Complete version of the ‘physical’ books can be downloaded from:

<http://www.stellamarismedia.com/book_city_of_god.html>

<http://www.mysticalcityofgod.org/>

Audio files (mp3) of the complete work:

<http://gloria.tv/user/AjToSd2G6Ee>

CITY OF GOD

THE CONCEPTION

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE

OF THE

VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

MANIFESTED TO MARY OF AGREDA

FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MEN

Translated from the Original Spanish

BY

FISCAR MARISON

(Rev. Geo. J. Blatter)

FIRST COMPLETE EDITION

ADDRESS

THE THEOPOLITAN

SO. CHICAGO, ILL.

W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

HAMMOND, INDIANA

IMPRIMATUR

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your

English translation of the work entitled

"Ciudad de Dios." Wishing you every bless

ing, I remain

Devotedly in Domino,

H. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

COPYRIGHT, 1014

BY

REV. GEO. J. BLATTEB

All Rights Reserved-

MYSTICAL

CITY OF GOD

THE MIRACLE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE

AND THE ABYSS OF HIS GRACE

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN

MOTHER OF GOD

OUR QUEEN AND OUR LADY, MOST HOLY MARY

EXPIATRIX OF THE FAULT OF EVE

AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Manifested in these later ages by that Lady to her handmaid

SISTER MARY OF JESUS

Superioress of the convent of the Immaculate Conception of the town

of Agreda, of the province of Burgos in Spain, under

obedience to the regular observance

of the seraphic father

SAINT FRANCIS

For new enlightenment of the world, for rejoicing

of the Catholic Church, and encouragement of men.

A

Translation from the Original Authorized Spanish Edition

BY

FISCAR MARISON

Begun on the Feast of the Assumption

1902

o 7

CONTENTS

PAGE

SPECIAL NOTICE AND APPROBATIONS IX. -XXIV.

INTRODUCTION 3

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I. Concerning Two Special Visions Vouchsafed to

My Soul by the Lord and Concerning Other Enlighten

ments and Mysteries, which Compelled Me to Withdraw

from Earthly Things and Raised My Spirit to Dwell above

the Earth .". 23

CHAPTER II. How the Lord, in the State in which He Had

Placed Me, Manifested to Me the Mysteries of the Life

of the Queen of Heaven 35

CHAPTER III. Of the Knowledge of the Divinity, which was

Conferred Upon Me, and of the Decree of the Creation

of the World 46

CHAPTER IV. How the Divine Decrees are Classified according

to Instants, and what God in. Each Determined to Commu

nicate ad Extra 52

V CHAPTER V. Instructions concerning Holy Scriptures, and in

Particular concerning Chapter Eight of the Proverbs, in

Confirmation of the Preceding Pages 62

CHAPTER VI. Concerning a Doubt, which I Proposed Regard

ing the Doctrine Contained in these Chapters, and the

Answer to It 75

CHAPTER VII. How the Most High gave a Beginning to His

Works and Created all Material Things for the Use of

Man, while Angels and Men were Created to be His people

Under the Leadership of the Incarnate Word 83

CHAPTER VIII. Which Follows up the Previous Discourse by

the Explanation of the Twelfth Chapter of the Apocalypse., 93

CHAPTER IX. The Rest of the Twelfth Chapter of the Apoca

lypse is Explained 104

CHAPTER X. The Explanation of the Twelfth Chapter of the

Apocalypse is Concluded 116

V

vi CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER XT. In the Creation of All Things the Lord had

before His Mind Christ Our Lord and His Most Holy

Mother. He Chose His People and Heaped His Benefits

on Them 125

CHAPTER XII. How, after the Human Race had been Prop

agated, the Clamors of the Just for the Coming of the

Redeemer Increased, and Likewise Sin ; in this Night of the

Ancient Law, God Sent Two Morningstars as Harbingers

of the Law of Grace 141

CHAPTER XIII. How the Conception of the Most Holy Mary

was Announced by the Archangel Gabriel, and How God

Prepared Holy Anne for It by a Special Favor 151

CHAPTER XIV. How the Almighty Made Known to the Holy

Angels the Opportune Decree for the Conception of the

Most Holy Mary; and which of Them He Selected for

Her Custody 161

CHAPTER XV. Of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother

of God through Divine Power 173

CHAPTER XVI. Of the Habits of Virtue, with which God Gifted

the Soul of the Most Holy Mary, and of Her First

Exercises of These Virtues in the Womb of her Mother

Anne ; She Herself Gives me Instructions for Imitating

Her 184

CHAPTER XVII. Still Treating of the Mystery of the Concep

tion of Holy Mary and Explaining the Twenty-first Chapter

of the Apocalypse 198

CHAPTER XVIII. Sequel of the Mystery of the Conception of

the Most Holy Mary as Described in the Second Part of

the Twenty-first Chapter of the Apocalypse 217

CHAPTER XIX. Contains \_ the last Portion of Apocalypse XXI

in as far as it Describes the Conception of the Most Holy

Mary 232

CHAPTER XX. Treating of what Happened during the Nine

Months of the Pregnancy of St. Anne ; the Doings of the

Most Holy Mary in the Womb of her Mother, and those of

Saint Anne during that Time 252

CHAPTER XXI. Of the Felicitous Birth of the Most Holy Mary

Our Mistress : of the Favors, which She then Received from

the Hand of the Most High, and How a Name was Given

Her in Heaven and on Earth ..263

CONTENTS vii

PAGE

CHAPTER XXII. How Saint Anne Complied with the Law of

Moses in regard to Childbirth ; and How Most Holy Mary

Acted in Her Infancy 278

CHAPTER XXIII. Of the Emblems of the Holy Guardian Angels

in their Intercourse with the Blessed Mary, and of Their

Perfections 291

CHAPTER XXIV. Of the Holy Exercises and Occupations of the

Queen in the First Year and a Half of Her Infancy 301

CHAPTER XXV. How the Most Holy Child Mary Began to

Speak at the Age of One Year and a Half; and How She

was Occupied until the Time of Her Departure to the

Temple 309

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I. Of the Presentation of the Most Holy Mary in the

Temple at the Age of Three Years.

325

CHAPTER II. Concerning a Singular Favor, which the Almighty

Conferred on Most Holy Mary as soon as She was Estab

lished in the Temple 337

V CHAPTER III. Instruction which the Queen of Heaven Gave Me

concerning the Vows of My Profession 348

CHAPTER IV. Of the Perfection in which Most Holy Mary

Passed Her Days in the Temple, and of the Exercises which

She was Ordered to Undertake 360

CHAPTER V. Of the Perfections of the Most Holy Mary in the

Practice of Virtues in General, and of Her Advance in

Them 371

CHAPTER VI. Of the Virtue of Faith, and How Most Holy

Mary Practiced It 377

CHAPTER VII. Of the Virtue of Hope, and How the Virgin

Our Lady Practiced It 389

CHAPTER VIII. Of the Virtue of Charity in the Most Holy

Mary, Our Lady 397

CHAPTER IX. Of the Virtue of Prudence as Practiced by the

Most Holy Queen of Heaven 411

CHAPTER X. Of the Virtue of Justice, as Practiced by Most

Holy Mary 426

viii CONTENTS

PAGE

CHAPTER XI. The Virtue of Fortitude, as Practiced by the Most

Holy Mary 440

CHAPTER XII. The Virtue of Temperance as Practiced by the

Most Holy Mary 449

CHAPTER XIII. Of the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost and How

the Most Holy Mary Made use of Them 462

CHAPTER XIV. ^ Explanation of the Different Kinds of Divine

Visions Enjoyed by the Queen of Heaven and the Effects

which They Wrought in Her 476

CHAPTER XV. Description of Another Kind of Visions and

Communications, which the Most Holy Mary Enjoyed with

the Holy Angels of Her Guard 500

CHAPTER XVI. Continuation of the History of the Most Holy

Child Mary in the Temple; the Lord Prepares Her for

Troubles, and Joachim, Her Father, Dies 510

CHAPTER XVII. The Princess of Heaven Begins to Suffer

Affliction; God Absents Himself From Most Holy Mary:

Her Sweet and Amorous Sighs 523

CHAPTER XVIII. Other Afflictions of Our Queen, Some of which

were Permitted by the Lord Through the Agency of

Creatures and of the Ancient Serpent 531

CHAPTER XIX. The Most High Enlightens the Priest concern

ing the Spotless Innocence of Most Holy Mary; She Her

self is Informed of the Approaching Death of Her Mother,

Saint Anne, and is Present at this Event 547

CHAPTER XX. The Most High Manifests Himself to His

Beloved Alary, Our Princess, by Conferring on Her an

Extraordinary Favor 553

CHAPTER XXI. The Most High Commands the Most Holy Mary

to Enter the State of Matrimony and Her Response to this

Command ^ 557

CHAPTER XXII. The Espousal of Most Holy Mary with the

Most Chaste Saint Joseph 575

CHAPTER XXIII. An Explanation of Chapter Thirty-One of the

Proverbs of Solomon, to which the Lord Referred Me

Regarding the Life of Most Holy Mary in Matrimony 587

CHAPTER XXIV. The Same Subject Continued : the Rest of the

Thirty-first Chapter of the Proverbs is Explained 597

SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

REVELATIONS

NOTHING that essentially differs from the teach

ings of the Catholic Church can rightfully be

taught or believed by any man or under any pre

text. Moreover, even the essential doctrines can be

taught and expounded only in the sense and spirit ap

proved, or at least not disapproved, by the Church.

This at once will establish the position which private

revelations, whether coming from Heaven or originat

ing from hallucination, merely human or devilish, hold

in the Church of God.

There can be no doubt that God can and does manifest

to chosen souls hidden things in addition to what He

teaches through the public ministry of His Church. It

is also an accepted truth that He sometimes reveals them

to his friends for the express purpose of communicating

this extra knowledge to other well disposed persons

through the natural and human means at the disposal

of those receiving his revelations. These manifestations

He invariably surrounds with enough evidence to satisfy

all requirements of a cautious and well founded human

belief. It follows naturally that whenever He thus sur

rounds private revelations with evidences of their heav

enly origin, He will be pleased with a rational and lov

ing belief and dissatisfied with a captious and obstinate

unbelief of the facts or truths thus privately revealed.

Where, however, these external evidences are wanting,

ix

x SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

or wherever holy Church intimates the least direct or in

direct disapproval, there any faith in private revelation

would be not only foolish, but positively wrong.

FULL APPROVAL

The Church has as yet given no public and full ap

proval to private revelations of any kind; nor will she

ever do so, since that would be really an addition to the

deposit of faith left by Christ. But tacitly and indirectly

she has approved many private revelations, and among

them the writings of Mary of Agreda. She could well

do so, since there are no writings of that kind which

exhibit more reliable human proofs of divine origin than

the "Ciudad de Dios" of the Venerable Servant of God,

Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

The existence of the Bible justifies the query, whether

there are not other books that have been written under

supernatural guidance, though we know of course that

none of them can ever have the same importance and

authenticity as the Bible. For the Bible was provided

as the record of the general revelations of God to man

kind at all its stages to the end of times.

A VAST FIELD BETWEEN

Evidently there remains an immense domain of truths

outside the range of natural human knowledge and not

specially revealed in the Bible. You will at once say :

that whole field is covered by the one true religion. Of

course it is. The teaching and ministry of men especially

appointed for that purpose, the practice and example of

those eminent in the Christian virtues, the writings of

those versed in higher truths, are the ordinary means

of spreading truth and leading men to their great

SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER xi

destiny. But besides all this, history proves that God,

for special purposes, often grants to his friends higher

insight into supernatural truths and facts, which, if at his

command they are recorded in writing, are intended by

Him as an additional source of higher knowledge and

well deserve to be considered as private revelations.

EARMARKS OF DECEIT

Past ages simply teem with writings that claim to be

derived from or based on divine revelation or inspiration.

Many of them are clearly nothing but frauds, showing

the signs of conscious or unconscious hallucination.

Many again seem beyond mere natural human powers of

insight, but at the same time in their authorship and ten

dencies show nothing divine or beneficent, thus proving

that besides human error and malice the sinister and

treacherous knowledge of malign spirits often finds its

way into such writings. Ancient sorcery and magic and

modern spiritism have their root in this sort of preter

natural communication.

TO BE CLOSELY SCRUTINIZED

Hence it would be foolish not to demand the closest

inquiry into anything put forward as private revelation.

Fortunately it is easy to apply sure and unfailing tests.

All that is necessary, is to ascertain the character and

motives of the writer and the result or drift of his writ

ings. Mahomet proves himself an epileptic adventurer

and his Koran a travesty of Judaism and Christianity,

settling like a blight upon civilization. Joseph Smith

and his companions turn out to be rebellious incendiaries

and murderers and their book of Mormon a ridiculous

fake, establishing a fanatic and bigamous theocracy.

xii SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

The fakir Dowie pretending prophecy, ends as a luna

tic in a bankrupt Zion, yet leaving millions to his rela

tives. The humbugging Eddy, after crazy-quilting

scraps from the Bible with shreds of Buddhism, Brah-

manism and Theosophy, shuffles off her wrinkled coil

amid a numerous following of dupes who rather ex

pected her faked science to keep her perpetually alive

or raise her up from the dead;

Is there any difficulty in discovering the fraud in

revelations of such a kind? Yet they claim divine in

spiration and very often contain passages which show

sources of information and deceit not altogether human.

The sinister manifestation of spiritism and the astound

ing information often furnished by mediums, are not

all sleight of hand or illusion of the senses; some of these

things can be explained only by assuming interference

of a sinister spirit world.

REALLY ANOTHER ARGUMENT FOR PRIVATE REVELATIONS

Would it not be absurd to concede the communica

tion with evil spirits or departed souls, damned or other

wise, (and all reasonable people concede it), and deny

the possibility of communing with the good spirits or

souls and with God? Who would want to limit the

power of God in this way ? It will not do to claim that

all the communication of God and the good spirits takes

the ordinary course provided in the public ministry of

the true religion. For it does not. Saint Paul saw

things that he dared not reveal, though he was not slow

in writing down his other revelations. The doctrine of

the Immaculate Conception and the Infallibility was pri

vately revealed many times before they were officially

defined and accepted as self -understood truths by all

SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER xiii

reasonable men. Before these doctrines were defined,

who had the greater prudence and insight? Those peo

ple who refused to believe these truths because they were

privately revealed, or those who examined those reve

lations and finding them humanly credible, and not con

trary to the true religion, simply accepted them as re

vealed by God? I should think the latter showed them

selves ahead of their times and far more enlightened in

their belief than the former, who persisted in a finical

unbelief concerning all private revelations.

NO DIFFICULTY TO DISTINGUISH THE) TRUE FROM

THE FALSE

If we find that the author of alleged private revela

tions has been a faithful adherent of the one true re

ligion established by God, that he has led a good and

blameless life, that his writings do not run counter to

the Bible nor to the public teachings of the true Church,

that he was not actuated by motives of selfish gain, pe

cuniary or otherwise, that the writings themselves tend

toward the practice of perfection both as far as the

writer as well as the reader is concerned, that they have

not been openly disapproved by the Church; then cer

tainly, if the information recorded is such that it would

presuppose supernatural inspiration or direct communi

cation with the higher world, we are not justified in

immediately rejecting the writings as fraudulent. Closer

examination may easily lead to reasonable certainty

that they are privately revealed. But we all know that

this acceptance can never mean anything more than a

mere human belief, not the belief of faith, such as for

instance is demanded by holy Scripture. In fact, as

xiv SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

soon as any such writing lays claim to implicit faith,

it certainly is no revelation and ought to be rejected at

once as spurious.

MARY OF AGREDA

She was the daughter of Francis Coronel and Catherine

of Arana, born April 2, 1602, in the small town of Agreda

near Tarazona in Spain. In 1617 she entered the convent

of the discalced Franciscan Nuns in the Convent of the

Immaculate Conception in Agreda and took her vows one

year later. In 1625 she was chosen abbess, much against

her wishes, and, except during a short intermission, was

re-elected every three years until she died, in 1665. The

fame of her prudence and foresight, not only in the gov

ernment of her convent but in other matters, soon spread

outside the convent walls and persons of the highest rank

in state and Church were eager to obtain her counsel in

important affairs. King Philip IV visited her several

times in her convent and corresponded with her about

national affairs for many years.

But she was no less famous for her exalted virtues. In

many respects her life was a faithful copy of that of St.

Francis. The miracle of bilocation related of her is in

fact more remarkable and lasted a longer time than that

recorded anywhere in the lives of the saints. Her good

sense, her truthfulness, her sincerity, her humility, her

unselfish love of God and man eminently adapted her for

the communication of messages from God to men.

WHAT INDUCED HER TO WRITE

In all writing that lays claim to private revelation, the

motives of the writer must be closely scrutinized. If it

appears to be a self-imposed task, for selfish ends, pe-

SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER xv

cuniary or otherwise, tending to particularity in religious

teachings or practice not approved by the established faith

or written without knowledge or consultation of the right

ful superiors, it ought to be rejected as spurious. God will

reveal nothing for such purpose or under such circum

stances, and He will permit human error and deceit and

the sinister influence of hell to run their natural course.

Nothing of all this appears in the writings of Mary of

Agreda. Though she was urged interiorly and exteriorly

to record the facts of history revealed to her concerning

the Mother of God, she resisted for twelve years and was

finally induced to write only through the positive com

mands of her superiors. Reluctantly she began her his

tory in the year 1637 and finished it in the year 1645,

continually asking to be relieved from the task because

she thought herself unworthy. As soon as the insistence

of her superiors relaxed and an error of judgment on the

part of an outside confessor gave her a plausible excuse,

she burned all her writings, thus destroying the labor of

many years. When this came to the knowledge of the

higher authorities and when they insisted on her rewrit

ing the history which continued to be supernaturally

made known to her, she again succeeded in delaying the

task for ten years. Only the strictest command under

obedience and the threat of censures finally induced her

to write the manuscript which she began in 1655 and fin

ished in 1665, and which is still preserved in the convent

of Agreda.

WHY REVEALED TO A WOMAN

It is to be remembered that God s almighty power is

restricted to no particular instrument; He creates out of

nothing. In the case of Balaam, he used not only that

xvi SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

wicked man but even his beast for special revelation. It

does seem that He prefers women for private revelation.

He chose men to reveal the great public truths of the

Bible and to attend to the public teaching, but to women

in the new law He seems to have consigned the task of

private revelations. At least most of the known private

revelations have been furnished us by women and not

men. We must infer from this that they are better

adapted for this work. In fact, no special learning or

great natural insight is required of a messenger; such

qualities might tend to corrupt or narrow down the in

spired message to mere human proportions, whereas pri

vate revelation is given precisely for the purpose of com

municating higher truths than can be known or under

stood naturally. Humility, great piety and love, deep

faith are the requisites of God s special messengers.

Women as a rule are more inclined to these virtues than

men, and therefore are not so apt to trim the message

of God down to their own natural powers of understand

ing. In choosing women for his special revelations He

gives us to understand from the outset, that what He

wishes to reveal is above the natural faculties of per

ception and insight of either man or woman.

HOW WAS "CIUDAD" RECEIVED?

As soon as the "City of God" appeared in print it was

welcomed and extolled as a most wonderful work. The

different translations found no less enthusiastic welcome

in nearly all the European countries. It secured the im

mediate approbation and encomium of the ordinaries, the

universities, the learned and eminent men of Christendom.

There is probably no other book which was so closely

scrutinized by those in authority, both civil and religious,

SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER xvii

and afterwards so signally approved as the "City of God."

By order of Innocent XL, Alexander VIIL, Clement IX.,

Benedict XIIL, and Benedict XIV. it was repeatedly sub

jected to the closest scrutiny and declared authentic,

worthy of devout perusal and free from error. The title

"Venerabilis" was conferred upon the author. A large

sized volume would be required to record the praises and

commendations written in favor of the great "City of

God."

OPPOSITION

As the "City of God" so strenuously maintains the

prerogatives of the Mother of God and the authority of

the Popes, it was not to be expected that it should escape

the malicious slander and intrigues of those tainted with

Jansenism and Gallicanism. Many members of the Sor

bonne in Paris were secret or open adherers of these

sects at the time when the "Ciudad" was first published

in French about the year 1678. The first translation in

French was very inexact and contained many interpola

tions and false versions of the original. Dr. Louis Elias

du Pin and Dr. Hideux of the Sorbonne made this trans

lation the foundation of virulent attacks. Du Pin was

called by Pope Clement XI. "Nequioris doctrinse homi-

nem," "A man of pernicious doctrines." Hideux turned

out to be a rabid and fanatical Jansenist, cut off from

the Church as a heretic. As they and other members of

the Sorbonne succeeded in enlisting the sympathy of in

fluential Gallican courtiers and church dignitaries, both

in Paris and at Rome, they secured a clandestine prohi

bition of the "City of God," which appeared in the acts

of the Congregation of the Office. When it was discov

ered, no one could be found who would dare stand

1-2

xviii SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

sponsor for it, and immediately Pope Innocent XL, on

November 9, 1681, annulled the act, positively decree

ing that the "City of God" be freely spread among the

clergy and laity. The very fact that this prohibition did

not issue from the Index Commission but from a depart

ment not concerned with the examination of books, proves

that it owes its insertion to Gallican intrigue, secretly ex

tending even to high circles in Rome, and to the fair-

minded, this sectarian attempt will be a convincing argu

ment for the excellence and orthodoxy of the doctrines

contained in the revelations of Mary of Agreda.

MANY EDITIONS

The popularity and excellence of the great history of

the Mother of God is also evidenced by its widespread

diffusion. It has appeared in over sixty editions in Span

ish, Italian, French, Portuguese, German, Latin, Arabic,

Greek, and Polish. Does it not seem providential that the

first English translation of this great work should have

been reserved for our own times? No other language on

the face of the earth is the medium of so many theories,

sects and isms as the English language and the "City of

God" is a most timely and efficient antidote for the epi

demic of false doctrines, which is sweeping over all the

earth, and affects especially the English-speaking portion

of the human race.

EXPECTATIONS OF THE TRANSLATOR

The translator and promoter of the "City of God" is

confident that it will not be one of the books idly filling

the shelves of libraries, but one which at the first cursory

SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER xix

inspection will arouse the desire of further inquiry and

lead to repeated and attentive perusal.

The translation herewith offered is as exact and as per

fect a rendition of the original Spanish into English, as

ten years of assiduous labor and a considerable experi

ence in literary production give a right to expect. The

subject-matter surely ought to secure for it a proper

place in the more elevated ranks of English Literature.

May this first English translation, under the guidance

of our holy faith, bring forth abundant fruits of the

Spirit among English-speaking people in all parts of the

world.

Feast of the Annunciation, 1912.

Fiscar Marison, South Chicago.

APPROBATIONS

THE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad

de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3,

1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks

and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne,

known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting the

publication and reading of the "Ciudad de Dios." Similar

decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII,

Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were

followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites,

approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which

the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and writ

ten by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is

officially established. The great pope Benedict XIII,

when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revela

tions as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed

Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy,

objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was

peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his

objections as interfering with the decree of pope

Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was

promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men

of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has re

sulted so far in securing her the title of VenerabUis, thus

clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us

hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many

pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

xxi

xxii APPROBATIONS

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles

wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German

translation in 1885, which was approved and highly

recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the follow

ing\* terms :

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approba

tion to the annotated translation of the Spanish original

"Ciudad de Dios" of Mary of Jesus and recommend this

book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occa

sion of great spiritual blessings."

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

)j( IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-

Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Ger

many, etc.

"According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and

Clement XI the book known as Ciudad de Dios written

by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may

be read by all the faithful."

"A number of episcopal approbations, the recommen

dations of four renowned universities, namely, of Tou

louse, Salamanca, Alcala and Louvain, and of prominent

members of different orders, coincide in extolling the

above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal

D Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty

years of his previous life as of small consequence in com

parison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in

all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the

Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Ven

erable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbe Emery,

adds: "Only since I read the revelations of Mary of

Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother."

APPROBATIONS xxiii

"We therefore do not hesitate in granting our epis

copal approbation to "Ciudad de Dios" and wish to

recommend it to the faithful and especially to our

clergy."

^ FRANZ ALBERT,

Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.

September 12, 1885.

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios"

is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edi

tion of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God

and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Admin

istrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo,

chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immacu

late Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to

compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for

the printing of the new edition of the "City of God"

now about to be published by the religious of the above-

named convent, with the authenticated autograph

manuscript of that work there preserved, and hav

ing ascertained by a personal revision of a great part

of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently

and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him

by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition

of Ciudad de Dios/ with the exception of a few mere

orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to

the autograph of that work as composed and written

by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal] % JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

xxiv APPROBATIONS

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right

Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this

English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English

translation of the work entitled Ciudad de Dios. Wish

ing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

)JiH. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at

variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and se

cure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the

newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridg

ment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I

contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part

III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publi

cation of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these

divisions as follow :

THE CONCEPTION, Books 1 and 2.

THE INCARNATION, Books 3 and 4.

THE TRANSFIXION, Books 5 and 6.

THE CORONATION, Books 7 and 8.

C|)e Conception

Sacramental ;fttp#terie# torougftt fip

I^igf) in tfte &lt;&ueen of l^eaben from tyt ime

of l&gt;er immaculate Conception until tfyt

carnation of t&e ?^orti in ftec birginal

anti ftota mucfj jmerit Sfte fter^elf acquired

t^rougft bibine oBrace ftp profiting from tfte

f abor# conferred upon l^er during tftotfe ftr^t

fifteen iear of fter 3life

INTRODUCTION

TO THE

LIFE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

GIVING THE: REASON FOR WRITING IT, AND EXPLAINING

OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES IN CONNECTION THEREWITH.

1. I should not be astonished to hear myself con

demned as audacious, foolhardy and presumptuous by

any person who will begin to realize (if realized it can

be) that I, a simple woman, who is of herself but sheer

weakness and ignorance and who is, on account of her

sins, most unworthy, has resolved and attempted to write

of divine and supernatural things. This condemnation

will be the more justified in these, our present times, in

which the holy Church, our mother, is so abundantly

supplied with teachers and holy men, so rich in doctrines

of the holy Fathers and Doctors ; in this our most oppor

tune age, when even prudent and wise persons, full of

holy zeal in the spiritual life, are disturbed and troubled

at the least mention of a higher life, looking upon visions

and revelations as most suspicious and dangerous paths

for the pursuit of Christian perfection. If no excuse can

be found for such an enterprise in itself, or even for at

tempting things that are so far above and superior to

what man can hope to compass, and so far beyond all

human capacities, then we can only conclude that to un

dertake them is either a sign of perverse judgment or the

result of an activity far surpassing all the human power.

2. As faithful children of the holy Church we must

3

4 INTRODUCTION

confess that all the mortals, not only with the use of all

their natural powers, but with the simultaneous use of all

the common and ordinary graces, are but incapable and,

as it were, mute and ignorant weaklings for so difficult an

undertaking as to explain and describe the hidden mys

teries and magnificent sacraments which the powerful

arm of the Most High has wrought in that Creature

whom, as his Mother, He has designed to be an immense

ocean of grace and privilege and the Depositary of the

greatest treasures of the Divinity. How incapable must

our weakness acknowledge itself to be, when even the

angelic spirits confess that words fail them when at

tempting to describe that which is so far above their

thoughts and capacities. The life of this Phcenix

among the works of God is a book so sealed up that none

is found among all the creatures of heaven and earth,

worthy to open it (Apoc. 4, 3). It is evident then, that

only the powerful Lord can unseal it ; He who made Her

more perfect than all the creatures; or She herself, the

Mistress, our Queen and Mother, who was worthy to re

ceive and properly to appreciate her ineffable gifts. It

is in her power to select suitable instruments, and such as

for her glory seem capable of manifesting these gifts in

the proportion, at the time, and in the manner serviceable

to her Onlybegotten Son.

3. I would willingly maintain that these instruments

can be no other than the teachers and learned saints of

the Catholic Church, or the doctors of the schools, who

have all taught the way of truth and life. But the

thoughts and the judgments of the Most High are ex

alted as much above ouf own as heaven is exalted above

the earth and no one knows his mind and no one can

counsel Him in his works (Rom. 11, 34) ; He it is that

holds the scales of the sanctuary in his hands (Apoc. 6,

INTRODUCTION 5

5), and who weighs the winds (Job 28, 25) ; who

grasps in his hands all the orbs (Is. 40, 12), and who,

by the equity of his most holy counsels, disposes of all

things with weight and measure (Wis. 11, 21), assign

ing to each one opportune time and place. He dispenses

the light of wisdom (Ecclus. 24, 37) and by his most

equitable bounty He distributes it, and no one can ascend

to the heavens to draw it down (Baruch 3, 29), or fetch

it from the clouds, or know its ways or investigate the

hidden paths thereof (Baruch 3, 31). He alone observes

it as it is in itself, and transfuses it as the vapor and

emanation of his immense charity (Wis. 7, 25) as the

brightness of his eternal light, as the flawless reflection

and image of his eternal bounty, through holy souls

among the nations in order to make them friends of the

Most High and constitute them as Prophets (Wis. 7, 27).

The Lord alone knows why and for what purpose He

thus prepared me, the last of his creatures ; why He thus

called and raised me, obliged and compelled me, to write

the life of his most holy Mother, our Queen and Lady.

4. It is beyond the prudent surmise of any man that,

without this influence and power of the Most High, the

thought of such a work should enter into a human heart,

or such an enterprise should take shape in my mind. For

I acknowledge and confess myself to be a weak woman,

wanting in all virtue; therefore, it should be far from

my thoughts to approach such a work, but equally as far

from me to refuse it on my own account. In order that a

just estimate may be had in this matter I will mention in

simple truth something of that which happened to me re

garding this history.

5 In the eighth year after the foundation of this con

vent, in the twenty-fifth of my life, obedience imposed

upon me the office which I unworthily hold at the pres-

6 INTRODUCTION

ent day, namely to be the abbess of this convent. I found

myself much troubled, sorrowful and discouraged, be

cause neither my age nor my inclinations were such as are

requisite for governing and commanding, but they were

rather such as befitted one who should be governed and

obey. I knew also, that in order to invest me with this

office a dispensation had been obtained. On account of

these and other just reasons, the terrors with which the

Most High has crucified me during all my life, were

much augmented. In addition thereto God left me in

dreadful doubt whether I was on the secure path or

whether I should obtain or lose his friendship and grace.

6. In this tribulation I cried to the Lord with all my

heart that He help me and if it be his will that I should

be freed from this danger and burden. Although it is

true that the Lord had prepared me sometime before

hand and commanded me to accept the office, and al

though when I tried to excuse myself on account of my

pusillanimity. He always consoled me and reiterated his

command, I nevertheless did not cease my petitions, but

rather augmented them. For I perceived and understood

in the Lord that, although He showed this to be his holy

will, which I could not hinder, yet I was aware at the

same time that he left me free to retire and resist, and, if

I wished, to act according to my weakness as a creature

and in the consciousness of my total insufficiency ; such is

the prudence of the Lord in his dealings with men. Re

lying on this kindness of the Lord, I increased my efforts

to be relieved from this evident danger, which is so little

estimated by our human nature with its bad habits and

disorderly passions. The Lord, however, repeated con

tinually that it was his will and He consoled me, admon

ishing me through his holy angels to obey.

7. I fled in this affliction to our Queen and Lady as

INTRODUCTION 7

to my only refuge in all troubles, and after I had mani

fested to Her my way of life and my desires, She deigned

to answer me in these sweetest of words : "My daughter,

console thyself and do not be disturbed in thy heart on

account of this labor ; prepare thyself for it and I will be

thy Mother and Superior, whom thou shalt obey; and

the same I will be to thy subjects. I will supplement thy

deficiencies and thou shalt be my agent, through whom

the will of my Son and my God shall be fulfilled. In all

thy temptations and troubles thou shalt take refuge with

me, confer about them with me, and take the advice,

which I will give thee in all things. Obey me, and I will

favor thee and will continue to be attentive to thy afflic

tion." These were the words of the Queen, as consoling

as they were soothing to my soul. From that day on the

Mother of mercy multiplied her mercies toward me, her

slave; for She became more intimate with me and con

tinued her intercourse with my soul, receiving me, listen

ing to me, teaching me with ineffable condescension, giv

ing me counsel and encouragement in my affliction, filling

my soul with the light and knowledge of eternal life and

commanding me to renew the vows of my profession in

her presence. Finally this our most amiable Mother and

Lady revealed Herself still more fully to her slave, with

drawing the veil from the hidden sacraments and mag

nificent mysteries which are contained, though unknown

to mortals, in her most holy life. And, although this

blessed and supernatural light was uninterrupted, and

especially clear on her festival days and on other occa

sions when I was instructed in many mysteries; yet it was

not so full, frequent and clear as that which was after

wards vouchsafed to me when She added the command

that I write the history of her life according as her Ma

jesty herself should dictate and inspire me. Particularly

8 INTRODUCTION

on one of these festivals of the most holy Mary the Most

High informed me that He had in reserve many hidden

sacraments and blessings, which He had conferred upon

this his heavenly Mother in the days of her pilgrimage

and that it was his intention to manifest them to me, in

order that I might write them down according to her^

guidance. This will of the Most High, though I resisted

it, was continually present to my mind for the space of

ten years, until I attempted the first writing of this divine

history.

8. Consulting about my doubts with the holy princes

and angels, whom the Most High had appointed to direct

this work of writing the history of our Queen, and mani

festing to them how great was my disturbance and afflic

tion of heart and how stuttering and mute was my tongue

for such an arduous task, they replied over and over

again that it was the will of the Most High that I write

the life of his most pure Mother and our Mistress. On

one day especially, when I made many objections and de

clared to them my difficulties, and my incapability and

great fears, they spoke to me these words: "With good

reason thou fearest and art disturbed, O soul, doubtest

and hesitatest in a matter, where we angels ourselves

would do the same, as considering ourselves unable wor

thily to describe the high and magnificent doings of the

Omnipotent in the Mother of Piety and our own Queen.

But remember, dearest soul, that the firmament, the

whole machinery of the world and all things created will

sooner fail, than the words of the Most High Many

times He has promised to his creatures, and in the holy

Scriptures it is recorded, that the obedient man shall

speak of victories over his enemies and shall not be repre

hensible in obeying (Prov. 21, 28). And when He cre

ated the first man and gave him the command not to eat

INTRODUCTION 9

of the tree of knowledge, he established the virtue of

obedience, and swearing He swore, in order to give

greater assurance to man. For the Lord has repeatedly

given such an oath; for instance, when He promised to

Abraham that the Messias should descend from his race,

He added thereto the assurance of an oath (Gen. 22,

16) ; the same He did when He created the first man,

assuring him that the obedient shall not err. He also

repeated this oath, when He ordained that his most holy

Son should die (Luke 1, 73) ; and He gave a like assur

ance to men that they, who should obey this second

Adam, imitating Him in the obedience, by which He re

stored what the first lost through his disobedience, shall

live forever and that the enemy shall have no part in

them. Remember, Mary, that all obedience takes its rise

from God as from its first and principal source, and we

angels obey the power of his divine right hand and his

most just will. We cannot contravene or ignore it, be

cause we see the immutable being of God face to face

and we perceive that his will is holy, pure and true, most

equitable and just. Now this certainty, which we angels

possess through the beatific vision, you mortals also pos

sess in its proper proportion as wayfarers through the

words of the Lord concerning your prelates and supe

riors : "He who hears you, hears Me ; and who obeys you,

obeys Me." (Luke 20, 16). Now since obedience is ren

dered on account of God, who is the principal Cause and

who is the Superior of all, it is befitting to his almighty

Providence that He take the consequences of obedience,

whenever that which is commanded is not in itself sin

ful. Accordingly the Lord assures us of these things by

an oath, and He will sooner cease to exist, though this is

impossible, than that He will fail in his word. In the

same way as the children proceed from their parents, and

10 INTRODUCTION

all the living from Adam, multiplied from his natural

being in his posterity; so also all superiors are consti

tuted by God as by the supreme Lord on whose account we

yield obedience to them ; human beings to their living su

periors, we angels to our higher hierarchies of the same

nature, and all beings together, in their superiors, obey

the eternal God. Remember now, that all of these have

directed and commanded thee to do that, about which

thou still hesitatest; if thou now shouldst begin to write

by mistake, intending thereby to fulfill his commands in

obedience, then the Most High would do with thy pen the

same as He did with the knife of Abraham, when he was

about to sacrifice his son Isaac, for on that occasion the

Lord commanded one of us angels to withhold the arm

and the knife. He did not thus command us to withhold

thy pen, but has ordered us with lightest breath to speed it

on, and while gazing on his Majesty, to direct and assist

thee by illuminating thy intellect."

9. Such encouragement and instruction my holy angels

and lords gave me at this time. On many other occa

sions the prince saint Michael informed me of the same

wish and command of the Most High. By the continual

enlightenments, favors and instructions of this great

prince, I have understood great sacraments and mysteries

of the Lord and of the Queen of heaven ; for this angel

was one of those, who guarded and assisted Her and

who were delegated from the angelic choirs, as I will re

late in its place (Part I, 201-206). He is at the same

time the general patron and protector of the holy Church.

He was a special witness and faithful minister of the mys

teries of the Incarnation and Redemption. This I have

often heard of saint Michael himself, who showed me

singular favors in my troubles and dangers, and has

promised me his assistance and direction in this under

taking.

INTRODUCTION 11

10. In addition to all this and other facts, which need

not here be mentioned, and in addition to what I shall say

farther on, the Lord has directly, in his own person, com

manded and manifested to me his will many times, and in

words which I shall presently repeat. He said to me one

day on the festival of the Presentation of most holy

Mary in the temple: "My spouse, many mysteries per

taining to my Mother and the saints have been made

manifest in the Church militant; but many are still hid

den, especially the interior secrets of their lives, and these

I wish now to make known ; and I desire thee to put them

down in writing according as thou art directed by the

most pure Mary. I will reveal and explain them to thee ;

for until now I have, according to the hidden designs of

my wisdom, kept them in reserve, because the time for

revealing them was not befitting or opportune to my

Providence. Now, however, it is, and it is my will that

thou write. Obey, soul !"

11. All these facts which I have mentioned, and many

more which I could mention, would not have been urgent

enough to rouse my will to an enterprise so arduous and

so foreign to my condition, if to them had not been added

the motive of obedience to my superiors, who are set to

govern my soul and teach me the way of truth. For cer

tainly my mistrusts and fears were not so unimportant

as to permit me to come to a full decision without their

commands in so great a matter, when in resolving upon

others, also supernatural and vastly less difficult, I rely

so much on the guidance of obedience. As an ignorant

woman I have always sought this northstar, for it is a

duty incumbent on all to test all things, even though they

seem to be most noble and excellent beyond suspicion, by

the approbation of the teachers and ministers of the holy

Church. Such assurance I have been solicitous to pro-

12 INTRODUCTION

cure for the direction of my soul, and more particularly

in this undertaking of writing the life of the Queen of

heaven. I have frequently tried to prevent my superiors

from being moved by any accounts of my interior ex

periences, disguising, as much as I could, many things,

and in tears begging the Lord to enlighten them and to

fill them with mistrust against me, to watch over them

lest they be deceived or lest they permit me to be deceived

or misdirected. Many times I have desired that the very

thought of allowing me to engage in this enterprise

would fade from their minds.

12. I will also confess that the demon, availing himself

of my natural dispositions and of my fears, has made

great efforts to hinder this work by seeking to terrify and

afflict me. He would no doubt have succeeded in keep

ing me from it if the zeal and persistence of my superiors

had not counteracted my cowardice. In this persecution

the Lord, the most pure Virgin and the holy angels often

took occasion to renew their enlightenment, their tokens

and wonders. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, I de

ferred, or to speak more appropriately, I resisted this un

dertaking many years ; I refused compliance, as I will de

scribe further on, not having the boldness to attempt the

execution of something so far above all my powers. And

I believe that this was not without special providence of

his Majesty; for in the course of those years so many

things have happened to me, and I may say, so many

mysterious and various difficulties intervened, that I

would not have been able to preserve the tranquillity and

quiet of spirit, which is necessary for retaining the

proper light and information; for not in all states of

mind, though they are of the highest and most advanced,

can the soul engage in that exalted activity which is

necessary to correspond to such exquisite and delicate in-

INTRODUCTION 13

fluences. In addition to this, there was still another rea

son, namely : During this protracted delay I could inform

myself and assure myself of the truth of these things not

only by means of the new enlightenment, which grew as

time passed on, and by the prudence which experience

gives, but also by the persevering insistence of the Lord,

of the holy angels and of my superiors, under whose

obedience I lived. Likewise an opportunity was given

me to quiet my fears and misgivings, to overcome my

cowardice and perplexity, and to trust that to the Lord,

which I would not trust to my weakness.

13. Confiding then in the great virtue of obedience, I

resolved in the name of the Lord and of my Queen and

Mistress to lay aside my reluctance. I call this virtue

great, not only because by it the most noble activities in

the faculties of a creature, namely the mind, the judg

ment and free will, are offered as a holocaust to the

Lord ; but also because no other virtue ever assures suc

cess more unfailingly than obedience ; for by it the crea

ture then does not operate of itself alone, but also as an

instrument of him that governs and commands. This was

the assurance of Abraham, when he overcame the force

of the natural love for his son Isaac (Gen. 22, 3). And

if it was sufficient for such an act, and sufficient to detain

the sun and the heavens in their swift course (Josue

10, 13), it can certainly be sufficient to influence the

movement of the earth. Perchance if the hand of Oza

had been guided by obedience, he would perhaps not

have been punished as presumptuous in touching the ark.

Well do I know that I am more unworthy than Oza in

stretching out ray hand to touch, not the lifeless and fig

urative ark of the old covenant, but the living Ark of the

New Testament, which contained the manna of the Di

vinity, the source of grace and the New Law. But if I

14 INTRODUCTION

remain silent, I fear with good reason to disobey most

high commands, and I could exclaim with Isaias : "Woe

is me because I kept my peace!" (Is. 6, 5). Therefore,

O my Queen and Lady, it is better that thy benignest

goodness and mercy and the blessings of thy liberal hand

should shine forth through my base and unworthy ef

forts ; it is better that I should experience thy blessings in

obeying thy commands, than that I should fall into thy

displeasure. It will be a work of thy clemency, O purest

Mother, to raise the poor from the earth and to execute

through a weak and unfit instrument, a work so difficult ;

for thereby Thou shalt magnify thy condescension and

the graces which thy most holy Son communicates to

Thee. Moreover Thou thereby shalt exclude that deceit

ful presumption, which might make us imagine that by

human efforts, or by earthly prudence, or by the force

and authority of deep discussion, this work is accom

plished. Thou thereby showest, that by divine virtue

Thou awakenest anew the hearts of the faithful, drawing\*

them toward Thee, Thou fountain of kindness and

mercy. Speak therefore, O Lady, that thy servant may

hear with an ardent desire fully to obey Thee (I Kings

3, 19). But how can my desires ever reach or equal my

indebtedness? A befitting response on my part will be

impossible, but if it were possible, I would desire to give

it. O powerful and exalted Queen, fulfill thy promises

by manifesting to me thy graces and attributes, in order

that thy greatness may be made known and heralded

through the nations and generations. Speak, O Lady,

for thy servant heareth; speak and magnify the Most

High in the powerful and wonderful works, which his

right hand performed for Thee in thy most profound hu

mility. Let them flow from the hollow of his hands

filled with hyacinths into thine (Cant. 5, 14), and from

INTRODUCTION 15

thine to thy devout servants, in order that the angels

may bless Him, the just magnify Him, and the sinners

seek Him. Let all of them see the example of thy high

est sanctity and purity, and by the grace of thy most holy

Son, let me be favored with this mirror and efficacious

rule, by which I can set my life in order. For this is to

be the principal purpose and first object of my solicitude

in writing thy life. This Thou hast repeatedly intimated

to me, condescending to offer me a living pattern and a

mirror without flaw, in which I should see and according

to which I should adorn my soul, so as to become worthy

to be thy daughter and the bride of thy most holy Son.

14. This shall be my whole object and intention; and

therefore I shall not write as a teacher, but as a disciple ;

not as one instructing, but as one trying to learn, know

ing that it is the duty of women to be silent in the holy

Church, and to listen to the teachers (I Cor. 14, 34).

But as an instrument of the Queen of heaven I will de

clare what She deigns to teach me and whatever She

commands me; for all the souls are capable of receiving

the Spirit, which her divine Son has promised to pour

out over men of all conditions (Joel 2, 28). The souls

are also able to communicate it in a befitting manner,

whenever a higher authority acting according to the dis

pensations of Christ s Church so disposes. I am now

convinced that the Church has authorized this history

through my superiors. That I should err is possible, and

to an ignorant woman, natural; but then I err, while

obeying and not acting of my own free will ; thus I remit

myself and subject myself to those who are my guides

and to the correction of the holy Catholic Church, to

whose ministers I fly in all my difficulties. And I wish

that my superior, teacher and confessor be a witness and

a censor of this doctrine, which I receive, and also a

16 INTRODUCTION

severe and vigilant judge of the manner in which I put

it into practice, or fail in the fulfilling of the obligations

consequent upon this blessing.

15. Pursuant to the will of the Lord and the com

mand of obedience, I have written for the second time

this heavenly history; for during the first writing of it,

though the light by which I perceived the mysteries was

abundant and fruitful in proportion as my shortcomings

were great, my tongue was unequal to the task of finding

the proper terms, and my pen not swift enough for a full

statement. I omitted some things, and with the lapse of

time and by the aid of new enlightenments, I found my

self better prepared to write at this second time Nev

ertheless there always remains much of what I under

stood and have seen, which I must leave unsaid ; since to

say all will never be possible. Besides these reasons,

there was another known to me in the Lord, namely;

That in my first writing my mind was much hindered

from attending to the matter and arrangement of this

work by my temptations and great fears. They raised

such tempests of contrary thoughts and suggestions with

in me, that, deeming it the greatest presumption to have

attempted such an arduous task, I concluded to burn it.

And I believe that this did not happen without the per

mission of the Lord, for in the turbulency of my soul I

could not present myself in a state entirely befitting and

desirable to the Lord for writing and engraving into my

heart and spirit his doctrine, as He commands me to do

now and as can be seen from the following event.

16. On one of the festival days of the Purification of

Our Lady, after having received the most holy Sacra

ment, I wished to celebrate this holy festival, which was

the anniversary of my profession, with many acts of

thanksgiving and of total resignation to the Most High,

INTRODUCTION 17

who without any merits of mine had chosen me as his

spouse. While I was thus exciting these affections, I felt

in my interior a most powerful change accompanied by

abundant light which raised me and urged me strongly

and sweetly toward the knowledge of the essence of God,

his goodness, perfections and attributes, and to the dis

closing of my own misery (Wis. 8, 1). And these dif

ferent things, which were placed before my understand

ing at one and the same time, produced in me various

effects: The first was that all the attention of my mind

and all my aspirations were raised on high; the other

effect was, that I was humbled in mind to the very dust,

in such a way that it seemed to take away my own exist

ence. At the same time I felt a most vehement sorrow

and contrition for my grievous sins, joined to the de

termination to amend and to renounce all worldly things,

aspiring instead toward complete love of God. In these

affects I remained as if annihilated, and the greatest pain

seemed but consolation, and death, but life. The Lord

having pity on my faintness, in sheer mercy, spoke t f )

me: "Be not dismayed, my daughter and spouse, for in

order to pardon, to wash and to purify thee from thy

sins, I will apply my infinite merits and the blood, which

I shed for thee; animate thyself to desire all perfection

in imitation of the life of the most holy Mary. Write it

a second time in order that thou mayest supply what was

wanting and impress her doctrines on thy heart. Do not

again irritate my justice, nor show thyself thankless for

my mercy by burning what thou shalt have written, lest

my indignation deprive thee of the light which, without

thy merits, thou hast received for the manifestation of

these mysteries."

17. I immediately thereupon saw the Mother of God,

who also spoke to me : "My daughter, as yet thou hast

18 INTRODUCTION

not derived becoming fruit for thy soul from the tree of

life, which was offered thee in the writing of my history,

nor didst thou enter into the substance of its contents.

Thou hast scarcely yet thought of this hidden manna,

nor hast thou attained that perfect and ultimate prepara

tion, which the Almighty requires in order to engrave

and imprint, in a proper manner, my virtues into thy

soul. I am to give thee the befitting qualities and per

fections for that which the divine right hand is to accom

plish in thee. I have asked Him that, through my inter

cession and through the abundant graces conferred upon

me, I be permitted to adorn thee and compose thy soul,

so that thou mayest turn again to the writing of my life

with less attention to the material and more to the spir

itual and substantial part of it. Remove the hindrances

which oppose the currents of divine grace flowing to

thee from the Almighty through me and make thyself ca

pable of readily accepting the full portion assigned to thee

by the divine will. See that thou do not curtail or limit

by thy shortcomings and imperfections." Thereupon

I saw that the divine Mother clothed me in a garment

whiter than the snow and more shining than the sun;

and She girded me with a most precious girdle and said :

"This is a participation of my purity." I also asked for

the infused science of the Lord, which should serve me

as most beautiful hair for my adornment and for other

precious gifts and presents, the value of which I saw and

knew was great, but which I was not able fully to esti

mate. After having thus adorned me, the heavenly Lady

said: "Work faithfully and earnestly to imitate me and

to be my most perfect daughter, engendered of my spirit,

nourished at my breast I give thee my blessing, in

order that in my name and under my direction and assist

ance thou mayest again resume thy writing."

INTRODUCTION 19

18. The whole of this holy life of Mary is divided,

for greater perspicuity, into three parts. The first treats

of all that pertains to the first fifteen years of her life,

from the moment of her most pure Conception until the

moment when in her virginal womb the eternal Word

assumed flesh, including all that the Most High per

formed for Mary during these years. The second part

embraces the mystery of the Incarnation, the whole life

of Christ our Lord, his Passion and Death and his As

cension into heaven, thus describing the life of our Queen

in union with that of her divine Son and all that She did

while living with Him. The third part contains the life

of the Mother of grace during the time She lived alone,

deprived of the companionship of Christ our Redeemer,

until the happy hour of her transition, assumption and

crowning as the Empress of heaven, where She is to live

eternally as the Daughter of the Father, the Mother of

the Son and the Spouse of the Holy Ghost. These three

parts I subdivided into eight books, in order that they

may be more convenient for use and always remain the

subject of my thoughts, the spur of my will and my

meditation day and night.

19. In order to say something of the time in which

I wrote this heavenly history, it must be noticed that my

father, brother Francis Coronel, and my mother, sister

Catharine de Arana, my parents, founded in their own

house this convent of the discalced nuns of the Immacu

late Conception by the command and the will of God,

which was declared to my mother, sister Catharine, in a

special vision and revelation. This foundation took place

on the octave of the Epiphany, January 13th, 1619. On

the same day we took the habit, my mother and her two

daughters; and my father took refuge in the order of our

seraphic Father Saint Francis, in which two of his sons

20 INTRODUCTION

had already been living as religious. There he took the

habit, made his profession, lived an exemplary life, and

died a most holy death. My mother and myself received

the veil on the day of the Purification of the Queen of

heaven, on the second of February, 1620. On account

of the youth of the other daughter her profession was

delayed. The Almighty in his sheer goodness favored

our family so much, that all of us were consecrated to

Him in the religious state. In the eighth year of the

foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my age,

in the year of our Lord 1627, holy obedience imposed

upon me the office of abbess, which to this day I un

worthily hold. During the first ten years of the time in

which I held this office, I received many commands from

the Most High and from the Queen of heaven to write

her holy life, and I continued in fear and doubt to resist

these heavenly commands during all that time until the

year 1637, when I began to write it the first time. On

finishing it, being full of fears and tribulations, and be

ing so counseled by a confessor (who directed me dur

ing the absence of my regular confessor), I burned all

the writing containing not only this history, but many

other grave and mysterious matters ; for he told me, that

women should not write in the Church. I obeyed his

commands promptly ; but I had to endure most severe re

proaches on this account from my superiors and from the

confessor, who knew my whole life. In order to force

me to rewrite this history, they threatened me with cen

sures. The Most High and the Queen of heaven also

repeated their commands that I obey. During this sec

ond writing, so abundant was the light concerning the

divine Essence, so copious were the blessings of the di

vine right hand for the renewal and vivification of my

soul in the teachings of my heavenly Mother, so perfect

INTRODUCTION 21

were the instructions and so exalted were the sacraments

communicated to me, that it was necessary to write an

other book in connection with this history, the title of

which will be: "Laws of the Spouse; heights of his di

vine love and fruits gathered from the tree of life of

most holy Mary, our Lady." By divine favor I begin re

writing this history on the eighth of December, 1655, on

the day of the Immaculate Conception.

BOOK ONE

Treats of the Divine Fore-Ordalnment of Christ and His Mother as the

Highest Ideals of all Creation; of the Creation of the Angels and

Men as their Servants; of the Lineage of the Just Men,

Finally Resulting in the Immaculate Conception and

Birth of the Queen of Heaven; and of Her Life

up to Her Presentation in the Temple.

CHAPTER I.

CONCERNING TWO SPECIAL VISIONS VOUCHSAFED TO MY

SOUL BY THE LORD AND CONCERNING OTHER ENLIGHT

ENMENTS AND MYSTERIES, WHICH COMPELLED ME TO

WITHDRAW FROM EARTHLY THINGS AND RAISED MY

SPIRIT TO DWELL ABOVE THE EARTH.

1. I confess to Thee (Matth. 11, 25) and magnify

Thee, King Most High, that in thy exalted Majesty Thou

hast hidden these high mysteries from the wise and from

the teachers, and in thy condescension hast revealed them

to me, the most insignificant and useless slave of thy

Church, in order that Thou mayest be the more admired

as the omnipotent Author of this history in proportion

as its instrument is despicable and weak.

