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The
Infant
King

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE ORIGINAL STATUE OF
THE INFANT JESUS OF PRAGUE " " "

BY AUDREY MAY MEYER

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Infant King

by

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To The Infant King
And To His Mother
Mary, Queen Of Carmel

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*A CHILD is born to us,
A Son is given to us,
The government is upon His shoulders,
And His name shall be:
Wonderful, Counsellor,
God the mighty.
Father of the world to come,
PRINCE OF PEACE.*

Isaias . . . IX, 6.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Christ, although superbly consistent, arouses our admiration by being totally unpredictable. Who could have fathomed, while studying the rigors of the cave of the Nativity, that from it would emerge sixteen centuries later the majestic Infant of Prague, some of whose garments have been sewn with precious gems?

It requires genuine effort for the mind to reconcile the swaddling clothes of Bethlehem with the royal robes of Prague, but the effort ought to be made. For when Christ gave us the miraculous image with its splendor, He did not intend to mitigate the lesson of the Manger with its abasements. He now demanded of us a double allegiance: loyalty to Crown and Crib. To understand His meaning we must fuse mentally all that is comprised in His Kingship and in His Infancy. The resulting concept of our Infant King will have deep significance for modern man who by repudiating the virtues of the Child Jesus has almost destroyed himself, and by rejecting Christ's rule has gone the ruinous ways of secularism.

When the time was ripe God chose His recently formed family of Discalced Carmelites, dedicated to Mary and the Incarnation, to practice and then to preach this new phase of spirituality. He made them the guardians of the miraculous image which gives concrete expression to it. Under the aegis of the mystic Teresa of Avila, in silent contemplation, Carmelites of both sexes had been cultivating a fond intimacy with the humanity of Christ the King, Whom St. Teresa constantly referred to as "His Majesty." Her attention to the Infancy of Christ is seen in her referring to the first monastery of Discalced Carmelite Friars at Duruelo as "a little porch of Bethlehem," as well as in selecting St. Joseph as patron of her foundations because he was head of the Holy Family. No more appropriate place than Carmel could have been chosen for the origin of the apostolate.

From three Carmels especially—at Prague, Beaune, and Lisieux—a complete explanation of this new divine plan has gradually unfolded. In order to grasp it fully we ought to view side by side the work of Father Cyril at Prague, first apostle of the miraculous Infant; the revelations of his contemporary Margaret of Beaune about the mysteries of the Infancy; and the practical applications of the doctrine made in the last century by Thérèse of Lisieux in her life and in her Little Way.

For three centuries the Carmelites have never relaxed their efforts to honor the Infant King. However, at an early date other orders enlisted under His banner and hand in hand with the Carmelites gradually extended His reign. Today He belongs to the whole Christian world.

It is possible that some of us have not been attracted to the Infant Jesus of Prague beyond a nodding acquaintance, because we have not listened to His wordless appeal. This is not a devotion for the naive; we all owe homage to the King, we all need His gifts, and sophisticates most of all. It is not for those who are interested solely in obtaining favors; it is well suited to the practice of mental prayer. It is not a seasonal devotion to be remembered at Christmastime and dismissed from the mind the day after Epiphany; we need it every season of the year.

The Infant King has an intimate role to play in our lives. He graciously invites us to examine His miraculous image, to trace its history, to consider why He reserved its universal acceptance for modern times. It will be a rewarding task. He will help us solve our personal problems because He is omnipotent. Perhaps He will teach us how to contribute a little peace and order to a wartorn and chaotic world. At the very least He will show us how to be at peace with our own souls.

CHAPTER ONE

PROLOGUE: ST. MARY OF VICTORY'S

THE INFANT JESUS OF PRAGUE made His dramatic entrance onto the stage of modern history during the bitter times of the Thirty Years War. The most terrible conflict ever fought prior to World War I struck Prague with ugly impact. The Bohemian capital was repeatedly the scene of battle, plunder, and terror, and none of the citizens suffered more than the Carmelite monks who were to come into the possession of the miraculous image.

The statue, a waxen model of the Child Jesus about nineteen inches high (forty-eight centimeters to be exact), regally dressed, had been treasured as a miraculous heirloom in the family of Maria Manriquez of Lara, a Spanish princess who married Lord Vratislav of Pernstein. Maria received the statue from her mother as a wedding gift and brought it to Bohemia. She in turn presented it as a marriage gift to her daughter Polyxena, who married Count Albert of Lobkowitz.

How the monks acquired the image and passed it on to the world is an unusual story. The prelude, which will not be found in our secular history books, opens in 1620 with an ascetic priest, whom we might expect to find deep in contemplation in a narrow cell, leading men to victory in the Battle of White Mountain near Prague.

Spanish-born Venerable Dominic of Jesus Mary, fifth General of the Discalced Carmelite Order, whom we hope to see canonized some day, was sixty-one years old when Pope Paul V sent him into the camp of the Hapsburg Emperor Ferdinand II to give the valued moral support of the Papacy to the Catholic cause in Germany. Dominic, friend of popes and princes, renowned for his massive intellect as well as for his holiness, was an envoy to lead and inspire men. It was common knowledge that he had been privileged with supernatural experiences; it was said that he enjoyed apparitions of the Blessed Virgin and that he possessed miraculous powers. Yet he was on

familiar terms with mundane affairs and he was a practiced administrator and diplomat. At this time the Order he governed was spreading rapidly and in addition to his papal assignments he had many provinces to care for. But he capably discharged his heavy duties, for he spent little time in sleep and he had such mastery over his mind that he could be absorbed in material problems one moment and deep in prayer the next.

The Pope would have preferred to remain neutral in the war, realizing that political differences furnished the motives for many of the rulers involved, even though it was called a religious war. Yet Emperor Ferdinand was a staunch Catholic, Jesuit-educated, and he had made a vow, when in Italy in the sanctuary of Loreto, to banish heresy from the territory he would rule. At this time, too, all the religious orders were fighting for a Catholic revival throughout Europe (although not all had leaders like Dominic in battle). Consequently, large numbers of people were being brought back to the Church in Germany in the first quarter of the seventeenth century.

Now Pope Paul saw Catholicity threatened with disaster in Bohemia. Although Ferdinand had been crowned King there, many of the Bohemian nobles were Calvinists who were jealous of their religious liberty. A group of these noblemen, one day in 1618, had arrogantly forced their way into the council chamber of the royal palace in which three imperial envoys were gathered and had thrown them from a window. Revolt had followed quickly, with the proclamation that Ferdinand was dethroned in Bohemia.

This event had signaled the opening of the tragic Thirty Years War which eventually threatened to encompass all Europe. The Calvinist Elector Palatine Frederick, head of the union of Protestant princes and son-in-law of James I of England, was crowned King of Bohemia.

Emperor Ferdinand had a strong ally in Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, head of the Catholic League, who commanded a large army. Besides, the imperial forces were augmented by troops from Spain, Poland, and Tuscany. A Bavarian general, Count Tilly, was placed in overall command. It was a heterogeneous army that greeted Father Dominic when he arrived at Ferdinand's camp in white flowing cape, bearing the Papal standard that added prestige to the Austrian cause.

The Emperor and Maximilian, who had been hesitant in spite of their respectable army, took heart at the sight of the monk. They begged him to act as chaplain of the imperial forces. Dominic assented and with his

tireless energy and boundless zeal filled the new role. He consecrated the standard of the general, a painted image of Mary which bore the words: "Show yourself a mother." He celebrated Mass on the field, administered the Sacraments, and clothed more than ten thousand soldiers in the Brown Scapular, the habit of the Blessed Virgin, counting on her promise to Saint Simon Stock that all who died in this garment would be preserved from hell-fire. Dominic had a way with the sick, too, a Christ-like charity, and delighted in caring for the men who fell ill. Sometimes, almost exhausted after a day of ceaseless exertion, he spent most of the night in refreshing prayer.

On August 15, 1620, on her great feast day, the Blessed Virgin is said to have revealed to the priest that the Catholics would be victorious in the coming battle. A council of war was held and Dominic encouraged the generals to attack. He also urged the soldiers to fight valiantly for the faith in the Germanies.

Soon Dominic had won the respect and confidence of the hardened professional soldiers. On November 8 he rode with them into battle, a strange figure in his brown habit among so many suits of armor. He was armed with two weapons: a cross in his right hand and, suspended from his neck, a sacred picture that he counted on to fire the zeal of the men. It was an old painting of the Nativity which he had found in the pillaged castle of Strakonitz a short time before. It represented the Virgin kneeling before the Infant Jesus, and St. Joseph standing behind Mary, holding a lantern in his left hand and a staff in his right. Two shepherds adored the Christ Child from a distance. The enemy had profaned the picture, derisively putting out the eyes of the figures, and the sight of this desecration gave spur to the courage of Ferdinand's soldiers. As they advanced to battle they solemnly chanted the *Salve Regina*.

Now Dominic proudly elevated the picture of the Holy Family for all of his followers to see. His eyes were ablaze with love. Someone shouted "Mary!" and a thousand voices took up the cry. In the white heat of enthusiasm which her name inspired, the imperial army won the decisive battle. The cries of "Mary!" gradually merged into exultant shouts of "Victory! Victory!" The triumph was indisputably hers.

The power of the Protestant Party in Bohemia was broken. Frederick, the "Winter King," was dethroned and driven into exile. Ferdinand was not

only reinstated as King of Bohemia, but also found himself in a more respected position than he had formerly held in his loosely-knit Empire.

He was overwhelmingly grateful to Pope Paul for sending Dominic to Bohemia at this crucial time. He determined to express in concrete form his gratitude to the Church and especially to the Order which had lent the renowned diplomat and Father General to bolster the Austrian cause. In 1622 Ferdinand founded a Carmelite Monastery in his capital city, Vienna. Two years later he opened a foundation in Prague, and soon afterwards one at Gratz.

The establishment at Prague consisted of a convent for the monks, a chapel and a church, situated on the left bank of the Moldau River, which had formerly been the Protestant Church of the Holy Trinity. The latter was renamed "St. Mary of Victory's."

When Dominic returned to Rome, Paul V had died and the aged and ailing Gregory XV who had succeeded to the papal throne greeted him and congratulated him on the success of his mission. The monk asked that the title of "miraculous" be accorded the little picture that had served him for a battle standard, and the favor was granted.

Pope Gregory had the miraculous picture solemnly enshrined in the Church of St. Paul on the Quirinal, May 8, 1622. The title of "Our Lady of Victory" was given both to the painting and to the Italian Church which housed it.¹

Dominic was again sent to Austria in 1626, as legate of Urban VIII, to establish peace between the Emperor and the Duke of Mantua. Highly respected by Ferdinand and his Empress Eleanor, the monk was induced to stay in the imperial palace. Here he fell ill and died February 30, 1630, attended by high dignitaries of Church and State.

Father Dominic's body is preserved in Vienna-Doebling, in the Church of his Order. Although the Process of his beatification was taken up for the second time by decree of Pius X, he has not yet been beatified. He is remembered for many important roles in history but none has brought him

¹ *The original picture was destroyed by fire in 1834 and has since been replaced by a copy. Many princes of Europe and above all of Germany presented gifts to Our Lady of Victory Church: crowns of gold, precious stones, and banners captured in the religious wars.*

more fame than the part he played in the foundation of the Carmelite Monastery and Church which were destined to house the miraculous image of the Infant Jesus of Prague.

For a time the Austrian Emperor, who was generous almost to a fault, provided for the monks whom he had brought to Prague. However, after he moved to far-off Vienna and became more deeply embroiled in the war, he seemed to forget the poor religious who sometimes went hungry during those unstable times. But succor was at hand for them. The time had come for the appearance of a greater Benefactor than Ferdinand. The stage was set; the cue had been given; the Infant King was about to make His bow.

