

Prayer of the Month • October 2015

Most gracious Lord, by whose direction this time is appointed for renewing the memory of thy infinite mercy to man in the incarnation of thy only Son; grant that we may live, this holy time, in the spirit of thanksgiving, and every day raise up our hearts to thee in the grateful acknowledgement of what thou hast done for us.

Besides this, we ask thy grace, O God, that we may make a due use of this holy time, for preparing our souls to receive Christ our Lord coming into the world at the approaching solemnity of Christmas.

Christ came into the world to do good to all. Grant, O God, we may thus prepare to meet him. Grant we may be watchful at this time above all others, in avoiding everything that can be injurious to our neighbour, whether in afflicting him, or giving him scandal, or drawing him into sin, or casting any blemish on his reputation; but in all things, O God, may we follow the spirit of charity, being forward in bringing comfort and relief to all, as far as their circumstances shall require, and ours permit.

Grant, O Lord, that we may prepare to meet our redeemer.

John Gother, died 1704

This is a prayer for the Advent season, a prayer that prepares for Christmas, but that also prepares for the coming of Christ to the individual, whenever that might be. The prayer is firstly for a spirit of thanksgiving, which is always a good start. Secondly, the prayer asks for help in preparing for the coming of the Saviour. He reminds himself of the fact that Christ came into the world to do good, and prays to avoid doing any harm to his neighbour, and to follow the spirit of charity or love. Gother seems to be alive to the way people injure each other or each other's reputations needlessly. Perhaps this has come from his own life experience. He was brought up as a strict Presbyterian, but was then converted to Catholicism. He studied at the English College at Lisbon, and returned to England to work in a mission in London in 1681. A few years later he produced a work, *A Papist Misrepresented and Represented*, which lists commonly held errors about Catholic doctrines and practices, together with refutations of them. He was trying to convince Protestants, in a polite and engaging manner, that Catholic doctrines were at least not the hotch-potch of unscriptural superstitions that people believed them to be. He later wrote many devotional works. In 1704 he was sent to be President of the College in Lisbon. Already ill when he left, he died at sea in October 1704. Unusually, his body was preserved and brought to port. It was said this was because of the impression Gother had made by his saintliness on the ship's captain. On arrival at Lisbon it was conveyed to the English College, where it was interred in the chapel. The College remained in function until the last quarter of the 20th century. *The Spiritual Works of Rev. John Gother* were published in 1718 (in 16 volumes).

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