

THIRTEENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Visitation.

"Arise my love, my beautiful one: and come; my dove in the cliffs of the rock, in the hollow places of the wall, show me thy face; let thy voice sound in my ears,—for thy voice is sweet."—*Cant.*, ii.

WHERE the little city of Hebron nestles amid the mountains of Judea there was a holy and a happy home. Zachary an aged priest had long lived there with Elizabeth his holy wife. She was a cousin of Mary of Nazareth. One day Zachary was burning incense in the Temple, while, as was the law, the people were praying without. "And there appeared to him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zachary saw him, he was troubled and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him: Fear not Zachary, for thy prayer is heard, and thy wife Elizabeth will bear thee a son 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 he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb." And Zachary said unto the angel: How shall I know this? For I am an old man and my wife is well stricken in years. And the angel answering, said unto him: "I am Gabriel who stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou hast not be-

lieved my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

The people were waiting and had wondered much why he tarried so long in the Temple.

When he came out he could not speak, but only made a sign and then they knew that he had seen a vision in the temple. "And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived."

Long had they prayed that God would bless them with offspring; and at last their prayer is granted.

But Zachary is speechless. He has lost his voice. How strange, that his child, when he faces the world thirty years afterwards, and when asked who he is, will answer "I am a voice crying in the wilderness."

To that home in the hill-country went Mary of Nazareth; and Scripture tells us that she went in haste.

From Nazareth to Jerusalem it was a long three days' journey. She passed by the Mount of Transfiguration. She passed by Calvary to reach the Holy City bearing the unborn victim. When she saw in the distance or near (or did she cross them?) its dark gray rocks, did their shadows give to her soul the light of presentiments? Or was it more than mere presentiment? Who knows?

The young virgin mother hastens to meet the aged mother.

The one bears the unborn Christ,—the other, His unborn precursor. The aged Elizabeth is the image of the Old Law passing away, which did not produce grace, but only promised and waited for it. Mary represents the New Law,—young and never to grow old, virginally fruitful of sanctity and abounding in ageless grace. The younger hastens to visit the older that truth may

meet the Figure 'ere it passes away,—that Substance may face the Shadow, and bless it 'ere it goes. And as Mary's presence, in after days, at the wedding-feast in Cana will be the means of eliciting from Christ the first Manifestation of His glory and the first Miracle of the New Law;—so her going with her unborn Child to Zachary's home brings the last manifestation and the last miracle of the spiritual life of the Old Law in the presanctification of John the Baptist.

She brought Christ into the world (hidden as yet) and now she brings Him to meet (hidden as Himself) and to bless His great Precursor.

What a meeting it must have been between two such mothers of two such children? There will never be such a meeting in this world again.

But let St. Luke describe it.

She entered the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. "And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary; the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost. And she spoke with a loud voice and said: 'Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb; and whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me? For lo! as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, for all these things shall be accomplished which were told thee from the Lord.'"

Listen!—At the sound of the voice of Mary, Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Ghost. Whose voice like her's save Christ's? And that voice is stronger now than ever.

Up in yonder heaven, this peaceful evening, (for there

is a lull in the winds and a holy hush out there on the waves of the gulf*) (I wonder do they know that I am trying to praise the Queen of Heaven and Star of the Sea?) Mary's voice is the sweetest music in the ears of God, and the mighty power of grace for us.

Oh voice above all voices, save the voice of Him who was and is thine forever, plead with the Father for us.

Thy voice has the tones of the voice of His Eternal Son,—and the Father loves to hear them.

Sweeter than all the voices of the angels in melody,—and next to the very voice of God in might!

"Blessed art thou among women" came from the lips of her cousin;—the very words of Gabriel to herself. Zachary stood by the mystery, speechless; as Joseph stood by the greater mystery, silent. Elizabeth, the mother of the Precursor, "filled with the Holy Ghost," is the first after the Archangel Gabriel to give public testimony of an honor above all honors, saving that due to God alone, to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Was she wrong? Was it too much or too great? But,—she was filled with the Holy Ghost. She spoke with His inspiration. It was the Holy Ghost speaking through her aged lips.

Thus Christ and the Precursor met,—and they met through their mothers. Wondrous mystery! too deep in the least of its meanings for any lips to tell, save Mary's.

