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THE MYSTERY AND LOVE

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THE MYSTERY AND LOVE

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*THE MYSTERY AND LOVE

If there were no such thing as solitude, the mind would become deranged. Everyone is known to have at certain times escaped every mentality. Sometimes it is only a flash of a lapse of thinking. The mind rests at such times. Sometimes it is accompanied by a fleeting focusing of attention, the eyes being for a moment caught on some object. You will often hear a person ask of another, What are you thinking about? Because upon that face is a glimpse of something different when the mind is for an instant still.

Now, solitude is known to us by another name--perhaps not very familiarly known to us, but experienced by us as

*Class lecture, December 27, 1940

what we call mystery. If it were not for the fact that the mind could enter into something mysterious, it would be lost in its capacities and abilities, it would be like a machine that had no chance to be oiled or readjusted. It is therefore most fortunate that something is introduced into the world in the form of religion, in the form of philosophy, in any form you wish to call it, that permits the mind to escape from its habitual confusion and enter either knowingly or unknowingly into a place of relief.

Now, the mysteries in the Christian doctrine are of such a nature. They provide a resting place. Did you ever note in personal contact with people, how talkative they are? They always have so much to say when the mind is merely running on without any object in view. Have you not noticed also that there are some in whose presence you like to be, who seem not only to have a quietness that is silence in regard to speech, but a silence of solitude, as

though they had the ability to enter into some region that may not be explainable. But these talkative people who ramble on will not give you the impression that there is in reserve somewhere a solitude which is akin to the mystery.

Now, in this Christmas season, we are in the midst of the mystery. Later on there will be the mystery about the time of Easter. At different periods of the year there are the outstanding mysteries which are connected very subtly, making it possible for a person to walk through the year as you might walk on an upper story in a house, or on the second and third story in a building. So you may walk on a floor that is prepared through the year, that you may have a foothold in a world that is not obvious, is not plain to be seen. Shortly you come to appreciate the fact that it is not a matter so much of knowing the mysteries that gives you satisfaction as being able to dip into the solitude of the mysteries, for you have

the same sense of satisfaction when you have not been able to comprehend the fullness of the mystery.

Let us review, just for a moment, the town of Bethlehem. In the original language Bethlehem means the House of Bread. Jesus is born in this House of Bread. He is Himself called the Bread of Life. Can you make anything out of that? Is it not a mystery when you speak of the House of Bread into which is born the Bread of Life which, if you eat you shall never hunger again?

Do you not see how you are introduced and given a platform upon which to walk wherein you may be perfectly at home although you may confess to yourself or to your neighbor, I do not understand what it all means? It is not a matter of understanding from the standpoint of the mind that is thinking in terms of dimensions and figures and all kinds of relativities. Nevertheless you enter into and experience and really appropriate the feeling of the mystery, and love it even when you do not understand it.

This action takes place in you whether you understand it or not, because there is a power accompanying the mysteries. And anyone who brushes against them, when he has contact with them, must be nourished by them. It is a fact that the body is nourished and the mind is nourished by this contact with the mysteries.

Note how simply the mystery is put, as though it was not intended that you comprehend it as you would comprehend a problem in mathematics. You are merely offered the mystery as a picture; for it is well known by Him Who offers the picture that it will not remain a picture because of the energy that is within. And the picture will introduce the mystery to operate in you, so that when you talk about the Babe that is born in the crib, the babe that is born in the manger of your mind associates with the environment; the picture acts upon you in a very different way than pictures ordinarily do because the picture is surcharged with the spiritual

energy that takes action. How many times have the lives of individuals been completely changed when they gazed at a picture of the Virgin Mary!

A young man was taken prisoner, having been wounded in the head because he was a Christian. In the midst of his suffering--having been cruelly abandoned--he fell asleep, and there appeared what seemed to him to be a dove. This dove flashed its wings against the wound in his head and vanished in blazing light more brilliant than the sun. When the young man awakened, his head was healed and all the wounds of his body were healed. What did he understand about the mystery of the action of the Holy Spirit, or the presence of the Virgin Mary who took compassion upon him? What did he know scientifically about such a matter? Nothing at all. But he became a recipient of the energy of that mystery.

I might recite to you the lives of many of the saints, like Mary of Egypt who went out into the great

desert. She had been a woman of the world; she had lived in great wealth; she had been associated with palaces. But one day by accident she saw a picture of the Virgin Mary. From that moment her life was changed. She went out into the desert. Can you think of a greater change than that? Do you think she went into deprivation, and pain, and suffering in the terms in which those things could be offered one in the desert? She became a power like unto the power of the Virgin Mary, by which she was able to heal even as the Virgin Mary had healed her. Her life became remarkable because she had gazed upon a picture.

