

Meditations for December

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"The King Who is to come; O come let us adore Him."

1st Day: WHO IS OUR KING?

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/1.html>

Our King is Jesus Christ, God and Man. The name Jesus indicates His Divine nature. For Jesus means Saviour ("Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins"-- Matt. i. 21). Now from our sins none can save us but One who is Himself God; none else can pay the debt due for man's sin. Hence He who is our King is also our Saviour; and He who is our Saviour must be God, the God of infinite majesty, infinite power, and infinite knowledge. This is why before the name of Jesus every knee must bow; because the name of Jesus is the name of God. If men glory in having a noble King, how much more ought we to rejoice in having as our King the Omnipotent God and Lord of Heaven and earth.

The second name of our King, Christ indicates his human nature. For Christ means anointed, and it was not possible for God as God to receive that sacred anointing of the Holy Spirit which our King claims for Himself in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke iv. 18). He could be anointed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit only as man. As man, our King shares our human nature; He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; He does not disdain to call us His brethren. He puts Himself on a level with us; knows by His own experience all our difficulties and troubles; and loves us with a true human brotherly love. How happy are we to have a King who will never misjudge or misunderstand us, but has a perfect sympathy and compassion for all our miseries!

Our King is Jesus Christ, and therefore at the same time God and Man. This union of the Infinite and the Finite surpasses our comprehension. We can only adore.

2nd Day: OUR KING'S CLAIM TO SOVEREIGNTY
<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/2.html>

Jesus Christ, as God, has an absolute right to our unfailing and universal obedience. He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and every created being in Heaven and on earth is bound to carry out His Divine will in all things. We owe Him homage and adoration as the continual and unceasing tribute to which He has a right by virtue of His supreme Majesty. He is the Lord our God, and we are His servants. His handmaidens, the sheep of His pasture. Rejoice in being subject to such a King, adore His Majesty, and fall down at His feet and promise Him obedience in every detail of your life.

Jesus Christ has also an unlimited claim on us as our Creator. "By Him all things were made." Now creation gives the most perfect title to ownership that exists; nothing is so completely ours as that which we in some sense create. Hence we belong entirely to our King. We are His absolute property and possession. We have no rights of our own in opposition to His. His rights over us, over all that we call ours, over our body and our soul, are all-embracing. We shall therefore, if we are wise, put ourselves and all our faculties, especially our will, to Him to do with us as He pleases.

Jesus Christ is also our King as being the heir of the Eternal Father. God has appointed Him, says St. Paul (Heb. i. 2), heir of all things. He has the right of inheritance, Man though he is, to all the glory and all the dominion of the Eternal Father. He entered on His inheritance when He trampled on sin and on death. No wonder, then, that St. Paul says: "All things are ours; and we are Christ's and Christ is God's." We inherit God's good things as subjects of Christ our King.

3rd Day: FURTHER CLAIMS OF OUR KING

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Jesus Christ has also received the sovereignty of the world, not merely by way of inheritance, but as having had it entrusted to Him by His Eternal Father, and placed in His hands with full authority to wield it. "The Father loveth the Son, and has given all things into His hand," are the words of our Lord Himself. "Thou hast set Him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast subjected all things under His feet," are the words of the Psalmist referring to our Lord. I therefore am in the hands of *Jesus Christ*; how happy should I be to have so good a Master.

Our King is also King by conquest. He has fought and vanquished the foe who had gained possession of the King's territory, the Prince of this world, whom our King utterly routed by His Passion and by Death. He has trampled him under His feet, and the regions he had usurped have become the kingdoms of our Lord. Henceforth we have no reason to fear the usurper and all his supporters. We have only to meet them boldly in the Name of our King, and they will fly in terror.

Our King also holds His Kingdom by this very excellence as one whose nature gives Him a right to rule. His place among the sons of men is naturally that of their King; He is of necessity supreme over them, "inasmuch as He has inherited a more excellent name than they." He rises above all mankind not merely as a giant among pigmies, but as a mountain among the grains of sand which make up the dust of the plains. Admire the natural dignity and majesty of *Christ our King*.

4th Day: FURTHER CLAIMS OF OUR KING

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/4.html>

Jesus Christ is our King and Lord, and we are His subjects; nay, we belong to Him as His property and possession, because He has purchased us for a great price. The price He has paid is not gold or earthly treasure. It is nothing less than His own precious blood, of which He shed the last drop upon the Cross as the price of our redemption. Each drop of that blood had a greater value than all things that are in Heaven and on earth: yet our King gave it all, and at the cost of pain and anguish unspeakable, that we poor miserable wretches might be His loyal servants, instead of the slaves of the devil. Hence we belong entirely to Him, absolute, complete submission is our duty and our privilege.

Our King also has dominion over us as members of His mystical Body, the Church which He has founded, and which He has joined to Himself as His mystical Spouse. Inasmuch, then, as we belong to the Church, we claim Him as our Sovereign, and we also share in all the gifts and all the privileges that He has communicated to His holy Spouse. As the Church obeys Him, so ought we to do; as she can never be unfaithful to Him in the very smallest detail, so ought our devotion to enter into every action.

