THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION AND HERESIES ABOUT CHRIST

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Today, nine months before the feast of Christmas, we keep the feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and we recall that moment when the Archangel Gabriel came to the little house of the Immaculate Virgin in Nazareth to announce to her that she was to become the Mother of the Son of God, that she was to give birth to the Messiah, the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ.

On this feast of the Annunciation, then, we bend over the mystery of the Incarnation. We bend over this mystery of God's taking on human nature. And since the state of catechetical knowledge among Catholics, including those so-called traditionalists, is deplorable today, it is worth that, as we bend over the mystery of the Incarnation, we make ourselves aware of what actually took place more than 2000 years ago in Nazareth.

THE DEVIL'S ATTACK

My dear ones, this mystery of the Incarnation, like the mystery of the Redemption, is especially hated by the devil and his servants, and from the very beginning, from the first centuries, it has been attacked by the devil in a particular way. How? For the first three centuries of the Church's history the Catholic faith was attacked mainly by physical persecution, by bloody persecution from the pagan Roman rulers. The devil tried to destroy the Church by shedding the blood of Catholics. When the Church obtained the Edict of Milan, when the Christian religion obtained freedom in the Roman Empire, the devil changed his tactics. There were no longer bloody persecutions. Three centuries of bloody persecutions had not brought about the result the devil and his servants, in particular the Jews, longed for, namely the destruction of the Catholic faith. And so the devil began to attack minds. He wanted to poison minds with false, heretical teaching.

And the first great heresy, which swept over nearly the whole Christian world, was the Arian heresy, created by the priest Arius of Alexandria. A heresy which attacked the teaching about the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. And so Arius began to claim that our Lord Jesus Christ is not true God, but is an outstanding man, chosen by the Lord God as an adopted Son of God, endowed with particular talents, particular graces, but who remains a man. He is not true God. This, my dear ones, in turn means that there is no Most Holy Trinity. If Jesus Christ is not God, then this claim strikes at the teaching on the Most Holy Trinity. It strikes at the very foundation of the Christian religion. The Arian heresy leads to the rejection of the true God.

This Arian heresy was condemned by the first council, the Council of Nicaea in 325, but despite this condemnation it persisted, and persists to this day in various forms, renewed again and again. The denial of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the treating of the Lord Jesus as some hero, a champion like something out of Greek mythology. And after all, not so long ago we heard from the lips of Bergoglio, in one of his interviews, the statement: Jesus of Nazareth, even if he was a man of exceptional virtues, was not God. This is noth-

My dear ones, the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ, who has the same divine essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit, took on human nature. He took on human nature in such a way that it was joined to the divine nature in one Person. Unfortunately, a certain mistaken, utterly mistaken, heretical notion is common among many would-be Catholics. Our Lord Jesus Christ, my dear ones, was fully God and fully man. He was not a demigod, half-god and half-man. In one Person, in Jesus Christ, two natures were joined on the basis of what is called the hypostatic union: the divine and the human. Something beyond comprehension, something extraordinary. For behold, my dear ones, our Lord Jesus Christ, remaining immortal God, at the same time took on a mortal human nature. Remaining almighty God, he at the same time took on our weak, limited human nature.

ing other than Arian thought, the rejection of the divinity of Jesus Christ, the rejection of the Most Holy Trinity. This Arian thought, my dear ones, is widespread among post-conciliar Catholics. If you were to ask the average Catholic who Jesus Christ is, he would answer you: well, a sort of Superman, a sort of superhero. But hardly anyone realises that Jesus Christ unites human and divine nature in one Person.

DEATH ON THE CROSS

And this, my dear ones, has its bearing also on the teaching about the Redemption, because a great mass of people live in the conviction that the Lord Jesus died on the cross also as God, that on Good Friday Jesus the man, Jesus God, was laid in the tomb. The Lord Jesus in his divine nature never died. The divine nature cannot be annihilated, God cannot be put to death. On the cross Jesus Christ offered to the Most Holy Trinity his Body and his Blood as a propitiatory sacrifice for human sins. On Good Friday Jesus Christ died on the cross in his human nature. Solely and exclusively in his human nature.

