Dimanche IV apres Pâques 2014

« Tout don excellent, toute grâce parfaite, descend d’en haut » (James 1:17)

In the Epistle today, St. James the Apostle tells us that « Tout don excellent, toute grâce parfaite, descend d’en haut, du Père des lumières.” The lights of heaven—the sun, moon, and stars—are wonderous and beautiful, but they are not, of course, divine. If we observe them closely, we notice that they change from time to time—sometimes appearing larger, sometimes smaller, and sometimes even eclipsed altogether. All corporeal things are susceptible to changes of this kind—it is, in fact, what distinguishes bodies from spirits. Bodies can change, but in God, who is a pure Spirit, “n’existe aucune vicissitude, ni ombre de changement” (James). As St. Paul says, Il “est le même hier et aujourd’hui ; il le sera éternellement” (Heb. 13, 8).

And yet, although eternally the same, He is able to act in time: “Au commencement Dieu créa le ciel et la terre” (Gen. 1). In what is known in speculative theology as the “Franciscan Thesis,” God’s First Decree of Creation was that of the Incarnation of Jesus-Christ—that is, He ordained from all eternity that He would one day create the most perfect creature—the human nature of Christ. Following the logic of this Thesis, God’s Second Decree was that of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary—the second most perfect creature, second in dignity only to Christ Himself. That is, God ordained from all eternity that His Most Perfect Son should assume flesh in the most perfect way, with the cooperation of the Most Blessed Mother. This is the deepest meaning of the phrase “toute grâce parfaite descend d’en haut.” God alone is the Perfect Giver, for He alone can give the Perfect Gift: Himself.

This Wonderous Giver wishes to give Himself to each one of us. Therefore, while each one of us is a natural son of Adam or daughter of Eve according to the flesh, through baptism, we are also an adopted son or daughter of the Second Adam and Second Eve. This is what St. James means when he writes “De sa propre volonté, il nous a engendrés par la Parole de la Vérité, afin que nous soyons comme les prémices de ses créatures” (1:18). We are, as it were, “les prémices de ses créatures,” because our births in Christ were fore-ordained, fore-seen, before the creation of the world. During Paschaltide, let us thank God in a special way for making us “participants de la gloire divine,” participants in the Glorified and Resurrected Body of Christ. Ainsi soit-il!