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VATICAN - AVE MARIA Our Lady of Tenderness by Rev Luciano Alimandi

Vatican City (Agenzia Fides) - Advent is a season charged with divine tenderness, the unconceivable love of a God for His creatures, a love so tender that He becomes an Infant in the womb of a woman, the Blessed Virgin Mary. In this important liturgical season everything speaks of the Creator's love for humanity, redeemed by His Coming, the subject of our reflection in Advent.

Dante, in his masterpiece the Divina Commedia, describes the deep mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God in Mary using insuperable poetic expressions, put in the mouth of Saint Bernard who says: "Vergine Madre, figlia del tuo figlio, umile e alta più che creatura, termine fisso d'eterno consiglio, tu se', colei che l'umana natura nobilitasti, sì che il suo Fattore non disdegnò di farsi sua fattura. Nel ventre tuo si raccese l'amore, per lo cui caldo ne l'eterna pace così è germinato questo fiore" (Paradise, canto XXXIII).

During these weeks of waiting for Christmas the Church turns the pages of the Old and New Testament which speak of the coming of the Messiah and His unmistakeable Messianic signs. Full of wonder, step by step, we discover the divine tenderness which envelops the events of salvation. This tenderness extends over all creatures of good will who, from this mercy, are reanimated and drawn out from their darkness to the irresistible light of the love of a God who became one of us.

Where would the world be without Advent? We can rightly say: the world without the Incarnation of the Word would be nothing! The coming of God in time and in history wins the heart and redeems life, without this ineffable mystery of His coming we would all disappear into nothing!

Deep in every heart there is potentially all the capacity to go to meet the Lord who comes thanks to His Mother. In the inner abyss of every heart, because we are created in the image and likeness of God, there flows an invisible and intangible energy which keeps it alive, animates it and gives it the strength to dream of lasting happiness, to desire reciprocity of love, to seek the truth... However the longing for true life and authentic freedom needs to encounter the tenderness of the Infant God, in the arms of the Immaculate Conception who offers Himself to every soul searching for happiness. Many words are not necessary to understand this mystery; what is needed is a heart able to hear deep within the presence of the Creator: what is needed is prayer!

The human heart is filled with deep longing for the "advent of happiness", but for this to happen there must be reciprocity: longing for happiness must encounter Happiness, longing for eternity must encounter the Eternal One, longing for love must encounter Infinite Love. This is why God comes: if He did not come the human heart would never find fulfilment.

The Blessed Virgin Mary is there, between the human heart and the Heart of God who comes. The Mother unites two points separated by infinite distance; in this Immaculate Heart distance is annulled and "the totally Other" is conceived: the Infant God encounters humanity!

Our Lady of Tenderness desires only to draw us to the Heart of her Son who gave her the fullness of grace: "in te misericordia, in te pietate, in te magnificenza, in te s'aduna quantunque in creatura è di bontate" (Dante).

In the weeks of Advent let us strive with confidence, to draw near to this Immaculate Heart and with the confidence of children let us say: "O Our Lady, whose heart is full of compassion and great tenderness, cure our sicknesses and wounds... that we may glorify you as we should" (Teofanie Grapto, Canone Paracletico to the Mother of God: Parakletikè, ode IX). (Agenzia Fides 6/12/2006 - Righe 46, parole 609)

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