



SSPX



Sursum Corda

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And the Word was Made Flesh

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. Christ is the Incarnate Word. Revelation teaches us that the second Person of the Holy Trinity, the Word, the Son, took a human nature in order to unite Himself personally to it. This is the mystery of the Incarnation.

Let us pause for a few seconds to consider this dogma of a God-Man, a dogma at once so amazing and so touching. It is the fundamental mystery upon which the other mysteries of Jesus rest. Their beauty, their splendor, their virtue, their strength, their value, are derived from this ineffable union of the Humanity with the Divinity. We shall only understand these mysteries properly if we first consider this one in itself

and in the general consequences which proceed from it. Jesus is God and Man; if we want to know His Person, and to share in His states, we must try to understand not only that He is the Word, but also that He is the Word-made-Flesh; if we would know Him worthily, it is as necessary for us to acknowledge the reality of His human nature as it is to adore the Divinity to which this nature is united.

Faith teaches us that there are two natures in Christ: the human nature and the Divine nature; Christ is both perfect God and perfect man.

Moreover, these two natures are united in so close a manner that there is only one single Person, that of the Divine Word in Whom the humanity subsists. From this ineffable union results the infinite value of

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Letter from the Chaplain

Dear Tertiaries,

Dom Columba Marmion is one of the best spiritual writers of the 20th century. The article for this issue of *Sursum Corda* is taken from his work *Christ in His Mysteries*. One thing that is particularly enjoyable and informative about this text is the focus on the humanity of Christ.

The entire movement of God in Creation and in Redemption is an outreach of His Goodness. This movement, while common to all Three Divine Persons, is appropriated to the Son - both the Creation and the Redemption. Regarding the Creation, St. John writes: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. All things were made by Him. And as for the Redemption, St. Paul writes: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ: Who hath predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the purpose of his will, unto the praise of the glory of his grace, in which he hath graced us in His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the remission of sins...*

What is the value of the humanity of Christ? It is the material object that acts as medium to bring the divine into the soul. The entire mission of the Word is made available to us through the humanity of Christ. We avail of these divine goods because of that humanity.

Moreover, we must not understand that as a 'once and done' deal. Why do we have the Mass? So that mankind may have (continually) an act of adoration and worship which is effective with our heavenly Father! Why do we have the sacrament of penance? So that we may continually (not just once) be cleansed of our sins by the blood of Christ, the medium of forgiveness.

The Blessed Humanity of Christ! Without which no Divine favor comes to us.

In Christ,



Fr. Adam Purdy



Jesus' acts, of His states and of His mysteries.

Let us contemplate these truths. From this contemplation made with humility and love, will spring forth quite naturally the sentiments which should animate us in regard to this mystery.

Christ is Perfect God and Perfect Man.

When He shows Himself to us in the manger at Bethlehem, in the workshop of Nazareth, upon the roads of Judea, preaching in the synagogues, nailed to the Cross, or ascending glorious into Heaven, He manifests Himself at the same time as God and as man.

He is perfect God. In taking our human nature, the Word remains what He was: God, the Eternal Being, possessing in their plenitude all life, all perfection, all sovereignty, all power and all beatitude.

Let us hear the Incarnate Word Himself proclaim His Divinity: *As the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself... My Father and I are one ... Whatsoever He doth, these the Son also doth in like manner... All My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine.* As you see there is identity of perfections, equality of rights, because there is unity of nature.

Christ is the Son and consequently God Himself. The Pharisees acknowledged that God alone can remit sins; in their presence, in order to show that He is God, Jesus forgives the paralytic man and with a miracle emphasizes the grace given. He declares that He is the Bread of Life come down from Heaven, the Bread that gives eternal life; He only, by His own power, ascends into Heaven, because He alone came down from Heaven. Also He asks His Father that the Humanity which He has taken may be glorified with that eternal glory which He had as the Word, as God, before the world was. He treats with God as equal to equal because He is the very Son of God.