Our King also rules over us by our free choice. We chose Him at our Baptism by the voice of our Sponsors; we chose Him at our Confirmation by our own free will; we choose Him by each prayer we offer, each hymn we utter in His honour, each aspiration we make to Him to guide and help us, each time we cry out to Him, My Lord and My God! Once again, O Christ my Lord, I freely choose Thee as the King to rule my heart, my will, my intellect, my whole self.

The Kingdom of our King is no earthly Kingdom. This was the mistake made by Herod; he thought the new-born King was come to wrest from him his sceptre as King of Judaea. Our Lord Himself expressly declared: "My Kingdom is not of this world." All worldly ambition is therefore not only out of place in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, but is directly at variance with its spirit. Do not I too often set my heart on earthly things, and make them the objects of my ambition, instead of those things that belong to the Kingdom of my King and will find favour with Him?

The Kingdom of our King is a Heavenly Kingdom. He Himself speaks of it as the Kingdom of Heaven. He brought it down with Him from Heaven to earth, in order to found it among men. It was founded on earth, in order to provide fresh members for it, as it exists and will exist to all eternity, in Heaven. All those who belong to it must have their hearts set on Heaven. They must seek those things that are above. They must do their best to conform themselves to the Kingdom of Christ as it exists in Heaven. My God! grant that I may be one of the loyal members of Thy Kingdom on earth, that so I may deserve to be joined to its happy company in Heaven.

The Kingdom of Jesus Christ is the Kingdom of truth. He tells us that the object of His coming into the world was to give testimony to the truth. The Kingdom of our King must be the home of perfect truth. No lie can enter into it; no error can be incorporated with its teaching. He who loves the truth is attracted towards the true Catholic Church; he who hates it hates also the Church of Christ.

6th Day: THE KING'S SERVICE

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/6.html>

In our last meditation we saw that we enrol ourselves in the service of our King at our Baptism, our Confirmation, whenever we offer ourselves to God. What is the nature of that service?

It is a service obligatory on all. Every rational being born into the world is bound to enlist in it, and that under the severest penalties. This follows from our relation to our King as our Creator and our God. Whether we acknowledge the obligation or not, it continually is present for us, and embraces our whole life. No human being is exempt from the service of his Creator. Do I recognize this relation, and do I rejoice in it?

The service of the King, though obligatory, is not compulsory. We can hold aloof from Him, and serve other masters, if we choose. He does not force the free will of any of his subjects. Man's perverse will can, if he chooses, set itself in opposition to the will of God, and can so remain through all eternity. It is in the hands of each individual man to enlist in his King's service or not. How have I used my liberty? Have I attached myself to my King in willing subjection, or stood aloof from His service?

Yet we must join some service. If we do not serve our King, we shall of necessity fall under the dominion of some other master. Independence is impossible to any created being, however much he may desire it. To shirk the service of the King is to sink into some form of vile and disgraceful servitude. It is only in His service that true liberty can be found. Do I realize and act upon this?

7th Day: OUR KING'S ENEMIES

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/7.html>

Our King, in spite of His Divine perfections, in spite of His power. His claims to rule, and His unspeakable goodness and love, has nevertheless many and irreconcilable enemies.

His first enemy is the devil, or rather the innumerable company of devils who make it their one object to insult and outrage Him with insatiable fierceness and hatred. They spare no pains, they neglect no means within their reach, to carry on a deadly war against Him and His soldiers. Nothing can satisfy their malice and their fury. Their one object is to destroy the happiness and ruin the souls of all those who are stamped with the image of our King. How is it that, knowing this, I so often listen to their suggestions?

His second enemy is the world around us, which acknowledges principles opposed to those by which our King desires that we should be guided. It is actuated by a covert selfishness, by self-love, by earthly ambition, by a desire to be highly esteemed by others, by the greed of gain. It seeks to explain away the precepts of our King, and it despises His counsels. It puts Him, as far as possible, in the background or out of sight. Do I not too often act on these worldly principles?

His third enemy is our own nature, tainted as it is with sin. Self-will is strong within us, defying God. Concupiscence bribes us by the promise of pleasures, which will make us enemies of our King, or at least will weaken our fidelity to Him. Pride urges us on to actual rebellion, in matters great or small. Do I fight manfully against these enemies of my King?

8th Day: HIS SOLDIERS' ARMOR

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/8.html>

To the soldiers of our King the shield of Faith is indispensable. Without Faith it is impossible to please God, and without Faith no one can be a true soldier of Jesus Christ. It is the Faith of the Christian that overcomes the world and puts the devil to flight. The Faith of the martyrs won them their crown; the Faith of confessors enabled them to work miracles; it is this Faith which is dear to every true Catholic beyond all else. And this Faith must be a living Faith, if it is to avail us against the foe. It must be actuated by charity; it must comprise firm confidence in God and dependence on Him. With such a Faith we are secure against all the assaults of the King's enemies.

