who was administering the baptism of penance unto sinners, just as if You Yourself were a sinner; and You asked him to be baptized, You Who had never felt the least stain of sin—not that You had need to be sprinkled, and washed with water, but that You, in Your own Person, might bless the water as with sacred chrism, and might consecrate baptism for us, whereby we were to be cleansed from all stain of sin, and that You might point out, that You were the true Messiah, promised to the fathers, and the Christ, that is, the anointed One, and the spotless Lamb of God, Who, takes away the sins of the world.

From there, You went forth in the power of the spirit into the wilderness, and that, as our strong standard-bearer and leader, You might give us courage for the fight, You Yourself, first of all, entered into battle, and begin a single-handed combat with our cruel enemy, whom straight away, with his whole power, at the first meeting You laid low, being conquered by a man, he might be confounded, and ceased to boast that he had conquered and deceived man. O unvanquished Lion, how earnestly, and with what toil You worked out our salvation, in order to stir us up, Your weak members, and give us courage for toil and for battle. You did not fear the loneliness of the wilderness, nor grow pale at the temptation of the devil—no gnawing of hunger, no roughness of penance held You back, nor were You ever weary of the labor of prayer, or of meditation, or of watching. For the salvation of us, Your suffering members, was ever in Your Heart, and for these, like a most faithful father, You were

ever careful, and earnestly labored to enrich them with eternal goods, and lay up for us the unfailing treasure of virtue and merit, from which we might draw in all abundance whatever might be wanting to us. Then, too, because the light of Your Godhead, which lay hidden within You, under the bushel of Your Manhood, could not be concealed, You suffered the light of Your heavenly doctrine and wisdom to shine out in the face of day, that You might enlighten all men as to the faith. For to all who lived in those parts You announced the kingdom of God, confirming Your words by marvelous works and miracles; while to all who were weak, or in evil state, You declared Your divine power, nor to anyone You refused Your tender loving-kindness, that You might gain all, and heal them. But the understanding of men was darkened, for not with love they received You as their Saviour, but rather turned their hearts away far from You, as if from some seducer and imposter of evil will. At the same time, they despised Your teaching; they spoke ill of Your works; they made light of Your miracles. Not only were they ungrateful for all Your benefits, but even for the very reasons for which they ought to have loved and worshiped You, for these same reasons they wickedly accused, and hated, and persecuted, and blasphemed You, saying: "This man is not from God: He seduced the multitude: He is a drunkard and a friend of tax collectors." Yet all the while, O most meek Lamb, You opened not Your sacred mouth to utter words that might have grieved them, but You bore all with gentleness. Why, then, are You so impatient, and so fainthearted, O my soul, when any adversity come upon You, or some pain or annoyance is inflicted on You on the part of men? Do You not perceive how great was the wrong, and the slight, and the contempt, and the shame which the Lord of glory suffered for You? Do You consider Yourself more than Him? If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more those of His household, and His ministers?

O Jesus, Wisdom of God, Eternal Truth, how brightly Your divine light has shone down on the sons of Adam! How all Your life, and Your every action, been to us, as it were, a light leading us on to the truth! How clearly the light of Your heavenly teaching had lit up the darkness! How full were all Your works of lowliness; and long-suffering, and love, and self-denial; in a word, of every grace and

virtue, so that in these were reflected the most perfect examples of all holiness! Therefore, whatever is wanting to me, from these sources I will draw it. If in anything I shall happen to doubt, in Your holy life as in a clear mirror will I look. For here I find rigorous self-denial, true obedience, profound humility, voluntary poverty, unspeakable purity, marvelous patience, unchanging long-suffering, constant perseverance, and incomprehensible charity. Here, also, I find in all abundance, that of which we chiefly stand in need, infinite loving-kindness and mercy,—yes, and all the virtues that I can possibly think of in my heart, all these I clearly discover written down as on a tablet. In truth, You are that book which the prophet saw written within and without, for all Your life, both outward and inward, is full of spiritual teaching, and all virtue. Truly, whosoever, with the prophet eat this book, and chew it well, shall find it sweet in his mouth, like honey. O most pitiful Jesus, what labors You endured, in seeking after and gathering together the lost sheep of the house of Israel! With what friendship and sweetness You recalled them from their error to Yourself; how gently You smiled upon them, and won them by Your good deeds, and drew them by Your love to Your Father, now by the promise of heavenly gifts, now by the threats of the torments of hell, at one time by smiles, at another by rebuke. What more could You have done unto this vine, that You have not done? Oh! How earnestly You endeavored to plant Your Father's vineyard, without ever sparing Yourself in heat or cold, or in thirst or hunger, or in watchings or labors? For Your Heart was ever glowing within You with an exceeding burning longing, as in a fiery furnace, to gain for Your Father, and save the whole of Israel.

