

Christmas Readings

2023

From the Sacred Scriptures
and the Heavenly Doctrine



[1 80

CHAPTER 2.

Birth of Jesus (Mt. 1. 18-25; Lk. 2. 1-7; cf. John 1. 14).

1 It came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (Now this taxing was first made when Censurus was governor of Syria.)

2 And Joseph went to be taxed, every year, into the city of Nazareth, which is of the city of David, called Bethlehem; (because he is of the house and lineage of David.)

3 And so he went with Mary his wife, who was with child, to be taxed with Joseph in the city of David.

4 And it came to pass, as they were there, the days were accomplished, that the child was born to her, the firstborn son.

5 And she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

6 And there were shepherds in the field, keeping their flock about the manger.

7 And it came to pass, as they were watching their flock about the manger, the angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shined about them, and they were afraid.

a oikoumene = inhabited earth.

b Mic.5.2; 1 Sam.17.12.

c Mt.1.25; Isa.7.14.

d Heb.1.4, note.

e Gospel, vs. 18; (Gen.12.13; Rev.14.6.)

f Rom.1.16, note.

g Cf. Mt.10.34, note.

h 2 Cor.5.18,20; Eph.2.14,18.

i Lev.12.3; Gal.4.4,5; 5.3.

j Lk.1.31; Mt.1.21.

k Sanctify, not, (Ger.26. (Mt. Rev.22.3))

8 And the angels said unto the shepherds, Fear not, for we tell you good tidings, which shall come to pass.

9 Behold, I have told you, and ye have despised me: ye shall say, We have despised thee, because thou tellest us dreams.

10 And the angels departed from them with haste, and they were afraid, and said among themselves, We have dreamed, or we have seen a vision.

11 And as they were saying these things, behold, the angels stood round about them, saying, Fear not.

12 For we tell you good tidings, which shall come to pass.

13 Behold, I have told you, and ye have despised me: ye shall say, We have despised thee, because thou tellest us dreams.

14 And the angels departed from them with haste, and they were afraid, and said among themselves, We have dreamed, or we have seen a vision.

Circumcision of Jesus.
21 And when eight days were accomplished for the child, for the name of the child, was called JESUS, which is written in the law, saying, The firstborn son of the virgin.

1

New Light Shines.

December 1

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; they who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, on them has the light given brightness. (Isaiah 9:2)

And God remembered (Gen. 8:1). That this signifies the end of temptation and the beginning of renewal, is evident from what precedes and follows.

“God remembered” signifies, specifically, that He is merciful, for His remembrance is mercy; and this is especially predicated after temptation, because new light then shines forth. So long as temptation continues, the man supposes the Lord to be absent, because he is troubled by evil genii so severely that sometimes he is reduced to despair, and can scarcely believe there is any God. Yet the Lord is then more closely present than he can ever believe. But when temptation ceases, the man receives consolation, and then first believes the Lord to be present. Therefore, in the passage before us, the words “God remembered,” expressed according to the appearance, signify the end of temptation, and the beginning of renewal. (AC 840)

Concerning the entrance into eternal life of those who are raised from the dead... I was shown how these angels work. They seemed to as it were roll off the coat of the left eye toward the septum of the nose, in order that the eye might be opened and the use of light be granted. To the man it appears as if this were really done, but it is only an appearance.

After this little membrane has been thus in appearance rolled off, some light is visible, but dim, such as a man sees through his eyelids when he first awakes out of sleep; and he who is being resuscitated is in a tranquil state, being still guarded by the celestial angels. There then appears a kind of shadow of an azure color, with a little star, but I perceived that this takes place with variety. (AC 182-184)

The Lord Has Unlimited Power to Help.

