

And all things: the cold, the darkness, the roughness of the straw, the unpleasant smells, concentrated their arrows of suffering on the tender Body of the Baby Jesus that had just been born in the inhospitable stable. Sensitive in the extreme, the Child-God quivered with pain, and surely broke into infant wails. He willed to be as an ordinary child! His Divinity did not come to His assistance. And all who wished to be with Jesus — to come close to Him — were drawn into the miserable surroundings of the stable: — first Mary and Joseph and then the shepherds. They all had, in order to get near Him to suffer the same cold, the same misery, the same abandonment. They all had to share in everything which provided a marked contrast to the scenes of merriment that were taking place elsewhere in the world outside. Man was enjoying his pleasures while the Christ-Child was suffering in the cold stable.

And so it is with us. The closer we get to Jesus, the more must we share in His sufferings. There can be no other way!

Who is there who has not experienced the hollowness and emptiness of even the most intoxicating joys of earth? How many repeat after Solomon,



after having gratified every sense with pleasure: “Vanity of vanities and all is vanity.” On the other hand, what intense happiness is to be found at the side of the Manger! The very absence of everything calculated to please the senses leaves the soul free to enjoy itself more largely. In Bethlehem little concession is made to the body! Bethlehem is the setting for the soul! It is not of that which benefits the body, but that which benefits the soul that all men stand in need! All that this earth can give us is nothing. All that the life with God can give us is everything.