

Christmas Fear

December 26, 2009

So Christmas Day has come and gone once more, reminding us of the great joy which Our Lord brought to the entire world by His Incarnation and Birth, but especially to his Mother. At last she holds him safe in her arms where she tends to him like a mother, but where she also adores him as her God. Alas, who that has an inkling of religion cannot lament how the world around us cashes in on the joy, but in large part forgets the God?

In this respect the joy of Christmas today resembles the smile of the Cheshire Cat, especially in capitalist lands (but Pius XI observed back in 1931 that capitalism was extending all over the world – “Quadragesimo Anno,” 103–104). Readers of “Alice in Wonderland” will remember how the smile of the Cat could still be seen when the rest of the Cat had disappeared. The substance is gone, but the effects linger, at least for a while. Belief in the Divine Child is being killed off all the time, thanks especially to Vatican II, yet the joy of Christmas is lingering. This is partly because God, being supremely generous, commemorates each year the Birth of his Son amongst men with a flood of actual graces, to which many souls respond by being a little nicer than they are at any other time of year, but it is partly also because joy is enjoyable. This is rather less secure.

For as the true worship of God continues to disappear, and with it any true grasp of what the coming of the Saviour meant, indispensable for our eternal happiness, so the joy of Christmas is being reduced to the commercialism and carousing we all know. The smile cannot indefinitely survive the Cat. Even the nicest of NIFs (Nice Internal Feelings) cannot survive indefinitely without their object. If Jesus Christ is not God, let alone the one and only Saviour of mankind, why rejoice in his birth? I love my Nifs, but if they are based

only on themselves, sooner or later they will collapse, leaving only a sour taste of disillusion behind them. I may love feeling all "Christmassy," but if I am reacting to my feelings instead of to what they are based on, I am heading for some emotional collapse or other.

It is the difference between sentimentality and sentiments. Our Lord was full of sentiments, when for instance he met the widow of Naim, distraught over her only son being carried to the grave (Lk. VII, 11-15). But there was no trace of sentimentality in Our Lord (nor, I declare, in "The Poem of the Man-God"), because the sentiments are never being sought out for their own sake. His sentiments were always stirred directly by a real object, eg the widow's grief, which put him vividly in mind of what would be his own Mother's desolation when he himself was being carried to the grave.

Subjectivism is the plague of our times, i.e. man shutting out objective reality in order to re-arrange it how he likes it subjectively within himself. Subjectivism is the heart and soul of the Neo-modernism now desolating the Church. And subjectivism cutting off the mind from its outside object necessarily engenders sentimentality in the heart, because it takes away from the heart all outside object for its sentiments. Capitalist Christmas will finally be killed by sentimentality. Either men return to the true God, to Our Lord Jesus Christ and to the true importance of his Birth, or the collapse of some of their nicest Nifs, the "Christmassy" Nifs, risks leaving the little that remains of "Western Civilization" with one more reason for suicidal sourness.

Kyrie eleison.