December 2

2

For a Child is born to us,
A Son is given to us;
and the principality shall be on His shoulder...
Of the multiplying of His principality and peace
there shall be no end,
on the throne of David, and on his kingdom,
to establish her, and to sustain her, in judgment and in justice,
from now and even to eternity;
the zeal of Jehovah of Armies will do this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

The words of Scripture, “A Child is born to us, a Son is given to us; and the principality will be upon His shoulder,” are said of the Lord and of His power and might. (AC 1085:4)

The case is... with the new life in the man who is being regenerated: at first, he is in a state of tranquility. But as he passes into a new life, he also passes at the same time into an untranquil state; for the evils and falsities with which he had previously become imbued emerge and come forth and disturb him, and this at last to such a degree that he is in temptations and vexations inflicted by the diabolical crew, who are continually striving to destroy the state of his new life. Yet inmosty the man is in a state of peace, for unless this peace were with him inmosty, he would not combat, for in his combats he is continually looking to this state as the end, and unless he had such an end, he would in no way have power and strength to combat. Moreover, this is the reason why he overcomes; and because this is the end in view, he also comes into this state after the combats or temptations. (AC 3696:2)

“To put upon the shoulders and carry” is to preserve in a state of good and truth forever with all exertion and power. (AC 9836:6)

This is said of the Lord and of His coming: “the zeal of Jehovah shall perform this,” denotes that He will do it from the ardent love of saving the human race. [The Lord’s] zeal looks to the salvation of man. (AC 8875:4, AE 693:2)

3

Have Hope and An Affirmative Outlook.

December 3

Arise, give light; for Thy light comes, and the glory of Jehovah has risen upon Thee. For, behold! The darkness shall cover the earth, and dense darkness the peoples; but on Thee Jehovah shall rise, and His glory shall be seen upon Thee.

And the nations shall walk to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy rising. (Isaiah 60:1-3)

He urged them exceedingly (Gen. 19:3). That this signifies a state of temptation which one overcomes, cannot be seen except by those who have been in temptations. As before said, temptations are attended with doubt in regard to the Lord's presence and mercy, and also in regard to salvation. The evil spirits who are then with the man and induce the temptation strongly inspire negation, but the good spirits and angels from the Lord in every possible way dispel this state of doubt, and keep the man in a state of hope, and at last confirm him in what is affirmative. The result is that a man who is in temptation hangs between what is negative and what is affirmative. One who yields in temptation remains in a state of doubt and falls into what is negative. But one who overcomes is indeed in doubt, but still, if he suffers himself to be cheered by hope, he stands fast in what is affirmative.

As during this conflict the man seems to urge the Lord, especially by prayers, to be present, to have mercy, to give aid, and to deliver from damnation, therefore where the temptation of those who are becoming men of the church is treated of, as in the passage before us, these things are described by the angels' first saying, "No" and that they would tarry all night in the street, and by Lot's then urging them exceedingly, so that they turned aside to him and came to his house. (AC 2338)

Do Not Be Afraid.

December 4

4

But it came to pass that while he served as priest before God in the order of his daily ministry, according to the custom of the priest's office, it was his lot to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And all the multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of burning incense.

And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And seeing him, Zacharias was disturbed, and fear fell on him. And the angel said to him, "Fear not, Zacharias..." (Luke 1:8-13)

There is a kind of fear within all worship called "holy fear." Holy fear is not so much a fear of hell and damnation as it is of doing or thinking anything against the Lord and against the neighbor, and thus against the good of love and the truth of faith. (AC 2826:13)

As regards the fear of the Divine in which they who are in falsities and infest must be, be it known that fear is the only means of restraining the infernals and holding them in bonds. For fear is a common bond, both for those who are upright, and for those who are evil. But for those who are upright the fear is internal, which is fear for the sake of salvation, namely, lest they should perish as to their souls, and so lest they should do anything contrary to conscience, that is, contrary to the truth and good which are of conscience. Consequently they have fear lest they should do anything contrary to what is just and fair, thus contrary to the neighbor. But this is holy fear, so far as it is conjoined with the affection of charity, and still more as it is conjoined with love to the Lord. Fear then becomes like that of little children toward the parents whom they love. Then, so far as they are in the good of love, so far the fear does not show itself; but so far as they are not in good, so far it shows itself and becomes anxiety. Such is the "fear of God," so frequently spoken of in the Word. (AC 7280)

5

The Lord's Teachings are Powerful.