So let us be still while Mary sings the first and grandest *Te Deum* of Redemption

MAGNIFICAT.

My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid : for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name,

And His mercy is from generation to generation to them that fear Him.

He hath showed might in His arm ; He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

He hath put down the mighty from their seat ; and hath exalted the humble.

He hath filled the hungry with good things ; and the rich He hath sent empty away.

He hath received Israel His servant ; being mindful of His mercy.

As He spoke to our fathers ; to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Thus Mary, in the "ecstasy of humility," chants the first Christian psalm. It was her royal right as queen of her Son's Kingdom. There is no song on key as lofty in all Scripture. It lives an everlasting life in the Vespers of Holy Church. No wonder when it is entoned the people rise to honor its every syllable.

No wonder that in Solemn Vespers, the altar is incensed ; for the closed tabernacle contains the very Holy One who was then hidden in her womb.

'Tis a song enshrining all the grandeurs of God, for it contains and expresses the greatest things which God has done in time and eternity, in Heaven and on earth, for His own glory and the happiness of His children. It was the grand human echo of the music of divine mercy then silent in her bosom. For the unborn Child in tones unheard sang the *Magnificat* with His Mother.

The first announcement that the Messiah had come was by His Mother's song.

She remained with her cousin until the Child was born. In her own arms she held Him, Who thirty years afterwards will baptize her own Son. And the Precursor of her child nestled on her bosom.

Eight days afterwards they came to circumcise the Child. Then the speechless Zachary opened his long-closed lips in sudden song.

The harmonies of grace broken by the discord of sin are coming back to earth. Zachary sings his BENE-DICTUS. But Mary's *Magnificat* had already entoned the first notes of the eternal hymn of divine Mercy.

Ah me ! discords still will come to mar the beauty of the holy hymn. But Mary's voice is ever ready, sweet and tender, if only we plead with her, to bring, by its own power, our voices, our hearts and our lives into the harmony of the eternal hymn again.

ASPIRATION.

"BLESSED art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb ! And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me ?"—*Luke* i, 42.

PRAYER.

VOUCHSAFE, Lord, we beseech thee, to us thy servants the gift of thy heavenly grace ; that as in the childbirth of the blessed Virgin our salvation began, so from the votive solemnity of her Visitation we may obtain an increase of peace.

FOURTEENTH DAY.

The Flower of the Fear.

"Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God."—*Luke, i.*

ALL the Feasts of the Old Covenant were historical and memorial. There was not a single day set apart in honor of a divine Truth. The very Sabbath was more a memorial-day of God's rest, than a reminder of His Nature and attributes.

The Pasch, Pentecost, Feast of Tabernacles and others were merely commemorative of the great facts of Hebrew history. But while those festivals borrowed their meanings from the past, they were shadows of a great coming Future. The Feast of Expiation, the only day in the year, when the white-robed High Priest entered the Holy of Holies merely represented the sinfulness of the people, and typically foreshadowed the day of Redemption.

Not so the Feasts of the New Dispensation. The living truth in the beautiful variety and the more beautiful harmony of Dogmas is their primary object,—commemoration is but secondary. What was typical in the Old Law is mystical in the New. For the New Law is an ever present Life,—that of the ever-living Christ. We have, of course, seven signs or symbols called Sacraments; but they are more than signs, they are the supernatural activities of the divine life of Christ in the Church made present and sensible. The

old Hebrew Church was a Shadow-Church. Ours is the Church of the divine Substance. The priests and people of the old Dispensation, generally, kept their Shadow-Feasts with wonderful strictness and fidelity, wherein, they have left an example which many Christians would honor themselves by following.

Joseph, always attentive to the strictest observance of the Law, never failed to go down to Jerusalem and to assist with fervor at the services on the great Feasts.

And, always, poor though he was, would he bring his humble offerings to the Temple. The journey was too long for Mary, and besides, to some of the Festivals the Hebrew women were not obliged, by the law, to go. And, further, in most of the towns of Judea there were synagogues which stood instead of the Temple.

