

'In God Is Our Trust'

SERMON DELIVERED BY BISHOP KEARNEY In Nation-Wide Broadcast On Mutual Broadcasting Company CHURCH OF THE AIR SUNDAY, DECEMBER 28

At this season of the year, the eyes and hearts are drawn in memory and in love to a Babe who was born in a cave outside of Bethlehem, the Babe Whose birth shook the world to its very foundation. It is the hour of the stupendous mystery of Omnipotence wrapped in swaddling bands and laid in a manger. Divinity is always where the world least expects to find it. No one in the world ever would have thought that He Who threw the fiery ball of the sun into the Heavens, would one day be warmed by the breath of oxen. No one in the world would ever have thought that He Who could make for Himself a canopy of stars, would one day be covered by the roof of a stable. And yet such are the ways of God. In order to confound the power of the world He comes in the weakness of a child, and in order to set at naught its pride, He makes His bed in straw.

What an extraordinary sign to mark the birth of the Redeemer of mankind. Because He was a Redeemer it was expedient that he should heal the wounds which sin had inflicted on human nature. Pride and sensuality were the chief sources of man's disorder. If Christ, then, had displayed them at His coming, He would have increased rather than cured his infirmities. Nothing, then, but the opposite virtues should have marked the coming of Him who was to be the Saviour of the world. Man had sinned by pride; humility was its remedy; he transgressed by sensuality, it was expedient that it should be corrected by mortification; and therefore, Christ appearing in an humble and suffering condition was invested with those qualities that became the nature of His office.

REJECTED BY HAUGHTY

I know that this lowly appearance is not one that is flattering to opulence or pride. It is one under which the children of the world are unwilling to recognize their Redeemer. I am not surprised it was one that was not pleasing to His own contemporaries; and many who would have gladly confessed Him, had He come in all the pomp of a worldly king, rejected Him because He was born in a stable in Bethlehem. Having witnessed the lowliness of His birth, they turned with disdain from one who deceived all their expectations, and though He afterwards wrought miracles in support of His mission they would have still preferred a Messiah who would have flattered all their carnal hopes.

You may be surprised at their blindness; but do not some of us furnish many similar characters, who make of religion a matter of temporal policy, and who would rather follow him who would flatter their passions, than the other who would dash all their hopes by telling them that the God whom they adored recommended suffering and mortification.

By humbling Himself, and assuming our nature, He becomes at once the partner of our sufferings, and therefore entitled to the warmest affections of the human heart. This is the circumstance that gives the mystery of this day its greatest consolation, reminding us that our Saviour, as God, is able, and, as man, is willing to heal our infirmities. Were He only God, the fear of His power might repulse us from approaching Him. Were He only man, we might approach Him in vain, since the feelings of pity are not always joined to the power of giving relief. But being God and man, have we not the strongest grounds of confidence; and how consoling is the mystery of this day, which represents the Divinity clothed without nature and sharing in all its tenderness, thus engaging all our love without diminishing our veneration. But you may like to hear on this subject the inspired language of St. Paul: "Having therefore, a great High Priest, who hath penetrated the Heavens, Jesus, the Son of God; let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but One tempted in all things

like as we are, without sin.

"Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid." These words of the Apostle unfold to us one of the strongest motives of confidence that ever swayed the human heart. He exhorts us to approach with confidence the throne of grace. And why? Because our High Priest is not one "who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but One tempted in all things, except sin, like as we are." Let a poor man tell his distress to him who never knew what misery was. His tale cannot reach his heart, because it is a stranger to such feeling. Let him talk to the luxurious, who revel in enjoyment, of sorrow and privation; he talks to him of a subject he cannot understand, because it never came home to his own soul; he therefore talks to one who has no sympathy with his sorrow. But let him tell the same story to one, who himself endured the same afflictions which he hears; his heart is immediately touched with the feelings of pity which instantly mingle with those of the supplicant; and thus, by sharing in his woe, he lightens the load of his afflictions. Such is precisely the reasoning of St. Paul.