Perfect God, Christ is likewise perfect Man: *Et verbum caro factum est.* He took from us a human nature which He made His own in uniting Himself to it physically, substantially, personally, by ineffable bonds.

This Eternal God, the Being necessarily subsisting by Himself, is born in time, of a woman: *Factum ex muliere.* Christ has like us a human nature, complete, integral in its constitutive elements. Like us, Christ has a created soul, endowed with faculties

like unto ours; His body is a true body, formed of the most pure blood of His Mother. In the early days of the Church, there were some heretics who affirmed that the Word took only the appearance of a human body; but they were condemned by the Church. Christ is authentically one of us, of our race. As the Gospel shows, He really suffered hunger, thirst, weariness; He shed tears, and sufferings weighed upon Him, body and soul, as truly as they weigh upon us. Even after His Resurrection, He keeps this human nature; He has it at heart that His incredulous disciples should verify its reality: *Handle and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have.* As they still doubt, He says to them: *Have you here anything to eat?* And they offer Him a piece of broiled fish and honeycomb which He takes and eats before them.

All that is ours He has made His own, excepting sin: *Absque peccato.* Christ knew neither sin nor that which is the source or moral consequence of sin: concupiscence, error, ignorance. His flesh is subject to suffering, because He comes to expiate sin by suffering; but sin itself has no hold upon Him: "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" This challenge made to the Jews still remains unanswered; and, in order to condemn Christ to death, it was necessary to have recourse to false witnesses. He is man, but of a stainless purity, as befits the dignity of a God-man: *Sanctus, innocens, impollutus, segregatus a peccatoribus.*

Christ, then, possesses Divine nature and human nature. He is at once God and Man, perfect God and perfect Man.

The Divine and the Human

Open the Gospel and on each page you will see that in all that He does the Incarnate Word shows Himself as God and man; everywhere the Divinity and humanity are manifested, each according to its nature and properties.

Christ is born of a woman, but He wills that His Mother shall be a Virgin and shall so remain; in the manger, He is an infant Who needs a little milk to nourish Him, but the Angels celebrate His coming as that of the Savior of the world; He is laid upon straw in a stable, but a marvelous star leads the Eastern Magi to His feet; like every Jewish boy, He undergoes circumcision, but at the same time He receives a name that comes from Heaven and marks a divine mission; He grows in age and wisdom, but at twelve years old He throws the doctors of the

Law themselves into admiration by His wonderful answers; He wills to receive baptism from John the Precursor as if He needed to do penance, but at that same moment the heavens open, and the Eternal Father attests that He is His beloved Son; in the desert, He is hungry, but the angels come to minister to Him; during His journeys throughout Palestine, He suffers weariness, thirst and want, but, by His own authority, He makes the paralytics walk, cures the lame and halt, and multiplies the loaves to feed the multitude; upon the Lake of Genesareth, sleep closes His eyelids while His disciples struggle against the tempest, but, the next instant, awakened by the terrified apostles, He stills the furious waves with a single gesture; at the tomb of Lazarus, He is moved, He sheds tears, true human tears, but, with a word, He raises to life His friend who had been dead four days; in the Garden of Gethsemani, after an agony full of weariness, distress and anguish, He allows Himself to be taken by His enemy, but the declaration that He is Jesus of Nazareth is sufficient to make them fall to the ground; upon the Cross, He dies like the last of men, but all nature proclaims by the upheaval it undergoes that it is a God Who dies.

Thus, according to St. Leo's beautiful words: *majesty is allied to lowliness, power to weakness, that which is mortal to that which is eternal... an inviolable nature to a passible nature... The true God is born in the integral and perfect nature of a true man, entirely with all that is His, entirely too with all that is ours.*

Everywhere, from the entering of Jesus into this world, the union of the Divinity and humanity is manifested in Him; a union which takes away nothing of the divine perfections and leaves intact the reality of the human nature: the Incarnation is an ineffable union.

O Eternal Wisdom, how deep are Thy thoughts, how wonderful Thy Works!

The Grace of Union

That which further makes this Mystery ineffable is the way wherein the union of natures is realized.