2. After I had overcome the above mentioned reluc

tance and disorderly fears which caused so much timid

hesitation, lest I suffer shipwreck in that sea of marvels,

the most exalted Lord caused me to feel a virtue from on

high, strong, sweet, efficacious and gentle; an enlighten

ment which illumined the intellect, subjected the rebel

lious will, tranquillizing, directing, governing and attract

ing the whole range of interior and exterior senses, thus

23

24 CITY OF GOD

subjecting my entire being to the will and pleasure of the

Most High and directing it in all things toward his honor

and glory alone. Being thus prepared, I heard a voice

from the Almighty, which called me and raised me up

toward Him, exalting my dwelling-place on high (Ec-

clus. 51, 13) and strengthening me against the lions, that

hungrily roared about me in order to snatch my soul

from the enjoyment of great blessings in the boundless

mysteries of this holy Tabernacle and City of God. Sur

rounded by the sorrows of death and perdition (Ps. 17, 5)

and beset by the flames of Sodom and Babylon, in which

we live, it liberated me from the portals of sorrow, into

which I was enticed to enter. My enemies, forming vis

ions of fallacious and deceitful delights for the misleading

of my senses and the capture of them by pretended pleas

ures, set their allurements about me, in order that I might

blindly turn toward these flames and be consumed by

them. But from all these snares, laid for my footsteps

(Ps. 56, 7), the Most High has delivered me, elevating my

spirit and teaching me by the most efficacious admonitions

the way of perfection. He invited me to a life spiritual

ized and angelic, and obliged me to live so cautiously, that

in the midst of the furnace, the fire touched me not (Ec-

cli. 51, 6). He often liberated me from the impure tongue,

when it sought to communicate to me its earthly fables

(Ps. 118, 85). His Majesty invited me to rise from the

dust and littleness of the law of sin, to resist the defec

tions of sin-infected nature and restrain its disorders,

combatting them by his enlightening inspirations and rais

ing myself above myself (Lam. 3, 28). He called me re

peatedly, sometimes by the power of his omnipotence,

sometimes with the correction of a Father, and at others

with the love of a Spouse, saying: Arise, my dove, creation

of my hands, make haste and come to Me (Cant. 2, 10),

THE CONCEPTION 25

who am the light and the way (John 8, 12), he that fol

lows Me, walks not in darkness. Come to Me, who am

the secure truth, and unchangeable holiness, to Me, who

am the Powerful and the Wise, and the Teacher of those

that follow wisdom (Wis. 7, 15).

3. These words were like arrows of sweet love, which

filled me with admiration, reverence, knowledge and

dread of my sins and of my vileness, so that I retired

from his presence, shrunken and annihilated in the

knowledge of my nothingness. And the Lord spoke to

me: "Come, O soul, come to Me, who am thy omnipo

tent God, and although thou hast been a prodigal child

and a sinner, arise from the earth and come to Me, thy

Father; receive the stole of my friendship and the ring

of a spouse."

4. Still remaining in that secure retreat of which I

have spoken, I saw on a certain day, six angels, whom

the Almighty had appointed to assist and guide me in

this undertaking and in other dangers. Coming toward

me, they purified and prepared my soul, and then pre

sented me before the Lord. His Majesty gave to my in

terior being a new light and, as it were, a participation

in glory, by which I was made capable and desirous of

seeing and understanding the things, which are above the

powers of a mere terrestrial creature. Soon after, two

other angels, of a still higher order, appeared to me and I

felt within me the power of the Lord by which they

called me. I understood that they were most mysterious

envoys and that they wished to reveal to me high and

hidden sacraments. Eagerly I responded, and desirous

of enjoying the blessing which they pointed out to me, I

declared to them, how ardently I longed to see what they

wished to show me and yet so mysteriously concealed

from me. Then they at once answered with great seren-

26 CITY OF GOD

ity : "Restrain thyself, O soul." I turned to the great

princes of heaven and said: "Princes of the Almighty

and messengers of the great King! Why do you now de

tain me contrary to my will and why do you defer my

joy and my delight, after you have called me? What

force is this of yours, and what power, which calls me,

fills me with fervor, which allures and yet detains me,

which attracts me to follow after the odor of my beloved

Lord and of his ointments, and yet restrains me with

strong bonds? Tell me the cause of all this!" They

answered : "Because, in order to be instructed in all these

mysteries, thou must needs, O soul, come with bare feet

and despoiled of all thy desires and passions; for these

mysteries do not accommodate or lend themselves to dis

ordered inclinations. Take off thy shoes like Moses

(Exodus 3, 5), for such was the command given to him

before he could see the wonderful bush." "Princes of

heaven and my lords," I answered, "much was asked of

Moses, when he received the command to perform the

works of an angel while yet living in mortal flesh : but he

was a saint, and I am but a sinner full of miseries. My

heart is disturbed and I am in conflict with the slavery

and the oppression of sin, which I feel in my members,

and which are opposed to the law of the spirit" (Rom.

7, 23). To which they rejoined: "Soul, it would in

deed be for thee a most difficult enterprise, if thou hadst

to execute it merely with thy own power ; but the Most

High, who wishes to see in thee this disposition, is pow

erful, and He will not deny to thee his help, if from thy

heart thou ask his assistance and thou prepare thyself to

receive it. And his power, which caused the bush to

burn and at the same time prevented it from being con

sumed, can prevent also the fire of the passions which

encompass and beset the soul, from consuming it, if it

THE CONCEPTION 27

truly desires to be saved. His Majesty asks for that

which He desires, and can execute what He asks.

Strengthened by Him, thou canst do that which He com

mands (Phil. 4, 13) ; take off thy shoes and weep in bit

ter sorrow, call out to Him from the bottom of thy heart,

in order that thy prayers may be heard and thy desires

fulfilled."

5. Presently I saw a most precious veil covering a

treasure and my heart burned with desire to see it raised

and to look upon the sacred mystery which I understood

was hidden beneath. My desire was answered in the fol

lowing manner: "Obey, O soul, in what was enjoined

and commanded thee ; despoil thyself of thyself, and then

this mystery will be revealed to thee." I resolved to

amend my life and to overcome my appetite; I sighed

and wept with many aspirations from my inmost soul

for the manifestation of this blessing. While I made

my good resolves, the veil which covered the treasure,

began to be lifted. Presently the veil fell entirely and

my interior eyes saw what I shall not know how to de

scribe in words. I saw a great and mysterious sign in

heaven; I saw a Woman, a most beautiful Lady and

Queen, crowned with the stars, clothed with the sun, and

the moon was at her feet (Apoc. 12, 1). The holy an

gels spoke to me: "This is that blessed Woman, whom

Saint John saw in the Apocalypse, and in whom are en

closed, deposited and sealed up the wonderful mysteries

of the Redemption. So much has the most high and pow

erful God favored this Creature, that we, his angelic

spirits, are full of astonishment. Contemplate and ad

mire her prerogatives, record them in writing, because

that is the purpose for which, according to the measure

suitable to thy circumstances, they will be made mani

fest to thee." I was made to see such wonders, that the

28 CITY OF GOD

greatness of them took away my speech, and my admira

tion of them suspended my other faculties ; nor do I think

that all the created beings in this mortal life will ever

comprehend them, as will appear in the sequel of my dis

course.

6. On another day, while my soul sweetly tarried in

the aforesaid habitation, I heard a voice from the Most

High saying: "My spouse, I desire that thou rouse thy

self in earnest to seek Me, and to love Me with fervor;

that thou make thy life more angelic than human, and

that thou forget entirely the terrestrial affairs. I wish to

raise thee as one that is poor from the dust, and as one

full of need from the dunghill (Ps. 112, 7), so that,

while I exalt thee, thou mayest humiliate thyself, and

the nard of thy sweet odor may remain in my presence ;

knowing thy own misery, be thou convinced from the

bottom of thy heart, that thou meritest for thyself only

tribulation and humiliation. Consider my greatness and

thy littleness; remember that I am just and holy; I deal

with thee considerately, making use rather of my mercy

and not chastising thee as thou deservest. Strive to build

upon this foundation of humility all the other virtues in

order to fulfill my wishes. I appoint my Virgin Mother

to teach, correct and reprehend thee. She will spur thee

onward and accompany thy footsteps according to my

liking and pleasure."

7. While the Most High spoke to me the Queen stood

near by; and the heavenly Princess disdained not to ac

cept the office which his Majesty assigned to Her. She

accepted it benignly and said to me: "My daughter, I

desire that thou be my disciple and my companion, and

I will be thy Teacher; but remember that thou must obey

me courageously and from this day on no vestige of a

daughter of Adam must be found in thee. My conduct

THE CONCEPTION 29

and my works during my pilgrimage on earth, and the

wonders, which the arm of the Almighty wrought

through me, shall be the mirror and the mocfel of thy

life." I prostrated myself before the throne of the King

and Queen of the universe and I offered to obey Her in

all things; I gave thanks to the Highest for the favor,

which He, so much in excess of my merits, conferred

upon me in giving me such a Guide and Protectress. Into

Her hands I renewed the vows of my profession; I of

fered myself to Her and proposed to work anew at the

amendment of my life. Again the Lord spoke to me :

"Behold and see!" Turning I saw a most beautiful lad

der with many rungs; around it were many angels, and

a great number of them were ascending and descending

upon it His Majesty said to me: "This is the mys

terious ladder of Jacob, the house of God and the portal

of heaven (Gen. 28, 17) ; if thou wilt earnestly strive to

live irreprehensible in my eyes, thou wilt ascend upon

it to Me."

8. This promise incited my desires, set my will aflame

and enraptured my spirit; with many tears I grieved,

that I should be a burden to myself in my sinfulness

(Job. 7, 20). I sighed for the end of my captivity and

longed to arrive where there would be no obstacle to my

love. In this anxiety I passed some days, trying to re

form my life; I again made a general confession and

corrected some of my imperfections. The vision of the

ladder continued without intermission, but it was not ex

plained to me. I made many promises to the Lord and

proposed to free myself from all terrestrial things and

to reserve the powers of my will entirely for his love,

without allowing it to incline toward any creature, be it

ever so small or unsuspicious ; I repudiated all visible

and sensible things. Having passed some days in these

30 CITY OF GOD

affections and sentiments, I was informed by the Most

High, that the ladder signified the life of the most Holy

Virgin, its virtues and sacraments. His Majesty said to

me : "I desire, my spouse, that thou ascend this stair of

Jacob and enter through this door of heaven to acquire

the knowledge of my attributes and occupy thyself in the

contemplation of my Divinity. Arise then and walk,

ascend by it to Me. These angels, which surround it

and accompany it, are those that I appointed as the guar

dians of Mary, as the defenders and sentinels of the cita

del of Sion. Consider Her attentively, and, meditating

on her virtues, seek to imitate them." It seemed to me

then, that I ascended the ladder and that I recognized

the great wonders and the ineffable prodigies of the Lord

in a mere Creature and the greatest sanctity and perfec

tion of virtue ever worked by the arm of the Almighty.

At the top of the ladder I saw the Lord of hosts and the

Queen of all creation. They commanded me to glorify,

exalt and praise Him on account of these great mysteries

and to write down so much of them, as I might bring

myself to understand. The exalted and high Lord gave

me a law, written not only on tablets, as He gave to

Moses (Exod. 31, 18), but one wrought by his omnipo

tent finger in order that it might be studied and ob

served (Ps. 1, 2). He moved my will so that in her

presence I promised to overcome my repugnance and

with her assistance to set about writing her history, pay

ing attention to three things: First, to remember that

the creature must ever seek to acknowledge the profound

reverence due to God and to abase itself in proportion to

the condescension of his Majesty toward men and that

the effect of greater favors and benefits must be a greater

fear, reverence, attention and humility; secondly, to be

ever mindful of the obligation of all men, who are so for-

THE CONCEPTION 31

getful of their own salvation, to consider and learn what

they owe to the Queen and Mother of piety on account

of the part assumed by Her in the Redemption, to think

of the love and the reverence which She showed to God

and the honor in which we are to hold this great Lady ;

thirdly, to be willing- to have my spiritual director, and if

necessary the whole world, find out my littleness and

vileness, and the small returns which I make for what I

receive.

9. To these my protestations the most Holy Virgin

answered : "My daughter, the world stands much in need

of this doctrine, for it does not know, nor does it prac

tice, the reverence due to the Lord omnipotent. On ac

count of this ignorance his justice is provoked to afflict

and humiliate men. They are sunken in their careless

ness and filled with darkness, not knowing how to seek

relief or attain to the light. This, however, is justly their

lot, since they fail in the reverence and fear, which they

ought to have." Besides this the Most High and the

Queen gave me many other instructions, in order to make

clear to me their will in regard to this work. It seemed

to me temerity and want of charity toward myself, to re

ject the instruction which She had promised me for nar

rating the course of her most holy life. It seemed

equally improper to put off the writing of it, since the

Most High had intimated this as the fitting and oppor

tune time, saying to me in this regard: "My daughter,

when I sent my Onlybegotten, the world, with the excep

tion of the few souls that served Me, was in worse condi

tion than it ever had been since its beginning; for human

nature is so imperfect that if it does not subject itself to

the interior guidance of my light and to the fulfillment of

the precepts of my ministers by sacrificing its own judg

ment and following Me, who am the way, the truth and

32 CITY OF GOD

the life (John 14, 6), and by carefully observing my com

mandments in order not to lose my friendship, it will

presently fall into the abyss of darkness and innumerable

miseries, until it arrives at obstinacy in sin. From the

creation and sin of the first man until I gave the law to

Moses, men governed themselves according to their own

inclinations and fell into many errors and sins (Rom. 8,

13). After having received the law, they again com

mitted sin by not obeying it (John 7, 19) and thus they

lived on, separating themselves more and more from

truth and light and arriving at the state of complete for-

getfulness. In fatherly love I sent them eternal salvation

and a remedy for the incurable infirmities of human na

ture, thus justifying my cause. And just as I then

chose the opportune time for the greater manifestation of

my mercy, so I now select this time for showing toward

them another very great favor. For now the hour has

come and the opportune time to let men know the just

cause of my anger, and they are now justly charged and

convinced of their guilt. Now I will make manifest my

indignation and exercise my justice and equity; I will

show how well justified is my cause. In order that this

may come to pass more speedily, and because it is now

time that my mercy show itself more openly and be

cause my love must not be idle, I will offer to them an

opportune remedy, if they will but make use of it for re

turning again to my favor. Now, at this hour, when the

world has arrived at so unfortunate a pass, and when,

though the Word has become incarnate, mortals are more

careless of their weal and seek it less ; when the day of

their transitory life passes swiftly at the setting of the

sun of time; when the night of eternity is approaching

closer and closer for the wicked and the day without a

night is being born for the just; when the majority of

THE CONCEPTION 33

mortals are sinking deeper and deeper into the darkness

of their ignorance and guilt, oppressing the just and

mocking the children of God ; when my holy and divine

law is despised in the management of the iniquitous af

fairs of state, which are as hostile as they are contrary to

my Providence ; when the wicked least deserve my mer

cy; in these predestined times, I wish to open a portal

for the just ones through which they can find access to

my mercy ; I wish to give them a light by which they can

dispel the gloom that envelops the eyes of their minds.

I wish to furnish them a suitable remedy for restoring

them to my grace. Happy they who find it, and blessed

they who shall appreciate its value, rich they who shall

come upon this treasure, and blessed and very wise those

who sh^ll search into and shall understand its marvels

and hidden mysteries. I desire to make known to mor

tals how much intercession of Her is worth, who brought

restoration of life by giving mortal existence to the im

mortal God. As recompense I desire that they look upon

the wonders wrought by my mighty arm in that pure

Creature, as upon a mirror by which they can estimate

their own ingratitude. I wish to make known to them

much of that, which according to my high judgment is

still hidden concerning the Mother of the Word."

10. "I have not revealed these mysteries in the primitive

Church, because they are so great, that the faithful

would have been lost in the contemplation and admira

tion of them at a time when it was more necessary to

establish firmly the law of grace and of the Gospel. Al

though all mysteries of religion are in perfect harmony

with each other, yet human ignorance might have suf

fered recoil and doubt at their magnitude, when faith

in the Incarnation and Redemption and the precepts of

the new law of the Gospel were yet in their beginnings.

34 CITY OF GOD

On this same account the person of the incarnate Word

said to his disciples at the last supper: "Many things

have I to say to you ; but you are not yet disposed to re

ceive them" (John 6, 12). These words He addressed

to all the world, for it was not yet capable of giving full

obedience to the law of grace and full assent to the faith

in the Son, much less was it prepared to be introduced

into the mysteries of his Mother. But now, mankind

has greater need for this manifestation, and this neces

sity urges Me to disregard their evil disposition. And if

men would now seek to please Me by reverencing, be

lieving, and studying the wonders, which are intimately

connected with this Mother of Piety, and if they would

all begin to solicit her intercession from their whole

heart, the world would find some relief. I will not longer

withhold from men this mystical City of refuge; de

scribe and delineate it to them, as far as thy shortcom

ings allow. I do not intend that thy descriptions and

declarations of the life of the Blessed Virgin shall be

mere opinions or contemplations, but reliable truth. They

that have ears to hear, let them hear. Let those who

thirst come to the living waters and leave the dried-out

cisterns ; let those that are seeking for the light, follow it

to the end. Thus speaks the Lord God Almighty!"

11. These are the words of the Most High on the oc

casion before mentioned. Obedient to the authority,

which commands me, I will in the following chapter de

scribe the manner in which I receive my information and

enlightenment, and how I see the Lord. Thus comply

ing with his orders, I will explain, once for all, the illu

minations and the favors which are vouchsafed to me for

this work and to which I will refer in the sequel of this

history.

CHAPTER II.

HOW THE LORD, IN THE STATE IN WHICH HE HAD

PLACED ME, MANIFESTED TO ME THE MYSTERIES OF

THE LIFE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

12. It seemed to me proper to preface this history

with an explanatory chapter, describing and explaining

once for all, as far as is given me and as far as I can,

the manner in which the Lord manifested to me these

wonders.

13. Ever since I have had the use of reason, I was con

scious of especially one blessing, which in my estimation

is the greatest of all those bestowed upon me by God s

liberality ; namely, a great and penetrating fear, lest I

should lose Him. And this moved and urged me on to

strive after the better and more secure way and to follow

after it and implore it from the Lord day after day. He

has wounded my flesh with the dart of fear of his judg

ments (Ps. 118, 120), and I live continually in the dread

ful thought: Have I perhaps lost the friendship of the

Most High or am I still in his friendship ? My bread day

and night have been the tears, which this fear has drawn

from my eyes (Ps. 91, 4). On account of this dread,

since it is more necessary than ever that the friends of

the Lord should practice their virtues in secret and with

out ostentation, I have in these latter times begun to send

up earnest and heartfelt prayers and petitions to the

Lord, asking also the intercession of the Queen and Vir

gin, that I may be guided and led along the secure paths

hidden from the eyes of men.

35

36 CITY OF GOD

14. In answer to these repeated prayers the Lord said :

"Do not fear, soul, nor afflict thyself ; for I will give thee

a state of mind and show thee a path of light and secur

ity, which only its Author himself could know of or even

conceive. Whatever is exterior and dangerous shall leave

thee today and thy treasure shall be altogether hidden.

Take care of it on thy part and preserve it by a perfect

life. I will direct thee toward a hidden path, unobstruct

ed, unfailing and pure ; walk thou in it." And presently

I felt a change within me and a highly spiritualized state

of mind. To my understanding was given a new light,

which illuminated it and infused into it a knowledge of

all things in God, and of his operations as they are in

themselves and as they are known and seen by God, ac

cording to the measure of his communication. It is a

knowledge of light, holy, sweet and pure, subtle, pene

trating, sure and agile, causing love of good and hatred

of evil. It is a breath of the power of God and an ema

nation of a most subtle light, which acts as a mirror for

my understanding. Thus the higher faculties and the in

terior perception of my soul began to expand in their

activity. For the Object, by means of the light which

flashed from It, showed Itself to be infinite, though the

perception of It remained limited and the understanding

finite. It is a vision as it were of the Lord seated on a

throne of great majesty, where, always within mortal

limitation, I perceive his attributes distinctly. A veil,

which seems like purest crystal intervenes, through

which the wonderful attributes and perfections of God

appear distinctly and clearly perceptible; yet this vision is

not entire, immediate or intuitive, or entirely free from

obstruction, but always comes through a medium, which

is nothing else than this crystalline covering above men

tioned. The perception of that which it covers is not

THE CONCEPTION 37

painful to the understanding,, but is marvelous, because

the mind is aware that what is perceived is infinite, and

that the one who perceives is finite. The mind reposes in

the hope of once possessing that which it perceives, and

of once seeing the veil removed and the medium done

away with, as soon as the soul shall have been freed from

the mortality of the body (II Cor. 4, 6).

15. In this vision there are three different ways or

degrees, according to the different methods, by which the

divine Will communicates it and according to the dispo

sitions of the human will. Sometimes He manifests

Himself more clearly, at other times less. At times some

mysteries are revealed to the exclusion of others of great

importance. This difference is usually in accordance

with the dispositions of the soul ; for if the soul does not

preserve itself in peace or if it is guilty of some fault,

no matter how small, it will not experience this vision in

its fullness. In the one I have described the Lord is per

ceived so plainly and so securely, that there is not the

least room for doubt. However, the conviction of the

real presence of God in the vision always precedes and

impresses itself upon the mind, before one understands

fully that which his Majesty speaks. And this knowl

edge produces a pleasing constraint, powerfully and effi

caciously urging the soul onward to love, serve, and obey

the Most High. In this vision great truths are made

clear ; how estimable virtue is, and what a valuable treas

ure is its exercise and preservation. The beauty and se

curity of virtue is exhibited and a powerful impulse given

toward the good, while a hatred and disgust toward evil

and all disorderly inclinations fills the soul, very often

entirely subduing them. As long as the soul enjoys this

vision and does not lose it, it will never be conquered

(Wis. 7, 30), because it gives life, security, fervor and

38 CITY OF GOD

joy. Strongly and lovingly it calls and urges the soul

onward, gives it lightness and alertness, and establishes

the superior part of the being firmly above the inferior.

Even the body becomes agile and spiritualized during

such times, freeing itself from its grossness and weight.

16. And beginning to perceive and feel these delight

ful sensations, the soul lovingly calls out to the Most

High: "Trahe me post Te" (Cant. 1, 3) let us run to

gether; for, united to its Beloved, it does not any more

feel the doings of this earthly life. Seeking to fly after

the odor of the ointments of its Beloved, it begins to live

more where it loves, than where it lives. Having already

left behind its lower nature, it turns back only for the

purpose of reforming it and curtailing its animal appe

tites of the passions. If at any time they seek to rise in

rebellion, the soul will subdue them with alacrity, for

already "not I live, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2, 20).

17. To a certain extent, in all these holy operations

and aspirations, is felt the assistance of the spirit of

Christ, who is the God and the life of the soul (John 5,

11) and who is known as such by the fervor, by the en

lightenment, by the holy desires, by the light, and by the

facility of action inspired by Him. These are such, that

only God can be the Author of them. One feels the un

interrupted activity of love which it causes, and of inti

mate conversation with God, living and continuous,

which rivets the attention of the mind to the things of

God and withdraws it from earthly things. Christ mani

fests Himself as living within the soul, exerting his

power and dispersing the darkness by his light. This

may be properly designated as standing in the entrance

of the house of the Lord ; for there the soul beholds the

splendor emanating from the beaconlight of the Lamb of

God (Apoc. 21, 23).

THE CONCEPTION 39

18. I do not say that this is the whole light, but it is

part of it ; and it consists in a knowledge superior to the

capabilities and faculties of a creature. In furtherance

of this vision the Most High animates the intellect by a

certain subtlety and light, thus adapting it for the exalted

knowledge. Moreover the knowledge thus given is ac

companied by the certainty which is peculiar to faith, as

experienced in regard to the more common truths of

revelation. Faith accompanies the vision and the Omnip

otent gives to the soul power to appreciate the value of

the knowledge and the light, which He infuses. Its light

is inextinguishable (Wis. 7, 10) and all good things

and a nobility of great price come to me with it. This

light goes before me, directing my ways (Wis. 8, 16)

and I took possession of it unerringly, and I desired to

communicate it without envy, nor have I concealed its

excellence. It is a participation of the Divinity and its

presence is a great delight and joy. It teaches great

things freely and it disciplines the heart ; with irresistible

force it banishes and expels the deceitful things of this

world, wherein, solely by looking upon them in this light,

the spirit finds immeasurable bitterness. By it the soul

leaves behind the perishable things and flies to the sacred

refuge of eternal truths. It enters into the cellar of fer

mented wine (Cant. 2, 4) where the Most High orders

in me most holy charity. And by it He urges me to be

patient and without envy (I Cor. 13, 4), to be kind with

out offense, to be free from pride and ambition or anger,

thinking ill of nobody and suffering and tolerating all

things. Its voice is ever within me (Prov. 8, 1) and se

cretly warns me powerfully to do what is most holy and

most pure, teaching me in all things ; and if I fall short in

the slightest degree, it reprehends me without ever pass

ing over the smallest point.

40 CITY OF GOD

19. This is the light, which at one and at the same

time enlightens, raises to fervor, teaches and reprehends,

chastens and enlivens, calls and deters, warns and com

pels, makes clear the distinction between good and evil,

discloses the hidden and the profound, the length and

the breadth (Eph. 3, 18) ; which reveals to me the world,

its state, its inclinations, its deceits and the lies and falla

cies of its lovers and clients. Above all, it teaches me to

despise the world, to tread it under foot and to raise my

self to the highest Lord and Governor of the universe.

And in his Majesty I see and learn the ordering of all

things (Wis. 7, 17), the power of the elements, the

beginning, the middle and the end of time, its changes

and variations, the onward course of the years, the har

mony of all creatures and their innate qualities; all the

secrets of men, their acts and their thoughts; how far

they stray from the Lord ; the dangers in which they live

and the errors of their ways ; the states and governments,

their curtailed existence and their great instability, their

beginning and their end, the true and the false principles

which guide them. All this is learnt and seen distinctly

in God through this light, even as far as pertains to the

separate individuals and circumstances. But as soon as

the soul descends to a lower condition and a more ordi

nary state, wherein it must make use only of the substance

or acquired habit of this enlightenment and cannot enjoy

its full splendor, this exalted knowledge of persons, of

conditions, and of the secret thoughts before described is

more circumscribed and limited. In this lower state I

perceive only so much as is necessary to avoid danger

and fly from sin, and to feel true compassion with other

persons, though at the same time I am not permitted to

speak clearly with any one about that which is revealed

to me of their evil state^r^rcpuld not do it if I tried, for

THE CONCEPTION 41

it seems as if I am made dumb, except at times, when the

Author of this light gives me permission and commands

me to admonish one of my neighbors. But even on such

occasions I must not disclose the nature of my cognition,

but I am constrained to speak to the heart, using plain

arguments, simple, ordinary and charitable persuasion in

God. At the same time I am urged to pray for their ne

cessities, which for that object become known to me.

20. Although all these things were revealed to me

with the greatest clearness, yet never has the Lord shown

me the final ruin of any soul, which has damned itself.

This knowledge is withheld from me by the providence

of God, because He is so just, that He does not deem it

befitting to reveal the damnation of a soul except for

some great purpose ; and if I were to come to the knowl

edge of such a great ruin, I think I should die of sorrow.

This would doubtlessly be the effect of such a revelation,

so great is the grief caused by the sight of a soul forever

separated from God. I have besought Him not to show

me any one who will damn himself. I would not refuse,

at the cost of my life, to liberate any one who is in sin,

nor would I object even to see the present state of such

soul ; but may I never see one, who is beyond redemption !

21. This light is given me, not that I may reveal my

secrets in particular, but that I may make use of it with

prudence and wisdom. Though it continues to be only

accidental, it remains with me in the same way as some

substance, that vivifies and comes from God himself ; and

in the manner of a habit, to insure the good government

of my lower appetites and feelings. Moreover, in the

superior part of my soul, I enjoy a vision and habitation

of peace and I understand the mysteries and sacraments

of the life of the Queen of heaven and of other mysteries

of faith, which were thus continually made manifest and

42 CITY OF GOD

present to me in this never failing light And if at any

time I descend, creaturelike, to attend to human affairs,

the Lord presently calls me with a sweet yet rigorous

severity and again draws my attention to his words and

teachings and to the conscious meditation of these sacra

ments, graces and virtues, and to the exterior and in

terior works of the Virgin Mother, as I will explain

farther on.

22. Thus, when in the state of enlightenment afore

said, I see also and recognize the same Queen and Lady

as She speaks with me ; also the holy angels, their na

ture and excellence. Sometimes I see and recognize them

in the Lord, at other times I see them in themselves ; but

with this difference that in seeing them in themselves, I

descend to a lower grade of knowledge. I perceive also

this difference, which results from the object and from

the kind of knowledge. In this lower degree of vision

I see, speak and listen to the holy princes ; they converse

with me and explain many of the mysteries, which the

Lord has shown me. The Queen of heaven likewise

manifests and propounds to me the mysteries of her most

holy life and of its admirable events. With great clearness

I recognize each one of these holy persons, feeling the

divine effects, which each one excites in the soul.

23. But when I see these same persons in the Lord,

I perceive them as through a mirror placed freely by His

Majesty, in which He shows to me the saints according

to his pleasure, with great clearness and producing most

exalted effects in my soul. For this admirable light, the

Lord himself becomes known, as also the Saints and their

excellent virtues and wonderful works ; likewise the man

ner in which they exercised these virtues by the help of

the graces, that made them capable of all this (Philip

4, 13). In this state of knowledge the creature is more

THE CONCEPTION 43

abundantly and completely filled with a joy, that still

further increases the power and satisfaction of the soul,

and poises it as if on its center of gravity. For, the more

intellectual and the less corporeal or imaginary the light,

so much the more powerful and exalted are the effects,

and so much the more substantial and certain is the

knowledge attained. Yet also here there is a difference :

for the vision or knowledge of God himself, of

his attributes and his perfections is superior and

its effects are most sweet and affable; while the

vision and knowledge of the creatures, even in

the Lord, is of an inferior order. This inferiority,

it seems to me, arises in part from the soul itself; since

its own vision is so limited, that it cannot attend to or

perceive God so well, when seeing Him conjointly with

creatures, as when seeing Him by Himself and without

them. Also this vision of God by Himself is accom

panied by a greater plenitude of joy than the vision of

creatures in God. So delicate is this cognition of the

Divinity, that to attend to any other thing in conjunction

with it, impairs to a certain extent its clearness, at least

so long as we shall be in our mortal state.

24. In the inferior state, which I have mentioned, I

see the most holy virgin and the angels in themselves and

their mode of teaching me, speaking to me, and enlighten

ing me. I understand this to be similar to the mode in

which the angels themselves enlighten, communicate and

speak with each other, when the superior orders en

lighten the inferior. The Lord is the first cause of this

light, but the Queen who has received it in its highest

plenitude, communicates it as through a channel to the

superior part of my soul, so that I begin to know her

excellence, her prerogatives and mysteries in the same

manner as an inferior angel perceives that, which is com-

44 CITY OF GOD

municated to him by the superior spirits. I recognize

Her also by the doctrine which She teaches, by the ef

ficacy peculiar to it, and by other qualities, which are

felt and tasted and which indicate the purity, elevation

and certainty of these visions. There, nothing impure,

or obscure, or false, or suspected is met with ; and nothing

that is holy, pure and true is withheld from view. The

same happens to me in its proper proportion, when con

versing with the holy angels; for the Lord himself has

often informed me, that they enlighten and communicate

with me in the same manner as they converse with each

other. Often it happens that the enlightenments pass

through all these channels and conduits in succession : the

Lord gives the intelligence or light, the most holy Virgin

reveals it to me and the angels express it to me in words.

At other times (and this is the most ordinary mode) the

Lord communicates and teaches me his holy doctrine,

sometimes the most holy Queen, and sometimes the holy

angels. It also happens, that I receive only the under

standing of things, and then I am left to find for myself

the terms which befit that which I hold in the intelligence.

In finding these terms I may err, if the Lord allows, for

I am only an ignorant woman and I must rely on what

I have heard. If any difficulties arise in the explanation

of my visions, I take counsel with my master and spir

itual guide, especially in more difficult and arduous

matters.

25. In this condition and state I very seldom see

corporeal visions, but imaginary visions I see sometimes;

these are of a much lower grade than the exalted, more

spiritual, or intellectual vision, of which I have until now

spoken. But this I can assert with confidence : in all the

spiritual enlightenments, which I receive, great and small,

lower or higher, whether they come from the Lord, the

THE CONCEPTION 45

most blessed Virgin, or the holy angels, in all of them I

obtain most abundant light and help of salvation, en

abling me to see and know the truth and the possibility

of greater perfection and sanctity. I feel within me a

divine force, which compels me to seek the greater purity

of my soul, and advancement in the grace of the Lord,

which makes me ready to die for it and to act in all

things according to greater perfection. With the help

of the different grades and kinds of intelligence already

described, I learn to know all the mysteries of the life of

the Queen of heaven to the great advancement and re

joicing of my spirit. For this I thank the Almighty with

my whole heart and mind, I magnify Him, I adore and

praise Him as the all powerful and holy God, strong and

admirable, worthy of honor, magnificence, glory and rev

erence through all the ages. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE) OF THE DIVINITY, WHICH WAS CON

FERRED UPON ME, AND OF THE DECREE OF THE CRE

ATION OF THE WORLD.

26. O King, most high and most wise Lord: How

incomprehensible are thy judgments, and inscrutable thy

ways (Rom. 11, 24)! Invincible God, enduring for

ever and whose beginning is unknown (Eccli. 18, 1) !

Who can understand thy greatness and who can be worthy

of thy most magnificent works, or who can tell Thee why

Thou hast created them (Rom. 9, 20) ? For Thou art

exalted above all of them and our vision cannot reach

Thee and our understanding cannot comprehend Thee.

Mayest Thou be blest, magnificent King, because Thou

has deigned to show me, thy slave and a vile worm of

the earth, great sacraments and most sublime mysteries,

exalting my habitation and raising my spirit to a height,

in which I saw things unspeakable. I saw the Lord and

Creator of all things ; I perceived as it were the exalted-

ness of a Being existing in Itself, before It created any

other thing; I do not know the manner in which It

showed Itself to me, but I know what I saw and per

ceived. His Majesty, comprehending all things, is aware

that, while I am speaking of his Deity, my thoughts stand

still, my soul is troubled, my faculties cease their opera

tions, and the superior part of my being deserts the lower

and animal parts, despises that which is of the senses

and flies toward its Beloved, leaving lifeless the body

which it should keep alive. In these excursions and aban-

46

THE CONCEPTION 47

donments of love my eyes flow over in tears and my

tongue becomes mute. O my most high and incompre

hensible Lord, infinite Object of my understanding! How

am I annihilated at the sight of Thee, the Measureless

and the Eternal, and how my being grovels in the dust,

scarcely knowing what I am ! How can my insignificance

and misery dare to admire thy magnificence and thy

great majesty? Vivify, O Lord, my being; strengthen

my vision and give the breath of life to my fear, so that

I may be able to describe what I saw and thus obey thy

command.

27. I saw the Most High, at the same time under

standing how his Majesty is in Himself; I received a

clear intelligence and a true perception of what is meant

by a God, infinite in his substance and attributes, eternal,

exalted above all, being three in Person, and one true

God. Three in Person, because of the three activities of

knowing, comprehending and loving each other; one, so

as to secure the boon of eternal unity. It is the Trinity

of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. The Father

is not made, nor created, nor begotten, nor can He be

generated or have a beginning. I perceived, that the

Son derives his origin from the Father alone by eternal

generation; and that They are equal in their duration

from eternity ; and that He is begotten by the fecundity

of the intelligence of the Father. The Holy Ghost pro

ceeds from the Father and the Son through love. In

their indivisible Trinity there is nothing which can be

called first or last, greater or smaller: all three Persons

are equally eternal and eternally equal ; there is unity of

essence in a trinity of persons. Nor are the Persons

mingled in order to form one God, nor the divine sub

stance separated or divided in order to form three Per

sons, being distinct as the Father, as the Son and as the

48 CITY OF GOD

Holy Ghost. They are nevertheless one and the same

Divinity, equal in Each is the glory, and majesty, the

power, the eternity, the immensity, the wisdom and sanc

tity, and all the attributes. And though there are three

Persons, in whom these infinite perfections subsist, He

is the one and true God, the Holy, the Just, the Power

ful, the Eternal and the Measureless.

28. I also obtained an understanding of the manner in

which this Trinity comprehends Itself by simple vision,

so that no new or distinct cognition is necessary : the

Father knows that, which is known to the Son, and the

Son and the Holy Ghost know that which is in the in

telligence of the Father. I understood how they love

One another with one and the same immense and eternal

love ; how there is a single, indivisible and equal oneness

of intelligence, love and action, how there is one simple,

incorporeal and indivisible nature, a divine essence of the

true God, in which are joined and united all the perfec

tions in their highest and in an infinite degree.

29. I learnt also to understand the quality of these per

fections of the highest Lord : that He is beautiful with

out a blemish, great without quantity, good without need

of qualification, eternal without the duration of time,

strong without any weakness, living without touch of

decay, true without deceit, present in all places, filling

them without occupying them, existing in all things with

out occupying any space. There is no contradiction in

his kindness, nor any defect in his wisdom. In his wis

dom He is inscrutable, in his decrees He is terrible, in

his judgments just, in his thoughts most hidden, in his

words most true, in his works holy, in his riches affluent.

To Him no space is too wide, no narrowness causes re

straint, his will does not vary, the sorrowful does not

cause Him pain, the past has not passed for Him, nor

THE CONCEPTION 49

does the future happen in regard to Him. O eternal

Immensity, what illimitable expansion have I seen in

Thee? What vastness do I see in thy infinite Being?

Vision does not terminate, nor ever exhaust itself in thy

abyss of being. This is the unchangeable Essence, the

Being above all other beings, the most perfect sanctity,

the most constant truth ; this is the infinite, the length, the

breadth, the height and the depth, glory and its cause,

rest without fatigue, goodness immeasurable. All this

I saw at the same time, but the power to describe it more

fully fails me.

30. I saw the Lord as He was before He had created

anything and with great astonishment I looked to see

where was the throne of the Most High, for the em

pyrean heavens were not, nor the lower ones, nor did

the sun exist, nor the moon, nor the other stars, nor the

elements, only the Creator was, without any of his

creatures. All was void, without presence of angels, or

men or animals. I saw how of necessity it must be ad

mitted, that God has his being in Himself, and that He

stands in want or need of none of the created things.

For He is as infinite in his attributes before as He is

after creating them, and He will possess and hold these

attributes during the whole of eternity, because they ex

ist in Him as in an independent increated Essence. No

perfection which is in itself purely and essentially such,

can be wanting to his Divinity: for the Godhead is the

only thing that is, and contains all the perfection of

created beings in an eminent and ineffable manner. All

the other beings, in so far as they exist, have their ex

istence solely in that infinite Being, as effects in their

cause.

31. I understood, that the Most High was in the

quiescent state of his own being, when the three Persons

50 CITY OF GOD

(according to our way of understanding things), decreed

to communicate his perfections as a free gift. For

greater clearness, I must remark, that God comprehends

in Himself all things by one indivisible, most simple and

instantaneous act. He does not go on from the under

standing of one thing to the understanding of

another like we do, distinguishing and perceiving

first one thing by an act of the understanding, and

after that proceeding to the knowledge of others by their

connection with those already known. God knows them

conjointly all at once, without before or after, since all

are together and at once contained in the divine and un

created knowledge and science, just as they are compre

hended and enclosed in his infinite Being, as in their first

beginning.

32. In this knowledge of God, which primarily is

called the knowledge of pure intelligence (scientia sim-

plicis intelligentise), we must, according to the natural

precedence of the intelligence before the will, not over

look a certain succession, not indeed of time, but of

nature. Hence we perceive that the act of intelligence

preceded by its nature the act of the will For in our

way of reflecting on things, we think of the act of intelli

gence by itself, abstractedly from the decree of wishing

to create anything. In this first stage or instant the three

Persons through an act of intelligence confirmed the op

portuneness of the work ad extra and of all creatures,

which have been, are, and are to be.

33. Though I am unworthy to know the order which

He followed, or which we, as men, are enabled to per

ceive in the decree of creation, his Majesty nevertheless

deigned to take notice of a request, which I made in this

regard. I petitioned Him to make known to me the

place which was held by the Mother of God and our

THE CONCEPTION 51

Queen in the divine intelligence ; and, as well as I can, I

will state what He answered me and manifested to me and

I will also say something of the order which I perceived

by the help of God in these ideas. I divide them accord

ing to moments or instants, for it is impossible to ac

commodate the knowledge of this divine science to our

capacity in any other way. This science is called the

science of vision, constituting the divine ideas or images

of the creatures, which God decreed to call into existence

and which are a production of his mind. By them He

knows creatures with an infinitely more precise knowl

edge, than we can ever have of them.

34. Although this divine knowledge is one, most sim

ple and indivisible, nevertheless, since the things which

I see are many, and since there is a certain order, by

which some are first and some come after, it is necessary

to divide the knowledge of God s intelligence and the

knowledge of his will into many instants, or into many

different acts, according as they correspond to the diverse

orders of created things. For as some of the creatures

hold their existence because of others, there is a depen

dence of one upon the other. Accordingly we say that

God intended and decreed this before that, the one on

account of the other; and that if He had not desired or

included in the science of vision the one, He would not

have desired the other. But by this way of speaking, we

must not try to convey the meaning that God placed

many acts of intelligence, or of the will ; rather we must

intend merely to indicate, that the creatures are depen

dent on each other and that they succeed one another.

In order to be able to comprehend the manner of cre

ation more easily, we apply the order of things as we

see them objectively, to the acts of the divine intelligence

and will in creating them.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE DIVINE DECREES ARE CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO

INSTANTS, AND WHAT GOD IN EACH DETERMINED TO

COMMUNICATE AD EXTRA.

35. I understood, that this order comprises the follow

ing instants. The first instant is : God recognizing his

infinite attributes and perfections together with the pro

pensity and the ineffable inclination to communicate Him

self outwardly. This knowledge of God as being com

municative ad extra comes first. The Majesty of God,

beholding the nature of his infinite perfections, their vir

tue and efficacy operating with magnificence, saw that

it was just and most proper, and, as it were, a duty and

a necessity, to communicate Himself and to follow that

inclination of imparting and exercising his liberality and

mercy, by distributing outside of Himself with magnifi

cence the plenitude of the infinite treasures, contained

in the Divinity. For, being infinite in all things, it is

much more natural that He communicate gifts and

graces, than that fire should ascend, or the stone should

gravitate toward its center, or that the sun should diffuse

its light. This unfathomable depth of perfections, this

affluence of treasures, this impetuous infinity of riches, is

set in motion by its own inclinations to communicate it

self. At the same time God is in Himself conscious that

to distribute gifts and graces, is not to diminish his

riches, but to increase them in the only possible way, by

giving an outlet to the inexhaustible fountain of his

riches.

52

THE CONCEPTION 53

36. All this did God see in the first instant after the

communication ad intra by means of the eternal emana

tions. Seeing this He found Himself, as it were, obliged,

in Himself, to communicate Himself ad extra, perceiving

that it was holy, just, merciful, and god-like to do so;

hence nothing could impede Him. According to our

mode of understanding, we can represent God to our

minds as not being satisfied nor at rest with Himself

until He reached the object of his desires, the creatures,

where and with whom, by making them partakers of his

divinity and perfections, He seeks his delight.

37. In this enlightenment and knowledge which I pos

sess, two things hold my lukewarm heart in wonder and

inflame it unto annihilation. The first is the inclination

and urgent desire, which I see in God, and the strong

will, to communicate his Divinity and the treasures of

his grace. The second is the unspeakable and incompre

hensible immensity of the good gifts, which I see He

wishes to distribute according to this decree, assigning

them for this purpose and yet remaining infinite, as if He

had yet given nothing. In this desire and inclination,

which fills his Majesty I see Him prepared to sanctify,

justify, overwhelm with gifts and perfections all crea

tures together and each one in particular for itself. He

would be ready to give to each of the creatures more than

what is held by all the angels and seraphim together;

even if all the drops in the ocean and the grains of sand

on their shores, all the stars, the planets and the elements,

and all creatures were capable of reason and of his gifts,

they would receive them without measure, provided they

would dispose themselves and place no obstacle toward

receiving them. O fearful malice of sin, which alone is

capable of holding up the impetuous stream of such great

and eternal gifts!

54 CITY OF GOD

38. The second instant was to confirm and determine

the object and intention of this communication of the

Divinity ad extra, namely, that it should redound to his

greater glory and to the exaltation of his Majesty and

the manifestation of his greatness. This his own exal

tation God saw as the end, for which He would com-

municate Himself, make Himself known by his liberality

in the distribution of his attributes, and set in motion his

Omnipotence in order that He might be known, praised

and glorified.

39. The third instant consisted in selecting and de

termining the order and arrangement, or the mode of

this communication, so as to realize in an adequate man

ner the most exalted ends The order namely, which it

is proper should be maintained in regard to the communi

cations of the Godhead and its divine attributes; so that

this activity of the Lord may have its proper reasons and

objects, and so that it might proceed with the most beau

tiful and admirable sequence, harmony and subordina

tion. In this instant was decreed first of all, that the di

vine Word should assume flesh and should become vis

ible. The perfection and the composition of the most

holy humanity of Christ our Lord was decreed and

modeled in the divine intelligence. Secondarily, also

were formed the ideals of the rest of men in imitation of

the First The divine mind prearranged the harmony

and adornment of the human nature composed of an

organic body and a vivifying soul, endowed with facul

ties to know and enjoy its Creator, to discern between

good and evil, and with a free will to love that same

Lord.

40. This hypostatic union of the second Person of the

most holy Trinity I understood necessarily to have been

the first incentive and object on account of which, before

THE CONCEPTION 55

all others, the divine intelligence and will issued ad extra;

and the reasons are most exalted, so that I cannot explain.

One of these reasons is, that God, having in Himself

known and loved Himself, should, according to right or

der, know and love that, which approaches most inti

mately to his Divinity, as is the case in the hypostatic

union. Another reason is, that the Divinity, having

communicated Itself ad infra, should also communicate

Itself ad extra; for thus the divine will and intention

would begin to execute its works with the highest end

in view, and his attributes would be communicated in

the most beautiful order. The fire of the Divinity ex

pended itself in its fullest measure on that which was

most immediately connected with It, namely, the hypo-

statically united humanity ; and his Divinity communicated

Itself in the highest and most excellent degree to Him,

who was to be closest to God in divine knowledge

and love, and share the works and the glory of the Deity.

For God (speaking according to our lowly comprehen

sion) could not endanger the attainment of this end, since

He alone could be an object proportionate and worthy of

so wonderful an operation. It was also befitting and, as

it were, necessary, that if God should create many crea

tures, He should create them in such harmony and sub

ordination, as would be the most admirable and glorious

within the reach of possibility. In conformity with this

therefore, they must be subordinate to a supreme Chief,

who should be as far as possible united immediately with

God, so that through Him they may have communication

and connection with his Divinity. For these and for other

reasons (which I cannot explain), the dignity of the

works of God could be provided for only by the Incarna

tion of the Word ; through Him Creation should possess

the most beautiful order, which without Him was im

possible.

56 CITY OF GOD

41. The fourth instant was to determine the gifts and

graces, which were to be conferred upon the humanity

of Christ, our Lord, in union with the Divinity. Here

the Most High opened the liberal hands of his Omnipo

tence and his other attributes, in order to enrich the most

sacred humanity and the soul of Christ with the highest

possible plenitude of his gifts and graces. Then was

fulfilled what afterward David said : "The stream of the

river maketh the city of God joyful" (Ps. 45, 5). When

the stream of his gifts flowed toward the humanity of

the Word, communicating to it all the infused science,

the grace and goodness of which his blessed soul was

capable, and which fitted that Being, which was to be

God and true man, and at the same time, the Head of all

creatures capable of grace and glory, in order that from

this impetuous stream they might partake in the manner

in which it afterwards really happened.

42. To this instant also, and, as it were, in natural

sequence, pertain the decree and predestination of the

Mother of the Divine Word incarnate ; for here, I under

stand, was ordained that pure Creature before aught else

whatever. Thus, before all other creatures, was She con

ceived in the divine mind, in such manner and such state

as befitted and became the dignity, excellence and gifts

of the humanity of her most holy Son. To Her flowed

over, at once and immediately, the river of the Divinity

and its attributes with all its impetuosity, in as far as a

mere creature is capable and as is due to the dignity of

the Mother of God.

43. In the knowledge of these exalted mysteries and

decrees, I confess myself ravished in admiration and

transported beyond my proper self. Perceiving this most

holy and pure Creature formed and conceived in the di

vine mind from the beginning and before all the ages, I

THE CONCEPTION 57

joyously and exultingly magnify the Omnipotent for the

admirable and mysterious decree, by which He formed

for us such a pure and grand, such a mysterious and

godlike Creature, worthy rather to be admired and

praised by all beings, than to be described by any one.

In my admiration I can say with St.Dionysius the Areop-

agite: "If faith would not instruct me, and if the un

derstanding of what I see would not teach me, that it is

God, who has conceived Her in his mind, and who alone

could and can in his Omnipotence form such an image of

his Divinity, if this all were not present to my mind, I

might begin to doubt, whether the Virgin Mother con

tain not in Herself Divinity."

44. O what tears flowed from my eyes, and what sor

rowful astonishment possessed my soul, to see that divine

prodigy not acknowledged and that wonder of the Most

High not manifest to all the mortals. Much is known

of it, but much more is unknown, as this sealed book has

not been opened. I am ravished in the perception of this

tabernacle of God, and I perceive that the Author of it

is more admirable in her creation, than in that of all the

rest of the world, although the diversity of the creatures

manifests the wonderful power of their Creator. In this

Queen alone are comprehended and contained more treas

ures than in all the rest of things joined together, and

the variety and the preciousness of her riches honor the

Lord above all the multitudes of the other creatures.

45. Here (according to our way of understanding)

the promise and, as it were, the contract was made with

the Word as to the degree of sanctity, and perfection and

the gifts and graces, which were to be possessed by Mary

his Mother. Also as to the protection, support and de

fense, which was to be provided for this true City of

God, in which his Majesty contemplated the graces and

58 CITY OF GOD

merits, which She earned for Herself, as well as the

fruits to be gathered for his people by the loving returns,

which She was to make to his Majesty. In the same in

stant, and as it were in the third and last place, God de

termined to create a locality and an abode, where the in

carnate Word and his Mother should converse and dwell.

For Them primarily did He create the heaven and earth

with its stars and elements and all that is contained in

them. Secondarily the intention and decree included the

creation of the members, of which Jesus was to be the

Head, and of whom He would be the King; in order that

with kingly providence, all the necessary and befitting ar

rangements might be made beforehand.

46. I pass over to the fifth instant, although in reality

I have found that, which I sought. In this fifth decree

the creation of the angelic nature which is more excellent

and more like unto the spiritual being of the Divinity,

was determined upon, and at the same time the division

or arrangement of the angelic hosts into nine choirs and

three hierarchies, was provided and decreed. As they

are created first of all for the glory of God, to assist

before his divine Majesty and to know and love Him, so

secondarily they are ordained to assist, glorify and honor,

reverence and serve the deified humanity of the eternal

Word, recognizing Him as Head, and honoring Him

also in his Mother, the most holy Mary, Queen of these

same angels. Commission was given to these angels, "to

bear them up in their hands" in all their ways (Ps. 90,

12). In this instant Christ our Lord earned for them by

his infinite merits, present and foreseen, all the grace,

which they were to receive. He was constituted as their

Head, Exemplar and supreme King, of whom they should

be subjects. Even if the number of angels had been

infinite, the merits of Christ our highest Good, would be

abundantly sufficient to supply them all with grace.

THE CONCEPTION 59

47. To this instant belongs also the predestination of

the good, and the reprobation of the bad angels. God

saw in it, by means of his infinite science, all the works

of the former and of the latter and the propriety of pre

destinating, by his free will and by his merciful liberality,

those that would obey and give honor, and of reprobating

by his justice those who would rise up against his

Majesty in pride and disobedience on account of their

disordered selflove. In the same instant also was de

creed the creation of the empyrean heaven, for the man

ifestation of his glory and the reward of the good ; also

the earth and other heavenly bodies for the other crea

tures ; moreover also in the center or depth of the earth,

hell, for the punishment of the bad angels.

48. In the sixth instant was decreed the creation of a

people and congregation of men for Christ, who was al

ready formed in the divine mind and will, and according

to whose image and likeness man was to be made, in

order, that the incarnate Word might find brethren, sim

ilar but inferior to Himself and a people of his own na

ture, of whom He might be the Head. In this instant

was determined the order of the creation of the whole

human race, which was to begin from one man and

woman and propagate itself, until the Virgin and her

Son should be born in the predestined order. On account

of the merits of Christ, our Savior, the graces and gifts

were prearranged, and also original justice, if they would

only preserve it. The fall of Adam was foreseen and in

him that of all others, except of the Queen, who did not

enter into this decree. As a remedy was it ordained, that

the most holy humanity should be capable of suffering.

The predestined were chosen by free grace, and the fore

known were reprobated with exact justice. All that was

convenient and necessary for the conservation of the

60 CITY OF GOD

human race and for obtaining the end of the Redemp

tion and the Predestination, was preordained, without in

terfering with the free will of men; for such ordainment

was more conformable to God s nature and to divine

equity. There was no injustice done to them, for if with

their free will they could sin, so also could they abstain

from sin by means of grace and the light of reason. God

violated the right of no one, since He forsook no one nor

denied to any one that which is necessary. Since his law

is written in the hearts of men, nobody is excused for not

knowing and loving Him as the highest Good of all cre

ation.

