

THE INCARNATION

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Our vision of the face of God is always fragmented and impaired by the limits of our understanding. Faith alone makes it possible to penetrate the mystery in a way that allows us to understand it...¹ Faith like Mary, the Mother of God. "At the Annunciation Mary entrusted herself to God completely, with the 'full submission of intellect and will', manifesting 'the obedience of faith' to him who spoke to her through his messenger."² Jesus tells us nothing is impossible if one has faith, even if just a little faith. The Blessed Mother is the greatest example of faith. "Do whatever he tells you," she says to the servers at the Wedding at Cana, for she knew He would perform a miracle. She did not beg Him; she simply had faith and trusted.



Man through the eyes of faith, trusting in God, can grasp a glance at the Mystery of Love - our Lord Jesus Christ. It can be said that God created the world out of love, not out of necessity for there is nothing creation can add or give to Him who is all in all. In His mercy, He chose to make visible the invisible Mystery of His love. The question could be asked, "why does God choose to make visible the invisible?" He makes visible the invisible simply out of love and goodness, and for the redemption of mankind. As Saint Irenaeus stated, "It is true, because of the greatness and inexpressible glory of God, that "man shall not see me and live," for the Father cannot be grasped. But because of God's love and goodness toward us, and because He can do all things, He goes so far as to grant those who love Him the privilege of seeing Him.... For 'what is impossible for men is possible for God'."³

God is omnipotent, all knowing, and He knew Adam and Eve would disobey Him. Why, therefore, create man in the first place? God, who is goodness, in His goodness communicated that goodness to man. "Thus the more we know about His communication to creatures the more we will praise His grandeur..."⁴ He did not need to do this for there is nothing He needs, but rather He created man so that His love would draw man to Himself and thus share in that love. "God created man in His image; in the divine image He created him..."⁵ God created man to be His sons, not mere creatures, so man could enter into the relationship with Love. "God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in Him."⁶

"In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as expiation for our sins."⁷ The Son of God, who gives glory to the Father for all eternity before the creation of the world, entered into human history through the Incarnation. God the Father sent His Son at a particular moment in history. The angels, the heavens and even the human soul(s) anxiously await the coming of the Messiah and eagerly wait for the response of Our Lady, at the moment of the Incarnation. The Son of God becomes a son of man, making it possible for the sons of men to become sons of God. "But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become the children of God."⁸ As sons of God, mankind can enjoy again the divine friendship which man was created for in order to know and love God. This divine friendship was lost because of original sin. Therefore, through the Incarnation man would finally come to see God in Heaven, entering into divine communion. One could argue that on earth God is visible in others or in nature. Although this is true, man was created for the Beatific Vision, which is to see God Himself, face to face, to glorify God for all eternity. Man desires to be one with God, consumed by Love. St. Teresa of Avila explains it beautifully, "The spiritual marriage is like what we have when rain falls from the sky into a river or fountain; all is water, for the rain that fell from heaven cannot be divided or separated from the water of the river."⁹

Hence, one can deduce it suitable for the Son, the second person of the Trinity, to become man, in order to make man adopted sons of God. Therefore, he could partake of that divine sonship that man was ultimately created for. This grace was given to man in the beginning but was lost when Adam and Eve gave into the temptation of Satan. This gift, of being united with God was lost for humanity in the Garden of Eden when they ate of the forbidden fruit. The Incarnation was ordered to restore the divine sonship that was lost. St. Thomas explains, "Hence it was fitting that by Him Who is the natural Son, men should share this likeness of

sonship by adoption, as the Apostles say in the same chapter (Roman 8:29): 'For whom he foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son.'¹⁰ Aidan Nichols in his study of St. Thomas states, "First, just as a craftsman repairs damage in something he has made by reference to the idea of the thing which is in him, his creative conception of it, so it is fitting that God repairs humanity by means of the Son who is humanity's exemplar."¹¹ The question could be asked, could the Father or the Holy Spirit have become man? God can do anything, however it is fitting that the Son reestablish and recreate mankind as the children of God.