CHAPTER TWO

ENTER CYRIL OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The miraculous image of the Infant Jesus of Prague is a superb little figure with both majesty and gentle charm. It is said that Polyxena made some of its robes herself, an expression of the deep devotion to the Infancy which her mother had instilled into her from childhood. After her marriage to Count Albert she arranged in her Bohemian home a sumptuous altar adorned with rich tapestries as an appropriate setting for the image. Here she loved to venerate it and to lavish on it all the affection of her warm Spanish heart.

After Polyxena was widowed in 1623 she determined to devote the rest of her life to works of piety. She was pleased when the Discalced Carmelites came to Prague because like all Spaniards she was fond of the Order.¹ She began to make liberal contributions to the monks.

Seeing them impoverished as a result of the war she decided in a burst of generosity to surrender her statue to them. Most women would have clung to the treasured wedding gift to console their widowhood. The Countess had many valuable possessions that she might have given instead.

"I give you what I prize most highly in the world," she said simply. "As long as you venerate this image, you shall not want."

She spoke with authority, with the audacity of childlike faith—the kind the Infant cannot resist. He rewarded her with earthly immortality. Her words have been translated into many languages and today they are quoted all over the world. Polyxena did not dream, however, that her gift would become the basis for a new popular devotion that would enrich the lives of men for centuries to come.

¹ *Their great Spanish reformer, Teresa of Avila, had just been canonized by Gregory XV.*

The monks proudly set up their small statue in their oratory and twice each day assembled before it for prayer. Its aristocratic garb contrasted sharply with the poverty of the monastery. The beauty of the childish features fascinated the religious and they saw in the face a combination of authority and clemency that filled them at once with reverence and confidence.

Their confidence was well-founded. Soon their financial distress was relieved. The Infant proved to be a good provider and He had a way of locating generous benefactors precisely when they were most needed. The first year He was enthroned in the convent (1628) the Emperor remembered that monks must eat, and assigned to them two thousand florins and a monthly allowance. Besides, a sterile vineyard they owned now mysteriously yielded an abundance of the choicest wine.

As the foundation at Prague was a novitiate, devotion to the Infant King was inculcated in the novices who felt themselves drawn more and more frequently to the oratory to lay their personal problems at His feet. Among them there was at least one who was suffering spiritual torments. He was not so young, this Cyril of the Mother of God. A native of Luxemburg, he had spent a number of years among the Calced Carmelites before shifting to the more austere branch of the Order. That was a difficult thing for a man close to forty to do.² But he had long been prey to spiritual desolation and he hoped to find in Carmel balm for his troubled soul. Although he did not suspect it, the long martyrdom was preparing him for his life-work.

Cyril spent hours on his knees before the image, begging the Child Jesus to lift the crushing load from his heart. He promised to make the Infant his companion in the novitiate if his prayer were answered.

Significantly it was on Christmas that solace came to him as he knelt not before a Crib but in his favorite place of prayer. Surely, he had been reasoning, at the very hour of His birth, the Christ Child would not refuse a few drops of grace to a poor monk whose soul was parched. Suddenly at midnight Cyril's long trial ceased and he was bathed in the peace of Bethlehem. What a glorious release! His heart melted and tears scalded his

² *Cyril was born either January 2 or October 12, 1590. His biographers, who know nothing of his early years, are not certain of the precise date. His name was Nicholas Schockweiler.*

eyes, but joy surged within him at last. Overwhelmed with gratitude, even while he gave himself up to his joy, he felt an intense longing to repay the Infant Jesus for His Christmas gift.

Cyril knelt there a long time feeling as though he were in heaven. Gazing into the mild eyes before him, he realized that this was the Prince of Peace. How other men like himself needed that peace! How Europe needed it! Why would men insist on killing and plundering even in the name of religion?

The grateful novice determined to leave no stone unturned to spread devotion to the Child Who had quickly transformed his life, the Child Who held in His hand the world and the secret cure for all its ills. But Cyril was destined to leave Prague and the beautiful image the following year. The interminable conflict that was destroying Germany was no respecter of monks and their devotions. It brought such increased hardship and terror to the monastery that the monks were forced to move their novitiate from troubled Prague to Munich in Duke Maximilian's Bavaria.

The Catholic Emperor was up to his eyes in trouble. Now, when he needed a strongly united home front to oppose foreign enemies who were watching for opportunities to intervene in the war, there was increased tension between Ferdinand and his estates on both sides of the religious fence. The Edict of Restitution of Church property had alienated the loyal Protestant nobles, and even some Catholic estates were deserting because of their disgust for the war with its ceaseless destruction and enforced contributions.

One of the most formidable enemies of Catholicism landed on German soil the year that Cyril and the other novices kissed their Infant King good-bye and set out with heavy hearts for Munich. The picturesque Gustavus Adolphus, King of Sweden, the prime Lutheran country, disembarked at Pomerania, quickly made allies of Protestant princes in the north, and caused Germany to quake in its boots. Ferdinand was ill prepared to repel the Swedish giants Gustavus brought with him to make their living off of German soil. Worst of all Richelieu, foreign minister of France, although he opposed Protestantism in his own country, inconsistently made an alliance with Gustavus in the hope of humiliating Catholic Austria.

Now Gustavus, fresh from victories in the north and east, dreaming of a Sweden that would dominate northern Europe and command the Baltic, coveted Germany. Providence had lavished on this tall, fair warrior of the

north, rare gifts of intellect but the terrorized Germans saw none of his charms or talents. They knew only of the ruinous path of conquest he marked out wherever he bore down. Rumors flew before him that not only would fields and villages be laid waste, but Catholicism would be wiped out in the Germanies.

And well they might dread his coming. Gustavus cut savagely across Germany southwest toward the Rhine to form a union with the Calvinist princes in that region, leaving death and destruction behind him. While he prostrated the west, an army of eighteen thousand of his Saxon allies entered Bohemia. Prague was in an uproar. The inhabitants, citizens and nobles, lay and religious, knew that it was only a matter of time before the city would fall. In panic they began to flee. It was unthinkable that the Carmelite monks should remain in their monastery. They fled with the others, that is, all but two brave souls who remained behind to do what they could to hold the sacred fort.

Even the garrison of five hundred men had deserted and on November 15, 1631, the gates of the city were opened wide to the Saxons. Inevitably, the two lone monks were captured and they were imprisoned under a guard of fifteen soldiers. St. Mary of Victory's Church was occupied by a Protestant preacher, one of eighty-odd who fell upon the Catholic properties of Prague.

When the distracted monks fled, they had no thought of the image in their oratory. There were too many urgent necessities claiming their attention. If Cyril had been there, he would have remembered. Even now in Munich he was venerating the Infant King in his heart. But when the invaders tore through the corridors of the Prague monastery and into the gloomy oratory, they laughed when their eyes fell on the little dressed statue on the altar and raced to see who could reach it first and have the sport of pitching the emblem of "popish superstition" down from its place of honor. It landed ignominiously in the dust behind the altar where it was accounted as rubbish.

There it lay forgotten for seven years. Insects crawled over the delicate features. Spiders wove lacy webs over the rich robes, the careful stitches of Polyxena. The filth of utter neglect settled down on the prostrate figure of the beautiful Infant King.

And Cyril of the Mother of God, the only one who remembered Him, was far away and unable to come to His rescue.

CHAPTER THREE

HONOR THE KING

While the Prince of Peace lay hidden behind the altar in the monastery, permitting Himself to be despised and an outcast as He had been in life, the Thirty Years War raged with unspeakable destruction.

Gustavus Adolphus, after his devastating march southwest, had turned east and invaded Bavaria. Tilly was killed at Rain on the Lech and Munich lay open to the Swedes who plundered the Bavarian lowlands. In June, 1632, an imperial army reconquered Prague but the city remained in constant danger. Gustavus was preparing to invade Ferdinand's hereditary lands next, when in the late autumn of that eventful year his ambitions were checked by a fatal bullet at Lutzen, near Leipzig, even while his army was victorious over General Wallenstein's forces.

When the Carmelites came back to Prague to repossess their monastery, they wept bitter tears over the marks of profanation they found there. Besides, how were they to live? If they had been poor before, now they were destitute. When Ferdinand, son of the Emperor, was crowned King of Bohemia, he withdrew the allowance his father had granted the monks.

Although Gustavus was dead and even many of the Germans who had been his allies were eager to be rid of foreign troops and influence, it was not until 1634 that the last of the stubborn Swedes he had trained were crushed at Nordlingen. That year Von Arnim made an unsuccessful attempt to retake Prague from the Catholics and the Carmelite novitiate was again moved to Munich. The following May a treaty was signed at Prague. The third or Swedish phase of the grisly war was over. (Swedish mercenaries, however, were to be active to the bitter end of the conflict.)

The monks felt that it was safe to return their novitiate to Prague once more. But unfortunately the new novices knew nothing of the image of the Infant King which remained unhonored in their monastery.

And now it was Richelieu who disrupted the Peace of Prague, that truce which had been achieved at the cost of so much tragedy. The French minister wanted the war prolonged in order to enhance Bourbon power and prestige in Europe at the expense of the Hapsburgs. (After another weary thirteen years there would remain only the shadow of the Holy Roman Empire.)

Meanwhile, a cloud rested on the Carmelite Monastery in Prague. The monks were genuinely puzzled about their continued misfortune. It was not only the war that disturbed them: there was a general unrest in their house. It seemed impossible to diagnose the malady, still more impossible to prescribe the cure. One by one the priors and the masters of novices were forced to resign before completing their terms of office. Unendurable burdens pushed them to it. Uneasiness hovered in the air that should have held only the peace of prayer.

Even the Provincial of the Order was powerless to discover and uproot the source of the evil. This state of affairs continued for seven years, from Cyril's departure until his return to Prague at a time when the city was again threatened with invasion.

On the Feast of Pentecost, 1637, Cyril reentered with pounding heart his old novitiate where the Infant had smiled on him and brought peace to his soul. A surge of memories rushed over the priest as he crossed the threshold. The years fell away—years crowded with experience—and he was a novice again, kneeling before his little King. He recalled his long hours of prayer in the oratory and the deep consolation he had enjoyed there. Now he was overpowered with longing to relive those hours. He lost no time in getting to the oratory. It was empty of his treasure.

Father Cyril obtained permission from his prior to institute a search for the image. Tirelessly, he examined every conceivable hiding place in the house. When he found the statue at last and realized that it had been treated contemptuously, he felt both a rush of joy and a sharp pang of sorrow. He had the image he had longed for, but it had been dishonored. Instantly he resolved to make reparation to the Holy Child for the neglect He had suffered.

Cyril consoled himself with the thought that by working very earnestly to make others know and love the Infant King, he would perhaps be able to atone for the insult of the last seven years. He bore the statue off to

his cell where he knelt and with reverence began to remove the spider webs, the long accumulated filth.

When he had done all that love and industry could do to make the image presentable, he took it to the prior and begged that it might reclaim its former place of honor in the oratory. His superior, touched by his eagerness, agreed.

As soon as the miraculous image was restored to its proper position and the priests and the novices had begun to make their meditations twice each day before it, the enemy that had been besieging Prague withdrew from the gates of the city. Now the air of gloom that had claimed the monastery mysteriously lifted. A sense of well-being returned. Gifts began to come to the monks from unexpected sources. For the time their material needs were filled, a remarkable achievement considering the economic state of the entire country.

Peace reigned again in the home and in the hearts of the Carmelites. It filtered out from their silent halls, and saturated many a soul in Prague, even in those warlike times.

CHAPTER FOUR

GIVE ME MY HANDS

The figure of the Infant Jesus of Prague has always had an irresistible appeal. Every detail of the image makes an absorbing study: the comely face, the dignified posture of the Child, His stiff, ornate robes, His pretentious crown. Some of us are fascinated by the small hands, partially hidden by full frills of lace, the right in a gesture of benediction, and the left holding a little globe.