49. In the perception of these mysteries I saw with

great clearness and force the high motives which caused

God to manifest and magnify Himself and which should

induce men to praise and adore the greatness of the Cre

ator and Redeemer of all. I also saw how tardy they

are in the acknowledgment of these obligations and in

making return for these benefits ; and I was made aware

of the complaints and the indignation of the Most High

on account of this forget fulness. His Majesty com

manded and exhorted me not to be guilty of such in

gratitude, but to offer Him a sacrifice of praise, and a

new song, and that I magnify Him in the name of all

creatures.

50. O most high and incomprehensible Lord ! Would

that I had the love and the perfections of all the angels

and the just in order to confess and praise worthily thy

greatness! I acknowledge, great and mighty Lord, that

such a vile creature as I cannot merit the memorable

benefit of receiving this clear and exalted knowledge and

light concerning thy exalted Majesty. At the sight of

thy greatness I perceive my littleness, which before that

happy hour was unknown to me; and I was ignorant of

THE CONCEPTION 61

the greatness and excellence of the virtue of humility,

which is learnt in this science. I do not wish to say that I

now possess that virtue, but neither can I deny that I have

been shown the certain path which leads to it. Thy light,

O most high Lord, illumines me and thy lamp shows me

the paths (Ps. 118, 105), so that I see what I have been

and what I am, and fear what I may become to be. Thou

hast lighted up, most high King, my understanding and

inflamed my will with its most exalted object. Thou hast

entirely drawn me on to seek Thee, and I wish to make

this known to all mortals in order that they may leave me

in peace and I them: I am for my Beloved (Cant.

2, 16), and (although I am unworthy), my Beloved is

for me. Strengthen then, O Lord, my weakness that I

may run after Thee, and reaching Thee, I may never

leave Thee or lose Thee.

51. Very short and stammering is this chapter, for of

this matter many books could be written; but I refrain,

because I do not know how to speak and I am an ig

norant woman. My sole object has been to explain, how

the Virgin Mother has been formed and preordained in

the divine mind before the ages (Ecclus. 24, 14). That

which I have seen over and above concerning this high

est mystery, transforms my interior, and in silent admira

tion makes me praise the Author of such magnificence in

company with the blessed, saying: Holy, holy, holy, is

the Lord God Sabaoth (Is. 6, 3).

CHAPTER V.

INSTRUCTIONS CONCERNING HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND IN

PARTICULAR CONCERNING CHAPTER EIGHT OF THE

PROVERBS, IN CONFIRMATION OF THE PRECEDING

PAGES.

52. I will converse, O Lord, with Thy great Majesty,

since Thou art the God of mercies, though I am only

dust and ashes (Gen. 18, 17), and I will supplicate thy

incomprehensible Immensity to look from thy exalted

throne upon me, thy most vile and useless creature, and to

be propitious to me by continuing to enlighten my under

standing. Speak, O Lord, for thy servant heareth (I

Reg. 3, 10). Then the Most High, the Corrector of the

wise, spoke to me (Sap. 7, 15). He referred me to the

eighth chapter of the Proverbs and gave me the under

standing of its mysteries. First was given me the literal

wording of the chapter, which is as follows (Prov. 8,

22):

53. Verse 22. "The Lord possessed me in the be

ginning of his ways before He made anything from

the beginning."

23. "I was set up from eternity and of old, before

the earth was made."

24. "The depths were not as yet and I was already

conceived : neither had the fountains of waters as yet

sprung out."

25. "The mountains with their huge bulk had not

as yet been established : before the hills I was brought

forth."

62

THE CONCEPTION 63

26. "He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers,

nor the poles of the earth."

27. "When He prepared the heavens, I was present :

when with a certain law and compass He enclosed the

depths."

28. "When He established the sky above and poised

the fountains of the waters."

29. "When He compassed the sea with its bounds,

and set a law to the waters that they should not pass

their limits: when He balanced the foundations of the

earth."

30. "I was with Him forming all things: and was

delighted every day, playing before Him all the

times."

31. "Playing in the world: and my delights were

to be with the children of men."

54. This is the portion of the Proverbs, of which the

Most High gave me an understanding. I understood at

first, that it treats of the ideas or decrees, which were

in the Divine Mind before the Creation of the world;

and that, in its literal sense, it speaks of the Person of

the Incarnate Word and of his most holy Mother, while

in its mystical sense it refers to the holy angels and

prophets. For before decreeing or forming the ideals

of the rest of the material creation, He formed and de

creed their prototype, the most sacred humanity of Christ

and of his purest Mother, and this is indicated by the

first words.

55. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his

ways." In God there are no ways, and his Divinity does

not need them : but He made use of them, in order, that

by them we may know Him and that all of us creatures,

who are capable of knowing Him, may tend toward Him.

In this beginning, before He formed any other ideal in

64 CITY OF GOD

his mind, because He desired to create paths and open

ways in his mind for the communication of the Divinity,

He decreed, as a beginning, the formation of the hu

manity of the Word, who was to be the highway, by

which the other creatures might come to the Father (Joan.

14, 6) . Joined with this decree was that of his most holy

Mother, through whom his Divinity was to enter into

the world, becoming man and being born from Her as

God and man ; therefore it is said : "God possessed me"

since both were possessed by his Majesty: for as to his

Divinity, He was the possession, the property, and the

treasure of the Father without possibility of separation,

because Father and Son are One, of the same substance

and Divinity with the Holy Ghost; and also as to his

humanity, the Father possessed the Son; because He

himself knew and decreed the plenitude of grace and

glory, which He was to bestow upon it at the moment

of its creation and its hypostatical union. Moreover, as

this decree and possession was to be brought about by

the mediation of the Mother, who was to conceive and

bring forth the Word (since He did not decide to create

it out of nothing, nor form his soul and body out of any

other material), it followed that He possessed Her, who

was to give Him the human form. Thus He possessed

and claimed Her as his own in the same instant, provid

ing with solicitude, that in the order of grace neither the

human race nor any other, should have at any time a

right or a part in Her. He alone retained the full right

in Her as his portion, and so much his portion as the

dignity of Mother required. She alone was to call Him

Son, and She alone was to be called Mother, a Mother

worthy of having an incarnate God for a Son. Now as

all this far surpassed in dignity the whole creation, so

did it also take the precedence in the mind of the supreme

Creator. Hence He says :

THE CONCEPTION 65

56. "Before He made anything from the beginning, I

was set up from eternity and of old." We, in our present

state, conceive this eternity of God as an interminable

time. But what were the things "of old," since none had

been created ? It is clear that the three Persons are here

spoken of, namely, that She was foreseen from the

eternal ages of the Divinity, by the Beings, which alone

are ancient, namely, the indivisible Trinity (since all the

rest, having a beginning, are recent), that She was fore

seen when only the ancient Uncreated was, and before

any ideals of the future creation were formed. Between

these two extremes intervened the ideal of the hypostatic

union which was to be verified ad extra through the in

tervention of most holy Mary. Both were ordained to

gether, immediately next to God and before any other

creature, and it was the most wonderful decree ever

passed or ever to be passed. The first and most ad

mirable image in the mind of God, next to the eternal

generation, was that of Christ and next to it, that of his

Mother.

57. And what other order could there be in God, in

whom all that pertains to Him is present at one and

the same time, so that no part of His being must await

the perfection of another, or one perfection ever need

succeed upon others? All is well ordered in his eternal

nature, and so it was and will be forever. The new or-

dainment, however, was that the person of the Son should

become incarnate and that from his deified humanity

should begin the order of God s desires and of his de

crees ad extra. He was to be the Head and Ideal of all

other men and creatures; for this was the most appro

priate order and harmony to be instituted among crea

tures, that they have One, who is the first and the high

est, and that from Him should descend the order of all

66 CITY OF GOD

nature, and in a special manner, of the mortals. First

among them all, however, was the Mother of the Man-

God, as the Supreme among mere creatures, following

immediately upon Christ, and, through Him, upon the

Divinity. Thus the conduits, which led the crystalline

fountains of the Divinity from the eternal throne, meet

first in the humanity of the Word and immediately there

after in his holy Mother in the degree and in the manner,

as it was possible for a mere creature, and as it was

proper for the Mother of the Creator. It was equitable,

that all the divine attributes should exert themselves in

Her, without reserve, so far as She was capable; and

that She be inferior only to Christ our Lord. She was to

be superior in the degree of his incomparable graces to

all the rest of the creatures, that are deserving of graces

and gifts. This then was the order, so well instituted by

the eternal wisdom : that all was to commence with Christ

and his Mother. Therefore the text adds :

58. "Before the earth was made; and the depths were

not as yet and I was already conceived." This earth was

that of the first Adam; for before his creation was de

creed, and before the abysses of the ideas ad extra were

formed in the divine mind, the likenesses of Christ and

of his Mother were already conceived. The forms are

called abysses, because there is an infinite distance be

tween the being of God and that of creatures. This dis

tance was measured (speaking according to our own way

of understanding) , when the ideals of the creatures were

formed ; for then these very abysses were formed. Not

only was the Word conceived before all these by eternal

generation from the Father, but His temporal generation

from the Virgin Mother full of grace, had already been

decreed and conceived in the divine mind. Inasmuch as

no efficacious and complete decree of this temporal gen-

THE CONCEPTION 67

eration could exist without at the same time including

his Mother, and such a Mother, the most holy Mary, was

then and there conceived within that beautiful Im

mensity, and Her eternal record was written in the

bosom of the Divinity, in order that for all the ages it

should never be blotted out. She was stamped and de

lineated in the mind of the eternal Artificer and possessed

the inseparable embraces of his love.

59. "Neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung

out." The images and ideals of creatures had not yet

sprung from their source and origin ; for they had not yet

broken from the fountains through the channels of God s

goodness and mercy, through which the divine will was

to be moved to create the universe and to communicate

his divine attributes and perfections. In respect to the

entire rest of the universe, these waters and fountains

were still repressed and detained within the bounds of

the immense ocean of the Divinity ; in his own Being

there were as yet no founts or currents for outward man

ifestation, not having until then met their proper object,

namely, men. But when these were encountered, the

sacred humanity of Christ and his Virgin Mother had al

ready furnished proper objects of benevolence. And

therefore it is added :

60. "The mountains with their huge bulk had not been

established," for God had not as yet then decreed the

creation of the high mountains, the Patriarchs, Prophets,

Apostles and Martyrs or the other saints of great holiness,

and this was not yet exerting its full weight and force in

the mighty and sweet manner (Sap. 8, 1) in which God

executes his counsels and great works. And not only

before the mountains (which are the great saints) but

also "before the hills I was brought forth," which are the

orders of the holy angels. Before them the divine Mind

68 CITY OF GOD

had conceived the most holy Humanity united hypo-

statically with the divine Word, and the Mother, who

bore it. The Son and the Mother were conceived before

the hierarchies of the angelic hosts, so, that, what David

said in the eighth psalm, becomes intelligible: "What is

man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man,

that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little

lesser than the Angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory

and honor! Thou has set him over the works of thy

hands; Thou hast subjected all things under his feet." Let

all understand and know, that there is a Godman, who

is above all angels and men, and that all are his in

feriors and his servants, for being the first of men, He is

God at the same time. He is the first in the divine Mind

and in the divine Will, and with Him is associated and

inseparably connected, one Woman and Virgin, his

Mother, the exalted Queen of all creation.

61. And if man, as says the same psalm, was crowned

with glory and was constituted above all the works of

the hand of the Lord, it was because the Godman, his

Chief, had merited both this crown, and also that, which

is borne by the angels. The same psalm adds, that,

after having made man a little less than the angels, He

placed him over the works of his hands: yet these very

angels were works of his hands. Thus David spoke to

the whole human race, when he said: God made man

a little less than the angels; but although man was in

ferior in his nature, one Man is found who is of su

perior make and is set over these same angels, who were

works of the hand of God. This superiority is in the

order of grace, not only as far as His Divinity united to

the humanity is concerned, but also in regard to the hu

manity itself in so far as grace was conferred by the hy-

postatic union. In a proportionate degree his most holy

THE CONCEPTION 69

Mother likewise attained this superiority, just as some

saints in virtue of the same incarnate Lord can reach a

station and throne superior to that of the angels.

62. It is further said: "I was brought forth" or born,

which means more than being conceived; for the latter

refers to the divine intellect of the Blessed Trinity at the

instant, when the Incarnation was known and, as it were,

weighed in regard to its propriety. But to be brought

forth refers to the act of the divine Will, which de

termined upon this work, for the most holy Trinity, in its

divine councils, resolved upon the efficacious execution

of this work by determining, and preliminarily putting

into effect, the wonderful decree of the hypostatic union

and of calling into being Mary most holy. That is the

reason for using first the word "conceived" and then the

words "brought forth," or born; for in reality the work

was at first conceived and then immediately afterwards

determined upon and willed.

63. "He had not yet made the earth, nor the rivers,

nor the poles of the (earth) world." Before the cre

ation of the second earth, namely, the earthly paradise

(the sense in which the earth is mentioned a second time),

into which the first man, after he had been created from

the first earth of the Damascene plains, was placed, and

where he sinned, the sacred humanity of the Word and

the material from which it was to spring, namely the

Virgin, was determined upon. For it was necessary, that

God should provide beforehand against her participating

in sin and against her being in any way subject to it. The

rivers and poles of the earth are the militant Church and

the gifts of grace which were to flow from the sources

of the Divinity. These were to flow toward all men and

with efficacy to the saints and the foreknown. Fixed in

God as in their pole or pivot and being dependent upon

70 CITY OF GOD

Him they nevertheless move around Him in seeking after

the virtues of faith, hope and charity, through which they

sustain, vivify and direct themselves though yet en

tangled in human conversation. They are drawn toward

their last end and toward the highest good, without

swerving from the center about which they turn. Also

the Sacraments and the institutions of the Church are

here signified, her safety and stability, her beauty and

sanctity without blot or wrinkle (Eph. 5, 27), for this is

what is meant by this circumference and these rivers.

Before the Most High prepared all this and ordained

this mystical sphere and system, of which Christ was to

be the center and head, He decreed the union of the Word

with human nature, and foresaw his Mother, through

whom He was to execute these wonders in the world.

64. "When he prepared the heavens, I was there."

When He prepared and preordained the heaven and the

reward, which was to be given to the just sons of the

Church after their sojourn upon the earth, then already

was decreed the union of the humanity with the Word,

thereby meriting grace as their Head ; and with Him his

Mother most holy. Having destined the greater part of

this grace for the Mother and the Son, He then disposed

and arranged similar gifts of glory for the other saints.

65. "When with a certain law and compass he en

closed the depths," namely, when He decided to close

the abysses of his Divinity in the person of the Son ac

cording to a certain law and measure, which no living

being can ever compass or understand. He delineated

this sphere and circumference, where none could nor

ever can enter, except only the Word (since none but

Himself can ever fill his place). For thus He was able

to empty (Phil. 11, 7) and humiliate his Divinity in the

humanity, then, both humanity and Divinity, in the womb

THE CONCEPTION 71

of the most holy Mary, afterwards, in the small quantity

and species of the bread and wine, and finally, in the nar

row space of sinful, mortal hearts. All this is indicated

by the words: abysses, law and circle or limits. They

are called "certain" on account of their vast bearing and

also on account of the certainty, with which they were to

be fulfilled (in spite of seeming impossibility), and on

account of the difficulty of explaining them in words. It

certainly did not appear feasible, that the Divinity should

be subject to law, nor that It should enclose Itself within

determined limits. But the wisdom and the power of

that same Lord made it possible and has accomplished it

by enclosing Himself in a designated created being.

66. "When he established the sky above, and poised

the fountains of the waters; when he encompassed the

sea with its bounds, and set a law to the waters, that

they should not pass their limits." He calls here the

just "heavens," for that is what they are, as God re

mains and dwells within them by grace, and through it,

according to each one s disposition, gives them courage

and firmness to rise above the earth as long as they are

pilgrims. Afterwards He gives them a place and a

dwelling in the heavenly Jerusalem according to their

merits. For them He poised the fountains and has di

vided them, distributing to each one with equity. He

weighs the gifts of glory, the virtues, the helps, and the

perfections, according to the dispositions of his Wisdom.

When He resolved to make the distributions of these

waters of grace, He also resolved to give to the humanity

united to the Divinity all the ocean of graces and gifts,

which naturally flowed from the Divinity in its union

with the Onlybegotten of the Father. Although this

ocean was infinite, He placed confines to it, namely, the

humanity, in which was to dwell the plenitude of the

72 CITY OF GOD

Divinity (Col. 2, 9) ; and it was enclosed thirty-three

years within these confines, in order that He might dwell

among men, and in order that, what happened to the

three Apostles on Tabor mount might not happen to all

men. In the same moment in which this entire ocean

and all the rivers of grace reached Christ our Lord as

being nearest to the Deity, they also redounded in his

most holy Mother as being nearest to her Onlybegotten

Son. For without the Mother, and precisely such a

Mother, the gifts and graces of her Son could not have

been disposed of in such order and with such high per

fection. Nor did the admirable harmony of the celestial

and spiritual machinery, and the distribution of the gifts

of the Church militant and triumphant rest on any other

foundation.

67. "When he balanced the foundation of the earth,

I was with him forming all things." The works ad extra

are common to the three divine Persons, for They are

one God, one wisdom, one power; therefore it was un

avoidably necessary, that the Word, in whom according

to the Divinity all things are made, should be in union

with the Father in making them. But here more is

meant, for also the incarnate Word was already present

together with his most holy Mother in the divine Will.

Thus, just as through the Word, as far as He is God, all

things were made, so also for Him, in the first place and

because He is the most noble and most worthy end, were

created the foundations of the earth and all that is con

tained in it.

68. Therefore it is farther said : "And I was delighted

every day, playing before him at -all times, playing in the

world." The incarnate Word diverted Himself at all

times, because He knew all the ages and the lives of all

the mortals, all being as one day in comparison with

THE CONCEPTION 73

eternity (Ps. 89, 4). He was delighted, because the

whole course of Creation had found its end, for when

the ultimate day with all its perfection should arrive,

men were to enjoy the affluence of grace and the crown

of glory. He diverted Himself as it were, counting the

days, when He should descend from heaven to earth and

assume human flesh. He knew that all the works and

thoughts of men were like a play, wherein all is mere

burlesque and deceit. He saw also the just, who, though

so weak and limited in their capacity, nevertheless would

be fit for the manifestation and communication of God s

glory and perfections. He compared his immutability

with the change fulness of men, and how He was never

theless to act in concert with them. He delighted in his

own works, and especially in those, which He ordained in

his most holy Mother. He took a great delight in the

prospect of assuming the form of man within Her and

in making Her worthy of so great a privilege. And be

cause the conception of these ideals and the efficacious

decree of the divine Will in their regard were to be fol

lowed by their actual fulfillment, therefore the divine

Word adds:

69. "And my delight is to be with the children of

men." My recreation is to work for them and show them

favors: my contentment is to die for them and my joy

is to be their Teacher and their Redeemer. My delight is

to raise the needy one from the dust and to unite Myself

with the lowly one (Ps. 112, 7) ; my pleasure is to un

bend my Divinity for this purpose, and to clothe it with

human nature, to constrain and debase Myself, and to sus

pend the glory of my body in order to make Myself

capable of suffering and of meriting for men the friend

ship of the Father; to be a Mediator between his most

just indignation and the malice of men, and to be their

Model and Head, whom they might imitate.

74 CITY OF GOD

70. O eternal and incomprehensible Goodness ! how am

I ravished with admiration, when I compare the im

mensity of thy immutable Being with the insignificance

of man ! When I see thy eternal love mediating between

two extremes of such immeasurable distance ; a love in

finite, for a creature so insignificant and at the same time

so ungrateful! Oh, on what a low and debased object,

O Lord, dost Thou cast thy eyes, and on what a noble

Object can and should man fix his thought and his af

fection in beholding such a mystery! Filled with ad

miration and with sadness of heart, I lament over the un

happy state of men, their darkness and blindness, since

they do not make any effort to understand how much

thy Majesty has been beforehand in looking down upon

them and in offering them true felicity with such great

love and care as if thy own consisted in it.

71. All his works, and the disposition of them, as they

were to be called into being, the Lord had in his mind

ab initio, and He numbered and weighed them according

to his equity and rectitude. He knew the constitution

of the world before its creation, as it is written in the

book of Wisdom (7, 18 Seq.). He knew the beginning,

the middle and the end of time, the changes of the years

and the courses of the ages, the disposition of the stars,

the powers of the elements, the nature of animals, the

wrath of wild beasts, the force of winds, the difference

of plants, the virtues of roots and the thoughts of men.

All He weighed and counted (Sap. 11, 21), not only

that which is literally true of the rational and irrational

creatures, but He preordained also all that which is sig

nified mystically by these creatures. But as this comes

not within my scope at present, I do not speak of it in this

place.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING A DOUBT, WHICH I PROPOSED REGARDING

THE DOCTRINE CONTAINED IN THESE CHAPTERS, AND

THE ANSWER TO IT.

72. In regard to the significance of the doctrine con

tained in the last two chapters a doubt occurred to me,

and I have often heard and been informed by learned per

sons, that the same is discussed also in the schools. The

doubt was as follows: If the principal motive of the

incarnation of the Word, was to make him Head and

the Firstborn of all creation (Col. 1, 15) and, through

the hypostatic union with human nature, to communi

cate his attributes and perfections, in a manner befitting

his grace and glory, to the predestined; and, if to as

sume flesh capable of suffering and dying for man was

his secondary motive : then, if these assumptions are true,

how comes it, that there is such a diversity of opinion in

regard to it in the holy Church? The most common

assumption is, that the eternal Word descended from

heaven expressly for the purpose of redeeming men

through his most holy Passion and Death.

73. This doubt I proposed humbly to the Lord. After

giving me an understanding and a great enlightenment,

by which I perceived and understood many mysteries, He

condescended to answer me. The mysteries themselves

I cannot explain, because the words of the Lord compre

hend and mean so much. But his answer was as follows:

"My spouse and dove, hear : for as a Father and a Teacher

I will solve thy doubt and instruct thee in thy ignorance.

75

76 CITY OF GOD

Know, that the principal and legitimate end of the decree,

which I had in view in resolving to communicate my

Divinity in the hypostatic union of the Word with human

nature, was the glory, which would redound to my name

through this communication, and also that which was to

redound to the creatures capable thereof. This decree

would without doubt have been executed in the Incarna

tion, even if the first man had not sinned : for it was an

express decree, substantially independent of any con

dition. Therefore, the intention of my will, which was

primarily to communicate Myself to the soul and hu

manity of the Word, was to be efficaciously fulfilled.

This was conformable to the justice and rectitude of my

works, and, although it was subsequent in its execution,

it was nevertheless antecedent in my intention. If I

waited before sending my Onlybegotten, it was because

I had resolved to prepare for Him beforehand a holy

and select congregation of the just, who, presupposing

the fall of mankind, would be like roses among the thorns,

that is, the sinners. Foreseeing the fall of the human

race, I determined, by an express decree, that the Word

should come in a form capable of suffering and death for

the Redemption of his people, whose head He was to be.

Thus my infinite love for man could be so much the more

known and manifest and a just satisfaction would be ren

dered to my equity and justice; and if he, who was to be

first in existence, was a sinner : He that was to be first in

dignity, would be the Redeemer (I Cor. 15, 21). Thus

also men might come to know the gravity of sin, and love

one and the same Creator, Vivifier, Redeemer, and Judge

of all mortals. I also wished as it were, to compel them

to make a proper return of gratitude and love. Refusing

to punish them without reprieve, as I have punished the

apostate angels, but pardoning them and looking upon

THE CONCEPTION 77

them with mercy, I offered them an opportune remedy

by executing the rigor of my justice upon my onlybe-

gotten Son and reserving for man the kindness of my

great mercy."

74. "And in order that thou mayest better understand

the answer to thy doubt, remember, that there is neither

any succession of time in my decrees, nor any need of it

for the perception and the execution of them. Those that

say that the Word became incarnate in order to redeem

the world, say well; and those that say, that He would

have become incarnate also, if man had not sinned, like

wise speak well, only it must be understood in the right

way. For if Adam had not sinned, Christ would have

descended from heaven in that form, which would be

suitable to the state of man s innocence; but as Adam

sinned, I resolved by the secondary decree, that He

should be made of passible nature; since foreseeing sin,

it was proper, that it should be repaired in the way in

which He has done it. And as you desire to know, how

the mystery of the Incarnation would have taken place,

if man had preserved the state of innocence, know, that

the human substance would have been essentially the

same as now, only it would be clothed with the gifts of

impassibility and immortality, such as my Onlybegotten

possessed after his Resurrection and before his Ascension.

He would live and converse with men ; the hidden sacra

ments and mysteries would all be manifest; and many

times would his glory shine forth as it happened once in

his mortal life (Mark 17, 1). He would, in that state

of man s innocence, have become manifest to all men

in the same manner as He once showed Himself to the

three apostles in his mortal state. All those on the way

to heaven would see the great glory of my Onlybegotten ;

they would be consoled by conversing with Him and

78 CITY OF GOD

they would place no obstacle to his divine workings, for

they would be without sin. But all this was impeded and

spoiled by the guilt of sin and on that account it was

proper, that He should come in passible and mortal

nature."

75. "The existence of different opinions regarding

these sacraments and other mysteries in the Church,

arises from the fact that I manifest and give light con

cerning one set of mysteries to some teachers, and

illumine others concerning other mysteries; for mortals

are not capable of receiving all the light. It is not ex

pedient, that the knowledge of all things be given to one

man, as long as men are viators. For also in the state of

comprehensors, they obtain them in parts and according

to the state and the merits of each. But the plenitude of

all gifts is due only to the humanity of my Onlybegotten

and to his Mother in proper proportion. The other

mortals receive it neither entirely, nor is it always given

so clearly, as to assure them altogether. Therefore they

must acquire it by means of study and the use of letters

and science There are also many truths revealed in

holy Scriptures and to some men light is given from

above. Yet, as I leave most men to work by their natural

light, it must follow, that they understand these mys

teries in different senses, and that there exist different ex

planations and different meanings regarding the different

passages in Scripture; for each adheres to his opinion

according to his understanding. Many have a good in

tention and the light and truth is essentially one, but it

is made use of with diversity of judgment and inclina

tions, so that some adhere to these teachers, others to

those and so the controversies arise among them."

76. "One of the reasons why the opinion, that the

Word came from heaven mainly for the sake of redeem-

THE CONCEPTION 79

ing the world, is more common can be partly explained

by the fact, that the mystery of the Redemption with its

object has already been consummated and has been men

tioned so often in Scriptures, thus causing it to be better

understood and manifested. The impassibility of Christ

on the contrary was neither effected, nor was it simply

and absolutely decreed. All that pertained to this state

remains concealed and nobody could be sure of it, ex

cept those particular ones, whom I select for the reception

of that light, and for the revelation of this decree of my

love for man. And although this would certainly be

capable of moving men, if they would ponder over it and

penetrate it; yet the decree and the work of his Re

demption from sin is more powerful and efficacious to

move them toward some acknowledgment and return of

my immense love ; for this is the end, which prompts my

works. Therefore I fittingly provide, that these motives

and mysteries be kept especially before the mind and be

more frequently expounded. Advert also, that in one

work two results can well be intended, when one of them

is conditional. Thus it was that the Word would not

have descended in passible flesh, if man had not sinned,

and if he would sin, He would come in a body capable of

suffering: whatever would happen the decree of the In

carnation would not be left unfulfilled. I desire, that the

sacraments of the Redemption be recognized and held in

esteem and that they be always remembered, in order

that they may bring the proper fruit. But just as much

I desire, that the mortals recognize the Word as their

Head and as the final Object of all Creation and of all

the rest of the human race. For, conjointly with my own

kindness, his formation was the principal motive for giv

ing existence to the creatures. Therefore He should be

honored, not onlv because He has redeemed the human

80 CITY OF GOD

race, but also because he furnished the motive for its

creation."

77. "Take notice also, my spouse, that very often I

permit and cause differences of opinions among the doc

tors and teachers. Thus some of them maintain what is

true and others, according to their natural disposition,

defend what is doubtful. Others still again are per

mitted to say even what is not true, though not in open

contradiction to the veiled truths of faith, which all

must hold. Some also teach, what is possible according

to their supposition. By this varied light, truth is traced,

and the mysteries of faith become more manifest. Doubt

serves as a stimulus to the understanding for the investi

gation of truth. Therefore controversies of the teachers

fulfill a proper and holy end. They are also permitted

in order, to make it known, that real science dwells in

my Church more than in the combined study of all the

holy and perfect teachers, and that she can make them

wise above the wisdom of the worldly wise; that there

is above them One, who is the Prompter of the wise

(Wis. 7, 15), namely, Myself; who alone knows all

and comprehends all ; \vho weighs and measures, without

ever being measured or comprehended (Wis. 9, 13) ;

that men, although they may search my judgments and

testimonies ever so much, cannot attain them, unless I

give the intelligence and light (Job 32, 8), who am the

beginning and the Author of all wisdom and science. I

desire that men, in acknowledging all this, give Me praise,

exaltation, confession, supremity and glory forever."

78. "I desire also that the holy doctors acquire for

themselves much grace, light and glory by their earnest,

laudable and sacred study, and that the truth be more

and more clearly detected and purified, and be traced to

its source. By humbly investigating the mysteries and

THE CONCEPTION 81

the admirable works of my right hand, they come to be

partakers of them and of the bread of the understanding,

the holy Scriptures (Eccli. 15, 3). I have especially

shown my Providence in regard to doctors and teachers,

although their opinions and doubts have been so diverse

and for such different ends. Sometimes, for my greater

glory and honor, sometimes for earthly purposes, they

are permitted to dispute, and to contradict each other;

and there is a great inequality in the manner in which

they have proceeded and do proceed to show their emula

tion and earnestness. But with all this I have directed,

governed and enlightened them, giving them my protec

tion in such a manner, that the truth may be investigated

and clearly manifested. The light has spread out, so

that many of my perfections and wonderful works have

been made known, and the holy Scriptures have been in

terpreted according to high standards, which has been

very pleasing to Me. For this reason the fury of hell,

with inconceivable envy (especially in these, our times),

has raised its throne of iniquity, pretending to engulf the

waters of the Jordan (Job 40, 18), and obscure the light

of holy faith by heretical doctrines and seeking to sow its

false seeds by the help of man (Matth. 13, 25). But

the rest of the Church and its truths are in most perfect

order ; the Catholics, although much involved and blind in

other respects, hold nevertheless the truths of faith and its

holy light without diminution. I call all men with

fatherly love to share this happiness, yet few are the elect,

who choose to respond to my call."

79. "I also desire thee to understand, my spouse, how

well my Providence disposes things in such a way, that

the teachers, by the diversity of their opinions, and by

their own diligent exertion and study, scrutinize more

deeply my testimonies and thus lay bare the marrow of

82 CITY OF GOD

the holy Scriptures to wayfaring men. But it would be

very pleasing to Me and in harmony with my service, if

learned persons would extinguish and do away with

pride, envy and ambition after vain honors; also all the

other passions and vices, which arise from them, together

with the bad seeds, that are likely to be generated from

that sort of occupation (Matth. 13, 25). But I do not

root out this bad seed at present, in order that the good

may not be rooted out with the bad." All this the Lord

spoke to me and many other things, which I cannot make

manifest. May his Majesty eternally be blessed, who,

without disdaining the insignificance of so insipient and

useless a woman, deemed it proper to enlighten and to

satisfy my ignorance in so bountiful and merciful a man

ner. May the blessed spirits and the just of the earth

give Him praise and thanksgiving without end !

CHAPTER VII.

HOW THE: MOST HIGH GAVE A BEGINNING TO HIS WORKS

AND CREATED ALL MATERIAL THINGS FOR THE USE OP

MAN, WHILE ANGELS AND MEN WERE CREATED TO BE

HIS PEOPLE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE INCAR

NATE WORD.

80. The Cause of all causes is God, who created all

things that have being. His powerful arm gave exist

ence to all his wonderful works ad extra when and how

He chose. The beginning and succession of the work of

Creation is described by Moses in the opening chapter

of Genesis. Since the Lord has given me an understand

ing thereof, I will mention what I think useful for eluci

dating the mysterious origin of the Incarnation of the

Word and of our Redemption.

81. The words of the first chapter of Genesis are as

follows :

1. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

2. "And the earth was void and empty, and dark

ness was upon the face of the deep; and the spirit of

God moved over the waters.

3. "And God said : Be light made. And light was

made.

4. "And God saw the light that it was good; and

he divided the light from the darkness.

5. "And he called the light day, and the darkness

night ;and there was evening and morning one day," etc.

Of the first day Moses says that "In the beginning God

created heaven and earth." Though He himself is im

mutable in being, the almighty God, in calling creatures

into existence, issued, so to say, forth from his own Self

and gave to creatures a being of their own, in order that

He might, as it were, rejoice in the works of his own

83

84 CITY OF GOD

hands, as being the perfect and adequate results of his

operations. And before creating intellectual and ra

tional creatures, desiring also the order of executing these

works to be most perfect, He created heaven for angels

and men; and the earth as a place of pilgrimage for

mortals. These places are so adapted to their end and so

perfect, that as David says of them, the heavens publish

the glory of the Lord, the firmament and the earth an

nounce the glory of the works of his hands (Ps. 18, 2).

The heavens in their beauty manifest his magnificence

and glory, because in them is deposited the predestined

reward of the just. And the earthly firmament an

nounced that there would be creatures and men to in

habit the earth and that men should journey upon it to

their Creator. Before He created them the Most High

wished to provide for them and create that which is

necessary for the attainment of their end, and for living

in the manner ordained for them. Thus all parts of the

creation would be compelled as it were to obey and love

their Maker and Benefactor and by his works to learn

of his holy name and of his perfections (Rom. 1, 20).

82. Of the earth Moses says, that it was void, which

he does not say of the heavens ; for God had created the

angels at the instant indicated by the word of Moses:

"God said : Let there be light, and light was made." He

speaks here not only of material light, but also of the

intellectual or angelic lights. He does not make express

mention of them, but merely includes them in this word,

on account of the proclivity of the Hebrews to attribute

Divinity to new things, even of much greater inferiority

than the angels. But the metaphor of light was very

appropriate to signify the angelic nature and mystically,

the light of their science and grace, with which they

were endowed at their creation. God created the earth

conjointly with the heavens, in order to call into exist-

THE CONCEPTION 85

ence hell in its centre; for, at the instant of its creation,

there were left in the interior of that globe spacious and

wide cavities, suitable for hell, purgatory and limbo. And

in hell was created at the same time material fire and

other requisites, which now serve for the punishment of

the damned. The Lord was presently to divide the light

from the darkness and to call the light day and the dark

ness night. And this did happen not only in regard to

the natural night and day, but in regard to the good and

bad angels ; for to the good, He gave the eternal light

of his vision and called it day, the eternal day; and to

the bad, the night of sin, casting them into the eternal

darkness of hell. Thus we were to be taught the inti

mate relation between the merciful liberality of the Cre

ator and Vivifier and the justice of the most just Judge

in punishment.

83. The angels were created in the empyrean heavens

and in the state of grace by which they might be first to

merit the reward of glory. For although they were in

the midst of glory, the Divinity itself was not to be

made manifest to them face to face and unveiled, until

they should have merited such a favor by obeying the

divine will. The holy angels, as well as the bad ones,

remained only a very short time in the state of proba

tion; for their creation and probation with its result

were three distinct instants or moments, separated by

short intermissions. In the first instant they were all

created and endowed with graces and gifts, coming into

existence as most beautiful and perfect creatures. Then

followed a short pause, during which the will of the

Creator was propounded and intimated, and the law and

command was given them, to acknowledge Him as their

Maker and supreme Lord, and to fulfill the end for

which they had been created. During this pause, in

stant or interval, Saint Michael and his angels fought

86 CITY OF GOD

that great battle with the dragon and his followers,

which is described by the apostle Saint John in the

twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse. The good angels,

persevering in grace, merited eternal happiness and the

disobedient ones, rebelling against God, merited the pun

ishment, which they now suffer.

84. Although all this of the second instant could have

happened in a very brief time on account of the subtle

nature of the angels and the power of God, never

theless I understood, that the kind consideration of the

Most High permitted a certain delay. With the inter

position of some intervals of time, He proposed to them

the good and the bad, truth and falsehood, justice

and injustice, divine grace and friendship as op

posed to sin and enmity of God. They were enabled to

see eternal reward and eternal punishment, the perdition

of Lucifer and of those that would follow him. His

Majesty showed them hell and its pains. They saw it

all ; for, by virtue of their superior and excellent nature,

they understood the essence of other more qualified

and limited creatures; so that, before falling from grace,

they were clearly aware of the place of their chastise

ment. Although they did not know in the same man

ner the reward of glory, they had of it other knowledge

and besides they had the manifest and express promise

of the Lord The Most High had therefore justified

his cause and proceeded with the greatest equity and

justice. But as all this goodness and equity did not suf

fice to restrain Lucifer and his followers, they were

chastised in their stubbornness and hurled into the depths

of the hellish caverns, while the good angels were con

firmed in eternal grace and glory. All this was con

summated in the third instant, and thus it became truly

manifest that no being outside of God himself is im

peccable by nature, since the angel, who held such an

THE CONCEPTION 87

exalted position and was adorned with so many great

gifts of knowledge and grace, nevertheless sinned and was

lost. What will become of human frailty, if the divine

power does not defend it and if it forces God to forsake it ?

85. It remains to investigate the motive, which urged

Lucifer and his confederates to sin and what was the

occasion of their disobedience and fall, for this is the

point to which I wanted to come. In regard to this, it

was made known to me that they could commit many

sins as far as the guilt of sin (secundum reatum) is con

cerned, although they did not consummate them in acts.

However, on account of those which they did actually

commit freely and of their own depraved will, they ac

quired the disposition to all bad acts, inducing others to

commit and approving in others those sins, which they

could not commit themselves. Following the bad incli

nations which from that time on filled Lucifer, he fell

into a most disorderly selflove, which arose from the

consciousness of being endowed with greater gifts and

greater beauty of nature and grace, than the other in

ferior angels. He tarried with inordinate pleasure in

this consciousness; and thus self-satisfied he became lax

and remiss in the gratitude, which was due to God as

the sole cause of all that he had received. Turning

again and again in admiration toward himself, he took

pleasure in his own beauty and grace, attributing them

to himself and loving them as his own. This disorderly

selflove not only caused him to exalt himself on account

of the superior virtues, which he had received, but also

induced him to harbor envy and covetousness for other

gifts and for excellences not his own. Then, because he

could not attain them, he conceived a mortal hatred and

indignation against God, who created him out of noth

ing, and against all his creatures.

86. Hence arose his disobedience, presumption, injus-

88 CITY OF GOD

tice, infidelity, blasphemy, and perhaps also a certain

kind of idolatry, for he coveted for himself the adora

tion and reverence due to God. He blasphemed the di

vine magnificence and holiness, he failed in the trust

and loyalty due to Him; he plotted to destroy all the

creatures, and presumed to be able to do all this and

much more by his own power. Thus his pride ascends

continually (Ps. 73, 23) and perseveres, though his ar

rogance is greater than his strength, for in this he can

not increase (Is. 16, 6) and in sin, one abyss calls the

other (Ps. 14, 8). The first angel who sinned was Luci

fer, as is described in the fourteenth chapter of Isaias.

He induced others to follow him and therefore he is

called the prince of the demons; not on account of his

natural gifts, for these would not secure to him that

title, but on account of his guilt. Those that sinned

were not all of one order or hierarchy, but among all

hierarchies there were many who sinned.

87. It is proper, that 1 also explain what was made

known to me concerning the kind of honor and excel

lence, which Lucifer aspired to and envied. As in the

works of God there is measure, number and weight

(Wis. 11, 21), his Providence decided to show to the

angels, immediately after their creation and before they

could incline to diverse ends, the purpose for which He

had created them with such an exalted and perfect na

ture. Of all this I obtained the following information:

At first they received a more explicit intelligence of the

being of God, one in substance, trine in person, and that

they were commanded to adore and reverence Him as

their Creator and highest Lord, infinite in his essence

and attributes. All subjected themselves to this com

mand and obeyed it, but with a certain difference; the

good angels obeyed through love and on account of the

justice of it, offering their love and good will, freely

THE CONCEPTION 89

admitting and believing what was above their intelli

gence, and obeying with joy. Lucifer, on the other

hand, submitted himself, because the opposite seemed

to him impossible. He did not do it with perfect char

ity, for he, as it were, was divided in his will between

himself and the infallible truth of the Lord. In conse

quence it happened that the precept appeared to him in a

measure difficult and violent, and his fulfilling of it was

wanting in love and in the desire to do justice. Thus he

exposed himself beforehand to the danger of not perse

vering. Although grace did not leave him on account

of this remissness and slowness in the accomplishment

of these first acts, nevertheless his bad disposition be

gan with them; for there remained with him a certain

weakness and laxity of virtue and spirit, and the perfec

tion of his nature did not shine forth as it should. It

appears to me that the effect of this remissness in Luci

fer, is similar to that which is caused in the soul by a

deliberate venial sin. I do not say that he sinned mor

tally, nor even venially at that time, since he fulfilled the

precept of God; but this fulfillment was remiss and im

perfect, springing more from a sense of overwhelming

compulsion, than from a loving willingness to obey.

Thus he put himself in danger of falling.

88. In the second place, the angels were informed that

God was to create a human nature and reasoning crea

tures lower than themselves, in order that they too

should love, fear and reverence God, as their Author

and eternal Good. They were informed that these were

to stand in high favor, and that the second Person of

the blessed Trinity was to become incarnate and assume

their nature, raising it to the hypostatic union and to

divine Personality ; that therefore they were to acknowl

edge Him as their Head, not only as God, but as God

and man, adoring Him and reverencing Him as God-

90 CITY OF GOD

man. Moreover, these same angels were to be his in

feriors in dignity and grace and were to be his serv

ants. God gave them an intelligence of the propriety

and equity, of the justice and reasonableness of such a

position. For the acceptation of the merits foreseen

of this Mangod was exhibited to them as the source of

the grace which they now possessed and of the glory

which they were to obtain. They understood also that

they themselves had been, and all the rest of the crea

tures should be created for his glory, and that He was

to be their Head. All those that were capable of know

ing and enjoying God, were to be the people of the Son

of God, to know and reverence Him as their Chief.

These commands were at once given to the angels.

89. To this command all the obedient and holy angel\*,

submitted themselves and they gave their full assent and

acknowledgment with an humble and loving subjection

of the will. But Lucifer, full of envy and pride, resisted

and induced his followers to resist likewise, as they in

reality did, preferring to follow him and disobey the

divine command. This wicked prince persuaded them,

that he would be their chief and that he would set up a

government independent and separate from Christ. So

great was the blindness which envy and pride could cause

in an angel, and so pernicious was the infection that the

contagion of sin spread among innumerable other angels.

90. Then happened that great battle in heaven, which

St. John describes (Apoc. 12). For the obedient and

holy angels, filled with an ardent desire of hastening the

glory of the Most High and the honor of the incarnate

Word, asked permission and, as it were, the consent of

God, to resist and contradict the dragon, and the per

mission was granted. But also another mystery was con

cealed in all this: When it was revealed to the angels

that they would have to obey the incarnate Word, an-

THE CONCEPTION 91

other, a third precept was given them, namely, that they

were to admit as a superior conjointly with Him, a

Woman, in whose womb the Onlybegotten of the Father

was to assume flesh and that this Woman was to be the

Queen and Mistress of all the creatures. The good an

gels by obeying this command of the Lord, with still in

creasing and more alert humility, freely subjected them

selves, praising the power and the mysteries of the Most

High. Lucifer, however, and his confederates, rose to

a higher pitch of pride and boastful insolence. In dis

orderly fury he aspired to be himself the head of all the

human race and of the angelic orders, and if there was

to be a hypostatic union, he demanded that it be con

summated in him.

91. The decree constituting him inferior to the

Mother of the Incarnate Word, our Mistress, he op

posed with horrible blasphemies. Turning against the

Author of these great wonders in unbridled indignation

and calling upon the other angels, he exhorted them,

saying: "Unjust are these commands and injury is done

to my greatness; this human nature which Thou, Lord,

lookest upon with so much love and which thou favor-

est so highly, I will persecute and destroy. To this end

I will direct all my power and all my aspirations. And

this Woman, Mother of the Word, I will hurl from the

position in which Thou hast proposed to place Her, and

at my hands, the plan, which Thou settest up, shall come

to naught."

92. This proud boast so aroused the indignation of

the Lord that in order to humble it, He spoke to Luci

fer: "This Woman, whom thou refusest to honor, shall

crush thy head and by Her shalt thou be vanquished and

annihilated (Gen. 3, 15). And if, through thy pride,

death enters into the world (Wis. 2, 24), life and salva

tion of mortals shall enter through the humility of this

92 CITY OF GOD

Woman. Those that are of the nature and likeness of

that Man and Woman, shall enjoy the gifts and the

crowns, which thou and thy followers have lost." To

all this the dragon, filled with indignation against what

ever he understood of the divine will and decrees, an

swered only with pride and by threatening destruction

to the whole human race. The good angels saw the just

indignation of the Most High against Lucifer and his

apostates and they combated them with the arms of the

understanding, reason and truth.

93. The Almighty at this conjuncture worked an

other wonderful mystery. Having given to all the angels

a sufficiently clear intelligence of the great mystery of

the hypostatic Union, He showed them the image of

the most holy Virgin by means of an imaginary vision

(I speak here according to our way of understanding

such things). They were shown the perfection of the

human nature in the revelation of an image represent

ing a most perfect Woman, in whom the almighty arm

of the Most High would work more wonderfully than

in all the rest of the creatures. For therein He was to

deposit the graces and gifts of his right hand in a higher

and more eminent manner. This sign or vision of the

Queen of heaven and of the Mother of the incarnate

Word was made known and manifest to all the angels,

good and bad. The good ones at the sign of it broke

forth in admiration and in canticles of praise and from

that time on began to defend the honor of the God in

carnate and of his holy Mother, being armed with ardent

zeal and with the invincible shield of that vision. The

dragon and his allies on the contrary conceived implac

able hatred and fury against Christ and his most holy

Mother. Then happened all that which is described in the

twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, which I will explain,

as far as it has been given me, in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH FOLLOWS UP THE PREVIOUS DISCOURSE BY THE

EXPLANATION OF THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE

APOCALYPSE.

94. The literal version of that chapter of the Apoc

alypse is as follows :

1. "And a great sign appeared in heaven: A

woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her

feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars:

2. And being with child, she cried travailing in

birth, and was in pain to be delivered.

3. And there was seen another sign in heaven; and

behold a great red dragon having seven heads and

ten horns; and on his head seven diadems.

4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of

heaven and cast them to the earth and the dragon

stood before the woman, who was ready to be deliv

ered; that, when she should be delivered, he might

devour her son.

5. And she brought forth a man-child, who was to

rule all nations with an iron rod; and her son was

taken up to God, and to his throne.

6. And the woman fled into the wilderness where

she had a place prepared by God, that there they

should feed her a thousand two hundred and sixty

days.

7. And there was a great battle in heaven ; Michael

and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon

fought and his angels.

93

94 CITY OF GOD

8. And they prevailed not, neither was their place

found any more in heaven.

9. And the dragon was cast out, that old serpent,

who is called the devil and satan, who seduceth the

whole world; and he was cast unto the earth, and his

angels were thrown down with him.

10. And I heard a loud voice saying: Now is come

salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God

and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of

our brethren is cast forth, who accused them before

our God day and night.

11. And they overcame him by the blood of the

Lamb and by the word of the testimony, and they

loved not their lives unto death.

12. Therefore rejoice, O heavens, and you that

dwell therein. Woe to the earth and the sea, because

the devil is come down unto you, having a great

wrath and knowing that he hath but a short time.

13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast un

to the earth he persecuted the woman, who brought

forth the man-child :

14. And there were given to the woman two wings

of a great eagle, that she might fly into the desert

unto her place, where she is nourished for a time and

times and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the

woman, water as if it were a river, that he might

cause her to be carried away by the river.

16. And the earth helped the woman and the earth

opened her mouth and swallowed the river, which the

dragon cast out of his mouth.

17. And the dragon was angry against the woman

and went to make war with the rest of her seed, who

THE CONCEPTION 95

keep the commandments of God, and have the testi

mony of Jesus Christ.

18. And he stood upon the sands of the sea."

95. Such are the words of the Evangelist. He speaks

in the past, because at that time was shown to him a

vision of that which had already happened. He says:

"And a great sign appeared in heaven ; a woman clothed

with the sun and the moon under her feet and on her

head a crown of twelve stars." This sign appeared

really in the heavens by divine disposition and was

shown to the good and the bad angels, in order that see

ing it, they might subject their will to the pleasure and

the commands of God. They saw it therefore before

the good ones chose the good and before the bad ones

had turned to evil. It was as it were a mirror of the

wonderful perfection of the handiwork of God in creat

ing human nature. Although He had already revealed

this perfection to the angels in making known to them

the mystery of the hypostatic union, yet He wished to

reveal it to them also in a different manner by showing

it to them in a mere Creature, the most perfect and holy

which, next to the humanity of our Lord, He was to

create. It was also a sign for the assurance of the good

angels and for confusion of the bad, since it manifested

to them that in spite of the offense which was commit

ted, God would not let the decree of creating man be un

fulfilled, and that the incarnate Word and this Woman,

his Mother, would please Him infinitely more than the

disobedient angels could ever displease Him. This sign

was also like the rainbow, which appeared after the flood

in the clouds of heaven, as a guarantee that even if men

should sin like the angels and become disobedient, they

were not to be punished like the angels without remis

sion, but would be furnished with salutary medicine and

96 CITY OF GOD

remedy by this wonderful sign. It was as if God said to

the angels : I will not chastise in the same way the other

creatures which I call into my existence, because this

Woman, in whom my Onlybegotten is to assume flesh,

belongs to that race. My Son shall be the Restorer of

friendship and the Pacifier of my justice; He shall open

the way to the felicity, which sin would close.

96. In further testimony of this, after the punishment

of the disobedient angels, God made use of the sign in

order to show that his anger, which the pride of Lucifer

had occasioned, was appeased and placated. And ac

cording to our way of understanding, He rejoiced in the

presence of the Queen thus represented in that image.

He gave the angels to understand that, through Christ

and his Mother, He would now divert upon men the

grace which the apostates had lost through their rebel

lion. There was also another effect of that great sign

among the good angels; namely, that since they had

been, as it were, made sorrowful and made unhappy

(speaking according to our way of understanding) the

Most High now wished to rejoice them with the sight of

that image and to increase their essential beatitude by

this accidental pleasure merited by their victory over

Lucifer. Seeing this Woman so full of clemency (Es

ther 4, 11), appearing to them as a sign of peace, they

understood at once that the decree of punishment was

not issued against them, since they had obeyed the pre

cepts of the Lord and his divine will. Much of the

mysteries and sacraments of the Incarnation, and those

of the Church militant and its members, were made

manifest to them in this sign. They understood also,

that they were to assist and help the human race, by

watching over men, by defending them against their

enemies and by leading them to eternal felicity. They

THE CONCEPTION 97

saw that they themselves would owe their felicity to the

merits of the incarnate Word and that the Creator had

preserved them also in grace through Christ preordained

in the divine Mind.

97. Just as all this was a great joy and happiness

for the good angels, so it was a great torment for the

evil spirits. It was to the latter a part and the begin

ning of their punishment. For they saw at once, that

having failed to profit by this sign, they were to be con

quered and crushed by it (3, 15). All these mysteries,

and many others, which I cannot explain, the Evangelist

wished to comprehend in this chapter, and include in

that great sign; although for us it will remain obscure

and enigmatic until the proper time arrives.

98. The sun, which is mentioned as clothing the

Woman, is the true Sun of Justice. The angels were

to understand by it, that the Most High was to remain

with this Woman by his grace in order to overshadow

and defend Her by the protection of his invincible right

hand. The moon was beneath her feet; for as the two

planets, the sun and the moon, divide night and day,

therefore the moon, being the symbol of the darkness of

sin, is beneath her feet, and the sun, being the symbol

of the light of grace, clothes Her for all eternity. Thus

also the deficiencies of grace in all mortals must be be

neath her feet, and never must rise either to her soul or

to her body, which on the contrary were to be ever su

perior to all angels and men. She alone was to be free

from the darkness and the wanings of Lucifer and of

Adam, treading them under foot without their being

able to gain any advantage over Her. And just as She

rose above all the guilt and the effects of original and of

actual sin, God now placed these in a symbolical manner

under her feet, in order that the good angels might know,

98 CITY OF GOD

and the bad ones, (though they did not attain full knowl

edge of the mysteries), might fear this Woman even

before She came into actual existence.

99. The crown of twelve stars are evidently all the

virtues, with which that Queen of heaven and earth was

to be adorned. But the mystery of its being composed

of twelve stars has reference to the twelve tribes of Is

rael, by which all the elect and the predestined are desig

nated, as is mentioned in the seventh chapter of the

Apocalypse by the Evangelist (Apoc. 7,4). And since

the gifts, graces and virtues of all the elect were to

crown their Queen in a most eminent and exalted de

gree, a crown of twelve stars was placed around her

head.