The Christian soldier must also have the sword of the Spirit, which is the "Word of God," and which consists in obedience to all those holy inspirations that God puts into our minds, and all the holy lessons that we learn from Holy Scripture, the sermons we hear, the pious books we read, and the example of others. These holy inspirations are chiefly gained in prayer, and without prayer we shall never be safe. Without prayer we never shall be able to put the devil to flight, and to withstand the seductive influence of the world, and the temptations of the flesh.

The Christian soldier must also be clothed with the breastplates of justice. Justice is the virtue which makes us give to each his due, and primarily which makes us give God His due. To God we owe everything we have; nothing is really our own. Yet how grudging we are in giving to God His due in our worship, in our alms, in our remembrance of Him, and our dependence upon Him.

9th Day: WAYS AND MEANS

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/9.html>

During the time of our warfare on earth we are surrounded with a number of persons and things, all of which are intended by our King to be means of gaining a complete victory over our enemies, and of rendering to Him the tribute of our faithful service. All our relations and friends, all those who love us and set us a good example, all who call forth our charity, or our zeal, or our devotion to our King, are in His design meant to further our welfare. And not these only, but also all those who cause us sorrow and pain, those who treat us unkindly, those who misunderstand us, all will help us in our warfare, if we try to use them as we know our King would desire.

All the circumstances of our life are also means provided by our King to promote our own happiness, and our success in His service, whether we have prosperity or adversity, whether we succeed or fail in our undertakings, whether we have good health or frequent sickness, whether we have great talents or are wanting in ability. Each is intended as a means to help us in our warfare. Do I seek to turn all the circumstances of my life to my own advantage in life's warfare?

We may go still further and say that all our personal defects, our temptations, our evil tendencies, our frailties, our imperfections, are, in our "King's design intended for our good. Even our past offenses, grievous though they may have been, and in themselves simply evil, through the mercy of our King may yet be turned to good, as was the case with many saints who had been great sinners. Do I thus avail myself of all my environment in the battle of life?

10th Day: REBELLION AGAINST OUR KING

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/10.html>

What do we mean by rebellion? We mean refusal to submit to the lawful authority of the King, to whose dominion the rebel is subject; it involves a desire, actual or virtual, to shake off his yoke, and even to dethrone him if opportunity offers. Let us see how this applies to those, who are rebels against Jesus Christ our King.

The rebellion of man was not the first instance of rebellion that the universe had witnessed. Previously a vast number of beings far superior to him had declared open revolt. They were conscious of their own excellence, and began to esteem themselves by reason of it, forgetting that they had received it from God. And when He required of them that they should adore, they rose in rebellion, and refused to obey. Every act of wilful disobedience of which I am guilty is therefore some approach to the sin that consigned the devils to hell.

Why was this so grievous, so unpardonable? It was because of the wonderful graces and gifts God had bestowed upon them, because of the very nobility of their nature. It was also because it was a sin, not of weakness, but of malice, pure and simple. There was nothing to be gained by it, except an imagined liberty. It was the pure craving of self-will for indulgence. Is not this the character of many of my offenses, which thus makes me like to the devils?

Did God forgive the angels who rebelled? Had they a chance of retrieving themselves? No, not one. They were cast down for ever into hell. Hence if God has forgiven my offenses against my King, it is owing simply to His gratuitous mercy and love.

11th Day: THE TRUE NATURE OF REBELLION

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/11.html>

Rebellion consists in any wilful disobedience to the express commands of our King in order to gratify our own will, or promote what seems to us to be our interest. Let us see what such disobedience involves.

It involves a preference of ourselves to God our King, of our supposed advantage to His glory. It thus reverses the order of Divine Providence. The disobedient man places himself, so to speak, above his King, and, instead of serving his King, seeks to make his King serve him. He who is Lord of Heaven and earth is set aside for a miserable worm, made of the dust of the earth, who is of no account and nothing. What insolence could be greater than this?

Every act of disobedience treats as of no account the Passion and Death of our King. It deliberately adds to His suffering, and if it is a serious act of disobedience it in some way shares the malice and cruelty of those who scourged and mocked Christ, and put Him to death. St. Paul tells us that when, after swearing allegiance to Him, we afterwards join the ranks of His enemies, we "crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame." What is not deserved by those who are guilty of such infamy?

Rebellion and disobedience to our King are also the most frightful ingratitude. Nothing is more hateful than to return evil for good. When we think of the most generous sacrifice of Himself that our King made of His life for us, what can be more shamelessly base and ungrateful than to insult and outrage Him in return. Yet this, (alas!) is what I have too often done.

12th Day: THE PUNISHMENT OF REBELLION

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/12.html>

The just and holy God cannot allow a single act of rebellion against Jesus Christ our King to go unpunished. Even if the rebel submits, some punishment must be inflicted. But what if he does not submit?