When the Saxon invaders of Prague threw the miraculous image behind the altar, the hands were broken off. But Father Cyril concealed the loss as well as he could by means of the voluminous clothing of the statue. In his joy at repossessing it, he did not consider the loss of the hands a tragedy.

Now that Cyril had succeeded in communicating his enthusiasm for the beautiful image to the other religious of his house, he extended his apostolate beyond the monastery walls. He sang the praises of the Infant at every opportunity to those who begged his prayers, to the visitors at the monastery, to his friends and acquaintances. Occasionally, at the entrance of St. Mary of Victory's Church, he met some poor downcast soul who aroused his compassion and then he delighted in bringing back hope to lackluster eyes by telling of the marvelous help to be obtained from the Infant King.

"Pray to Him," he would urge, "and I will pray with you. He will bring you peace."

The statue in the oratory drew Cyril like a magnet, and he found an ever-increasing number of clients to remember in his prayers there. He was rewarded for his charity by a signal grace. One day he heard distinct words coming from the image:

"Have pity on Me and I will have pity on you. Give Me My hands, and I will give you peace. The more you honor Me, the more I will bless you."

Father Cyril of the Mother of God was amazed. Perhaps he had shamefully fallen asleep at his prayers and dreamed that he heard those words. Still he knew it was not so. He had indeed heard that rich low Voice—the Voice he had often lovingly imagined. His hands shook with joy as he sprang from his knees to remove the statue from its niche.

At his first opportunity Cyril reported to his prior exactly what had happened and begged funds for the repair of the statue. He did not dream that he would meet with refusal. There was little difficulty in convincing his superior of the reality of the Infant's request since the evidence was there in the missing hands. No, the difficulty was in getting him to see the urgency of the request at a time when the monks hardly knew where the next meal was to come from. Perhaps the Infant's words, "Give Me My hands," had some hidden, mysterious meaning. Or perhaps if He meant them to be taken literally He intended to send a benefactor.

Cyril, saddened by his inability to fulfill his commission, fell back on his favorite weapon. He stormed heaven, begging that some kind person would furnish what was necessary for the repair job. He reminded the Infant that he himself was bound by a rigorous vow of poverty and that he knew little of money matters.

A few days later he was called to administer the Last Sacraments to a wealthy old gentleman. He told his penitent the story of the miraculous image from beginning to end and urged him to pray to the Infant Jesus for recovery from his illness. Touched by the priest's simplicity and his helpless grief over his small financial problem, the gentleman volunteered one hundred florins for the mending of the statue.

The monk's elation was short-lived. He handed over his gift to the prior only to be told that the proper thing to do with so much money was to order a new statue. Schooled in obedience, Cyril submitted without a murmur. On schedule the statue arrived and usurped the place of honor in the oratory. Cyril knelt there and studied it. The workmanship was inferior to that of the Spanish heirloom. He tried to pray but distractions swarmed in his mind. The replica held little inspiration for him. With a sigh he arose and went to his cell where he was privately guarding the original. There prayer came to him unbidden and his heart overflowed with love.

Meanwhile a candlestick toppled over on the new wax figure in the

oratory and smashed it into a thousand pieces. Cyril felt now, all happenings considered, that the Infant meant His words to be taken literally. "Give Me My hands." He determined to move heaven and earth in order to obey the request of His King.

Shortly after this the prior resigned and Father Dominic of St. Nicholas, who was later to become a noted missionary, succeeded to the governing post of the monastery. Cyril took heart and tried again. But the new superior had such a staggering job facing him, trying to square accounts, that he could barely make ends meet.

One morning while Cyril was in the Church, an unknown woman handed him a package and quietly left before he could properly thank her. What a strange thing to do. Could this be the solution to his problem?

Excitedly, he opened the package and found that it contained a substantial sum of money. Suddenly he knew what Lady to thank. He quickly made his way to the altar of the Madonna of Carmel. She who gave the Infant King to the world was the real benefactor.

"What did the lady say it was for?" the prior naturally wanted to know when Cyril hopefully surrendered the package of money. "Father," he stammered confusedly, "she said nothing. She only gave me the packet." Again disappointment, frustration. Since no specifications had been given, Father Dominic thought it his plain duty to use most of the money for the restoration of Our Lady's Church and to pay some pressing bills. He gave Cyril only a petty sum.

Certainly, Cyril must be wearing a special crown in heaven for perseverance. He pressed his point respectfully, objecting that he would be unable to find an artist, even in impoverished Prague where men were hungry for employment, to work for such a pittance. The prior silenced him but in his heart he felt a twinge of pity for his poor monk.

The words spoken by that lovely Voice were as clear in Cyril's ears as the day they were spoken. They were a constant reproach to him. He felt guilty, but what could he do but continue to pray?

Finally he was rewarded for his gentle persistence. Once more as he knelt before the miraculous image he heard the Voice:

"Place Me near the entrance of the sacristy and you will receive aid."

He obeyed with alacrity, new hope springing within him. Returning to his cell, he confidently asked Mary to be his ally and promptly to direct to the sacristy the one who would restore the image of her Child.

A gentleman named Daniel Wolf noticed the attractive statue as he went in to hear Mass at St. Mary's. After Mass he spoke to the prior and offered to assume responsibility for the needed repairs. Father Dominic accepted the offer happily for Cyril's eyes had been haunting him. When the work was accomplished the image was exposed in the Church for public veneration. The monks noticed with satisfaction how eagerly the people clustered round the altar to see the statue and they decided to expose it there on special occasions.

The Infant King had His hands again. Instead of restoring them miraculously, He had patiently awaited human cooperation. He used them to bless all who knelt before Him. The people of Prague were the first to experience the fulfillment of the second part of His promise:

"The more you honor Me, the more I will bless you."

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MYSTERIES: MARGARET OF BEAUNE

Cyril of the Mother of God had still a long apostolate before him in Bohemia. In the very middle of his eighty-five years, Margaret of the Blessed Sacrament lived out her short span in France. The two lives were totally different, yet through the haze of three centuries, we see them meet and merge in a flame of love for the Christ Child. All that we know of Cyril's life and work revolved around the Infancy. And of Margaret Father Bourgoïn said: "She was incessantly occupied with the Nativity of Jesus. I believe the grace of this mystery has been given to her in such plenitude that she may pour it in abundance upon the Church of God."

One of the popular devotions to the Infant of Prague today is the Chaplet or Crown of the Child Jesus, a Rosary of fifteen beads.¹ It was Margaret who was inspired to make the Chaplet and who, as a mark of the pleasure with which God viewed it, saw it shining with an unearthly light. But it was not until later that it came to be associated with the Prague devotion.

While Cyril and Margaret lived perhaps no one saw that their work was complementary. But in our times it has been accurately stated: "The Infant of Prague may be regarded as the outward expression of the interior devotion of Margaret of Beaune. Prague was the Eastern and Beaune the Western center of the love of the Holy Child."²

Margaret's life was described by a physician who attended her as "one prolonged miracle."³ In this story we are interested mainly in her countless mystical experiences relating to Christ's Infancy. However, her importance

¹ *For directions for saying the Chaplet and promises attached to its recitation, see Chapter X, "From Sea to Shining Sea."*

² "Carmel, Its History, Spirit, and Saints," New York, Kenedy 1927, p. 234.

³ *Statement signed under oath, "Salins," July 7, 1649.*

in seventeenth century history and her link with prominent figures, both lay and ecclesiastic, warrant a quick glance at her whole life.

Margaret Parigot was born February 7, 1619, just before Ferdinand II became Emperor of Austria, and five years before Richelieu undertook the government of France. Her entry into Carmel at the age of eleven gave the signal for the beginning of a remarkable career. Of her twenty-nine years eighteen were spent hidden from the world in the monastery of Beaune, her birthplace.

Yet a contemporary admitted that she did more for France by her prayers than any whole army. Margaret was inspired to pray daily for the rulers of nations, particularly of France, for the armed forces and judges, for the Pope and for her superiors. Equally important, she was chosen to atone for countless sins by constant and severe sufferings, for she lived the mysteries of the Passion as well as those of the Infancy. In one of her visions she saw a huge Cross emerging from a Crib and extending loving arms over the whole world. Gradually her fame spread throughout France, and people clamored for her spiritual assistance. She was as much sought after as a queen.

King Louis XIV is said to have been born in answer to her prayers. His mother, Anne of Austria, after twenty-three years of childless marriage to Louis XIII, had begged Margaret to pray for an heir to the French throne. When the prince was born on September 5, 1638, the young nun knew of the birth before the news reached Beaune from Paris, and she acknowledged the favor by placing a crown on her statue of the Infant Jesus.⁴

At one time Margaret was miraculously sustained for a period of four months without food. Again when she was mortally ill and all other means had failed she was immediately cured when her prioress covered her with a cloak which was a relic of Cardinal de Berulle, father of the French Carmelites, saying: "Sister be cured through obedience to our venerated Cardinal and Father."

Margaret, who imitated the virtues of Christ's Infancy with a perfection that has perhaps never been excelled, was permitted to retain, even in death, the appearance of a child. She died May 26, 1648 (about the time the Thirty Years War ended) and her life was written almost immediately, at the re-

⁴ *This statue was in no way connected with the miraculous image of the Infant of Prague.*

quest of Father Olier, founder of the Sulpicians. Like Dominic, the precursor of devotion to the Infant King, Margaret is an uncanonized saint, her cult having continued uninterruptedly since her death.⁵

When we consider the solemnity of the mission Our Lord entrusted to Margaret and the marvelous graces with which He prepared her for it, we wonder why her message has not had the universal hearing that has been accorded the message of Prague. Early in her religious life He said to her: "I have chosen you to honor My Infancy, and will bestow on you that innocence and simplicity which I brought into the world at My birth. I will show you the manner in which I wish you to honor It and cause It to be honored on earth." And again at the time of her profession He said to her: "Propagate this devotion to My Holy Infancy in souls, spread everywhere the love and practice of it . . ."

Margaret was permitted to hold the Infant Jesus in her arms, and in her heart. She saw the stable of the Nativity in its repulsiveness, the humility of the Child, the angels adoring, the shepherds, the Magi. Mary and Joseph she watched in contemplation before the Manger, silent and undisturbed by their visitors. She endured with the Holy Innocents the agonies of their massacre and received special light on their glory in heaven and the efficacy of their prayers because they were martyred in the place of the Infant.

Sometimes Margaret united herself to Jesus presented in the Temple. Hidden circumstances of the flight into Egypt were known to her, and the keen sufferings endured by the sensitive Child. She experienced the fathomless peace of the quiet house in Nazareth, where no word or motion was wasted. She felt the unspeakable love of the Savior for His mother, and His boundless pity for sinners. On one occasion she saw on Our Lord's right hand written in letters of fire, "The Word is made Flesh."

Margaret gave to the Holy Child the purest affection, the most delicate attention. Her statue of Him received exquisite care; her annual preparation for Christmas was elaborate; and from the sixteenth to the twenty-fifth of each month, she celebrated the mysteries. Frequently she repeated that she

⁵ *But the Process and the Manuscripts were mislaid. After they were recovered in 1850, the Bishop of Dijon reopened the canonical inquest. The cause was introduced and accepted and private veneration is permitted. In our own century Pius X solemnly decreed the heroicity of her virtues.*

belonged entirely to the Infant Jesus. A month before she died, she knew that she was to accept death as His victim.

In 1636 Christ told Margaret: "I wish you to institute an association . . . (which) will be My Family . . . the Family of the Infant Jesus . . ." He promised rich blessings to its members. Margaret obeyed His request at once. That very night she dictated to one of the religious of her house what had been revealed to her. Nine sisters were selected to act as Servants of the Child Jesus, and shortly after this an association was established for people outside the convent. Considering that it was born within the cloister, the Family of the Child Jesus spread with amazing rapidity and success. Prelates, prime ministers and superior-generals of religious orders, princes, illustrious doctors, judges, and many French clerics enrolled. The association became known beyond the borders of the country of its origin, and foreigners asked to be admitted to membership.