December 5

...For thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth shall give birth to a son for thee, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong

drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he shall turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. And he shall come before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and in the prudence of the just to prepare the disobedient, a people made ready for the Lord. (Luke 1:13-17)

It was said of this John that "he should go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah," and that he was Elijah, because John, like Elijah, represented the Lord in relation to the Word, and thence signified the Word, which is from the Lord; and as Divine wisdom and Divine power are in the Word, these are meant by "the spirit and power of Elijah." (*AE* 724:9)

The power of Divine truth is directed especially against falsities and evils, thus against the hells. The combat against these must be waged by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word. Moreover, it is by means of the truths in a man that the Lord has the power to save him. For man is reformed and regenerated and is at the same time taken out of hell and introduced into heaven by means of truths from the sense of the letter of the Word. The Lord took upon Himself this power even as to His Divine Human, after He had fulfilled all things of the Word down to its ultimates. (*SS* 49.1)

The order of influx: As man instructs his understanding, he prepares it for the reception of light, and hence for wisdom from heaven. As man does the goods of charity, he prepares the will for the reception of the heat of heaven, or of love. Like one who cuts a diamond, he makes preparation for the splendor of light to be diffused from himself. (*Additions to TCR*, IV:1-3)

Confidence, Tranquility, Peace, and Joy

December 6

6

And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and virgin's name was Mary.

And the angel coming in to her said, Hail, thou who art graced! The Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. (Luke 1:26-28)

That "God blessed" signifies the presence and grace of the Lord. This is evident from the signification of "to bless." "To bless" in the Word, in the external sense, signifies to enrich with every earthly and corporeal good, according to the explanation of the Word given by those who abide in the external sense, as do the ancient and modern Jews, and also Christians, especially at the present day. Therefore they have made the Divine blessing to consist in riches, in an abundance of all things, and in self-glory.

But in the internal sense, "to bless" is to enrich with all spiritual and heavenly good. This blessing is and never can be given except by the Lord, and on this account, it signifies His presence and grace, which necessarily bring with them such spiritual and heavenly good. It is said presence, because the Lord is present solely in charity, and the subject treated of here is the regenerate spiritual man, who acts from charity. (AC 981:1)

The varying states in the other life... are according to the perception of good and truth with those who are there, thus according to their perception of the Lord's presence. According to this perception they have tranquility; for they who are in the perception of the Lord's presence are in the perception that each and all things which befall them tend to their good, and that evils do not reach them; hence they are in tranquility. Without such faith or confidence in the Lord, no one can possibly come to the tranquility of peace, thus neither to the bliss in joy, because this bliss dwells in the tranquility of peace. (AC 5963)

7

Have Peace About Things to Come.

December 7

And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give to Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. But Mary said to the angel, How shall this be, since I know not a man? And the angel answering said to her, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that which shall be born of thee Holy shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:30-35)

He who lives in good, and believes that the Lord governs the universe, and that all the good which is of love and charity, and all the truth which is of faith, are from the Lord alone—in fact, that life is from Him, and thus that from Him we live, move, and have our being—is in such a state that he can be gifted with heavenly freedom, and together with it with peace; for he then trusts solely in the Lord and has no care for other things, and is certain that all things are tending to his good, his blessedness, and his happiness to eternity. (AC 2892)

With those who trust in the Divine. . . notwithstanding they have care for the morrow, still have it not, because they do not think of the morrow with solicitude, still less with anxiety. Unruffled is their spirit whether they obtain the objects of their desire, or not; and they do not grieve over the loss of them, being content with their lot. If they become rich, they do not set their hearts on riches; if they are raised to honors, they do not regard themselves as more worthy than others; if they become poor, they are not made sad; if their circumstances are lowly, they are not dejected. They know that for those who trust in the Divine, all things advance toward a happy state to eternity, and that whatever befalls them in time is still conducive thereto. Be it known that the Divine Providence is universal, that is, in the most minute things; and that they who are in the stream of Providence are all the time carried along toward everything that is happy, whatever may be the appearance of the means; and that those are in the stream of Providence who put their trust in the Divine and attribute all things to Him. (AC 8478:3-4)

With God Nothing Will Be Impossible.