The sentence passed upon every such rebel is perpetual banishment from the presence of the King--"Depart from Me, ye cursed." This sentence implies misery through all eternity, for to be deprived of God, when we have once appreciated, even in the faintest degree, His infinite beauty, will fill the heart of the exile with such a continual longing after Him, that the consciousness that this longing will never be satisfied, will fill him with remorse, dismay, terror, self-reproach, hopelessness, despair. O my God, grant that I may never be separated from Thee!

To the sentence of banishment is added the King's anathema--"ye cursed." The curse of God carries with it every possible misfortune. It blights a man's whole being. All his faculties are to him sources of pain instead of pleasure. The senses, instead of admitting to his soul that which causes it satisfaction, will only admit what is a cause of pain. The memory will call up all that is horrible --the intellect will be deprived of truth; and the heart of peace, of love, while hatred, hatred of all the world, hatred of self will take its place. May I, through God's mercy, never fall under the curse of our King.

Besides all this, the body will suffer its own punishment, and that punishment will be the pain of burning, of all pains the one that we most dread. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." May this thought help me to have a wholesome fear of any sort of rebellion, and of all that leads to it.

13th Day: ADVANTAGES OF THE KING'S SERVICE

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/13.html>

We are bound to serve our King, because He has every claim on us. He is our God, our Creator, our Saviour, our rightful Monarch. But is it to our interest to serve Him?

*H*is service is a happy service. We never can be solidly or permanently happy unless we enrol ourselves to it. To serve any other master is slavery, and cannot satisfy the cravings of our heart. In the service of our King is the most perfect liberty that is within the reach of mortal man. If we make the will of our King our own will, we shall always be able to do our own will by doing His. Our higher and rational will never be thwarted, and we cannot fail to be happy all our life long.

*H*is service is one in which we are always safe. No one can harm us. Our King engages to supply us with weapons and armour, which if we employ we shall be perfectly safe from the hands of our foes. If ever we are wounded or slain, it is entirely our own fault. It is because we do not use our arms, or because we neglect His orders or advice. Dangers we shall have to pass through; suffering we shall have to endure, but no real injury; nay, what is the most difficult and painful will be the means of the most brilliant success.

When the victory is won, we shall have a most magnificent reward. We shall have a share in the glory and in the happiness of our King Himself. He will invite us to a celestial banquet of endless delights, of which we shall never grow weary; we shall bask in the joy of His love, and in the exquisite happiness of being always with Him, and with His angels and saints, and of gazing forever on His Divine beauty. How is it, then, that I am so slack in His service?

14th Day: ADVANTAGES OF THE KING'S SERVICE

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/14.html>

Many servants of the King, though not actually rebels against Him, are nevertheless disloyal in little things. They neglect the regulations of the service, they disobey Him in points of detail, they neglect His interests for their own enjoyment or supposed advantage, human respect prevents them from being thorough in the King's service; idleness makes them negligent of their duty. They let their arms get dull and blunted; they are not on their watch against the foe, and so are liable to be overcome by him. Is not this my case in the spiritual service of Jesus Christ?

These acts of disloyalty, which do not amount to actual revolt, but yet involve some degree of contempt for our King, and of ingratitude to Him, are what we call venial sins. They are an evil greater than any other evil in the universe, save actual rebellion. They gradually weaken our love and devotion to Him and prepare the way for open disaffection. They deprive us of many a favour and many a grace that we should otherwise have received; they impair our power of resisting the foes who attack us; they destroy our happiness and our peace of mind. Am I conscious of any that I wilfully commit?

What is the punishment of these acts of disloyalty? Unless they are repented of and atoned for, they will involve a long and dreadful time of suffering when life is over. In darkness, and in bitter sorrow, and in desolation, and in agonizing pain, we shall lament over and expiate the little venial sins that undermined our love of our King in this life, and will condemn us to long imprisonment in the cleansing fires before we can see God's face in Heaven.

15th Day: ADVANTAGES OF THE KING'S SERVICE

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/15.html>

We are all bound to serve our King and fight against His enemies, but this obligation we are too prone to forget, and our King therefore has issued an appeal to all who recognize His sovereignty, and has called upon them to come and fight with Him. The object of His campaign is to drive back the host of enemies who are seeking to rob Him of His sovereignty, and to corrupt and destroy His subjects, and to bring destruction on all who are fighting in His cause. The campaign may be a long one, but our King can absolutely promise ultimate victory to everyone who will serve Him faithfully. Who would not be anxious to serve a King who could make such a promise as this?

But our King does far more than this. He offers to share with His soldiers all the hardships of the campaign, all the sufferings, all the weariness, all the physical exhaustion and all the mental anxiety and pain. He does more; He offers to undergo (and has actually undergone) all these hardships and sufferings in a far worse form and a far more acute degree than that which will be imposed on any of His soldiers. He further promises that in every danger and suffering He will be at their side to help and comfort them, and enable them to be victorious in every struggle.

He also promises that His faithful soldiers, one and all, shall share in all the fruits of the victory. His glory will be their glory. His joy their joy. His happiness their happiness. They shall come and join with Him in His triumph, and shall dwell with Him forever. What shall we say of one who does not accept such an offer as this, or who is careless and disloyal in such a service?

