



Allocutio



PRAESENTATA CURIA

Allocutio 24th November 2016

The Incarnation

We are on the cusp of Advent and not long we will be celebrating Christmas. Just a few reflections around that to help us keep our focus.

I say that because if you go by some secular outlets you can see the lights of this world, food, Santa Claus, Rudolf's nose or antlers; anything but what it is all about.

Advent is about the coming of Christ: his coming before he was born in Bethlehem, his coming in our lives now and his coming at the end of time.

But it is also a season when the figure of Mary shines out, perhaps more than any other season. Please do not get me wrong: we do have great feasts of hers other times of the year but between the Immaculate Conception, her giving birth to Christ at Bethlehem and her Motherhood and the many other Gospel passages we hear in this season she seems to share equally the platform with her Son.

But she would, I believe, join the Baptist in saying, "No. He must increase, I must decrease". That is a tone and theme of her Magnificat.

We must never forget the awesome mystery we are celebrating in this season: God become man. That is the heart of it all. The God who is behind all that is enters his creation and not only that but identifies himself fully with a particular species, much to the annoyance of certain angels, who do the dirty on God and then on us.

One image you could use is that of the Prince who comes to visit the leading ladies of the kingdom and sets his heart on one. Most of the others are delighted and rejoice. But a jealous section is bitter and sets out to make life miserable for the chosen one and does all in its power to "show-up" the chosen beloved by exposing all her flaws. However the Prince is not put off. Although degraded and put down and lowered in ignominy he sees her beauty even when

muddied by her sins and loves her so much he will come to rescue her and restore her to the beauty he saw in her from the start and indeed make her even more radiant. It is a story told in so many tales that are in fact the mystery of God's choice remodelled and retold.

God loves us. God desires us. God wants to bring nothing to us but good. God as the Bridegroom so loves us he wants to be part of our lives, so much so that he will even undergo our death and indeed, so as to assure the most wretchedly treated, he will join in the worst form of death we can impose on one another and go through that. On the one hand we can wonder at what right we have to be viewed favourably by God; on the other because he has shared our life to the dregs his heart has nothing but the greatest pity and love for us.

It is the greatest mystery of all: God united to the human race. He who made the Universe, shown by science in its awesomeness, joins himself to that Universe. He sneaks in hidden in a most un-expected place. But it is a place he has already prepared.

Many people out there do not grasp this at all, even those well-disposed to Jesus. If God is coming to meet his Bride, he'd like to see her at her best. After the fall he had to wait till the first opportunity of the restored race appeared. This had been a Promise made to the original couple who had fallen for the jealous spirit's ploy.

Mary is not just the physical place where God enters our world. That is massive in itself. But she is already the first restored, the most graced, the sign of the future of what we are to be. She is the morning star signalling the redeemed with all their beauty, the first sample of the new-bride, washed already clean by the blood of her little Lamb.

That cleansing reached its climax on Calvary but had already begun through many of the generations who had themselves been through earlier forms of the Cross. For example the flood, the Passover, the Babylonian exile. St. Matthew, whose Gospel will dominate in the coming year, is at pains to show that all that happens in the Christ event, was already pre-figured in the many events of the history of God's people.

God becomes man. If there is one event that should dominate our thoughts this season think of the groom coming to meet his bride and becoming one with her. Christ's union with Mary symbolises all this. Mary represents that Bride of

Christ and makes it possible for this to happen. Let us ask her to lead us to be changed so that the Groom may see in us all what his heart desires. Amen.