December 8

8

And behold, thy kinswoman Elizabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God not any saying shall be impossible. (Luke 1:35-37)

Faith in the Lord healed... first, because they acknowledged His Divine omnipotence, and that He was God; secondly, because faith is acknowledgment, and from acknowledgment intuition; and all intuition from acknowledgment makes another to be present. This is a common thing in the spiritual world. So now, when a New Church was to be established by the Lord, it was this intuition from an acknowledgment of the Lord's omnipotence from which they were first to look to the Lord.... (AE 815:5)

And Jesus answering says to them, Have the faith of God. For amen, I say to you, that whoever shall say to this mountain, Be thou taken up, and be thou cast into the sea, and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he says shall come to pass, he shall have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, All things whatever you ask for, having prayed, believe that you shall receive, and it shall be done to you. (Mark 11:22-24)

With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26)

9

“Be It Unto Me According to Thy Saying.”

December 9

And Mary said, Behold, the maidservant of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy saying. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

Peace is ... like dawn on the earth, which gladdens minds with universal delight; and the truth of peace is like the light of the dawn. This truth, which is called “the truth of peace,” is the very Divine truth in heaven from the Lord, which universally affects all who are there, and makes heaven to be heaven. For peace has in it confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and that He leads to a good end. When a man is in this faith, he is in peace, for he then fears nothing, and no solicitude about things to come disquiets him. A man comes into this state in proportion as he comes into love to the Lord. (AC 8455:1)

Those who trust in the Lord continually receive good from Him, for whatever happens to them, whether it appears to be prosperous or not prosperous, is still good, because it contributes as a means to their eternal happiness. (AC 8480:3)

Serve Without Fear.

December 10

10

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and worked redemption for His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of David His servant; as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from the beginning, Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; to do mercy with our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to Abraham our father, that He would give to us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice in His sight, all the days of our life. (Luke 1:67-69,74)

This is a prophecy of Zechariah respecting the Lord and His coming. “A horn of salvation in the house of David” signifies omnipotence to save by Divine truth from Divine good. “Horn” is that omnipotence; “the house of David” is the Lord’s church. “The enemies” from which “He should save” are the falsities of evil, for these are the enemies from which the Lord saves those who receive Him. (*AE* 316.11)

A single angel has greater power than myriads of infernal spirits, yet not from himself, but from the Lord. And he has it from the Lord in the proportion that he believes that he has no power from himself, thus that he is the least. And he can believe this so far as he is in humility and in the affection of being of service to others, that is, so far as he is in the good of love to the Lord and of charity toward the neighbor. (*AC* 3417)

11

Be Confident in the Lord's Providence.

December 11

And thou, little child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give the knowledge of salvation to His people for the forgiveness of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God, by which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; to appear to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:76-79)

THAT MAN CAN NEVER BE LED BETTER [than he is led]. Spirits suppose that they could have been led differently, and so become better than they are, thus be kept from actual evils, and many things. The evil cast the blame on the Lord, but they were told that it is their fault. I perceived in a spiritual idea that they can never be led better, thus that all the moments of their lives are necessities.... And it was foreseen from eternity, and so provided, that each and all things tend to the ultimate end, to be parts in the Grand Man, that is, in the Lord's kingdom. (*SD* 3114)

When the Lord is with anyone, He leads him, and provides that all things which happen, whether sad or joyful, befall him for good: this is the Divine providence. (*AC* 6303)

The strides of a mighty man are established from Jehovah,
And He delights in his way. (Psalm 37:23)

Confidence: Part of a Good Life

December 12

12

And the birth of Jesus Christ was in this way: His mother Mary, being betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, was found with child from the Holy Spirit. And Joseph, her husband, being just, and not willing to expose her to public infamy, intended to send her away privately.

(Matthew 1:18-19)

To believe in the Lord is to have confidence that He will save, and as no one can have this confidence except one who lives aright, therefore this also is meant by believing in Him. (*Faith 36*)

It is indeed said that the very faith itself which saves is confidence, but this confidence is quite impossible except in the good of life. Without the good of life there is no reception, and where there is no reception there is no confidence, except at times a certain apparent confidence. (*AC 2982.2*)

By faith in the Lord is meant confidence that He will save, and they have this confidence who approach Him immediately, and shun evils as sins; with others it is not given. (*AR 949:2*)

13

“With God’s Help I Will Conquer This.”