16th Day: OUR KING'S TRIBUNAL

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/16.html>

One day all the servants of the King will appear before Him to receive the sentence of reward or punishment that they have deserved. None can escape the summons before that tribunal. There we shall stand with a perfectly vivid recollection of all our deeds, whether good or bad, and each will receive from the hands of our King his just recompense. Then there will be no hiding of any of our faults, no making of excuses, no petitioning for mercy. Our King, who is now our merciful and indulgent Friend, will then be our just and severe Judge. What reason I have to dread the day, which must come sooner or later, and how soon, I do not know.

This day may come upon me very suddenly. I may go to sleep in peace some night, and ere day breaks, find myself standing before the King's tribunal. Even if I have some forewarning, how unlikely it is that I shall then have the same opportunities of preparing for it that I have now! Then I shall be feeble, and perhaps in severe pain, scarce able to reflect on anything. How foolish to put off until then my preparation for that dread account.

The sentence passed will be a final one. I must not forget that. No further opportunity of making amends, or expressing sorrow for the past, or of humbling ourselves for our manifold offenses and sins. We shall then see in our King, either one who will look upon us with looks of love, and with whom we shall dwell in happiness unspeakable through eternity; or else we shall shrink away in an agony of terror from our Judge.

17th Day: OUR KING AS OUR TEACHER

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/17.html>

Our King is not only our Master and Ruler, but also our Teacher in all that is of the greatest importance to our welfare. He says of Himself: "For this I came into the world, that I might give testimony to the truth." He is always ready to teach us, if we look to Him for instruction and guidance. We cannot go wrong, so long as we carry out His precepts, and conform our opinions to what He has revealed to us. All our errors arise either from our ignorance, or from our ears being dulled by the din of the world, or by self-will and self-love, which deafen our ears to His voice when He teaches us what is true and right.

But it is not safe to trust to what we think is His voice speaking within us. It is easy here to deceive ourselves and to fancy we hear His voice, when we really are listening to the echoes of our own prejudices, or our own self-will. He has therefore provided an external voice, whose teaching none can mistake. His Priests and Bishops execute His authority. "He who hears you," He says, "hears Me." Am I thoroughly loyal to the Church in all her teaching, accepting it with unquestioning faith as the voice of my King and Master, Jesus Christ?

Our King also teaches us through the pages of Holy Scripture, of which God is the Author, and especially by all the discourses and parables, as recorded by the Evangelists. All these we must treasure up in our hearts as jewels of truth, and faithfully obey as the commands of our King. When we are not certain of their meaning, we must seek an explanation from those who teach in our King's name, and accept it in a loyal spirit of submission.

18th Day: THE EXAMPLE OF OUR KING

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/18.html>

How can we poor, weak and sinful men ever hope to conform ourselves to the example of our King and God, the Spotless Lamb of God? Is not the task an impossible one? No, it is possible, and within our reach, for—

The prevailing feature of His life was unselfishness, and we all can be unselfish if we choose, and love unselfishness, and wish to be ourselves unselfish. To call anyone selfish, is to brand him at once as one whom we cannot love, or even esteem; as a despicable character, and as one whom we shall do well to avoid. On the other hand, a thoroughly unselfish man cannot fail to be loved; there is something very attractive about him; we rejoice in his society; we wish to be like him. And unselfishness is, besides, within everyone's reach. Hence our King, in giving us a pattern of unselfishness, gives us a pattern of the most attractive of all qualities, and one within everyone's reach.

Our King in proposing Himself for our example, puts forward another virtue, which we all can imitate, and which in us is but common sense. "Learn of Me," He says "for I am meek and humble of heart." Now humility in us is but the esteeming ourselves at our true value; in recognizing that we have nothing good of our own; and that we are therefore to be placed below others, not above them. This we can all practice, and must practice, if we are to be like to our King, who humbled Himself.

The third point in which we can easily imitate our King is obedience. He was obedient in every detail of His life to the will of His eternal Father. If we try in all the particulars of our life to do what God wills, not what we will, we cannot fail to become dear to our King.

19th Day: THE CONDESCENSION OF OUR KING

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/19.html>

Condescension is the stooping from a higher position, in order to place ourselves on a level with those whose position is a lower one than our own. The good teacher stoops to the level of a learner, in order to become intelligible to him; the prince who loves his people stoops to kindly and familiar intercourse, or comes down from his own level to that of others. What shall we say, then, of the condescension of our King, who was God, co-equal with the Father, when He stooped to our low estate, and came to dwell among those whom He had made out of the dust of the earth? How can we ever appreciate as we ought this debasement of Himself for our sakes?

If our King had for one moment taken the form of one of the archangels, or had appeared for an instant among us clad in a human form of majesty, such condescension on the part of the Infinite God would have had an infinite value. It would have been an infinite debasement of His glory and dignity. What, then, was the Divine condescension that led Him to hide Himself in the womb of one of His own creatures, to appear as a helpless babe, to grow up as if an ordinary human being, to appear among men as the inferior and the servant of others, and to mix with the sinful worms of earth as His friends and brethren!

