

# HOW THE EXPERIENCE OF CHILDHOOD OF JESUS EQUALLY APPLIES TO ALL MEN

❧ HANS URS VON BALTHASAR (1905–88) ❧

JESUS HAS no need to demonstrate what there is in his experience of childhood that equally applies to all men; he leaves that to the meditation of his believers, who have given expression to such a contemplation in hundreds of thousands of pictures representing Mother and Child. The variety of such portrayals is great: Child being suckled at the Mother's breast, or sleeping on her, or playing with his Mother, or taking some gift from her (a fruit or a flower), or embracing her or busying himself from her protective lap as from a throne with something coming toward him: the treasure of the Three Kings or his little cousin John. The scene can be portrayed in a more strictly religious or in a more secularized form—even the stark icons do not disdain the representation of human tenderness—but everywhere what is being indicated is the fact of the authentic status as a child of him who 'became like us in all things except sin' (Hebrews 4:15).

—Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Unless You Become Like This Child*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), 29.

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