What is a picture but a picture? Most pictures are representation only. Not so with these mysteries. Any picture that is deliberately of the mysteries is no longer a symbol. It is absorbed into the substance and distributes the energy of that substance, even as the dove healed the wounds of the young man. There is nothing that is any longer symbolic after the mystery in it has been revealed. We

have known of commonplace material being the symbol of all that is required to change a life of very ordinary worldliness, to a life of the understanding, acceptance, and participation in the mysteries of the spiritual life--such a common thing as a blade of grass, such a common thing as a piece of pewterware lying in the sun, a scrap of broken glass.

This whole world is a symbol. But the symbol is absorbed into the substance when the activity of the spirit is designed for operation in any individual's life; and that design may be aroused at any time by any being who has been absorbed into the mystery, so that his word becomes energy, and he can speak a word that will stir this energy and turn a symbolic word into a spiritual substance. So that under the auspices of one who had the power to speak the word, even the clothes of the people were not worn out, did not become ragged; during the period of forty years their shoes did not wear out. The symbol which

formerly was only a representative of truth may be translated into the substance of truth and becomes participant in reality.

Bethlehem, the House of Bread, the Babe in the Manger, the Word Made Flesh, the Bread of Heaven! Because of these mysteries, simply told as they are, like a picture, there is introduced into the world a kindliness. It is the presence of Life. But associated with the mystery is something that stirs the feelings because the mystery is a living thing. It cannot be in your presence without stirring you. You cannot be in this presence without feeling a contact--not ordinary, like a touch of wood, of stone--but contact that is like something so fine and delicate that you are lifted. And often you are actually lifted above the ground, as though, when you lose that sense of matter that is a weight upon your shoulders, you could be picked up into this stream of levitation and carried into the air.

This kindly feeling that one experiences in contact with the mysteries is not the kind of kindness that is based upon some selfish interest that you feel in the world. What is that feeling in the world that makes people have a kind look, one to another? Often it is founded upon some selfish motive, as though a person could have a sense of usefulness in being kind to someone, for he thinks that if he is kind, someone will in turn do something for him. But the kindness that goes with these mysteries, the feeling that is approached in the world today because of the spirit of Advent--because the mysteries are open and exposed at that time--that kindness has nothing whatever to do with a sense of usefulness.

Now, there is, in association with true friendliness, a spirit that is called partnership. And there is, in association with friendliness, a sense of good will, of wishing someone well. And along with this partnership, friendship, there is a sense of justice, and also there is a sense of equality.

Whether you have a sense of it or not, equality must exist in true friendship, justice must exist in true friendship, partnership must exist in true friendship, because it is on the level of something substantial and good. It is not like the good will, the good spirit, that is exercised in the world out of selfish motives, a hope for some kind of return; but it is that kind of friendship that can exist only through souls.

For illustration, an artisan may have a tool that is very fine--it may be a gardener who uses a tool in the garden, it may be a mechanic who has a tool that works upon steel. But between the man and the tool there can never be any equality, there can never be justice, nor partnership, nor friendship; but there must be the relation of master to servant.

What is your relation to your body? Is it master to servant so that your body is the tool of your soul? So it would be if you experienced a life in

the world such as people imagine they do, wherein the body must be subject to the will of the mind of the individual, must be told to do this and that, and must be a servant. Do you not see that that is the usual interpretation of man in the world? His soul is the artisan, his body is a tool. And where then is this partnership, this friendship, this justice and equality, to be located?

It is said by the great minds of the world that the only good that can come out of such relationship must be in the equality of the good that is of the tool with the good that is of the user of the tool. They do not express the same kind of goodness. The tool has a certain kind of goodness; if it is cleaned up at night and is put carefully away and keeps shining and good, it has its own kind of goodness which the master gives to it, the kind of goodness that belongs to the tool itself in belonging to the artisan.

The soul has a different kind of goodness; the soul has a goodness that

is due to the fact that it is the creator of the duality of soul and body. A workman and his tool--each has its own goodness. But the good of both belongs to the one for whose sake the pair exists. That Being Who is the Creator is the One Who has the right to assume all the goodness and appropriate all the goodness there is. For goodness that belongs merely to a tool is a very minus quality.

If, therefore, you were to go on thinking of your soul as the user of a tool, you could not accept the same kind of goodness to the body that you would have to the soul. But it must be that since the soul is prepared to experience only equality, only partnership, only justice, and only friendship, it must be inheritor and absorber of all the good there is.

And who is that soul? Let me explain in this way: If your body was made in such a way as, made of steel it must remain steel, made of wood it must remain wood, made of flesh it must remain flesh, then it could not be

transformed. If it were a tool, it must be just what it is after its own pattern and design. Then you say that it can know very little of any kind of goodness.

