

CHAPTER 8

THE THREE ACTS WHICH REFER TO OUR LORD

188 The three acts that refer to Our Lord are:

1. an act of faith;
2. an act of adoration;
3. and an act of thanksgiving.

#1 ACT OF FAITH ON A MYSTERY

189 We may make an act of faith on the mystery we have chosen as the subject of our mental prayer,

for instance, the Nativity of Our Lord,
by believing firmly that He truly accomplished this mystery,
that is, that once He had become incarnate
He was born as a little child,
from the womb of the most blessed Virgin.

190 To convince ourselves more firmly of this truth we may call to mind a passage of Holy Scripture which teaches it to us, or which refers to it, such as the words which the Angel said to the shepherds:

In Saint Luke, Ch 2:

Today in the town of David
a Savior has been born to you,
who is Christ the Lord.

Lk 2,11

or again these words of Saint Matthew, Ch. 1
quoting the prophet Isaiah:
Behold, a virgin shall conceive,
and shall bring forth a son;
and he shall be called Immanuel,
that is, God with us.

Mt 1,23
cf. Is 7,14; 8,8-10

191 This is how we may make this act:

a. My Lord Jesus Christ, I firmly believe
that Thou,

cf. Jn 1,14;1,18

who art the only Son

1 Jn 4,9

of God the almighty Father,

who art one eternal God with Him,

cf. He 1,3

didst deign to become man

cf. He 2,14

clothing Thyself in our flesh

by taking up a body and a soul

like ours,

through the operation of the Holy Spirit,

in the womb of the most pure
Virgin
from which Thou wert born
under the form of a tiny
infant.
although Thou didst not cease to be God.

cf. Lk 1,35; Mt 1,20

cf. Lk 2,6-17

b. This, I believe, O my Savior,
because faith teaches me this truth.

192 Manner of turning our thoughts on this act of faith:

a. Yes, my God,
I believe that Thou didst become a little child
out of love for me.
Thou wast born in a stable,
in darkest night.
in the depths of winter.
Thou didst lie
on straw and hay.

cf. Lk 2,7
cf. Ws 18,14-15

cf. Lk 2,7

Thy love for me reduced Thee
to this unheard-of poverty and wretchedness,
to such extreme destitution that nothing like it
had ever been heard of before.

I believe, O my Lord,
all these truths which faith teaches me
about Thy love for me.

b. Thou couldst have been born
amidst the abundance of riches,
surrounded by the glory
and in splendor of the most magnificent palace ever built.

At Thy birth Thou couldst
have taken possession of all the kingdoms of this
earth, for they all belong to Thee.

cf. Lk 4,5-6

The earth and all it holds is the Lord's,
says the Royal Prophet,

Ps. 23, Ps 24,1

But Thou didst not choose to enjoy all these rights,
O my divine Savior.

c. Thine infinite wisdom judged
that it was much more advantageous for me to give me
in Thy adorable Person
the example
of the kind of life I must live,

and of the path I must follow
to attain true glory
and the enjoyment of the true good,
and of spiritual and heavenly riches,
by despising
the perishable goods of this earth,
and its false and fleeting honors.

d. Thou knowest well,
how strongly my inclinations
of pride, of selfishness,
and my avidity for sensual pleasure
(passionately dominate me.)
In Thy infinite love and goodness Thou didst resolve
to heal me at Thine own expense of this deadly
malady,
(and then merit for me the grace)
to follow Thee and to walk in Thy
footsteps.

cf. 1 Pt 2,21

e. This is what I am resolved to do, O my loving Savior,
whatever it may cost me,
whatever repugnances
my corrupt nature may experience,
whatever difficulties my self-love may encounter.

f. Help me, I beg of Thee, O my God,
in my weakness
which is so strong (when I wish to act.)

g. Grant me the grace
which Thou has merited for me in this mystery,
of imitating Thee.

h. Increase, O Lord, I pray, my faith which is so
frail.