The divine nature and the human nature are united in one Person, the Eternal Person of the Word, of the Son.

In us, the soul and body united together form a human person. In Christ, it is not the same. The human nature, altogether integral, altogether perfect in its essence, in its constitutive elements, has, however, existence only through the Word, in the Divine Person

of the Word. The Word gives to the human nature its reality of existence, which, in this case, means its personal subsistence. There is then in Jesus but one Person, that of the Only begotten Son of God.

Yet, as you know, however intimately they be united, the two natures keep their particular energies and their specific operations; there is neither blending nor confusion between them; they are inseparably united in the one Person of the Word, each preserves its own activity.

In fine, the human nature is rooted in the divinity. It is a human activity, truly human and authentic, which is manifested in Jesus; but it has its ultimate principle in the divinity. The Divine Person of the Word is the source of all Christ's perfections. In the Holy Trinity, the Word expresses the perfections of the Father by an infinitely simple act; in uniting Himself to the Sacred Humanity, the Word expresses through this Humanity all these perfections by manifold and varied acts conformed to human nature. It is thus that a ray of light in passing through a prism emerges in a variety of different shades of colors. The virtues of the Sacred humanity of Jesus: His patience, sweetness, goodness, meekness, His kindness, zeal and love, are virtues accomplished by His human nature, but which are deeply rooted in the divinity, and at the same time manifest the perfections of the invisible God to our earthly gaze. Human in its outward expression, the life of Jesus is Divine in its source and principle.

Divine Action

What is the consequence of this doctrine? You know it, but it is extremely useful to return to it.

It is that all the actions of Jesus are the actions of a God. The actions of the Sacred humanity are finite actions, bounded by time and space, in the same way as human nature is bounded.

But the moral value of these actions is divine. Why is this? Because every action, although it be accomplished by such or such a faculty of nature; is attributed to the person. In Christ, it is always God *Who* acts, but sometimes *through* His divine nature, sometimes *through* His human nature. It is then true to say that it is a God Who toiled, Who wept, Who suffered, Who died, although all these actions were accomplished through the human nature. All Jesus Christ's human actions, however small they may be in their physical reality, have a divine value.

And this is why Christ's whole life is so pleasing to His Father. The Father finds in Jesus, in His person and in His acts, in His most humiliating states as in



His most glorious mysteries, all His delight, because He ever sees the Person of His Only begotten Son. The Father sees Christ Jesus as no creature can ever see Him. If I may thus speak, He alone can appreciate the value of all that His Son does. As our Lord Himself said: *No one knoweth the Son, but the Father.* We may raise our souls and meditate upon the mysteries and states of Jesus, but we shall never arrive at appreciating them as they deserve. Only God can worthily know and recognize that which a God does. But in the Father's sight, the least acts of the Humanity of Jesus; the least movements of His Sacred Heart were a source of delight.

Full of Grace

Another reason the Father has for contemplating the soul of Christ with complacency is that it is full of all grace. After having proclaimed the Divinity of the Word and the reality of the Incarnation, St. John immediately adds: *And we saw His glory... full of grace.*

What is this fulness of grace that St. John admired in Jesus and of which he said that *of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace?*

In Christ, there is first of all, as you know, the grace of union: *gratia unionis*, in virtue of which a human nature is substantially united to a Divine Person. Through this grace is wrought the union which constitutes the Incarnation. It is a grace unique of its kind, one which has only been given to Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, the soul of Jesus, created like ours, was endowed with the fulness of sanctifying grace. Through the grace of union, the humanity in Jesus became the humanity of a God; through sanctifying grace, the soul of Jesus was rendered worthy of being and acting as befitted a soul united to God by a personal union. This sanctifying grace was given to Jesus in all its plenitude. To us it is given in greater or lesser measure according to God's designs and co-operation. To Jesus, it was conferred in its fulness, on account of His personal quality of Son of God as well as account of His title of Head of the Mystical Body to which distributes it: *Secundum mensuram donationis Christi.*