Margaret outlined for the members a detailed and comprehensive rule which she had received directly from Christ. He had made her understand that persons who aspired to belong to His Family must dedicate themselves to His mysteries from His Incarnation to His twelfth year. They were to wear and recite the Chaplet, and to practice special devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, to Mary and Joseph, and to all the saints in any way connected with the Infancy. One of the requirements was to pray for peace.

The renowned Baron de Renty, friend and correspondent of Margaret's, was the chosen guardian of this association, and one of its ardent apostles. Father Olier established it at St. Sulpice. The illustrious Bishop Fenelon composed a litany for it. Pope Alexander VII approved it in 1661.⁶

Margaret was firmly establishing the Family of the Infant Jesus in France during the exact period in which Cyril was laying his foundations in Prague. Both were commissioned about the same time to build chapels to honor the Infancy. Margaret's chapel was adorned, as the years passed, with the magnificent gifts of the wealthy and the lowly offerings of the poor. It was

⁶ *The society suffered from the religious persecutions which came later in France, but it never died out. In 1855 Pius IX raised it to the rank of an Arch-Confraternity. This Arch-Confraternity is not to be confused with the Confraternity of the Infant Jesus of Prague which is similar to it in spirit, but distinct in origin and requirements. See Chapter X, "From Sea to Shining Sea," for a description of the Confraternity.*

her crowning work and it served as her tomb and monument. When it was later destroyed by Revolutionists, the remains of the saint were secured by members of her Order.

Why did Providence place the lives of the two Carmelites in juxtaposition? Was it because He wants us to study them together and combine their doctrine into a unit? It would seem that by doing this we obtain a perfect whole.

Margaret showed us how we should honor the Infancy by meditating on its mysteries and by conforming our conduct to its pattern of virtue. She emphasized the inadequacy of a purely exterior worship, communicating to us Christ's desire to share His Childhood with us, to relive it every day in His Mystical Body. But she sounded a gentle warning that only the clean of heart, only meek and self-stripped souls would be His intimates.

Cyril worked tirelessly to induce the world to recognize the Kingship of the Christ Child. He sold his followers on the goodness and the lavish generosity of the Infant Who is King of the Universe, and Who gives His gifts in proportion to the honor He receives.

If we blend the white tones of Margaret's life and work with the brighter hues of Cyril's, we catch the beautiful shades of the Infant King. Only by focusing the eyes of the soul on the combined picture do we grasp what is meant by the Twin Allegiances He demands of His subjects.

(But for those who still have not understood, there remains the lesson of Thérèse of Lisieux who, in order to give us a glimpse of the infinite resourcefulness of God, will vary the lesson somewhat, without in any way altering its fundamentals. The story will be told in Chapter XI.)

CHAPTER SIX

THE INFANT KING CAPTURES PRAGUE

When a member of the nobility experiences a sensational cure, it is news. It was time for the Infant King to attract all of Prague to Himself. Cyril had done all he could in the two years that had passed since his return from Munich to make Him known and loved and people were beginning to talk about the remarkable statue in the monastery. Suddenly, the word was out that by venerating the image, Countess Elizabeth of Kolowrat, wife of the Imperial Superintendent in Bohemia, had been miraculously cured of a mortal illness.

Elizabeth, who had been Baroness of Lobkowitz before her marriage to Count Henry Liebsteinsky, had probably admired the statue when it was in the home of Polyxena whose husband was her relative. It was midsummer when Elizabeth became critically ill. She could neither hear nor speak and her death seemed imminent when her husband, in desperation, begged Father Cyril to bring the image to her. The priest hesitated, doubting that it was prudent to take the precious heirloom about on sick calls. Yet the Count's eyes pleaded, and there was the question of charity . . .

Cyril held the miraculous image close to Elizabeth whose eyes were squeezed shut with pain. Elizabeth fingered the robes reverently and then, opening her eyes, gently kissed the face of the image. Tears of sympathy welled in the monk's eyes. By her gesture the Countess seemed to be making a heroic effort to convey a message to him. She kept pointing to the crown on the image and then to herself.

Cyril had already anointed her and now he read aloud prayers for the dying but Elizabeth could not hear him. He had not the heart to take the statue away from her now. The Count reassured him about its safety. All the way back to the monastery Cyril pleaded with the Infant Jesus to cure Elizabeth, and to manifest His miraculous powers to the people of Prague.

Soon after the monk's departure the Countess found her voice. Excitedly, her husband spoke to her and discovered that her hearing too had been restored. With tears streaming down her cheeks, Elizabeth touched the Infant's crown. "Dear Child," she whispered, "did you understand what I was trying to tell you? I will give you a beautiful crown of gold."

In a few days she was completely well. A crowd of excited people, buzzing about her sudden cure, tagged behind her carriage when she made a pilgrimage to the monastery to present the new crown to the monks and to pray in thanksgiving for her favor. For the rest of his life the grateful Count gave generously to the Carmelites, and he remembered them in his will. Because of the prominent position of Elizabeth and her husband in Bohemia, members of the nobility were drawn powerfully to the statue which had been instrumental in the cure of the Countess.

News of the miracle made the rounds of Prague and many people begged to see the miraculous image. On feast days when it was exposed in the Church of St. Mary of Victory, the crowds lingered long at the altar which served as its Shrine. Their only complaint in the early forties was that they had too few opportunities to venerate it. The curious came with the devout, but the devotion of all of them grew. If it was natural that the nobility should be strongly attracted by the Kingship of the Infant, it was equally natural that the poor should be attracted by the Infancy of the King. All classes, kinds, and ages of people prayed to the Infant Jesus of Prague whose favors were for all, although He had a special predilection for children, for impoverished laborers, and for those who prayed to Him with complete confidence. Soon the monks began to accept offerings of gratitude from those who had been favored, especially objects to adorn the Shrine and to beautify the Church.

A woman donated three thousand florins for an altar to the Holy Trinity with a gold-plated tabernacle for the exposition of the image. Another gave an altar to the Virgin Mary. The Lady Febronia of Pernstein, a descendant of Maria Manriquez of Lara, had the presbytery of the Church laid with beautiful red and white marble slabs. An aristocratic widow parted with her wedding gown so that the costly material might be used in the service of the altar.

Febronia continued to be among the most generous benefactors of the monks throughout her life, and she bequeathed to them her estate at Solnitz as

a mark of her love for the Infant King to Whom she was indebted for her retention of this estate when a lawsuit had earlier threatened her claim to it. When she died in 1646 she was buried in St. Mary's near the high altar, dressed in the Carmelite habit.

Cyril was elated at seeing so many persons worshipping his Infant and honoring Him with their gifts. The time was ripe for the building of a chapel to house the miraculous image, to give it a proper setting, and to accommodate the crowds of worshippers. There is a story that Cyril was instructed by Mary in a vision to undertake this new project. It is said that the prior listened to his report of the vision and did nothing to help him fulfill Mary's wish. For three years Cyril endured this new martyrdom, until 1642 when Baroness Benigna Lobkowitz untied the priest's hands by making a generous donation. He immediately made plans to build the chapel which was completed before the end of the year.

The "Hermitage," as it was called, was constructed on the monastery grounds behind the Church, with one entrance accessible to the public, and another within the enclosure. Adjoining the elegant new structure there were small cells for the monks which later came to be used only by priests making retreats. A fund for the use of retreatants was donated by Baron Christopher of Mitrowitz, with the stipulation that the fathers should pray for their stricken country.

The Chapel was solemnly blessed on the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus in 1644 when Mass was celebrated there for the first time. This feast has continued to be considered the principal one of the Infant of Prague up to the present time, and January as His month; while the Litany of the Holy Name was adopted as the favored prayer for public recital in His honor.

Cardinal Ernest Albert of Harrach, the Bishop of Prague, consecrated the Hermitage in 1648. He granted permission to all priests, secular and religious, to offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass there. Many prominent churchmen were attracted to the Shrine in the following years to avail themselves of this privilege.

By this time the Thirty Years War had burned itself out. However Prague suffered from its terrors to the end. In 1647 Ferdinand III, who was in the city to repel a Scandinavian invasion, visited the Hermitage and spent some time there in profound prayer. The following year, just three months before the Peace of Westphalia, three thousand Swedes made a stealthy

entry by night into the Bohemian capital. The people awoke to pandemonium. The monks had just finished their Office when they heard the firing of enemy guns. They hastily consumed their consecrated Hosts and knelt for a brief prayer before the miraculous image. They were preparing to hide their treasure when they heard the rude knocks of the soldiery at their door. But their prayers were answered. The troops were hungry and demanded only food. They did not harm the monks or their monastery. Furthermore, the invading general decided to spare St. Mary's (although other churches were molested) and even placed it under the protection of the Swedish crown.

On January 14, 1649, the Feast of the Holy Name, a solemn ceremony of thanksgiving was held in honor of the miraculous Infant Who had sustained the city of Prague throughout the war.

If all had gone smoothly in the history of the Infant of Prague, we might suspect the authenticity of the devotion. Nothing genuine in the Church is allowed to prosper without opposition and struggle. From the start there had been obstacles. Now complaints were voiced within the Carmelite family from religious who looked on the image as a novelty. But in 1651 the General of the Order, Father Francis of the Blessed Sacrament, visited the convent of Prague and scrutinized the devotion from all angles. He found it to be well authenticated and worthy of confidence in every respect. To show his approval publicly, he celebrated Mass before the miraculous image. Further, he issued an official decree of approval, written by his own hand, and signed by the Provincial, the prior, and by Father Cyril. The document with seal appended was hung in the Chapel to allay any criticism or fear of superstition. It attracted much attention and the publicity it received added to the popularity of the miraculous Infant.

Before the Hermitage was a dozen years old the throngs of people who sought entrance there had outgrown it. The demand for permanent removal of the image to St. Mary of Victory's increased until two brothers, Ernest and Francis, the Barons of Talmberg, erected a chapel for it within the Church, on the left side of the entrance. This corresponded to a chapel on the right side, dedicated to Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the gift of another member of the Talmberg family.

Although the new Chapel was completed in 1654 the miraculous image was not permanently installed there until the Feast of St. Joseph two years later. The King was to remain in His new home for most of a century

receiving the homage of all Prague and of many pilgrims. A marble tablet at the entrance of the Hermitage commemorated His former Shrine.

In 1655 the image was solemnly crowned by Bishop D. Joseph Corti. The new crown like that given by the Countess was of gold but much more ornate than hers, being decorated with genuine pearls and other precious stones. It was the gift of Count Bernard Ignatius of Martinitz.

About this time five Discalced Carmelite sisters of St. Joseph, led by the saintly Mother Mary Electa of Jesus, were sent to Prague to found a monastery.¹ On September 1, 1656, they paid a visit to the Shrine and begged the benediction of the Infant King on their foundation. Their successors in Prague were destined to play an important role in the history of the miraculous image.²

The wardrobe of the statue increased in splendor with the passing years. Cyril begged alms for additional costumes and notables gave handsome robes. Empress Maria Theresa, when crowned Queen of Bohemia, presented a dress of green samite which she had made herself. Eventually the wardrobe was to contain more than twenty complete sets of clothing. Later the custom was adopted of changing the clothing in solemn ceremony six times a year, observing the liturgical colors.³

Fortunately for us one of the posts which Cyril held during his long residence in the convent at Prague was that of historian. He neglected no opportunity to write about the miraculous image. His writings were invaluable to later historians of the devotion, most of our knowledge of its early phases having been derived from his observations.

When Cyril died in 1675 he had cause for deep satisfaction. Not only had the Infant King taken Prague by storm but He was loved all over the Austrian Empire.

