

COME... COME JESUS, I AWAIT YOU!

In 1902, a young seminarian studying for the priesthood in Rome penned these poignant lines...

Night has fallen; the clear, bright stars are sparkling in the cold air; noisy, strident voices rise to my ear from the city... the voices of the revelers of this world **who celebrate with extravagance and merrymaking the poverty of their Savior**. Around me in their rooms my companions are asleep... but I am still wakeful, thinking of the mystery of Bethlehem

COME... COME JESUS, I AWAIT YOU!

Mary and Joseph, knowing the hour is near, are turned away by the townsfolk and go out into the fields to look for shelter. I am a poor shepherd; I have only a wretched stable, a small manger, some wisps of straw. I offer all these to You, be pleased to come into my poor hovel.

COME... COME JESUS, I AWAIT YOU!

I offer You my heart; my soul is poor and bare of virtues. The straws of so many imperfections will prick You and make You weep, but oh, my Lord, what can You expect? This little is all I have. I am touched by Your poverty, I am moved to tears, but I have nothing better to offer You. Jesus, honor my soul with Your presence, adorn it with Your graces. Burn this straw and change it into a soft couch for Your Most Holy Body.

COME... COME JESUS, I AWAIT YOU!

Jesus, I am here, waiting for Your coming. Wicked men have driven You out, and the wind is like ice. I am a poor man, but I will warm You as well as I can. At least be pleased that I wish to welcome You warmly, to love You, and to sacrifice myself for You.

COME... COME JESUS, I AWAIT YOU!

But in Your own way, You are rich, and You see my needs. You are a flame of charity, and You will purge my heart of all that is not Your own Most Holy Heart. You are uncreated Holiness, and You will fill me with those graces which give new life to my soul. O Jesus, come! I have so much to tell you, so many sorrows to confide, so many desires, so many promises, so many hopes.

COME... COME JESUS, I AWAIT YOU!

I want to adore you, to kiss You on the brow, O tiny Jesus... to give myself to You once more, forever. **Come my Jesus, delay no longer, come, be my guest!**

Alas... it is already late! I am overcome with sleep and my pen slips from my fingers. Let me sleep a little, O Jesus, while Your Mother and St. Joseph are preparing the room. I will lie down to rest here in the fresh night air. As soon as You come, the splendor of Your light will dazzle my eyes. Your angels will awaken me with sweet hymns of glory and peace, and I shall run forward with joy to welcome you and to offer You my own poor gifts, my home, all the little I have. I will worship You and show You all my love with the other shepherds who have joined me, and with all the angels of Heaven, singing hymns to the glory of Your loving Heart.

The young seminarian's name was Angelo Roncalli, now known and loved by all the world as Pope St. John XXIII.