Finally, the humanity of Jesus is holy because in an incomparable degree it possesses all those virtues which are compatible with His dignity as the Only begotten Son of God; because it is adorned, in a unique measure, with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Nothing is wanting then to the Humanity of Jesus in order for it to be worthy of the Word to Whom it is united; it has indeed the fulness of all grace: *Et vidimus eum pleni gratiae.* It is without measure that all

the treasures wisdom and knowledge are stored up in Jesus. In things He *holds the primacy* because in Him, it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell and should remain with Him forever. So that, says St. Paul who in this is the echo of St. John, *we are filled in He Who is the head of all principality and power.*

Faith in Christ Jesus

What ought to be our soul's attitude in presence of the fundamental mystery of the God- Man?

The first attitude that we should have is one of faith. I have already said so, but this truth is of capital importance and therefore I do not hesitate to return to it.

At the beginning of his Gospel, after having extolled the glory of the Divine Word, St. John says that the Word came into this world, and that this world which He had created which was His domain, which was *His own*, received Him not. But, he adds, all such receive Him as believe in His name. We receive the Incarnate Word, by faith; by faith, we accept the Divinity of Jesus *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*

Such is the attitude that the Eternal Father requests of us. *This is His commandment*, says the same St. John *that we should believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.* He has Himself told us so: *This is My beloved Son... hear ye Him.* These words which were heard on Thabor, when the splendor of the Divinity filled the Sacred Humanity of Jesus with its rays, are but the echo, in the created world, of the words that the Heavenly Father utters in the heavenly sanctuary, *in splendoribus sanctorum, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee.*

Thus we are very pleasing to our Heavenly Father when, accepting His testimony, we profess that Jesus is His own Son, that He is co-eternal with the Father and shares with Him the Divine glory.

The mystery of the self-abasement of the Word-made Flesh plunges St. Paul in such admiration that he can scarcely find terms wherewith to express the glory that, according to the very thoughts of God, these abasements will procure to Jesus. Listen to what he says: *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. For which cause God also hath exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above all names. That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven,*

on earth and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father.

We ought often to unite ourselves in mind and heart with the will of the Eternal Father to glorify His Son: *Clarificavi et iterum clarificabo*. Before opening the Gospel or preparing ourselves to celebrate the mysteries of Jesus, let us first enter into God's views, confessing, by an act of intense faith, that this Christ Whom we are about to contemplate, He to Whom we would pray and unite ourselves, is God like the Father and the Holy Spirit.

This attitude of soul is extremely profitable to us, for it raises us to the divine level and makes us pleasing to the Father: *Pater amat vos... quia credidistis quia ego a Deo exivi*. St. Leo so well says that the faith *which justifies the impious, and from sinners makes saints, is that faith which believes that in one and the same Lord Jesus Christ are the true Divinity and the true Humanity. The Divinity whereby before all ages He is equal to the Father, having with Him the same eternal nature; the Humanity whereby, in these latter times, He has united Himself to us in taking upon Himself the form of a servant.*

Adoration of Christ Jesus

This act of faith in the Divinity of Jesus should be the source of our adoration. Often, in the Gospel, we see the homage of adoration, accompany the act of faith. It is the homage of the Magi, of Peter after the miraculous draught of fishes, of the disciples who saw Jesus walking upon the water, of the man born blind when his sight had been restored to him: *Credo, Domine, et proci dens, adoravit eum*.

By this act of adoration, the soul surrenders itself wholly to the Divine Word. When Our Lord dwells in our heart, especially after Holy Communion, we ought, according to the counsel of St. Francis of Sales, to cast all our faculties down at His feet in order to listen to Him and promise Him fidelity.

This is to imitate the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. This Sacred Humanity belonged and was so absolutely yielded up to the Word, that it had no proper personality: this is one of the essential aspects of the mystery of the Incarnation.