100. "And being with child." In the presence of all

the angels, for the rejoicing of the good and for the

punishment of the evil ones, who resisted the divine will

and the fulfillment of these mysteries, it became mani

fest that the three Persons of the blessed Trinity had

selected this wonderful Woman as the Mother of the

Onlybegotten of the Father. And since the dignity of

the mother of the Word was the principal beginning and

foundation of all the great excellences of this great Mis

tress and of this her symbol, She was shown to the

angels as being the resting place of the holy Trinity,

represented in the divine personality of the Word incar

nate. For on account of their inseparable union and co

existence, all the three Persons could not fail to be

there, wherever any one of Them was present; although

only the Person of the Word assumed human flesh and

with Him alone was She pregnant.

101. "She cried travailing in birth." Although the

dignity of this Queen and of that mystery was to be hid

den in the beginning in order that God might be born

THE CONCEPTION 99

humble, poor and unknown : yet afterwards the news of

that Birth was proclaimed so loudly, that its first echo

excited King Herod and filled him with uneasiness. It

drew the Magi from their palaces and kingdoms in

order to find Him (Matth. 2, 3). Some hearts were

touched with fear, others moved to interior affection.

The Fruit of this birth, growing until it was raised on

the Cross, gave such loud voices, that It was heard from

the rising to the setting sun (John 12, 32), and from

farthest north to farthest south (Rom. 10, 18). So far

then was heard the voice of that Woman who gave birth

to the Word of the eternal Father.

102. "And was in pain to be delivered." He does not

say this because She was to give birth in bodily pain,

for that is not possible in this divine Parturition. But

because it was to be a great sorrow for that Mother to

see that divine Infant come forth from the secrecy of

her virginal womb in order to suffer and die as a victim

for the satisfaction of the sins of the world. For this

Queen could know and did know all this beforehand by

her knowledge of the holy Scriptures. On account of

the natural love of such a Mother for such a Son, She

must be deeply afflicted thereby, although in subjection

to the will of God. In this pain was also foreshadowed

the sorrow of this most gentle Mother at the thought of

being deprived of the presence of her Treasure, after

He should have issued from her virginal womb; for al

though her soul always enjoyed his presence as to his

Divinity, yet She was to be a long time without his bod

ily presence, according to which He was exclusively her

Son. The Most High had determined to exempt Her

from guilt, but not from the labors and sorrows corres

ponding to the reward, which was prepared for Her.

Thus the sorrows of this birth were not the effect of sin,

100 CITY OF GOD

as they are in the descendants of Eve, but they were the

effect of the intense and perfect love of the most holy

Mother for her divine Son. All these mysteries were

motives of praise and admiration for the good angels

and the beginning of punishment for the bad angels.

103. "And there was seen another sign in heaven;

and behold a great red dragon having seven heads and

ten horns ; and on his head were seven diadems, and his

tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and cast

them to the earth." Thereupon followed the punish

ment of Lucifer and his allies; for after uttering his

blasphemies against the Woman, who had been symbol

ized in the heavenly sign, he found himself visibly and

exteriorly transformed from a most beautiful angel in

to a fierce and most horrid dragon. He reared with

fury his seven heads, that is, he led on the seven legions

or squadrons of all those that followed and fell with

him. To each principality or congregation of these fol

lowers he gave a head, commanding them to sin on their

own account and undertake the leadership in the seven

mortal sins, which are commonly called capital. For in

these are contained the other sins and they constitute as

it were the regiments that rise up against God. They

are the sins called pride, envy, avarice, anger, luxury,

intemperance and sloth. They are the seven diadems

with which Lucifer, after being changed into a dragon,

was crowned. This is the punishment with which he

was visited by the Most High and which he acquired as a

return for his horrible wickedness for himself and for his

confederate angels. To all of them were apportioned

the punishment and the pains, which corresponded to

their malice and to the share which they had in origi

nating the seven capital sins.

104. The ten horns were the triumphs of the iniquity

THE CONCEPTION 101

and malice of the dragon, and the vain and arrogant

glorification and exaltation which he attributed to him

self in the execution of his wickedness. In his depraved

desire of attaining the object of his arrogance, he of

fered to the unhappy angels his malicious and poison

ous friendship and his counterfeit principalities, com-

manderships and rewards. These promises, full of bes

tial ignorance and error, were the tail with which the

dragon drew after him the third part of the stars of

heaven. These angels were the stars and if they would

have persevered, they would have shone with the rest of

the angels and the just, like the sun through the per

petual eternities (Dan. 12, 3). But the punishment

which they merited drew them down to the earth of

their unhappiness into its very centre, which is hell,

where they will for all eternity be deprived of light and

happiness (Jude 6).

105. "And the dragon stood before the woman, who

was ready to be delivered; that when She should be

delivered, he might devour her Son." The pride of

Lucifer was so boundless that he pretended to place his

throne on high, and with the utmost boasting he spoke

in presence of the Woman symbolized in the heavenly

sign : "This Son, which that Woman is to bring forth,

is of lower nature than mine : I shall devour Him and

destroy Him. I shall lead on my followers against Him,

I shall spread my doctrines against his decrees and

against the laws, which He shall set up. I shall wage

perpetual war and contradiction against Him." But the

answer of the most high Lord was that this Woman was

to bring forth a Manchild, who was to reign over the

nations with an iron rod. "This Man" (the Lord

added) "shall be not only the Son of that Woman, but

He shall also be my Son, true God and true man, gifted

102 CITY OF GOD

with power to overcome thy pride and crush thy head.

He will be to thee and to all those who hear and follow

thee, a powerful Judge, who shall rule thee with a rod

of iron and bring to naught all thy vain and aspiring

thoughts. This Son shall be taken up to my throne,

where He shall be seated at my right hand as Judge,

and I will place his enemies for a footstool beneath his

feet in order to triumph over them (Ps. 2, 9). He will

be rewarded as the Just man, who, being at the same

time true God, has done so much for his creatures; all

shall know Him and shall give Him reverence and hon

or (Ps. 109, 1). But thou, as the most unhappy, shalt

know what is the day of the wrath of the Allpowerful

(Sophon 1, 14). This Woman, too, shall be placed in

solitude, where She will have a place assigned by Me"

(Apos. 12, 6). This solitude, to which the Woman

fled, is the position which our great Queen holds, as be

ing only and alone, unsurpassed in sanctity and exempt

from all sin. For She, being of the same nature as mor

tals, far excelled all the angels in grace, merits and

gifts attained in common with them. Thus, She who

was the only One and without a compeer among crea

tures, fled and was placed in a solitude exalted above all

the rest. This solitude was so far removed from all sin

that the dragon could not even attain sight of it, nor

could he from the time of her Conception discern any

thing of Her. The Most High placed Her alone and

as the only One in the world, who never had intercourse

with, and never was in subordination to the serpent. On

the contrary, with solemn promise and assurance He

affirmed and decreed: "This Woman, from the first in

stant of her existence, shall be my only One, chosen for

Myself; I exempt Her even now from the jurisdiction

of her enemies and I will assign to Her a position of

THE CONCEPTION 103

grace most eminent and incomparable, in order that

there She may be nourished one thousand two hundred

and sixty days" (Apos. 12, 6). That number of days

the Queen was to remain in an interior and spiritual

state of most exalted and extraordinary graces, which

were to be more memorable and wonderful. This hap

pened in the last years of her life, as, with the help of

God, I will relate in its place. In that state She was

nourished in such a divine manner, that our understand

ing will never be able to grasp it. And because these

graces were in a certain measure the end toward which

others of the life of the Queen of heaven were ordained,

and, as it were, their culmination, the Evangelist makes

a special mention of them.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REST OF THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE APOCA

LYPSE is EXPLAINED.

106. "And there was a great battle in heaven; Michael

and his angels fought with the dragon and the dragon

fought and his angels." When the Lord had manifested

these things to the good and to the bad angels, the

holy prince Michael and his companions, with the per

mission of God, gave battle to the dragon and his fol

lowers. It was a wonderful battle, for it was fought

with the understanding and the will. Saint Michael,

burning with zeal for the honor of God and armed with

divine power and with his own humility, resisted the

arrogant pride of the dragon, saying: "Worthy is the

Highest of honor, praise and reverence, and of being

loved, feared and obeyed by all creation. He is mighty

to work whatever He desires. He that is increate and

without dependence on any other being, cannot seek any

thing that is not most just. To us He gave grace such

as we have, creating us and forming us out of noth

ing. He can create other beings, as many and in what

manner He pleases. It is reasonable that we, submissive

and prostrate in his presence, adore his Majesty and

kingly grandeur. Come then, ye angels, follow me, let

us adore Him, and extol his admirable and secret judg

ments, his most perfect and holy works. God is most

exalted and above all creatures, and He would not be

the Most High, if we could attain or comprehend his

great works. Infinite He is in wisdom and goodness,

104

THE CONCEPTION 105

rich in the treasures of his benefits. As Lord of all and

needing none, He can distribute them to whomsoever

He wishes, and He cannot err in the selection. He can

love and confer his favor to whomsoever He chooses, and

He can love whom He likes; He can raise up, create

and enrich according as it is his good pleasure. In all

things He will be wise, holy and irresistible. Let us

adore and thank Him for the wonderful work of the In

carnation which He has decreed, and for his favors to

his people and for its restoration to grace after its fall.

Let us adore this Person endowed with the human and

the divine nature, let us reverence It and accept It as

our Head ; let us confess, that He is worthy of all glory,

praise and magnificence, and, as the Author of grace, let

us give Him glory and acknowledge his power and Di

vinity."

107. With such arms St. Michael and his angels gave

battle, fighting as it were, with the powerful rays of

truth against the dragon and his followers, who on their

hand made use of blasphemies. But Lucifer at the sight

of the holy prince, not being able to resist, was torn

with interior rage and sought to fly from his torments;

it was the will of God, however, that he should not only

be punished, but also conquered, in order that by his fall

he might know the truth and power of God. Neverthe

less he blasphemed and cried out: "Unjust is God in

raising the human nature above the angelic. I am the

most exalted and beautiful angel and the triumph be

longs to me. It is I who am to place my throne above

the stars and who shall be like unto the Highest; I will

subject myself to no one of an inferior nature, and I will

not consent that any one take precedence of me or be

greater than I." In the same way spoke the apostate

followers of Lucifer. But St. Michael answered: "Who

106 CITY OF GOD

is there like unto the Lord, who dwells in the heavens,

or who to compare himself to Him? Be silent, enemy,

cease thy dreadful blasphemies, and since iniquity has

taken possession of thee, depart from our midst, wretch,

and be hurled in thy blind ignorance and wickedness

into the dark night and chaos of the infernal pains. But

let us, O spirits of the Lord, honor and reverence this

blessed Woman, who is to give human flesh to the

eternal Word; and let us recognize Her as our Queen

and Lady."

108. The great sign of the Woman served the good

angels as a shield and as arms of battle against the evil

ones; for at the sight of it, all their power of reasoning

weakened and was brought to confusion and silence,

since they could not endure the mysteries and sacra

ments contained in this sign. And just as by divine

power this mysterious sign appeared, so also now the

other figure or sign of the dragon appeared, in order

that thus transformed he might be ignominiously hurled

from heaven amid the fright and terror of his follow

ers and amid the astonishment of the holy angels. All

this was the effect of this new manifestation of the jus

tice and power of God.

109. It is difficult to describe in words what passed

in that memorable battle, since there is such a wide dif

ference between our conceptions, founded on material

objects, and those which would be appropriate to the

nature and operations of such great spirits as these

angels. "But the bad ones did not prevail" for injus

tice, lies, ignorance and malice could not prevail against

equity, truth, light and goodness ; nor could these virtues

be overcome by vices. Therefore, it is also said : "From

that time on their place was not found in heaven."

Through the sins which these disgraced angels had com-

THE CONCEPTION 107

mitted, they made themselves unworthy of the eternal

vision and company of the Lord. Their memory was

blotted out from his mind, where they had been written

by the excellences and graces of the nature given to

them. Having lost the right to the places, which had

been reserved for them, if they had obeyed, it passed over

to mankind. To man these places were now transferred

in such a way that the very vestiges of the apostate an

gels were blotted out and were no more found in heaven.

O unhappy wickedness and never to be described mis

fortune, which drew after itself such a horrible and

dreadful chastisement! The Evangelist adds:

110. "And the dragon was cast out, that ancient ser

pent who is called devil and satan, who seduceth the

whole world; and he was cast unto the earth and his

angels were thrown down with him." The holy prince

Michael hurled from heaven the dragon Lucifer with

the invincible battle-cry: "Who is like unto God?" So

powerful was this cry, that it sufficed to precipitate that

proud giant and all his host to the earth and cast him in

dreadful ignominy to the centre of the earth. From

that time he began to be called dragon, serpent, devil

and satan, imposed upon him by the holy archangel in

that battle as a testimony of his iniquity and malice.

Deprived of the happiness and honor, of which he had

become unworthy, he was despoiled also of his names

and honorable titles, acquiring in their stead such as

designate his ignominy. The wicked plans which he

proposed and enjoined upon his confederates, namely,

that they should deceive and pervert all those that live

in the world, manifest sufficiently his wickedness. He

therefore, who intended to scourge the nations, was con

signed to hellish regions, as Isaias says in the fourteenth

chapter, to the profound abyss, and his cadaver was de-

108 CITY OF GOD

livered to the moth and the worm of his own bad con

science ; thus was fulfilled in Lucifer all that the prophet

says in that chapter.

111. When the heavens had been cleared of the bad

angels and the Divinity had been unveiled to the good

and the obedient; when they were already admitted into

glory and the bad ones chastised, then happened what

the Evangelist farther says : "And I heard a loud voice

in heaven saying: Now is come salvation and strength

and the kingdom of our Lord, and the power of his

Christ ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth,

who accused them before our God day and night." This

voice, which the Evangelist heard was that of the Word,

and all the holy angels heard and listened to it. Its

echoes reverberated through the infernal regions and

filled with trembling and fear the demons. They did

not, however, understand its mystery in full, but only

so much of it, as the Most High chose to manifest to

them for their greater affliction and punishment. It was

the voice of the Son, who in the name of the humanity,

which He was to assume, was asking the eternal Father

that the salvation, power and kingdom of his Majesty,

and the reign of Christ might begin; since the accuser

of the brethren of the same Christ our Lord, that is, of

man, had been cast out. It was like a petition before

the throne of the most holy Trinity, that the salvation

and power and the mysteries of the Redemption and In

carnation be put into execution. He asked that it be

done so much the sooner as Lucifer, being filled with

fury, envy and wrath against the human nature, which

the W r ord was to assume, was now infesting the earth.

Full of love and compassion the Word calls men his

brethren. Lucifer is said to "accuse them day and

night," because, both during the day in which he still

THE CONCEPTION 109

enjoyed divine grace in the presence of the eternal

Father and of the holy Trinity, he belittled us in his

pride, and much more, in the night of his own darkness

and of our fall, he pursues us unceasingly with slander

and persecution as long as this world will endure. The

Word calls the works and mysteries of the Incarnation

and his Death "virtue," "power" and "reign," because

in them, all these really had their beginning and in them

was manifested his great virtue and power against

Lucifer.

112. This was the first time in which the Word in

the name of his humanity interceded for men before the

Divinity, and in which, according to our mode of con

ceiving such things, the eternal Father conferred with

the other Persons of the blessed Trinity in regard to

this petition. He also partly revealed to the holy angels

the decree of this divine consistory, saying, in regard to

the sacraments resolved upon: "Lucifer has raised the

banner of pride and sin and will persecute with all his

malice the whole human race. With cunning he will

pervert many men, availing himself of their own pas

sions for their destruction. In the blindness of sin and

vice men will prevaricate, heedless of danger. But his

lying pride, his sins and vices, are infinitely distant from

our nature and wishes. We will therefore bring out the

triumph of virtue and sanctity; for this purpose the sec

ond Person will assume human nature; He will exalt

and teach humility, obedience and all the virtues, and

thus will secure the salvation of mortals. Being true

God He will become humble and submissive. He will

be the Just Man, the Model and Teacher of all virtues.

These alone shall be accredited before our tribunal and

shall always triumph over vices. We will raise up the

lowly and humble the proud (Matth. 11, 28) ; we will

110 CITY OF GOD

make labors and endurance praiseworthy in our sight;

we resolve to help the afflicted and the sorrowful. Let

them be corrected by afflictions and thereby advance in

our grace and friendship and, according to their capa

bilities, reach salvation in the practice of virtue. Blessed

will be they that weep (Matth. 5, 3), and happy the

poor and those that suffer for justice sake and for

Christ, their Chief; and the insignificant ones shall be

magnified, the meek of heart exalted. The peaceful

shall be loved as our sons. Most dear shall those be to

us, who forgive and suffer injuries and love their ene

mies. We will assign to them copious benedictions of

our grace and an immortal glory in heaven. Our Only-

begotten will put in practice these decrees, and those

that follow Him shall be our chosen ones, our cherished

ones; they shall be refreshed and rewarded by Us; their

good works shall be engendered in our own mind,

which is the first cause of all virtue. We give permis

sion to the bad ones to oppress the good, thus helping

them to gain the crown, while for themselves they in

crease the punishment. Let there be scandals (Matth.

18, 7) for the common good; unhappy be those that

cause them, and blessed they that are proved by them.

The vain and the proud will afflict and despise the hum

ble; the great and the powerful will oppress the lowly

and abject ones. They will give benediction instead of

curses (I Cor. 4, 12). While they are pilgrims, they

shall be rejected by men, but afterwards they shall be

ranked with the angelic spirits, our sons, and they

will enjoy the seats and crowns, which the unfortunate

and unhappy apostates have lost. The stubborn and the

proud shall be condemned to eternal death, where they

will recognize their foolish proceedings and their per-

verseness."

THE CONCEPTION 111

113. "In order that all may have a true model and

superabundant grace, if they wish to use it, the Son will

descend, capable of suffering and as a Redeemer, and

He shall save men (whom Lucifer defrauded of their

happy state) ; and He shall raise them up through his

infinite merits. We have resolved and determined upon

the salvation of men, through a Redeemer and Teacher,

who shall be able to propitiate and to teach, who shall

be born and live poor, shall die despised, condemned by

men to a most ignominious and frightful Death; who

shall be esteemed a sinner and a criminal, and yet shall

satisfy our justice for the guilt of sin. On account of

his foreseen merits We will show mercy and kindness.

All will understand, that those who are humble and

peaceful, those that practice virtue, that suffer and yet

forgive, are the followers of Christ and our sons. No

body will be capable of entering by his own free will

into our kingdom, unless he denies himself, and, taking

up his cross, follows his Chief and Master (Matth. 10,

22). Our kingdom shall be composed of the perfect,

who have legitimately labored and fought, persevering

to the end. These will take part in the reign of our

Christ, now begun and determined upon. For the ac

cuser of his brethren has been cast down; the triumph

of Christ is secured; to Him belong exaltations and

glory, since He is to wash and purify men with his

blood. Therefore only He shall be worthy to open the

book of the law of grace (Apoc. 5, 9), He is the way,

the light, the truth and the life (Joan 14, 6), through

which men may come to Me. He alone shall open the

gates of heaven; He shall be the Mediator (I Tim. 2,

5) and the Advocate of mortals, in Him they will have

a Father, a Brother (I Joan 2, 1), and Protector after

having been freed from their accuser and persecutor.

112 CITY OF GOD

And the angels, who like true sons, have shared in the

work of our salvation and power and have defended the

reign of my Christ, shall likewise be honored and

crowned through all the eternities of eternities in my

presence."

114. This voice (which contains the mysteries hidden

since the constitution of the world and manifested by

the doctrine and the life of Jesus Christ), issued forth

from the throne and imported more than I can explain.

Through it were assigned the commissions, which the

holy angels were to fulfill. Saint Michael and Saint

Gabriel were appointed ambassadors of the incarnate

Word and of Mary his Mother most holy ; they were to

be ministers for all the mysteries of the Incarnation and

Redemption. With these two princes, many other an

gels were assigned to the same service, as I shall explain

afterward (Nos. 201-206). Other angels the Almighty

appointed as companions and guardians of the souls, to

teach them and inspire them with the virtues and sanc

tity opposed to the vices, into which Lucifer had pro

posed to seduce mankind. They were to guard and de

fend the souls and to carry them in their hands (Ps. 90,

12), in order that the just might not hurt their feet

against the stones, which are the snares and the traps

laid by their enemies.

115. Also other things were decreed on this occasion

of which the Evangelist says that the power, salvation,

virtue and kingdom of Christ began. But among the

mysterious works at this time was especially the desig

nation and enumeration of the predestined in the secret

tablets of the divine mind through the foreseen merits

of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Oh the mysteries and the

inexplicable secrets, which then were evolved in the

bosom of God ! Oh, happy lot of the chosen ones ! What

THE CONCEPTION 113

can equal this in importance ! What sacrament is so wor

thy of the Omnipotence of God! How great was the

triumph of the power of Christ! Happy, infinitely hap

py, the members who then were assigned and united to

such a Head ! Oh great Church ! Oh mighty people and

holy congregation of such a Leader and Master! At

the thought of such exalted mysteries the judgment of

the creature is rendered powerless, my understanding is

suspended, and my tongue becomes mute!

1 16. In the consistory of the three divine Persons the

mysterious book spoken of in the Apocalypse was given

and, as it were, delivered to the Onlybegotten of the

Father; at that time it was written, closed, and sealed

with the seven seals (Apoc. 5, 7), of which the Evan

gelist speaks. When He was made human flesh He

opened it, solving in their order the seals by enacting the

mysteries of his Birth, Life and Death unto the consum

mation of all things. That which the book contained

were all the decrees of the holy Trinity after the fall of

the angels; namely all that belongs to the Incarnation

of the Word, and the law of grace, the ten Command

ments, the seven Sacraments and all the articles of faith,

and what is contained in them, the constitution of the

whole militant Church. To the Word as having as

sumed human nature and as the High Priest and holy

Pontiff (Heb. 6, 20), was given the power to communi

cate the necessary faculties and gifts to the Apostles and

the other priests and ministers of the Church.

117. This was the mysterious beginning of the law

of the Gospel. In a most secret consistory of the Trin

ity it was resolved and recorded in the divine mind, that

those who would observe that law, shall be written in

the book of life. Here was the beginning of that law

and from the eternal Father the pontiffs and prelates

114 CITY OF GOD

have their power and their vicariate. From his infinite

power flows the virtues of those that are meek, poor in

spirit, humble and just. This is their most humble ori

gin, and on that account it is true to say, that he who

obeys the superior obeys God (Luc. 10, 16), and he who

despises them, despises God. All this was decreed and

conceived in the divine mind and to Christ was given

the power to open in its proper time this book of de

crees, which was until then to be closed and sealed. In

the meanwhile the Most High gave his testament, that

is the testimonies of his divine words in the natural laws

and in the written laws, accompanying them with won

derful works and manifesting a part of his secrets

through the Patriarchs and Prophets.

118. Through these testimonies and through the

blood of the Lamb, it is said: "They (the just) over

came him (the dragon)." For although the blood of

Christ was entirely sufficient and superabundant to en

able all the faithful to overcome the dragon, their ac

cuser, and although the testimonies and teachings of the

Prophets are of great power and help for eternal salva

tion ; yet the just attain the fruit of the Passion and Re

demption, by cooperating of their own free will with

these divine helps, conquering their own selves and the

demons, and making use of grace. They not only suc

ceed in fulfilling the ordinary commandments and coun

sels of God, but they go to the extent of sacrificing

their lives for the Lord (Apoc. 6, 9) in testimony of

Him and in the hope of the crown and triumph prom

ised by Christ, as the martyrs did in testimony of the

faith and in defending his honor.

119. On account of all these mysteries the sacred

text adds : "Therefore rejoice, O heaven, and all those

that dwell therein." Rejoice, because thou art to be the

THE CONCEPTION 115

dwelling place of the just, and of their Chief, Jesus

Christ, and of his most holy Mother. Rejoice, O

heaven, because of all the material and inanimate crea

tures none obtained a better lot, for thou art to be the

house of God, who will endure through the eternal ages,

and thou art to receive as thy Queen the most pure and

most holy Creature, that emanated from the power of

the Most High. Therefore rejoice, heaven and all that

dwell therein, ye angels and ye just, since you are to be

the companions and ministers of the Son of the eternal

Father and of his Mother, and you are to be parts of

that mystical body, whose head is Christ himself. Re

joice, ye holy angels, because ministering to them and

serving them by your defense and custody, you increase

your accidental joy. Let the holy Archangel Michael,

the prince of the celestial hosts, rejoice in particular be\*

cause he defended in battle the glory of the Most High

and his adorable mysteries, and because he is to be the

minister of the Incarnation of the Word and a particu

lar witness of all its effect to the end. Let all his allies

and all the defenders of Jesus Christ and his Mother re

joice, since during their ministry they do not lose the

joys of essential glory already their own. On account

of such divine sacraments let the heavens rejoice!

CHAPTER X.

THE EXPLANATION OF THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE

APOCALYPSE IS CONCLUDED.

120. "Woe to the earth, and to the sea, because the

devil is come down to you, having great wrath, know

ing that he hath but a short time." Woe to the earth,

where so many sins and such wickedness shall be perpe

trated! Woe to the sea, which refused to pour forth its

floods and annihilate the transgressors at the sight of so

great offenses against its Creator, and to avenge the in

sults against its Maker and Lord! But more woe to the

profound and raging sea of those that follow the demon,

after he had descended in their midst in order to war

against them with great wrath and with such unheard

of cruelty ! It is the wrath of the most ferocious dragon,

and greater than that of the devouring lion (I Pet.

5, 8), who attempts to annihilate all creation and to

whom all the days of the world seem a short time to

execute his fury. Such is his hunger and thirst to do

damage to the mortals, that all the days of their life do

not satisfy him, for they come to an end, whereas he

desires eternal ages, if possible, in order to wage war

against the sons of God. But incomparably greater than

against all others is his rage against that most blessed

Woman, who was to crush his head (Gen. 3, 15).

Therefore the Evangelist says:

121. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast

unto the earth, he persecuted the Woman, who brought

forth the Man-child." When the ancient serpent saw

116

THE CONCEPTION 117

the most unhappy place and state to which he had fal

len, and that he was hurled from the empyrean heaven,

he broke out in so much the greater rage and envy,

like a wild beast tearing its own entrails. Against the

Mother of the Word incarnate he conceived such a furi

ous rage, as no human tongue or intelligence can ever

describe or understand. But to a certain extent this

anger can be surmised from that which followed im

mediately after that dragon found himself hurled with

his hosts to the infernal regions. I will describe this

event, as far as I can, and as far as it has been made

plain to my understanding.

122. During the whole first week of the creation of

the world and its contents Lucifer and the demons were

occupied in machinations and projects of wickedness

against the Word, who was to become incarnate, and

against the Woman of whom He was to be born and

made man. On the first day, which corresponds to Sun

day, were created the angels; laws and precepts were

given to them, for the guidance of their actions. The

bad ones disobeyed and transgressed the mandates of the

Lord. By divine providence and disposition then suc

ceeded all the other events, which have been recorded

above, up to the morning of the second day, correspond

ing to Monday, on which Lucifer and his hosts were

driven and hurled into hell. The duration of these days

corresponds to the small periods, or delays, which inter

vened between their creation, activity, contest and fall,

or glorification. As soon as Lucifer with his followers

entered hell, they assembled in general council, which

lasted to the morning of Thursday. During this time

Lucifer exerted all his astuteness and diabolical malice

in conferring with the demons and concocting plans to

offend God so much the more deeply, and to obtain re-

118 CITY OF GOD

venge for the chastisement, to which he had been sub

jected. They came to the conclusion and resolved that

the greatest vengeance and injury against God would

be to impede the effects of the love, which they knew

God bore toward mankind. This they hoped to attain

by deceiving men, and persuading them, or even, as far

as possible, compelling them to neglect the friendship of

God, to be ungrateful toward Him, and to rebel against

his will.

123. "This we must strive to do," said Lucifer, "to

ward this end we must apply all our forces, all our so

licitude and knowledge. We will subject the human

creatures to our influence and will, in order to destroy

them. We will persecute this race of men and will de

prive them of the reward promised to them. We will

exert all our vigilance, to prevent them from arriving

at the vision of God, which was denied us unjustly. I

will gain great triumphs over them ; I will destroy them

all and subject them to my designs. I will sow new

sects and errors, and set up laws contrary to those of

the Most High in all things. I will raise up from

among men false prophets and leaders, who will spread

these doctrines (Act 20, 30) and I will scatter this seed

through them and afterwards I will assign to them a

place in these profound torments. I will afflict the poor,

oppress the afflicted, and persecute the timid. I will sow

discord, excite wars, and stir up nations against each

other. I will raise up proud and haughty men to extend

the dominion of sin and after they shall have executed

my designs, I will bury them in this eternal fire, and in

so much the greater torments, the more faithfully they

followed me. This is my kingdom and this is the re

ward which I will give to those who follow me."

124. "I will wage fierce war against the incarnate

THE CONCEPTION 119

Word, for although He is God, He is also man, and

therefore of a lower nature than mine. I will exalt my

throne and my dignity above his; I will conquer Him

and will humble Him by my power and astuteness. The

Woman who is to be his Mother shall perish at my

hands. What is one Woman against my power and

greatness? And you, ye demons, who were injured to

gether with me, follow me and obey me in the pursuit

of this vengeance, as you have followed me in disobe

dience ! Pretend to love men, in order to destroy them ;

serve them, in order to ruin them and deceive them ; help

them, in order to pervert them and draw them into these

my hellish regions." No human tongue can explain the

malice and fury of this first council of Lucifer and his

hosts against the human race, which although not yet in

existence, was to be created. In it were concocted all

the vices and sins of the world, thence proceeded lies,

sects and errors ; all iniquity had its origin in that chaos

and in that abominable gathering, and all those that do

evil are in the service of the prince of this assembly.

125. Having closed this meeting, Lucifer sought per

mission to speak with God, and his Majesty, for his own

exalted ends, gave him permission. This was allowed in,

the same manner in which satan spoke to God when he

asked permission to persecute Job (Job 1, 6), and it

happened on the day which corresponds to our Thurs

day. He addressed the Most High in the following

words : "Lord, since Thou hast laid thy hand so heavily

upon me in chastising- me with so great cruelty, and

since Thou hast predetermined all that Thou desirest to-

do for the men whom Thou art to create; and since

Thou wishest to exalt and elevate so high the incarnate

Word and enrich the Woman, who is to be his Mother,

with all thy predestined gifts, be now equitable and just ;

120 CITY OF GOD

as Thou hast given me permission to persecute the rest

of men, give me also permission to tempt and make war

against Christ, the Man-God and the Woman, who is to

be his Mother; give me freedom to exert all my powers

against Them." Other things Lucifer said on that occa

sion, and, in spite of the great violence occasioned to his

pride by the humiliation, he humbled himself neverthe

less in order to ask for this permission. His wrathful

anxiety to obtain what he desired was so great that he

was willing to subdue even his arrogance, thus forcing

one iniquity to yield to another. He knew too well that

without the permission of the omnipotent Lord he could

attempt nothing. In order to be able to tempt Christ

our Lord, and his most holy Mother in particular, he

was willing to humiliate himself a thousand times, for

he feared the threat, which had been made, that She

should crush his head.

126. The Lord answered: "Thou must not, satan,

ask such a permission as due to thee in justice, for the

incarnate Word is God and Lord most high and omnip

otent, though He is at the same time true man, and

thou art his creature. Even if the other men sin and

subject themselves to thy will, this will not be possible

in my Onlybegotten made man. Though thou mayest

succeed in making men slaves of sin, Christ will be

holy and just, segregated from sinners. He will redeem

them, if they fall. And this Woman against whom

thou hast such wrath, although She is to be a mere

creature and a true daughter of man, is to be preserved

by my decree from sin. She is to be altogether mine

forever and on no account or title shall any one else be

allowed to have part in Her."

127. To this satan replied: "But what wonder that

this Woman should be holy, since no one on this earth

THE CONCEPTION 121

will be allowed to draw Her to the contrary, or perse

cute Her and incite Her to sin ? This cannot be equity,

nor just judgment, nor can this be proper and praise

worthy." Lucifer added yet other blasphemies in his

arrogance. But the Most High, who disposes all things

with wisdom, answered him: "I will give thee permis

sion to tempt Christ, so that He will be an example and

a teacher in this to all the rest of men. I also give thee

permission to persecute the Woman, but thou must not

touch Her in regard to the life of her body. It is my

will, that Christ and his Mother be not exempt from

temptation, and that They be tempted by thee like the

rest of men." This permission was more pleasing to

the dragon than that of being free to persecute all the

rest of the human race. In this he resolved to use more

care than in the pursuit of any other project, as after

wards really happened. To no one else than himself

was he resolved to confide its execution. Therefore the

Evangelist proceeds to say:

128. "He persecuted the Woman, who brought forth

the man-child." For with the permission of the Lord,

he waged unheard of war and persecution against Her,

whom he thought to be the Mother of God incarnate.

But since these persecutions and battles will be de

scribed later (No. 692-697, Part II 340-71; III 451-

528), I will only say here, that they were beyond all

conception of man. Equally admirable, was her glorious

resistance and victory over them. Therefore in order

to describe the manner in which She defended Herself,

he says : "There were given to her two wings of a great

eagle, that she might fly into the desert unto her place,

where she is nourished for a time and times." These

two wings were given to the most holy Virgin before

She entered upon the combat, for She was prepared by

10

122 CITY OF GOD

special gifts and favors. The one wing was an infused

science, which revealed anew to Her vast mysteries and

sacraments; the other was a new and sublime humility,

as will be explained in its place (Part II 335-339, Part

III 448-450). With these two wings She took her

flight to the Lord, her proper habitation, for in Him

alone She lived and in Him was centered all her at

tention. She flew like the royal eagle, without ever di

recting her flight towards the enemy, being alone in

her flight and living in seclusion from all earthly things,

solely in communion with her last End, which is the

Divinity. In this solitude She "was nourished for a

time and times," for though this nourishment lasted all

her life, yet it was more abundant in the times of her

great battles with satan. In those times She received

favors more proportioned to the greatness of the con

flict. By "time and times" is also understood the fe

licity, by which her victories were rewarded and

crowned.

129. "And half a time from the face of the serpent."

This half a time was that, in which the most holy Virgin

was free from the persecution of the dragon and far

from his sight during this life; for, having conquered

him in her battles, She was, by divine providence and

as Victress, freed from them. This freedom was con

ceded to Her in order that She might enjoy the peace

and quiet, which She had merited after having con

quered the enemy, as I will describe farther on (Part

III, 526). Concerning the time of the combat the Evan

gelist says:

130. "And the serpent cast out of his mouth after the

woman, water, as it were, a river, that he might cause

her to be carried away ; and the earth helped the woman

and the earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the

THE CONCEPTION 123

river, which the dragon cast out of his mouth." All

his malice and all his forces Lucifer exerted and directed

against the Mistress; for all those, who were ever

tempted by him, seemed to him of less importance than

most holy Mary. With the same force as the current

of a great swift river, so the malice, and the lies, and

the temptations flowed from the mouth of that dragon

against Her. But the earth helped Her; for the earth

of her body and of her inclinations was not cursed, nor

did the sentence and punishment, which God hurled

against Adam and Eve, touch Her in any way. For in

it our earth is cursed and produces thorns instead of

fruit. It is wounded in its very nature by its inclina

tion to sin "fomes Peccati" (Gen. 3, 17), which con

tinues to assault us and causes opposition. The devil

avails himself of these inclinations for the ruin of men,

for he finds within us arms for his offensive warfare;

and catering to our evil inclinations by his false repre

sentations and apparent sweetness and delight, he draws

us toward sensible and earthly things.

131. But the most blessed Mary, the holy and sancti

fied earth without touch of bad inclinations or evil dis

positions, was free from all danger of corruption arising

from the earth. On the contrary, since all her inclina

tions were most orderly, composed and obedient to

grace, the earth of her body was in perfect harmony

with her soul. Thus this earth opened its mouth and

swallowed up the stream of temptations which the

dragon raised up for Her in vain; for he found that

material indisposed and unfomented for sin, unlike the

other offspring of Adam. Their terrestrial and disor

derly passions are more adapted to produce the floods of

temptation, than to absorb them, since our passions and

our corrupt nature are always in opposition to virtue.

124 CITY OF GOD

On account of the futility of his efforts against this

mysterious Woman, Scripture says:

132. "And the dragon was angry against the

Woman : and he went to make war with the rest of her

seed, who keep the commandments of God, and have

the testimony of Jesus Christ/ The dragon, having

been gloriously overcome in all things by the Queen of

all creation and dreading the furious torments of his

own confusion and the ruin of all hell power, fled from

Her, determined to make cruel war against the other

souls belonging to the generation and race of the most

blessed Mother. These are the faithful, who are marked

with the testimony and the blood of Christ in Baptism

as keepers of his commands and constant witnesses. For

all the wrath of the demon turned so much the more to

ward the holy Church and its members, when he saw,

that he would be unable to gain any advantage over

Christ and his most holy Mother. Especially does he

war against the virgins of Christ, and with a more par

ticular hatred does he seek to destroy the virtue of vir

ginity or chastity, this being the seed and the inheritance

of the most chaste Virgin and Mother of the Lamb.

On account of all this the Evangelist says :

133. "And he stood upon the sands of the sea." This

is the contemptible vanity of the world, on which the

dragon feeds and which he eats like hay. All this

passed in heaven and many mysteries were made mani

fest to the angels in the decrees of the divine Will re

garding the privileges reserved for the Mother of the

Incarnate Word." I have been short in describing what

I saw; for the multitude of the mysteries has made me

poor and halting in the words needful for their manifes

tation.

CHAPTER XL

IN THE CREATION OF ALL THINGS THE LORD HAD BEFORE

HIS MIND CHRIST OUR LORD AND HIS MOST HOLY

MOTHER. HE CHOSE HIS PEOPLE AND HEAPED HIS

BENEFITS ON THEM.

134. In the eighth chapter of the Proverbs, Wisdom

says of Itself, that It was present in the Creation, or

dering all things conjointly with the Almighty (Prov.

8, 30). And I said above (No. 54) that this Wisdom is

the incarnate Word, who with his most holy Mother was

present, in spirit, when God resolved upon the creation

of the whole world; for in that instant the Son was not

only coexistent in divine essence with the Father and

the Holy Spirit, but also the human nature, which He

was to assume, was foreseen and conceived as the pro

totype of all works in the divine mind of the Father.

Conjointly with Him was also foreseen as present the

human nature of his most holy Mother, who was to

conceive Him in her most pure womb. In these two

Persons were foreseen all his works, so that on account

of Them (speaking in a human way) He overlooked all

that could offend Him in the conduct of the men and

angels that were to fall; for the conduct of the latter

was an inducement rather to desist from the creation of

the human race and of the things that were to sub

serve for their use.

135. The Most High looked upon his Son and upon

his most holy Mother as models, produced in the cul

mination of his wisdom and power, in order that They

125

126 CITY OF GOD

might serve as prototypes according to which He was to

copy the whole human race. Thus the rest of men de

pended on these Two as Mediators between themselves

and God. He created also the necessary material beings

required for human life, but with such wisdom, that

some of them also serve as symbols, to represent in a

certain way these two Beings, which He primarily in

tended and to which all others were to be subservient,

namely, Christ and most holy Mary. On this account

He made the luminaries of heaven, the sun and the

moon (Gen. 1, 16) so that in dividing the day and the

night, they might symbolize the Sun of justice, Christ,

and his most holy Mother, who is beautiful as the moon

(Cant. 6, 9), for these Two divide the day of grace and

the night of sin. The sun illuminates the moon; and

both, together with the stars of the firmament, illumine

all other creatures within the confines of the universe.

136. He created the rest of the beings and added to

their perfection, because they were to be subservient to

Christ and most holy Mary, and through them to the

rest of men. Before the universe proceeded from its

nothingness, He set it as a banquet abundant and un

failing, and more memorable than the feast of Assuerus

(Esther 1, 3) ; for He was to create man for his delight

and to draw him to the enjoyment of his knowledge

and love. Like a most courteous and bounteous Lord

He did not wish that the invited guests should wait,

but that both the creation and the invitation to the ban

quet of his knowledge and love be one and the same

act. Man was not to lose any time in that which con

cerned him so much : namely, to know and to praise his

almighty Maker.

137. On the sixth day he formed and created Adam,

as it were of the age of thirty-three years. This was

THE CONCEPTION 127

the age in which Christ was to suffer death, and Adam

in regard to his body was so like unto Christ, that

scarcely any difference existed. Also according to the

soul Adam was similar to Christ. From Adam God

formed Eve so similar to the Blessed Virgin, that she was

like unto Her in personal appearance and in figure. God

looked upon these two images of the great Originals

with the highest pleasure and benevolence, and on ac

count of the Originals He heaped many blessings upon

them, as if He wanted to entertain Himself with them

and their descendants until the time should arrive for

forming Christ and Mary.

138. But the happy state in which God had created

the parents of the human race lasted only a very short

while. The envy of the serpent was immediately aroused

against them, for satan was impatiently awaiting their

creation, and no sooner were they created, than his

hatred became active against them. However, he was

not permitted to witness the formation of Adam and

Eve, as he had witnessed the creation of all other things :

for the Lord did not choose to manifest to him the cre

ation of man, nor the formation of Eve from a rib; all

these things were concealed from him for a space of time

until both of them were joined. But when the demon

saw the admirable composition of the human nature, per

fect beyond that of any other creature, the beauty of

the souls and also of the bodies of Adam and Eve ; when

he saw the paternal love with which the Lord regarded

them, and how He made them the lords of all creation,

and that He gave them hope of eternal life : the wrath of

the dragon was lashed to fury, and no tongue can de

scribe the rage with which that beast was filled, nor how

great was his envy and his desire to take the life of these

two beings. Like an enraged lion he certainly would

128 CITY OF GOD

have done so, if he had not known, that a superior force

would prevent him. Nevertheless he studied and plotted

out some means, which would suffice to deprive them of

the grace of the Most High and make them God s

enemies.

139. Here Lucifer was deceived; for the Lord had

from the beginning mysteriously manifested to him, that

the Word was to assume human nature in the womb of

the most holy Mary, but not how and when; and thus

He had also concealed the creation of Adam and the

formation of Eve, in order that Lucifer might from the

beginning labor under his ignorance concerning the mys

tery and the time of the Incarnation. As his wrath and

his watchfulness had thus been so signally forestalled in

regard to Christ and Mary, he suspected that Adam had

come forth from Eve, and that She was the Mother and

Adam the incarnate Word. His suspicions grew, when

he felt the divine power, which prevented him from

harming the life of these creatures. On the other hand

he soon became aware of the precepts of God, for these

did not remain concealed from him, since he heard their

conversation in regard to them. Being freed more and

more from his doubt as he listened to the words of the

first parents and sized up their natural gifts, he began

to follow them like a roaring lion (I Pet. 5, 8), seeking

an entrance through those inclinations, which he found

in each of them. Nevertheless, until he was undeceived

in the course of the Redemption, he continued to hesitate

between his wrath against Christ and Mary and the

dread of being overcome by Them. Most of all he

dreaded the confusion of being conquered by the Queen

of heaven, who was to be a mere creature and not God.

140. Taking courage therefore in the precept, which

was given to Adam and Eve, and having prepared the

THE CONCEPTION 129

snare, Lucifer entered with all his energy upon the work

of entrapping them and of opposing and hindering the

execution of the divine Will. He first approached the

woman, and not the man, because he knew her to be by

nature more frail and weak, and because in tempting her

he would be more certain that it was not Christ whom

he was encountering. Against her also he was more en

raged ever since he had seen the sign in the heaven and

since the threat, which God had made in it against him.

On all these accounts his wrath was greater against Eve

than against Adam. Before he showed himself to her,

however, he aroused in her many disturbing thoughts

or imaginations, in order to approach her in a state of

excitement and pre-occupation. But because I have

written about this in another place, I will not enlarge

here upon the violence and inhumanity of this tempta

tion ; it is enough for my purpose to mention what Scrip

ture says : that he took the form of a serpent (Gen. 3, 1),

and thus speaking to Eve drew her into a conversation,

which she should not have permitted. Listening to him

and answering, she began to believe him; then she vio

lated the command of God, and finally persuaded her

husband likewise to transgress the precept. Thus ruin,

overtook them and all the rest: for themselves and for

us they lost the happy position, in which God had placed

them.

141. When Lucifer saw the two fallen and their in

terior beauty and grace and original justice changed

into the ugliness of sin, he celebrated his triumph with

incredible joy and vaunting in the company of his

demons. But he soon fell from his proud boasting,

when he saw, contrary to his expectations, how kindly

the merciful love of God dealt with the delinquents, and

how He offered them a chance of doing penance by giv-

130 CITY OF GOD

ing them hope of pardon and return of grace. More

over he saw how they were disposing themselves to

ward this forgiveness by sorrow and contrition, and how

the beauty of grace was restored to them. When the

demons perceived the effect of contrition, all hell was

again in confusion. His consternation grew, when he

heard the sentence, which God pronounced against the

guilty ones, in which he himself was implicated. More

especially and above all was he tormented by the repeti

tion of that threat: The Woman shall crush thy head

(Gen. 3, 15), which he had already heard in heaven.

142. The offspring of Eve multiplied after the fall

and so arose the distinction and the multiplication of the

good and the bad, the elect and the reprobate, the ones

following Christ the Redeemer, and the others follow

ing satan. The elect cling to their Leader by faith, hu

mility, charity, patience and all the virtues and in order

to obtain victory, they are assisted, helped and beauti

fied by the divine grace and the gifts, which the Re

deemer and Lord of all merited for them. But the repro

bate, without receiving any such benefits from their false

leader, or earning any other reward than the eternal

pain and the confusion of hell, follow him in pride, pre

sumption, obscenity and wickedness, being led into these

disorders by the father of lies and the originator of sin.

143. Notwithstanding all this the Most High, in his

ineffable kindness, gave our first parents his benediction,

in order that the human race might grow and multiply

(Gen. 4, 3). The most high Providence permitted,

that Eve, in the unjust Cain, should bring forth a type

of the evil fruits of sin, and in the innocent Abel, both

in figure and in imitation, the type of Christ our Lord.

For in the first just one the law and doctrine of Christ

began to exert its effects. All the rest of the just were

THE CONCEPTION 131

to follow it, suffering for justice sake (Matth. 10, 22),

hated and persecuted by the sinners and the reprobate

and by their own brothers. Accordingly, patience, hu

mility and meekness began to appear in Abel, and in

Cain, envy and all wickedness, for the benefit of the just

and for his own perdition. The wicked triumph and the

good suffer, exhibiting the spectacle, which the world in

its progress shows to this day, namely, the Jerusalem

of the godfearing and the Babylon of the godforsaken,

each with its own leader and head.

144. The Most High also wished that the first Adam

should be the type of the second in the manner of their

creation; for, just as before the creation of the first,

He created and ordered for him the republic of all the

beings, of which he was to be the lord and head; so be

fore the appearance of his Onlybegotten, He allowed

many ages to pass by, in order that his Son might, in the

multiplied numbers of the human race, find prepared for

Himself a people, of which He was to be the Head, the

Teacher, and the King. He was not to be even for a

moment without a people and without followers : such is

the wonderful harmony and order, in which the divine

wisdom disposed all things, making that later in the

execution, which was first in the intention.

145. As the world progressed in its course, in order

that the Word might descend from the bosom of the

Father and clothe Itself in our mortality, God selected

and prepared a chosen and most noble people, the most

admirable of past and future times. Within it also He

constituted a most illustrious and holy race, from which

He was to descend according to the flesh. I will not

linger in detailing the genealogy of Christ our Lord,

for the account of the holy Evangelists has made that

unnecessary. I will only say, in praise of the Most

132 CITY OF GOD

High, that He has shown to me many times the incom

parable love, which He bore toward his people, the fa

vors shown to it, and the mysteries and holy Sacraments,

which He entrusted to it, as was afterwards made mani

fest through his holy Church. For at no time has slept

nor slumbered He, who has constituted Himself the

watcher of Israel (Ps. 120, 4).

146. He reared most holy Prophets and Patriarchs,

who in figures and prophecies announced to us from far

off, that, which we have now in possession. He wishes

us to venerate them, knowing how they esteemed the law

of grace and how earnestly they yearned and prayed for

it. To this people God manifested his immutable Es

sence by many revelations, and they again transmitted

these revelations to us by the holy Scriptures, contain

ing immense mysteries, which we grasp and learn to

know by faith. All of them, however, are brought to

perfection and are made certain by the incarnate Word,

who transmitted to us the secure rule of faith and the

nourishment of the sacred Scriptures in his Church. Al

though the Prophets and the just ones of that people

were not so far favored as to see Christ in his body,

they nevertheless experienced the liberality of the Lord,

who manifested Himself to them by prophecies and who

moved their hearts to pray for his coming and for the

Redemption of the whole human race. The consonance

and harmony of all these prophecies, mysteries and as

pirations of the ancient fathers, were a sweet music to

the Most High, which resounded in the secret recesses

of the Divinity and which regaled and shortened the

time (to speak in a human manner) until He should de

scend to converse with man.

147. In order not to be detained too much in that,

which the Lord has revealed to me regarding this and in

THE CONCEPTION 133

order to arrive at the preparations, which the Lord made

for sending to the world the incarnate Word and His

most holy Mother, I will rehearse these mysteries suc

cinctly according to the order given in the holy Scrip

tures. Genesis contains that which concerns the begin

ning and the creation of the world for the human race ;

the division of the earth, the chastisement and the resto

ration, the confusion of tongues, and the origin of the

chosen race, humbled in Egypt; and the many other

great sacraments revealed to Moses by God, in order

that we may be led to know his love and the justice to

wards men from the beginning drawing them to his

knowledge and service, and to foreshadow that, which

He has resolved to do in the future.

148. The book of Exodus contains what happened in

Egypt with the chosen people, the plagues and punish

ments, which God sent in order to rescue them; their

departure and march through the sea; the written law

given with such great preparations and wonders; and

many other great sacraments, which the Lord provided

for his people, visiting now their enemies, now them

selves with afflictions, chastising their enemies with the

severity of a Judge, correcting the Israelites with the

benignity of a Father and teaching them to appreciate

his benefits by sending severe hardships. He worked

great wonders with the staff of Moses, which prefigured

the cross on which the incarnate Word was to be sacri

ficed as the Lamb, a salvation to many, a ruin to others

(Luc. 2, 34). It was like the staff of Moses, and like

the Red Sea, the waves of which shielded the people

and annihilated the Egyptians. Thus he filled the lives

of the saints with joys and sorrows, with hardships and

with comforts; with infinite wisdom and providence He

symbolized in them the life and the death of Christ our

Lord.

134 CITY OF GOD

149. In the book of the Levites He describes and

ordains many sacrifices and ceremonies of the law for

placating the Divinity; for they were to point out the

Lamb, which was to be immolated for all men ; and they

pointed out also ourselves, immolated to the Majesty of

God in reality, as was prefigured in these sacrifices. It

also describes the vestments of Aaron, the highpriest and

type of Christ, although Christ was not to be of that

inferior order but of the order of Melchisedech (Ps.

120, 4).

150. The book of Numbers describes the wanderings

of the Israelites in the desert, prefiguring what was to

happen with the holy Church, with the Onlybegotten as

man, and with his most holy Mother; and also with the

rest of the just, who, in different aspects, were prefigured

in the column of fire, in the manna, in the rock giving

forth water. It contains also other great mysteries,

which are comprehended in the events there recorded,

likewise the mysteries pertaining to numbers, in all of

which deep secrets are hidden.

151. Deuteronomy is like a second law, a repetition

of the first, but given in a different way and prefiguring

more closely the law of the Gospels. For as according

to the hidden judgments of God and according to the

propriety known to his wisdom, the Incarnation of the

Son was to be deferred, He renewed and rearranged

these laws in order that they might be more like to those,

which He was to establish for his Onlybegotten.

152. Josue or Jesus Nave conducts the people of God

into the promised land ; he divides the Jordan to allow

the passage of the multitudes, achieves great things,

typifying plainly the Redeemer as well in name as in

deed. His history represents the destruction of the king

dom of the devil, the separation and the division of the

good and bad, which will happen in the last day.

THE CONCEPTION 135

153. After Josue, when the people had already come

into the possession of the promised and wished-for land,

which primarily and appropriately signifies the Church

acquired by Jesus Christ through the price of his blood,

comes the book of the Judges. These were ordained by

God for the government of his people, especially during

the wars, which on account of their sins and idolatries

were waged against them by the Philistines and other

neighboring enemies. From these God freed and deliv

ered them, whenever they returned to God by penance

and amendment of life. In it are also related the deeds of

Deborah while judging the people and liberating them

from great oppression; also those of Jahel, who helped

them to victory, mighty and courageous women both.

All these deeds of history prefigure and illustrate what

was to happen in the Church.

154. After the generation of the Judges came the

Kings, for whom the Israelites petitioned in their desire

of imitating the government of the surrounding nations.

These books contain great mysteries concerning the com

ing of the Messias. Heli, the priest, and Saul, the king,

prefigure in their death the reprobation of the old law.

Sadoc and David, typify the new reign and priesthood

of Christ and also the Church with the small number,

which were to belong to it in comparison to the rest of

men in the world. The other kings of Israel and Juda

and their captivities presignify other great mysteries of

the holy Church.

155. During the aforesaid times lived the most patient

Job, whose words are so mysterious, that there is not

one without its profound sacramental meaning concern

ing the life of Christ our Lord, the resurrection of the

dead, the last judgment in the same flesh, in which each

one lives, and concerning the violence and astuteness of

136 CITY OF GOD

the demons and their warfare against men. Above all

has God placed him as an example of patience for us

mortals, for in him we all may learn how we are to bear

our adversities; especially as we have before our eyes

the death of Christ, whereas this saint saw Him only at

such a distance and yet imitated Him so closely.