¹ *Mother Mary Electa died in 1663 and her body is still incorrupt.*

² *See Chapter VII, "The Summit."*

³ *In 1860 a group of Chinese girls, who had watched with interest the vesting of a replica statue at Shanghai, sent an exquisite set of clothing to Prague for the permanent wardrobe of the original. On the bodice of the gown a heart of coral beads is encircled by a crown of thorns decorated with pearls. A prayer in Chinese characters is embroidered on the hem: "Divine Child Jesus, have pity on the land of China, convert her to the Faith, and deliver her from the power of the evil spirit."*

Among his writings Cyril left a prayer to the Child Jesus which is still popular because of its simple beauty. It gives us a more satisfactory picture of the monk than we would gain from a whole volume of panegyrics. It sums up his aspirations, and paints his sanctity in miniature.

Jesus! unto Thee I flee,
Through Thy Mother praying Thee
In my need to succor me.
Truly, I believe of Thee
God Thou art with strength to shield me;
Full of trust I hope of Thee
Thou Thy grace wilt give to me;
All my heart I give to Thee.
Therefore, of my sins repent me;
From them breaking, I beseech Thee,
Jesus, from their bonds to free me.
Firm my purpose is to mend me,
Never more will I grieve Thee.
Wholly unto Thee I give me,
Patiently to suffer for Thee,
Thee to serve eternally.
And my neighbor, like to me
I will love, for love of Thee.
Little Jesus, I beseech Thee,
In my need to succor me,
That one day I may enjoy Thee,
Safe with Joseph, and with Mary,
And angels all, eternally.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE SUMMIT

For a hundred years after the restoration of the miraculous image, veneration of the Infant Jesus of Prague gathered momentum. The peak was reached toward the middle of the eighteenth century.

In times of disaster especially Prague turned to its King. In 1713 Bohemia was prostrated by an epidemic which killed two hundred thousand people and two million cattle. The capital city flocked to its favorite Shrine where the Carmelites celebrated Mass daily for the relief of the citizens. All those who participated in the special devotions held at this time honoring the Infancy are said to have been spared the dreaded malady or to have survived it. As an expression of gratitude, the monks had the interior of the Talmberg Chapel redecorated and a new altar erected there.

In the eighteenth century reproductions of the miraculous image were in great demand.¹ A popular story is that of the needy artisan who was commissioned to produce a replica, and decided to sculpture the features at the Shrine. Before he had perfected the figure he had fallen completely under the spell of his model. Hardly realizing what he did, he dropped to his knees and prayed confidently that more work would come his way. Almost before his first assignment had been completed, he was besieged from all directions with orders for copies of the famous statue.

We know that replicas were exported from Prague at an early date because one of the numerous recorded cures occurred in 1733 at Gratz, Styria, through veneration of an image. However, the first identical copy made of

¹ *As early as 1647 the prior of Prague, Father Bonaventure of St. Mary Magdalen, in gratitude for a favor had caused the first replica to be carved in wood and sent to Solnitz where it was exposed in the church—the first after St. Mary of Victory's in which the Infant King received public veneration. It is probable that other copies were made at an early date.*

wax and touched to the original was not made until four years later than this. It was the work of one Susanna of Textor and was presented to the Carmelite nuns of Prague. The available accounts all agree that these sisters dressed and colored innumerable statues and pictures of the Infant King for distribution but do not make clear precisely when their undertaking began.

It is certain however that this work was a labor of love and that it grew to such proportions in the peak years of the devotion that it consumed every spare moment of the busy nuns' time. The replicas which they adorned went not only to the convents of Prague but also to the parish churches in and beyond the city, and to many families. Reason indicates that the sisters sent them also to other monasteries of their Order. Following their example, the sisters of Gratz and Gmunden took up this work which was prominent among the causes of increased devotion to the Infant Jesus.

Another prime factor in the expansion was the zeal of two influential Carmelite monks who simultaneously gave great impetus to the apostolate by their writing, preaching, and example. Father Emmerich of St. Stephen, learned theologian and philosopher, was prior of Prague.² Father Ildephonse of the Presentation of the Most Holy Virgin was General of the Order from 1737 to 1740. Both were worthy successors of Cyril.

Father Emmerich collected Cyril's manuscripts and the writings of others on the subject of the miraculous image, and used them as the basis of a book in German which he called *Things Great and Small about Prague*. The work was enthusiastically received and three years later a new and large edition was issued. It was also translated into Bohemian and Italian, the latter edition being published in Trent.

During the peak years from 1738 to 1741 worshippers came to the Shrine in constant streams from morning until night. Masses were celebrated from daybreak until noon, and the Chapel was constantly ablaze with thousands of candles. The largest crowds were attracted on Fridays when the Blessed Sacrament was customarily exposed there. Eighty remarkable favors were recorded in four years and ex-votos and gifts, many of considerable value, were offered daily.

² He was born at Roab in 1691 and entered the Carmel in Prague in 1709. After his priorship he became Provincial and then Definitor of the Order. He died at Vienna August 9, 1756.

The efforts of Father Ildephonse caused the knowledge of the Infant Jesus of Prague to be quickly disseminated over a vast area. In fulfilling the duties of his office, the General traveled extensively in Europe and in foreign lands, invariably accompanied by a representation of the Infant King whose power and mercies he constantly preached. His preparation for his apostolate was a long stay in Prague where he had formerly been prior, and where he had acquainted himself thoroughly with the history of the miraculous image.³

For use in Father Emmerich's book to which he gave formal approval he recorded two of his personal experiences in each of which he had been preserved from shipwreck by invoking the Infant Jesus. The more remarkable of the two cases occurred when he was caught in a furious tempest while en route to Sicily for a canonical visitation. The pilot was forced to take refuge for a night and a morning in the Bay of Orlando. When the wind calmed towards noon the passengers reembarked. Suddenly the wind regained its intensity and dashed the vessel against a reef. Instinctively Father Ildephonse prayed to the Holy Child and unexpectedly a boat came to the rescue of the desperate passengers and drew them all to safety. The priest's chest was washed overboard, containing among his possessions a magnificent Missal, ornately decorated and lined in cloth of gold, which had been entrusted to him by the nuns of Palermo to be placed in the Talmberg Chapel. When the chest was recovered, although its other contents were soaked, the Missal and its paper wrapping were quite dry. At Prague where the book was delivered two years later, it was esteemed as a miraculous souvenir.⁴

The swelling crowds of the Infant King's followers filled the Talmberg Chapel and overflowed into other parts of St. Mary's. For eighty-four years the miraculous image had stood there and now it clearly required more spacious surroundings. After much speculation about the choicest location for a new Shrine the monks chose the middle altar on the right side of the Church, a vantage point from which the miraculous Infant would be visi-

³ *He had been Provincial of Austria and Definitor General before becoming Superior General of the Order. He died in 1760.*

⁴ *Some time after the Carmelite monastery was suppressed, the Abbot of Strahow bought the relic at auction. It was placed in the pretentious library of the Premonstratensian Abbey.*

ble to persons in any part of the building. A painting of the Holy Spirit encircled by clouds and angels was used as background for the altar. A triumphal procession was held January 13, 1741, and the statue was carried with pomp to its final throne.

Owing to the inspiration of Father Ildephonse and Father Emmerich the Carmelite Chapter of Austria decreed that replicas of the miraculous image should be placed in all convents of the Province. Undoubtedly their work also directly or indirectly caused the devotion to spread beyond the distant churches and monasteries of their Order and to be embraced by other congregations as well as by the laity in foreign lands.

A result of this is seen in the fact that the recorded journeys of the replicas now increase in distance. Spain which had lost the original to Bohemia did not receive a copy until 1750. At the same time her neighbor, Portugal, imported a number of the statues which had been ordered by the royal court of Lisbon. A great fanfare was made to introduce them. Within another decade copies were being made by the hundreds and shipped not only to many localities of Europe, but also to distant parts of the world. At this time we know that there were statues of the Infant Jesus of Prague in Vienna, Gratz, Lintz, and Rome; in many parts of Germany, Hungary, Saxony, Poland, France, Italy, Sicily and Malta, besides those in the Iberian peninsula. Missionaries had carried them to India and China and other remote parts of the Christian world.

A frequently quoted work that was produced in the period we are considering is the book which was written by a Countess and printed at the Monastery of Kempt in 1761 and again in 1791. It stressed the wide variety of spiritual and material help granted to those who prayed with confidence before the miraculous image.⁵

The new Shrine at Prague was later enriched in many ways. In 1776 the altar of wood was replaced by one of red and gray marble. Following this improvement two imposing statues, one of Mary and the other of Joseph, were placed on the altar, completing the representation of the Holy Family. Finally a splendid tabernacle of glass supported by twenty silver angels

⁵ Another work of the eighteenth century was "The Veneration of the Divine Infant Jesus," written in 1796 by Father Rupert Mitz, pastor of the parish of Niederdorf in the district of Memmingen. But by this time the devotion was on its temporary decline.

was constructed for the miraculous image, and a Dove of pure silver surrounded by golden rays was placed above the tabernacle. The Figure of God the Father was added to the beautiful ensemble to complete also the representation of the Blessed Trinity.

And here we hope the Infant King still stands today, although His Shrine is now behind the Iron Curtain. One thing is certain: not even world revolution could cause the destruction of the numberless copies of His image that have been distributed. During the middle years of the eighteenth century, largely by means of these replicas, the devotion which had started in the quiet monastery of Prague was faithfully transmitted to the world.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ECLIPSED

By mid-eighteenth century the Infant Jesus of Prague was known and loved in Europe from the Atlantic seaboard eastward to Poland, and from the North Sea southward to the Mediterranean. The devotion was so deeply rooted on the continent that no combination of circumstances, however unfavorable, could destroy it now. This was providential because in the second half of the century it was submitted to the destructive glare of the "new enlightenment," and subsequently to conditions which were generally unfavorable to its propagation.

The spirit of the age and the spirit of the Infancy of Christ were irreconcilable. The minds of a large and influential class of Europeans, especially in France but scattered widely, became tainted with the doctrine of Rationalism which attacked the very foundations of the Church. Many of these people felt that intelligence presupposed skepticism in matters of religion as well as in learning and politics. They therefore sneered at miracles, discredited the Bible, and questioned Catholic dogma. A certain class of cynics thought it a childish waste of time to pray, for although they admitted the existence of God, they denied His interest in the everyday problems of insignificant human beings. Many Rationalists attempted to substitute for revealed Christianity a vague natural religion, whose laws they could discover for themselves and conveniently shape to their own purposes.

The total result was a considerable breakdown in reverence for the Church and the hierarchy in many parts of the continent. An impatience with restriction and a disrespect for Church observances combined to tear down sacred customs that had been painstakingly cultivated by the faithful. Certainly, the times were unfavorable to Christianity in general, but they were intolerant of a devotion such as that to the Infant Jesus of Prague,

with its insistence on unquestioning faith, its strong belief in miracles, and its respect for religious symbols.

Some rulers of countries became infected with the new poison and used their position to undermine the faith of their subjects. Frederick the Great of Prussia was an ardent admirer of Voltaire, one of the leading apostles of revolt of the century. During the destructive Seven Years War, (1756-1763), which involved most European nations, he overran Bohemia and threatened Prague. The country was thrown into turmoil but fortunately Frederick failed to conquer it but was compelled to withdraw into Saxony. Yet in the course of the war, against great odds, he managed to humiliate Austria and its Catholic Empress.

Maria Theresa, in her forty years' rule of Austria, shared the faith of her people and respected their Catholic traditions. She "remained an ardent Christian in an age of unbelief."¹ Although she reared her son Joseph in the Church, he embraced the radical doctrines of Rousseau (except that of popular sovereignty) and with his accession to the throne as Emperor Joseph II, he attempted to force his views on his people.² In fact, from the death of her husband, Francis I, Maria Theresa's attempts at practical and moderate reform were frustrated by the uncontrollable impulses of her son.