December 13

And while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, Joseph, son of David, fear not to take to thee Mary thy wife, for that which is begotten in her is from the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. (Matthew 1:20-21)

The Divine power of the Lord... is the Divine power of saving the human race; and the power of saving the human race is power over the heavens and over the hells. For man is saved by this power of the Lord, and not by any other. (AC 10019.3)

All who are in heavenly love, have confidence that they will be saved by the Lord. For they believe that the Lord came into the world in order to give eternal life to those who believe and live according to the commandments which He taught, and that He regenerates these, and so makes them fit for heaven; and that He does this Himself alone, from pure mercy, without the aid of man. This is meant by “believing in the Lord.” (AC 9244)

The least exercise of Divine power by a single nod instantly subdues the whole diabolical crew, even if it consists of myriads of myriads. (AC 8626)

He who believes in God also says within himself, “Through God I will conquer it.” And he supplicates [the Lord’s help], and he prevails. (*Charity* 203)

Guardian Angels Bring Us Help.

December 14

14

And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, the angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they feared with great fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people. For to you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be the sign to you: you shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host.... (Luke 2:8-13)

As to these things I have been informed by living experience that not only heaven in general flows in [and has an influence], but also societies in particular; likewise what the societies are and what they are like, that flow into this and that organ of the body and into this and that member; and further, that there is not just one society which flows into each organ or member, but very many, and that in each society also there are very many [angels]; for the more there are, so much the better and stronger is the correspondence, since perfection and strength are from the unanimous multitude of many who act as a one in a heavenly form. From this results a more perfect and stronger endeavor into particulars according to the numbers. (AC 3629)

Scarcely anyone in this world can know what is the nature of the power that is in truth from good, but it is known to those who are in the other life, thus by revelation from there. Those who are in truth from good, that is, in faith from charity, are in power through truth from good. In this power are all the angels, and from this the angels are called in the Word “powers”; for they are in the power of restraining evil spirits, one angel being able to restrain a thousand all at once. They exercise their power chiefly when with man, in defending him at times against many hells, and this in a thousand and a thousand ways. (AC 6344)

15

Goodwill is Powerful.

December 15

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace, good will among men. (Luke 2:13-14)

Spiritual power is to will the good of others, and to wish to convey to them as far as possible what is with oneself. (*AE* 79)

Heaven... consists in desiring from the heart the good of others more than one's own, and in serving others with a view to their happiness, not with recompense as an end, but from love. (*HH* 408)

Nothing is more pleasing to one who loves another, and who believes in another, than to will and do what the other wills and thinks, for it is his sole desire to know his will and thought, thus his good pleasure. (*AC* 10143:5)

Love consists in this, that its own should be another's; to feel the joy of another as joy in oneself, that is loving. (*DLW* 47)

Patience: A Sign of Trust

December 16

16

And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was just and circumspect, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

And it was revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents were bringing in the little Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law, he even received Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, Now Thou sendest Thy servant away in peace, O Lord, according to Thy saying; for my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples: Light for revelation of the nations, and the Glory of Thy people Israel. (Luke 2:25-32)

When man is in a state of love or of celestial affection, he is in an angelic state, that is to say, as if not in time, provided there is no impatience in the affection. For impatience is a corporeal affection, and so far as man is in it, so far he is in time; but so far as man is not in it, so far he is not in time. This appears in a kind of image from all the delights and gladnesses that belong to affection or love, in that when man is in them, he takes no note of time, for he is then in the internal man. By the affection of genuine love man is withdrawn from bodily and worldly things, for his mind is elevated toward heaven, and thus is withdrawn from the things of time. (AC 3827)

I wait for Jehovah, My soul waits,
And for His Word do I hope. (Psalm 130:5)

In your patience you possess your souls. (Luke 21:19)

17

Ups & Downs in Life

December 17

And Joseph and His mother marveled at the things which were spoken concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against. And also a sword shall pass through thine own soul, that the reasonings of many hearts may be revealed. (Luke 2:33-35)