156. In the writings of the many and great Prophets

moreover, which God sent in the time of the kings to

provide for special necessities, not one of the great mys

teries and sacraments pertaining to the coming of the

Messiah and his law, remained undeclared or unrevealed.

The same thing, although more at a distance, God ac

complished in the ancient Fathers and Patriarchs. In

all this He only multiplied the likenesses, and, as it were,

the patterns of the incarnate Word, and prearranged and

prepared for Him a people, and the law, which He was

to teach.

157. In the three great patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac

and Jacob, He deposited great and precious pledges call

ing Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He

wished to honor Himself in the name at the same time

that He honored them, manifesting his dignity and his

excellent virtues and sacraments, and confiding them to

their care, in order that they might furnish so honorable

a name to God. The patriarch Abraham, in order to

prefigure vividly, that which the eternal Father was to do

with his Onlybegotten, was tempted and tried by the

command to sacrifice his only son Isaac (Gen. 22, 1).

When, however, this obedient father was about to com

plete the sacrifice, the same Lord, who had given the

commandment, impeded its execution; for such a heroic

sacrifice was to be reserved to the eternal Father, who

alone was to sacrifice in effect his Onlybegotten: only

in a symbolic manner can Abraham be said to have done

THE CONCEPTION 137

the same: for thus it will appear, that the zeal of divine

love is (Cant. 8, 6) strong as death. It was not how

ever beseeming, that such an expressive figure should

remain altogether unaccomplished and therefore the sac

rifice of Abraham was fulfilled by the killing of a ram,

being likewise a figure of the Lamb, which was to pay for

the sins of the world (Joan 1, 29).

158. To Jacob was shown that mysterious ladder, full

of sacraments and hidden import (Gen. 28, 12), princi

pally to represent the incarnate Word as the way and

the means of ascending to the Father, and of his descend

ing to us. On it also ascend and descend the angels,

who illuminate and guide us, bearing us up in their

hands, so that we may not stumble over the rocks of the

errors, heresies, and vices, with which the path of mortal

life is strewn (Ps. 90, 12). In the midst of them we

pass securely up this stairs in the faith and hope of his

holy Church, which is the house of the Lord, the portal

of heaven and holiness.

159. In order to make him the god of Pharao and the

leader of his people He showed to Moses the mystical

thornbush, which burned without being consumed and

which foreshadowed the Divinity covered with our hu

manity, leaving the Divinity intact by the humanity and

the humanity unconsumed by the Divinity. At the same

time it also signified the perpetual virginity of the

Mother of the Word, not only of her body, but of her

soul, so that, although She was a daughter of Adam and

came vested in the sin-tainted nature derived from Adam,

She nevertheless was without stain or offense.

160. He raised also for Himself David according to

his own heart (I Reg. 13, 14), who worthily sang the

praise of the Most High, comprehending in his Psalms

all the sacraments and mysteries not only of the law of

11

138 CITY OF GOD

grace, but of the written and natural law. And the

testimonies, judgments and works of the Lord, which

were pronounced by his lips, David also treasured up

in his heart, meditating on them day and night. In

pardoning his enemies, he was an express image and

figure of God forgiving us. Thus all his promises con

cerning the coming of the Redeemer were made more

certain to the world.

161. Solomon, the king of peace, was an image of

the King of kings ; for by his great wisdom he manifested

in different kinds of writings the sacraments and mys

teries of Christ, especially in the similitudes of the

Canticles. For there he exposed the mysteries of the

incarnate Word, of his most holy Mother, of his Church

and of the faithful. He taught also right behavior in

different ways, opening up a fountain of truth and life-

giving knowledge for many other writers.

162. But who can worthily exalt the benefits He pro

vided for his people in the praiseworthy host of holy

Prophets, through whom the Lord has spread the light

of prophecy, lighting up as from afar the holy Church,

and commencing in advance to shed the rays of the Sun

of justice and of the efficacious law of grace? The two

great Prophets, Isaias and Jeremias, were chosen to

preach to us, in a sweet and exalted manner, the mys

teries of the Incarnation of the Word, his Birth, Life

and Death. Isaias promised us, that a Virgin should

conceive and give birth to a Son, who would call him

self Emmanuel ; that a little son shall be born- to us, who

shall bear his kingdom on his shoulder (Is. 7, 14; 9, 6).

All the rest of the life of the Christ he proclaims with

such clearness, that his prophecies are like a gospel.

Jeremias announces the unheard of wonder, that God

will cause a Woman to bear in her womb a man, who

THE CONCEPTION 139

is at the same time to be a God and perfect man, who

alone can be Christ (Jer. 31, 22). He announced his

coming, his passion, ignominy and death (Thren. 3, 28).

Wonder and suspense fill me in the consideration of

these prophets. Isaias asks the Lord to send the Lamb,

which is to rule the world from the rocks of the desert

to the mountain of the daughter of Sion ; for this Lamb,

the incarnate Word, calls the heavens a desert, where as

God He dwelt without the society of men (Is. 16, 1).

He calls Him rock, on account of the stability of his

throne and of the unaltered rest of eternity which He

enjoys. The mountain, from which He is asked to come,

is in the mystical sense, the holy Church and first of all,

the most holy Mary, the Daughter of the vision of peace,

that is Sion. The prophet interposes Her as the Media

trix, to induce the eternal Father to send his Onlybe-

gotten, the Lamb. For in all the rest of the human race

there was nothing to influence Him so much as to have

Her as his Mother, who was to clothe Him with the

spotless fleece of the most holy humanity. All this is

contained in that most sweet prayer and prophecy of

Isaias.

163. Ezekiel also saw this Virgin Mother in the fig

ure and likeness of the closed gate (Ezekiel 44, 2),

which was open only for the God of Israel and through

which no other man could enter. Habacuc contemplates

Christ our Lord on the cross and in most profound

words prophesies the mysteries of the Redemption and

the wonderful effects of the passion and death of our

Redeemer (Hab. 3). Joel describes the land of the twelve

tribes, prefiguring the apostles, who were to be the

heads of all the sons of the Church. He also announces

the descent of the Holy Ghost upon his servants and

handmaids, foretelling the time of the coming, and of the

140 CITY OF GOD

life of Christ. And all the other prophets announced in

part the same thing, for God wished all his great works

to be announced, prophesied and prefigured far in ad

vance and so completely, that they might testify the

love and care, which He had for men and with which

He enriched his Church. He wished also to reprehend

us and convict us of our lukewarmness, since these

ancient Fathers and Prophets, seeing only the shadows

and figures, were inflamed with divine love and broke

forth in canticles of praise and exaltation of the Lord,

whereas we, who enjoy the truth and the bright day of

grace, remain buried in fortgetfulness of so great bene

fits, and, forsaking the light, continue to seek the dark

ness.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW, AFTER THE HUMAN RACE HAD BEEN PROPAGATED,

THE CLAMORS OF THE JUST FOR THE COMING OF THE

REDEEMER INCREASED, AND LIKEWISE SIN ; IN THIS

NIGHT OF THE ANCIENT LAW, GOD SENT TWO MORN-

INGSTARS AS HARBINGERS OF THE LAW OF GRACE.

164. The posterity and race of Adam spread out in

great numbers, for the just and the unjust were multi

plied; likewise did increase the clamors of the just for

the Redeemer, and the transgressions of the wicked in

demerit of that benefit. The people of the Most High

and the plans for the triumph of the Lord in assuming

human nature, were already in the last stages of prep

aration for the advent of the Messias. The kingdom

of sin in the generation of the wicked had now spread

its dominion to the utmost limits and the opportune time

for the remedy had arrived. The merits and the crowns

of the just had been multiplied, the Prophets and the

holy Fathers in the joy of heavenly enlightenment per

ceived the approach of the salvation and the presence

of the Redeemer, and they increased their clamors, be

seeching God to fulfill the prophecies and the promises

made to his people. Before the high throne of the di

vine mercy they asked God to remember the prolix and

sombre night of sin which had lasted since the creation

of the first man, and the blindness of idolatry, which

had taken hold of all the rest of the human race.

165. When the ancient serpent had infected the whole

earth with its poisonous breath and apparently enjoyed

141

142 CITY OF GOD

peaceful control over mortals who had become blind

to the light of reason (Rom. 1, 20) and to the precepts

contained in the ancient written law, when, instead of

seeking the true Divinity, men set up for themselves

many false laws and each one created a god for himself

according to his liking, without considering, that the con

fusion of so many gods was repugnant to all goodness,

order, and peace, when by these errors malice, ig

norance and forgetfulness of the true God had become

naturalized; when, ignorant of its mortal disease and

lethargy, the world had grown mute in its prayer for

deliverance; when pride reigned supreme and fools had

become innumerable (Eccles. 7, 15); when Lucifer in

his arrogance was about to swallow the pure waters of

the Jordan (Job 40, 18) : when through these injuries

God was more and more deeply offended and less and

less beholden to man; when his justice had such an ex

cellent cause for annihilating all creation and reducing it

to its original nothingness :

166. At this Juncture (according to our way of un

derstanding), the Most High directed his attention to

the attribute of his mercy, counterbalanced the weight of

his incomprehensible justice with the law of clemency,

and chose to yield more to his own goodness, to the

clamors and faithful services of the just and the prophets

of his people, than to his indignation at the wickedness

and sins of all the rest of mankind. In this dark night

of the ancient law, He resolved to give most certain

pledges of the day of grace, sending into the world

two most bright luminaries to announce the approach

ing dawn of the sun of Justice, Christ our Salvation.

These were saint Joachim and Anne, prepared and cre

ated by especial decree according to his own heart.

Saint Joachim had his home, his family and relations in

THE CONCEPTION 143

Nazareth, a town of Galilee. He, always a just and

holy man and illumined by especial grace and light from

on high, had a knowledge of many mysteries of the holy

Scriptures and of the olden Prophets. In continual and

fervent prayer he asked of God the fulfillment of his

promises, and his faith and charity penetrated the heav

ens. He was a man most humble and pure, leading a

most holy and sincere life, yet he was most grave and

earnest, and incomparably modest and honest.

167. The most fortunate Anne had a house in Bethle

hem and was a most chaste, humble and beautiful

maiden. From her childhood she led a most virtuous,

holy and retired life, enjoying great and continual en

lightenment in exalted contemplation. Withal she was

most diligent and industrious, thus attaining perfection

in both the active and the contemplative life. She had

an infused knowledge of the divine Scriptures and a

profound understanding of its hidden mysteries and

sacraments. In the infused virtues of faith, hope and love

she was unexcelled. Equipped with all these gifts, she

continued to pray for the coming of the Messias. Her

prayers were so acceptable to the Lord, that to her He

could but answer with the words of the Spouse : "Thou

hast wounded my heart with one of the hairs of thy neck"

(Cant. 4, 9). Therefore, without doubt, saint Anne

holds a high position among the saints of the old Testa

ment, who by their merits hastened the coming of the

Redeemer.

168. This woman also prayed most fervently, that

the Almighty deign to procure for her in matrimony a

husband, who should help her to observe the ancient law

and testament, and to be perfect in the fulfillment of all

its precepts. At the moment in which saint Anne thus

prayed to the Lord, his Providence ordained, that saint

144 CITY OF GOD

Joachim made the same petition : both prayers were pre

sented at the same time before the tribunal of the holy

Trinity, where they were heard and fulfilled, it being

then and there divinely disposed, that Joachim and Anne

unite in marriage and become the parents of Her, who

was to be the Mother of the incarnate God. In further

ance of this divine decree the archangel Gabriel was

sent to announce it to them both. To saint Anne he ap

peared in visible form, while she was engaged in fervent

prayer for the coming of the Savior and the Redeemer

of men. When she saw the holy prince, most beautiful

and refulgent, she was disturbed and frightened and

yet at the same time interiorly rejoiced and enlightened.

The holy maiden prostrated herself in profound humility

to reverence the messenger of heaven; but he prevented

and encouraged her, as being destined to be the ark of

the true manna, Mary most holy, Mother of the Word.

For this holy angel had been informed of this sacra

mental mystery on being sent with this message. The

other angels did not yet know of it, as this revelation or

illumination had been given directly from God only to

Gabriel. Nevertheless the angel did not then manifest

this great sacrament to St. Anne; but he asked her to

attend and said to her: "The Most High give thee his

blessing, servant of God, and be thy salvation. His

Majesty has heard thy petitions and He wishes thee to

persevere therein and that thou continue to clamor for

the coming of the Redeemer. It is his will, that thou

accept Joachim as thy spouse, for he is a man of upright

heart and acceptable to the Lord: in his company thou

wilt be able to persevere in the observance of his law and

in his service. Continue thy prayers and thy supplica

tions and be not solicitous for anything else, for the

Lord will see them fulfilled. Walk in the straight paths

THE CONCEPTION 145

of justice and let thy soul s converse be in heaven.

Continuing to pray for the Messias, be thou joyful in the

Lord, who is thy salvation." With these words the

angel disappeared, leaving her enlightened in many mys

teries of holy Scriptures, and comforted and renewed in

spirit.

169. To saint Joachim the archangel did not appear in

a corporeal manner, but he spoke to the man of God in

sleep as follows : "J oac rri m &gt; be thou blessed by the right

hand of the Most High! Persevere in thy desires and

live according to rectitude and perfection. It is the will

of the Almighty, that thou receive saint Anne as thy

spouse, for her the Lord has visited with his blessing.

Take care of her and esteem her as a pledge of the most

High and give thanks to his Majesty, because he has

given her into thy charge." In consequence of this di

vine message saint Joachim immediately asked for the

hand of the most chaste Anne and, in joint obedience to

the divine ordainment, they espoused each other. But

neither of them manifested to each other the secret of

what had happened until several years afterwards, as I

will relate in its place (Part I, 184). The two holy

spouses lived in Nazareth, continuing to walk in the

justification of the Lord. In rectitude and sincerity

they practiced all virtue in their works, making them

selves very acceptable and pleasing to the Most High

and avoiding all blemish in all their doings. The rents

and incomes of their estate they divided each year into

three parts. The first one they offered to the temple of

Jerusalem for the worship of the Lord; the second they

distributed to the poor, and the third they retained for

the decent sustenance of themselves and family. God

augmented their temporal goods on account of their

generosity and charity.

146 CITY OF GOD

170. They themselves lived with each other in undis

turbed peace and union of heart, without quarrel or

shadow of a grudge. The most humble Anne subjected

herself and conformed herself in all things to the will of

Joachim : and that man of God, with equal emulation of

humility, sought to know the desires of holy Anne, con

fiding in her with his whole heart (Prov. 31, 11), and

he was not deceived. Thus they lived together in such

perfect charity, that during their whole life they never

experienced a time, during which one ceased to seek the

same thing as the other (Matth. 18, 20). But rather as

being united in the Lord, they enjoyed his presence in

holy fear. Saint Joachim, solicitous to obey the com

mand of the angel, honored his spouse and lavished his

attention upon her.

171. The Lord forestalled the holy Matron Anne with

the blessings of his sweetness (Psalm 20, 4), communi

cating to her the most exalted graces and infused science,

which prepared her for the happy destiny of becoming

the mother of Her, who was to be the Mother of God

himself. As the works of God are perfect and consum

mate, it was natural to expect, that He should make her

a worthy mother of that most pure Creature, who should

be superior in sanctity to all creatures and inferior only

to God.

172. This fortunate couple passed twenty years of

their married life without issue. In those times and

among the people of the Jews this was held to be the

greatest misfortune and disgrace. On this account they

had to bear much reproach and insult from their neigh

bors and acquaintances, for all those that were child

less, were considered as excluded from the benefits of

the Messias. But the Most High wished to afflict them

and dispose them for the grace which awaited them, in

THE CONCEPTION 147

order that in patience and submission they might tear

fully sow the glorious Fruit, which they were afterwards

to bring forth. They continued in most fervent prayers

from the bottom of their hearts, mindful of the com

mand from on high. They made an express vow to the

Lord, that if He should give them issue, they would

consecrate It to his service in the temple of Jerusalem.

173. This offer was made by an especial impulse of

the Holy Ghost, who had ordained, that She who was to

be the habitation of the Son of God, should, before com

ing into existence, be offered and, as it were, pledged by

her parents to the same Lord. For if they had not

obliged themselves by a special promise to offer Her to

the temple before they possessed Her, they would not

have been able to make the sacrifice on account of the

vehement love, which her sweetness and grace engen

dered. According to our mode of understanding such

things, the Lord in a measure allayed his fears, lest his

most holy Mother should remain in possession of any

one else, and his love so to say, diverted itself by a cer

tain delay in creating Her.

174. Having, at the command of the Lord, perse

vered a whole year in fervent petitions, it happened by

divine inspiration and ordainment, that Joachim was in

the temple of Jerusalem offering prayers and sacrifices

for the coming of the Messias, and for the fruit, which

he desired. Arriving with others of his town to offer

the common gifts and contributions in the presence of

the high priest, Isachar, an inferior priest, harshly repre

hended the old and venerable Joachim, for presuming to

come with the other people to make his offerings in spite

of his being childless. Among other things he said to

him: "Why dost thou, Joachim, come with thy offer

ings and sacrifices, which are not pleasing in the eyes of

148 CITY OF GOD

God, since thou art a useless man? Leave this company

and depart; do not annoy God with thy offerings and

sacrifices, which are not acceptable to Him." The holy

man, full of shame and confusion, in humble love thus

addressed the Lord: "Most high Lord and God, at thy

command and desire I came to the temple ; he that takes

thy place, despises me; my sins merit this disgrace; but

since I accept it according to thy will, do not cast away

the creature of thy hands" (Ps. 137, 8). Joachim

hastened away from the temple full of sorrow, though

peaceful and contented, to a farm or storehouse, which

he possessed, and there in solitude he called upon the

Lord for some days, praying as follows :

175. "Most high and eternal God, on whom depends

the whole existence and the reparation of the human

race, prostrate in thy living presence, I supplicate thy

infinite goodness to look upon the affliction of my soul

and to hear my prayers and those of thy servant Anne.

To thine eyes are manifest all our desires (Ps. 37, 10)

and if I am not worthy to be heard, do not despise my

humble spouse. Lord God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

our first forefathers, do not hide thy kindness from us,

nor permit, since Thou art a Father, that I be numbered

among the reprobate and the outcasts in my offerings,

because Thou givest me no issue. Remember, O Lord,

the sacrifices (Deut. 9, 27) and oblations of thy ser

vants and prophets, my ancestors, and look upon their

works, which were pleasing to thy divine eyes. Since

Thou commandest me, my Lord, to pray to Thee in con

fidence, grant me, according to the greatness of thy

mercy and power, that which at thy wish I pray for. In

beseeching Thee I fulfill thy will and render the obe

dience, in which Thou hast promised to grant my pe

tition. If my sins hinder the exercise of thy mercies,

THE CONCEPTION 149

take away what displeases and hinders Thee. Thou art

mighty, Lord God of Israel, and all that Thou wishest,

Thou canst accomplish without hindrance. Let my

prayer reach thy ears, and if I am poor and insignificant,

Thou art infinite and always ready to exercise mercy

with the downcast. Whither shall I flee from Thee,

who art the King of kings and the Lord of lords ? Thou

hast filled thy sons and servants with benedictions in

their generations and Thou hast instructed me to expect

and desire from thy bounty what Thou hast wrought in

my brethren. If it is Thy pleasure to yield to my pe

tition, and grant me issue I will offer it and consecrate

it to thy holy temple in perpetual service. I have riveted

my eyes and my will on thy holy Will and have always

desired to keep them free from the vanishing things

of this world. Fulfill in regard to me, what is according

to thy pleasure, and rejoice our spirit with the accom

plishment of our hopes. Look down from thy throne

upon this vile dust, and raise it up, in order that it may

magnify Thee and adore Thee, and let in all things be

fulfilled thy will, and not mine."

176. While Joachim was making these petitions in his

retirement, the holy angel manifested to holy Anne, that

her prayer for an issue, accompanied by such holy de

sires and intentions, was pleasing to the Almighty. Hav

ing thus recognized the will of God and of her husband

Joachim, she prayed with humble subjection and confi

dence, that it be fulfilled. "Most high God, my Lord,

Creator and Preserver of the universe, whom my soul

reveres as the true God, infinite, holy and eternal ! Pros

trate in thy real presence I will speak, though I am but

dust and ashes (Esther 13, 9) proclaiming my need and

my affliction. Lord God uncreated, make us worthy of

thy benediction, and give us holy fruit of the womb, in

150 CITY OF GOD

order that we may offer it to thy service in the temple

(Gen. 18, 27). Remember, O Lord, that Anne, thy ser

vant, the mother of Samuel, was sterile and that by thy

generous mercy she received the fulfillment of her de

sires. I feel within me a courage which incites and ani

mates me to ask Thee to show me the same mercy.

Hear then, O sweetest Lord and Master, my humble

petition : remember the sacrifices, offerings and services

of my ancestors and the favors, which thy almighty arm

wrought in them. I wish to offer to Thee, O Lord, an

oblation pleasing and acceptable in thy eyes: but the

greatest in my power, is my soul, my faculties and in

clinations given to Thee, and my whole being. If Thou

look upon me from thy throne giving me issue, I will

from this moment sanctify and offer it for thy service

in the temple. Lord God of Israel, if it should be thy

pleasure and good will to look upon this lowly and im

poverished creature, and to console thy servant Joachim,

grant me my prayer and may in all things be fulfilled thy

holy and eternal will."

177. These were the prayers, which saint Joachim

and Anne offered. On account of my great shortcom

ing and insufficiency I cannot fully describe what I was

made to understand concerning the holiness of these

prayers and of these saintly parents. It is impossible to

tell all; nor is it necessary, since what I have said is

sufficient for my purpose. In order to obtain a befitting

idea of these saints, it is necessary to estimate and judge

them in connection with the most high end and ministry,

for which they were chosen by God; for they were the

immediate grandparents of Christ our Lord, and par

ents of his most holy Mother.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THE: CONCEPTION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY WAS

ANNOUNCED BY THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL, AND HOW

GOD PREPARED HOLY ANNE FOR IT BY A SPECIAL

FAVOR.

178. The petitions of the holy Joachim and Anne

reached the throne of the holy Trinity, where they were

accepted and the will of God was made known to the

holy angels. The three divine Persons, according to

our way of expressing such things, spoke to them as fol

lows : "We have in our condescension resolved, that the

Person of the Word shall assume human flesh and that

through Him all the race of mortals shall find a remedy.

We have already manifested and promised this to our

servants, the Prophets, in order that they might an

nounce it to the world. The sins of the living, and their

malice are so great, that We are much, constrained by

the rigor of justice. But our goodness and mercy is

greater than all their evil-doing, nor can it extinguish

our love toward men. We will look with mercy upon

the works of our hands, which We have created accord

ing to our image and likeness, so as to enable them to

become inheritors and participators of our eternal glory

(I Pet. 3, 22). We will consider the services and the

pleasure derived from our servants and friends and re

gard the multitude of those, who shall distinguish them

selves in our praise and friendship. And above all have

We before our eyes Her, who is to be the chosen One,

who is to be acceptable above all creatures and singled

151

152 CITY OF GOD

out for our delight ana pleasure; because She is to con

ceive the person of the Word in her womb and clothe

Him with human flesh. Since there must be a beginning

of this work, by which We shall manifest to the world

the treasures of the Divinity, this shall be the acceptable

and opportune time for its execution. Joachim and

Anne have found grace in our eyes ; We look upon them

with pleasure and shall enrich them with choicest gifts

and graces. They have been faithful and constant in

their trials and in simplicity and uprightness their souls

have become acceptable and pleasing before Us. Let

Gabriel as our ambassador bring tidings of joy for them

and for the whole human race; let him announce to

them, that in our condescension We have looked upon

them and chosen them."

179. Thus the celestial spirits were instructed in re

gard to the will and the decree of the Almighty. The

holy archangel Gabriel humbled himself before the

throne of the most blessed Trinity, adoring and revering

the divine Majesty in the manner which befits these most

pure and spiritual substances. From the throne an in

tellectual voice proceeded, saying: "Gabriel, enlighten,

vivify and console Joachim and Anne, our servants, and

tell them, that their prayers have come to our presence

and their petitions are heard in clemency. Promise them,

that by the favor of our right hand they will receive

the Fruit of benediction, and that Anne shall conceive a

Daughter, to whom We give the name of MARY."

180. Together with this mandate of the Most High

many mysteries and sacraments pertaining to this mes

sage were revealed to saint Gabriel. With it he de

scended from the vault of the empyrean heaven and ap

peared to holy Joachim, while he was in prayer, saying

to him: "Just and upright man, the Almighty from his

THE CONCEPTION 153

sovereign throne has taken notice of thy desires and has

heard thy sighs and prayers, and has made thee for

tunate on earth. Thy spouse Anne shall conceive and

bear a Daughter, who shall be blessed among women

(Luc. 1, 42, 48). The nations shall know Her as the

Blessed. He who is the eternal God, increate, and

the Creator of all, most upright in his judgments, power

ful and strong, sends me to thee, because thy works and

alms have been acceptable. Love has softened the heart

of the Almighty, and has hastened his mercies, and in

his liberality He wishes to enrich thy house and thy fam

ily with a Daughter, whom Anne shall conceive; the

Lord himself has chosen for Her the name of MARY.

From her childhood let Her be consecrated to the temple,

and in it to God, as thou hast promised. She shall be

elect, exalted, powerful and full of the Holy Ghost; on

account of the sterility of Anne her conception shall be

miraculous; She shall be a Daughter wonderful in all

her doings and in all her life. Praise the Lord, Joachim,

for this benefit and magnify Him, for in no other na

tion has He wrought the like. Thou shalt go to give

thanks in the temple of Jerusalem and in testimony of

the truth of this joyful message, thou shalt meet, in the

Golden Gate, thy sister Anne, who is coming to the

temple for the same purpose. Remember that marvelous

is this message, for the Conception of this Child shall re

joice heaven and earth."

181. All this happened to saint Joachim during his

prolonged prayer and in a miraculous sleep, into which

he fell for the purpose of receiving this message. He

experienced something similar to that which happened

to saint Joseph, the spouse of the most holy Mary, when it

was made known to him, that her pregnancy was the work

of the Holy Ghost (Matth. 1, 20). The most fortunate

12

154 CITY OF GOD

saint Joachim awoke in great joy of soul and with solici

tous and ingenuous prudence he concealed within his heart

the sacrament of the King (Tob. 12, 7). With a lively

faith and hope he poured forth his soul in the presence

of the Most High, and full of tenderness and gratitude,

he thanked and praised Him for his inscrutable judg

ments. In order to do this more appropriately he has

tened to the temple as he had been ordered.

182. In the meanwhile the thrice blessed Anne was

exalted in prayer and divine contemplation and totally

wrapped up in the mystery of the Incarnation, which,

after having been previously rilled with a most high un

derstanding and a specially infused light, she solicited

from the eternal Word. With the profoundest humility

and lively faith she was praying for the hastening of the

coming of the Redeemer of the human race in the fol

lowing words: "Most high King and Lord of all crea

tion, I, a most vile and despicable creature, and yet the

work of thy hands, desire at the price of the life which

Thou hast given me, to urge Thee to hasten in thy mercy

the time of our salvation. O may thy infinite kindness

incline toward our need! O that our eyes might look

upon the Restorer and the Redeemer of men! Remem

ber, O Lord, the mercies of old shown to thy people,

wherein Thou hast promised thy Onlybegotten, and may

this promise of infinite kindness unbend Thee! May it

come now, that day so much longed for! Is it possible,

that the Most High should descend from his holy

heaven? Is it possible, that He is to have a terrestrial

Mother? What woman shall She be, that is so fortunate

and blessed ? O who shall be so favored as to look upon

Her? Who shall be worthy to be the servant of her

servants? Blessed the race, that shall be able to see

Her and prostrate themselves at her feet to reverence

THE CONCEPTION 155

Her ! How sweet shall be the sight of Her and her com

pany ! Blessed the eyes, that shall see Her and the ears,

that shall listen to her words, and the family, from whom

the Most High shall select his Mother! Execute, O

Lord, this decree: fulfill thy divine benevolence!"

183. In this prayer and colloquy saint Anne occupied

herself after having received enlightenment regarding

this ineffable mystery. She weighed all the conferences,

which she had had with her guardian angel, who on

many occasions, and now more openly than ever before,

had manifested himself to her. The Almighty ordained,

that the message of the Conception of his holy Mother

should in some way be similar to the one, by which the

Incarnation was announced. For saint Anne was medi

tating in humble fervor upon her, who was to bear the

Mother of the incarnate Word. And the most holy

Virgin was making the same reflections upon Her, who

was to be the Mother of God, as I will relate in its place

(Part II, 117). It was also the same angel, that brought

both messages, and in human form, though he showed

himself in a more beautiful and mysterious shape to the

Virgin Mary.

184. The holy archangel Gabriel appeared to saint

Anne in human form more resplendent than the sun, and

said to her: "Anne, servant of God, I am an angel

sent from the council of the Most High, who in divine

condescension looks upon the humble of the earth

(Psalm 137, 6). Good is incessant prayer and humble

confidence. The Lord has heard thy petitions, for He is

nigh to those who call upon Him with living faith and

hope, and who expect his salvation (Ps. 144, 18). If

He delays hearing their clamors and defers the ful

fillment of their prayers, it is in order to dispose them to

receive and to oblige Himself to give much more than

156 CITY OF GOD

they ask and desire. Prayer and almsgiving open the

treasures of the Lord, the omnipotent King, and incline

Him to be lavish in mercy toward those, who ask (Tob.

11, 8). Thou and Joachim have prayed for the Fruit of

benediction and the Most High has resolved to give you

holy and wonderful Fruit; and by it He will enrich you

with heavenly gifts, granting to you much more than

you have asked. For having humiliated yourselves in

prayer, the Lord wishes to magnify Himself in conced

ing your petitions: because those, who in humble confi

dence pray to Him without belittling his infinite power,

are most agreeable to the Lord. Persevere in prayer

and ask without ceasing for the Redemption of the hu

man race in order to constrain the Most High. Moses

by unceasing prayer brought victory to the people

(Exod. 17, 11); Esther by prayer obtained liberation

from the death sentence ( Esther 4, 11); Judith by the

same means was filled with fortitude to execute a most

arduous task for the salvation of Israel: She fulfilled

it, though a weak and frail woman (Judith 9, 1). Da

vid came forth victorious in his combat with the giant,

because he prayed, invoking the name of the Lord (I

Kings 17, 45; III Kings 18, 36). Elias drew fire from

heaven by his sacrifice and by his prayer opened and

closed the heavens. The humility, faith and the alms of

Joachim and of thyself have come before the throne of

the Most High and now He sends me, his angel, in or

der to give thee news full of joy for thy heart : His Ma

jesty wishes, that thou be most fortunate and blessed.

He chooses thee to be the mother of Her who is to con

ceive and bring forth the Onlybegotten of the Father.

Thou shalt bring forth a Daughter, who by divine dis

position shall be called MARY. She shall be blessed

among women and full of the Holy Ghost. She shall

THE CONCEPTION 157

be the cloud that shall drop the dew of heaven for the

refreshment of mortals (III Kings 18, 44) : and in Her

shall be fulfilled the prophecies of thy ancestors. She

shall be the portal of life and salvation for the sons of

Adam. Know also that I have announced to Joachim,

that he shall have a Daughter who shall be blessed and

fortunate : but the full knowledge of the mystery is not

given him by the Lord, for he does not know, that She

is to be the Mother of the Messias. Therefore thou

must guard this secret; and go now to the temple to

give thanks to the Most High for having been so highly

favored by his powerful right hand. In the Golden Gate

thou shalt meet Joachim, where thou wilt confer with

him about this tiding. Thou art the one, who art especial

ly blessed of the Lord and whom He wishes to visit and

enrich with more singular blessings. In solitude He will

speak to thy heart and there give a beginning to the law

of grace, since in thy womb He will give being to Her,

who is to vest the Immortal with mortal flesh and hu

man form. In this humanity, united with the Word, will

be written, as with his own blood, the true law of Mercy."

185. In order that the humble heart of the holy Anne

might not faint away with admiration and joy at these

tidings of the holy angel, she was strengthened by the

holy Spirit and thus she heard it and received it with

magnanimity and incomparable joy. Immediately arising\*

she hastened to the temple of Jerusalem, and there found

saint Joachim, as the angel had foretold to them both.

Together they gave thanks to the Almighty for this won

derful blessing and offered special gifts and sacrifices,

They were enlightened anew by the grace of the holy

Spirit, and, full of divine consolation, they returned to

their home. Joyfully they conversed about the favors,

which they had received from the Almighty, especially

158 CITY OF GOD

concerning each one s message of the archangel Gabriel,

whereby, on behalf of the Lord, they had been promised

a Daughter who should be most blessed and fortunate.

On this occasion they also told each other, how the same

angel, before their espousal, had commanded each to ac

cept the other, in order that together they might serve

God according to his divine will. This secret they had

kept from each other for twenty years, without com

municating it, until the same angel had promised them

the issue of such a Daughter. Anew they made the vow

to offer Her to the temple and that each year on this day

they would come to the temple to offer special gifts,

spend the day in praise and thanksgiving, and give many

alms. This vow they fulfilled to the end of their lives,

spending this day in great praise and exaltation of the

Most High.

186. The prudent matron Anne never disclosed the

secret, that her Daughter was to be the Mother of the

Messias, either to Joachim or to any other creature.

Nor did that holy parent in the course of his life know

any more than that She was to be a grand and mys

terious woman. However, in the last moments of his

life the Almighty made the secret known to him, as I

will relate in its place (Infr. No. 666). Although great

revelations have been made to me concerning the vir

tues and the holiness of the two parents of the Queen

of heaven, I shall not dilate upon that which all the

faithful must presuppose. I shall rather hasten to the

main point.

187. After the first conception of the body which was

to be that of the Mother of grace, and before creating

her most holy soul, God granted a singular favor to saint

Anne. She had an intellectual and most exalted vision

or . appearance of his Majesty, in which, having com-

THE CONCEPTION 159

municated to her great enlightenment and gifts of grace.

He disposed her and forestalled her with the blessings of

his sweetness (Ps. 20, 4). Entirely purifying her, He

spiritualized the inferior part of her body and elevated

her soul and spirit to such a degree, that thenceforward

she never attended to any human affair, which could im

pede her union with God in all the affections of her mind

and will, and she never lost sight of Him. At the same

time He said to her: "Anne, my servant, I am the

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: my blessing and my

eternal light is with thee. I have created man in order

to raise him from the dust and to make him the in

heritor of my glory and participator of my Divinity. I

also showered my gifts upon him and placed him in a

position and state of high perfection; but he listened

to the serpent and lost all. Out of my goodness and in

fulfillment of the promises made through my holy

Prophets, I wish to forget his ingratitude and to repair

the damage, by sending my Onlybegotten as their Re

deemer. The heavens are closed, the ancient Patriarchs

are detained, deprived of the sight of my face and of

eternal life promised to them. The inclination of my

bounteousness is as it were strained in not communicat

ing itself to the human race. Now, at this time do I

wish to show mercy, giving them the person of the eter

nal Word, to become man, to be born of a Woman, who

shall be Mother and Virgin, immaculate, pure, blessed

and holy above all creatures. Of Her, my chosen and

only One, I make thee mother." (Cant. 6, 8).

188. I cannot easily explain the effect of these words

in the upright heart of holy Anne, she being the first of

those born of men, to whom was revealed the mystery of

her most holy Daughter, who was to be the Mother of

God and chosen for the greatest sacrament of the divine

160 CITY OF GOD

Omnipotence. It was befitting that she should know of

this mystery and properly estimate the Treasure which

she was to possess and to which she was to give birth

and existence. She heard with profound humility the

voice of the Most High and with a submissive heart she

answered: "Lord, God eternal, it is the essence of thy

immense bounty and the work of thy powerful arm, to

raise from the dust those that are poor and despised

(Ps. 112, 7). I acknowledge myself, O Lord, a crea

ture unworthy of such mercies and benefits. What shall

this lowly worm do in thy presence? Thy own Being

and thy own magnificence alone can I offer in thanks

giving, and my soul and all its faculties in sacrifice. Use

me, O Lord, according to thy will, since to it I resign

myself entirely. I wish to be as completely thy own as

such a favor requires ; but what shall I do, who am not

worthy to be the slave of Her who is to be the Mother

of the Onlybegotten and my Daughter? This I know,

and shall confess always: that I am a poor creature;

but at the feet of thy greatness I await the course of thy

mercy, who art a kind Father and the all-powerful God.

Make me, O Lord, worthy in thy eyes of the dignity

Thou bestowest upon me."

189. During this vision saint Anne was wrapped in

a marvelous ecstasy, in which she was favored with the

highest understanding of the laws of nature, and of the

written and the evangelical precepts. She was instruct

ed as to how the divine nature in the eternal Word was

to unite itself to our own ; how his most holy humanity

was to be elevated to the being of God, and she under

stood many other mysteries, which were to be fulfilled

in the Incarnation of the divine Word. By these en

lightenments and by other gifts of grace, the Almighty

disposed her for the Conception and the creation of her

most holy Daughter, the Mother of God.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW THE ALMIGHTY MADE) KNOWN TO THE HOLY AN

GELS THE OPPORTUNE DECREE FOR THE CONCEPTION

OF THE MOST HOLY MARY; AND WHICH OF THEM HE

SELECTED FOR HER CUSTODY.

190. In the tribunal of the divine will, as the inevit

able source and universal cause of the whole creation,

all things with their conditions and circumstances, are

decreed and determined, so that nothing is forgotten

and no created power can in the least impede the fulfill

ment of the decree. All the spheres and the inhabitants

contained in them are dependent on this ineffable gov

ernment that rules them and cooperates with the nat

ural causes unfailingly and unerringly in all that must

be done. God works in all and sustains all by his sole

will; in Him lies the preservation of all things or their

annihilation, for without Him they would return to the

non-existence, from which they were drawn. But since

He has created the universe for his glory and for the

glory of the incarnate Word, therefore He has from the

beginning opened the paths and prearranged the ways

by which the same Word should lower Himself to as

sume human flesh and to live among men, and by which

they might ascend toward God, know Him, fear Him,

seek Him, serve Him, love Him, praise Him and enjoy

Him eternally.

191. Admirable was his name in all the lands of the

earth, and magnified in the plenitude and congregation

of the saints, whom He ordained and constituted as a

161

162 CITY OF GOD

people pleasing to Him and over whom He placed the

incarnate Word as their Chief. When the world had

arrived at the last and befitting 1 stage according to the

wishes of his divine Providence; and when the prede

termined time had come for the creation of that mar

velous woman, whose sign had appeared in the heavens

clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12, 1), and who was to re

joice and enrich the earth, the most holy Trinity exe

cuted the decree of forming Her. I will now manifest

what within the narrow limits of my reason and concept

I have been able to comprehend.

192. I have already said above (No. 34) that for

God there is no past or future, since He holds all things

present to his divine and infinite mind and knows all by

one simple act. But reducing this to our way of speak

ing and to our limited mode of understanding, we con

ceive that his Majesty remembered the decrees of the

creation of a Mother befitting and worthy of the Incar

nation of the Word, for the fulfillment of his decree is

inevitable. As the opportune and pre-ordained time had

arrived, the three divine Persons conferred with each

other saying : "Now is the time to begin the work of our

pleasure and to call into existence that pure Creature

and that soul, which is to find grace in our eyes above

all the rest. Let Us furnish Her with the richest gifts

and let Us deposit in Her the great treasures of our

grace. Since all others, whom We called into existence,

have turned out ungrateful and rebellious to our wishes,

frustrating our intention and impeding by their own

fault our purpose, namely, that they conserve themselves

in the happy state of their first parents, and since it is

not proper, that our will should be entirely frustrated,

let Us therefore create this being in entire sanctity and

perfection, so that the disorder of the first sin shall have

THE CONCEPTION 163

no part in Her. Let Us create a soul according to our

pleasure, a fruit of our attributes, a marvel of our in

finite power, without touch or blemish of the sin of

Adam. Let Us perfect a work which is the object of

our Omnipotence and a pattern of the perfection in

tended for our children, and the finishing crown of cre

ation. All have sinned in the free will and resolve of

the first man (Rom. 5, 12) ; let Her be the sole creature

in whom We restore and execute that which they in

their aberration have lost. Let Her be a most special

image and likeness of our Divinity and let Her be in our

presence for all eternity the culmination of our good

will and pleasure. In Her We deposit all the preroga

tives and graces which in our first and conditional re

solve We had destined for the angels and men, if they

had remained in their first estate. What they have lost

We renew in that Creature and We will add to these

gifts many others. Thus our first decree shall not

be frustrated, but it shall be fulfilled in a higher manner

through this our chosen and only One (Cant. 6, 8).

And since We assigned and prepared the most perfect

and estimable of our gifts for the creatures who have

lost them, We will divert the stream of our bounty to

our Well-beloved. We will set Her apart from the

ordinary law, by which the rest of the mortals are

brought into existence, for in Her the seed of the ser

pent shall have no part. I will descend from heaven into

her womb and in it vest Myself from her substance with

human nature."

193. "It is befitting and due to the infinite goodness

of our Divinity, that It be founded and enclosed in the

most pure matter, untouched and unstained by fault.

Nor is it proper that our equity and providence over

look what is most apt, perfect and holy, and choose that

164 CITY OF GOD

which is inferior, since nothing can resist our will (Es

ther 13, 9). The Word, which is to become man, being

the Redeemer and Teacher of men, must lay the foun

dation of the most perfect law of grace, and must teach

through it, that the father and mother are to be obeyed

and honored as the secondary causes of the natural ex

istence of man. The law is first to be fulfilled by the

divine Word by honoring Her as his chosen Mother,

by exalting Her with a powerful arm, and lavishing

upon Her the most admirable, most holy and most ex

cellent of all graces and gifts. Among these shall be

that most singular honor and blessing of not subjecting

Her to our enemy, nor to his malice; and therefore She

shall be free from the death of sin."

194. "On earth the Word shall have a Mother with

out a father, as in heaven He has a Father without a

mother. And in order that there may be the proper cor

respondence, proportion and consonance in calling God

his Father and this Woman his Mother, We desire that

the highest correspondence and approach possible between

a creature and its God be established. Therefore at no

time shall the dragon boast of being superior to the

Woman, whom God will obey as his true Mother. This

dignity of being free from sin is due and corresponds to

that of being Mother of the Word, and it is in itself

even more estimable and useful. It is a greater good to

be holy than to be only mother ; but all sanctity and per

fection is nevertheless due to the motherhood of God.

The human flesh, from which He is to assume form,

must be free from sin. Since He is to redeem in it the

sinners, He must not be under the necessity of redeem

ing his own flesh, like that of sinners. Being united to

the Divinity his humanity is to be the price of Redemp

tion, wherefore it must before all be preserved from sin,

THE CONCEPTION 165

and We have already foreseen and accepted the merits

of the Word in this very flesh and human nature. We

wish that for all eternities the Word should be glorified

through this tabernacle and habitation of the human

nature."

195. "She is to be a daughter of the first man; but

in the order of grace She is to be singularly free and

exempt from fault ; and in the order of nature She is to

be most perfect, and to be formed according to a special

providence. And since the incarnate Word is to be the

Teacher of humility and holiness and for this end is to

endure labors, confounding the vanity and deceitful fal

lacies of mortals by choosing for Himself sufferings as

the treasure most estimable in our eyes, We wish that

She, who is to be his Mother, experience the same labors

and difficulties, that She be singularly distinguished in

patience, admirable in sufferings, and that She, in union

with the Onlybegotten, offer the acceptable sacrifices of

sorrow to Us for her greater glory."

196. This was the decree which the three divine Per

sons made known to the holy angels, exalting the glory

and honor of their high and inscrutable judgments. And

since his Divinity is a mirror in which He at the same

time manifests new mysteries to the blessed who yield

obedience, this explanation revealed in a new light the

admirable order and marvelous harmony of his works.

All this follows from that which We have said in the

preceding chapters (VII, VIII) concerning the works

of the Almighty in the creation of the angels, telling

them to reverence as their superiors the incarnate Word

and his most holy Mother. Moreover, as the time for

the formation of that great Queen had arrived, it was

befitting that the Lord should not conceal the fact of his

having disposed all this in weight and measure (Sap.

166 CITY OF GOD

11, 21). Self-evidently, with human words and terms

so limited as those at my disposal, the understanding

given to me about these hidden mysteries will be obscured

rather than explained ; but within these limits I will tell

what I can concerning their manifestation by the Al

mighty to the angels on this occasion.

197. "Now the time has arrived" added his Majesty,

"which was resolved upon by our Providence for bring

ing to light the Creature most pleasing and acceptable to

our eyes. That Creature, in whom the human nature is

freed from its first sin, who is to crush the head of the

dragon, who was typified by that singular sign, the

Woman that appeared in the heavens in our presence,

and who is to clothe the eternal Word with human flesh.

The hour is at hand, so blessed for mortals, in which the

treasures of our Divinity are to be opened and the gates

of heaven to be unlocked. Let the rigor of our justice

be softened by the chastisements, which We have until

now executed upon the mortals; let the attribute of our

mercy become manifest; let the creatures be enriched,

and let the divine Word merit for them the treasures of

grace and of eternal glory."

198. "Now let the human race receive the Repairer,

the Teacher, the Brother and Friend, to be life for mor

tals, a medicine for the sick, a consoler for the sorrow

ful, a balsam for the wounded, a guide and companion

for those in difficulties. Let now the prophecies of our

servants and the promises made to them, that We would

send a Savior to redeem them, be fulfilled. And in order

that all may be executed according to our good pleas

ure, and that We may give a beginning to the mystery

hidden since the constitution of the world, We select for

the formation of our beloved Mary the womb of our

servant Anne; in her be She conceived and in her let

THE CONCEPTION 167

that most blessed Soul be created. Although her gener

ation and formation shall proceed according to the usual

order of natural propagation, it shall be different in the

order of grace, according to the ordainment of our Al

mighty power."

199. "You do already know how the ancient serpent,

since he saw the sign of this marvelous Woman, at

tempts to circumvent all women, and how, from the first

one created, he persecutes all those, whom he sees ex

celling in the perfection of their works and life, expect

ing to find among them the One, who is to crush his

head (Gen. 3, 15). When he shall encounter this most

pure and spotless Creature, he shall find Her so holy

that he will exert all his powers to persecute Her in pur

suance of the concept which he forms of Her. But the

arrogance of this dragon shall be greater than his

powers (Is. 16, 6) ; and it is our will that you have par

ticular charge of this our holy City and tabernacle of

the incarnate Word, protecting, guarding, assisting and

defending Her against our enemies, and that you en

lighten, strengthen and console Her with all due solici

tude and reverence, as long as She shall be a wayfarer

among the mortals."

200. At this proposal of the Most High all the holy

angels, prostrate before the royal throne of the most

holy Trinity, avowed their promptitude and eagerness

to obey the divine mandate. Each one desired in holy

emulation to be appointed, and offered himself for such

a happy service; all of them gave to the Almighty praise

and thanksgiving in new songs, because the hour had ar

rived for the fulfillment of that for which they had,

with the most ardent desires, prayed through many

ages. I perceived on this occasion that from the time of

that great battle of saint Michael with the dragon and

168 CITY OF GOD

his allies, in which they were hurled into everlasting

darkness while the hosts of Michael remained victorious

and confirmed in grace and glory, these holy spirits com

menced immediately to pray for the fulfillment of the

mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word, of which

they became cognizant at that time. And they perse

vered in these oft repeated prayers up to the hour in

which God manifested to them the fulfillment of their

desires and petitions.

201. On this account the celestial spirits at this new

revelation conceived an additional joy and obtained new

accidental glory, and they spoke to the Lord: "Most

High and incomprehensible God and Lord, Thou art

worthy of all reverence, praise and eternal glory; and

we are thy creatures and made according to thy divine

will. Send us, most powerful Lord, to execute thy most

wonderful works and mysteries, in order that in all

things thy most just pleasure may be fulfilled." In such

terms of affection the heavenly princes acknowledged

themselves as subjects; and if it had been possible, they

desired to increase in purity and perfection in order to

be more worthy guardians and servants of Mary.

202. Then the Most High chose and appointed those

who were to be occupied in this exalted service (the

guardianship of Mary) from each of the nine choirs of

angels. He selected one hundred, being nine hundred

in all. Moreover He assigned twelve others who should

in a special manner assist Mary in corporeal and visible

forms; and they were to bear the emblems or escutch

eons of the Redemption. These are the twelve which

are mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the Apoca

lypse as guarding the portals of the city ; of them I will

speak in the explanation of that chapter later on. Be

sides these the Lord assigned eighteen other angels, se-

THE CONCEPTION 169

lected from the highest ranks, who were to ascend and

descend by that mystical stairs of Jacob with the mes

sage of the Queen to his Majesty and those of the Lord

to Her. For, many times did She send them to the

eternal Father in order to be governed in all her actions

by the Holy Spirit. She did nothing except what

pleased the Almighty, and his pleasures She sought even

in most insignificant things. Whenever She was not

instructed by a special enlightenment, She sent these

holy angels to the Lord in order to represent her doubt

and signify her desire to do what was most pleasing to

the divine will, and in order to be informed of his pleas

ure, as we shall relate in the course of this history.

203. In addition to all these holy angels the Almighty

assigned and appointed seventy seraphim, choosing them

from the highest ranks and from those nearest to the

Divinity, in order that they might communicate and

converse with this Princess of heaven in the same way

as they themselves have intercourse with each other, and

as the higher communicate with the lower ones. This

was a privilege conferred upon the Mother of God be

cause She was to be a wayfarer on earth and in nature

inferior, though in dignity and grace, superior to all the

seraphim. When at one time the Lord withdrew and

hid Himself from Her, as we shall see later on, these

seventy seraphim enlightened Her and consoled Her; to

them She poured out the longings of her most ardent

love and her anxieties in regard to her hidden Treasure.

That there were seventy of these spirits, had reference

to the number of years of her life, which was seventy

and not sixty, as I will explain in its place. Among this

number are included the sixty strong ones, which in the

Canticles are mentioned as guarding the chamber or

couch of Solomon, their loins girded with swords against

the terror of the night.

13

170 CITY OF GOD

204. These mighty princes and captains were as

signed as a guard of the Queen of heaven from among

the highest orders of the angelic hierarchy; for these,

in that ancient battle of the obedient spirits with the

proud dragon, were as the armed champions of the Lord

of all creation, encountering and overcoming Lucifer

and all his apostates with the sword of their virtue and

of the divine Word. Hence, because they distinguished

themselves in that great battle and victory by their zeal

for the honor of the Almighty, and had been valiant

and skillful captains in the divine love, and as they so

zealously defended the honor of their Captain and Lord

and of his most holy Mother by the arms of divine

grace given to them in view of the merits of the incar

nate Word, therefore it is said, that they guard the

couch of Solomon, that they form his guard, girded

with the sword about the loins. For thus is indicated

the human generation or humanity of Christ conceived

in the virginal chamber of Mary of her most pure blood

and substance.

205. The other ten seraphim, which complete the

number of seventy, were likewise chosen from the more

distinguished leaders of those who in their opposition to

the dragon had manifested a greater reverence for the

Divinity and humanity of the Word and for his most

holy Mother; for all this was determined during that

brief conflict of the holy angels. It was one of the prin

cipal distinctions merited by them at the time that they

were to be selected as guardians of their Queen and

Lady. Altogether a thousand angels were chosen from

the Seraphim and the lower orders of angels, and thus

that City of God was superabundantly fortified against

the infernal hosts.

206. In order that this invincible warrior-troop might

THE CONCEPTION 171

be well appointed, saint Michael, the prince of the heav

enly militia was placed at their head, and although not

always in the company of the Queen, he was neverthe

less often near Her and often showed himself to Her.

The Almighty destined him as a special ambassador of

Christ our Lord and to act in some of the mysteries as

the defender of his most holy Mother. In a like man

ner the holy prince Gabriel was appointed to act as le

gate and minister of the eternal Father in the affairs of

the Princess of heaven. Thus did the most holy Trinity

provide for the custody and the defense of the Mother

of God.

207. All the appointments of the angels were a grace

of the Almighty ; but I understood that He observed, ac

cording to a certain measure, the laws of distributive

justice. In his equity and providence He took account of

the manner in which the holy angels acted and felt in

regard to the mysteries revealed to them in the begin

ning concerning his most holy Mother. For in accept

ing the divine decree each was moved by different affec

tions and inclinations toward the sacraments which be

came known to them. Not in all was the same grace or

willingness and affection. Some of them yielded with

an especial devotion, when they recognized the union of

the divine and the human natures in the person of the

Word, which was to be enclosed in the limits of a human

body and yet raised to the sovereignty of all creation.

Others in their affection were moved to admire the love

of the Onlybegotten of the Father, that caused Him to

become mortal and offer Himself as a sacrifice for men.

Others again signalized themselves in praising God for

creating a body and soul of such excellence, that it

would be superior to all the celestial spirits and that

from it the Creator should take human flesh. Accord-

172 CITY OP GOD

ing to these sentiments and in proportion to them, and

as it were for accidental reward, these holy angels were

selected to serve in the mysteries of Christ and his most

holy Mother. In the same way those, who during this

life have signalized themselves in the practice of certain

virtues are rewarded with the special crowns of doctors,

virgins and so forth.

