

“He has become Man to redeem us”

Marvel at God's magnanimity: he has become Man to redeem us, so that you and I - who are absolutely worthless, admit it! - may come to know him and trust him. (The Forge, 30)

23 December

“This day shall light shine upon us; for the Lord is born to us” [1]. This is the great announcement which moves Christians today. Through them it is addressed to all mankind. God is here. This truth should fill our

lives, and every Christmas should be for us a new and special meeting with God, when we allow his light and grace to enter deep into our soul.

We stop in front of Mary, Joseph and the Child, looking at the Son of God who has taken on our flesh. I remember now I made a visit — for a very special reason — to the holy house of Loreto, Italy, on August 15, 1951. I said Mass there. I wanted to say it calmly and reverently, but I hadn't counted on the crowd's fervour. I had forgotten that the faith of the people of the region and their love for the Madonna meant there would be a huge crowd for the feast of the Assumption.

Their piety was not always entirely correct in its expression, at least from the point of view of the Church's liturgical regulations. When I would kiss the altar in accordance with the rubrics, three or four local

women would accompany me. It was distracting, but certainly moving. I also noticed that above the altar in that holy house, which tradition says was the home of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, these words were written: "Here the Word was made flesh." Here, on a bit of the earth on which we live, in a house built by men, God dwelt. (Christ is passing by, 12)

[1] Is 9:2 (Second Mass of Christmas Day, entrance antiphon): *Lux fulgebit hodie super nos, quia natus est Dominus*