

Christ's Cradle or Grave?

The Holy Bible begins with the Book of Genesis by the following words: "In the beginning God created..." The whole book is a story of one event. This event is about the great struggle between first, God's desire to be close to man in his life, and second, the refusal of man to accept the company and entrance of God into his life. The whole history written in this book lies between these two poles of God's desire and man's reluctance.

The greatness of the divine economy recorded in the Old Testament through the prophets, preachers and the Law lies in that God, the Creator, never violated man's freedom. With all His patience, love and continuous sacrifice, through His discipline and education, God was able to help man reach the point where he shouted at the end of the Holy Bible through the mouth of the beloved apostle John, saying, "Lord Jesus Come" (Rev. 22:20)

Between the first and the last expression of the Bible comes the Incarnation of Christ as a focal point and the most important event in Human life and History. The Divine Incarnation represents the final and holiest event in history in which humanity accepted God to enter into its life and share human life in the body, a body like ours. At the fullness of time, God has sent His Son Who was incarnated, taking the form of a servant to redeem those

who are in the flesh. This was the peak event in which the divine desire met human freedom.

This event, "The Nativity of Christ" at that moment of history was not the end, but the crown of history. At that point God (Jesus Christ) began to enter human life in a faster and more direct way. Many began to accept Him and share their life with Him. The struggle, however, between accepting and refusing God continues.

God is in our life. God is in the fullness of our life. That is the daily struggle of each one of us. The sin of our ancestors, Adam and Eve, was not just a certain event. It was a wrong position, a position against that of the divine desire. Human freedom chose to separate between life and God, instead of drawing life from God. Sin is not just a wrong thing we do. It is the way we choose to take, like moving away from God, instead of coming closer to Him.

Sin in the Holy Scriptures does not mean insulting God or transgressing the Law, in the literal sense of the word. Sin is the wrongful direction that man takes. The wrong is taking a direction away from life with God instead of moving closer to Him. The Paradise of life was not a place full of trees! Eden was not a place on earth. Paradise and Eden represent every place in which God exists. The Holy Bible tells us that God was walking in the midst of Paradise. Therefore Paradise is every place having God in its midst, in every age. The Holy Bible links sin to death, for sin is every trial to separate oneself from God, leading to death. Virtue is to seek having God in our midst, in all our action, and thus in all our life.

The beloved John relayed to us the words of Jesus, Who said that He came in the midst of History so that we may have life abundantly (John 10:10). The Nativity of Christ has to do with an issue of life or death. His Nativity is not just a moment happening 2000 years ago, but it happens every moment in our history. His nativity is our life, and His absence is our death.

What was the sin of the Prodigal Son? Wasn't it that he left the paternal house, choosing to live where his father? His life exists in the bosom of His Father who welcomed and accepted him in all patience. Alienation from God is death and acceptance of life with God is life. Jesus is compared with the first Adam and is called the Second Adam. The first Adam inclined himself to live away from God and the Second Adam, Christ, ushered God into the life of man. In His Incarnation, God lived with man.

Christ was born in History, but He may be born or may die every moment in any person. Feasts come to renew His birth in us, and not just to remember it. The Nativity of Christ this year must be a cradle and not a grave of Christ in our lives. "Christ has come from heaven, receive Him. Christ has come on earth, be lifted up." As one of the saints cried in astonishment: "I see God on earth and man in heaven!"

When Christ is in our midst, than our life becomes the cradle of Christ. His grave, however, is our life, when we alienate Him.

"Make ready of Bethlehem, for in the birth of Christ, Eden was opened to all. The wood of life blossomed from the Virgin in the cave. The womb of the

Virgin appeared as a true paradise for the Lord was planted in its midst. If we eat from this plant, we shall live, and not die, as happened to the first Adam. Christ is born always to raise man who falls every moment. Amen.