208. In pursuance of this, when these holy princes

appeared in visible shape to the Mother of God, they

bore devices or badges representing the different mys

teries, as I will relate farther on. Some of them showed

the emblems of the Incarnation, others those of the Pas

sion, others those of the Queen herself, and of her great

dignity. But She did not immediately recognize these

badges when they began to be shown to Her, for the

Almighty had told all these holy angels not to make

known to Her that She was to be the Mother of his

Onlybegotten until the hour appointed by his divine wis

dom ; yet at the same time always to converse with Her

about the sacraments and mysteries of the Incarnation

and the Redemption, in order to excite her fervor and

her prayers. Too tardy is human speech, and inade

quate my brief terms and words, for the manifestation

of these exalted lights and intelligences.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THU IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE) MOTHER OF

GOD THROUGH DIVINE POWER.

209. The divine wisdom had now prepared all things

for drawing forth the spotless image of the Mother of

grace from the corruption of nature. The number and

congregation of ancient Patriarchs and Prophets had

been completed and gathered, and the mountains had

been raised, on which this mystical City of God was to

be built (Ps. 86, 2). By the power of his right hand

He had already selected incomparable treasures of the

Divinity to enrich and endow Her. A thousand an

gels were equipped for her guard and custody, that they

might serve as most faithful vassals of their Queen and

Lady. He had provided a noble and kingly ancestry

from whom She should descend and had selected for

Her most holy and perfect parents, than whom none

holier or more perfect could be found in the world. For

there is no doubt that if better and more apt parents

existed, the Almighty would have selected them for Her,

who was to be chosen by God as his Mother.

210. He endowed these parents with abundant

graces and blessings of his right hand, and enriched

them with all virtues, with enlightenments of divine

science and with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. After

having announced to the two saints, Joachim and Anne,

that He would grant them a Daughter, admirable and

blessed among women, He permitted the work of the

first Conception to take place, namely, that of the most

173

174 CITY OF GOD

pure body of Mary. The age of Anne, when She mar

ried Joachim, was twenty-four, and that of Joachim,

forty-six. Twenty years they lived in married life with

out having an issue, and thus Anne, at the same time of

the Conception of her Daughter, was forty-four years

old, and saint Joachim sixty-six. Although the concep

tion happened according to the ordinary course of na

ture, yet the Most High freed it from imperfections and

disorders, permitting only what was strictly required ac

cording to nature, in order that the proper material

might be furnished for the formation of the most per

fect substance within the limits of a mere creature.

211. God limited the natural activity in the two par

ents and by his grace prevented any fault or imperfec

tion, substituting for them virtue and merit, and entire

propriety in the manner of conception, which though

natural and according to the common order, was never

theless directed, supplemented and perfected by the ac

tion of divine grace, without disturbing the proper effect

due to the law of nature. As regards the holy matron

Anne, the divine power was more manifest on account

of her natural sterility ; in her the Conception was mirac

ulous, not only in regard to the manner, but in regard

to its very substance. In regard to the conceptions

which happen entirely according to the natural order and

in virtue of the natural powers, there is no necessity of

recurring to or of depending on any supernatural cause.

The parents in concurring are sufficient causes of the

propagation, even in case they furnish the material and

the concurrent acts of generation with imperfection and

without proper measure.

212. But in this Conception, although the father was

not naturally sterile, yet on account of his age and mod

eration, his natural powers were in a measure suppressed

THE CONCEPTION 175

and weakened; and therefore he was enlivened, restored

and enabled to act on his part with entire perfection and

with the plenitude of his faculties, proportionately to the

sterility of the mother. In both of them nature and

grace concurred; the former briefly, with measure, and

in that which was necessary; the latter overflowingly,

powerfully and generously; absorbing, yet not con

founding nature, exalting it and perfecting it in a mirac

ulous manner. Thus grace was the origin of this Con

ception, while it called into its service the activity of

nature in so far as was necessary for the birth of that

ineffable Daughter from her natural parents.

213. The mode of repairing the sterility of the most

holy mother Anne did not consist in the restitution of

that condition, which was wanting in her natural facul

ties of conception; for thus restored, she would have con

ceived in no way different from the rest of women; the

Lord concurred with her sterile faculties in a more mir

aculous manner for the formation of the body from

natural material. Thus the faculties and the material

were of the natural order, but the manner of moving

them happened by the miraculous power of the Divinity.

As soon as the miracle of this Conception had ceased,

the mother was left in her former sterility never to con

ceive again, since no new quality was taken from or

added to the natural temperament. This wonder, it

seems to me, can be made intelligible by that which our

Savior wrought, when saint Peter walked over the

water (Matth. 14, 29). In order to sustain him, the

water was not necessarily changed into crystal or ice, over

which he and others could have walked without requir

ing any miraculous intervention except that of thus sud

denly changing it into ice ; but without thus changing the

water, the Lord gave it the power to sustain the body of

176 CITY OF GOD

the Apostle. It remained in a liquid state both during

and after the miracle; for when saint Peter ran over

it, he began to sink and was about to drown. The

miracle therefore was performed without changing the

water by the addition of a new quality.

214. Much like to this, though much more wonder

ful, was the miracle of the Conception of Mary most

holy in her mother Anne. The parents were so entirely

governed by grace and withdrawn from concupiscence

and delectation, that the accidental imperfections, which

ordinarily are the material or the instruments of con

ception, and which induce original sin, were altogether

wanting. Thus was furnished a material exempt from

imperfection and furnished in such a manner that the

act itself was meritorious. Hence in so far as this act

was concerned it could easily be free from sin or imper

fection, even if divine Providence had not previously

arranged every particular of this event. This miracle

the Almighty reserved solely for Her, who was to be a

Mother worthy of Himself. For if it was proper that

the material part of his being should have its origin

according to the order maintained in the conception of

the other children of Adam, it was likewise eminently

proper that, without destroying nature, grace should

concur in it with all its efficacy and power, and that it

should excel in Her and act in Her more efficaciously

than in all the children of Adam; yea, be greater than

even in Adam and Eve, who gave origin to the corrup

tion of nature and to its disorderly concupiscence.

215. In the formation of the body of the most holy

Mary the wisdom and power of the Almighty proceeded

so cautiously that the quantities and qualities of the four

natural elements of the human body, the sanguine, mel

ancholic, phlegmatic and choleric, were compounded in

THE CONCEPTION 177

exact proportion and measure ; in order that by this most

perfect proportion in its mixture and composition it

might assist the operations of that holy Soul with which

it was to be endowed and animated. This wonderfully

composed temperament was afterwards the source and

the cause, which in its own way made possible the seren

ity and peace that reigned in the powers and faculties

of the Queen of heaven during all her life. Never did

any of these elements oppose or contradict nor seek to

predominate over the others, but each one of them sup

plemented and served the others, continuing in this well-

ordered fabric without corruption or decay. Never did

the body of the most Holy Mary suffer from the taint

of corruption, nor was there anything wanting or any

thing excessive found in it; but all the conditions and

proportions of the different elements were continuously

adjusted, without any want or excess in what was neces

sary for her perfect existence and without excess or de

fault in dryness or moisture. Neither was there more

warmth than was necessary for maintenance of life or

digestion; nor more cold than was necessary for the

right temperature and for the maintenance of the bodily

humors.

216. Nor was this body on account of its admirable

composition, less sensible to the influence of heat and

cold and the other inclemencies of the weather, but

rather, as it was more delicately and perfectly constitut

ed, so it was more acutely affected by any extremes, not

being able to furnish a defense against the excess of

temperature in those parts, which were more subject to

them. Certainly, on the one hand, these extremes would

find in such a harmoniously constituted frame much less

material in which they could work their changes; never

theless, on the other hand, the delicacy of its composi-

178 CITY OF GOD

tion made even ordinary influences much more penetrat

ing than greater ones in other bodies. This admirable

body, thus formed in the womb of holy Anne, was not

capable of spiritual gifts before it was animated by the

soul; but it was capable of receiving the natural ones.

These were given to this body in supernatural degree

and by supernatural power, so as to accord with the high

purpose and the singular gifts for which it was formed;

and in this it surpassed all others in the order of nature

and grace Thus were given to it a complexion and

faculties so excellent that all nature would never of it

self be able to produce one similar to it.

217. Just as the hand of our Lord formed the first

parents Adam and Eve in such a way as to befit original

justice and the state of innocence and therefore also

more excellently than their descendants (for the works

coming directly from the Lord must be more perfect

than those of secondary causes), so his Omnipotence, in

a more excellent and superior manner, operated in the

formation of the virginal body of the most holy Mary.

And this He did with so much the greater solicitude and

abundance of grace, as this Creature was to exceed in

perfection not only the first parents, who were to sin so

soon, but all the other creatures, corporal and spiritual.

According to our way of speaking, God exerted more

care in composing this little body of his most holy

Mother, than in creating all the celestial orbs and the

whole universe. In accordance with this rule are to be

measured the gifts and privileges of this City of God

from its first beginnings and foundations to its highest

pinnacle next to the infinity of the Most High.

218. Such was also the measure of the distance be

tween her miraculous Conception and sin and its cause,

concupiscence; for not only was She, as the dawn of

THE CONCEPTION 179

grace, entirely free from sin, and always so exhibited

and treated by the Lord; but also in her parents, sin

and concupiscence was restrained and withheld in view

of her Conception, in order that nature might not be

disturbed or made imperfect in this work. For nature

was to be subject to grace and served merely as an in

strument to the supreme Artificer, who is superior to the

laws of nature and of grace It was here that He com

menced to destroy sin, and to lay the foundations, build

ing up the castle of the strong armed One (Luc. 11, 22)

who was to undermine evil and deprive it of the posses

sions which it tyrannically held.

219. The day on which the first Conception of the

body of the most holy Mary happened, was a Sunday,

corresponding to the day of the week on which the an

gels were created, whose exalted Queen and Lady She

was to be. For the formation and growth of other

human bodies, according to the natural order, many

days are necessary in order to organize and fit them for

the reception of the rational soul. Thus for a man-

child are required forty and for females eighty days,

more or less, according to the natural heat and disposi

tion of the mothers. In the formation of the virginal

body of Mary the Almighty accelerated the natural time

and that, which according to the natural rule required

eighty days, was accomplished in Her within seven days.

Within these seven days, by accelerated growth, was

organized and prepared in the womb of holy Anne that

wonderful body which was to receive the most holy soul

of her Daughter and of our Lady and Queen.

220. On the Saturday next following this first Con

ception, the Almighty wrought the second Conception

by creating the soul of his Mother and infusing it into

180 CITY OF GOD

the body; and thus entered into the world that pure

Creature, more holy, perfect and agreeable to His eyes

than all those He had created, or will create to the end

of the world, or through the eternities. God maintained

a mysterious correspondence in the execution of this

work with that of creating all the rest of the world in

seven days, as is related in the book of Genesis. Then

no doubt He rested in truth, according to the figurative

language of Scripture, since He has now created the

most perfect Creature of all, giving through it a be

ginning to the work of the divine Word and to the Re

demption of the human race. Thus was this day a

paschal feast for God and also for all creatures.

221. On account of this Immaculate Conception of

most holy Mary the holy Spirit has provided that Satur

day be consecrated to the Virgin in the holy Church,

since that was the day on which She received the great

est benefit through the creation of her soul and its

union with its body without entailing sin or its effects.

The day of the Immaculate Conception, which the Church

now celebrates, is not the day of her first conception,

when the body alone was conceived, but it is the day of

he\* second Conception or the infusion of her soul. Body

and soul, therefore, remained for nine months in the

womb of holy Anne, which are the days that intervene

between the Conception to the Nativity of that Queen.

During the other seven days preceding the vivification

of the inanimate body, it was disposed and organized by

the divine power, in order that this work might corre

spond with the account that Moses gives of the Creation

of all things, comprising the formation of the whole

world at its beginning. At the instant of the creation

and infusion of the soul in the most holy Mother, the

THE CONCEPTION 181

most blessed Trinity, repeated with greater affection of

love the words, recorded by Moses at that time concern

ing man : "Let us make Mary to our image and like

ness to be our true Daughter and Spouse and a Mother

to the Onlybegotten of the Father."

222. By the force of this divine pronouncement and

through the love with which it issued from the mouth of

Almighty, was created and infused into the body of most

holy Mary her most blessed Soul At the same time

She was filled with grace and gifts above those of the

highest seraphim of heaven, and there was not a single

instant in which She was found wanting or deprived

of the light, the friendship and love of the Creator, or

in which She was touched by the stain or darkness of

original sin. On the contrary She was possessed of the

most perfect justice, superior to that of Adam and Eve

in their first formation. To Her was also conceded the

most perfect use of the light of reason, corresponding

to the gifts of grace, which She had received Not for

one instant was She to remain idle, but to engage in

works most admirable and pleasing to her Maker. In

the perception of this great mystery I confess myself

overcome, so that my heart, unable to express itself in

words, is dumbfounded in sentiments of admiration and

of praise. I see the Ark of the Testament joined to

gether, enriched and placed in the temple of a sterile

mother with greater glory than the figurative one in the

house of Obededon, and of David, or in the temple of

Solomon (II Reg. 6, 11 III Reg. 8, 6). I see the altar

of the Holy of holies (Is. 65, 17), whence is to be of

fered the first sacrifice that is to overcome and prove

acceptable to God ; I see the order of nature break from

its laws to be rearranged; I see new laws established

182 CITY OF GOD

against sin, disregarding those of the common order,

overpowering those of guilt, conquering those of na

ture and supervening even those of grace itself; I see

the formation of a new earth, and of a new heaven (Is.

65, 17) being the womb of a most humble woman,

whither the eyes of the most holy Trinity are directed,

where the Divinity presides, where the courtiers of the

ancient heavens gather, and whither a thousand angels

are delegated to form a guard over a tiny, animated

body not larger than that of a little bee.

223. In this new creation is heard with a greater

force the voice of its Maker, who, pleased with the work

of his Omnipotence, says that it is very good (Gen. 1,

31). Let human frailty with humble piety approach this

wonder, confessing the grandeur of the Creator, and let

it rejoice at this new benefit conceded to all the human

race in this its Reparatrix. Let the heat of disputation

cease, overcome by thy divine light; for if the divine

Bounty, as was shown to me, in the Conception of the

most holy Mother, looked upon Her with such pleasure

and upon original sin with such hostility that He gloried

in the occasion and just cause of restraining and with

holding its baneful currents, how can that appear proper

to human wisdom, which was so abhorrent to God?

224. At the time of the infusion of the soul into the

body of this heavenly Lady, the Almighty desired that

her mother, the holy Anne, should feel and recognize

the presence of the Divinity in a most exalted manner.

She was filled with the Holy Ghost and was moved in

teriorly with a joy and devotion altogether above the

ordinary. She was wrapped in exalted ecstasy, in which

she was enlightened with deep intelligences of the most

hidden mysteries and praised the Lord with new canti-

THE CONCEPTION 183

cles of Joy. These effects lasted during all the rest of

her life; but they were greater during the nine months

in which she bore in her womb the Treasure of heaven.

For during that time these benefits were more constantly

renewed and repeated with continual intelligences of the

holy Scriptures and of their most profound sacraments.

O most fortunate woman ! let all the nations and gen

erations of the world extol thee and call thee blessed!

CHAPTER XVI.

OF THE HABITS OF VIRTUE, WITH WHICH GOD GIFTED

THE SOUL OF THE MOST HOLY MARY, AND OF HER

FIRST EXERCISES OF THESE VIRTUES IN THE WOMB OF

HER MOTHER ANNE; SHE HERSELF GIVES ME INSTRUC

TIONS FOR IMITATING HER.

225. The impetuous floods of the Divinity met in this

holy City of the sanctified soul of Mary. It took its

origin from the foundation of his Wisdom and Good

ness, by which and whence He had resolved to deposit

within this heavenly Lady the greatest graces and vir

tues ever to be given to any other creature for all eter

nity. And when the hour had arrived for giving them

into her possession, namely the very moment of her

coming into natural life, the Almighty fulfilled accord

ing to his pleasure and full satisfaction the desire, which

He had held suspended from all eternity until the time

for gratifying this wish should arrive. The most faith

ful Lord executed his design, showering down all his

graces and gifts in the most holy soul of Mary at the

time of her Conception in such an overpowering meas

ure as no other saint, nor all of them combined, can ever

reach, nor ever human tongue can manifest.

226. Although She was adorned as the Bride, de

scending from heaven, endowed with all perfections and

with the whole range of infused virtues, it was not

necessary that She should exercise all of them at once,

it being sufficient that She exercise those, which were

befitting her state in the womb of her mother. Among

184

THE CONCEPTION 185

the first thus exercised were the three theological vir

tues, faith, hope and charity, which relate immediately

to God. These She at once practiced in the most ex

alted manner recognizing by a most sublime faith the

Divinity with all its perfections and its infinite attributes,

and the Trinity with its distinction of Persons. This

knowledge by faith was not impeded by the higher

knowledge which God gave her, as I will soon demon

strate. She exercised also the virtue of hope, seeing in

God the object of her happiness and her ultimate end.

Toward this her sanctified Soul at once hastened and

aspired with the most intense desires of uniting Herself

with God and without having for one moment turned

to any other object or tarried one moment in her up

ward flight. At the same instant also She put into

action the virtue of charity, seeing in God the infinite

and highest Good, and conceiving such an intense ap

preciation of the Divinity, that not all the seraphim

could ever reach such an eminent degree of fervor and

virtue.

227. The other virtues which adorn and perfect the

rational part of the creature, She possessed in a pro

portion corresponding to the theological virtues. The

moral and natural virtues were hers in a miraculous and

supernatural measure, and in a still more exalted man

ner was She possessed of the gifts and fruits of the

Holy Ghost in the order of grace. She had an infused

knowledge and habit of all these virtues and of all the

natural arts, so that She knew and was conversant with

the whole natural and supernatural order of things, in

accordance with the grandeur of God. Hence from her

first instant in the womb of her mother, She was wiser,

more prudent, more enlightened, and more capable of

comprehending God and all his works, than all the crea-

14

186 CITY OF GOD

tures have been or ever will be in eternity, excepting of

course her most holy Son. And all this perfection con

sisted not only in the habits, which were infused in Her

in such a high degree; but in the acts which She exer

cised in correspondence with the excellence of her state

and in proportion to the activity of the divine power.

Therefore her perfection was not circumscribed by any

other bounds, nor was subject to any other limits than

God s divine and most just pleasure.

228. Since much will be said in the course of this his

tory, of all these virtues and graces and of their exer

cise, I mention here only a little of that which She

achieved at the instant of her Conception by the help

of the infused habits and the actual light bestowed upon

Her. In the exercise of the theological virtues, as I

have said, and of the virtue of religion, and of the car

dinal virtues consequent upon it, She perceived God as

He is and as the Creator and Glorifier; in heroic acts

She reverenced Him, praised Him, gave Him thanks

for having created Her, loved Him, feared Him and

adored Him, offering sacrifices of worship, praise and

glory because of his immutable Being. She recognized

the gifts, which She had received, although some of

them were yet hidden to Her, and She gave thanks with

profound humility and prostrated Herself immediately

in the womb of her mother, though yet in a body so

small; and by these acts She merited more than all the

saints in the highest state of perfection and sanctity.

229. In addition to the facts of faith She possessed

other knowledge of the mystery of the Divinity and of

the most holy Trinity. Although in this instant of her

Conception She did not see Him intuitively as the saints,

yet She saw Him in abstraction by a light and vision

which though inferior to the beatific vision, were never-

THE CONCEPTION 187

theless superior to all the other ways, in which God can

manifest Himself or does manifest Himself to the cre

ated intelligence; for there were shown to Her images

of the Divinity so clear and manifest that She under

stood the immutable being of God, and in Him, all cre

ation, with a greater light and clearness than any crea

ture ever is understood by another. And these images

were like a shining mirror from which was resplendent

the whole Divinity and in It all creatures ; so that in God

She saw and recognized, by means of this light and by

means of these images of the divine nature, all things

with a greater distinctness and clearness than was pos

sible by the images of the infused science already vouch

safed Her.

230. In all these different ways was laid open to Her

from the very instant of her Conception the vision of

all men and angels in their hierarchies, dignities and

operations, and of all the irrational creatures with their

natures and conditions. She saw the fall of the angels

and their ruin; the justification and glory of the good

ones, and the rejection and punishment of the bad ones ;

the first state of Adam and Eve in their innocence ; their

deception, their guilt, and the misery in which the first

parents were thrown on account of it ; and in what mis

fortune the whole human race was cast through them;

the divine resolve to repair it; the pre-ordaining and the

disposing of the world, the nature of the heavens, the

stars and planets; the condition and the arrangement of

the elements; She saw purgatory, limbo and hell; She

saw how all these things and whatever is contained in

them were created by the divine power and were main

tained and preserved by the infinite goodness, without

having need of any of them (II Mach. 14, 35). Above

all She was informed of the most high sacraments con-

188 CITY OF GOD

nected with the Incarnation, by which God was to be

come man in order to redeem the whole human race,

while the fallen angels were left without a remedy.

231. In correspondence with this wonderful knowl

edge of her most holy soul at the instant of its union

with the body, Mary exerted Herself by eliciting heroic

acts of virtue, of incomparable admiration, praise, glori

fication, adoration, humility, love of God and sorrow for

the sins committed against Him, whom She recognized

as the Author and end of these admirable works. She

hastened to offer Herself as an acceptable sacrifice to

the Most High, beginning from that instant with fer

vent desire to bless Him, love Him and honor Him, be

cause She perceived that the bad angels and men failed

to know and love Him. She requested the holy angels

whose Queen She already was, to help Her to glorify

the Creator and Lord of all, and to pray also for Her.

232. The Lord in this instant showed Her also her

guardian angels, whom she recognized and accepted with

joyful submission, inviting them to sing canticles of

praise to the Most High alternatively with Her. She

announced to them beforehand that this was to be the

service which they were to render Her during the whole

time of her mortal life, in which they were to act as her

assistants and guards. She was informed moreover of

her whole genealogy, and the genealogy of all of the

rest of the holy people chosen by God, the Patriarchs

and Prophets, and how admirable his Majesty was in

the gifts, graces and favors wrought in them. It is

worthy of admiration, that, although the exterior facul

ties of her body at the creation of her most holy Soul

were hardly large enough to be distinguished, neverthe

less, in order that none of the miraculous excellence

with which God could endow his Mother might be want-

THE CONCEPTION 189

ing, He ordained by the power of his right hand that in

perceiving the fall of man She shed tears of sorrow in

the womb of her mother at the gravity of the offense

against the highest Good.

233. In this wonderful sorrow at the instant of her

coming into existence, She began to seek a remedy for

mankind and commenced the work of mediation, inter

cession and reparation. She offered to God the clamors

of her ancestors and of the just of the earth, that his

mercy might not delay the salvation of mortals, whom

she even then looked upon as her brethren. Before She

ever conversed with them She loved them with the most

ardent charity and with the very beginning of her exist

ence She assumed the office of Benefactress of men and

exercised the divine and fraternal love enkindled in her

heart. These petitions the Most High accepted with

greater pleasure than the prayers of all the saints and

angels and this pleasure of God was also made known

to Her, who was created to be the Mother of God. She

perceived the love of God and his desire to descend from

heaven in order to redeem men, though She knew not

how it should be consummated. It was befitting that

God should feel Himself impelled to hasten his coming

on account of the prayers and petitions of this Crea

ture ; since it was principally for the love of Her that He

came, and since in Her body He was to assume human

flesh, accomplish the most admirable of all his works,

and fulfill the end of all other creatures.

234. She also prayed at the moment of her Concep

tion for her natural parents, Joachim and Anne, whom

She knew in God before She had seen them in the body.

Immediately She exercised the virtues of love, reverence

and gratitude of a daughter, acknowledging them as the

secondary causes of her natural being. She made many

190 CITY OF GOD

other petitions in general and for particular objects. By

aid of the infused science given to Her, She began to

compose songs of gratitude in her mind and heart for

having, at the portal of life, found the precious drachm,

which we all have lost in our first beginning (Luke 15,

9). She found the grace, which issued forth to meet

her (Eccli. 15, 2), She found the Divinity, which met

Her at the threshold of her existence (Sap. 6, 15). Her

faculties of body and soul found, at the instant of her

creation, the most noble Object, which attracted and en

tranced them; for they were created solely for It, and,

as they were to be hers entirely, it was proper also that

the first fruits of their activity, which were the knowl

edge and love of God, should be devoted to that Object.

In this Queen there was no existence without knowledge

of God, no knowledge without love, and no love with

out its merit. Nor was there in Her anything small, or

measured merely by the common laws or by the general

rules. Great was She altogether and great did She come

forth from the hands of the Most High in order to pro

ceed and arrive at such an excellence of being, that God

alone would be greater. Oh how beautiful were those

steps of thine, Daughter of the King, since with thy first

one Thou didst reach the Godhead ! ( Cant. 7,1). Twice

beautiful wert Thou, for thy grace and beauty! (Cant.

4, 1). Heavenly are thine eyes (Cant. 7, 5), and thy

thoughts are like the kingly carmine, since Thou hast en

raptured his heart and hast made Him Prisoner by a

thread of thy hair (Cant. 4, 9) and drawn Him captured

by the love of thy virginal womb and heart.

235. There in truth the spouse of the King did sleep,

while her heart was awake (Cant 5, 2). There those

bodily faculties, which scarcely had yet attained their

natural form and had not yet seen the material light,

THE CONCEPTION 191

were asleep, and that heavenly heart, more marvelous on

account of the greatness of its gifts than by the small-

ness of its size, was watching in the chamber of her

mother s womb with the light of the Divinity, which

bathed it and enkindled it in the fire of its immense love.

It was not befitting that in this heavenly Creature the

inferior faculties of the soul should act before the su

perior ones, nor that they should operate in an inferior,

or merely in a manner equal to those of any other crea

ture. For if the operations correspond to the essence of

each creature, She, who always was superior to all of

them in dignity and excellence, was also to be superior

in her operations to all creatures, angelic and human.

Not only was She to be nothing short of the angelic

spirits in so far as they immediately made use of their

faculties at the instant of their creation, but this pre

rogative was due to Her in superior excellence as She

was created as their Queen and Lady. And this by so

much more, as the name and office of Mother of God ex

cels that of servants, and that of Queen, the estate of vas

sals ; for to none of the angels had the Word said : thou

shalt be my Mother (Heb. 1, 5) ; nor could any one of

them say to Him : Thou art my Son. Mary alone could

claim this commerce and relationship, which is there

fore the real measure and foundation of the greatness of

Mary, in the same way as the Apostle measured the

greatness of Christ by his being the Son of the eternal

Father.

236. In writing of these sacraments of the King,

howsoever honorable it is to reveal his works, I confess

my inaptitude and incapacity, being only a woman, and

I am afflicted, because I am speaking in such common

and vague terms, which fall entirely short of that, which

I perceive in the light given to my soul for the under-

192 CITY OF GOD

standing of these mysteries. In order to do justice to

such sublimity, there were need of other words, more

particular and especially adapted terms and expressions,

which are beyond my ignorance. And even if they were

at my service, they would be weighed down and made

insipid by human weakness. Let therefore this human

imbecility acknowledge itself unequal and incapable of

fixing its eyes on this heavenly sun, with which the rays

of the Divinity break upon the world, although yet be

clouded in the maternal womb of holy Anne. If we

seek permission to approach this wonderful sight, let us

come near free and unshackled. Let us not allow our

selves to be detained, neither by our natural cowardice nor

by a base fear and hesitation, even though it be under the

cloak of humility. Let us all approach with the great

est devotion and piety, free from the spirit of conten

tion (Rom. 13, 12) ; then we will be permitted to exam

ine with our own eyes the fire of the Divinity burning in

the bush without consuming it (Exodus 2, 2).

237. I have said that the most holy soul of Mary, at

the moment of her purest Conception, saw the divine

Essence abstractively, for it was not revealed to me, that

She saw the essential Glory; rather I understood that

this latter privilege was peculiar to the most holy soul of

Christ, such being due and consequent upon the substan

tial union of the Divinity in the Person of the Word.

For it was befitting that for not one moment should the

soul of Christ be deprived in all its faculties of the high

est grace and glory. Just as the man, Christ, our high

est Good, commenced to be conjointly God and man,

so He began at the same instant also to know and love

God as one already possessing Him, that is as a com-

prehensor. But the soul of his most holy Mother was

not united substantially with the Divinity and therefore

THE CONCEPTION 193

She did not begin her activity as a possessor of God,

but entered into life as a wayfarer. However, She en

tered this state of wayfarer as one in closest proximity

to the hypostatic union, and therefore She was endowed

with a vision of God proportionate and most immediate

to the beatific vision. Her vision was inferior to the

beatific, but superior to all the visions and revelations

which have been vouchsafed to other creatures, always

excepting 1 the clear vision and fruition of the Blessed.

Nevertheless in some respects and in regard to some

qualities, the perception of God by the Mother of Christ

in her first instant, excelled even the intuitive vision of

other creatures, in so far as She penetrated abstractive

ly into greater mysteries than they. Moreover, though,

She did not see God face to face at that moment of her

Conception, She was favored with that kind of vision

many times afterwards during the course of her life, as

I will say later on.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME

REGARDING THIS CHAPTER.

238. In the preceding chapters of this history I said

a few times that the Queen and Mother of mercy had

promised that when I should begin to describe the first

operations of her faculties and virtues She would in

struct me how to model my life after her own ; for this

would be the principal purpose of showing it to me as

in a mirror. And this great Lady, most faithful to her

promises, besides continuing to assist me by her heaven

ly presence and the explanation of these mysteries, be

gan to acquit Herself of this promise in this chapter and

told me to expect the same as long as I should continue

to write this history. Accordingly at the end of each

chapter I will write down what her Majesty shall teach

me, as She has done even now, speaking to me in the

following manner:

194 CITY OF GOD

239. My daughter, I wish that thou reap for thyself

the fruits which thou desirest from the description of

the mysteries and sacraments of my holy life; and let

the reward of thy labors be the greater purity and per

fection of thy life, disposing thyself by the grace of the

Most High to practice what thou hearest. It is the will

of my divine Son, that thou exert all thy powers toward

that which I shall teach thee, and that thou apply thy

self with all thy heart to my virtues and works. Hear

me with attentive faith, for I will speak to thee words of

eternal life and teach thee the most holy things of a per

fect Christian life and what is most acceptable to God.

Begin even now to dispose thyself for the reception of

the light, in which thou shalt see the hidden mysteries

of my most fioly life and the doctrine, which thou de

sirest. Continue in this exercise and write down that

which I will teach thee in this regard. And now listen.

240. It is an act of justice due to the eternal God

that the creature coming to the use of reason, direct

its very first movement toward God. By knowing,

it should begin to love Him, reverence Him and adore

Him as its Creator and only true Lord. The parents

are naturally bound to instruct their children from their

infancy in this knowledge of God and to direct them

with solicitous care, so that they may at once see their

ultimate end and seek it in their first acts of the intellect

and will. They should with great watchfulness with

draw them from the childishness and puerile trickish-

ness to which depraved nature will incline them if left

without direction. If the fathers and mothers would be

solicitous to prevent these vanities and perverted habits

of their children and would instruct them from their in

fancy in the knowledge of their God and Creator, then

they would afterwards easily accustom them to know

THE CONCEPTION 195

and adore Him. My holy mother, who knew not of my

wisdom and real condition, was most solicitously before

hand in this matter, for when She bore me in her womb,

she adored in my name the Creator and offered worship

and thanks for his having created me, beseeching Him

to defend me and bring me forth to the light of day

from the condition in which I then was. So also parents

should pray with fervor to God, that the souls of their

children, through his Providence, may obtain Baptism

and be freed from the servitude of original sin.

241. And if the rational creature has not known and

adored the Creator from the first dawn of reason, it

should do this as soon as it obtains knowledge of the

essential God by the light of faith. From that very mo

ment the soul must exert itself never to lose Him from

her sight, always fearing Him, loving Him, and rever

encing Him. Thou, my daughter, owest this adoration

to God from the beginning of thy life ; but now I desire

thee to practice it in a more perfect manner, as I shall

show thee. Direct the eyes of thy soul toward the es

sence of God, which is without beginning and without

limit, contemplate his infinite attributes and perfections.

Consider that He alone is the true holiness, the highest

good, the most noble object of creatures, that He alone

gave being to all things and without having need of

them, sustains and governs them. He is consummate

beauty without defect, He is eternal in his love, true in

his words and most faithful in his promises. He it was

who gave his own life and subjected Himself to suffer

ings for the good of his creatures without waiting for

any merits on their part. Over this wide field of good

ness and of benefits extend thy vision and occupy thy

faculties without forgetting or wandering away there

from. For, having obtained such a great knowledge of

196 CITY OF GOD

the highest Good, thine would be a loathsome meanness

and disloyalty to forget Him, and horrible would be thy

ingratitude, if, after having received an enlightenment so

much above the common and ordinary, and divinely in

fused by faith, thou wouldst allow thy understanding

and will to swerve from the course of divine love. If at

any time in thy weakness it should nevertheless happen,

then quickly seek it again with all dispatch and diligence

and return more humbly to the Most High to give Him

honor, glory and eternal praise. Remember that thou

must consider it thy special duty to do this incessantly

for thyself and for all the other creatures and in this I

desire thee to exert all thy diligence.

242. In order to excite thyself to greater efforts, con

fer in thy heart what thou knowest of my own conduct ;

how at the first sight of the highest Good, my heart was

wounded with love, giving myself entirely to Him in

order never to separate myself thereafter. My whole

life was consumed in this and I ceased not to press for

ward in order to arrive at the centre of my desires and

affections; for since the Object is infinite, so love can

have no rest or cessation until It is attained. With the

knowledge of God and the love of Him should also go

the knowledge of thyself, remembering and consider

ing thy insignificance and vileness. Advert that when

these truths are well understood, repeated, and meditat

ed upon, they will cause divine effects in the soul.

Having heard these teachings and others of the

Queen, I said to her Majesty:

243. "My Mistress, whose slave I am and to whom

I dedicate and consecrate myself anew; not without

cause has my heart desired and asked for this day, on

which, according to thy maternal condescension, I might

come to know thy heavenly doings and hear thy sweet

THE CONCEPTION 197

and salutary words. I confess, O Queen, from all my

heart, that I can claim no goodness on my part, which

deserves such a benefit as a reward and, if I were not

obeying thy will and that of thy divine Son, I would

look upon the attempt to write thy life as an unpardon

able presumption. Accept, O my Lady, this sacrifice of

praise from me and speak, that my servant may hear (I

Reg. 3, 10). Let thy most delightful voice, O sweet

est Lady, resound in my ears (Cant. 2, 14), for Thou

hast the words of life (John 6, 69). Continue to teach

me and enlighten me, O Lady, that my heart may dilate

in the sea of thy perfections, furnishing me with worthy

material for the praise of the Almighty. In my bosom

burns the fire, enkindled by thy kindness and longing for

that, which is most holy and most acceptable to thy eyes.

In my inferior members, however, I feel the law of re

pugnance to the law of the spirit, retarding me and em

barrassing me. I justly fear that it will hinder me from

attaining the good which Thou, most loving Mother,

dost offer to me. Look upon me, therefore, my Lady, as

a daughter, teach me as thy disciple, correct me as thy

servant, and compel me as thy slave, whenever I am

tardy or disinclined ; for, though unwillingly, I fall short

through weakness. I will raise my aspirations to know

the being of God, and, may his divine grace govern

my affections, so that they may become enamored with

his infinite perfections and if I attain Him, I will not

dismiss Him (Eccli. 24, 24). But Thou, O Lady,

Mother of knowledge and of beautiful love, beseech thy

Son and my Lord, that He forsake me not in considera

tion of His liberality toward Thee, Thou Queen and

Mistress of all creation."

CHAPTER XVII.

STIU, TREATING OF THE MYSTERY OF THE CONCEPTION

OF HOLY MARY AND EXPLAINING THE TWENTY-FIRST

CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE.

244. The Immaculate Conception of the most holy

Mary contains such great and such exalted sacraments

that in order to make me more capable of understand

ing this admirable mystery, his Majesty opened up to

me many of the hidden meanings of the twenty-first

chapter of the Apocalypse of St. John and referred me

to it for my guidance. In recording some of the things

which were manifested to me I will divide this explana

tion into three parts, thus relieving the monotony which

too long a chapter might entail. And first I will give

the very words of that chapter which begins in the fol

lowing manner :

245. 1. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth.

For the first heaven and the first earth were gone, and

the sea was now no more.

2. And I John saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem,

coming down out of heaven, from God, prepared

as a bride adorned for her husband.

3. And I heard a great voice from the throne say

ing: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He

shall dwell with them. And they shall be his people

and God himself with them shall be their God.

4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their

eyes; and death shall be no more, nor crying, nor

mourning, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former

things are passed away.

5. And He that sat upon the throne said : Behold I

make all things new. And He said to me : Write, for

these things are most faithful and true.

198

THE CONCEPTION 199

6. And He said to me : It is done ; I am the Alpha

and the Omega; the beginning- and the end. To him

that thirsteth I will give of the fountain of the water

of life, freely.

7. He that shall overcome shall possess these things

and I will be his God ; and he shall be my Son.

8. But the fearful and the unbeliever and the abom

inable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcer

ers and idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their

portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone,

which is the second death."

246. This is the first of the three parts of the literal

rendering of this chapter and I will begin to explain it

verse for verse. "I saw," says the Evangelist, "a new

heaven and a new earth." He speaks of the creation of

Mary by the hand of the Almighty and the formation of

that material, from which the most holy human nature

of the Word originated. With great propriety can that

divinely human nature and the virginal womb, where

and from which the Word was formed, be called a new

heaven ; for in that heaven, God began to dwell in a new

way (Jerem. 31,21), different from that in which He had

dwelt before in the old heaven and in any of his crea

tures. But also the old heaven after the mystery of the

Incarnation could be called new, for through it the nov

elty was made possible, that henceforth also mortal men

could dwell therein. Moreover the renovation, which

was wrought by the glory of the humanity of Christ

and that of his most pure Mother, was so splendid, that

in addition to its former essential glory, it renewed the

heaven and added to it unheard of beauty and splendor.

Although the good angels already dwelt there, that was

a thing as of old and of yore; therefore it was as it were

a new event, that the Onlybegotten of the Father should

200 CITY OF GOD

by his death restore to men the glory lost through sin,

and merit for them admittance into heaven, whence they

had been expelled and incapacitated as inhabitants

through their own fault. And because all this renewal

of heaven had its beginning in most holy Mary, the

Evangelist, in speaking of Mary born without sin, said

that he saw a new heaven.

247. He saw also a new earth; for the old earth was

stained and laden with the guilt of sin and the reproba

tion; but the holy and blessed earth of most holy Mary

was a new earth without the fault or the malediction of

Adam ; and it was so new, that since the creation of the

first earth none other was seen until the creation of most

holy Mary. It was so new and free from the maledic

tion of the old earth that in this blessed earth were re

newed all the rest of the children of Adam. For on ac

count of the blessed earth of Mary and through it, and

in it, the earthly material of Adam was beginning to be

blessed, renewed and vivified, having until then re

mained cursed and grown old in malediction. All was

renewed in most holy Mary and in her innocence; and

therefore the Evangelist, seeing that in Her this renova

tion of the human and earthly elements took its rise,

says that in Mary conceived without sin he saw a new

heaven and a new earth. He continues :

248. "For the first heaven and the first earth were

gone." It naturally followed that as soon as the new

earth and new heaven of Mary and her Son the God-

man appeared in the world, the old heaven and the earth,

grown old by the sin-tarnished human and earthly mat

ter, should disappear. There was now a new heaven

for the Divinity in that human being, which, being pre

served from sin, could furnish a new habitation to God

through the hypostatic union of the person of the Word.

THE CONCEPTION 201

Already the first heaven ceased to exist, that one which

God had created in Adam and which had become de

ficient and unfit for the indwelling of a God. This dis

appeared and for it was substituted the other heaven in

the coming of Mary. Then also arose the new heaven

of glory for the human beings, not inasmuch as the

empyrean heaven was removed, but in so far as from

now on there would not be wanting the presence of men

therein, who had been excluded for so many ages. In

this respect it ceased to be the old heaven and it became

a new one through the merits of Christ, now beginning

to shine forth in the aurora of grace, most holy Mary,

his Mother. Thus vanished the first heaven and the

first earth, which until then was without hope of remedy.

"And the sea was no more." For the sea of abomina

tions and sin, which had flooded the world and destroyed

the earth of our being, ceased to exist with the coming

of most holy Mary and of Christ; for the sea of his

blood superabounded, overwhelming the sea of sin in

such an abundance, that no amount of guilt could pre

vail against it. If the mortals would only approach this

infinite sea of the divine mercy and merits of Jesus

Christ our Lord, all the sins of the world would cease

to exist, since the Lamb of God came to undo them

and take them away.

249. "And I, John, saw the holy city and the new

Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, pre

pared as a bride adorned for her husband." As all these

mysteries had their beginning in most holy Mary, and

were founded in Her, the Evangelist says, that he saw

the holy city Jerusalem, for under this figure he speaks

of Her. To Him was given to see Her, in order that

he might value so much more highly and watch with

befitting solicitude over the Treasure, which was con-

202 CITY OF GOD

fided to his care at the foot of the Cross. And although

nothing could ever fill up the void caused by the absence

of her Son, yet it was befitting that saint John should

be enlightened as to the dignity of the office, which he

was to assume, namely, that of a substitute for her

natural Son.

250. On account of the wonderful works, which God

had accomplished in the city of Jerusalem, it was a most

excellent symbol of Her, who was his Mother, the center

and the focus of all wonders of the Almighty. For a

similar reason it is also a figure of the works of the

Church militant and triumphant; both were revealed to

the eagle vision of saint John and he was shown the

correspondence and similarity which those two mystical

Jerusalems presented. But in an especial manner he

viewed as from a watchtower the exalted Jerusalem of

the most holy Mary, in which are portrayed and repro

duced all the graces, wonders, gifts and excellences of

the Church militant and triumphant. Whatever was

transacted in Jerusalem, the city of Palestine, and all

that it signified together with its inhabitants, is repro

duced in the most pure Mary, the holy City of God, and

with a greater and more marvelous excellence than in all

the rest of heaven and earth and their inhabitants.

Hence She is called the new Jerusalem, since all her gifts,

her greatness and virtues are new and are the cause of

new wonder to the saints. New also, because She came

after all the ancient Fathers, Patriarchs and Prophets,

and in Her were renewed and accomplished all their

clamors, their prophecies and promises; new, because

She came without the contagion of guilt and under a

new dispensation far from the law of sin; new, because

She entered into the world triumphant over sin, the

devil and the first deceit, thus being the greatest new

event since its beginning.

THE CONCEPTION 203

251. As all this was now on the earth and could not

have proceeded from earthly causes, She is said to "come

down from heaven. Although She was derived from

Adam according to the ordinary course of nature, She

did not tread the well-worn paths of sin in her coming,

as had been done by all the preceding children of that

first delinquent. For that Lady alone there was a special

decree of divine predestination and a new path was

opened, by which She should descend into this world

with Her divine Son, neither being Herself the com

panion of any other of the mortals, nor any of them

being found worthy of treading the same path as She

and Christ our Lord. Thus She, as a new creature from

the heaven of the divine mind, descended from the ex

alted spheres of divine forethought and pre-ordination.

Just as the other children of Adam, derived from the

earth, are earthly and tainted, so this Queen of all cre

ation comes from heaven derived from God himself by

innocence and grace; for ordinarily we say, that such

a one is descended from this or that house or family,

since he descends therefrom as from a source of his

being. Now the natural substance of Mary, which She

derived from Adam, scarcely comes into consideration,

when we take into account her dignity as Mother of God

with all that it imports as bringing Her so near to the

eternal Father by grace and participation of the Divinity.

This dignity causes her natural being to appear as mere

ly accessory and of minor importance. Hence the Evan

gelist directed his gaze upon that which was in Her

most exalted and heavenly, and not upon the insignificant

part of her being that came from the earth.

252. He continues saying that She came "prepared

as a bride adorned for her husband." For the day of

the espousal it is customary among mortals to procure

204 CITY OF GOD

the most precious adornments and presents obtainable

for adorning the terrestrial bride, and the most precious

jewels will even be borrowed, in order that nothing

may be wanting to the array befitting her state and

condition. Therefore, if we admit, as we are indeed

forced to admit, that the most pure Mary was the Spouse

of the blessed Trinity, and Mother of the second Per

son, and that She was adorned and prepared for these

dignities by the omnipotent God, who is infinite and rich

without measure or limit: what adornments, what prep

aration, what jewels must those be with which He fitted

Her out in order that She might be a worthy Spouse and

Mother? Would He reserve any of his jewels in his

treasury? Would He withhold any grace that could

beautify and make Her precious? Would He permit

Her to be deformed, ill-favored, blemished in any way

or for the least instant? Would He be sparing and nig

gardly with his Mother and Spouse, when He so pro

digiously lavishes the treasures of the Divinity upon other

souls, who, in comparison, with Her, are less than ser

vants and slaves of his house? Let all confess with the

Lord Himself, that She alone is the chosen One (Cant.

6, 8) and the perfect One, whom the rest must recog

nize, proclaim and magnify as the immaculate and most

happy among women, of whom in wonder and with joy

ful praise they ask: Who is She that comes forth like

the morning, beautiful as the moon (Cant. 6, 9), and

terrible as the serried armies? This is the most holy

Mary, the only Spouse and Mother of the Almighty,

who descends to the world adorned and prepared as

the Bride of the blessed Trinity for her Spouse and her

Son. This coming and entrance was made memorable

by such great gifts of the Divinity, that the splendor

of them made Her more agreeable than the sunrise, more

THE CONCEPTION 205

beautiful than the moon, more exquisite and admirable

than the sun, and without equal among things created;

She came more valiant and powerful than the heavenly

hosts of saints and angels. She descended adorned and

prepared by God, who gave Her all that He desired, and

who desired to give Her all that He could, and who

could give all that is not the essentially Divine, namely,

all that is most approximate to the Divinity and farthest

removed from any blemish of a creature. Entire and

most perfect was this adornment, so that all defect was

excluded, which would not have been the case, if in any

regard She failed in grace and innocence. Without this

the treasures of grace would not suffice to make Her so

beautiful, since they would adorn but a distorted visage,

a nature infected with sin, or a garment soiled and be

smirched by guilt. Forever there would have been a

stain, a shadow and blot of guilt, which no diligence on

her part could obliterate. All this was unbefitting the

Mother and Spouse of God, and if it was unbefitting

Her, it was also unbefitting Himself ; for He would have

failed to adorn and prepare Her, with the love of a

Spouse, or the solicitude of a Son, if, having in his pos

session most rich and precious vestments, He would have

clothed his Mother and Spouse, and Himself, in soiled

and worn-out garments.

253. It is verily time, that the honor due to our great

Queen should be unveiled and made clear to human in

sight, and that whoever was misled by opposite opinions,

should hesitate and cease to belittle and deny Her the

adornments of her immaculate purity at the instant of

her heavenly Conception. Compelled by the force of

truth and by the light, in which I see these ineffable

mysteries, I proclaim over and over again, that (as far

as revealed to me), the privileges, graces, prerogatives,

206 CITY OF GOD

favors and gifts of most holy Mary, not excluding even

that of her being the Mother of God, all depend upon,

have their origin, and are founded upon the fact, that

She was immaculate and full of grace in the moment

of her most pure Conception, hence all of them would

appear ill-proportioned and deficient without this favor,

like a sumptuous edifice without a solid and well-built

foundation. All depend and are founded in a certain

way upon the purity and innocence of her Conception

and on this account it was necessary to refer so often in

the course of this history to this mystery, especially when

treating of the divine decree, the formation of most holy

Mary, and the incarnation of her most holy Son. I will

not enlarge on this ; but I will give notice to all, that the

Queen of heaven so esteems the beauty and adornment

given to Her by her Son and Spouse in her purest Con

ception, that She will be correspondingly incensed against

those, who, with evil intention and obstinacy, try to de

spoil Her and debase Her in this point, while her most

holy Son had deigned to show Her to the world thus

adorned and beautified for his glory and for the en

couragement of the mortals. The Evangelist proceeds:

254. "And I heard a great voice from the throne say

ing: Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and he

shall dwell with them. And they shall be his people

and God himself with them shall be their God." The

voice of the Most High is great and strong, sweet and

efficacious to move and draw toward Him all creation.

Such was the voice which saint John heard proceeding

from the throne of the most blessed Trinity and which

caused him to pay perfect attention, in order to under

stand thoroughly the mystery which was then shown to

him. He was privileged to see the dwelling of God

among men and that He lived among them, that He was

THE CONCEPTION 207

their God and they his people. All this was contained

in the mysterious figure of most holy Mary descending

from heaven in the form I have described. Since this

divine tabernacle of God had now come to the earth, it

followed, that God also dwelt among men for He lived

and remained in this tabernacle. It is as if the Evangel

ist had said : the King has taken possession and is hold

ing his court in the world and for no other reason than,

that He might remain and dwell on earth. And in such

manner, that from this tabernacle He was to assume

the human form, in which He was to be a Dweller

among men. In it He was to be their God and they

his people, as the inheritance of the Father and also for

his Mother. We were the inheritance of the Father to

his Son, not only because in Him were all things created

and because all was given to Him through the eternal

generation: but also because He redeemed us as man

clothed in our human nature, buying us as his people

and as the inheritance of the Father and making us

his brethren. For the same reason, namely, on account

of his human nature, we are the legitimate inheritance

of Mary most holy, since She gave Him the form of

human flesh by which He purchased us for Himself.

She, being the Mother and the Spouse of the Blessed

Trinity, was also the Mistress of all creation, which She

left as an inheritance of her Onlybegotten ; for the hu

man laws, are founded on right reason and therefore

need not be invalid in the divine order of things.

255. This voice proceeded from the royal throne

through an angel, who with a sort of holy envy seemed to

me to say to the Evangelist : Behold and see the tabernacle

of God among men, and He shall live with them and they

shall be his people ; He will be their Brother and He will

assume human form in this tabernacle Mary, whom thou

208 CITY OF GOD

seest descending from heaven, by her conception and for

mation. But we can answer with equal joy to these

heavenly courtiers: indeed the tabernacle of God is with

us, for it is our tabernacle, and in it God becomes our

own; He will receive from it life and blood, which He

offers in purchase for us in order to make us his people.

He shall live in us as in his dwelling and habitation, since

receiving Him in the holy Sacrament we are made his

tabernacle (Joan 6, 57). Let those heavenly spirits be

content to be our elder brothers, less in need than we.

We are the frail little ones, who must be strengthened

and regaled by our Father and Brother. Let Him come

to the tabernacle of his Mother and to us; let Him as

sume human form in her virginal womb ; let the Divinity

be encompassed and live among us and in us. Let us

hold Him in our midst, in order that He may be our God

and we his people and his resting-place. Let the angelic

spirits break forth in wonder and praise at such great

marvels: but let us mortals enjoy Him, uniting with

them in praise and love toward Him. The text con

tinues :

256. "And God shall wipe away all tears from

their eyes and death shall be no more, nor crying, nor

mourning, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former

things are passed away." In consequence of the Re

demption, of which the Conception of most holy Mary

has assured us, the tears, which sin has caused to flow

from the eyes of the mortals, shall be dried. Those

that avail themselves of the mercy of the Most High,

of the blood and merits of his Son, of his mysteries and

sacraments, of the treasures of his Church, of the inter

cession of his Mother, there is no more death, no sor

row, no tears: since the death of sin and all that re

sulted from sin is abolished and has ceased. The true

THE CONCEPTION 209

mourning is now left to the sons of perdition that dwell

in the abyss whence there is no deliverance. The sor

rows of labor are not a mourning, not a true sorrow,

but only an apparent one, entirely compatible with the

true and the highest kind of joy. For when accepted

with submission, it is of inestimable value and the Son

of God chose it as a loving pledge for Himself, his

Mother, and his brethren.

257. Nor will there be heard any clamor, nor the

voice of quarrel; for the just and the wise, following

the example of their Master and of his most humble

Mother, must learn to bear themselves with silence, like

the artless lamb, when it is slaughtered as victim of the

sacrifice (Is. 53, 7). They must renounce the right of our

weak nature to vent itself in cries and to complain, see

ing that his Majesty, their supreme Lord and model,

was slaughtered on the frightful Cross in order to re

pair the damages wrought by our impatience and want

of confidence (Phil. 2, 8). Why should our human na

ture be permitted to complain of labor and trouble, in

view of such an example? Or how can hateful distinc

tion and uncharitable sentiments be allowed among men,

when Christ has come to establish the law of eternal

charity? The Evangelist repeats: "and sorrow shall be

no more," for if any sorrows remained among men, they

are those of a bad conscience; but as a remedy of this

kind of sorrow, there is the sweet medicine of the in

carnation of the Word in the womb of the most holy

Mary, so that now this sorrow is become acceptable and

the cause of rejoicing, not any more meriting the

name of sorrow and containing within itself the high

est and the sincerest joy. With its introduction the

first things have passed away, namely, the sorrows and

the useless hardships of the ancient laws, which are now

210 CITY OF GOD

sweetened and assuaged by the abundance of grace in

the new law. Therefore he adds: "And behold, I

make all things new." This voice proceeded from the

One, who is seated on the throne, because He declares

Himself as the Artificer of all the mysteries of the new

law of the Gospel. Since all this newness was to begin

with such an unheard of and such an inconceivable event,

as the Incarnation of the Onlybegotten of the Father and

the preservation of the virginity of his Mother, it was

necessary, that, just as in all things, so in this Mother,

there should be nothing old and worn-out. But original

sin clearly is as old as visible nature, and if the Mother

of the incarnate Word was to be infected with it, He

would not have made all things new.