"The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness..."¹² The Incarnation means salvation therefore the Word becoming man at the beginning of history would not have made sense. "But no one receives a suitable remedy against sin unless first he acknowledges his failure, so that man in his lowliness, not relying on himself, may put his 'hope in God, by whom alone sin can be healed..."¹³ Man, after recognizing his sin, can better grasp the goodness of God and therefore become open to receive His salvation. The same is true that Incarnation at the end of times would not have been fitting. God becoming flesh at the end of time is similar to a person waiting until they are on their deathbed to seek the sacraments. The Word became man when it was most appropriate, the center of human history because God is a God of order. God's time is not man's time and in His perfect timing, He became incarnate; so that man would be able to grasp that His coming was not only because of original sin but also for actual sins, even to the end of time. God becomes incarnate after fostering a yearning in the hearts of His people. In His mercy, He forewarns His people of His coming. He raises prophets and tells them what to do to prepare for His coming thus perpetuating a longing for the holiness that is the insatiable yearning of man's heart.

Jesus becoming man and dying for our sins, was the most perfect and fitting way to redeem man. St. Thomas says,

"I answer that a thing is said to be necessary for a certain end in two ways. First, when the end cannot be without it; as food is necessary for preservation of human life. Secondly, when the end is attained better and more conveniently, as a horse is necessary for a journey. In the first way it was not necessary that God should become incarnate for the restoration of human nature. For God with His omnipotent power could have restored human nature in many other ways. But in the second way it was necessary that God should become incarnate for the restoration of human nature. Hence, Augustine says (*De Trinitate* xxii, 10): 'We shall also show that other ways were not wanting to God, to Whose power all things are equally subject; but that there was not a more fitting way of healing our misery.'¹⁴

The Incarnation of the Son of God? was the most fitting way for God to become incarnate because it strengthens man's faith, hope and charity by giving example of all the virtues man should strive to obtain in order to imitate God. It keeps humanity from despair, "He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not give us all things with Him?"¹⁵ Therefore, without the Incarnation and Passion of Christ, the meaning of suffering and evil in the world would not have been adequately illuminated by God, leading humanity to despair. It was the best way to give man a share in Christ's divinity, St. Irenaeus says it flawlessly,

"For it was for this end that the Word of God was made man, and He who was the Son of God became the Son of man, that man, having been taken into the Word, and receiving the adoption, might become the son of God. For by no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that we might receive the adoption of sons?"¹⁶

Jesus, having recreated mankind into the adopted sons of God goes a step further and gives us His Mother at the foot of the Cross. "When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there who he loved, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son.' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother.'¹⁷ He entrusts this new humanity, a redeemed humanity to His mother. Hers was "an election connected with the very core of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word - the reality that he is Son of man, descendant of Adam and head of the human race."¹⁸ Mary was chosen to bear the Son, she became the instrument through which Jesus would redeem the physical characteristics of humanity. "Had He received nothing from Mary [as the Gnostics believe], He would never have taken the foods which come from earth, the foods by which the body taken from the earth is nourished. Nor would He have felt hunger after fasting, like Moses and Elijah..."¹⁹ Without

Mary Jesus would not have felt hunger, pain, suffering, tiredness, etc..., for is it from Her that He receives His humanity. When one ponders this reality one can begin to understand the immensity and the importance of Mary's yes to God the Father. Danielle Rose, a contemporary Catholic singer beautifully expresses it in her song *Let it be done unto me*,

"And all the heavens and the earth stand still in silence, waiting for her soul to reply. She is free to choose: God will never abuse the sacred Yes she cannot be denied. 'Let it be done unto me!' With one small yes the world will be redeemed. What was impossible is now a possibility. Let it be done unto me!"

Blessed John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Fides et Ratio*, no.13

² Blessed John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Mother of the Redeemer*, no.13

³ Saint Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 5, 32, 1 PG 7/2, 210

⁴ Theresa de Avila, *The Interior Castle*, page 172

⁵ Genesis 1:27

⁶ 1 John 4:16

⁷ 1 John 4:10

⁸ John 1:12

⁹ Theresa de Avila, *The Interior Castle*, page 179

¹⁰ Summa Theologiae, Saint Thomas Aquinas, III. q3, a8

¹¹ Aidan Nichols, *Discovering Aquinas: An Introduction to His Life, Work, and Influence*, page 114

¹² Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC), 458

¹³ Summa contra gentiles, book 4, Ch 55, 12

¹⁴ Summa Theologiae, Saint Thomas Aquinas, III.q1, a2

¹⁵ Rom 8:30

¹⁶ Saint Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres.* 3.19.1

¹⁷ John 19:26

¹⁸ Juan Luis Bastero, *Mary, Mother of the Redeemer*, page 154

¹⁹ Irenaeus, *The Scandal of the Incarnation*, page 61

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