Mc 9,24

193 Another manner of dwelling on this act of faith.
By considering Our Lord becoming a child of man
(in order to make us children of God.)

a. I believe with all my heart, O my God,
the eternal Word,
the one true Son of God the Father,
that Thou didst become a child of man
so as to merit for me the grace
of becoming a child of God Thy Father.

cf. Jn 1,1-18;
1 Jn 4,9; Ga 4,4

b. It was the infinite greatness of Thy love
Lord, cf. Jn 3,16
which led Thee to this excess
of abasement and humiliation. cf. Ph 2,7

c. Thou came into Thine Own,
says the evangelist Saint John, Ch. 1,
that is, into this world which belongs to Thee
but Thine own received Thee not. Jn 1,11

The Jews,
who were Thy special people and Thy servants,
did not acknowledge Thee.

They rejected Thee, and would not welcome Thee.

But to as many as received Thee Thou gave
the power of becoming children of God. Jn 1,12

The Jews refused to acknowledge Thee
because of the poor and miserable condition
in which Thou didst choose to enter this
world. cf. Lk 2,7

They were scandalized

by Thine exterior abjection;

they could not admit

that Thy wisdom

and Thy love for men

could lead Thee to share our wretched

state

in order

to enrich us with the inestimable

treasure

of Thy grace in this world,

and Thy glory in the next. cf. 1 Co 1,29

cf. 1 Co 1,22-25

d. O excessive bounty of my God!
Thou didst abase Thyself in this world
to lift me up to heaven.
Thou didst become miserable on earth
to make me blessed in heaven.

e. O infinite charity of God's eternal Son.
Thou didst become my brother
when Thou didst make Thyself son of man,
so that
Thou didst not need to blush,
as the Apostle says in the Epistle to the
Hebrews, Ch. 2
when calling us brothers,

saying to Thy Father:

I will declare Thy name to my brethren;
in the midst of the church I will praise Thee.
Here am I with the children Thou has given me.
These children, adds Saint Paul,
are born of flesh and blood.
He too needed to be born in the same way.
He made Himself in all things,
like unto His brothers,
so that as a merciful Pontiff, faithful to God,
He might expiate the sins of His people;
and having been put to the test,
might help those who are also tempted.

He 2,11-18

f. What a great happiness is this, what prodigious joy!
what lofty nobility I enjoy,
surpassing any the world can offer!
I can really be for all eternity
the son of God and the brother of God!
What a dignity, what a privilege, what a blessing!
My soul, canst thou grasp it?

g. It is Thou, O most beneficent, unique and eternal Son
of God

to whom I owe everything.

It is to Thy love, O my Lord and my God,

to whom I am indebted

for this incomparable favor.

When Thou didst become the child of the most pure
Virgin

(Thou didst win for me the power)

of enjoying the grace of adoption of the sons
of God,

(according to an expression of St. Paul)

cf. Jn 20,28

Rm 8,14-15

h. Grant O my loving Jesus,
that I may make myself worthy as much as I can,
of this grace
which cost Thee so dearly to merit it for me.

O Lord, may I live

in such a manner that there may be at least some resemblance
between my life and Thine,
through my imitation of Thy sacred virtues.

i. This is the grace I beg of Thee,
as the spirit of the mystery

of Thy adorable birth and childhood.
I implore you, Lord, to grant me this,
through the merits of this your birth.

How We May Address the Most Blessed Virgin While Making Mental Prayer on this Same Mystery

194 We may also address ourselves to the most blessed Virgin while considering this mystery, somewhat in this manner:

a. O most blessed Virgin, I firmly believe
that Jesus Our Lord,

the only Son of God the Father,
was conceived in thy womb
by the power of the Holy Spirit.
I believe this because faith teaches me so.

cf. Lk 1,35; Mt 1,20

b. It was in thee, O most fortunate Virgin,
that the prophecy of Isaiah was accomplished:

cf. Mt 1, 22-23

A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring
forth a son
and they call His name Emmanuel,
that is, God with us.

Is 7,4

Thou wast a virgin
when thou didst conceive this divine Infant.

Thou wast a virgin
when thou didst bring Him forth,
and Thou didst remain a virgin
after giving birth to Him

Thou are the purest of virgins
and the most glorious of mothers.

For this reason

thou wilt be called blessed
by all generations to come.

Lc 1,48

c. I believe all these truths taught me by faith,
and because God has revealed them.

I greatly rejoice in them, O most blessed Virgin;
I praise thee with all my heart.

d. I very humbly beg thee,

O most holy mother of God,
in thy goodness to intercede for me with thy divine
Child,

that I may be allowed to share
in the spirit and the graces proper to the mystery

of His birth
and most holy childhood.

e. It was through thee, O incomparable Virgin,
that this God of love and mercy
came down to save us.