258. And He said to me: "Write, for these things

are most faithful and true." And He said to me: "I

am the Alpha and the Omega: the beginning and the

end." According to our way of speaking, God was

deeply grieved, because the great works of love per

formed for us in the Incarnation and Redemption should

be so much forgotten; and as a remembrance of these

great benefits and as a satisfaction for our ingratitude

He commands them to be written. Therefore men

should write them in their hearts and should begin to

dread the offense, which they commit against God by

their gross and execrable forget fulness. Although it is

true, that the Catholics believe and trust in these mys

teries, yet by the contempt, which they show in their

want of esteem for them and in their forgetfulness, they

seem tacitly to repudiate them, living as if they did not

believe them. Protesting against their foul ingratitude,

the Lord says : "For these things are most faithful and

true." Let the torpid and listless mortals in their sloth

and listlessness understand, that these words are most

THE CONCEPTION 211

faithful as well as most powerful to stir the human heart

from its torpidity, as soon as they become fixed in the

memory, pondered and revolved in the mind as the most

certain truth. For God has made them true for each one

of us.

259. But as God does not repent of his gifts (Rom.

11, 29) and does not retract the good which He confers,

even if man makes himself unworthy, He says: "It is

done;" as if He wanted to say to us, that although by

our ingratitude we have offended Him, He will not turn

back from his course of love, but having already sent

into the world the most holy Mary free from original

sin, all that pertains to the Incarnation is already an

accomplished fact. Since the most pure Mary was now

on earth it appeared impossible, that the divine Word

should remain in heaven and not come to earth in order

to assume human flesh in the womb of the Virgin. And

He assured us again saying: I am the Alpha and the

Omega, the first and the last letter, the beginning and

the end, including the perfection of all things; for if

I give them a beginning, it is for the purpose of raising

them to the perfection of their ultimate end. This I will

do through Christ and Mary, commencing and perfect

ing in Them all the works of grace. In man I will raise

and draw all creatures toward Me, as to their last end

and their center, where they shall find repose.

260. "To him that thirsteth I will give of the foun

tain of the water of life, freely. He that shall overcome

shall possess these things." Who among creatures shall

presume to give counsel to God (Rom. 11, 34) or who

shall give so much to Him as to oblige Him to make a

return? So says the Apostle, wishing to make it under

stood, that all that God does or has done for men, was

of his free grace, and not through obligation toward

212 CITY OF GOD

any one. The source of a fountain owes nothing to him

that drinks from its stream; freely and gratuitously it

flows for all that approach; and that all do not partake

of its blessings is not the fault of the fountain, but of

those that do not approach, for it invites all to partake

of its joyful abundance. And if they do not seek it, it

issues itself to seek such as will partake, flowing on

without ceasing, in order that freely and without reward

it might offer itself to all. O most reprehensible dull

ness of mortals ! O most abominable ingratitude ! If the

true Lord is in no way obliged to us, and if He has given

and gives all out of liberality, and if He has even ex

ceeded all his graces and benefits by becoming man and

dying for us, thus giving Himself to us entirely and

letting flow the stream of his Divinity until it meets our

human nature and unites Itself with us, how is it pos

sible, that we, being so desirous of honor, glory and de

light, do not hasten to drink from this freely flowing

fountain (Is. 55, 1)? But well I see the cause. We

do not thirst for the true glory, honor and happiness,

but we seek only for the apparent and deceitful ones,

despising the fountains of grace, which Jesus Christ has

opened for us by the merits of his Death (Is. 12, 3).

But to those that have thirst after the Divinity and its

graces, the Lord promises, that He will give freely of

the fountain of life (Jer. 2, 13). O what a great sor

row and pity it is, that having discovered the fountain

of life, so few are thirsting for it, and that there are so

many, who run after the waters of death! Those that

conquer the demon, the world, and their own flesh within

themselves, will certainly possess these things. And it is

moreover said, that He offers them, for it might be

doubtful, lest the waters of grace might at some time

be denied or withdrawn: therefore in order to assure

THE CONCEPTION 213

us, they are offered freely for our possession without

limit or restriction.

261. Over and above, the Lord hastens to certify all

this by another assurance, saying: "I shall be his God

and he shall be my son" (Apoc. 21, 7), and if He is to

us a God, and we are to Him as sons, it is clear, that we

are made to be sons of God, and being sons, also heirs of

all his goods (Rom. 8, 17) and being heirs (although all

our heirship is that of grace) we are made secure of our

inheritance, just as children are secure in the inheritance

of the possession of their parents. As He is Father and

God at the same time, infinite in his attributes and per

fections, who can estimate the goods, which He offers to

us in making us sons ? Therein is included the paternal

love, our preservation, our vocation, our enlivenment

and justification, all the means thereto, and finally our

glorification and the state of happiness, which neither

eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, nor ever has en

tered into the heart of man. All this is destined for

those that conquer and have shown themselves true and

courageous children.

262. "But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the

abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sor

cerers, and idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their

portion in the pool burning with fire and brimstone,

which is the second death." On this formidable roster

innumerable sons of perdition have written their names

of their own accord, since infinite is the number of the

foolish, who blindly have chosen death, blocking up for

themselves the path of life. For this path is not hidden

to those who use their eyes, but only to those who wil

fully close their eyes and who have allowed and are al

lowing themselves to be fascinated and deceived by the

fraudulent tricks of satan. According to the different

214 CITY OF GOD

inclinations and tastes he proffers them the poisonous

cup of vice, after which they seek. "The fearful"

are those, who continually hesitate, and thus fail to

taste of the manna of virtue and never enter into the

pathway of eternal life; to whom virtue appears insipid

and burdensome, though the yoke of the Lord is sweet

and his burden is light (Matth. 11, 30); deceived by

this fear they are overcome by their cowardice rather

than by the difficulties. Those other ones, "the unbe

lievers," neither admit that truths are revealed, nor

give belief to them, like the heretics, pagans and infi

dels; or if they do believe them, like the Catholics, it

seems as if they heard them from afar and only through

the faith of others, not giving full assent to the evident

truth contained therein. Thus they hold but a lifeless

belief and they live like unbelievers.

263. "The abominable," are those who follow vice

without distinction, without repentance or limit, and

rather boast of their wickedness and contempt, making

themselves hateful to God and drawing down his wrath

and curse. Thus they arrive at a state of rebellion and

become incapable of good works. They draw away from

the path of eternal life, as if they were not created for it,

they separate and become estranged from God and his

benefits and blessings, objects of disgust to God and his

saints. Likewise are mentioned "the murderers," who,

without fear or reverence for the divine justice, usurp

the right of the supreme Lord, the sole Governor of the

universe, and presume to chastise and avenge injury;

these deserve to be treated and judged according to the

same measure, which they use in treating and judging

others (Luke 6, 38). "The adulterers" are excluded

from that kingdom, since, for a short and impure pleas

ure, which is abhorred as soon as it is attained, and yet

THE CONCEPTION 215

in its disorder is never satiated, they despise the friend

ship of God and the eternal joys, which on being tasted

are the more sought and are an unfailing fountain of

undiminished delight. The "sorcerers" likewise, who

believe and testify to the false promises of the dragon,

hidden under the cloak of friendship; they are deceived

themselves and so perverted that they deceive and per

vert others. "The idolaters" cannot enter heaven for

they seek after and feel the presence of the Divinity

and do not find it, though He is in all our surround

ings (Act 17, 27). They ascribe Divinity to the works

of their own hands, which are only inanimate shadows

of the truth and empty cisterns, totally inapt to suggest

an idea of the grandeur of the true God (Jer. 2, 13).

"The liars" also, who standing in opposition to the high

est truth, which is God, are deprived of his rectitude

and virtue, occupying the opposite extreme, confiding

more in fraudulent deceits than in the Author of truth

and of all good.

264. Of all these the Evangelist says he heard the

sentence, "Their portion shall be in the pool of the fire

burning with sulphur, which is the second death." No

body can complain of divine justice and equity since He

has justified his cause by the greatness of his benefits

and numberless mercies. He descended from heaven to

live and die among men and rescue them by his own

life-blood. He opened up vast foundations of grace,

which are freely offered to us in the holy Church. In

addition to all this He gave us his Mother and the foun

tain of her most holy life, through which we may attain

it. Therefore, mortals cannot excuse themselves, if in

spite of all these gifts, they have not made use of his

grace, and if they have abandoned the inheritance of

eternal life in the pursuit of momentary delights of their

216 CITY OF GOD

mortal life. No wonder that they harvest that which

they have sown, and that their portion shall be in the

terrible abyss of burning brimstone from whence there

is no redemption nor hope of life, when once the second

death of punishment has overtaken them. Although

this second death is infinite in its duration, yet more

wicked and abominable was the first death of their sin,

into which they voluntarily precipitated themselves. For

the death of grace caused by sin is opposed to the in

finite sanctity and goodness of God ; it offends Him, who

is to be reverenced and adored. The death of infernal

pains is the just punishment of these damnable souls and

is the equitable retribution of his most unerring justice.

Thereby this justice is exalted and proclaimed in the

same measure in which it was outraged and despised by

sin. Let it through all the ages be feared and adored.

Amen.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SEQUEL OF THE MYSTERY OF THE CONCEPTION OF THE

MOST HOLY MARY AS DESCRIBED IN THE SECOND PART

OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE.

265. The further wording of the twenty-first chapter

of the Apocalypse is as follows :

9. "And there came one of the seven angels, who

had the vials full of the seven last plagues, and spoke

with me, saying: Come, and I will show thee the

bride, the wife of the Lamb.

10. And he took me up in spirit to a great and

high mountain, and he showed me the holy city Jerusa

lem coming down out of heaven from God,

11. Having the glory of God; and the light thereof

was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper-stone,

even as crystal.

12. And it had a great wall and high, having twelve

gates ; and in the gates twelve angels, and names writ

ten thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes

of the children of Israel.

13. On the east, three gates; and on the north,

three gates ; and on the south, three gates ; and on the

west, three gates.

14. And the wall of the city had twelve founda

tions, and in them, the twelve names of the twelve

apostles of the Lamb.

15. And he that spoke with me had a measure of

reed, of gold, to measure the city and the gates there

of, and the wall;

16 217

218 CITY OF GOD

16. And the city lieth in a four-square, and the

length thereof is as great as the breadth ; and he meas

ured the city with the golden reed for twelve thou

sand furlongs; and the length and the height and the

breadth thereof are equal.

17. And he measured the wall thereof a hundred

and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is

of an angel.

18. And the buildings of the wall thereof was of

jasper-stone; but the city itself pure gold,, like to pure

glass."

266. The angels of which the Evangelist speaks in

this place, are seven of those who attend in a special

manner at the throne of God and who have received

commission and power to punish some of the sins of

men. This vengeance of the wrath of the Omnipotent

(Apoc. 15, 1) will happen in the last ages of the world;

but it shall be a new punishment, greater than which

neither before nor after is possible during mortal exist

ence. But since these mysteries are deeply hidden and

since not all have been revealed to me, nor concern this

history, I do not consider it proper to expatiate upon

them, but I will pass on to what more closely concerns

my task. This angel, of which St. John speaks, is the

one through whom God will avenge with an especial

and dreadful chastisement the injuries committed against

his most holy Mother ; for the insane daring, with which

they have despised Her, has roused the indignation of

his Omnipotence. As the most holy Trinity has pledged

Itself to honor and exalt this Queen of heaven above all

human creatures and above the angels, placing Her in

this world as a Mirror of the Divinity and as the special

Mediatrix of mortals, God has taken it in a particular

manner upon Himself to avenge the heresies, errors,

THE CONCEPTION 219

outrages, and all injuries committed against Her, since

thereby men have not glorified, acknowledged and

adored Him in this tabernacle and have not made use of

this incomparable mercy. These punishments are proph

esied to the holy Church. Although the mysterious

words of the Apocalypse enshroud in obscurity the rigor

of this punishment, yet woe to the unhappy ones, that

shall be overtaken by it ! Woe to me, who have offended

a God so strong and powerful to chastise! I am over

whelmed in the expectation of the great calamity here

threatened.

267. The angel spoke to the Evangelist saying:

"Come, and I will show thee the bride, the wife of the

Lamb," etc. The angel declares in this passage, that

the holy city of Jerusalem, which he showed to him, is

the espoused wife of the Lamb, referring by this meta

phor (as I have already said No. 248) to the most holy

Mary, whom St. John saw both as a Mother, or Woman,

and as a Spouse of the Lamb, that is Christ. The Queen

held and fulfilled in divine manner both offices. She was

the Spouse of the Divinity, the only One (Cant. 6, 8)

and incomparable on account of the unequalled faith and

love, with which the espousals were entered into and

accomplished ; and She was the Mother of the same Lord

incarnate, giving Him his mortal substance and flesh,

nourishing and sustaining Him in his existence as man,

which He derived from Her. In order to see and under

stand such high mysteries the Evangelist was exalted in

spirit to a great height of sanctity and light; for with

out going out of himself and being raised above human

weakness, he could not understand them; just as we,

imperfect, earthly and abject creatures, cannot encom

pass them for the same reason. Then elevated thus high,

he says: He showed me the holy city of Jerusalem,

220 CITY OF GOD

coming down out of heaven," for Mary was built up

and formed, not on earth, where She was like a pil

grim and a stranger, but in heaven, where the common,

earthly material was excluded. For though the material

of her being was taken from the earth, it was at the

same time so elevated in heavenly perfection as to be fit

for the building up of that mystical City in a celestial

and angelic, yea divine manner, effulgent with the Di

vinity.

268. Therefore he adds: "Having the glory of God,"

for the most holy soul of Mary was favored with such a

participation of the Divinity and of its attributes and per

fections, that if it were possible to see Her in her own

essence, She would appear as if illumined with the

eternal splendor of God himself. Great and (Ps. 86, 3)

glorious things are said in the Catholic church of this

City of God, and of the splendor, which She has received

from that same Lord; but all of it is insignificant, and

all human words fall short of the truth. The created

intellect, entirely overcome, can but assert, that the most

holy Mary partakes of the Divinity more than can be

comprehended; confessing thereby the substance of the

reality as well as the incapability of the mind to express

in a proper manner, that which it wishes to confess.

She is formed in the heavens, and only the Artificer who

formed Her, is able to comprehend her greatness, He

alone can estimate her origin and the affinity, which He

contracted with most holy Mary, by perfecting her gifts

to a semblance of the attributes of his infinite greatness

and Divinity.

269. "And the light thereof was like to a precious

stone, the jasper-stone, even as crystal," etc. It is not so

difficult to understand how She can be similar at the

same time to two such dissimilar stones as crystal and

THE CONCEPTION 221

jasper, as it is to understand how She can be similar to

God. But from this comparison we derive a certain un

derstanding of similarity to God. The jasper sparkles

and glitters in colors of many different shades, while the

crystal is characterized by limpid and uniform transpar

ency; both combined form a rare and beautiful variety.

The most pure Mary, in her formation, was endowed

with the variety of virtues and perfections, which the

hand of God itself selected and interwove in her soul.

These graces and perfections made her soul like unto a

most pure crystal, without blemish or stain of guilt; in

her purity and transparency it scattered the enrapturing

rays of the Divinity, just as the crystal meeting the sun,

seems to absorb and again send forth its rays as if it

were itself the sun. Nevertheless this crystal- jasper

sparkles also in many-colored hues because She is a

Daughter of Adam and a mere creature, and all the

splendors of the Divinity contained within Her are only

a participation. Although it appears to be a divine light,

it is not a part of her nature, but communicated and con

ferred by grace. She is truly a creature formed and

shaped by the hand of God himself, but in a manner

befitting one who was to be his Mother.

270. "And it had a great wall and high, having twelve

gates." The mysteries enclosed in the walls and por

tals of this mystical City, most holy Mary, are so hidden

and great that I, an ignorant and obscure woman, can

with difficulty reduce to words that which was shown

to me. However, in order to proceed : At the first mo

ment of the Conception of the most holy Mary, when

the Divinity manifested Itself to Her in the vision above

referred to (No. 228-236), the whole blessed Trinity,

as if renewing the ancient decrees of her creation and

exaltation, made a kind of agreement or contract with

222 CITY OF GOD

this Lady, without however making it fully known to

Her. It was as if the three Divine Persons conferred

among Themselves and spoke to each other in the fol

lowing manner:

271. "It is befitting to the dignity of our Bride and

the Mother of the Word, that She be constituted the

Queen and Mistress of all creation. Besides the gifts and

riches of the Divinity, which We give and confer upon

Her for her own sake, it is meet that She exercise the

right of distributing the treasures of our mercy, so that

She may communicate according to her pleasure the

graces and favors necessary to mortals, especially to

those who invoke Her as her children and clients, thus

enriching the needy, freeing the sinners, elevating the

just and affording a universal refuge to all men. And

in order that all creatures may recognize Her as their

Queen and Mistress, and as the Treasurer of our infinite

bounties, from whence they are to be distributed, We

entrust Her with the keys of our will and heart; She

shall be in all things the Executrix of our pleasure to

ward the creatures. Above all We shall give to Her do

minion and power over the dragon, our enemy, and over

all his allied demons. Let them fear her presence and

her name and in it, let their deceits be crushed and anni

hilated. Let all the mortals that fly to this City of

refuge, find in it a sure and certain protection, free from

all the dread of the demons and their snares."

272. Without revealing to the soul of the most holy

Mary all that is contained in this decree or proposal, the

Lord directed Her in that first instant to pray with great

love, to intercede for all the souls, and to solicit and

procure for them eternal life, especially for those, who

in the course of their lives should commend themselves

to her care. The blessed Trinity made known to Her that

THE CONCEPTION 223

before his most just tribunal nothing would ever be de

nied to Her; that She should command the devil and

that She should have power, by virtue of her commands,

to keep him away from souls, since She would have at

her disposal the arm of the Almighty. But the reason of

this favor was not made known to Her, nor the reason

for all her other gifts, and this reason was no other

than that She was to be the Mother of the Word. In

saying that this City was surrounded by a great and

high wall St. John refers to this godgiven prerogative

of his Mother, that She was to be the secret refuge, pro

tection and defense of all men, wherein they would find

all the security of a city of refuge and of a strong for

tress against their enemies. To this powerful Queen

and Lady of all creation and to this dispensatrix of all the

treasures of heavenly grace, all the sons of Adam were

to fly. He says that the walls are very high, for the

power of the most pure Mary to overcome the demon

and to raise the souls to grace is so great that it is in

ferior only to that of God himself. So well armed for

all this and so well defended and secure for Herself and

for all those, who seek her protection, is this City, that

not all the forces created by God outside of Her can

overthrow or surmount its walls.

273. "Having twelve gates," for the entrance into this

holy City is free to all nations and generations excluding

none, but inviting all; so that no one shall be deprived

of the mediation of this Queen of mercy for obtaining

the gifts and graces, nor the eternal glory of the Most

High. In the gates were twelve angels. These twelve

princes are those mentioned above as being among the

ones selected as the guardians of the Mother of the incar

nate Word. The service of these twelve angels, besides

attending to their Queen, was to assist especially and to

224 CITY OF GOD

defend those souls who devoutly call on Mary, our

Queen, for help, and who distinguish themselves in their

devotion, veneration and love for Her. Therefore the

Evangelist says that he saw them in the gates of that

City; they are the ministers and as it were, the servants,

who are to help, encourage and accompany the mortals

in entering into the portals of piety, opened by the most

holy Mary to eternal happiness. Many times does She

send them with inspirations and favors in order to snatch

those from the dangers of body and soul, who invoke

Her and are her devout servants.

274. He continues: "And names written thereon,

which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children

of Israel;" for the angels receive their names according

to the ministry and service, for which they are sent to

the earth. And because these twelve princes are espe

cially attached to the service of the Queen of heaven in

order that they may assist in the salvation of men, and

because all the elect are included with the twelve tribes

of Israel, forming the holy people of God : therefore the

Evangelist says that the angels bear the names of the

twelve tribes of Israel. To each one of the twelve tribes

one of these angels is assigned. Under their charge and

protection are all those that from every nation and gen

eration enter through the portals of the intercession of

most holy Mary into the celestial Jerusalem.

275. Wondering at this exaltation of the most pure

Mary and that She should be the Mediatrix and the por

tal of all the predestined, I was given to understand

that this prerogative befits Her, who as Mother of Christ

was to do such great things for men conjointly with her

most holy Son. For She furnished Him from her own

purest blood and substance with a body, in which He

suffered and redeemed men. On account of her close

THE CONCEPTION 225

connection with his flesh and blood, She in a manner

died and suffered in Christ, freely of her own will ac

companying Him in his Passion and Death, suffering

with Him according to Her power with heavenly humil

ity and fortitude. Thus, as She cooperated in his Pas

sion and offered Herself as a victim for the human race,

so the same Lord made Her a participant in his dignity

of Redeemer and placed Her in charge of the merits

and fruits of the Redemption, to be distributed by her

own hand and communicated to the redeemed. O, ad

mirable Treasurer of God! How secure are in thy heav

enly and bountiful hands the riches of the Omnipotent!

Hence this City "had three gates on the east, three gates

on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates

on the west," etc. The three gates, corresponding to each

of the four quarters of the world, invite all the mortals

to draw near to Him, who is the Creator of all,

namely, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Each of

the three Persons, desires and ordains, that most holy

Mary should be in possession of the gates for soliciting

the divine treasures for mortals. Although there is but

one God in three Persons, each one for Himself con

cedes free entrance and admission to this most pure

Queen, in order that before the tribunal of the immu

table and triune Being She may intercede, solicit and re

ceive gifts and graces for those that seek Her and honor

Her in the world. Therefore as there are not one, but

three portals in every direction, none of the mortals any

where in the universe and of any nation and tribe shall

have an excuse. The entrance into free and open city

gates is so easy, that if any one fails to enter, it is not

because the gates prevent him, but because he himself

tarries and does not wish to seek safety. What then

shall the infidels, heretics and pagans say? and what ex-

226 CITY OF GOD

cuse have the bad Christians and the obstinate sinners?

If the treasures of heaven are in the hands of our

Mother and Lady, if She continues to call us and solicit

us through her angels, if She opens not one but many

gates to heaven, how is it that there are so many who

remain outside and so few who enter through them?

276. "And the walls of the city had twelve founda

tions, and in them the twelve names of the apostles of

the Lamb." The strong and unshakable foundations,

upon which God built up the holy City of Mary his

Mother, are her virtues, as governed and proportioned

in Her by the Holy Ghost. He enumerated twelve, cor

responding with the names of the Apostles, in order to

show that it is founded upon the surpassing sanctity of

the Apostles, who are the leaders among the saints. For

according to the saying of David, the foundations of the

city of God are placed upon the holy mountains, and also

inversely, the sanctity and wisdom of Mary grounded

and confirmed the Apostles after the Death and Ascen

sion of Christ. Although She was always their In

structress and model, yet in those times She alone was

the chief support of the primitive Church. Now, be

cause She was destined and endowed for this office by

the corresponding virtues and gifts from the moment

of her Immaculate Conception, therefore they are called

the twelve foundations of this City of God.

277. "And he that spoke with me had a measure of

reed, of gold, and he measured the city with the golden

reed for twelve thousand furlongs," etc. By these meas

urements the Evangelist alludes to the great mysteries of

the dignity, graces and gifts and merits contained in the

Mother of God. Although the measurements of the dig

nity and benefits, which the Almighty conferred upon

Her, were exceedingly great, yet they were within pos-

THE CONCEPTION 227

sibility and they were also well proportioned. "And the

length thereof is as great as the breadth." From all

sides She is equally well formed, without a sign of de

ficiency, inequality or disproportion. I do not expatiate

thereon, but refer to what I will say about this in the

course of this history of her life. But I desire to men

tion that the measure of the dignity, the merits and

graces of most holy Mary, was none other than the hu

manity of her most blessed Son, united to the divine

Word.

278. The Evangelist calls the humanity of Christ a

"reed" because He assumed the frailty of our weak

and carnal nature, and "of gold," on account of his Di

vinity. In accordance with the dignity of the true God-

man, Christ, and correspondingly with the gifts and

merits of the incarnate God, also his most holy Mother

was measured. He it was who measured Her with

Himself, and She, being thus proportioned, seemed in

her office as Mother, exalted to a dignity corresponding

to his. In the length of her gifts and graces, and in

the breadth of her merits, in all things did She seem

well proportioned without defect. She could not be

equal absolutely to her most holy Son with an equality

which the learned call mathematical; for Christ our

Lord was true God and man, whereas She was a mere

creature and thus the measure exceeded infinitely that

which was measured by it ; yet the most pure Mary was

adjusted according to a certain equality of proportion

to her divine Son. Just as there was wanting in Him

nothing that corresponds and belongs to his dignity as

the true Son of God, so nothing was wanting, nor was

there any defect in that, which was due to Her as true

Mother of that same God, in such a manner that to Her

as Mother of God, and to Christ as Son of God, were

228 CITY OF GOD

conceded equal proportions of dignity, graces, gifts and

merits. There was no created grace in Christ, which

was not held in its proportion also by his most pure

Mother.

279. The Evangelist says : "And he measured the city

with the golden reed for twelve thousand furlongs."

This measure of "stadia" and the number "twelve thou

sand" with which the heavenly Queen at her Conception

was measured, indicate most exalted mysteries. The

Evangelist calls the perfect measure, by which are meas

ured the high sanctity of the predestined, "stadia," there

by referring to the graces and gifts, which God in his

eternal foreknowledge decreed to communicate through

the incarnate Son, adjusting and pre-ordaining these

gifts with infinite equity and mercy. By these stadia

then are measured all the saints and the heights of their

virtues and merits. Most unhappy he who does not

come up to this measure and who cannot be measured

by it when the Lord shall measure him. The number

twelve thousand is used in order to include all the rest

of the elect and the predestined, headed in their thousands

by the twelve Apostles, the princes of the Catholic

Church. In the same way they are mentioned in the

seventh chapter of the Apocalypse under the leadership

of the twelve tribes of Israel. For all the elect must sub

mit to the teaching of the Apostles of the Lamb, as I

have already said above (No. 273).

280. From all this can be estimated the greatness of

that City of God, the most holy Mary. For if we as

sume that the stadium which the Evangelist mentions

measures at least 125 steps, then a city that extends

12,000 furlongs or stadia on each of its four sides aim

in its height, must appear of huge dimensions. The

measurement and number of stadia of all the predes-

THE CONCEPTION 229

lined taken together was found to be equal to that of

our blessed Lady, the most holy Mary, and their length,

breadth and height was not greater than hers. For She

that was to be the Mother of God himself and the Queen

and the Mistress of all creatures, was equal to them

joined in one mighty host. In Her alone was contained

more than in all the rest of creation.

281. "And he measured the wall thereof a hundred

and forty-four cubits, the measure of a man, which is of

an angel." This measure of the walls of the City of

God, was not of their length, but of their height. For

if the length and the width of the city were twelve thou

sand stadia, making a perfect square, it was certainly

necessary that the walls should extend still farther on

the outside in order to encompass the city. The meas

ure of one hundred and forty- four cubits (of whatever

length these might be) , was certainly too short for a city

of that extent; but that measurement would very well

fit the height of the walls and would be well adapted for

the security and defense of those dwelling therein. This

measurement of their height indicates the security of all

the gifts and graces which the Almighty conferred on

most holy Mary as befitting her dignity and sanctity. In

order to make this more plain, it is said that the height

was one hundred, forty, and four cubits, an unequal

number, referring to three walls : a high one, a medium

sized and a small one, and corresponding to the activity

of the Queen of heaven in great, in more ordinary and

insignificant things. Not that in Her there was anything

insignificant, but because the object matter of her actions

was of different kinds, and so were also her actions

themselves. Some were miraculous and supernatural,

others belonged to the sphere of the moral virtues, and

these latter again were either interior or exterior. All

230 CITY OF GOD

of them She performed with such a plenitude of perfec

tion that She omitted not the unimportant obligations on

account of the important ones, nor did the latter suffer

on account of her exactitude in the former. She fulfilled

them all with such an exalted holiness, and with such

full approbation of the Lord that She was measured

with the standard of her most holy Son, as well in the

natural as in the supernatural sphere of her life. It was

the measure of the Godman himself, the Angel of the

great council, excelling all men and angels. With Him

She, as his Mother, was exalted above them in propor

tion to her dignity. The Evangelist continues and says :

282. "And the building of the wall thereof was of

jasper-stone." The walls of a city most conspicuously

strike and engage the eyes of the beholder. The variety

of colors and hues that distinguish the jasper-stone here

mentioned as composing the walls of Mary, the City of

God, bespeak the ineffable humility with which all the

excellencies and graces of the great Queen were clothed

and permeated. For although She was the worthy

Mother of her Creator, exempt from all stain of sin and

imperfection, She exhibits Herself to the view of mor

tals as dependent upon and as it were tinted with the

shades of the ordinary laws, to which the daughters of

Adam are subject; for She subjected Herself to the pen

alties and necessities of our common life, as I shall de

scribe later on. Nevertheless this wall of jasper, though

apparently displaying these color-tints of the rest of

womankind, was to serve as an invincible defense of the

city. Inside, as the Evangelist says, the city was of

"pure gold, like to most pure and flawless glass," for

neither in the formation of the most holy Mary, nor

afterwards, during her most innocent life, did She ever

admit any stain, which could obscure her crystalline

THE CONCEPTION 231

clearness. For just as any stain or blemish, even if only

the size of an atom, finding its way into glass during its

formation will never disappear so as to leave no visible

trace and will always interfere with its transparency and

purity; so, if the most pure Mary had contracted in her

Conception the blemish or stain of original sin, it would

always be discernible and forever degrade and prevent

her crystalline purity and transparency. Neither would

She be pure Gold, since her sanctity and gifts would con

tain the slack of original sin, lessening its fineness by

many carats; hence, this City was "gold, like the purest

glass," because She was most pure and like unto the

Divinity.

CHAPTER XIX.

CONTAINS THE LAST PORTION OF APOCALYPSE XXI IN AS

FAR AS IT DESCRIBES THE CONCEPTION OF THE MOST

HOLY MARY.

283. The text of the third and last part of chapter

twenty-first of the Apocalypse which I saw explained is

as follows:

19. "And the foundations and the wall were

adorned by all manner of precious stones. The first

foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third,

chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;

20. The fifth, sardony, the sixth, sardius; the

seventh, chrysolite ; the eighth, beryl ; the ninth, topaz ;

the tenth, chrysoprasus ; the eleventh, hyacinth; the

twelfth, amethyst.

21. And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to

each; and every special gate was of one several pearl;

and the street of the city was of pure gold, as it were

transparent glass.

22. And I saw no temple therein. For the Lord

God Almighty is the temple thereof, and the Lamb.

23. And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of

the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God hath

enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof.

24. And the nations shall walk in the light of it;

and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and

honor into it.

25. And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day ;

for there shall be no night there.

232

THE CONCEPTION 233

26. And they shall bring the glory and honor of

the nations into it.

27. There shall not enter into it anything defiled, or

that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they

that are written in the book of life of the lamb."

So far the text and letter of the twenty-first chapter of

the Apocalypse, which I saw explained.

284. The Almighty having chosen the holy city of

Mary for his habitation, and She being of all things out

side of God the most fit and appropriate, it was not im

proper that, from the treasures of his Divinity and from:

the merits of his most holy Son, He should adorn the

foundations of this city s wall with all manner of pre

cious stones. The fortitude and strength of Mary, typi

fied by the walls, the beauty and excellence of her sanc

tity and graces, symbolized by the precious stones, her

wonderful Conception, suggested by the foundations,

were all well proportioned by God in regard to each

other and in regard to the exalted end, for which this

City was founded, namely, that God should live within

it by his love and that from the virginal womb of Mary

He might accept his human nature. All this the Evan

gelist describes just as he sees it in the most holy Mary.

For on account of the dignity, sanctity and stability which

were required in Her as a dwelling-place and as a

stronghold of God, it was befitting that the foundation

walls of this City, which prefigure the beginnings of her

Immaculate Conception, should be built of such emi

nently precious stones or virtues that none more rich or

precious could ever be found.

285. "The first foundation," or stone, he says, "was

jasper," whose variegated tints and durability indicate

the constancy and fortitude, which from the moment

of her Conception was infused into this great Lady in

17

234 CITY OF GOD

order that during the course of her life She might con

tinue to exercise all the virtues with invincible magnan

imity and constancy. The virtues and habits, conceded

and infused into the most holy Mary at her Conception

and typified by these precious stones, at the same time

are connected with special privileges, and I will as far

as possible, explain them, in order that the full mystery

of these twelve foundations may become known. This

gift of strength included a special superiority and sov

ereignty for repressing, subduing and vanquishing the

ancient serpent, and for inspiring all the demons with

an inexpressible terror. On that account they fly from

Her and fear Her from afar, being filled with trembling

at her mere presence. They cannot come near the most

holy Mary without excruciating pain. So liberal was

divine Providence with her Majesty that She was not

only exempt from the common laws of the children of

Adam, but also freed from original guilt as well as from

subjection to the demon contracted thereby. Setting Her

apart from these evils, He at the same time endowed

Her with sovereign power over the devil, which all men

have lost together with their innocence. More than

that: as Mother of the Son of the eternal Father (whom

She bore in her womb for the very purpose of putting an

end to the evil power of the enemies) She was invested

with actual authority which emanated from God him

self and in virtue of which this most exalted Mistress

subdued the demons and sent them repeatedly to the in

fernal dungeons, as I will relate farther on.

286. "The second, sapphire." This stone imitates the

color of the clear and serene firmament and shows a scat

tering of gold spots or atoms. Its color typifies the

serenity and tranquillity of the gifts and graces of the

most holy Mary, enabling Her to enjoy an unchanging,

THE CONCEPTION 235

heavenly and serene peace, free from any cloud of dis

order and illumined from the moment of her Concep

tion with visions of the Divinity. By the likeness of her

virtues to the divine attributes and by her participation

in them, especially in their unchangeableness, She made

Herself worthy to see God. Many times during her pil

grimage through life was She favored with unveiled and

clear vision of God, as will be described. In virtue of

this singular privilege the Almighty endowed Her with

the power of communicating tranquillity and peace of

spirit to those, who will ask for her intercession. There

fore let all the faithful, who are agitated and stirred up

by the tormenting anxiety of their vices, pray to Her,

that so they may obtain from Her this gift of peace.

287. "The third, a chalcedony." This stone takes its

name from the country where it is found. It is of the

color of the ruby and in the night resplendent as a bea-

conlight. The hidden signification of this stone points

to the holiness and power of the name of Mary. For

She took her name from that part of the world, where

She first came into being, calling herself a daughter of

Adam, and her name, by the mere change of the accent

signifies in Latin the collective oceans, for She was the

ocean of the graces and gifts of the Divinity. She came

into the world in her Immaculate Conception, submerg

ing and inundating it with these gifts, sweeping off the

malice of sin and its effects, illuminating the darkness of

the abyss with the light of her spirit and the brightness

of her heavenly wisdom. This foundation-stone signifies

that the Most High conceded to her most holy name the

power to disperse the clouds of infidelity spread over the

earth, and to destroy the errors of heresy, of paganism,

idolatry and all uncertainty in matters of the Catholic

faith. If the infidels would turn toward this light by

236 CITY OF GOD

invoking Mary s name, it is certain that their under

standing would quickly expel the darkness, their errors

would be drowned as in a sea in virtue of the power con

ceded to Her from on high.

288. "The fourth, an emerald," the color of which is

a pleasant green, delighting the sight without fatigue. It

mysteriously typifies the graces of the most holy Mary

in her Conception for, being most amiable and gracious

in the eyes of God and his creatures. She preserved in

Herself, without the least offense against his name and

memory, all the verdure and strength of the holiness,

virtues and gifts then conferred upon Her. According

ly the Most High granted Her the privilege of insuring

a like stability to her devout followers, obtaining for

them perseverance and fidelity in the friendship of God

and in the practice of virtue.

289. "The fifth, sardonyx." This stone is transpar

ent, though favoring the flesh-color and usually contain

ing three different tints : dark below, whitish in the cen

tre, and nacreous or like mother-of-pearl above, a most

graceful variety of color. The mysterious signification

of this stone pointed to the close relation between the

Mother and the Son, whom She was to bring forth. The

dark color points to the inferior and terrestrial portion

of the body of Mary, obscured by mortification and la

bors during her stay on earth, and also to the humanity

of her Son, obscured by taking upon Himself our guilt.

The white typifies the purity of the soul of Mary, the

Virgin, and of Christ, our highest good. The carnation

bespeaks in Him the hypostatical union of his humanity

and Divinity, and in Mary her participation in the love

of her most holy Son, and her communication in all the

splendors of the Divinity. In virtue of this foundation-

stone the great Queen of heaven enjoys the power of

THE CONCEPTION 237

interceding and obtaining for her clients the efficacious

application of the superabundant merits of the Incarna

tion and Redemption, including also a special devotion

toward the mysteries and the life of Christ our Lord

through his merits.

290. "The sixth, sardius." This stone is transparent,

and because it at the same time flashes like the clear

flame of a fire, it is the symbol of the flame of divine

love, which incessantly burns in the Queen of heaven,

for there is no cessation nor diminution of that conflagra

tion of love in her bosom. From the very moment of

her Conception, which was the time and place of its be

ginning, it continued to grow, and now, having reached

that highest state of exaltation, which ever can fall to

the lot of a creature, it burns and shall burn still bright

er through all the eternities. This includes her privilege

of distributing the influence, the love and the gifts of the

Holy Ghost to those who ask in her name.

291. "The seventh, chrysolite." This stone resembles

in its color gold refulgent with flaming fire; and this

latter is more apt to show itself by night than by day.

It symbolized the ardent love which Mary entertains for

the Church militant, its ministers, and for the law of

grace in particular. This love shone forth more especial

ly during the night of the Death of her most holy Son,

also during the time, when in the beginnings of the evan

gelical law, She held the office of teacher and when She

prayed so ardently for the establishment of the Church

and its Sacraments. In those times, as will be said in its

place, She cooperated by her most burning love toward

the salvation of the whole human race. She alone

knew and appreciated the value of the most holy law of

her Son. With this love She was prepared and endowed

from the moment of her Conception in order to be the

238 CITY OF GOD

Coadjutrix of Christ our Lord. This includes the pre

rogative of being able to obtain for those that invoke

Her, the grace of a good disposition toward the fruit

ful reception of the Sacraments of the holy Church and

of clearing away obstacles that prevent their full effects.

292. "The eighth, beryl." This stone is of a green

and yellow color; but the green predominates, having a

great resemblance to olive and being of resplendent bril

liancy. It represents the singular faith and hope given

to Mary in her Conception, enabling Her to understand

and execute arduous and sublime works, such as She in

reality accomplished for the glory of Her Creator. In

virtue of this gift of unfailing assistance of the Lord,

was conferred upon Her the power to endow her ser

vants with fortitude and patience in the tribulations and

difficulties of their undertakings.

293. "The ninth, topaz." This stone is transparent

and of a mulberry color, much prized and esteemed. It

represents the most honorable virginity of Mary, our

Mistress, and her mothership in regard to the incarnate

Word; moreover during her whole life these two pre

rogatives were held by Her as of inestimable value and

worthy of the most humble thanks. At the instant of

her Conception She asked the Most High for the virtue

of chastity and She promised the observance of it during

the rest of her earthly life. She was aware that it was

conceded to Her in a degree far above her vows and

desires. Not only that, but She knew that the Lord

had made Her the Teacher and the Guide of all the

virgins and lovers of chastity, and that through her in

tercession, She could obtain these virtues and perse

verance in them for all her devotees.

294 "The tenth, chrysoprase," the color of which is

green with touches of gold. It signified the most firm

THE CONCEPTION 239

hope planted in the heart of the most holy Mary at her

Conception, and the love with which it was impreg

nated and embellished. Hope lived inextinguishably in

the bosom of our Queen, as was befitting for Her who

was to communicate similar quality to the rest of man

kind. The firmness of her confidence was founded in the

stability of her high and generous nature during all the

labors and exercises of her most holy life, and especially

in the Passion and Death of her most holy Son. At the

same time with this virtue the power of efficacious medi

ation was given Her, so that She might obtain the same

firmness of hope for her clients.

295. "The eleventh, hyacinth," which is of an exquis

ite violet color. In this foundation-stone is disclosed the

love of Mary for the Redemption of the human race.

This love was infused into Her at her Conception and

was applied to Her in view of the merits of the death of

the Redeemer, her Son. As the whole remedy of guilt

and the justification of all the souls was to take its rise

from the Redemption, this love of the great Queen for

the Redemption from that first instant, earned Her the

power of demanding that no sinner, how great and

abominable soever he might be, should be excluded from

the fruit of the Redemption and justification, nor fail

to attain eternal life if he invoked the intercession of this

powerful Lady and Advocate.

296. "The twelfth, amethyst," of a refulgent violet

color. The mystery of this stone or foundation cor

responds in part with that of the first. It imports a

kind of inherent power conceded to the most holy Mary

from the moment of her Conception against all the devil

ish host, so that the demons, without any command or

action on her part, feel a distressing and torturing force

proceeding from Her, as soon as they wish to approach

240 CITY OF GOD

her presence. It was given to Her as a reward of her

incomparable zeal in exalting and defending the glory

and honor of God. Hence the mere sound of her sweet

est name is sufficient to expel from the bodies of men the

malignant spirits. For her holy name is so powerful that

at the mere intimation of it, they are overcome and de

prived of strength. These are in short the mysteries of

the foundations upon which God built the holy City of

Mary. But they point to many other mysteries and

favors received by Her, and in so far as the Lord will

give me light and strength, I will manifest them in the

farther course of this history.

297. The Evangelist proceeds and says: "And the

twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each; and every

several gate was of one several pearl." The great num

ber of gates of this mystical City signify that through

most holy Mary and through her ineffable dignity and

merits, the entrance to life everlasting was to be just as

easy as it is free. It was in a manner due and befitting

to the excellence of this exalted Queen, that in Her and

through Her the infinite mercy of the Most High should

magnify itself by opening all the many ways of com

munication with the Divinity, and that all mortals, if

they wished to make use of her merits and powerful in

tercession, should enter into participation of the Divin

ity. The priceless value, magnificence, beauty and fair

ness of these twelve gates, constructed of pearls, imply

the greatness of the dignity and grace of this Empress

of heaven, and the sweetness of her delightful name,

which draws mortals toward God. The most holy Mary

knew that the Lord had bestowed upon Her the preroga

tive of being the special Mediatrix of the human race

and the Dispensatrix of the treasures of the Divinity for

her Son; and therefore the prudent and most diligent

THE CONCEPTION 241

Mistress exerted Herself to make the merits and dignity

of her works so precious and excellent that they are the

astonishment of the blessed in heaven. Thus the gates

of that city were indeed precious pearls in the sight of

the Lord and of men.

298. Accordingly it is said: "And the square of the

city was of pure gold, as it were transparent glass." The

piazza or square of that City of God, most holy Mary,

is its interior or her soul. Here, as in a square or mar

ketplace, all the life converges and here the commerce

and trade of the republic of the soul is transacted; for

it is the centre of the activity of the senses and other

faculties. This square in the most holy Mary was of

purest and transparent gold, because composed of the

wisdom and love of God himself. Never was it affected

by dullness, ignorance or inattention; all her thoughts

were most exalted and her affections were inflamed with

immeasurable love. On this square the highest myster

ies of the Divinity were deliberated, from this square

were heard the words "Fiat mihi secundum verbum

tuum," which gave a beginning to the most exalted work

that God ever accomplished or will ever accomplish;

there the innumerable petitions in favor of the human

race were devised and sent up to the tribunal of God;

there those riches were amassed, which will expel pov

erty from all the world, if men will enter into commerce

with it ; there also is the armory against the demons and

all vice. For in most holy Mary are the graces and vir

tues, which make Her terrible to hell and which afford

us courage to overcome the devilish host.

299. He says farther: "And I saw no temple therein.

For the Lord God Almighty is the temple thereof, and

the Lamb." The temples of the cities serve as places of

prayer and worship to be rendered to God ; and it would

242 CITY OF GOD

be a great defect, if in the City of God there were no

temple befitting its greatness and excellence. Hence in

this City of holy Mary is so sacred a temple that the

omnipotent God himself and the Lamb itself, that is:

the humanity and the Divinity of his Onlybegotten Son,

are reverenced and adored in spirit, and more worthily

than in all tfie temples of the world; for He dwelt in

Her as in his proper habitation. He was also Himself

the temple of Mary, since She was encompassed, sur

rounded and enclosed by the Divinity and the humanity,

both of which served Her as a habitation and a taber

nacle. For being in God, she never ceased to adore, wor

ship and petition this same God and incarnate Word

within her womb thus in spirit living in God and in the

Lamb as in a temple since her continual sanctity was be

fitting to such a temple. In order to think worthily of

this heavenly Mistress, we must always consider Her as

enclosed in the Divinity and in her most holy Son

as in a temple. Thus shall we understand what acts and

processes of love, adoration and reverence, were accom

plished by Her; what delights She experienced in the

same Lord, what petitions arose in Her for the human

race, and how earnestly, from her inmost heart and

with burning charity, She cried and begged for the sal

vation of mortals, when in spirit She saw the great

necessity of their salvation.

300. Further says the Evangelist: "And the city

hath no need of the sun and the moon, to shine in it;

for the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb

is the lamp thereof." The sun and the moon, are not

necessary in the presence of greater light than their own ;

and thus, in the empyrean heaven, where the infinite Suns

give their light, the absence of our sun is no defect,

though it is so resplendent and beautiful In the most

THE CONCEPTION 243

holy Mary, our Queen, there was no need of created

sun or moon to enlighten and direct Her; for without

comparison She pleased and delighted God. Nor could

the wisdom, sanctity and perfection of her works have

any other teacher and director, than the Sun of justice

itself, her most holy Son. All other creatures were far

too deficient to assist Her in being a worthy Mother of

her Creator. Nevertheless in this same school of the

Lord She learned to be the most humble and obedient

among the humble and obedient. Though She was

taught by God himself, yet She hesitated not to suppli

cate and obey the most abject among men in those

things in which it was not unbecoming. Being the dis

ciple of Him, who corrects the wise, She drew the di

vine philosophy of humility from Him, her great Mas

ter. And She rose to such wisdom, that the Evangelist

could say :

301. "And the nations shall walk in the light of it:"

for if Christ our Lord, calls the doctors and saints burn

ing lights, placed upon the candlestick to enlighten the

Church: lights such as were scattered through the ages

in the Patriarchs and Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs and

Doctors, filling the Catholic Church with such effulgence,

that it appears to be a heaven with many suns and

moons: what shall we say of the most holy Mary,

whose light and splendor incomparably exceeds all the

doctors and teachers of the Church, yea that of the

angels of heaven? If only the mortals were possessed

of clear sight to see the splendor of the light of the

most holy Mary, it alone would suffice to enlighten every

man in the world and to illumine for them the paths of

heaven. Therefore, because all those who have attained

to the knowledge of God, walked in the light of this

244 CITY OF GOD

holy City, St. John says: "that the nations have walked

in the light of it." Moreover he adds most truly:

302. "And the kings of the earth shall bring

their glory and their honor into it." Very blessed are

those kings and princes, who with happy zeal use their

power and influence to fulfill this prophecy. All of them

should do so; but fortunate are they, that turn with

sincere affection to most holy Mary, employing their

life, their honor, their riches, and their high position in

the defense of that City of God, extending her glory in

the world and magnifying her name in the Catholic

Church in opposition to the crackbrained madness of

heretics and infidels. With the deepest sorrow I be

hold Catholic princes, who are remiss in seeking the

favor of this Queen, fail to ask her assistance in the

great dangers of their states, and do not look upon Her

as a refuge and protection, as an Intercessor and Ad

vocate. If the dangers of kings and potentates are

great, let them remember, that their obligation to be

thankful is not any less; for this heavenly Queen her

self says, that through Her kings do reign, princes com

mand, and the powerful administer justice (Prov. 8,

16) ; She loves those that love Her (Eccli. 14, 31) and

those, that magnify Her, attain eternal life, since those,

that work with Her do not sin.

303. I do not wish to conceal the light, which many

times and especially on this occasion, has been vouch

safed to me in order to be made known to others. In

the Lord it was shown me, that all the afflictions of the

Catholic Church and all the labors of the Christian peo

ple, have been invariably mitigated by the intercession

of the most holy Mary; that in the turbulence of the

present times, when heretical pride surges up so high

against God and his lamentably afflicted Church, only

THE CONCEPTION 245

one remedy is left for these miseries, namely: That

the Catholic kings and governments turn to the Mother

of grace and mercy, most holy Mary. Let them seek her

favor by rendering Her especial homage, so that the de

votion and honor of Mary may grow and spread over

the whole earth and thus draw Her toward us with a

look of pity. Then it may be, that She will obtain for

us the grace of her most holy Son, that all the un

bridled vices now infecting the Christian people through

malice of the enemy, will be reformed, and through

her intercession the wrath of the Lord, which so justly

chastises us and threatens us with yet greater calamities

and misfortunes, will be appeased. From this reforma

tion and amendment of our sins would also spring vic

tory against the infidels and the extirpation of the false

sects, that oppress the holy Church. For the most holy

Mary is the sword, which is to destroy and cut them

down all over the world.

304. Even now the world suffers the losses conse

quent upon this forgetfulness. If the Catholic kings are

not successful in the government of their countries, in

the preservation and the spread of the Catholic faith, in

overcoming their enemies, or in the warfares and battles

against the infidels, all this happens, because they do not

follow this guiding Star, which shows them the way; be

cause they have not placed Mary as the beginning and

immediate end of their works and projects and because

they forget that this Queen treads in the paths of justice

in order to teach it, exalts and enriches those that love it

(Prov. 8, 20).

305. O thou prince and head of the holy Catholic

Church! O ye prelates, who are also called princes of

the Church! And thou, Catholic prince and monarch of

Spain, to whom, according to my natural obligation and

246 CITY OF GOD

through the great love and special providence of the

Most High, I direct this humble and earnest appeal!

Cast thy crown, thy monarchy at the feet of this Queen

and Mistress of heaven and earth ; seek out this Restora-

trix of all the human race ; listen to Her, who by power

divine is placed over all the hosts of men and of all

the infernal regions ; turn thy affection toward Her, who

holds in her hands the keys of the good will and treas

ures of the Most High ; transport thy honor and renown

of that City of God, who has no need thereof in order

to increase hers, but who can improve and exalt thy

own! Offer to Her with Catholic enthusiasm and with

a whole heart some great and pleasing service, and the

recompense will be immeasurably great : the conversion

of the heathens, the victory over heresies and paganism,

the peace of the Church, new light and help to improve

the lives of men and a great and glorious reign for thee

in this life and the next.

306. O my fatherland, kingdom of Spain, which on

account of thy Catholic faith, art most fortunate ! Even

more fortunate shalt thou be if to the steadfastness and

sincerity of thy faith, given to thee by the Almighty,

thou wilt add the holy fear of God corresponding to thy

distinguished faith! Would that in order to arrive at

this summit of thy happiness, all thy inhabitants unite

in a burning devotion to the most holy Mary! How

greatly would thy glory then shine forth! How much

wouldst thou be enlightened! How valiantly wouldst

thou then be protected and defended by this Queen, and

how would thy Catholic kings be enriched by treasures

from on high, and through their agency, how widely

would the sweet law of the Gospel spread among the

nations! Remember that this great Princess honors

those that honor Her, enriches those that seek Her,

THE CONCEPTION 247

makes illustrious those that praise Her, and defends

those that hope in Her. Be assured, that in order thus

to show Herself a Mother and shower her mercies upon

thee, She hopes and desires to be approached and solicited.

At the same time remember, that God is under no

necessity to any one (Ps. 15, 2) and that He can make

out of stones, children of Abraham (Luc. 3, 8) ; if thou

make thyself unworthy of such great good, He can re

serve this glory for those that serve Him better and

make themselves less unworthy of the reward.

307. And in order that thou mayest not remain ig

norant of the service, which in our days (among many

others taught thee by the devotion and piety), should be

rendered to this great Queen and Mistress of men, con

sider the present position, which the mystery of her

Immaculate Conception holds in the Catholic Church

and direct thy attention to supply what is still missing

to establish firmly this fundamental doctrine of that City

of God. Let no one despise this suggestion as coming

from a weak and ignorant woman, or as a notion

founded in a prejudiced love of a state and profession

consecrated to the name and honor of Mary immaculate ;

for the conviction and light, which I have received in the

knowledge of her life, is sufficient for me. Not for my

own honor, nor relying upon my own judgment and

authority, do I make this exhortation: I obey the com

mand of the Lord, who gives speech to the mute, and

makes eloquent the tongues of infants. Let those that

admire this merciful liberality, also take notice of what

the Evangelist adds, saying:

308. "And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day :

for there shall be no night there." The portals of mercy

of most holy Mary never were and never are closed,

nor was there in Her from the first instant of her Con-

248 CITY OF GOD

ception, any darkness of guilt, which might close the

gates of this City, as it happened in the rest of the saints.

Just as in those places, where gates are always open,

all those that wish, can issue forth or enter at all times,

so no prohibition hinders mortals from entering freely to

the Divinity through the gates of the mercy of the most

pure Mary. For in that City is the storehouse of the

treasures of heaven, open to all without limitation of

time, place, age or sex. All were free to enter ever

since its foundation; for that very purpose the Most

High has opened so many portals in this foundation,

leaving them unlocked, free and open to the light, so

that from the first moment of Mary s purest Conception

mercies and benefits began to descend upon the whole

human race. But though this City has so many gates,

from which issue the riches of the Divinity, yet it is on

that account not the less secure from its enemies. There

fore the text proceeds:

309. "There shall not enter into it anything defiled,

or that worketh abomination or maketh a lie, but they

that are written in the book of life of the Lamb," etc.