To give the devil his due, Joseph meant well in some of his intended social reforms. He dreamed of uplifting the lower classes, liberating the serfs (who were unprepared for liberty) and providing free elementary education for all. The new and earthly paradise that was supposed to result from his efforts, however, failed utterly to materialize.

But Joseph did not stop at social reforms. He tried to usurp the authority of the Pope. Ignoring the fact that Austria had stood through the years a bulwark of the Church, he decreed that papal bulls should be withheld from publication in his domains, pending imperial authorization, and he reserved to the state the nomination of Bishops, and the training of the clergy.

¹ "Political and Social History of Modern Europe," I, 445, by Carlton J. H. Hayes, New York, Macmillan, 1926.

² Joseph was Holy Roman Emperor from 1765; co-regent of Austria with his mother until her death in 1780; and sole ruler of the Hapsburg dominions 1780-1790.

Catholic worship, while not forbidden, was curtailed and severely restricted. In Prague alone seventy convents, churches, and chapels were closed. Church ceremonies were changed or abolished, side-altars were removed (but fortunately not in St. Mary of Victory's), new laws were passed regulating such details as the size and number of candles to be used. The Emperor even tried to discourage religious vocations.

Dressed statues and other religious symbols, traditionally held in esteem not only by the peasantry but by Joseph's royal forebears, were now linked with the darkness of the uneducated mind. The clergy were righteously angered by the Emperor's highhanded and unscrupulous tactics and the people, accustomed to Maria Theresa's Christian rule, were shocked but powerless to alter the situation.

Joseph had a special aversion for the contemplative orders. An idea of his views on the Carmelite life may be gained from an incident that had occurred some years earlier when he visited his cousin, Madame Louise, a nun in the French Convent of St. Denis. At that time Joseph was permitted to visit the cloister and to study first-hand the austere life of the sisters. Upon leaving the convent he remarked to his cousin: "Madame, I would rather be hanged than lead the life you lead." The lady had the last word. She replied: "I have tried the Court and the Carmel."³

With such contempt for the life of Carmel, Joseph would hardly have been expected to leave the monks of Prague unmolested. On July 3, 1784, they received their decree of banishment, and the forty-four religious sadly left the city and their miraculous image of the Infant Jesus. A moderate sum of money was given them in exchange for their monastery which Emperor Ferdinand had founded for them one hundred and sixty years before.

The famous statue was not harmed, although the gifts and ex-votos that had been placed at the Shrine were confiscated. St. Mary of Victory's became a parish church and its administration passed to the priests of the Order of Malta. Before the Carmelites left they took a solemn oath to spread wherever they went the knowledge and love of the Infant Jesus of

³ From "*Carmel, Its History, Spirit and Saints.*" Madame Louise, whose name in religion was Sister Teresa of St. Augustine, has been declared Venerable by the Church. During the religious persecutions she obtained permission from her nephew, Louis XVI of France, to shelter expelled Carmelite nuns in the Monastery of St. Denis.

Prague, Who had been entrusted to their guardianship. But in Prague the devotion grew cold in many hearts. Far from being promoted it was only tolerated now.

Pope Pius VI was understandably alarmed at the policies of Joseph—how alarmed we may gauge by the fact that he made a personal visit to Vienna. John Farrow, in his *Pageant of the Popes*⁴ gives a revealing description of the visit. The hypocrisy of the age was indicated by the cordial reception accorded the Holy Father while simultaneously his authority was being overlooked in Austria. He was cheered, given receptions, and treated to a fine display of meaningless court etiquette. Nothing more substantial was gained by the trip but the Sovereign Pontiff refrained from taking stronger measures for fear of provoking the Emperor to make a complete break with the Church. There was nothing to do but wait.

When Joseph's reign had ended in dismal failure, his brother and successor, Leopold II, withdrew most of the innovations that had been imposed on the country. Yet a vast amount of damage had been done to the nation, to its people, and—what concerns us here—to a simple popular devotion. The Infant Jesus of Prague had suffered His worst defeat to date.

Still His veneration while deteriorating in Prague never completely died out there and it continued to flourish in many other localities of Europe in defiance of the times. But the European scene, for many years to come, provided an unhealthy climate for its cultivation, especially since some of the countries where the Carmelites had been strong, and where it might have spread most rapidly, were torn by the forces of irreligion: notably France, Italy, Spain and the Low Countries.

Before Joseph's death Revolution had flared in France. Many heads were to roll, including those of the Catholic King and Queen. The new French Republic began experimentation with religion and for a time even considered doing away with Christianity altogether. Churches were defiled and the victory of reason over "superstition" was celebrated in a degraded manner. Pius VI although aged and ill was imprisoned and, while in a dying condition, was transported to Valence where he closed his eyes on a Europe that he had been unable to save from blindness in matters of faith.

Napoleon restored Catholicism to France but only for political purposes. He had as little respect for the authority of the Church as Joseph II.

⁴ *New York, Sheed and Ward, 1943.*

He tried to use the new pope, Pius VII, as his tool in dealing with Europe. He imprisoned the Holy Father at Savona and later at Fontainebleau. During the Revolution many religious had been persecuted and monasteries suppressed. Napoleon continued the spoliation of the religious orders and eventually suppressed them altogether. His influence in foreign countries as in France was harmful to the Church.

The long series of political upheavals in Italy during the nineteenth century continued to involve the popes.⁵ The Kulturkampf movement in Bismarck's Germany, an organized effort to undermine Catholic influence, occasioned new persecutions in the North. The century following the Seven Years War was a troubled one for the Church in Europe.

The Infant Jesus of Prague had been eclipsed by the "new enlightenment." But He was patiently waiting for the opportune moment to emerge from the darkness to an unprecedented triumph.

⁵ *Twice the Austrians had to come to the aid of Gregory XVI. Pius IX fled to Gaeta but returned after French soldiers conquered Rome from the forces of Garibaldi and Mazzini. In the sixties the Pope lost most of his domains to Sardinia. After the Franco-Prussian War, Victor Emmanuel II seized Rome and Pius voluntarily imprisoned himself in the Vatican.*

CHAPTER NINE

PRINCE OF NATIONS

In 1878 Leo XIII became Pope and gradually poured oil on troubled European waters. It was the same year that Prague experienced a resurgence of devotion to the Infant King. Was it more than coincidence that with this increased homage an era of peace and prosperity was ushered in?

For many years prior to Leo's reign the work of restoring the religious orders in Europe had been progressing slowly and painfully, with repeated interruptions and setbacks occasioned by new political revolutions and by fresh outbursts of religious persecution. But wherever and whenever priests and sisters could safely emerge from obscurity they had not hesitated to do so.

Although many complicated problems awaited Leo, the times were now more propitious for Catholic expansion than they had been for a long period. This illustrious Prince of the Church, with an unexcelled combination of zeal and diplomacy, proved more than equal to the challenging situation in which he found himself. He decreased much of the hostility toward Rome which had long existed in Protestant countries and disarmed the suspicious who feared that the Church stood exclusively for reactionary policies and the monarchical forms of government. Leo was universally esteemed and the prestige of the Holy See was restored with resulting solid achievements in many fields of Christian endeavor. The Infant Jesus of Prague took advantage of the favorable circumstances on His home continent to win more completely the loyalty of the sections where He was already known and to vastly extend His Kingdom.

While Leo was being initiated into his duties in Rome, the Church of St. Mary of Victory in Prague with its privileged altar was being renovated. A concerted plea arose from the religious congregations in the city for permission to house the miraculous image while the repairs were being made on the Church. The Infant King therefore made a tour of the local religious

foundations between September, 1878, and December of the following year. He was the guest for short periods of time of the Jesuit Fathers, the Redemptorists, the Carmelite Sisters, the Ursulines, the Madames of the Sacred Heart, the Gray Sisters, the Sisters of Charity, of St. Elizabeth, and of St. Charles. Each order attempted to excel all the others in honoring the famous statue and in doing so attracted the eyes of Prague anew to the miraculous Infant. Fervor increased during the next two decades and in 1896 the Cardinal Archbishop of the city erected in St. Mary's an association of the Holy Infant.

Meanwhile in 1884 a German priest, Father Peter Joseph Mayer, C.Ss.R., had produced a history of the devotion, borrowing largely from the writings of Father Emmerich. Soon there were in circulation twenty-five thousand copies of the new work. The stimulus given by this timely publication, the recent lessening of animosity against the Church, and increased missionary activity were important factors in the widespread diffusion of the devotion that was achieved in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

In France all the Carmelites and more than a hundred other religious communities, notably the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul, now propagated devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague. The Company of the Holy Infancy was erected at Lille Nord in 1894 with a membership of thousands, under the direction of the Chancellor of the Catholic University of the city. In Paris all the children solemnly consecrated themselves to Christ's Infancy in January, 1893. An imposing number of parishes and schools scattered throughout the different dioceses of France also adopted allegiance to the Infant King.

The trade in statues, medals, Chaplets and pictures now reached proportions undreamed of in the last century, with Belgium playing a prominent part in the exportation of authentic copies of the miraculous image. This little country also furthered the apostolate by means of the printed word. In 1897 the city of Brussels produced a periodical in French, Flemish, and German, called *The Messenger of the Holy Infant of Prague*. A Carmelite nun of Namur wrote *The Story of the Miraculous Statue of the Holy Infant Jesus of Prague*, an excellent history of the image in French.¹ Many orders besides the Carmelites had long been active in promoting the devotion in Belgium, notably the Christian Brothers, the Barnabites, the Benedictine

¹ A translation of this work comprises the first section of "Da Praga ad Arenzano Ligure," Milan, 1923.

Sisters, the Ursulines, the Poor Clares, the Apostolines, the Sisters of Our Lady and of Providence.

At Luxemburg, the birthplace of Cyril, the Carmelites founded a monastery for women under the patronage of the Infant of Prague. The Franciscan nuns brought replica statues to Norway. Switzerland honored the Infant in her resorts of Martigny-Bourg, Wattwyl, and Davos. In England the Sisters of the Visitation (who were outstanding for their zeal), the Sisters of Mary Reparatrice, and the Religious of Our Lord of the Cenacle were now ardent enthusiasts. The Carmelites of St. Joseph introduced the statues into Oakley, Scotland. In Ireland more than eighty communities held the miraculous image in highest esteem. Seventeen thousand names were inscribed in the Infant's Confraternity, with its seat at Longhrea, before 1900.

All over the continent the miraculous Infant was experiencing perhaps His most overwhelming popularity in schools and orphanages. There appears to be little doubt that this devotion was intended, by the Christ Child, to be a means of instructing modern children in the doctrine of His Kingship. Among the numerous sisters who invited Him into their institutions, in addition to those already mentioned, were the Sisters of St. Chretienne de Metz, the Dominicans, the Borromaeans, and the Sisters of Christian Doctrine. But to mention the communities that sooner or later venerated the Infant Jesus of Prague would be almost tantamount to cataloguing the orders of the Church.

The Infant King enjoyed one of His greatest triumphs when He was welcomed into the Vatican by His representative Leo XIII, who accepted a beautiful statue from a noble couple of Belgian Flanders. Naples dedicated to the Child an institution for deaf-mutes, and Milan enshrined Him in the magnificent Church of Corpus Domini. Many cities of Italy joined the crusade and He selected this country for the site of His first Basilica. (This milestone, however, belongs to the twentieth century.)

At Arenzano, near Genoa, in the exquisite setting of the Riviera, this majestic Sanctuary stands among the palms and the orange tree of its semi-tropical surroundings. Pilgrims are invited to enter and venerate the copy of the miraculous image high above the main altar as once they thronged to St. Mary's to pray before the original. In this Basilica the Carmelite monks have found solace at last, realizing that they have given their Infant King an even more splendid home than they were able to offer Him in Prague,

a Shrine in which He can becomingly work His prodigies anew. Here on September 7, 1924, His statue was solemnly crowned with a rich diadem blessed by Pope Pius XI, while Cardinal Merry del Val officiated.