What shall I pay to You, O sweet Jesus, for all these immense benefits of Yours? What is man, that You should so thirst after his salvation, and suffer so much for his redemption, and labor so earnestly to draw him to Your love? What is there in a lost man in which You can take delight? Of what use to You is the sinner in his uncleanness? Or what gain You look for from a vile and wretched worm of earth, that You placed Your Heart so near him? O gentlest Lover of men, why have I begun so late to love You? Why have I left You, the well-spring of virtue, and the vein of living waters? Why have I

turned away from You, Who are the stream of spiritual favors, the abyss of graces, the highest good, and the mirror of all perfection? What madness had overcome me, that I should not blush to offend so faithful a father, to anger so powerful a Lord? Woe to me, wretched man that I am, I have forsaken You, the Bread of angels, and in my exceeding want have filled myself with the husks of vicious pleasure, in order that I might satisfy my beastly appetites. O, Restorer of nature, how glorious and beautiful You created me, and how full of corruption and foul have I made myself! For behold, my heart is turned aside, it is hard like stone. My memory is scattered abroad, my understanding is darkened, my will is corrupted, my love is cold, my soul has become a filthy thing, my spirit is relaxed and languished. I am wholly given up to my senses, I have become hateful and abominable. When You left me, I grieve not; I have fallen into the devils' snare, and I see it not; they have struck me, and wounded me to death, and I feel it not; I have fallen to the gates of hell, and I mourn not. Yet not even in this state, O most merciful God, You turn away from me Your great and manifold mercy. You called me to Yourself, who has gone far from You. You drew me to You, who still refuses to come. You opened Your arms to receive me, before I reached You. You bowed down Your Head to give me the kiss of peace, who are still all unworthy and unclean. You prevented me, and met me with Your grace, before I am reconciled to You. You poured out Your grace upon me, more quickly than I dare to ask it. Lastly, You fed me with the most sweet bread of Your chosen children, who are not worthy to be the last of Your slaves. What more shall I ask of You? For all these things my soul magnifies You, and my spirit rejoices in You, O God, my Savior. All my inward parts praise, and bless, and give thanks to You, O Lord, for Your mercy over me is great. Oh! if You show Yourself so loving to Your enemies, my tender Jesus, what then are You to the friends of Your Heart?

Moved, then, by the contemplation of Your immense mercy and goodness, I, a wretched and vile sinner, weighed down with the heavy burden of my numberless sins, come to You, O good Jesus! Very humbly do I cast myself at Your feet, for You are full of grace, and exceedingly kind towards sinners, and it is, indeed, Your own natural property ever to have mercy, and to spare, no, even to



show favor and kindness. Grant, I beseech You, that I may find the same grace which blessed Magdalen, Your most fervent lover, obtained from You. Say unto my soul that word full of comfort which You spoke to her: “Your sins are forgiven You.” For although my sins are beyond measure great, yet are they small when compared with Your mercy. O, sweet Jesus, help me, for indeed You can give me the desire of my heart, for in my deep lowliness and wretchedness I cry unto You! Forgive me much, that I may love You much, and may magnify and bless You. Heal me wholly, that I may wholly cling unto You. Unburden me of my heavy load of sins, that I may freely and cheerfully follow You. Cast away all my sins into the abyss of Your divine mercy, and then grind them into dust, and bring them to nothing, that all remembrance of them may pass away from before You. For now I have determined with myself, from this time forward, never to offend You anymore, O my God. Most tender Jesus, since I confess to You my wretchedness, show unto me, I beseech You, Your goodness. All my wretchedness and poverty have I shown to You, open then unto me the ample treasures of Your grace, and at the same time apply to my sins and negligences all Your toil, and labors, and all Your good works, and all the merits of Your most sacred Passion. Reconcile unto me Your Father who is in heaven, and with whom You live and reign, Co-eternal God, world without end. Amen.