

Ten After Ten – Session 26: The Mysteries of Jesus’ Infancy and Hidden Life

522 The coming of God’s Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the “First Covenant.” He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming.

523 St. John the Baptist is the Lord’s immediate precursor or forerunner, sent to prepare his way... Going before Jesus “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” John bears witness to Christ in his preaching, by his Baptism of conversion, and through his martyrdom.

524 When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming.

525 Jesus was born in a humble stable; into a poor family. Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event... The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night.

526 To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom... Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this “marvelous exchange”:

O marvelous exchange! Man’s Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.

527 Jesus’ circumcision, on the eighth day after his birth, is the sign of his incorporation into Abraham’s descendants, into the people of the covenant. It is the sign of his submission to the Law and his deputation to Israel’s worship, in which he will participate throughout his life.

528 The Epiphany is the manifestation of Jesus as Messiah of Israel, Son of God and Savior of the world. The great feast of Epiphany celebrates the adoration of Jesus by the wise men (magi) from the East, together with his baptism in the Jordan and the wedding feast at Cana in Galilee. In the magi, representatives of the neighboring pagan religions, the Gospel sees the first-fruits of the nations, who welcome the good news of salvation through the Incarnation.

529 The presentation of Jesus in the temple shows him to be the firstborn Son who belongs to the Lord. With Simeon and Anna, all Israel awaits its encounter with the Savior—the name given to this event in the Byzantine tradition. Jesus is recognized as the long-expected Messiah, the “light to the nations” and the “glory of Israel,” but also “a sign that is spoken against.” The sword of sorrow predicted for Mary announces Christ’s perfect and unique oblation on the cross that will impart the salvation God had “prepared in the presence of all peoples.”

530 The flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents make manifest the opposition of darkness to the light... Christ's whole life was lived under the sign of persecution. His own share it with him. Jesus' departure from Egypt recalls the exodus and presents him as the definitive liberator of God's people.

531 During the greater part of his life, Jesus shared the condition of the vast majority of human beings: a daily life spent without evident greatness, a life of manual labor. His religious life was that of a Jew obedient to the law of God, a life in the community. From this whole period it is revealed to us that Jesus was "obedient" to his parents and that he "increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man."

532 Jesus' obedience to his mother and legal father fulfills the fourth commandment perfectly and was the temporal image of his filial obedience to his Father in heaven. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: "Not my will...." The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed.

533 The hidden life at Nazareth allows everyone to enter into fellowship with Jesus by the most ordinary events of daily life... silence, family life, work.

534 The finding of Jesus in the temple is the only event that breaks the silence of the Gospels about the hidden years of Jesus. Here Jesus lets us catch a glimpse of the mystery of his total consecration to a mission that flows from his divine sonship: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's work?" Mary and Joseph did not understand these words, but they accepted them in faith. Mary "kept all these things in her heart" during the years Jesus remained hidden in the silence of an ordinary life.