It was in thee
that He became a child of
man,
just as He is truly
from all eternity the Son of God.

cf. Ga 4,4; Jn 1,1-18;
1 Jn 4,9; He 1,3

It was in thee
that He merited for us the grace
of becoming the adopted children of God His
Father.

We hope to enjoy
through thy intercession,
with your very dear Son
the effects of this grace and the spirit of children of
God.

Rm 8,15;
Ga 4,6; Jn 1,12

f. We beg thee to obtain this for us,
through the love by which thou dost love this God of
love
as thy true son,
and through the love by which He loves thee
as His true mother.

Benefits Which May Be Derived From These Considerations

195 The first benefit we can derive
from the consideration of the birth of Our Lord
is a great horror and aversion for sin of any kind,
because the Son of God abased and humbled Himself,
as Saint Paul says in Philippiens, Ch. 2, v. 7:
He annihilated Himself by taking the form of a
slave
when he became a child, in order to destroy sin by
His sufferings,

Ph 2,7

cf He 2,17-18

196 The second,
is great confidence that we shall obtain from God
the pardon of our sins
(provided we truly repent of them
and are resolved not to commit any more voluntarily);
and all the other graces which we may ask for

through the merits of the Son of God become child.

- 197** The third is
a great love for Our Lord
and a tender devotion towards Him,
considered as our Infant God,
born for love of us.
- 198** The fourth is
a great contempt for the riches and honors of the world,
since we behold the Son of God born
poor and humble in this world.
- 199** The fifth,
finally, is a great desire to imitate Him in all the virtues
of which He gives example to us from His birth.
- 200** How To Address Our Lord by Considering Him Born into This World to Destroy Sin

- a. O my Lord and God, how could I dare
commit sin again, knowing
as Saint John says in this First Epistle, Ch. 3
that you came
to take away our sins.
and to destroy the works of the devil
which are our sins.

1 Jn 3,5-8

What, Lord!
Shall I restore in myself
what Thou didst come to destroy
with so much suffering and pain?

- b. My sins, O Lord,
reduced Thee to this state
of infancy, in poverty and humiliation.
My sins
made Thee shed so many tears
from the moment of Thy birth.
It was my pride
and my love of luxury and vanity
that humbled Thee
to the point of being born in a stable,
lying in a manger
on a bed of straw between two lowly animals.
- c. It was to shame and destroy
my stupidity and my insatiable lusting

Lk 2,7

after pleasures and wealth,
my ill-regulated love
of comfort and pleasures,
that Thou didst endure such harsh poverty.
And now realizing all these truths,
would I dare to commit sin again?
O Lord,
do not permit me to be so heartless
as to still love sin
since it cost Thee so much to destroy it.

d. Thou who art
my Creator
my Father
my King
my God
O! I would rather die
than continue in my evil ways
or return
to those from which thou hast delivered me.

e. Almighty Savior, my loving Jesus,
by the grace and power
of Thy adorable nativity,
destroy and annihilate in me
all sin
and all inclination to sin;
and mercifully pardon me
all those
which I have had the misfortune to commit.

cf 1 Jn 3,5-8

201 Confidence

We may also converse with God in relation to the second effect,

namely, confidence,
in a manner, somewhat as follows:

a. I should feel great confidence, my loving Savior,
that Thy heavenly Father will pardon my sins
for love of Thee
and by Thy merits.
I have that confidence
that for Thy sake
and in view of Thy infinite merits,
He will grant me all the graces I need
to avoid sin,

cf. He 4,16

to correct my defects,
to acquire the virtues He desires to see in me,
and in the end to grant me eternal life.

b. Thy apostle encourages me to have this confidence
when he says, in romans, Ch. 8:

is it possible
that God who has given us His only Son,
has not granted us all things with Him?

Rm 8,32

Yes, my divine Savior,
I hope for everything from the infinite bounty of Thy
Father,

even though I am guilty of many sins
by which I have deserved hell.

c. Thou art the precious pledge
of the love He has for me,
of His willingness
to pardon me
and to save me.

cf. Rm 5,8; Jn 3,16; Ep 5,2

He assures us in Holy Scripture
that He does not will the death of the sinner,
but rather that he should be converted,
live and reach salvation.

