

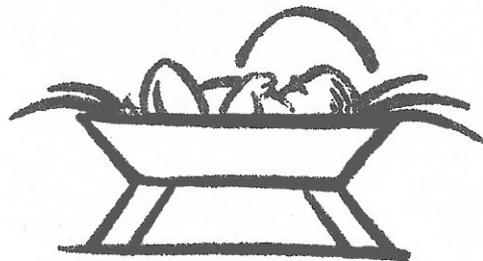
Liturgy, “the work of the people.” In this Liturgy, the Holy Communion service, we eat spiritual food in the words of the Gospel message, because the Lord is with us in the event of the day’s Gospel that we have come together to relive.

But our Divine Lord is more than spiritually present. He is really present in the Body and Blood of the Communion. We call this the “Real Presence.”

Christ has promised to be with us until the end of the world, when He will take the faithful to live and reign with Him forever. Our assurance of this is His Body and Blood, which we receive, because this is the same Body and Blood that was born of the Virgin Mary in order to suffer, die, rise, ascend, and come again.

As many grains of wheat are crushed into one host, as the drippings of many grapes fill our chalice, so we are made one Body in Christ. God comes down at every celebration of the Holy Communion and makes a little Bethlehem of our lives. Bethlehem means “house of bread.” One of the most prominent of Lutheran theologians, John Gerhard, said: “He is born in Bethlehem, the house of bread, Who brought with Himself from Heaven the Bread of Life for our souls.”

This is the Incarnation in our lives—the Word made Flesh feeding His Body with Life itself.



## The Incarnation

The Incarnation of the Son of God is the greatest act of love the world has ever known. "In this way God loved the world," St. John says, "that He gave His only begotten Son. If it is true that man is by nature lost and condemned and any enemy of God—and it is true—then salvation cannot come by man trying to make himself like God. Rather, the opposite is true: salvation must come by God's first assuming the nature of man. This is the Incarnation.

## Incarnate God

The first chapter of St. John's Gospel tells of the mystery. The Apostle calls the Son of God "The Word." Why? Because there is something about the nature of a word that is essential to the Incarnation.

I think a thought. I think in words. But that word, that thought is no one's but my own until I make it known—put it down on paper, for instance. Now it belongs to anyone.

Something like this happened with God the Father. His thought from all eternity was how to bring back to Himself the sinful human race He knew would turn its back on Him in Adam's sin. And God thought so long and so hard, as it were, that He thought of salvation, the Word of His Eternal Mind, had to be put down: "And the Word was made flesh." Now He can belong to anyone: "whosoever believeth in Him."

The mystery of the Incarnation teaches us that the Con-

ception and Birth were accomplished while the Blessed Mother remained in a virginal state. If Christ was to be true God and true Man in the same Person, the only kind of birth that could result from God's plan of Incarnation had to be the Virgin Birth. All other births bring into the world an infant stained with the guilt of original sin. This conception and birth, without the aid or intervention of a man, was immaculate.

## The Incarnation Extended

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, His blessed Mother gave Him a real body. With this body, He redeemed the world on the Cross. With this same body, He arose on Easter and forty days later ascended into the heavens.

Christ had told His Apostles to preach the Gospel, baptize, forgive sins, and celebrate the Holy Communion. All who are baptized become part of Jesus Christ, become His members; and the Scriptures call the baptized "His Body." The Church He rules is His Mystical Body: He is the Head and we the members. This is why we are so sure of heaven: where the Head goes, there the Body follows.

Now the Body of Christ, while supernatural, still reacts like an ordinary human body. A body must function to keep alive. It must have food; it must move about. Without food and exercise, a body dies.

The exercise that the baptized of God do is called their