So after that 25th of March Joseph went down to celebrate, at least, the latter days of the Paschal Festival. And Mary was left alone,—with her mysterious secret. Joseph's absence, for a single day, was wont to make her sorrowful; but now a change had come over her soul, and the pain of parting was not so great. Not that her pure love for him had diminished. Contrariwise it had increased; but a love of all loves deepest was filling the Virgin-heart:—a mother's love for an unborn Child,—and it,—her very God. Joseph returned from the Feast of the Pasch. Closer and closer together grew their hearts. Mary prayed,—and Joseph marked it,—more frequently and with a fervor that looked like rapture. And in the long-evenings she would ask him to read the old Scriptures and its strange prophecies about the Messiah.

He was a man learned in the Law; and while his outer life was a life of daily toil that seemed scarcely in

keeping with much or deep thought:—he, nevertheless, in unknown, inner life, lived more with the great prophets of the past than in the noisy discussions of the present teachers of the Law. How could the Emmanuel be conceived by a Virgin,—and how could a virgin bring Him forth,—as Isaias had predicted;—she would oftentimes ask Joseph. She knew the secret. She was hiding it in her heart. Was she trying him by her questions? Was she striving to reach his inner thought? Was she thinking of the day when the mystery, in herself, would be manifested?

Joseph would listen,—and ponder long in silence, as he had done a thousand times before, but he could not solve the mysterious Prophecy.

Did she ever answer him;—or did he ever say to her: “Nothing shall be impossible with God.” And, all the while, a great fear like a shadow that folds the hill, was creeping around her heart.

Again Joseph was obliged to go down to the Holy-City for the Feast of Pentecost. Jerusalem, like all other cities, either Hebrew or Christian, when external ordinances are of more importance than interior piety, was gossippy, talkative, curious, questioning. It busied itself about everybody. It had not forgotten the day of the Espousals of the best Hebrew of their race to its most beautiful Maiden. And they would ask Joseph about Mary. His answers were as brief as they were gently given. The High-priest and the priests would express their hopes that God would bless Mary with offspring. No word,—spake he then,—save perhaps: “God’s will is best.” For none there knew of his vow of virginity. He was the most secret and silent saint that ever lived in this world of vain and useless and

commonplace chatter. Home he came again. Up the long, narrow street that led to his dwelling and his shop he walked;—but Mary met him on the humble threshold,—in sooth more like a child and daughter than a woman and his spouse. Did he mark it? She was becoming more like a child day by day? Or were his eyes veiled yet for awhile. May with its flowers,—the angels of the valley passed. June came with her splendors of earth and sky, and the birds were singing vesper-songs up in the bitter-sweet almond-trees,—when:—

Hush and listen. All-day long Joseph had been working in his shop. He was very tired. All day long Mary had been praying in her humble room.

Had she a presentiment. All day long a great fear was folding darkest shadows around her soul;—and she was heart-tired.

Joseph entered. She rose to meet him. Ah! the look that swept like a cloud across his face! Ah! the storm that rushed over her soul!

It was a minute with infinite sorrow in it for both.

In his face suspicion. In her heart terror. In his eyes an awful doubt. On her face the white pallor of an indescribable pain.

His eyes could not deceive him. The hidden mystery stood manifested before him. She was going to be a mother. The signs were there. Has she broken her vow? If not the purest virgin, she must be the vilest outcast. Men are more suspicious than women,—and though he was a saint Joseph was a man,—with a man’s temperament.

But to be suspected of sin in that which was the very mystery of sanctity was a blow that fell heavy on her heart;—but to be suspected by him, her husband

according to the law, almost broke her heart. If he puts her away; if he denounces her, her unborn Child, who is the Blessing of the world, will bear the brand of an eternal curse. The haunting doubt that lurked in the eyes of Joseph;—his voice that hesitated when he spoke to her; his manner so gentle and simple that now put on a strange constraint;—his cold silence; but above all that look that seemed to mar the very sanctity of his face, filled the soul of Mary with all the terrors of a great overmastering fear. If he only asked a question,—but his lips were sealed. If she could only tell the secret,—but she dare not lift the lid of Mystery. Ah! Mary! before your child has appeared, you begin to live his life. His own people will doubt, and deny His divinity, and crucify Him. Joseph has doubts of your virginity, which is to you, what Divinity is to your unborn Child. His own people will lead Him to crucifixion;—your own Spouse crucifies you on the cross of his doubt. His own people will know not what they do. Did he not pray it: "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do." Your own Joseph knoweth not what he is doing.

