

Rembrandt, *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. 1647.

One fateful night in 1944, 13,000 paratroopers jumped out of their transports over Nazi-occupied France as part of the massive D-Day invasion, beginning the liberation of northern Europe. The night sky lit like day with torrents of machinegun bullets and exploding shells, planes crowding right and left, above and below, some blowing up or being hit and falling dizzily from the sky before the soldiers could jump. Yet the survivors jumped, landed, fought, and prevailed.

On another fateful night, 2,000 years ago, the most fateful night of all time, another invasion took place. It also involved a heroic descent into fiercely defended enemy-occupied territory but, in this case, the invader was not a soldier; He was a newborn baby. He too landed, fought and prevailed, but in different and infinitely higher ways. In so doing, He gave us the truest example of perfect humility and charity.

To quote St Ambrose: God “*made Himself a child... to enable [us] to become ... perfect [men]; He was wrapped in swaddling clothes to free [us] from the bonds of death.... He came down on earth to enable [us] to rise*

*up to heaven; He had no place in the inn so that [we] might have many mansions in heaven. He, being rich, became poor for our sake—St. Paul says (2 Cor 8:9)—so as to enrich us with His poverty.... The tears of this crying child purify [us], they wash away [our] sins.”*

So, on the wonderful feast of Christmas, we celebrate that Divine Invasion—the key event in all of human history—when the hitherto unimaginable became reality. When God is born as a Man, in utter humility and poverty, to save all mankind including you and me.

Now, unlike the D-Day invasion, His Incarnation was foretold long before it happened. Indeed all the prophets foretold the Messiah’s coming, describing—some more explicitly, and others less—the Messiah’s birthplace, His virtues, miracles, the principal facts of His life, the details of His passion and death, and of His triumph.

In all, Jesus fulfilled at least 200 Old Testament prophesies, and possibly many more. Divinely authored Scripture is so profound that, this side of Heaven, we will likely never know exactly how many. Might

all this have been a mere coincidence? The answer is simply no. It is impossible that the fulfillment of hundreds of prophecies made by many different prophets over hundreds of years could happen by chance.

God chose it to be so, to show that Holy Scripture and our salvation are His work, and, so infinitely above mere human literature or toil. Jesus Himself said, and He is the God Who never lies, everything written about Him *“in the Law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.”* (Lk 24:44) And indeed they were.

Since the glorious Incarnation, Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ definitively won the War of Wars, the evil one and his minions have been fighting a long, inevitable defeat. We have not yet, however, reached the war’s end, the Last Day. Therefore, we must expect some reverses, some battles lost. The history of Israel, our Church and the world is full of such setbacks. So let us be prepared for some reverses before the glorious Second Coming.

There is a true story about a paratrooper company’s participation in the famous Battle of the Bulge, which began just before Christmas. It was a major reversal for the Allies, for the tide of the war had by then turned decisively in their favor. The Nazis were being forced back into Germany, but staged a desperate surprise attack and burst through the Allied battle lines.

As the paratroopers rushed forward to block the German advance, they panicked. Retreating soldiers warned them that they would be surrounded. An officer wryly responded by saying, “We’re paratroopers. We’re supposed to be surrounded.” And indeed they were. Having few supplies and little ammunition, they seemed to face inevitable defeat. Yet courageously they held out—unbroken and triumphant. Had they not stood firm, the attack would have been successful, Hitler would have forced an end to the war, and his

evil regime would have survived.

Today we may be experiencing something akin to the Battle of the Bulge as the world now appears to be entering into a time of severe grace. Unless, of course, the Lord has some wonderful surprises in store for

us (and we should never dismiss such a possibility—remember Our Lady of Victory and the battle of Lepanto or the heroic witness of Pope St. John Paul II and the fall of the monstrous Soviet Union without so much as a shot being fired). So be prudent. Be prepared. Be ready for testing. But *don’t* be afraid. Like paratroopers, we Catholics—in fighting the spiritual combat—are supposed to be surrounded.

Fight the good fight. Trust, at all times, in the Good God Who never lies. “Rejoice always, pray constantly, and give thanks in all circumstances.” (1 Thes 5:16-18) For if God is for us, ultimately it really does not matter who is against us.

Pondering in our hearts, like Mary, the overwhelming joy of the birth of Our Lord will put all the difficulties and problems of life in their proper perspective. Always recall the Angel’s announcement to the shepherds, and through them, to all people including us: “Be not afraid. For behold, I bring you good news of a great joy, which will come to all the people. For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, Who is Christ the Lord.” (Lk 2:10-11)

Thus, our Almighty God landed on this enemy-occupied world to rescue us from sin and eternal death and, in so doing, has revealed the unfathomable depths of His love and mercy for us. For, while we were sinners, and thus His enemies, He nevertheless came to die for us (cf. Rom 5:8), that we be reconciled to Him and saved. So let us today and forevermore gratefully join the multitude of the heavenly host triumphantly praising God and singing: “Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased!” ❖