Ez 18,32;33,11

Thou art, O my loving Jesus, infant God,
a convincing proof of this truth.

d. And so I place all my confidence
in the mercy of Thy heavenly Father,
in thy love
and in thy merits.

cf. Ep 3,11-12

202 Love for the infant Jesus

a. How could I fail to love Thee,
O eternal Word?

Since it was Thy infinite love for me
which led Thee to take on human
flesh,

cf. Jn 3,16; Jn 1,14

as St. John says in the Gospel.

Thou hadst every reason
to hate me eternally
and to punish me

according to the strict rigor of Thy justice.
because of the enormity of my sins;

cf. Ps 103,10

and yet

Thou gavest me proofs of infinite love!

- b. What! Thou didst make Thyself an infant,
a poor, humble infant,
and the most lovable of all infants.

What love dost Thou not show me,
and how little have I loved thee up to now.

What striking proofs
Thou dost give me of Thy love,
and how poorly have I responded to them!

- c. Pardon me, my God,
and grant me I beg Thee, Thy holy grace,
for with its help I am resolved to love Thee
with all my heart,
with all my soul,
and with all my strength.

Le 10,27 citant Dt 6,5

- d. O Jesus, infant God,
my loving Savior,
beloved son of Mary and of God,
I pledge Thee inviolable and everlasting love.
I offer Thee, I give Thee, I consecrate to Thee this
heart of mine.
Fill it with Thy divine love.

cf. Rm 5,5

- e. O God of love,
let me love Thee with all the love
that Thou Thyself desirest
that I should love thee.

Lord, may I live
and may I die
in Thy love
and for Thy love.

For let us therefore love Him
(exclaims your beloved disciple)
because He has first loved us.
(first Epistle, Ch. 4)

1 Jn 4,19

- f. O how right, it is to love
the One who has loved us so much,
who is so loving,
who is so worthy of love.

cf. Jn 3,16; Jn 4,19

O Jesus, my love! I wish to die of love for Thee.

203 In the same way we can spend time considering the other benefits that can be derived from this mystery.

SHORT BUT PROLONGED REFLECTIONS

- 204** The above-mentioned ways
of dwelling on a mystery
by discourse and multiplied reflections
may be useful.
It is not less advantageous
to have recourse
to shorter reflections, continued for a long time,
on a passage of Holy Scripture
which refers to the mystery which we wish to consider.
- 205** For instance,
as regards the mystery of the birth of Our Lord,
we may recall to mind
this passage from Isaiah, Ch. 9:
For a child is born to us,
and a son is given to us. Is 9,5
Then we reflect
without much inner discourse
on this passage;
this serves to maintain our attention fixed
on the passage,
and on the mystery,
in an interior manner,
based on faith.
- 206** We might, for instance, make the following reflection:
How great must be god's goodness and love for us,
since He gave us His own beloved son!
Then we strive to remain attentive
not only to the passage but to this reflection also,
for as long a time as we can,
and in the most lively
and simplest manner
possible for us.
- 207** This short reflection, based on faith,
and inspired by a passage from Holy Scripture,
gives the soul a certain facility
in applying itself to the mystery in an interior
manner,
(in imbuing itself with it,
so that it imprints itself in the mind and heart,
which are thus filled with it
and marked by it.
They will then share in the spirit and the grace particular

to the mystery

(and by this means)

they will gently and sweetly be disposed and inclined
toward practicing and virtues illustrated in the
mystery.

For this is the end we should always keep in view;
which is what Our Lord Himself had in mind
when accomplishing His mysteries.

- 208** When we perceive that the mind no longer finds it easy
to pay attention to the passage by means of this first
reflection,
(we should try another)
which is also connected with the passage,
and which can renew the mind's attention to it.

- 209** We might try this other reflection:
Since God loved me enough
to become a child
for love of me,
is it not right that I should make myself a captive,
and humble myself
like a child,
for love of Him?

This new reflection once again revives our attention
to the passage and to the mystery,
and as a result the mind and heart will turn thereto
with renewed affection and fervor.