Go to rest, if rest you can to-night, virgin of sorrow, but around thy heart the very hand of Joseph has woven, by his suspicion, a crown of thorns. So they, his people, will weave another for the brow of your Son, and they will look upon Him on Calvary as Joseph, not knowing all, looks upon you to-night,—as a malefactor! Oh! the wondrous silences of God! Why does He not speak just one word in Nazareth? Why does not Gabriel come right down to Joseph, and rebuke him for his doubt? Why does he not descend again to Mary and bring her consolation and give her hope? Let God alone.

Let Mary suffer all the anguish of fear. Let Joseph suffer all the pangs of doubt. Sorrow like theirs is the shadow of God coming nearer and nearer.

Wait till its darkest folds encircle them. The shadow over the Holy of Holies betokened God's invisible Presence. Such sorrow as theirs is the Holy of Holies that hides the nearest Presence of God.

Next day came. They prayed apart. A wall of separation divided their souls. Joseph went to his shop and worked on in a weary way. Tears were sleeping in eyes; pain was gnawing at his heart. He was standing beneath a great dark cloud. All day long his thoughts were tortures.

What should he do? Denounce Mary? And his ears began to listen to the awful sounds of the cruel stones that would slay his child-spouse. For what else was she but a child? Would he lay his sorrow before the priests of the Temple? Ah! no! Mary was the child of the Temple,—the very angel of Jerusalem. And how the infamy would spread through Judea.

What should he do? What else but pray,—and perhaps some light would come from Heaven. Or, he thought:—"I will put her away privately."

And Mary? It was her hour of agony. If an angel came to Gethsemane in years long after to comfort her Christ; did an angel come to her that day to brighten the darkness around her?

All day long she prayed;—and sorrow gave swift wings to her prayers.

Her heart was whelmed in a sea of grief dark and deep and stormful, but far over the waters,—walking them as her Son will walk the waves of Galilee here-

after,—came the beautiful feet of Peace;—not to her, first, but to Joseph in his sleep.

“Yes,—I will put her away privately.” “No one will know of it but my own heart.” Came the awful rush of sorrow’s torrents through his soul. He prayed and wept himself to sleep. “And behold the angel of the Lord” (was it Gabriel?) appeared to him in his sleep, saying: “Joseph, Son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins.”

It was in the first watches of the night. Mary was praying for sleep had fled from her eyes. Came a call,—and Joseph’s voice: “Mary!” Never had she been called at such a time and in such a tone before. She went out to meet him. His face was her salutation. The glory of honor and the rapture of adoration blended in his looks. Did he kneel at her feet to adore the “Word made Flesh” tabernacled in her? Yes,—and if she was the first, he was the second Christian. No need of words! Did he try to frame his mistaken doubt in words?

Did they kneel down, and with hearts and voices blended, more closely now than ever, adore together the Word Incarnate?

Ah Joseph! you said in your thoughts: “The fruit of her womb is not my child.” The world will call him so; and, with the glory of a divine revenge, Mary, whom you doubted, the child of the Temple, will cry aloud in the Temple, with the same gladness, after sorrow, felt by you, in presence of the doctors of the law and the priests: “Son why hast thou done so to us.

Do you not know that thy Father and I have sought thee sorrowing three days?”

Next day came. And now two know the mystery of the Incarnation: Mary the Mother that is to be, the purest of the pure in Judea; and Joseph the foster-father that is to be,—the most just man in Israel.

“In the mouth of two witnesses every word shall stand.” In the testimony of Mary and Joseph the eternal Word will stand in the glory of His truth. For the rest of the world was the expectation of the Messiah.

To Mary and Joseph He was already come. They had and hid His Presence. In after days His priests, sharing the power of Mary His Mother, and the prerogatives of Joseph His foster-father, will mystically yet really conceive Him, by the words of Consecration, on the altar;—and like Joseph His foster-father, will keep care for Him in the tabernacle; and when, needs be, will carry Him into the Egyptian darkness of the dying. Oh! Mary! thou art called our sweet Hope and our Peace, but thou hast become so unto us, by the agony of thy great Fear. For Hope wears the sandals of fear.