But long before the end of the nineteenth century Europe had redeemed herself for the period during which she had neglected the Infant of Prague. Not satisfied with the work of reparation that was being effected on the continent, Europeans redoubled their efforts during Leo's reign to send ambassadors to distant lands to announce the coming of the Infant King.

Missionaries vigorously took up the work that had necessarily lapsed in the years of persecution and introduced the miraculous Infant to every known continent, and to the natives of numerous islands. Before a new century had dawned ardent sisters and priests had unpacked their replicas of the miraculous image in strange surroundings, and using whatever resources were at hand, had set up Shrines and instructed their white, black, yellow, brown and red charges in the power and the mercies of the Child Who is their King.

In Africa He was venerated from the Mediterranean to the Cape of Good Hope. He was known in Marian-hyll and Oran in Algeria, at Carthage in Tunisia, at Alexandria and Cairo in Egypt, and along the banks of the Niger. In the Belgian Congo and in the colony of Gabon in French Equatorial Africa negroes adored Him.

From Palestine to Japan Asiatics embraced the devotion. In the land of His birth the Carmelite monks paid homage to Him in their historic monastery on Mount Carmel, the cradle of their Order, while at the foot of the mountain, the Carmelite sisters offered their tribute. In Nazareth the Sisters of St. Joseph dedicated a nursery and a large hospital to Him.

The miraculous Infant was carried in procession at Mangalore in Malabar early in 1895. He was known and loved at Pondichery, and across the Bay of Bengal at Rangoon in Lower Burma. He was enshrined at Colombo in the island of Ceylon. Much earlier than this He had made His entry into ancient China and now He established His empire there more securely. The Trappists contemplated Him in their silent monastery near Peking, as did the Carmelite sisters at Tou-se-wei near Shanghai and on the heights of Yun-nan. In Indochina French missionaries taught the natives of Hanoi in Tongking and Saigon in Cochin China to turn to Him in all of their needs. In Penang off the coast of the Malay Peninsula Chinese orphans knelt

before the Infant King. In Japan he attracted a religious order, the Sisters of the Infant Jesus.

— He found His way to Sydney in Australia. In Molokai in the middle of the Hawaiian archipelago, He was as gracious to the lepers who asked His help as He had been to the princes and prelates of Europe in the early days of His reign.

With high hope He journeyed to the New World and laid claim to the lands that hold the greatest promise for men of the future. The Infant Who came originally from Spain was immediately at home among the Spanish children of South America, and the simple Indians took Him straight to their hearts. He established His sovereignty in Uruguay, Chile, Brazil, and Ecuador. The islands of Cuba and Haiti welcomed Him and the Dominion of Canada received Him into the French Diocese of St. Albert.

The spectacular rise of the Infant Jesus of Prague from the semi-obscurity that had followed His eclipse, and His whirlwind campaign of conquest in times immediately preceding our own seemed to augur great things to come in our day.

At this period He looked longingly toward the United States, foreseeing that in another half century it would become the arsenal of democracy, but also the crusader for world peace and therefore a possible ally of the Prince of Peace. He determined to occupy this country from shore to shore. In the nineties He therefore bombarded our coasts with blessings, and America opened her arms wide to receive the Infant King.

CHAPTER TEN

FROM SEA TO SHINING SEA

In our big and densely populated cities where sin and disease thrived, a little King went about doing good as the nineteenth century drew to a close. A beautiful Shrine was erected for Him in New York in the Church of the Most Holy Redeemer and other churches in the city, as well as convents, began to obtain copies of the miraculous image and to establish new centers of veneration. In Boston a large assembly of children, from one to twelve years old, were solemnly consecrated to the Infant Jesus of Prague on January 23, 1893. At New Orleans the Jesuits founded a school under His patronage. The Bohemian immigrants of Chicago found in the Church of St. Wenceslaus the great devotion imported from their native land.

The first Americans to benefit visibly from the generosity of the Infant King were patients in our eastern hospitals. Remarkable cures and conversions were well publicized and a great demand for replica statues resulted as well as a healthy curiosity about the story of the original.

As early as 1887 the Sisters of the Poor of St. Francis had imported a copy from their Mother House at Aix. Shortly after they placed statues in New York's St. Francis Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital for Incurables. When Bishop Maes brought the French Sisters of Providence from Alsace to Kentucky, they too had the images with them. One of these was destined for their house at Mount Martin and another for St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Covington. Jersey City obtained an Infant of Prague for St. Francis' Hospital and Hoboken another for St. Mary's Hospital. The Sisters of Providence made the devotion known in Rhode Island.

In 1894 a bookseller of New York, Joseph Schaefer, published a translation of Father Mayer's book by Father P. Herman Koneberg, O.S.B., entitled *The Infant Jesus of Prague and Its Veneration*. This, apparently the first account in English in our country, had a large sale. Schaefer also pub-

lished the original work in German; a French account; and a comprehensive ten-cent booklet in English which extended into several editions and of which at least seventy-five thousand copies had been printed by 1898. This booklet, *Devotion to the Miraculous Infant Jesus of Prague*, gave details of many of His prodigies including some worked in the United States.

In the nineties Schaefer was also selling a large variety of religious articles pertaining to the devotion. Some of the statues were made in America but replicas from Prague were available bearing the seal and signature of the Rector of St. Mary of Victory's, certifying that they had been touched to the original.

The story of the apostolate in the United States in our century has never been written although it has been vigorous. Apparently no new publications of any length appeared after 1900 on the subject of the miraculous image, and the earlier writings were never adequately revised and are today out of print.¹ The story remained alive in pamphlets such as *Devotion to the Infant Jesus of Prague*, published by the Benedictine Sisters at Clyde, Missouri, of which 1,312,000 copies had been printed by May, 1950. Articles appeared from time to time in Catholic periodicals. A monthly publication about the Infancy, *Bethlehem*, was published for a while by the Discalced Carmelites at Ponca City, Oklahoma.

During the last twenty-five years and especially during the last decade there has been an upsurge in devotion to the Infant King. Today we have many Shrines from which it is propagated nationally by means of well-advertised novenas held annually, monthly, or semi-monthly, and distribution of related literature and religious articles. In addition there are countless images in our churches, hospitals, schools, and other Catholic institutions. There is a tremendous carryover into American homes, the fruit of the efforts of priests and sisters of many orders, some secular priests, and members of the laity.

The work of the Discalced Carmelite monks and nuns is still prominent. The General of the Order has authority to erect everywhere the Confraternity of the Infant Jesus of Prague which was established in 1913 with the ap-

¹ One exception is Father Koneberg's translation of the seventh revised edition of Father Mayer's book, published in 1946 by the Catholic Book Publishing Company of New York.

proval of Pope Pius X.² Its purpose is officially stated in the following words:

1. To promote devotion to the Infant Jesus; to propose for meditation and imitation the ineffable virtues of the hidden life of Our Saviour so that all hearts may be inflamed with love for the Divine Infant.
2. To place all those enrolled, especially children, under the special protection of the Miraculous Infant, in order that they may be preserved from the corruption of the world.³

The Confraternity has been erected in many localities in the United States, not only in Carmelite foundations, but at Shrines maintained by other religious also. Enrollments may be made by mail.

The Carmelite priests at Dallas, at Washington, D.C., and at San Antonio, besides having branches of the Confraternity and frequent novenas, carry on a varied program to spread the knowledge of the Infant of Prague.

At Dallas under His generous patronage they were able to build a modern, well-equipped seminary, which they operate without tuition fees to benefit poor boys who aspire to the priesthood. "Our Little King always finds someone to take care of the expenses . . ." writes the Father Superior. The grateful priests offer daily prayers at the Shrine for their benefactors. To school children they offer membership in the Junior League. They preach novenas to the Infant in other churches. A very important phase of the work at Dallas is the distribution, gratis, of quantities of literature. In a crusade for peace during World War II about a million and a half leaflets in English, Italian, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese and French were given away. A similar crusade has been undertaken since the outbreak of the Korean conflict.

At both Dallas and Washington the Carmelites hold solemn Christmas novenas with processions in honor of the Infant Jesus preceding the Mid-

² "Carmel prayed that the sweet Jesus, the Infant King, might reign over the twentieth century, and that as He holds the globe in His tiny hand, He might hold all Christendom in the bonds of charity, and this prayer was answered by the erection of a . . . Confraternity . . ." "Carmel, Its History, Spirit and Saints," p. 234.

³ Members are required to register their names in the Confraternity book, to wear a properly blessed medal, and to recite the Gloria daily three times with the ejaculation, "Divine Infant Jesus, bless me." Other practices are recommended and indulged.

night Mass. The monks at Washington are outstanding promoters of the Confraternity. One happy result of this work which is slanted especially though not exclusively for children is seen in the number of young people who visit the Shrine daily. The Fathers conduct their Mission Apostolate under the name and patronage of the Infant of Prague. To Him they give credit for the erection of their monastery and chapel and at the present time, when they need to build again, they are trusting to Him to secure benefactors for the new undertaking.

The Carmelites of San Antonio, who publish *The Apostolate of the Little Flower*, promote devotion to the Child Jesus and to St. Thérèse simultaneously. (So do the Calced Carmelites at Chicago.) About a decade ago they erected a beautiful Shrine to the Infant of Prague because they had received at Thérèse's Shrine so many letters of gratitude from people who had been helped by Him.

The National Shrine in the Czech city of Prague, Oklahoma, was established at the request of Bishop Eugene McGuinness in the new St. Wenceslaus Church which was completed in 1949, the Golden Jubilee of the parish. The pastor, Father George Johnson, Director of the Shrine, has long been a zealous apostle of the Infant of Prague. Almost every man, woman and child in the parish made a personal contribution to the construction of the Church. It was a project that must have appealed strongly to the special Friend of workmen and children in whose honor it was undertaken. The National Shrine has a branch of the Confraternity and monthly novenas and issues a quarterly publication about the progress of the work.

A recent American development that gives promise of permanence and growth is the Infant Jesus of Prague Guild which originated in Youngstown, Ohio. It was founded by Mrs. George E. Gardner in memory of her only son who died in a lake tragedy in 1942. Praying to the Child Jesus for resignation, the mother spread devotion to Him privately during the sad interim between her son's death and the initiation of the Guild. Patiently she laid the foundations, first placing a statue of the Infant of Prague in her parish church, St. Dominic's, then giving small statues to the babies of the parish. She succeeded in launching the first guild in St. Dominic's in June, 1947. Within little more than three years there were seventeen parish guilds, including several in other towns of Ohio, and one in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Mrs. Gardner had also by this time sowed the seed for

future guilds in sections of New York, North Carolina, Michigan and Florida.

Each parish group follows the same Rule but each functions as an independent unit. The Rule stresses family prayer and the fostering of the love of the Infant Jesus in parents and by them in their children. Much emphasis is placed on generosity and a fine appreciation of the deep spiritual values inherent in devotion to the Infancy is evident in guild proceedings. The Guild is purely a lay project dependent upon the approval of the Bishop of each diocese and the pastor of each parish.

An outstanding example of the role played by the miraculous image in our American institutions is found in the "Prisoner-Built Church of St. Dismas" at Dannemora, N.Y. "In our building of this beautiful church," writes the Chaplain, Father A. R. Hyland, "we gained tremendous inspiration from the Infant Jesus of Prague and offered many prayers to Him to aid us in overcoming our difficulties . . ." The prayers were answered overwhelmingly, as the success of this unique undertaking testifies. The project offers a striking illustration of the popularity of the devotion with men. From the beginning it has appealed strongly to the masculine mind.