Those who have not been instructed about man's regeneration suppose that a man can be regenerated without temptation; and some suppose that he has been regenerated when he has undergone one temptation. But be it known that without temptation, no one is regenerated, and that many temptations follow on, one after another. The reason is that regeneration takes place to the end that the life of the old man may die and the new heavenly life be insinuated. This shows that there cannot help but be a fight, for the life of the old man resists, and is not willing to be extinguished, and the life of the new man cannot enter except where the life of the old man has been extinguished. From this it is evident that there is a fight on both sides, and this fight is a fiery one, because it is for life. (AC 8403.2)

Before man can know what is true and be affected with what is good, there must be a removal of such things as hinder and resist their admission. Thus the old man must die before the new man can be conceived. (AC 18)

Man first begins to live when that perishes which in the world he believes to be the all of life; and the life which he then receives is relatively ineffable and unlimited. (AC 3175:4)

Pray to the Lord.

December 18

18

And there was Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher; she was advanced in many days, having lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and she was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not stand back from the temple, serving God with fastings and prayers night and day. (Luke 2:36-37)

Prayer, regarded in itself, is speech with God, and some internal view at the time of the matters of the prayer, to which there answers something like an inflowing into the perception or thought of the mind, so that there is a certain opening of the man's interiors toward God. But this takes place with a difference according to the man's state, and according to the essence of the subject of the prayer. If the man prays from love and faith, and for only heavenly and spiritual things, there then comes forth in the prayer something like a revelation, which is manifested in the affection of him who is praying, as to hope, consolation, or a certain inward joy. (AC 2535)

In each thing that a man utters there is affection, and every man, spirit, and angel is his own affection, for their affection is their life. It is the affection itself that speaks, and not the man without it. Therefore such as the affection is such is the praying. Spiritual affection is what is called charity towards the neighbor. To be in that affection is true worship; praying is what proceeds. (AE 325:3)

19

“Thank you, Lord.”

December 19

And she, standing by at the hour itself, confessed the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who waited for redemption in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:38)

[The name] “Asher” in the original language means blessedness... [also] the enjoyment of affections, corresponding to the happiness of eternal life.... They are the enjoyments of the affections of truth and good.... When a man perceives this enjoyment or affection, he is beginning to become a Church. (*AC* 3939:1)

Here “to bless God” evidently means to glorify and give thanks because the Lord was to come into the world, to save all who receive Him. (*AE* 340:3)

Divine Providence has for its end nothing else than reformation and consequently salvation. This is its unceasing operation with everyone; and salvation can only be effected by the acknowledgment of the Divinity of the Lord, and by confidence that it is effected by Him when man lives according to His commandments. (*DP* 257.1)

In the conflicts or temptations of men, the Lord works a particular redemption, as He wrought a total redemption when in the world. By conflicts and temptations in the world the Lord glorified His Human, that is, made it Divine; in like manner now with man individually, when he is in temptations, the Lord fights for him, conquers the evil spirits who are infesting him, and after temptation glorifies him, that is, renders him spiritual. After His universal redemption the Lord reduced to order all things in heaven and in hell; with man after temptation He does in like manner, that is, He reduces to order all the things of heaven and the world that are in him. After redemption the Lord established a new church; in like manner He also establishes what pertains to the church in man, and makes him to be a church in particular. After redemption, He gives to man... a sense of peace, that is, gladness of mind and consolation. From all this it is clear that the Lord is the Redeemer forever. (*TCR* 599)

Serve the Lord.

December 20

20

And there were in the same country shepherds, abiding in the field, and keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, the angel of the Lord stood by them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they feared with great fear.

And the angel said to them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people. For to you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be the sign to you: you shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, Glory in the highest to God, and on earth peace, good will among men. Luke 2:8-14)

And when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came Magi from the east into Jerusalem, saying, Where is He who is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him. (Matthew 2:1-2)

When a man who is looking at internal things from external ones sees the heavens, he does not think at all of the starry heaven, but of the angelic heaven; and when he sees the sun, he does not think of the sun, but of the Lord, as being the Sun of heaven. So too when he sees the moon, and the stars also; and when he sees the immensity of the heavens, he does not think of their immensity, but of the immeasurable and infinite power of the Lord. (AC 1807)

The Lord is in the continual effort, from His Divine love, to reform and regenerate man, and so to purify him from evils. And when the man also wills and intends it, this perpetual effort of the Lord becomes an act. Thus and no otherwise does a man receive power to resist evils and fight against them. Before this he does not receive, but rejects. This, then, is to shun evils as sins as if of oneself, and yet from the Lord. (*Charity* 203)

21

Goodness Wins.