CONSIDERATION BY SIMPLE ATTENTION

- 210** We can, finally, consider a mystery
by simple attention,
also called contemplation.
This consists in keeping ourselves in attitude of deep
interior respect
(while considering the mystery)
by a simple, interior view of lively and respectful faith,
which leads the mind and heart to a sentiment of silent
adoration,
of love,
of admiration,
of gratitude and thanksgiving,
of self-abasement,
and of a desire of the heart
to unite ourselves with Our Lord in this

mystery
(and to share in His spirit and His graces.)

We should remain in this attitude for a more or less lengthy period,
(according as we may feel ourselves drawn and absorbed by it.)

We should not interrupt this process by making distinct acts
on these different interior dispositions.

It is not necessary to differentiate them one from the other,
since we can conceive them
with a simple and implicit movement of the heart,
that is,

without explaining them
or distinguishing them
or actually separating them
into formal acts,

provided that this disposition remains
lively and ardent;

it can be maintained
by a few affectionate words
pronounced from time to time,
more or less frequently
as the need is felt;

and it should always lead to the practice of virtue,
as mentioned previously.

211 What is said in the explanation of the First Part of mental
prayer
about the three manners of keeping oneself
in the presence of God.
This can easily be applied
to a mystery.

212 These three different means of engaging in mental prayer
on a mystery,
as in considering the holy presence of God,
can be related to the three stages of the spiritual life:
using set discourses and multiplied reasonings
befits that of beginners,
rare and prolonged reflections
befits the proficient,
while simple attention
befits the advanced.

#2 ACT OF ADORATION

213 After making an act of faith on the mystery
and spending some time dwelling on it

in one of the manners
just proposed
it is proper to make an act of adoration,
to do homage to Our Lord in His accomplishment of the mystery
on which we are making mental prayer
and to remain before Him with attention to His presence
in profound respect.

214 We may do this as follows,
considering Our Lord as a new born infant
and exposed in the crib.

a. Humbly prostrate
before Thy crib,
O most holy and adorable Child Jesus,
I offer Thee my deepest expression of respect,
and recognize Thee for the God of majesty
dwelling in heaven
in light inaccessible
as St. Paul says.

1 Tm 6,16

b. Thou art, O my Lord,
the eternal Word begotten by the eternal Father.
Through Thee were all things made;
by Thee they subsist
and are ruled,
O Wisdom of the Father.

Jn 1,3

cf. Col 1,16-17

Thou hast become a child of man
out of love and for the salvation of men
Heaven and earth are filled
with Thy majesty and glory;
yet behold! here Thou art, lodged in a stable
and lying in a manger.

cf. Is 6,3; Nb 14,21

Lk 2,7

c. O great God!
O tiny babe!
I adore Thee with all my heart.
I adore Thine infinite greatness,
contained in the small body of this infant,
yet not ceasing
to fill and to encompass the entire
universe

cf. Wis 1,7

d. God commanded His angels
(says St. Paul)
to adore thee and thy coming

on earth. He 1,6
They do so,
proclaiming glory to God most high
and announcing to us the peace
which Thou has come to bring to earth
for all men of good will. Lk 2,13-14

I unite myself to these celestial spirits
to pay Thee, O my God, my Savior,
all the homage due to Thee.

e. I abase myself before Thee,
O Lord of angels and men,
and wish to render Thee homage
with all powers of my soul.
I annihilate myself at Thy feet
in adoration of Thine own annihilation,
and wish to honor it by mine,
as far as this is possible.

215 Another way of adoring Our Lord as a child in the arms of His Mother.

a. O great, eternal God!
In heaven Thou art seated upon the
Cherubim, Dn 3,55; 1 S 4,4; Ex 25,18
as Holy Scripture tells us;
Thou art begotten by the Father in the splendor of
the Saints. Ps 80,2;99,1
Yet out of love for us Thou didst deign
to abase Thine infinite majesty
to the point of becoming a tiny infant,
like unto us,
and of being born of a virgin.