But all this did not satisfy Him. He must needs prepare for Himself not merely a humble life, but one of rejection, and insult, and outrage. He desired to stoop as low as He possibly could, to submit to be trampled on, spat upon, and even put to a slave's death. How strange, with such an example before me, that I should be so unwilling to stoop! It is because I am misled by my pride, and do not see in what true dignity consists.

There are very few great and illustrious men whose greatness is not in some way derived from, or connected with, the great and noble qualities of their mothers. Let us see how far this is the case with Jesus Christ our King.

The Mother of our King was the only human being who never once swerved by one hair's breadth from the will of God. Of all the millions who have trod the earth, she alone was entirely exempt from sin; she only earned to the full the blessing pronounced by her Son--"Whoever will do the will of God, the same is My father and sister and mother." This was the reason why our King chose her as His abode when He came down to dwell on earth. Oh, that I were sinless, like Mary! but as this cannot be, I will ask her, in honour of her Divine Son, that all my sins may be washed away, and also, that I may henceforward always carry out what I know to be the will of God.

The Mother of our King was the only woman who bore a son and yet remained a pure virgin, her childbearing consecrating, not impairing her virginity. This, miracle as it was, was but the natural result of her being the Mother of God. O unspotted and immaculate Mother, obtain for me that thy Son may pour into my heart a greater purity, that my heart may be less unworthy of the presence of Him who loved to dwell in thy spotless womb!

Jesus derived from Mary His Sacred Body; His flesh was formed of Mary's flesh. And in return she derived from Him that splendour of grace and holiness that raised her body and soul to the height of Heaven.

21st Day: *THE KING'S MESSENGERS*

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/21.html>

Our King has a countless number of messengers, angels, whom He employs to carry His messages to His soldiers on earth, to execute His orders, and to bring back to Him a report of their welfare and their doings. What are the tidings that they have to carry to and fro?

Sometimes they carry words of comfort and encouragement to the servants of God, consoling them in distress and in anguish, as the Angel of the Passion consoled our King Himself. Sometimes, too, they exhort and reprove, speaking in the name of our King Himself. "Do not think him one to be condemned," says Holy Scripture, "for My name is in him; and if thou wilt hear his voice, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them, who afflict thee." Am I obedient to the message of my King, when it is whispered in my ears?

Sometimes these holy messengers are sent to do works of mercy or of vengeance. How often has one of them turned aside from bodily or spiritual harm some servant of our King! How often through their means have the servants of our King triumphed over their foes! I think far too little of these invisible messengers and of all that they have done for me. If I realized how much they have done for me I should be more constant in honouring them.

These messengers also carry before the throne of our King the story of the struggle between His soldiers and their foes. Sometimes they carry the glad report of some victory won by a servant of God over his passions; sometimes they cry for vengeance on those who have given scandal; sometimes they offer to God our prayers. What sort of reports do they carry about me to my King?

22nd Day: *THE OFFICERS OF OUR KING*

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/22.html>

Our King, in dealing with His subjects, does not issue all His commands Himself. He follows the method of all human government, and has officers who give their orders in His name and with His authority. Who are these officers?

They are the Bishops and Priests of the Church that He has founded who remain faithful to Him and His teachings. To these He expressly says, "He who hears you, hears Me." They bear His Divine authority. They are one and all, in their several degrees, the successors of His Apostles.

But there are other officers of my King who hold their commission from Him. Every lawful government in the civil order is a power appointed by Him, and every kind of natural authority, whether of parents, teachers, or other superiors, marks those who hold it as delegates of our King. Do I remember this when I am tempted to show disobedience or disrespect to my superiors, or to speak slightly of them?

But if we are thus most strictly bound to obey the King's officers, we must also remember that there are very few of us who are not in some way officers in our turn, and that the influence we have with others, and the right we have to command others, makes our position a very responsible one. We shall be more severely judged for our own words and actions if, through our fault, our subordinates fall away.

23rd Day: *OUR KING AS OUR REDEEMER*

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/23.html>

All mankind was, in consequence of its loss of the gift of original justice at the Fall, handed over to the chief enemy of our King, who thus became the prince of the power of this world, and had a sort of dominion over all its inhabitants. From this slavery to Satan, our King in His great mercy determined to redeem us, that we might belong to Him, and not to Satan. How did He effect this?

He brought us back from the servitude we had incurred by paying the price in His own precious blood. He shed the last drop of it upon the Cross in payment; and this was but the final consummation of a life of poverty and hardship and contempt, all of which was a part of our ransom. To all this He added all the sufferings of mind and of body which preceded His Crucifixion. All this our King paid for us, and paid with a generous forgetfulness of self, which marks His excess of love for us.

Why did He do this when He might have found ten thousand ways of redeeming us without this sacrifice of Himself? It was because He knew that this was, or ought to be, the most effective way of winning our love, of making us hate sin, of keeping us faithful to God. He hoped that, if naught else would move our hearts, at least the sufferings of our King might put us to shame, and convince us of His love.