You do not accede soul and body in such a relationship, but have the understanding which Jesus Christ brought to you that your body should not any longer remain a tool, that your body should receive substance and be regenerated and turn into something permanently perfect. If it were a metal that could be rusted, it would cease to be a metal that could be rusted; if it were a sort of material that could be worn and torn, it would cease to have such a nature.

This was proposed in the sacrament of the Eucharist, that Jesus Christ Himself would enter into the body so that the body would no longer be a tool of the soul, but would be a living representative incarnating the very substance of the Word which was made flesh. Therefore, there can then exist between soul and body, friendship, justice, partnership, and equality. Otherwise the body

would be something to be discarded, to be thrown away; it would be worn out after a while. But, John the Beloved Disciple of Jesus gives us these words spoken by Jesus:

*I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly.

The word which John used most frequently was "love." It is said that as he grew older he never ceased to repeat this word. Love one another, he said. He had no experience of love as the world knows it, like a feeling of good will where one would help somebody so that he would get something done for him in return. None of that selfish love! But the activity was that the Word was incarnate in flesh. And therefore one shall feel toward another always as though he knew he is the incarnation of the Word, and therefore he would say: Love one another.

We have a story about Saint John. He had ordained a bishop for a certain

*St. John 10, 10

community, and one day when he was attending upon some ministry, walking through the congregation, he saw a beautiful youth, a fine young man, and he was drawn to this young man. He spoke to him and recommended him to the bishop as a charge, as a trust. So the bishop took him to his own home and kept him there and instructed him in the mysteries. For a long time the youth was absorbed in these wonderful instructions. Then, according to the story, he became more and more lax in his attentions and began to slip out into contacts that were quite worldly; and at last he separated himself from the bishop and joined a gang of robbers.

These robbers were highwaymen and they hid in the mountains, knowing all the mountain defenses. They were difficult to approach, but quick to descend upon any prey, and travelers going that way were stopped and robbed.

One day Saint John came where the bishop was established, and said, Where is that trust that I put in your hands

in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ? The bishop had forgotten the incident, and thought possibly he might be referring to money; he did not think of the young man as being a trust until Saint John reminded him. The bishop said, He is dead. Of what did he die? asked Saint John; what was his malady? The bishop answered, He forsook God and is now dead to the Christian faith.

Saint John is said to have immediately called for a horse and a guide into the mountains and rode in search of this young man. When he entered the mountains he was, as all travelers were, arrested by the band of robbers, and he said, This is what I came for--I wish to speak to such a one. The young man was brought to him; at first he was inclined to run away when he saw who it was. Finally, in the Name of Jesus Christ, Saint John said to him: You have been entrusted to God and I will lay down my life rather than lose this trust. The young man sprang out from the midst

of the band around him, rushed to Saint John and threw his arms around his neck, and confessed that he had erred, and that now his heart pined for restoration. He was taken back with Saint John and became a man such as he was ordained to be in the beginning, such as he had conformed to be, a true disciple, and he therefore afterwards passed on the word of truth to multitudes of people.

That story is to be remembered in connection with Saint John as an illustration of the love which he bore, which was not of the nature of mere kindness, but of such richness of quality that it would reach into the forfeiture of his own life rather than allow another to be sacrificed to the principle of evil.

There are certain words Saint John uttered which will always remain with you in association with the thought of him:

*He that loveth not, knoweth
not God: for God is [love.]

* 1 John 4: 8, 19, 20

And again he says:

Let us...love God [because God
is love,] because God first
hath loved us.

Now, this is a mystery, but you see how the mystery lays hold of you without your understanding it. It does not need to be written down on a slip of paper for you to read, nor does it need to be uttered on the ether; but in your heart this mystery lives and you feel it, and you accept it, and it becomes to you a power.

And then Saint John says:

For he that loveth not his
brother, whom he seeth,
how can he love God whom
he seeth not?

If you cannot have that feeling of love and friendship and equality and partnership with your fellow beings, you cannot know God Who is of that friendship and partnership and equality. But in order to experience that great love one must start out with the practice of it, perhaps only as a feeling in the beginning.

Aristotle asked a question that, perhaps, you have asked many times; why benefactors are more fond of the benefited than the benefited are fond of the benefactors. If you do a kind thing for someone, you show the spirit of charity. Perhaps you have asked the question, Why is not that person upon whom I have expended this love or this kindness--to whom possibly I have given money or food or housing or whatever--why has this person not the same kind of feeling for me as I have for him? And what do you think the answer is? Perhaps you have thought over this subject and decided that it is because the person feels indebted to you, and when he sees you he thinks of what he owes you and is not as happy in your presence as he would be if he had not come under that responsibility of debt.