All proportion being kept, it ought to be so with us, for Jesus Christ is our Model in all things. His Humanity only acted as subject to the Word in Whom it subsisted, to the Word Who gave this humanity existence. Let there be no movement in us that does not come from God, no desire that is not according to

the Divine good pleasure, no action that does not tend to serve as an instrument to His glory. A soul that is in such dependance of love, of will and of action upon God can say in all truth *The Lord ruleth me*.

And the sacred writer adds: *And I shall want nothing*. And so it is that because this soul is wholly given up to the Word, the Word says to His Father: *This soul is Mine, it is therefore also Thine, O Father; Mea omnia tua sunt*. The Word gives this soul to the Father in order that the Father may send His most perfect gifts down upon it.

Adoration of Christ's Humanity

Christ is God and Man. The faithful soul does not only confess the Divinity of Jesus but wills also to honor His Sacred Humanity.

There are some who think that they do better in their spiritual life not to occupy themselves with Christ's humanity but only to contemplate His Divinity. This was for a time the error of St. Teresa. The great contemplative afterwards recognized this error. In what bitter terms she deplored it. How earnestly she warned her daughters, and others through them, against this opinion which she declared to be *a delusion*, and one which she never recalled to mind without being seized with sorrow. For she says, *I had taken a detestable path and it seemed to me that I had been guilty of the blackest treachery*. To tell the truth it was *ignorance*.

According to the saint, such an illusion has for its cause *a certain want of humility, so secret and hidden that we do not observe it*. For we ought to account ourselves *exceedingly rich* to be able to stay near to the humanity of Jesus in His mysteries. This want of humility she says, *greatly hinders any progress in contemplation*.

Another result of the error that the saint points out is that it leaves the soul without support. *We are not angels*, she says, *we have a body ... in the midst of business, of persecutions, of trials ... in times of dryness, Christ is our best Friend. We see Him a man like ourselves, we contemplate Him in infirmity, in suffering ... It is very advantageous for us, as long we are in this life, to consider God-made-Man*. Is it not indeed the very law of our nature to come to the invisible through visible things? Now the Incarnation is the most divine application of this psychological law.

The Bride in the Cantic of Canticles says: *I sat*



down under His shadow, Whom I desired. This shadow is the Sacred humanity whereby our gaze is permitted to contemplate the Divinity thus revealed to us.

The Saint concludes: *God is extremely pleased to see a soul humbly place His Divine Son as the Mediator between herself and Him.*

And what is the innermost reason of this? It is that the Incarnation is a Divine mystery; it is the masterpiece of Eternal Wisdom and Infinite Love. Why not enter into God's views and designs? Why refuse to submit our limited and finite wisdom to Infinite Wisdom? Are then God's resources so inefficacious that we should have to improve them by our human

calculations? If God has thus willed to effect our salvation and holiness by means of a humanity united to His Word, to His Son, why do we not take this means? Therein God's wisdom is as wonderful as His condescension.

When reading the Gospel, or celebrating the mysteries of Jesus, do not let us fear to contemplate the man in Christ. This Humanity is the Humanity of a God. This Man, Whom we see acting and living in the midst of men so as to draw them to Himself by sensible marks of His love, is God, our God.

Above all do not let us fear to render to this humanity itself all the homage due to it.

Our adoration in the first place. It is true that this

humanity is a created humanity like unto our own. We do not adore it for its own sake; we must, however, adore it in itself, on account of its union with the Son of God. Our adoration goes to His Humanity, but the Divine Person to Whom it is substantially united is the term of this adoration.

Confidence in Christ

Next, absolute confidence. God has willed to make Christ's Humanity the instrument of grace. It is through His Humanity that grace flows into us. It is not of the Word in the bosom of the Father, but truly of the Incarnate Word that St. John speaks when he says that He was *'full of grace... and of His fullness we have all received.*

During His earthly life, Our Lord, being God, could have wrought all His miracles and given grace to men simply by an act of His Divine will. Each time that the sick were brought to Jesus to be healed or the dead to be raised to life, He could, by a single interior act of His Eternal will, have wrought the miracle demanded. But He did not do so. Read the Gospel and you will see that He willed to touch the eyes of the blind, the ears of the deaf, the tongue of the dumb; that He willed to touch the bier of the son of the widow of Naim, to take the daughter of Jairus by the hand, to give the Holy Ghost to His Apostles by breathing upon them. It was, then, by the contact of His Sacred



Humanity that Christ performed miracles and gave grace: the Humanity served as the instrument united to the Word. And this wonderful and touching law is observed in all the mysteries of Jesus.