Our sketch of the organized effort that is being made in our country today to honor the Infant King, although far from being complete, shows that the work has reached considerable proportions and is mounting steadily. It is supplemented by private veneration on a grand scale, if we may estimate its extent from the volume of related religious articles now on the market and the number of pamphlets, prayer leaflets and pictures currently in circulation.

Images are procurable in many sizes and styles. There is such diversity of execution that often a minimum of resemblance to the original miraculous image is observed. The face is sometimes babyish, sometimes mature, the expression grave or cheerful, depending on the mood or ability of the artist-creator. Costumes and crowns may be either simple or ornate. But almost invariably the figures are appealing. Purse-size statues in glass, plastic or leather cases are popular.

The Little Crown or Chaplet of fifteen beads is widely used and may be recited in a variety of approved forms. An adequate method is to say three Paters on the large beads in honor of the Holy Family, twelve Aves on the small beads in honor of the twelve years of the Infancy, and before each Pater and the first Ave, "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst

us." Our Lord revealed to Margaret of Beaune that the use of the Chaplet is very pleasing to Him and is rewarded with special graces, especially purity of heart and innocence. He asked that it be not only recited but also carried on our person.

A variety of prayers to the Infant Jesus of Prague are used in our country today, many having been transmitted from the early writings. Included are supplications for almost every human need and several novena formulas, a favorite being the Novena of Hours for cases of great urgency. Other novenas emphasize the mysteries, the virtues of the Infant, or our relations with Him. He is sometimes addressed as the Prince of Peace. Perhaps the most popular novena is that which ends on the twenty-fifth of the month.

From the total picture an observer may justly conclude that in America the devotion has penetrated every phase of our Catholic life. In all difficulties American men, women and children turn to the Infant King. Several of our periodicals regularly print letters of thanksgiving from those who have benefited by His generosity. (He was recently credited with being more powerful than the atom bomb.) Although the plan of this work excludes detailed accounts of favors, a sketch of the devotion in the United States today would be unsatisfactory without at least one sample of the wonders that He is quietly and constantly working among us.

A few years ago in St. Louis, Margarite Martin was stung by yellow jackets, developed aplastic anemia, and was given eight weeks to live. Through prayer to the Infant of Prague she was apparently cured and recovered a high blood count. When the illness returned after a year, although she required thirty-three transfusions, she continued to pray with confidence and was again rewarded. Doctors and hospital authorities were astounded at her lack of pain and her retention of her faculties and efficiency.

Death came to Margarite Martin (while this was being written) but not until she had been granted necessary time in which to arrange vitally important affairs. It came mercifully, bearing no twinge of pain. At the end she said: "The Little Infant is answering our prayers in another way."

The Infant King had granted her two years of grace which was perhaps miraculous. But He had given her a choicer gift: the confidence of a child which enables a soul to surrender unquestioningly to His Will. It is for souls of her mettle that His present campaign is being waged.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE TWIN ALLEGIANCES AND THE LITTLE WAY

The miraculous image is more than an attractive figure of the Child Jesus, intended to stimulate fervor. The more deeply we study it, the more we become convinced that it is symbolic, full of meaning for us. For three centuries it has been silently appealing for the Twin Allegiances that the Infant Christ ardently desires: universal acceptance of His *littleness* and of His *Kingship*.

We can almost hear Him saying: "If I was willing to become a Child for your sake and to be subject to Mary and Joseph, can you not remain little and submit to the will of God? If in spite of My love of humility I permit myself to be dressed royally to remind you that I rule all creatures, will you not accept My sweet yoke and My light burden?"

Notwithstanding the popularity of the Infant of Prague we have not really taken His lesson to heart. Ambition is the order of our day. Too many Christians love wealth and prestige. The modern religion is a blind and abject worship of power, mass and energy. We boast of our giant corporations, our terrifying weapons, our pretentious world federations. We have no use for littleness and so God favors littleness to bring us back to reality.

Again, although we admire virtue in general, we largely reject the perfections of the Infancy. Qualities which we actually extol in the twentieth century are those which do no violence to our ego: liberality, perseverance, heroic sacrifice on the battlefield. (So did the pagans of the ancient world.) But we ignore or contemn virtues which damage our self-esteem: simplicity, meekness, submission. There is no room in the inn of our hearts for the poor Child Who wants to be born there.

Nor have we fully accepted His Kingship. If we acknowledge with our lips that He is our Master, we deny it more or less completely by our

actions. The miraculous Infant holds the globe in His left hand to warn us of His sovereignty. As we consider the insignificance of the sphere in His little palm and the rebellious ways of its inhabitants, we realize that He sustains it out of pity. If the world is that small in His sight what is one nation? one man? Why are we not afraid to break His law? It appears fantastic that we should defy Him in any way, yet we act as though we were self-sufficient and depend on the sheer force and magnitude of material things to save us from destruction.

We begin to understand then why the cross surmounts the crown on the image, and why the weight of the crown seems to oppress the small head of the Child. It is because this King refrains from using force on His reluctant subjects and makes Himself dependent on free-will offerings which are largely denied Him. Mysterious as it is, He that is mighty must induce us to accept freely His Kingdom which is not of this world and which the world has always despised.

Since man had not yet grasped the lessons the Infant King was trying to teach, since in fact he seemed to be getting farther away from these truths than he had ever done since the beginning of the Christian era, less than a century ago God sent Thérèse of the Child Jesus to restate the message in simple, clear and attractive terms.

Thérèse's Little Way of Spiritual Childhood embraces perfectly the Twin Allegiances: loyalty to the virtues of Christ's Childhood, and total surrender to His rule of love. Before she taught it to others, the saint tried it for herself and consequently left us an inspiring example of the ennobling effects it produces in the soul.

Overcoming a strong tendency to pride and obstinacy, Thérèse early adopted the voluntary love of littleness in the arms of God that made her a specialist in the virtues of the Infancy and that raised her with dizzy speed to the heights of divine union. She did not walk, she did not run; "this exquisite miniature of Christian perfection," as Pius XI called her, was carried up the mountain.¹

¹ *In the homily for the canonization of St. Thérèse Pius XI said: "... We desire that ... (all the faithful) should try to imitate her in becoming as little children, lest otherwise, as Christ declares, they be excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven. If this path of spiritual childhood be followed by all the reformation of human society will be speedily accomplished ..."*

What were her secrets? They were the secrets that are concealed from the wise and revealed to little ones. She who had extraordinary maturity of judgment understood where to feed her knowledge. She flew straight to the heart of Wisdom where she found clear light and certain direction for her soul.

Thérèse knew that it is wise as well as good to recognize our nothingness as creatures, to expect everything from God, never to attribute virtue to ourselves. Because she knew that "everything is a grace," the gift of love, she always looked on the bright side of things, as children do, and became the saint of joy even when suffering most. She knew that a child wins all things from her Father by a blind trust and so her confidence burns like an inextinguishable taper in our present gloom. But her prize possession was her boundless enthusiasm for the divine Will: she treasured every iota of it (as a child greedily snatches crumbs of sweet chocolate) because Infinite Wisdom chooses for us only the best. She is a magnificent proof of what the love of God will accomplish in a creature when no obstacles are placed in the way.

Although it is attractive, Thérèse's Little Way of trust and self-surrender is a bitter pill for our generation to swallow because it begins with deflation of the ego. But it is the modern short-cut to sanctity and cannot be overlooked because it has the full approval of the Church. It is the way most suited to our age not because we are indolent and it is easy, as some mistakenly think, but because we are arrogant and it is lowly. It is also peculiarly appropriate to our challenging times when to be mediocre is not enough, when thousands of little saints are needed, because anyone of good will can practice it and be quickly lifted out of the ruinous mire of mediocrity simply by doing ordinary things with extraordinary perfection, and with loving dependence upon the Infinite.

Many people will reject the Little Way because they cannot bring themselves to take the first step—the step down. Others will turn to it hopefully and abandon it after a week or month, whenever the resolution to remain little is put to the acid test. Some may adopt it and persevere without giving much thought at first to the Infancy of Christ. But anyone who consistently adheres to it will ultimately find himself kneeling before a Crib, and offering the Child a Crown.

The Infant King has many important things to say to souls, secrets which often remain untold because they are reserved for those who give

themselves completely to Him. He has girdled the globe and multitudes have run after the odour of His ointments. His following is increasing with surprising swiftness. But He has only begun His conquests. Today in our boisterous cities as well as in our quiet villages, in our terrorizing bomb plants as in our peaceful cloisters, He is feverishly searching for a legion of little souls who will give Him entrance and, like Thérèse, permit Him to accomplish marvelous things within them. It is through these that He wills to heal our sick world.

CHAPTER TWELVE

I WILL GIVE YOU PEACE

The prime concern of right-thinking people today is to establish universal, lasting peace. Almost everyone has a solution to offer for our present chaotic conditions, but most of these panaceas ignore the root of the trouble. Peace is in exile because we are in a state of spiritual anarchy.

Our Lady of Fatima stated clearly the conditions for securing peace and these did not include universal military training or the building of the hydrogen bomb. Nor did she invent a new set of commandments which must be obeyed, but simply reminded us of certain ancient requirements of her Son's law, such as prayer and penance, which we were rather persistently overlooking.

By peace Mary meant more than a mere cessation of hostilities among nations. She indicated the way that leads to the peace of Christ in the reign of Christ: peace in our hearts, our homes, our countries; peace based on His rule within us and among us.

In the years after Fatima Pope Pius XI, alarmed by society's rejection of Christ's sovereignty, issued two great encyclicals on the Kingship of Christ (*Ubi Arcano* and *Quas Primas*) and established the feast which honors it.¹ During the same period the Legion of Mary was in its initial stages. Working for a general renewal of Christian life, the Legion has since made a breath-taking advance around the globe, "terrible as an army set in battle array" against the enemies of Christ.² Was Mary's army commissioned to prepare the way for the triumphal reentry of the King into Jerusalem?

It is at least certain that the reign of Christ will come about only through Mary's mediation. And that is entirely reasonable because a mother is natur-

¹ "The Peace of Christ in the Reign of Christ," Dec. 23, 1922, and "The Kingship of Christ," Dec 11, 1925.

² See "Legion of Mary" by Cecily Halleck, Crowell, 1950.

ally ambitious for the honor of her child. It is not enough that we address all of our prayers for peace directly to Him; we must also ask her to intercede for us, especially through the recitation of her Rosary. He will never permit us to forget that she is Queen.

If we examine the message of Fatima closely we will see that much of it had already been delivered to us by the Infant King. At Fatima Mary held the Brown Scapular in her hand to recall to our thoughts her family of Carmel. She chose poor, docile children to receive her message and convey it to us, in order to remind us of her Son's love of poverty and littleness. She repeated that we must meditate on the mysteries, as Margaret of Beaune once warned, and she appeared with St. Joseph to make us more conscious of the Family of the Child Jesus. She asked for a multitude of little sacrifices to reemphasize our need of the Little Way. (The main requirement that Mary added to this list was the dedication of ourselves, Russia, and the whole world to her Immaculate Heart.)

But this time the message came in the form of a gentle ultimatum. As a result we have our choice: we may ignore it and, adhering to our big and rebellious notions, destroy ourselves; or we may work with Mary to bring about the submission of the world to her Child and enjoy His reign of peace.

"Give Me My hands," the Infant King said to Cyril, "and I will give you peace." Mary asks us to admit that peace is His to give. Each time we attempt to build a peace without Him, our edifice falls about us to our greater confusion. The best we can do is cooperate with Him.

The Prince of Peace will return from exile when we are prepared to give Him His hands. When we have elevated Him to His place of honor in the oratory of His world, He will restore all things anew.

Almighty everlasting God, Who in Thy beloved Son, King of the whole world, has willed to restore all things anew; grant in Thy mercy that all the families of nations, rent asunder by the wound of sin, may be subjected to His most gentle rule.

Collect from the Mass for the Feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ the King.

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