We praise thee and bless thee in the clouds of thy sorrow as in the brightness of thy glory! In our fears, —and ah! how many they are; send our angels to us, as came the angel to Joseph, and let hope and holy peace dispel the darkness and bring us the light of earthly and eternal rest!

ASPIRATION.

“I WILL not fear thousands of the people surrounding me. Arise, oh Lord! Save me, oh my God.”—*Psalm*, iii.

PRAYER.

POUR forth, we beseech thee, O Lord, thy grace into our hearts: that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ thy Son was made known by the message of an angel, may by His passion and cross be brought to the glory of His resurrection.



 FIFTEENTH DAY.

 The Flower of the Midnight of Mercy.

"Glory be to God in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will."—*Luke, ii.*

DOWN in Brazil there is a flower of rarest beauty which blooms only at midnight. It is found far in the heart of the great silent forests. The sun passes over its close-shut leaves in the day;—but when night comes they open and the forests are filled with its sweet perfume.

"The stars were in the middle of their courses:" it was the noon of night. A hush fell around a stable outside of Bethlehem,—like the deep silence that comes over the people in the temple a little while before the moment of the Consecration in the Mass:—For the Holy of Holies was about to enter His creation in visible form. Nine months He had been in it,—but hidden. Joseph and Mary had been obliged to go to Bethlehem to be enrolled, because they belonged to the house and family of David. The order had come from Rome. How many another order will go forth to the world from Christian Rome? So to Bethlehem they came. Up and down the narrow streets they had gone in the closing of the day seeking a shelter for the coming night. But in the city of their royal ancestors there was no place for them in the inn. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not."

Mary's heart sank within her because she knew that His and her hour was nigh. Out towards the cold, bleak plains they went,—plains which were the property of the Temple where the animals to be used in sacrifices were kept and fed by herdsmen and shepherds.

They reached a rude stable hollowed in the rock. They entered. A few animals were there that gazed in mute wonder at the intruders. He was to be born outside of the city of His ancestors. He was to die outside of the city of the Temple. The night grew on apace. All was still. The world slept while the great Waker was coming. Ah! there was wonder in the hearts of the angels that night. They breathlessly awaited the mystery to become visible. Suddenly as a flower exhales its perfumes;—stilly and painlessly as the ray reflects its light, the Virgin brought forth the Word Incarnate; and wrapped the infant God in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. Ah! her rapture as she gazed on the little face! A mother's love and a creature's adoration met in her heart and were blended, in her first look upon the infant. The mother's familiarity and the creature's awful reverence met the mystery. And Joseph fell prostrate in worship intense,—overpowered by the awful responsibility placed upon him,—the charge of Mary the mother and the care of God His own creator,—now his foster child. Not a sound on earth;—but listen, the very angels have left the heavens and they are singing "*Gloria in Excelsis*" up in the starry stillness of the sky. "Glory be to God in the highest." And is this glory? Out on the hills the shepherds were watching the sheep destined for the sacrifices of

the Temple. They left the sheep and they found the Shepherd of souls in the stable. For: Lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were very much afraid. And the angel said unto them, "Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all the people: for unto you is born in the city of David, a Saviour who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Was it Gabriel that spoke to them "Fear not," that night of the Lord's coming, the very words that he had said to Mary before she gave her consent to let Him come through her? And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly hosts, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will." And the shepherds said to one another: "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came in haste and found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in a manger."

Mark:—first came the tidings in angelic song to those who were watching the sheepfolds that belonged to the Temple for sacrificial purposes. They came and they found in the crib "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" in the sweet form of a little babe. But they wondered only. How could they comprehend the mystery of the manger.

Let us go with them. How often we have done so on many a Christmas night! Let us enter. We find as they found Mary and Joseph and the infant;—an earthly Trinity in the stable. Faith still wonders as

the shepherds did. And Faith still finds what they did find,—Mary and her child. Kneel down now and adore the infant. The Mother has taken it from the cold crib to her warm bosom. You cannot take the child out of those arms; or from that breast. It is the first altar purer than any altar ever to be in all time. And those arms own that child.

Do you adore? Adoration of Him is veneration of her. Do you praise? Praise of Him is honor for her.

Mother and child together,—united indissolubly forever. In the Promise,—in the Conception and now the bond of birthhood unites them visibly.