b. I adore Thee in the arms of Thy most holy mother,
as on the throne
most worthy of Thy majesty
after the bosom of Thy heavenly Father Himself.
I prostrate myself at the foot of this throne of grace,
to offer to Thy supreme majesty cf. He 4,16
all the honor in my power.
I acknowledge Thee as my God,
my Redeemer and Savior, cf. He 2,17
who hast come
to ransom me and deliver me from my
sins. cf. Lk 1,68-69

c. Thou art the Lord, the true Christ, Son of

the living God,	Mt 16,16; cf. Mc 8,2-9
the Messiah sent by God Thy Father,	Lk 9,20
promised by the prophets,	Lk 1,70
and so long desired	
as the one Savior of the world.	cf. Jn 4,42
I adore Thee, O Jesus,	
Son of God, Son of David,	
and Son of the immaculate Virgin,	Mt 1,1-18
d. Thou are my Lord and my God.	Jn 20,28
I submit myself totally and irrevocably to Thee	
as to my eternal King	
on whom I depend,	
and desire to depend forever.	
I swear to Thee, O my sovereign Lord,	
eternal fidelity, obedience and love.	
e. Help me, O my adorable Savior,	
by that all-powerful grace	
which Thou didst come to bring and merit for us	
by Thy holy birth,	
so that I may persevere unswervingly	
unto death	
in the fidelity	
I owe Thee	
and which I now promise Thee.	
f. I ask this, O my loving Jesus,	
through the intercession of Thy most holy mother,”	

216 An act to honor the most blessed Virgin as mother of God

a. Most glorious Virgin Mary, mother of my God,
It was on that happy day
 when thou didst give birth in all purity
 to the infant God,
that thou didst also become most specially
 the mother of men
 and the Queen
 of all creatures in heaven and on earth.

b. I prostrate myself with all my soul at thy feet
 to render thee under these titles
 all the reverence which can be given thee.
Thou art the mother of my Creator, and my own mother;
thou art my Queen and sovereign Lady.
I honor and reverence thee, and I love thee,

after God and thy divine son,
above all things.
I submit myself to thy gracious power,
in time and in eternity.
O my loving mother,
who would not be subjected to thee
since God Himself
willingly became obedient to thee
as thy child?
Oh, with all my heart I too subject myself to thee.

cf. Lk 2,51

c. I beg thee, most holy mother of God,
to obtain for me from thy beloved Son
the grace to live and die
in submission to Him and to thee.

#3 ACT OF THANKSGIVING

217 After adoring Our Lord in this mystery
and paying Him the first duty we owe Him, namely
adoration,
we make an act of thanksgiving
to manifest our due gratitude to Our Lord
and to thank Him for His goodness in performing this mystery
and for all that His excessive charity caused Him to do
and suffer
to bring about our sanctification.

218 This we can do somewhat after this fashion:

a. How right it is, O my God,
that since Thou in Thy great goodness to me
didst deign to become a man
and to be born in the form of an infant
in order to sacrifice Thyself
by offering Thyself to the justice of God thy
Father
as a living, pure, holy
and agreeable victim to God
for the expiation of my sins and for my
sanctification.

cf. He 9,14
cf. He 2,17;

He 10,11-14;13,12

It is indeed right, as I was saying,
that I should profess my entire gratitude to Thee
and offer Thee my very humble thanks.
I thank Thee with all my heart, O God,
for Thy great goodness;
I offer Thee a thousand tokens of gratitude

for such a great blessing.

- b. By sinning I had made myself
the child and slave of the devil,
an object of hatred in the sight of Thy Father,
worthy of eternal death.
But Thou wast touched with compassion
at the sight of my miseries and my
distress.
Thou didst come down to earth to deliver me.
Oh! infinite charity of my God!
Oh! incomprehensible goodness!
**What shall I render to Thee for so great
a blessing?**
- cf. Rm 6,16-19
cf. Rm 5,12
cf. Ex 3,7-8; Os 11,8-9;
Jr 31,20; Is 54,8; Ml 1,41
Ps 116,12
- c. I should like to offer Thee infinite thanks,
but since I cannot do so
I beg Thee, O my loving Savior,
to make up for my powerlessness,
accepting my good will,
and the offering I make to you
of all the acts of thanksgiving
offered Thee by Thy most holy Mother,
all the blessed angels and saints,
as also
all my thoughts, words and actions,
I beg Thee to bless them and make them agreeable in Thy
sight,
by uniting them to Thy own.
- cf. Rm 12,1; He 13,21
- d. In all this I seek nothing
but to please Thee alone, O my God.
- e. I also offer Thee my will,
wishing to make use of it
only in submission to Thy will and in dependence
upon it.
- f. Such is the grace I beg of Thee, O my God,
through the merits of Thy holy birth.