



WHO IS HE?...

By BRO Francesco D. Colacelli

“...Et incarnatus est,” “...and He became flesh!”

We have called Him in thousands of different ways: God, Allah, the Almighty, the Totally Other, the Absolute, Om... Only the Christian faith has given Him a name: Christ Jesus, born of a woman, the Virgin Mary of Nazareth!

This is the greatest and most sublime announcement ever made to man. Someone from “above” descended and became one of us.

The voice of a God who is a friend of man becomes again definitively audible and the splendid metaphoric image of God who, at the dawn of history, “walks” with man in the garden of Eden, in the Orient (Gen 3,8), becomes in Jesus a reality, the “fact”, the central and most important event of all history. One of the questions that both fascinated and preoccupied the great theologians of the middle ages, St. Bonaventura included, was “*cur Deus homo?*”, why did God become man? Relying on the great and rock-like profession of faith of the Fathers of the Church and, before them and still more, upon the Word of God, they began their arguments from the indisputable existence of God, the creator of the universe and judge of history.

Many men of modern times or, as we say today, post-modern times, have tried by every means to eliminate the transcendent and, hence God, from the horizon of their understanding of themselves and the world. Man believes himself capable of finding the meaning of him-

self, history and the universe without the need of the transcendent, and nor moreover in the faith of a “Presence,” that at different times has been considered something awkward, absurd, inimical or in the very least as something useless. And yet, while we live in an age in which man thinks himself able to realise his life without God, as if he had nothing more to say to Him, during these days dedicated to the celebration of the birth of Jesus, from the most sumptuous and solemn cathedrals to the most humble chapels throughout the world, rise the loving and trusting voices of other men and women who profess and welcome the gift of God who is close to us, the friend of man, who became forever our brother in flesh and blood, and our hidden and inseparable companion along the way.

God became man purely out of His “gratuitous,” love for us, St. Bonaventura tells us in answer to the question above. God has always loved us and in His Son Jesus He demonstrated to us how only God can exceed every limit and, being Almighty, take on weakness, frailty and even sin and a curse, as St. Paul ardently expresses himself, in order to return to us light and grace: “For our sake He made Him to be sin, who knew no sin...” (2 Cor 5,21; Gal 3, 13).

In this Infant of Bethlehem, in the countenance of the Master and the Crucified and Risen One we are called to recognise that very God who, as Benedict XVI underlined in

his homily at the dedication of the cathedral of the Sacred Family in Barcelona, is the God of peace and not of violence, of freedom and not of constraint, of mercy and not of discord.

He is then, a loving Father and consoling Spirit, the One God who is revealed to us in His Son Jesus, in the frailty of human nature, in whom we believe and hope and whose countenance of love, as Church, we must manifest to the world as the sole answer to man’s thirst for fullness.

Padre Pio would weep copious, loving tears merely pondering that question: “WHO IS HE?” Who is in my hands when I consecrate the bread and wine?, Who is that Infant that I manifest for the veneration of the people of God?, Who is that Jesus in whose Name I forgive sins, who frees man from the chains of evil and opens their hearts to hope?... Who is He who is transforming and conforming me to His wounded body?

The tears and emotion in Padre Pio were only the external sign of his profound interior acceptance of the ineffable gift of the Son of God become man, for whom he gave himself daily to the point of exhaustion on behalf of his brothers and sisters.

For Christmas to be a happy Christmas should mean to us, the Christians of today and devotees of Padre Pio, a time spent in prayer with gratitude and confidence before this Infant. We know who He is!