## The Christmas Tree

By the nuns of Regina Laudis, O.S.B., Bethlehem, Connecticut, 1952

The Christmas Tree, which bring joy and brightness into our homes at Christmas time, reminds us immediately of Christ Himself, the Tree of Life, (Genesis 2:9, Apocalypse 22:2), Who is the true center of our Christmas joy because He brings life and light to our hearts as well as our homes. The birth of Christ is the spiritual springtime of the Church, and according to an old legend, on the first Christmas all the trees and flowers burst into bloom.

To carry the symbolism of Christ further, we decorate our tree with other symbols of Christ which have been used by Our Lord in the inspired writing of the Bible to accustom humanity to the great Mystery of the Incarnation. These symbols are recalled to mind each year by the Liturgy of the Church, particularly in the beautiful Vesper antiphons of the last week before Christmas.

- **1. WISDOM:** The Church sees in the Old Testament's personification of Wisdom a definite figure of the second person of the Holy Trinity, applying to Christ the words, "I came out of the mouth of the Most High, the firstborn before all creature," (Ecclesiasticus 24:5) and "My delights are to be with the children of men" (Proverbs 8:4). "The Creator of all things commanded and said to Me:--Let Thy dwelling be in Jacob, and Thy inheritance in Israel, and take root in my elect," (Ecclesiasticus 24:12-13).
- **2. ALPHA AND OMEGA:** The first and last letters of the Greek alphabet are a symbol of Christ (Isaiah 54:6, Apocalypse 22:13). The Jews wanted to fulfill the law from the first letter to the last, but Christ is the Law of the New Covenant reaching from one end of creation to the other. He is the first one because there is no God before Him and the last one because He is the Son of Man born in the fullness of time.
- **3. THE BURNING BUSH:** (Exodus 3:2). The Lord appeared to Moses under the figure of a bush, burning but not consumed. The living bush is the symbol of the humanity of Christ and the flame is His Divine which transforms humanity without destroying it.
- **4. ROOT OF JESSE:** (Isaiah 11:10), is the figure of the human genealogy of Our Lord. From the root which was Jesse, the successive generations grew forming the stock and the leaves and finally blossoming forth in the flower which was Christ, the Son of Mary.
- **5. KEY OF DAVID:** (Isaiah 22:22), is Christ, the Son of David, Who comes to open the door of the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, to the sons of Adam locked out of paradise through sin.
- **6. SUN OF JUSTICE:** (Malachi 4:1-2). The sun, rising at the dawn of the East, symbolizes Christ, the Light of the world, the Sun of Justice, Whose Incarnation enlightens the world made dark by sin.
- **7. KING OF NATIONS:** (Haggai 2:8), is Christ Who was born to establish His Universal Church where all nations will be united under the rule of the King of Peace.
- **8. CORNERSTONE:** (Psalm 117:22-23). Christ is the cornerstone, for in His Incarnation the two walls of God and humanity, of the Jews and the Gentiles, of the Old and the New Testament are fitted together.

- **9. EMMANUEL:** Isaiah 7:14, said: "Behold a virgin shall conceive and shall bear a Son and His name shall be called Emmanuel." Emmanuel means "God with us." God, in His divine nature, is with us, by His human nature.
- **10. THE MORNING STAR:** (Psalm 109). Christ is the Morning Star because He was begotten before the day of creation, in His divine nature. When He appeared on earth the Star of the East rose to announce His birth. He says in the Apocalypse, "I, Jesus, am the bright Morning Star," (Apocalypse 22:16).
- **11. THE LAMB OF GOD:** St. John the Baptist, the last herald of the Lord, said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world, (John 1:29)." God's beloved Son descended from Heaven and was made the Lamb of God, innocent in His divine splendor, gentle in His human lowliness.
- **12. XP:** Because this three represents Our Lord, we put at the top of the XP (Chi-Rho), one of the most ancient Christian symbols of Christ. These two Greek letters are the first letters of the name "Christ".

*Nihil Obstat:* Rev. Thomas F. Stack, Censor Deputatus, June 7, 1952 *Imprimatur*: Henry J. O'Brien, Bishop of Hartford, June 9, 1952