December 21

Then Herod, privately calling the Magi, precisely inquired of them at what time the star appeared. And sending them to Bethlehem, he said, Go and search earnestly for the little Child; and when you have found Him, report to me, so that I also may come and worship Him. And when they had heard the king they departed. (Matthew 2:7-9)

It is an undoubtable fact that the Lord governs the Universe. This government is called Providence. But since evils, likewise permissions, are not provided but foreseen, in order to understand this [it must be known] that foresight relates to evils; Providence is the disposal of them to good ends. Nevertheless, there is no such thing as chance, that is, no evil happens by chance, but all evils are so governed that not one of them is permitted which is not conducive to good, both to man and soul. Moreover, nothing is permitted which has not thus been foreseen, for otherwise it could by no means happen. (*SD 1088*)

Be it known that the infernal spirits to whom it is permitted to trouble the good intend nothing but evil. For they desire with all their might to drag them down from heaven and cast them into hell, because it is the very delight of their life to destroy anyone as to his soul, thus to eternity. But not one whit is permitted them by the Lord, except to the end that good may come of it, namely, that truth and good may be brought into shape and strengthened with those who are in temptation. In the universal spiritual world reigns the end which proceeds from the Lord, which is that nothing whatever, not even the least thing, shall arise, except that good may come from it. Hence the Lord's kingdom is called a kingdom of ends and uses. (*AC 6574:3*)

All the evil which the evil intend and do to the good is turned by the Lord into good. (*AC 4493:6*)

Humility Before the Lord

December 22

22

And lo, the star which they saw in the east went before them, till it came and stood over where the little Child was. And having seen the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And coming into the house, they found the little Child with Mary His mother, and falling down they worshiped Him. (Matthew 2:9-11)

The church is from the Lord and is with those who approach Him and live according to His commandments.... That it is with those who approach Him, is because in the Christian world His Church is from the Word, and the Word is from Him, being from Him in such a way that it is Himself. In the Word there is Divine Truth united with Divine Good, and this also is the Lord. Nothing else is meant by the Word which was with God and which was God, from which men have life and light, and which was made flesh (John 1)... Furthermore, that the Church is with those who approach Him is because it is with those who believe in Him; and the belief that He is God, the Savior and Redeemer, Jehovah our Justice, the Door by which to enter into the sheepfold—that is, into the Church—the Way the Truth and the Life, that no one comes to the Father but by Him, that the Father and He are one, and much else which He Himself teaches, this belief, I say, is possible to no one except from Him. That it is not possible unless He is approached, is because He is the God of heaven and earth, as He also teaches. Who else is to be approached? And who else can be approached? (CL 129)

The angel of the Lord said to Hagar, “Return yourself to your mistress and humble yourself beneath her hands” (Gen. 16:9). This signifies that [the external rational] ought to compel itself to be under the sovereign power [of interior truth].... “To humble oneself” is expressed in the original tongue by a word which signifies “to afflict.” “To afflict oneself” is, in the internal sense, to compel oneself.... Man ought to compel himself to do what is good, to obey the things commanded by the Lord, and to speak truths, which is to “humble himself under” the Lord’s hands, or to submit himself to the sovereign power of the Divine good and truth.... The arcanum contained here is that a man is thus gifted by the Lord with a heavenly Own.... This Own which man during his bodily life thus receives through what is apparently compulsory, is filled by the Lord in the other life with illimitable delights and happinesses. (AC 1937:1, 3, 6)

23

Gifts

December 23

And opening their treasures, they offered to Him gifts: gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)

“Eastward to the land of the east.” This signifies to the good of faith. The good of faith, which is signified by the “land of the east,” is no other than that which in the Word is called charity toward the neighbor; and charity toward the neighbor is nothing else than a life according to the Lord’s commandments.... Therefore they who were in the knowledges of the good of faith were called “sons of the east.” (AC 3249)