Let us go, therefore, with confidence to the throne of grace, because we have a High Priest who was tempted in all things like as we are. He will lend an ear to the tale of your distress, because He Himself has felt it. If you are in poverty, Jesus Christ, your High Priest, has felt it too. You cannot suffer anything that He did not endure before you. And hence St. Paul remarks: "Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like to His brethren that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest before God; that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that wherein He Himself hath suffered and been tempted, He is able to succour those also who are tempted." Hence our very misery is a motive of our confidence, and our weakness is converted into a source of joy, according to the language of the Psalmist: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart thy comforts have given joy to my soul."

LISTEN TO DOCTRINE

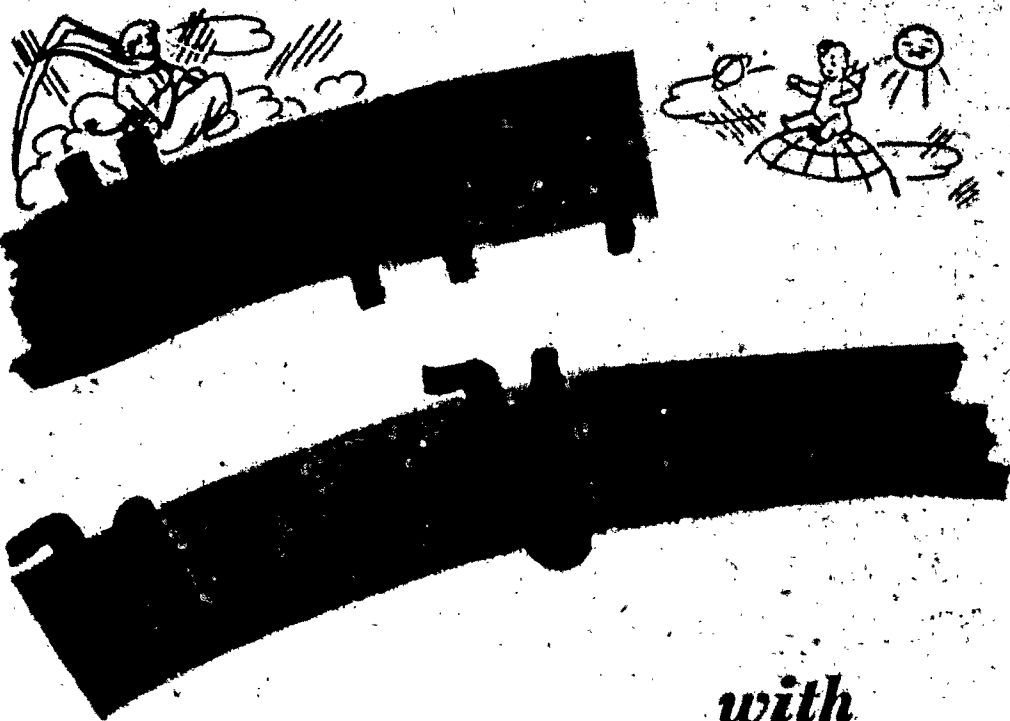
Approach, then, with confidence to your Redeemer, who teaches you from His cradle in Bethlehem with more efficacy than any language could teach you. Listen to the doctrine which He enforces by His example, and learn the spirit of compassion and tenderness from Him whose pity for the human race brought Him down from Heaven to alleviate their sufferings.

Inspired with confidence then, we turn our thoughts to Almighty God, the unfailing source of strength and of solace in times of peril. "I am the salvation of the people," saith the Lord. From whatever tribulation they shall have cried to me, I will hear them; and I will be their Lord forever." God has so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son for the world's salvation. In the days of His earthly pilgrimage, the Son of God taught us to ask from our Father in Heaven all that we need for our spiritual and temporal sustenance and welfare, and He promised that prayer offered in His Name would be answered. God, our Father, will never turn away from the prayer, which rises from hearts filled with confidence in His power and goodness. "Be appeased, O Lord, by the sacrifice which we offer," prays the Church in the Mass in Time of War. "May it be our safeguard in all the dangers of war-time, and may it enable us to count upon the sureness of Thy protection. Through Christ, Our Lord."

RESTING PEACE

Well may all who put their trust in God rejoice this Christmas, even though the clouds of war hang over the country. Christmas is a time of giving, and this year above all others we can bring no more

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