

EDITORIAL

THE crucifix which represents our Lord as *regnans a ligno* is not seen so often as the more ordinary one which shows him as he was on that first bitter Good Friday, the divine victim nailed to the cross. There he is stripped, naked and humiliated, the crown of thorns, a crown of shame and insult, upon his head. But here, in this other form of crucifix, the image of Christ is clothed in the priest's alb and crossed stole, wearing a crown not of thorns but of gold, a King's crown. He is on the cross, it is true, his arms outstretched, the nail-marks in his hands and feet, to remind us of the work he wrought, surrounded by mockery and weeping in the three hours' agony of Calvary. This crucifix however shows us much more than that, it shows us the Christ who died, but also the Christ who rose from the dead in triumph over death, who now lives and reigns and rules in the heavenly places as King; 'for in that he died he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth he liveth unto God' (Rom. 6, 10).

As we approach the season of Advent which prepares us for the coming of the Word made flesh at Christmas, as St John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Messiah, prepared the way for his coming long ago, we need to take in at a glance, as it were, the whole significance of that coming, a significance summed up in the crucifix which represents our Lord as *regnans a ligno*. We see there vividly depicted, who he is, what he wrought for us in his earthly life and what he now does for us where he sits at God's right hand.

For he is the eternal Son of God; in him all things created took their being, heavenly and earthly, visible and invisible. All things were created through him and in him, who is the true likeness of the invisible God (Col. 1, 15-16). In him we ourselves were created, and the material world around us of which we are a part, the things we see and touch and use. The things invisible also were his creation, the unseen spiritual world that lies within and around us, the home of God's powerful spirits, the angels. To that world belong also the mysterious soul, our own immortal life principle, and the grace by which God has trans-

formed its life. In Christ, God's Word, all these created things subsist.

For our sakes he became man. He entered our human life to share it with us, to make himself one with us that being one with him, we might be 'partakers of the divine nature'. The Word was made flesh. He took to himself a human nature; a mind to think with humanly, and a will to be used with human obedience and love. He crowned his earthly life of perfect obedience to his Father's will with an act of supreme obedience; he was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. By that death he set us free from the power of evil.

Now that he sits at God's right hand, we know that he is not in some far-off heaven remote from our concerns. For he is with us as he promised, even to the consummation of the world. As St Paul tells us, he is the head of his Body, the Church (Col. 1, 18), and we are his members, united with him by the power of grace which flows from his Cross. He lives in us in virtue of his life within the Mystical Body, his Church. The head communicates a constant increase of life to the members and this communication takes place principally through the Mass. There he is both priest and victim and there by his perpetual offering of himself he makes available to us the fullness of his redemptive power. By the power which flows from the cross through the Mass Christ our high priest lives in us and we in him.

The first Christians had a deep and abiding sense that if their lives were to be possessed by Christ our Lord, if he was to live and reign and rule in them supreme, then they must be wholly conformed to the pattern of his earthly life; they must die with him in order to share his life. He himself had said, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me' (Luke 9, 23). St Paul was also to say, 'All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized into his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life' (Romans 6, 4).

This sense of their life in Christ sustained the martyrs in their sufferings, as we read in their authentic and contemporary acts. They were ordinary men and women, old and young, husbands and wives, boys and girls. Yet because they knew that Christ possessed their lives they went joyfully to torture and death,

rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer with him and for his sake. What they had pledged themselves to, we also have promised in our baptism. We have renounced the devil and all his works and all his pomps and in doing so we have pledged a complete and wholehearted obedience to Christ. We have undertaken to die to sin that we may live by and in him. So in return for our obedience, loyalty and love, Christ by his power will reign and rule in our hearts, giving us here and now the life which will bring us one day to life eternal.

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We announce with some regret that as from next January the annual subscription to THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT will be raised to 25s. post free, single copies 2/- each. As subscriptions become renewable they will be booked at the new rate. This has been made an absolute necessity by the steady increase, over the past two years, of the cost of printing and production.

We announce also that the general theme of the January number will be *Christian Unity*.



ST JOHN THE BAPTIST

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IN Advent we go back to the very beginning of the Gospel, to St John the Baptist and his message. He has been called the school-master of the Apostles, and later apostles and preachers ought to study no less intently in his school. First, because he was the fore-runner of our blessed Lord, come to make his path straight and smooth before him. He was the remover of obstacles in that path, that would be in the way when the Lord came. This is not the highest power, but a very necessary one. His work was not so much that of a sacrament, which confers grace, as of a sacramental. The preaching and teaching, the rites and ceremonies of religious life with its special clothes and organization, is of the same kind. All that has the power of disposing men to come to our Lord; it stands as a witness to his truth and goodness. Like St John who was a burning and a shining light, modern apostles too must be *vera lumina*,