Truths that relate to charity toward the neighbor and to love to the Lord must be learned before it is possible for a man to be regenerated, and they must also be acknowledged and believed. And so far as they are acknowledged, believed, and imbued with life, so far the man is regenerated, and so far they are at the same time implanted in the man’s natural, in which they are as in their own ground. They are first implanted in it through instruction by parents and teachers; next from the Word of the Lord; and afterwards through the man’s own reflection about them. But by these means they are merely stored up in the memory of the natural man, being classed among the knowledges there, but they are still not acknowledged, believed, and imbued, unless the life is in accordance with them. For then the man comes into affection, and so far as he comes into affection from life, so far these truths are implanted in his natural as in their ground. (AC 3762:2)

The Lord Protects Us.

December 24

24

And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed into their own country by another way.

(Matthew 2:12)

The angels in heaven plainly perceive that all good and truth are from the Lord, and moreover that they are withheld by the Lord from evil and kept in good and so in truth, and this by a mighty force. (*AC 5758*)

Now what else can the Divine Providence have for its end than the reformation of the human race and its salvation? And no one can be reformed by himself by means of his own prudence, but only by the Lord by means of His Divine Providence. Hence it follows that unless man were led by the Lord every moment, even every minutest fraction of a moment, he would depart from the way of reformation and perish. (*DP 202.2*)

The Lord protects those who are in the good of charity. (*AC 2379*)

When spirits have been prepared for heaven by instruction... they are brought to the way that leads upwards towards heaven, and are delivered there to angel guards, and afterwards are received by other angels and introduced into societies and into many blessednesses there. After this, each one is led by the Lord into his own society, which is also effected by various ways, sometimes by winding paths. The ways by which they are led are not known to any angel but are known to the Lord alone.

(*HH 519*)

25

Grow in Wisdom/Grow in Usefulness.

December 25

And He came down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them; and His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in age, and in grace with God and men. (Luke 2:51-52)

As first created, man was imbued with wisdom and the love of it, not for himself but that from himself he might communicate it to others. Hence it is inscribed on the wisdom of the wise that no one is wise and no one lives for himself alone unless at the same time for others. From this comes society; otherwise society would not exist. To live for others is to perform uses. Uses are the bonds of society, which are as many as there are good uses; and uses are infinite in number. (*CL 18*)

While He lived in the world the Lord was in continual combats of temptations, and in continual victories, from a constant inmost confidence and faith that because He was fighting for the salvation of the whole human race from pure love, He could not but conquer.... But in all His combats of temptations the Lord never fought from the love of self, or for Himself, but for all in the universe, consequently, not that He might become the greatest in heaven, for this is contrary to the Divine Love, and scarcely even that He might be the least; but only that all others might become something, and be saved. (*AC 1812.1-2*)

Turn to the Word of God.

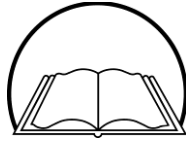
December 26

26

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was not one thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. And the Light appears in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God; his name was John. He came for testimony, that he might testify concerning the Light, that all might believe through him. He was not that Light, but was sent that he might testify concerning the Light. He was the true Light, which enlightens every man who comes into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own, and His own did not take Him in. But as many as received Him, to them He gave authority to become the children of God, to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of bloods, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt in a tabernacle among us, and we observed His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14)

In regard to the trust and confidence which is called Faith itself, the case is this. Those who are in the love of self and of the world, that is, those who are in evils and the consequent falsities, cannot have this Faith, for their heart is not toward God, but toward themselves and the world. But those who are in charity toward the neighbor and in love to the Lord can have such Faith, for their heart is toward the Lord. This the Lord also teaches in John... (John 1:12-13): those who are “born of bloods, of the will of the flesh, and of the will of man,” are those who are in what is evil and false from the loves of self and of the world. And those who are “born of God” are those who are in the good of charity and of faith from the Lord. (AC 9241)

There are two things that constitute the church, namely, the acknowledgment and belief that the Lord has the power to save, and that the Word is Divine; and where these two are not acknowledged and believed, there is no church. And this is for the reason that the Lord reforms man and gives him faith and love, and the Word teaches the way in which man must go to the Lord that he may receive faith and love from Him. (AE 1070)



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