Now this order, willed by God Himself, always subsists because the union of natures in Jesus Christ remains indissoluble. Hence, when we read the pages of the Gospel or follow the Church in her liturgy, when we unite ourselves to the Sacred Humanity of Jesus by an act of faith; when, above all, we receive His Body in the Eucharist, this Sacred Humanity, inseparable from the Divine Word, serves as the instrument of grace for our souls.

It is quite evident to me, writes St. Teresa, that in order to please God, and receive great graces from Him, it is needful, and such is His will, that they should pass through the hands of this Sacred Humanity, wherein, as He Himself declared, He was well pleased. I have seen a number of times that this is the door whereby we must enter if we wish His Majesty to reveal high secrets to us ... One walks with safety along this path.

And if you reflect, you will agree that all the economy of the spiritual life is based upon this truth. The Church, the Sacraments, the Holy Sacrifice, the preaching of the Word of God: these are so many means whereby God leads us to Himself.

We see how important and necessary it is for us to remain united to the Sacred humanity of Jesus. In it dwells the very plenitude of the Divinity, and it is from the Word through the instrumentality of the humanity, that we receive every grace: *Verbum caro factum est... et vidimus eum plenum gratiae et de plenitudine ejus nos omnes accepimus.* The humanity of Jesus is the divinely established means for transmitting grace to souls.

It is also the means whereby souls come to the Divinity. This is a no less important truth which we ought never to forget. We ought not to stop at the Sacred humanity as at the final term. In fact, you might say: *As for me, all my devotion consists in giving myself to Christ Jesus, in yielding myself up to Him.* That is good, it is excellent, nothing is better than to give ourselves up to Christ. But what is it to give ourselves to Our Lord? It is to unite our will to His. Now the will of Jesus is to bring us to His Father. In that

lies all His work; the Father is the term. *I am the way*, said Christ Himself in speaking of His Humanity. This Humanity is the one way, it is true, but only a way. The supreme end to which this way leads is the Eternal Father: *Nemo venit ad Patrem nisi per me.* By the Humanity we come to the Word, and by the Word to the Father.

This is what St. Paul said to the Christians of his time: *Omnia vestra sunt, vos autem Christi, Christus autem Dei.* By these simple words the great Apostle expressed the degrees of the Divine work upon earth: *For all things are yours ... and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.*

By the Humanity of Jesus, we belong to the Word, to the Son; by the Son, we go to the Father. Christ thus leads us *in sinu Patris.* This is, in what concerns us, the intimate reason of the ineffable mystery of the God-Man.

St. John tells us that at the outset of Our Divine Savior's public life, when He was passing through Samaria, He came to a city called Sichar, near Jacob's well. Among the details of this scene carefully noted by the Evangelist, there is one that especially moves our hearts: Jesus therefore, being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well. What a touching revelation of the reality of the humanity of Jesus!

We ought to read the wonderful commentary which St. Augustine has given of these details, with that opposition of ideas and terms of which he has the secret, especially when he wants to place in relief the union and the contrast of the Divine and the human in Jesus. *He is weary, He Who refreshes those who are weary; He Whose absence fills us with weariness, He Whose presence strengthens us. It is for you that Jesus is wearied on His journey. We find Jesus full of strength and of weakness. Why full of strength? Because He is the Eternal Word, and all things were created by His wisdom and power. Why full of weakness? Because this Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us. The strength of Christ created you; the weakness of Christ re-created you.*

And the saint concludes: *Jesus is weak in His humanity; but as for you, take care not to remain in your weakness; go rather to draw strength from Him Who, being by nature Almighty, willed to become weak for love of you.*