Do you not see, or have you not discerned the fallacy in this? Do you think that is the reason why the benefited person does not feel the same love for the benefactor that the benefactor

feels for the benefited? If you believe this you are mistaken. This is the true answer: The benefactor is the one who experiences the activity of love, and because he experiences that happiness of the movement of being able to show his love, his love keeps on and his love pours for itself the living substance of energy. But a person who merely receives something from someone else and is not actively distributing will not have the same love for his fellow beings.

Do you know there is always a right interpretation for everything? And it is so easy to fall into false interpretations!

I like to think that the benefactor is fond of the one he benefits, because there is an activity there of the spirit of love; and right there is the only ground upon which it can be said that the benefactor has more love than the benefited. For wherever you see the activity of the spirit of Love, you will see generated that pleasure, that joy that goes with activity. It is

the only joy of the spirit, it is the only joy for the soul, it is the only joy for any one.

Do not think for a moment that you can do a kind deed for anyone, expecting some return. It does not work that way. The one who gives and gives and gives in happiness of giving, in the joy of pouring out the activity of life, which is the presence of the Spirit of Truth, experiences the activity of love.

Now, let me give you the terms in which God loves you. He is the benefactor, He is happy in His love, He is constant in His love, He pours out His love, He pours out His benefits. And He is not thinking at all about your relationship to Him, as to whether you, the one who is benefited, have an equal love for Him. He is not thinking of that. The great benefactor pours out His spirit and His substance, and He pours out upon you life in terms of great abundance, in terms a hundredfold. Not only the life that you have, or the life that you hope for or plan for, or expect, or pray for;

but He gives you also the love that is unending, constant, and that was yours from the beginning. And He asks nothing in return.

*This Divine Lover of our souls will not be satisfied until he have substituted himself in our place, so that we may live not we ourselves, but he in us.

That is the way He would give life and give it more abundantly. I came, He says, to give life and give it more abundantly. How can He give it more abundantly than to give love, and to give Himself and all there is unto you? And He will not be satisfied until He has substituted Himself in others.

Now, He is not saying that He will substitute Himself in place of our soul, but "in our place," in the place which we call our soul and body.

This Divine Lover of our souls will not be satisfied,...until he have substituted himself in our place, so that we may live not we ourselves, but he in us,...

*Dom Gueranger, Liturgical Year, Christmas Vol. I, p 11

He is the Light of the World, and He turns that light into us that we may shine with that light, that we may be transformed with that light; that we may not keep it under a bushel, but we may shine; for we are permitted to shine, we are given that right.

It would seem that one ought to accept this period of the mysterious interpretation of Truth as God, born as a Babe in a manger in Bethlehem. We should accept this as the substance of truth, born in us, coming as a babe and growing up to great strength and power, that we may be like Him in every way, and may have the powers which He has, and may be one with the Father, even as He was one with the Father, that there may be no discrepancy anywhere in our life, no mistake anywhere at all; no use of the body as though it were a mere tool, but used in such a way as to be a friend to God, and to be equal with God, and to experience the justice which God has.

This truth is to be taken as you would eat bread. Do not think that you

may swallow words; but know that you swallow substance. And if your mind and heart and soul is open to hear these words, your whole soul will be filled with the substance of truth; and it shall begin immediately to be active in you. And then it shall not seem any longer as though you are benefited; you shall be the benefactor. And you shall say, as Saint John did all the days of his life: Love one another.

That is the friendship that goes with truth. The people who attend our little festive occasions, or who meet groups of the students, are impressed by that wonderful spirit that pervades, which is the spirit of friendship, the spirit of absolute justice, the spirit of partnership, the spirit of equality. For we are a people not separate, not apart each from the other, but we are a body, one body; in the same manner in which they speak of the church, it is a body. The doctrine of truth is always a body because it is the Word made flesh, and each one stands to the other like the

other, in equality with the other, in partnership with the other, in friendship with the other, in justice with the other, that it may be said: They love one another.

There is something there to love; and you do not see anything in terms of mortality. You do not interpret the body as a tool, as finite, as limited, but you interpret according to the saying of the Great Lover. He will not be satisfied until He has substituted Himself in your place that you may no longer be yourself, but may be Him.

This is a mystery, but it is an active mystery, and the moment you begin to feel the activity of it creeping in your flesh and filling your mind and heart, you will know that you are made a benefactor. It is because of the joy and the activity of giving forth that love which God has planted in you because He has taken possession of you and made you into Himself. Therefore love to be God. God loves to be God; you are to love to be God.

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