Dear faithful, when we meditate on this, we cannot fail to mention the problems connected with the so-called Chaplet of Divine Mercy of Sister Faustina. I have in mind the prayer: "Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved Son." We have two serious reservations here. First, my dear ones, to offer something in a religious sense means to annihilate. Sacrifice means annihilation, by which man expresses his submission to the Supreme Being, expresses the homage he pays to God. Sacrifice means the annihilation, the destruction, of something. We remember the sacrifices of the Old Testament, the bloody sacrifices of animals that were slain, the burnt offerings. And here, my dear ones, the words "offering of the Divinity" raise a certain doubt, because if we were to take them in the strict sense, it is impossible. Why? Because the Divinity cannot be annihilated. Because the Divinity, true Divinity, cannot be annihilated. Unless Jesus Christ had a Divinity of an inferior sort. Then he was not really God. He was some hero, an exceptional man. A man of exceptional virtues, as Bergoglio said.

Second, my dear ones, one can offer someone only what that person does not possess. I cannot offer you your car, because it is yours. So Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, could not offer to God the Father his Divinity, because the divine nature of Jesus Christ and of God the Father is the same. The Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Divinity of God the Father, of the Holy Spirit, is not a different Divinity. Unless, again, in the case of Jesus Christ we are dealing with some other kind of Divinity, a Divinity of a lower, inferior sort, but that, my dear ones, is a blow against the whole teaching on the Most Holy Trinity. So this prayer, which is part of Sister Faustina's chaplet, raises doubts. It raises serious doubts.

MONOPHYSITISM

Dear faithful, another heresy concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ was so-called Monophysitism. It arose somewhat later than Arianism. The Monophysites, for a change, proclaimed that in the Person of Jesus Christ there is only the divine nature. The human nature was swallowed up by the divine nature. So the Lord Jesus was exclusively God. And it might seem that this is a pious sort of heresy, but a heresy can never be pious. Error can never be good. False teaching can never be better than true teaching, even if it might seem so to us on the surface. Well, the Monophysites do not take away the Lord Jesus' divinity. But, my dear ones, this has very concrete consequences for the teaching on the Redemption.

Incidentally, this faith in the Divinity, in the exclusively divine nature of Jesus Christ, finds its reflection in the liturgy, in the liturgy of the Eastern schismatics, for instance the Armenians, who pour only wine into the chalice, indicating, precisely emphasising, that Jesus Christ has only and exclusively a divine nature. They do not add the drop of water, which symbolises the human nature.

But returning, my dear ones, to what significance this claim has, that Jesus Christ has only a divine nature? Well then, my dear ones, he was not truly a man. So the painful Passion of Good Friday and the death on the cross were only apparent, because as God Jesus Christ could not suffer. If he was only apparently a man, then there was really no suffering, no torment, no redemptive sacrifice. It had only an apparent char-

acter.

And this, my dear ones, is also a very important warning for all of us, for all those faithful, so-called traditionalists, who have a tendency to correct the Church, the Church's teaching, because somewhere they heard of some false revelation, invented some prayer for themselves, and they know better than the Church how one should pray, what one should do. A great warning for us, for all of us. Correcting the Church, correcting the Church's teaching, is an error and leads to heresy. What the Church teaches, the principles the Church has established, these we are to keep, and not invent our own because it seems to us more pious. That is false piety. That is, my dear ones, something very, very bad. Unfortunately something more and more widespread in the circles of so-called Catholic tradition.

THE WORD MADE FLESH

My dear ones, on this feast of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary we need to renew our faith in the mystery of the Incarnation. We need to realise what a great miracle took place 2000 years ago in Nazareth. How greatly Jesus Christ humbled himself. This mystery of the Annunciation, over which we bend on 25 March, is closely bound up with the mystery of the Redemption, because through the Annunciation we see, my dear ones, this act of God's self-abasement, who takes on human nature, a nature far lower, infinitely lower, inferior to the divine nature. So it is a self-abasement which leads the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, to Good Friday, to death on the cross.

And we today, my dear ones, on this feast of the Annunciation, need to humble ourselves before this mystery, to fall on our knees, paying homage to God, to the Word made flesh. To the Word made flesh for us and for our salvation. In order to complete the sacrifice of Good Friday, the propitiatory sacrifice for our sins. Let us then all go today in our hearts to Nazareth and fall down. Let us bow down in worship before the Word made flesh for our salvation.

Amen. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.