It is the nature of man to value everything partly according to the price paid for it, partly according to the dignity of the giver, partly according to the value of the thing in itself. What, then, must be the infinite value we ought to attach to that precious blood of our King with which we were redeemed?

24th Day: OUR KING'S BESTOWAL OF GRACES

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/24.html>

Our King has at His disposal a number of gifts of incalculable value, and these He is ready to bestow on any one who will ask for them, and will observe certain conditions that He has laid down for the reception of them. These gifts are gifts that will never perish, but will always remain as priceless treasures to him who receives them. Our King purchased them for us at the price of His own blood. These gifts are the supernatural graces that He offers to all who are subject to His sway, and which He has bestowed so liberally on me.

These graces are of two kinds. Some are called actual graces, which prompt us to do some act which will increase our happiness in this life, will enable us to follow more closely in the footsteps of our King, and will procure for us a larger share of the rewards He has promised to give to all His faithful servants. These gifts of love He continually is offering to me. Yet, strange to say, I too often pass them by and reject them.

Our King does more than this. He offers to increase our likeness to Him and the glory and happiness we shall enjoy in Heaven, by a means which requires no exertion on our part. He offers to give us rich gifts of sanctifying grace, on the very simple condition that we present ourselves to one of His ministers, and receive from his hand some one of the Sacraments that our King instituted as channels by which grace is poured into the soul. We have simply to present ourselves in due dispositions and there flows of itself this living stream of grace. Oh, how generous is our King, and how ungrateful are we!

25th Day: *THE NATIVITY*

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/25.html>

Four thousand years had passed since God promised to our first parents that a Redeemer should come to free the world from the curse that had fallen upon it when Adam was disobedient to the Divine command. Prophets and kings had desired to see the day when that promise should be fulfilled, but had not seen it. The whole world had long expected the day of Redemption. God always is slow in His best gifts. Hence learn to be patient. He will surely come and bless you in His own good time.

All the world was at peace at the moment when Christ was born. The angry passions of men were hushed, as if in compliment to the Prince of Peace. He never comes where strife and confusion prevail. If I desire that He should come into my heart today, I must resolve to subdue my evil passions, and the self-will that dares to do battle against the will of God.

But when the gift came at last, it was worthy of the Divine generosity. It was a gift of infinite value, given to all and each of the sons of men. It was a gift in which God gave Himself to be wholly ours. That little Infant in the cradle, before whom I kneel today, is the Omnipotent God, loving me with an immeasurable love, my King, my Lord, my Redeemer, my best Friend, the Divine lover of my soul. O, would that I loved Him more!

26th Day: *THE NEW-BORN CHILD*

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/26.html>

In the cradle before us lies the new-born Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the manger. Let us contemplate Him for a few moments and see what lessons He teaches us.

He teaches us the unspeakable force of Divine Charity. How was it possible for the Eternal Word, the coequal Son of God, to leave the bosom of His Father to clothe Himself with the flesh of sinful man. It seems an almost extravagant act of love, one unworthy of the dignity of God. Yet love puts everything aside, except the burning desire to promote the welfare of the loved. The Son of God forgot all else in His Divine compassion for us. How dearly He must love us! How great should be our confidence in His love!

He teaches us never to judge by appearances. If we had been told that God had come to dwell on earth, would not the stable of Bethlehem have been the last place where we should have sought Him? In many a humble cottage there may still be found saints even more dear to God than those who have a world-wide repute for their holiness and virtue!

He teaches us the true dignity of self-abasement. God could not do anything unworthy of Himself, when clad in human flesh. It therefore was no disparagement to the Divine honour that He should thus infinitely condescend. Nay, it proved that the greatest possible likeness to God is attained by the most complete humiliation of self. How little I have learned to practice this lesson!

27th Day: *THE HOLY MOTHER*

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/27.html>

By the side of the manger where the Infant lies. His Mother is watching. Who is she?

A poor and humble maiden, but nevertheless the Mother of God, The Mother of God! How can this be? How can the Eternal, Infinite God have a human Mother? Yet so it is; Mary has a privilege which raises her immeasurably above the highest of the Seraphim. It makes her more perfect in her likeness to God than is possible to any other creature. If, then, we honour the Saints and Angels, how much more should we honour God's own Mother!

Yet Mary has a still greater claim to our homage, a more fruitful source of blessedness even than the Divine Maternity. Her unswerving obedience to the inspirations of God is declared by our Lord Himself to be a still higher privilege -- "Yea, rather, blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." If only we realized the blessedness of unswerving obedience, how different our lots would be!

What are Mary's thoughts, as she sits watching there? She has no thought save of God. She is absorbed in Him. The hours pass like minutes, they are a sort of anticipation of Paradise. She sees her God face to face, and though His glory is veiled under the robe of flesh, yet Mary can pierce through it as none else ever could, and can bask in the Divine which it conceals. O God, help me to realize now Thy presence, when Thou art veiled under the Sacramental species.