In that stable, the haunt of animals, all the mysteries of Redemption begin to meet. Strange! Those mysteries were conceived and decreed amid the splendors of the heavens; and now they are fulfilled in the squalor of a stable. Let God alone. He has come to reverse human standards. He has come to revolutionize all the criteria of this world. Omnipotence becomes powerlessness. Riches eternal become Poverty. Immensity circumscribes itself in an infant's little face and form; and God's highest glory on earth begins in a stable! and it will end on a cross!

End?—Ah no,—it will never end.

Who presides over the Mystery's beginning? Mary, the Child's Mother. And she will preside over all Redemption's mysteries with all the right and power of a mother down to the last. In as true a sense as the word means she is co-redemptress of the human race. Christ is ours because He was hers. She is the human mother of the Father's consubstantial eternal Son. By divine decree from all eternity, and by

that decree's accomplishment in time, Mary, Virgin and Mother has become a necessary factor in Christian faith. Therefore she cannot be left out without marring the completeness of Faith.

If the whole wide world keeps Christmas as a day of abounding joy it is because she gave the Christ, who is the joy of Christmas, to the whole world. That stable has multiplied into hundred of thousands of temples. That manger has grown into millions of altars. The Temple means the stable and the altar means the crib. So, in temple and at altar we must find what the shepherds found Mary with her child. Mother and child together. You cannot, dare not part them. The very stable would protest, had it a voice; and the poor, humble straw made consecrate by becoming the first resting place of the Word Incarnate, would protest. And Joseph, and the shepherds and the mother;—but above all the child. Let him stay in His Mother's arms. Next to His Father's bosom, her breast is His place. Wonderful mystery! Who can understand it?

The mother,—a creature, clasps and kisses her creator! Well—is it not a mystery of Love?

Our Holy Church, like the stable, keeps the Mother and Joseph and the child together. In the inn, they were told that there was no room for them. There are so-called churches like the inn. They have no room for Mary and Joseph. They have room only for Christ. His Mother and His foster-father must stay outside the doors, forsooth! Christ and only Him is their cry. There is no such thing as Christ solitary and alone. He is akin to our race on His Mother's side. She is the bond of the kinship,—she, and her

blood. Thrust her aside, you must thrust Him away. No—no. He will stay with His Mother and she will stay by Him. And both together will stay with us. Mother and child together.

The Catholic temple or humblest chapel on Christmas night and day represent the stable. We have room for them—Jesus, Joseph, Mary. The rest of the churches represent the inn. They have no room for them. Ah! humble crib thou didst not stay in the stable. Thou hast moved down the centuries and across the world,—and not only on Christmas night and day;—but every hour of time thou, transformed into countless altars, art still presenting to the eyes and heart of faith the story of the stable; and Mary the Mother is always there,—in her own place,—and if she had power to give the Christ birth, which is the grandest power of all, she has all other powers which that contains,—and has them forever.

The birth was, by divine operation on the sinless Mary, without throes of sorrow,—but with throbs of rapture. The sinlessness of the Mother sweetened the humiliation of Christ. He came from the sinless heavens through His sinless Mother to save the sinful world. Can the world forget that Mother? Ought not every child of the human race love Mary with a devotion only inferior to love for God?

And remember, because of being His Mother, Mary became, in a sense the superior of Christ. If He obeyed the law that was passing away,—He, with greater reason, obeyed His Mother, because she had more right to His submission than the law.

The story of that Midnight can never pass away. And Holy Church keeps forever on her altars the

echoes of the "*Gloria in Excelsis*." It was not sung until Mary bent over the babe in the crib,—and now it will be sung forever.

Oh! Holy Mary! thou didst bring forth our Saviour in a poor and squalid stable for all the world. Bring Him forth in our poor souls, by thy prayers and intercessions! As in Holy Church—so in our hearts we will have room for Jesus, Joseph and Mary.

ASPIRATION.

"A LIGHT shall shine upon us this day: for our Lord is born to us: and he shall be called Wonderful, God, the Prince of peace, the Father of the world to come; of whose reign there shall be no end."
—*Is.*, ix.

The Lord hath reigned, he is clothed with beauty: the Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded himself."—*Psalms*, xcii.

PRAYER.

GRANT, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that we who are filled with the new light of thy incarnate Word, may show forth in our works what by faith shineth in our minds.