28th Day: *THE FOSTER-FATHER*

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/28.html>

At no great distance from the Mother of God stands His holy foster-father St. Joseph, the third person of that earthly Trinity. What can we learn from him?

He is the true husband of Mary, united to her by a closer bond than any on earth save that which exists between the Mother and the Son. He is moreover the true earthly father of Jesus, in everything except the fact of carnal generation. He has committed to him the care of God Himself, and of her who is dearer to God than all the world. He is, therefore, next to Mary, of all mankind the most privileged and the most exalted, How then can we honour him enough?

When God gives to any one an office, He gives him the virtues and the qualities which are required for its perfect exercise. What then must have been the virtues of St. Joseph? He must have had every virtue, not only in an eminent degree, but in a degree to which none other of the sons of men ever attained. Prudence, justice, humility, charity, in all he was far above all else. I, therefore, may ask of him every grace that I need.

Above all, St. Joseph was eminent for his unspotted purity. Many theologians assert that he was sanctified in his mother's womb. None save Mary was ever so pure as he. This it was that qualified him for his intimate union with Jesus and Mary. If I desire to be united to them, I must be pure of heart. St. Joseph, obtain for me this grace of purity!

29th Day: *THE LITTLE MAID*

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/29.html>

There is a tradition which asserts that, besides Joseph and Mary, there was present in the stable at Bethlehem a little maid, who had accompanied them from Nazareth, and who ministered to our Lady and the new-born Child.

Consider the happiness of this little servant, who was privileged to wait upon the holy Mother of God. If to wait upon a Queen is considered an honour worthy of maidens of the highest birth, how much more to wait upon the Queen of Heaven! Angels must have envied her the task, and longed to be allowed to share in it, I, too, can wait upon Mary, by walking in processions in her honour, by kneeling before her statue, by offering her flowers or votive candles; or if this is out of my power, by declaring to her my loyalty and desire to serve her.

Consider how this maiden had a still greater privilege. She ministered to God Himself as He lay in the manger. She had the singular honour of being the first after His Mother and St. Joseph to wait upon the King of kings; to carry Him in her arms, and to look upon the Face of God; to fold Him to her bosom. How pure and holy she must have been. How pure and holy I ought to be, who in Holy Communion am brought into still closer contact with the Sacred Body of Christ!

Consider how you would have acted had you been that little servant. Imagine yourself ministering to the Infant Jesus. How unworthy of the task, yet how eager to fulfil it well, to anticipate the wishes of Mary! Do I thus minister to Him in His brethren?

30th Day: *THE ANGEL'S SONG*

<http://catholicarboroffaithandmorals.com/30.html>

On the night of the Nativity a countless multitude of the heavenly host were singing the praises of the new-born King. Let us listen to them.

They are singing Gloria in excelsis Deo-- "Glory to God in the highest!" It is the first song they have sung on earth since the Fall. It is sung on the occasion of the infinite humiliation of the Son of God. Yet they sing, "Glory to God in the highest!" It must, therefore, be a source of unspeakable glory to God that He has taken the form of a servant, that He has humbled Himself to the very dust. If this is such a source of glory to God, my true glory must consist in humbling myself.

They are also singing of peace to men. What sort of peace? Not external peace, for Christ came not to bring peace, but a sword; but true peace, internal peace, that tranquility of soul that nothing can destroy. This is the boon that Christ gives to all who love Him, in proportion to their love.

But peace not for all, but for men of good will. Christ indeed brought peace to all, but all did not accept it--only those whose good-will and loyal spirit of submission made them ready to acknowledge Him as their Lord, and whom, therefore, the goodwill of God had predestined to the eternal peace and joy of Heaven. God grant that I may be one of these!

31st Day: THE SHEPHERDS' VISIT

<http://catholicharboroffaithandmorals.com/31.html>

The first who came to pay their homage to the new-born King were the shepherds, who were watching in the fields of Bethlehem, and to whom an Angel had announced the birth of Christ the Lord. They received this honour because:

They were poor, and therefore were well suited to gather round the King who came to live in poverty on earth. The Eternal Father chose poverty for His well-beloved Son, and therefore poverty must be better than riches. The poor are to be envied rather than pitied, so long as their poverty is not due to their own sin or folly. How many, who have saved their souls in poverty, would have lost them, if they had been rich! Hence, if you are poor, do not regret your poverty, but rather rejoice in it.

They were simple of heart, untainted by the world's deceit. None but good, simple men would have thus come in the darkness of the night to the stable of Bethlehem, to find their Saviour and their King. God loves simplicity. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome," says our Lord; and He thereby describes the happy lot of those whose one aim is to do their work with simplicity for God alone? Is this my spirit?

They were shepherds. The occupation is one which God seems to love. The man after God's own heart was a shepherd. Our Lord calls Himself the Good Shepherd. Every Christian is a shepherd, in that some sheep or lambs are committed to his care. Am I a zealous shepherd of the sheep of Christ?