Rehearsing again the glories of the City of God, the

Evangelist closes this twenty-first chapter, assuring us

once more, that there was no blemish in Her, because

She received an immaculate body and soul. This, how

ever, never could be said of Her, if She was tainted by

original guilt ; and much less have stains or blemishes of

actual sins ever found entrance in Her. That which

entered into this City of God is entirely similar to that

which is written of the Lamb: her most holy Son was

taken as the pattern and model for her formation and

from no other being could any excellence of the most

holy Mary be copied, even when there is question of

the smallest, if indeed anything can be called small in

THE CONCEPTION 249

Her. Since this portal, Mary, was to be the portal of a

city of refuge for the mortals, it could only be with the

understanding, that he, who is the perpetrator of abom

ination and lies, should never find part or entrance

through it. But let not on this account the sinful and

guilty sons of Adam hesitate to approach the gates of

this holy City of God; for if they approach with con

trition and humility to seek the cleansing of grace, they

will find it in these gates of the great Queen, and in no

others. She is clean, pure, abounding in grace, and

above all She is the Mother of mercy ; She is sweet, lov

ing and powerful to enrich our poverty and to cleanse us

from the stains of all our sins.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME

CONCERNING THESE CHAPTERS.

310. My daughter, these chapters contain excellent

direction and light, though thou hast left in them many

things unsaid. Seek therefore to draw profit from all

that thou hast understood and written, bewaring lest

thou receive the light of grace in vain. This in brief I

wish thee to remember; be not dismayed, that thou wert

conceived in sin, and, as an earthly creature, feelest

within thyself the earthly inclinations ; but strive against

thy passions to a finish. In doing this thou wilt at the

same time battle against thy enemies. With the help

of the Almighty s grace, thou canst rise above thyself

and make thyself a daughter of heaven, whence all grace

comes. In order that thou mayest attain thereto, let thy

habitation continue to be in the higher regions, keeping

thy mind fixed in the knowledge of the immutable Be

ing and perfections of God and never allowing thy at

tention to be drawn away to another even otherwise

necessary object. With this continual presence and

18

250 CITY OF GOD

memory of God s greatness thou wilt dispose thyself

for the influx of the holy Spirit and his gifts in closest

friendship and communication with the Lord. In order

to evade all hindrance to this his holy Will, which I

have already many times pointed out and made manifest

to thee, seek to mortify the inferior part of thy being,

the seat of the evil inclinations and passions. Die to all

that is earthly, sacrifice, in the consciousness of God s

presence, all thy sensitive appetities, fulfill none of their

impulses, nor ever satisfy thy own will outside of the

narrow limits of obedience. Do not leave the secret

refuge of interior recollection, where the Lamb en

lightens thee. Adorn thyself for entrance into the bridal

chamber of thy Spouse, and permit the hand of the Al

mighty to array thee in such a manner as He wishes, al

ways seeking to concur with Him and place no obstacle

in his way. Purify thy soul by many acts of sorrow

for having offended Him, magnify and praise Him with

a most ardent love. Seek Him, and rest not until thou

hast found Him, whom thy soul desires, hold Him and

do not let Him go (Cant. 3, 4). I wish thee to proceed

on thy pilgrimage like one, who has already arrived at

the journey s end, keeping thy gaze continually on the

source of all glory. Let the rule of thy life be to walk

in the light of faith and in the brightness, with which

the Omnipotent shall fill and illumine thy soul, and to

continue to love, adore and reverence Him, without any

cessation or diminution. This being the will of the

Almighty in thy regard : consider what shall be thy gain,

but remember also, what may be thy loss. See thou do

not run this risk; subject thyself with thy whole will

and being to the guidance of thy Spouse, of myself, and

of holy obedience, which must always be thy standard.

Thus the Mother of the Lord instructed me, and I

answered Her, filled with great confusion:

THE CONCEPTION 251

311. "Queen and Mistress of all creation, whose ser

vant I am and wish to be for all the eternities ! Forever

will I praise the Omnipotence of the Most High, be

cause He chose thus to exalt Thee. But since Thou art

so fortunate and so powerful with the Almighty, I con

jure Thee, O my Lady, to look with an eye of mercy

upon me, thy poor and miserable servant. Make me

partaker in the gifts which the Lord has placed in thy

hands for distribution among the needy, raise me up

from my abject state, enrich my nakedness and poverty,

and as a Mistress compel me to desire and do what is

most perfect, helping me to find grace in the eyes of thy

most holy Son and my Lord. In thy hands do I place

my salvation, O Mistress and Queen! do Thou take

charge of it to the end ; for thy desires are holy and pow

erful on account of the merits of thy most holy Son and

on account of the promises of the most holy Trinity,

which are pledges for the fulfillment of all thy petitions

and desires without fail. I myself have nothing to

oblige Thee, as I am unworthy, but as a substitute I

offer Thee, my Lady, thy own sanctity and clemency."

CHAPTER XX.

TREATING OF WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE NINE

MONTHS OF THE PREGNANCY OF ST. ANNE; THE DO

INGS OF THE MOST HOLY MARY IN THE WOMB OF

HER MOTHER, AND THOSE OF SAINT ANNE DURING

THAT TIME.

312. The most holy Mary, being conceived without

sin as described above, was entirely absorbed in spirit

and entranced by her first vision of the Divinity. At

the first instant, and in the narrow dwelling of the ma

ternal womb, began the love of God in her most blessed

soul, never to be interrupted, but to continue through all

the eternities of that high glory, which She now enjoys

at the right hand of her divine Son. In order that She

might grow in the contemplation and love of God not

only by the infused knowledge of created things, but also

by the direct vision of the Trinity itself, and in order

that She might exercise Herself in many acts of virtue

befitting her present state, the Lord repeated the won

derful vision and manifestation of his Divinity on two

other occasions; so that, the blessed Trinity manifested

Itself to Her in abstract vision three times before her

birth : first at the instant of her Conception, then in the

fourth or fifth month, and the third time, on the day be

fore her birth This vision was not continual, but it

must not be inferred, that She did not enjoy another

kind of vision, very exalted and superior to the one by

which She perceived the essence of God in the light of

faith. For in most holy Mary these kinds of visions

252

THE CONCEPTION 253

were incessant and continual, and superior to all visions

of the saints during their earthly pilgrimage.

313. This abstract vision of the Divinity, though not

incompatible with her present condition on earth, was

nevertheless so high and immediate, that it could not

well be continuous in her mortal state, where She was

to merit the glory of intuitive vision by other acts. It

was a special favor to assist Her in attaining thereto;

for it left in her soul the impress of the Lord s image,

and raised and consumed her whole being with a burning

love of God. These affections were renewed continually

during these visions in the most holy soul of Mary while

She remained in the womb of holy Anne. Thus it hap

pened, that, being in full possession of her intellectual

faculties and occupying Herself without intermission in

prayer for the human race, in heroic acts of adoration,

in reverence and love of God in company with the

angels, She did not feel the narrowness and confinement

of her natural prison, nor the restriction of her senses,

nor the other restraints, inseparable from such a state.

To all this She gave no heed, living more in her Be

loved than in the womb of her mother or in Herself.

314. The last of the three visions was accompanied by

new and more wonderful favors of the Lord; it was to

prepare Her for the entrance into the world and for

intercourse with mortals. In accordance with the di

vine will the Princess of heaven said to the Lord:

"Most high God, Lord of my being, Soul of my life and

Life of my soul, infinite in thy attributes and perfections,

incomprehensible, mighty and rich in mercies, my King

and Sovereign : out of nothing hast Thou given me ex

istence; without any merits of mine Thou hast enriched

me with the treasures of thy divine light and grace, in

order that by them I may instantly perceive thy im-

254 CITY OF GOD

mutable Being and divine perfections, and that thus Thou

mightst be the first Object of my vision and love, not

permitting me to seek any other than Thee, the highest

Good and all my joy. Thou commandest me, my Lord,

to issue forth and enter into the material light and con

verse with creatures. In thy own Being, whence all

things are reflected as in a most perfect mirror, I have

discerned the dangerous state and the miseries of mortal

life. If, on account of my natural weakness and debility,

there is danger lest even in the least point I fail in thy

love and service, and if it is possible that I die here, let

me die now, before I pass into a state where I may lose

Thee. But if thy holy Will, my Lord and Master, is

to be fulfilled, and I am to embark on the tempestuous

sea of this world, I beseech Thee, most high and mighty

God of my soul, to govern my life, direct my steps and

all my actions toward pleasing Thee. Order in me holy

love (Cant. 2, 4) that in the new use, which I am to

make of creatures, and by thy aid, it may continue to

grow. I have perceived in Thee the ingratitude of many

souls, and as I am of their nature, I fear with good

reason, that perhaps I may become guilty of the same

fault. In this narrow cavity of my mother s womb I

have enjoyed the infinite vastness of thy Divinity: here

I possessed all Good, Thee thyself, my Beloved; and

since here Thou alone art my portion and possession

(Ps. 72), I know not, whether outside of this enclosure

I may not lose it at the sight of the created light and in the

use of my senses. If it were possible and appropriate

to renounce the intercourse of approaching life, I would

gladly renounce and lose the experience of it; but let

not my will, but Thine be done. Therefore since Thou

wishest it, confer upon me thy blessing and good will at

my entrance into the world, and do not deprive me of

THE CONCEPTION 255

thy divine protection during the earthly course in which

Thou placest me." Having thus poured forth her prayer,

the most sweet child Mary received the benediction of

the Most High and the command to issue forth into the

light of the visible sun, at the same time being enlight

ened for the fulfillment of all his desires.

315. The most happy mother, holy Anne, passed the

days of her pregnancy altogether spiritualized by the

divine operations and by the sweet workings of the Holy

Ghost in all her faculties. Divine Providence, however,

in order to direct her course to greater merit and reward,

ordained, that the ballast of trouble be not wanting, for

without it the cargo of grace and love is scarcely ever

secure. In order to understand better, what happened to

this holy woman, it must be remembered, that satan,

after he was hurled with the other bad angels from

heaven into the infernal torments, never ceased, during

the reign of the old Law, to search through the earth

hovering with lurking vigilance above the women of dis

tinguished holiness, in order to find Her, whose sign he

had seen (Gen. 3, 15) and whose heel was to bruise and

crush his head. Lucifer s wrath against men was so

fierce, that he would not trust this investigation to his

inferiors alone; but leaving them to operate against the

virtuous women in general, he himself attended to this

matter and assiduously hovered around those, who sig

nalized themselves more particularly in the exercise of

virtue and in the grace of the Most High.

316. Filled with malice and astuteness, he observed

closely the exceeding great holiness of the excellent ma

tron Anne and all the events of her life: and although

he could not estimate the richness of the Treasure, which

was enclosed in her blessed womb (since the Lord con

cealed this as well as many other mysteries from him),

256 CITY OF GOD

yet he felt a powerful influence proceeding from saint

Anne. The fact that he could not penetrate into the

source of this activity, threw him at times into great

fury and rage. At other times he quieted himself with

the thought, that this pregnancy arose from the same

causes as others in the course of nature and that there

was no special cause for alarm; for the Lord left him to

his own hallucinations and to the vagaries of his own

fury. Nevertheless the whole event was a source of

great misgiving to this perverse spirit, when he saw how

quietly her pregnancy took its course and especially,

when he saw, that many angels stood in attendance.

Above all he was enraged at his weakness in resisting

the force, which proceeded from the blessed Anne and

he suspected that it was not she alone, who was the

cause of it.

317. Filled with this mistrust, the dragon determined,

if possible, to take the life of the most felicitous Anne;

or, if that was impossible, to see that she should obtain

little satisfaction from her pregnancy. For the pride of

Lucifer was so boundless as to persuade him of his abil

ity to overcome or take away the life of Her, who was

to be the Mother of the incarnate Word, or even the life

of the Messias and Redeemer of the world, if only he

could obtain knowledge of their whereabouts. His ar

rogance was founded upon the superiority of his angelic

nature to the condition and power of mere human na

ture: as if both were not subject to grace and entirely

dependent upon the will of their Creator. Audaciously

therefore he set himself to tempt holy Anne, with many

suggestions, misgivings, doubts and diffidences about the

truth of her pregnancy, alleging her protracted years.

All this the demon attempted in order to test the virtue

of the saint, and to see, whether these temptations would

THE CONCEPTION 257

not afford some opening for the perversion of her will.

318. But the invincible matron resisted these on

slaughts with humble fortitude, patience, continued

prayer and vivid faith in the Lord. She brought to

naught the perplexing lies of the dragon and on account

of them gained only additional grace and protection

from on high. For besides the protection abundantly

merited by her past life She was defended and freed

from the demons by the great princes, who were guard

ing her most holy Daughter. Nevertheless in his in

satiable malice the enemy did not desist on that account;

and since his arrogance and pride far exceeds his pow

ers, he sought human aid ; for with such help he always

promises himself greater ease of victory. Having at

first tried to overthrow the dwelling of saint Joachim

and Anne, in order that she might be frightened and

excited by the shock of its fall, but not being able to

succeed on account of the resistance of the holy angels,

he incited against saint Anne one of the foolish women

of her acquaintance to quarrel with her. This the woman

did with great fury, insolently attacking saint Anne with

reproach and scorn; she did not hesitate to make mock

ery of her pregnancy, saying, that she was the sport of

the demon in being thus found pregnant at the end of

so many years and at so great an age.

319. The blessed Anne did not permit herself to be

disturbed by this attack, but in all meekness and hu

mility bore the injuries and treated her assailants with

kindness. From that time on she looked with greater

love upon these women and lavished upon them so much

the greater benefits. But their wrath was not imme

diately pacified, for the demon had taken possession of

them, filling them with hate against the saint ; and, as

any concession to this cruel tyrant always increases his

258 CITY OF GOD

power over his victims, he incited these miserable dupes

to plot even against the person and life of saint Anne.

But they could not put their plots into execution, be

cause divine power interfered to foil their natural

womanly weakness. They were not only powerless

against the saint, but they were overcome by her ad

monitions and brought to the knowledge and amendment

of their evil course by her prayers.

320. The dragon was repulsed, but not vanquished;

for he immediately availed himself of a servant, who

lived in the house with Joachim and Anne, and exasper

ated her against the holy matron. Through her he cre

ated even a greater annoyance than through the other

women, for she was a domestic enemy and more stub

born and dangerous than the others. I will not stay to

describe, what the enemy attempted through this ser

vant, since it was similar to that of the other woman,

only more annoying and malicious. But with the help

of God saint Anne won a more glorious victory than

before; for the watcher of Israel slumbered not, but

guarded his holy City (Ps. 120, 4) and furnished it so

well with sentinels, chosen from the strongest of his

hosts, that they put to ignominious flight Lucifer and

his followers. No more were they allowed to molest the

fortunate mother, who was already expecting the birth

of the most blessed Princess of heaven, and who, en

riched by heroic acts of virtue and many merits in these

conflicts, had now arrived at the fulfillment of all her

highest wishes. I too desire to come to an end with this

chapter in order to hear the salutary instructions of my

Mistress and Preceptress, who, besides assisting me in

all that I write, also favors me with her maternal ad

monitions, which I receive with highest joy and exulta

tion of my spirit

THE CONCEPTION 259

321. Speak then, O Lady, and thy servant will listen

(Gen. 18, 17). If Thou wilt permit, although I am dust

and ashes, I will state a doubt, which has occurred to

me, in this chapter. Yet in all things I will remit myself

to thy sweet benevolence as of my Mother, Teacher and

Mistress. The doubt in which I find myself is this:

How was it possible, that Thou, the Queen of all cre

ation, conceived without sin and endowed with a soul

exalted so high in the knowledge of all things by the

visions of the Divinity, shouldst be filled in spite of all

these graces, with so great a fear and anxiety of losing

the friendship of God and of offending Him? If in the

first instant of thy existence Thou wast prevented by

grace, how couldst Thou at that very instant fear to lose

it? If the Most High exempted Thee from original

sin, how couldst Thou fall into others, or fear to offend

Him, who had preserved Thee from the first offense ?

INSTRUCTION AND ANSWER OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

322. My daughter, hear the solution of thy difficulty.

In the vision of the Divinity I instantaneously recog

nized my innocence and the stainlessness of my Concep

tion. These favors and benefits of the Almighty are

of such a nature, that the more they are understood and

made secure, so much the more will they excite care and

solicitude for their preservation and for the avoidance

of any offense of their Author. They are given to his

creatures out of pure goodness and are accompanied with

such clear intuition regarding their dependence on the

merits of my most holy Son, that the soul immediately

centers its attention only on its own unworthiness and

insufficiency, convinced that it cannot merit them and

that it cannot appropriate them to itself as being foreign

260 CITY OF GOD

to its nature. As they are seen to belong to such a high

Master, to whom they can revert to be distributed accord

ing to his pleasure, a most deep-felt solicitude fills the

soul lest it lose again, what is thus freely given. The

soul therefore begins to work with great diligence in or

der to preserve them and to multiply the talent (Matth.

25, 15), since it understands that to be the only means

of keeping the deposit and of fulfilling the object for

which they were given, namely, to make them bear fruit

and to contribute to the glory of the Creator. This

care is precisely the condition necessary for the preser

vation of the benefits and graces received.

323. Besides this the soul is made to understand the

human frailty and the freedom of the will for good or

evil. Of this knowledge the Almighty did not deprive

me, nor does He deprive any one of it, as long as he

wanders through this life ; but He gives it to all accord

ing to measure, in order that by its guidance they may

be filled with holy fear of falling into any fault, even the

smallest. In me this light was greater and I clearly saw

that a small fault prepares the way for another, and

that the second is only a punishment of the first. It is

true that on account of the blessings and graces of the

Lord sin was impossible in me. But his Providence so

disposed of this knowledge, that my absolute security

from sin was hidden to me ; I saw that as far as depended

on me alone I could fall, and that it was the divine will

that preserved me. Thus He reserved to Himself his

knowledge of my security, and left me in solicitude and

holy fear of sinning during my pilgrimage. From the

instant of my Conception until my death I never lost

this fear, but on the contrary grew in it as life flowed on.

324. The Most High also gave me humility and dis

cretion, not to ask or to examine too closely this mys-

THE CONCEPTION 261

tery, but solely to direct my attention toward increasing

my confidence in his goodness with a view to obtain his

assistance against sin. Thence resulted those two neces

sary dispositions of a Christian life ; the one a quiet pres

ervation of tranquillity in the soul, the other the con

stant presence of a holy fear and watchfulness, lest the

treasure be lost. As this latter was a filial fear, it did

not diminish love, but inflamed and increased it more and

more. These two dispositions of love and fear produced

in my soul a perfect harmony with the divine will, gov

erning all my actions, so as to draw me away from evil

and unite me with the highest Good.

325. This, my dear friend, is the great test of spiritual

things : that they come with true enlightenment and sound

doctrine ; that they teach greater perfection of virtues and

excite a strong impulse toward seeking it. This is the ex

cellence of the benefits which descend from the Father of

lights, that they give assurance and confidence while mak

ing the soul humble, and that they encourage while excit

ing solicitude and watchfulness, though still preserving

tranquillity and peace in this solicitude; for all these ef

fects are not incompatible in fulfilling the will of God.

Do thou, O soul, offer humble and fervent thanks to the

Lord, because with so little deserving of thine He has

been so liberal with thee and has so greatly enlightened

thee with divine light, breaking for thee the seal of his

secret archives and yet filling thee with holy fear of his

displeasure. Nevertheless make use of this fear with

measure and strive instead to excel in love. Thus with

these two wings raising thyself above the earth and

above thyself, try to rid thyself of the inordinate dis

turbance of excessive fear, and leave thy cause with the

Lord and make his cause thy own. Let fear be with thee

262 CITY OF GOD

until thou art purified and cleansed of thy sins and of thy

ignorance, but also love the Lord in order that thou

mayest be transformed in Him, and set Him as the Mas

ter and the Arbiter of thy actions without desiring to be

above any person. Do not trust thy own judgment, and

be not wise in thy own conceit (Prov. 3, 7), for the judg

ments of men are only too easily blinded by their pas

sions, throwing them out of their course and drawing

after them the will as their captive. Thus it comes, that

men fear what is not to be feared, and rejoice in that

which is not profitable. Take heed lest thou be dissipated

by every slight interior consolation, but hesitate and re

strain thyself until thou findest with tranquil solicitude

the proper measure in all things. This happy medium

thou wilt always find, if thou remain subject to thy su

periors and willingly accept that, which the Most High

works in thee and teaches thee. Although thy undertak

ings may be good as regards the intentions, they must

nevertheless also conform to the requirements of obe

dience and of prudence, for without this guidance they

are usually deformed and without any profitable result.

Be thou therefore in all things solicitous about that,

which is most holy and perfect.

CHAPTER XXL

OF THE: FELICITOUS BIRTH OF THE: MOST HOLY MARY OUR

MISTRESS: OF THE: FAVORS, WHICH SHE; THEN RE

CEIVED FROM THE HAND OF THE MOST HIGH, AND

HOW A NAME WAS GIVEN HER IN HEAVEN AND ON

EARTH.

326. The day destined for the parturition of saint

Anne and for the birth of Her, who was consecrated and

sanctified to be the Mother of God, had arrived: a day

most fortunate for the world. This birth happened on

the eighth day of September, fully nine months having

elapsed since the Conception of the soul of our most holy

Queen and Lady. Saint Anne was prepared by an in

terior voice of the Lord, informing Her, that the hour

of her parturition had come. Full of the joy of the holy

Spirit at this information, she prostrated herself before

the Lord and besought the assistance of his grace and

his protection for a happy deliverance. Presently she

felt a movement in her womb similar to that which is

proper to creatures being born to the light. The most

blessed child Mary was at the same time by divine provi

dence and power ravished into a most high ecstasy. Hence

Mary was born into the world without perceiving it by

her senses, for their operations and faculties were held

in suspense. As She had the use of her reason, She

would have perceived it by her senses, if they would have

been left to operate in their natural manner at that time.

However, the Almighty disposed otherwise, in order that

263

264 CITY OF GOD

the Princess of heaven might be spared the sensible ex

perience otherwise connected with birth.

327. She was born pure and stainless, beautiful and

full of grace, thereby demonstrating, that She was free

from the law and the tribute of sin. Although She was

born substantially like other daughters of Adam, yet her

birth was accompanied by such circumstances and condi

tions of grace, that it was the most wonderful and mi

raculous birth in all creation and will eternally redound

to the praise of her Maker. At twelve o clock in the

night this divine Luminary issued forth, dividing the

night of the ancient Law and its pristine darknesses from

the new day of grace, which now was about to break into

dawn. She was clothed, handled and dressed like other

infants, though her soul dwelt in the Divinity; and She

was treated as an infant, though She excelled all mortals

and even all the angels in wisdom. Her mother did not

allow Her to be touched by other hands than her own,

but she herself wrapped Her in swaddling clothes: and

in this Saint Anne was not hindered by her present state

of childbirth ; for she was free from the toils and labors,

which other mothers usually endure in such circum

stances.

328. So then saint Anne received in her arms Her,

who was her Daughter, but at the same time the most

exquisite Treasure of all the universe, inferior only to

God and superior to all other creatures. With fervent

tears of joy she offered this Treasure to his Majesty,

saying interiorly : "Lord of infinite wisdom and power,

Creator of all that exists, this Fruit of my womb, which

I have received of thy bounty, I offer to Thee with

eternal thanks, for without any merit of mine Thou hast

vouchsafed it to me. Dispose Thou of the mother and

Child according to thy most holy will and look pro-

THE CONCEPTION 265

pitiously down upon our lowliness from thy exalted

throne. Be Thou eternally blessed, because Thou hast

enriched the world with a Creature so pleasing to thy

bounty and because in Her Thou hast prepared a dwell

ing-place and a tabernacle for the eternal Word (Sap. 9,

8). I tender my congratulations to my holy forefathers

and to the holy Prophets, and in them to the whole human

race, for this sure pledge of Redemption, which Thou

hast given them. But how shall I be able worthily to treat

Her, whom Thou hast given me as a Daughter? I that

am not worthy to be her servant? How shall I handle

the true ark of the Testament? Give me, O my Lord

and King, the necessary enlightenment to know thy will

and to execute it according to thy pleasure in the service

of my Daughter."

329. The Lord answered the holy matron interiorly,

that she was to treat her heavenly Child outwardly as

mothers treat their daughters, without any demonstration

of reverence; but to retain this reverence inwardly, ful

filling the laws of a true mother toward Her, and rearing

Her up with all motherly love and solicitude. All this

the happy mother complied with ; making use of this per

mission and her mother s rights without losing her rever

ence, she regaled herself with her most holy Daughter,

embracing and caressing Her in the same way as other

mothers do with their daughters. But it was always done

with a proper reverence and consciousness of the hidden

and divine sacrament known only to the mother and

Daughter. The guardian angels of the sweet Child with

others in great multitudes showed their veneration and

worship to Mary as She rested in the arms of her

mother; they joined in heavenly music, some of which

was audible also to blessed Anne. The thousand angels

appointed as guardians of the great Queen offered them-

19

266 CITY OF GOD

selves and dedicated themselves to her service. This was

also the first time, in which the heavenly Mistress saw

them in a corporeal form with their devises and habili

ments, as I shall describe in another chapter (Ch. XXIII)

and the Child asked them to join with Her in the praise

of the Most High and to exalt Him in her name.

330. At the moment of the birth of our Princess Mary

the Most High sent the archangel Gabriel as an envoy to

bring this joyful news to the holy Fathers in limbo. Im

mediately the heavenly ambassador descended, illumining

that deep cavern and rejoicing the just who were de

tained therein. He told them that already the dawn of

eternal felicity had commenced and that the reparation of

man, which was so earnestly desired and expected by

the holy Patriarchs and foretold by the Prophets, had

been begun, since She, who was to be the Mother of the

Messias, had now been born; soon would they now see

the salvation and the glory of the Most High. The holy

prince gave them an understanding of the excellence of

the most holy Mary and of what the Omnipotent had

begun to work in Her, in order that they might better

comprehend the happy beginning of the mystery, which

was to end their prolonged imprisonment. Then all the

holy Patriarchs and Prophets and the rest of the just in

limbo rejoiced in spirit and in new canticles praised the

Lord for this benefit.

331. All these happenings at the birth of our Queen

succeeded each other in a short space of time. The first

exercise of her senses in the light of the material sun,

was to recognize her parents and other creatures. The

arms of the Most High began to work new wonders in

Her far above all conceptions of men, and the first and

most stupendous one was to send innumerable angels to

bring the Mother of the eternal Word body and soul into

THE CONCEPTION 267

the empyrean heaven for the fulfilling of his further in

tentions regarding Her. The holy princes obeyed the di

vine mandate and receiving the child Mary from the arms

of her holy Mother Anne, they arranged a new and sol

emn procession bearing heavenward with incomparable

songs of joy the true Ark of the covenant, in order that

for a short time it might rest, not in the house of Obede-

don, but in the temple of the King of kings and of the

Lord of lords, where later on it was to be placed for all

eternity. This was the second step, which most holy

Mary made in her life, namely, from this earth to the

highest heaven.

332. Who can worthily extol this wonderful prodigy

of the right hand of the Almighty ? Who can describe the

joy and the admiration of the celestial spirits, when they

beheld this new and wonderful work of the Most High,

and when they gathered to celebrate it in their songs?

In these songs they acknowledged and reverenced as

their Queen and Mistress, Her, who was to be the

Mother of their Lord, and the source of the grace and

glory, which they possessed ; for it was through his fore

seen merits, that they had been made the recipients of

the divine bounty. But above all, what human tongue,

or what mortal could ever describe or comprehend the

heart-secrets of that tender Child during these events? I

leave the imagination of all this to Catholic piety, and still

more to those who in the Lord are favored with an un

derstanding of it, but most of all to those who, by di

vine bounty shall have arrived at the beatific vision face

to face.

333. Borne by the hands of the angels the child

Mary entered the empyrean heaven where She prostrated

Herself full of love before the royal throne in the pres

ence of the Most High. Then (according to our way of

268 CITY OF GOD

understanding), was verified what long before had hap

pened in figure, when Bethsabee entered into the presence

of her son Solomon, who, while presiding over his people

of Israel, arose from his throne, received her with honor

and reverence, and seated her at his side as queen. Sim

ilarly, but in a more glorious and admirable manner, the

person of the divine Word now received the child Mary,

whom He had chosen as Mother, as Queen of the uni

verse. Although her real dignity and the purpose of

these ineffable mysteries were unknown to Mary, yet her

infant faculties were strengthened by divine power for

the proper reception of these favors. New graces and

gifts were bestowed upon Her, by which her faculties

were correspondingly elevated. Her powers of mind,

besides being illumined and prepared by new grace and

light, were raised and proportioned to the divine manifes

tation, and the Divinity displayed Itself in the new light

vouchsafed, revealing Itself to Her intuitively and clearly

in a most exalted manner. This was the first time in

which the most holy soul of Mary saw the blessed Trinity

in unveiled beatific vision.

334. The sole witnesses of the glory of Mary in this

beatific vision, of the sacraments then again revealed to

Her, of the divine effect that overflowed into her most

pure soul, was God the Author of this unheard of won

der, and the astounded angels, who in some measure per

ceived these mysteries in God Himself. The Queen seat

ed at the side of the Lord, who was to be her Son, and

seeing Him face to face, was more successful in her

prayer than Bethsabee (III Kings, 2, 21). For She prayed,

that He bestow the untouched Sunamite Abisag, his in

accessible Divinity, upon his sister, human nature; She

prayed that his promised coming from heaven to the

earth and his marriage with human nature by the hypo-

THE CONCEPTION 269

static union be fulfilled in the person of the Word. Many (

times had He pledged Himself to it among men through

the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets and now Mary be

sought Him to accelerate the reparation of the human

race, expected for so many ages amid the multiplied

iniquity and the ruin of souls. The Most High heard

this most pleasing petition of his Mother, and acting

more graciously than Solomon of old toward his mother,

He assured Her that soon his promises should be ful

filled, and that He should descend to the world in order

to assume and redeem human nature.

335. In this divine consistory and tribunal of the most

holy Trinity it was determined to give a name to the

Child Queen. As there is no proper and legitimate name,

except it be found in the immutable being of God himself

(for from it are participated and determined according to

their right weight and measure all things in infinite wis

dom) his Majesty wished himself to give and impose that

name in heaven. He thereby made known to the angelic

spirits, that the three divine Persons, had decreed and

formed the sweet names of Jesus and Mary for the Son

and Mother from the beginning before the ages, and that

they had been delighted with them and had engraved

them on their eternal memories to be as it were the Ob

jects for whose service They should create all things.

Being informed of these and many other mysteries, the

holy angels heard a voice from the throne speaking in the

person of the Father: "Our chosen One shall be called

MARY, and this name is to be powerful and magnificent.

Those that shall invoke it with devout affection shall re

ceive most abundant graces; those that shall honor it

and pronounce it with reverence shall be consoled and

vivified, and will find in it the remedy of their evils, the

treasures for their enrichment, the light which shall guide

270 CITY OF GOD

them to heaven. It shall be terrible against the power of

hell, it shall crush the head of the serpent and it shall win

glorious victories over the princes of hell." The Lord

commanded the angelic spirits to announce this glorious

name to saint Anne, so that what was decreed in heaven

might be executed on earth. The heavenly Child, lov

ingly prostrate before the throne, rendered most accepta

ble and human thanks to the eternal Being; and She re

ceived the name with most admirable and sweet jublia-

tion. If the prerogatives and graces, which She then was

favored with, were to be described, it would necessitate

an extra book of many volumes. The holy angels hon

ored and acknowledged most holy Mary as the future

Mother of the Word and as their Queen and Mistress en

throned at the right hand of her Son ; they showed their

veneration of her holy name, prostrating themselves as

it proceeded from the throne in the voice of the eternal

Father, especially those, who had it written on the devises

over their breast. All of them gave forth canticles of

praise for these great and hidden mysteries. In the mean

while the infant Queen remained ignorant of the real

cause of all that She thus experienced, for her dignity of

Mother of the incarnate Word was not revealed to Her till

the time of the Incarnation. With the same reverential

jubilee did the angels return in order to replace Her into

the arms of holy Anne, to whom this event remained a

secret, as was also the absence of her Daughter; for a

guardian angel, assuming an aerial body, supplied her

place for this very purpose. More than that, during a

great part of the time in which the heavenly Child re

mained in the empyrean heaven, her mother was wrapped

in an ecstasy of highest contemplation, and in it, although

she did not know what was happening to the Child, ex

alted mysteries concerning the dignity of Mother of God,

THE CONCEPTION 271

to which She was to be chosen, were revealed to her. The

prudent matron kept them enshrined within her breast,

conferring- them in her thoughts with the duties she owed

to her Child.

336. On the eighth day after the birth of the great

Queen multitudes of most beautiful angels in splendid

array descended from on high bearing an escutcheon on

which the name of MARY was engraved and shone forth

in great brilliancy. Appearing to the blessed mother

Anne, they told her, that the name of her daughter was

to be MARY, which name they had brought from heav

en, and which divine Providence had selected and now

ordained to be given to their child by Joachim and her

self. The saint called for her husband and they con

ferred with each other about this disposition of God in

regard to the name of their Daughter. The more than

happy father accepted the name with joy and devout

affection. They decided to call their relatives and a

priest and then, with much solemnity and festivity, they

imposed the name of MARY on their Child. The angels

also celebrated this event with most sweet and ravishing

music, which, however, was heard only by the mother and

her most holy Daughter. Thus was the divine Princess

named by the holy Trinity: in heaven, on the day of

her nativity, and on earth, after eight days. This name

was written in the list of other names, when her mother

presented herself at the temple according to the law, as

I will relate further on. This was the birth, like to which

none had been before, and the like of which cannot again

happen in mere creatures. This was the most blessed

birth of which nature was capable, for by it an In

fant came into existence, whose entrance into the

world was not only free from all impurities of sin,

but who was more pure and holy than the highest sera-

272 CITY OF GOD

phim. The birth of Moses was celebrated on account

of the beauty and handsomeness of the infant (Exod. 2,

2) ; all his beauty was only corruptible and apparent.

But O how beautiful is our great Child! O how beauti

ful (Cant. 7, 6) ! She is entirely beautiful and most

sweet in her delights, since She is possessed of all grace

and beauty, without being wanting in any. The laughter

and the joy of the house of Abraham was the birth of

the promised Isaac (Genes. 21, 6), conceived in a sterile

womb, but this joy was great only because it foreshad

owed and was derived from the birth of our infant

Queen, toward which all this joy of Abraham was only

a step. If that birth was so admirable and full of joy

for the family of the Patriarch because it was a fore

shadowing of the birth of sweetest Mary, heaven and

earth should rejoice at the birth of Her, who gave a be

ginning to the restoration of heaven and the sanctifica-

tion of the world. When Noah was born, his father

Lamech was consoled (Genes. 5, 29), because in that son

God had provided a progenitor of the human race in the

ark and assured a restoration of the blessings, which the

sins of men had forfeited. But all this happened merely

as a type to foreshadow the birth of this Child, who was

to be the true Reparatrix, being the mystical ark which

contained the new and true Noah and which drew Him

down from heaven, who was to fill with benediction all

the inhabitants of the earth. O blessed birth! O joyful

nativity ! The most pleasing to the blessed Trinity in all

the ages of the past, the joy of the angels, the relief of

sinners, the delight of the just, and the singular consola

tion of all the holy souls in limbo !

337. O precious and rich Pearl, that didst come forth

to the light of the sun, still enclosed within the rough

shell of this world! O sublime Infant, who, though

THE CONCEPTION 273

scarcely noticed by terrestrial eyes in the material light,

yet in the eyes of the highest King and his courtiers, ex-

cellest all that is not God in dignity and grandeur! All

generations bless Thee, all the nations recognize and

praise thy grace and beauty ! Let the earth be made illus

trious by thy birth, let mortals be rejoiced because their

Mediatrix is born, who will fill up the vast emptiness of

original sin. Let thy gracious condescension toward me

be blessed and extolled, who am the most abject dust and

ashes. If Thou givest me permission, O my Lady, to

speak in thy presence, I will propose a doubt which oc

curred to me in describing the mystery of thy most ad

mirable and holy birth, namely : regarding an act of the

Almighty at the hour of thy coming forth into the ma

terial light of the sun.

338. And this is the doubt : How are we to understand

thy being raised in thy body by the hands of the holy

angels into the empyrean heavens and to the vision of

God ? For according to the teaching of the holy Church

and her doctors, heaven was closed and as it were inter

dicted to man, until thy most holy Son should open it

through his life and death, and until He himself, as Re

deemer and Chief, should enter it on the day of his ad

mirable Ascension, He being the first one for whom these

eternal portals were to be opened after their being closed

up by sin ?

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

339. My dearest daughter, it is true, that divine jus

tice closed heaven against mortals on account of the first

sin, until my most holy Son should open it by satisfying

most abundantly for men through his earthly life and

death. It was befitting and just, that this same Re

deemer, who had united to Himself the redeemed mem-

274 CITY OF GOD

bers and opened heaven, should as their Chief enter be

fore any of the children of Adam. If Adam had not

sinned, it would not have been necessary to follow this

course; for men would have ascended of themselves in

order to enjoy the Divinity in the empyrean heavens;

having however foreseen the fall of man, the most blessed

Trinity provided for the course followed at present. This

great mystery was referred to by David in the twenty-

third psalm, when speaking of the spirits of heaven he

repeats twice "Lift up, ye princes, your gates ; and be ye

lifted up, ye eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall

enter in." They are here called the gates of the angels,

because only for them were they open, but for mortal

men they were closed. Although these heavenly courtiers

were aware of the fact that the incarnate Word had al

ready thrown back the bars and bolts of guilt, and that

He was now ascending rich and glorious with the spoils

of death and sin, bringing with Him the fruits of his

Passion in the accompanying hosts of the glorious saints

released from limbo; nevertheless the holy angels give

vent to their admiration and breathless suspense at this

wonderful novelty, asking : "Who is this King of glory ?"

For He was a man and of the same nature as the one

who had lost for himself and for all his race the right to

enter into heaven.

340. They themselves give answer to the question say

ing: "The Lord who is strong and mighty; the Lord

mighty in battle," the Lord of virtues, the King of glory.

This was as if they confessed their conviction, that this

Man, who was now coming up from the world in order

to open the eternal gates, was not a mere man and is not

included under the law of sin ; but that He was true God

and true man, who, strong and powerful in battle, had

overcome the strong-armed one (Luc. 11, 22), that

THE CONCEPTION 275

reigned in the world, had taken away his reign and de

spoiled him of his weapons. And He was the Lord of

virtues, as one that had exercised them as a Master, with

sovereignty over them^ and without any contradiction of

sin and defect. As the Lord of virtues and as the Lord

of glory, He now came in triumph, distributing virtues

and glory to his redeemed, for whom as man He had

suffered and died, and whom as God He was now raising

up to the eternal and beatific vision, having broken the

bars and shackles imposed by sin.

341. Since this, O soul, was the work of my dear Son,

the true God and man, He, as the Lord of virtues and

graces, exalted and adorned me with them from the first

moment of my Immaculate Conception. And as, more

over, the hindrance of sin touched me not, I was free

from the impediments which prevented other mortals

from entering into the eternal gates of heaven; on the

contrary the powerful arm of my Son acted with me as

being the Mistress of all virtues and as the Queen of

heaven. Because He was to vest Himself and assume

unto Himself human nature from my flesh and blood, He

was beforehand in preparing me and making me like

Himself in purity and exemption from fault and in other

divine gifts and privileges. As I was not a slave of sin, I

exercised the virtues not as a subject, but as a Mistress,

without contradiction, but with sovereignty, not like the

children of Adam, but like the Son of God, who was also

my Son.

342. For these reasons the celestial spirits, who had

possession of the eternal gates as their own, opened them

up for me, perceiving that the Lord had created me more

pure than all the most exalted spirits in heaven, and

made me their Queen, and the Mistress of all creation.

Remember also, my dearest, that he who makes the law

276 CITY OF GOD

can also dispense with it freely, and this the supreme

Lord and Legislator did with me, extending the sceptre

of his clemency toward me more readily than Assuerus

did to Esther. For the common laws regarding others

and consequent on their guilt, applied not to me, who

was to be the Mother of the Author of Grace. Although

I could not, as a mere creature, merit such blessed privi

leges, yet the divine clemency and goodness of God

turned toward me with full liberality and He was pleased

with the humility of his servant, in order that for all

eternity the Author of such prodigies might be praised.

Do thou also, my Daughter, according to my directions,

bless and magnify Him for these benefits bestowed upon

me.

343. My admonition to thee, whom in spite of thy

weakness and poverty I have chosen with such generous

kindness as my disciple and companion, is this : that

thou strive with all thy powers to imitate me in an exer

cise, in which I persevered during my whole life from the

very first moment of my birth, omitting it on not a single

day, however full of cares and labors it might have been.

This exercise was the following: every day at beginning

of dawn, I prostrated myself in the presence of the Most

High and gave Him thanks and praise for his immutable

Being, his infinite perfections, and for having created me

out of nothing; acknowledging myself as his creature

and the work of his hands, I blessed Him and adored

Him, giving Him honor, magnificence and Divinity, as

the supreme Lord and Creator of myself and of all that

exists. I raised up my spirit to place it into his hands,

offering myself with profound humility and resignation

to Him and asking Him to dispose of me according to

his will during that day and during all the days of my

life, and to teach me to fulfill whatever would be to his

THE CONCEPTION 277

greater pleasure. This I repeated many times during the

external works of the day, and in the internal ones I first

consulted his Majesty, asking his advice, permission and

benediction for all my actions.

344. Be very devout toward my most sweet name. I

wish that thou be convinced of the great prerogatives

and privileges, which the Almighty concedes to it, so

that I myself, when I saw them in the Divinity, felt most

deeply obliged and solicitous to make a proper return;

and whenever the name MARY occurred to my mind

(which happened often) and whenever I heard myself

called by that name, I was aroused to thankfulness and

urged to new fervor in the service of the Lord, who gave

it to me. Thou hast the same name and I wish, that in

proportion it should cause the same effects in thee and

that thou imitate me faithfully by following the lesson

given thee in this chapter, without failing in the least

point from this day onward. And if in thy weakness

thou shouldst fail, rouse thyself immediately, and in the

presence of thy Lord and mine, acknowledge thy fault,

confessing it in sorrow. Repeating these holy exercises

over and again with solicitous care, thou shalt find for

giveness for imperfections and grow accustomed to strive

after what is highest in all virtues and most pleasing to

the Lord. Then, following the light which He gives and

in pursuance of that which is most pleasing and agreeable

to thy own tastes and mine, thou shalt not be denied the

grace of employing thyself entirely in listening, attending

to and obeying in all things thy Spouse and Lord, who

seeks in thee only what is most pure, most holy and per

fect, and a will prompt and eager to put the same into

practice.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW SAINT ANNE COMPUED WITH THE LAW OF MOSES

IN REGARD TO CHILDBIRTH ; AND HOW MOST HOLY

MARY ACTED IN HER INFANCY.

345. It was a precept of the law, given in the twelfth

chapter of Leviticus, that a woman who had given birth

to a daughter should be deemed impure for two weeks

and should remain in the state of purification for sixty-

six days after the birth, just double the time required for

purification in case of a man-child Having completed

the days of her purification she was to present herself in

order to offer a lamb one year old as a holocaust for

the daughter or the son, and also a young pigeon or tur

tle-dove as atonement for the sin. This she was to do

at the door of the tabernacle, beseeching the priest to

offer them to the Lord and to pray for her; thereupon

she was accounted pure. The parturition of the most

happy Anne was pure and undefined, as befitting her

heavenly Daughter, in whose purity the mother was a

sharer. Although on this account there was no need

of a special purification, she nevertheless complied with

the obligation of the law to the very last point. Though

not subject to its penalties, she considered herself bound

in the eyes of men.

346. Sixty days of the purification having passed, saint

Anne departed for the temple, her mind inflamed with

divine ardor and bearing in her arms her blessed Daugh

ter and Child. With the offerings prescribed by law and

accompanied by innumerable angels, she betook herself

278

THE CONCEPTION 279

to the gate of the temple and spoke with the high priest,

who was none other than Simeon. He was accustomed

to spend much time in the temple and enjoyed the privi

lege and favor of seeing the child Mary, not only when

She was offered and presented to the Lord in the temple,

but on other occasions. Although this holy priest was

not on each of these occasions fully aware of the dig

nity of our heavenly Mistress, as I will say farther on

(No. 423, 710, 742), yet he always experienced great

promptings and impulses of the spirit regarding the

greatness of this Child in the sight of God.

347. Saint Anne offered to him the lamb and the tur

tle-dove with the rest of the gifts, and with tears of

humility she asked him to pray for herself and the Child,

her Daughter, that the Lord forgive them any fault of

which perhaps they might be guilty. His Majesty cer

tainly had nothing to forgive in a Daughter and mother,

who were so full of grace ; but He found Himself bound

to reward the humility, with which notwithstanding their

holiness they presented themselves as sinners. The holy

priest received the oblation and in his spirit he was in

flamed and moved to extraordinary joy. Careful not to

manifest anything exteriorly and communing with him

self, he said; "What strange feeling is this within me?

Are these women perhaps the parents of the Messias,

who is to come?" Moved by this joyful suspense he

showed them great benevolence. The blessed mother

Anne entered the temple, bearing her most holy Daugh

ter on her arms, and She offered Her to the Lord with

most devout and tender tears. For she alone in all the

world knew what Treasure was given into her charge.

348. Saint Anne renewed the vow, which she had al

ready made, to offer her Firstborn to the temple on

arriving at the proper age. In renewing this offer she

280 CITY OF GOD

was enlightened by new graces and promptings of the

Most High, and in her heart she heard a secret voice

urging her to fulfill this vow and offer her Child to the

temple within three years. It was as it were the echo

of the voice of the most holy Queen, who in her prayer

touched the heart of God, in order that it might resound

in the bosom of the mother. For when both entered the

temple, the sweet Child seeing with her bodily eyes its

grandeur and magnificence, dedicated to the worship and

adoration of the Divinity, experienced wonderful effects

of the Spirit and wished to prostrate Herself in the tem

ple, to kiss its floor, and adore the Lord. But as She

could not execute these desires in external actions, She

supplied the defect with interior fervor, and She adored

and blessed the Lord with a love more ardent, and a

humility more profound than ever before or ever after

was possible to be rendered by any creature. Addressing

the Lord in her heart, She offered the following prayer :

349. "Most high and incomprehensible God, my King

and my Lord, worthy of all glory and reverence, I, ab

ject dust, but also a creature of thine, adore Thee in this

thy holy place and temple. I magnify and exalt Thee on

account of thy infinite Being and perfections, and I give

thanks in as far as my insignificance is worthy of thy

regard. For Thou hast vouchsafed to permit my eyes to

see this holy temple and house of prayer, where thy holy

Prophets and my forefathers have worshipped and

blessed Thee, and where thy generous mercy has wrought

so many wonders and mysteries in their behalf. Accept

me, O Lord, in order that I may serve Tboe in this holy

house according to thy blessed will."

350. Thus She who was the Queen of heaven and of

the universe, offered Herself as if She were the lowest

slave of the Lord. As a testimony of its acceptation by

THE CONCEPTION 281

the Most High, a most resplendent light shone down

from heaven, enveloping the mother and Child, and rill

ing them with new splendors of grace. Again saint

Anne was made aware that she would be expected to de

vote her Daughter to the temple within three years; she

was given to understand that the delight with which God

looked forward to such an offer, and the love with which

the heavenly Child desired its consummation would not

permit a longer delay. The holy angels of her guard

and innumerable others who were present on this occa

sion sang sweetest songs of praise to the Author of these

wonders ; but they did not therefore have a more perfect

knowledge of these happenings than saint Anne or her

most holy Daughter, who perceived interiorly what was

spiritual, and felt exteriorly what was subject to the

senses in these things. Saint Simeon saw dimly the sen

sible light. Thereupon saint Anne, rich in her Treasure

and endowed with new gifts of the most high God, re

turned to her home.

351. The ancient serpent eagerly observed all these

events. Yet the Lord concealed from him what he was

not to know, and permitted him to obtain knowledge only

of what was necessary for his own undoing in his desire

of destroying others and only so much as might serve to

make him an instrument in the execution of the secret

judgments of the Most High. This enemy was full of

conjectures in regard to the unheard of things, which had

come to pass in connection with this Mother and Child.

But when he saw that they brought offerings to the

temple and that they, like sinners, observed the prescrip

tions of the law, even begging of the priest to intercede

for their forgiveness; he was deceived and assuaged in

his fury, believing that this mother and her Daughter

were of ordinary condition although they might be more

perfect and holy than other women.

20 J

282 CITY OF GOD

352. The sovereign Child was treated like other chil

dren of her age. Her nourishment was of the usual kind,

though less in quantity; and so was her sleep, although

her parents were solicitous that She take more sleep. She

was not troublesome, nor did She ever cry for mere an

noyance, as is done by other children, but She was most

amiable and caused no trouble to anybody. That She

did not act in this regard as other children caused no

wonder; for She often wept and sighed (as far as her

age and her dignity of Queen and Mistress would per

mit) for the sins of the world and for its Redemption

through the coming of the Savior. Ordinarily She main

tained, even in her infancy, a pleasant countenance, yet

mixed with gravity and a peculiar Majesty, never show

ing any childishness. She sometimes permitted Herself

to be caressed, though, by a secret influence and a cer

tain outward austerity, She knew how to repress the im

perfections connected with such endearments. Her pru

dent mother Anne treated her Child with incomparable

solicitude and caressing tenderness; also her father

Joachim loved Her as a father and as a saint, although

he was ignorant of the mystery at that time. The Child

on its part showed a special love toward him, as one

whom She knew for her father and one much beloved of

God. Although She permitted more tender caresses from

her father than from others, yet God inspired the father

as well as all others, with such an extraordinary rever

ence and modesty towards Her whom He had chosen for

his Mother, that even his pure and fatherly affection was

outwardly manifested only with the greatest moderation

and reserve.

353. In all things the infant Queen was most gracious,

perfect and admirable. Though She passed her infancy

subject to the common laws of nature, yet this did not

THE CONCEPTION 283

hinder the influx of grace. During her sleep her interior

acts of love, and all other exercises of her faculties which

were not dependent on the exterior senses, were never in

terrupted. This special privilege is possible also in other

creatures, if the divine power confers it on them; but it

is certain that in regard to Her whom He had chosen as

his Mother and the Queen of all creation, He extended

this special favor beyond all previous or subsequent meas

ure in other creatures and beyond the conception of any

created mind. God spoke to Samuel and to other saints

and Prophets in their sleep, (I Reg. 3, 4) and to many

He sent mysterious dreams or visions (Genes. 37; 5, 9)

for to his Omnipotence it is easy to enlighten the mind

during the inactivity of the senses in natural sleep or

during their ravishment in ecstasy; they cease to act in

the one as well as in the other, and without their activity

the soul hears, accepts and transacts the things of the

Spirit. This was the rule which the Queen followed

from the moment of her Conception till now and for all

eternity ; for the activity of grace in Her during Her pil

grimage through life was not intermittent, like in other

creatures. When She was alone, or when She was laid to

sleep, which was in Her most moderate, She was en

gaged in the contemplation of the mysteries and the ex

cellencies of the Most High, and in the enjoyment of the

divine visions and the conversation of his Majesty. Her

intercourse with the angels was likewise very frequent

and in the following chapter something will be said of the

manner of their manifestation and of some of their emi

nent perfections.

354. My Queen and heavenly Lady, if without being

offended, Thou wilt, as a kind Mother, listen to my ig

norant talk, I will ask of thy kindness the solution of

some doubts which have occurred to me in this chapter.

284 CITY OF GOD

If my ignorance and boldness should transgress the lim

its, instead of answering me, my Mistress, correct me

with maternal mercy. My doubt is : Whether in this thy

infancy Thou didst feel the necessities and hunger which

according to the natural order, children do feel? And

if Thou didst feel them, how didst Thou suffer these an

noying inconveniences? And how didst Thou ask for

the nourishment and the other help necessary, since Thou

wast so wonderfully patient that Thou wouldst not make

use of tears, which serve other infants as speech and

words? I am also ignorant, whether the hardships of

that age were not most irksome to thy Majesty, such as

to have thy virginal body clothed and unclothed as in

fants are, to be fed with the food of other children, and

to undergo the other experiences of that age? For other

children undergo them bereft of reason, while nothing

was concealed from Thee, O Lady. When I look upon

Thee as a child in age and yet as grown up in thy ca

pacity of judging of things, it seems to me almost im

possible that there should have been no inconveniences

in this matter, in the time or the measure, or in other cir

cumstances regarding the treatment allotted to Thee dur

ing thy infant life. Thy celestial prudence taught Thee

to preserve dignity and composure, yet Thou didst not

intimate the wants and needs of thy age and condition

either by crying, as an infant, or by word of mouth, as

one grown up. Thus they could not know thy needs and

could not treat Thee as one endowed with reason; for

even thy mother could not know all these things, nor

could she provide for all that was necessary, since she

knew not the time nor the manner of serving thy Ma

jesty in all things. All these considerations excite my

admiration and arouse in me the desire of knowing the

mysteries thus concealed.

THE CONCEPTION 285

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

355. My daughter, since thou art full of wonder, I will

inform thee in all kindness. It is true that I was in pos

session of grace and of the use of reason from the first

instant of my Conception, as I have so often shown thee ;

I underwent the hardships of infancy as other children

and I was reared and treated as others of the same con

dition. I felt hunger, thirst, sleepiness and other infirm

ities of the body, and as a daughter of Adam I was sub

ject to these accidental necessities; for it was just that I

should imitate my most holy Son, who subjected Him

self to these hardships and defects, in order that He

might merit so much the more and in order that He

might be an example to the rest of mortals for their imi

tation. As I was governed by divine grace, I made use

of eating and sleep in moderation, allowing myself less

than others, and only so much as was proper for the aug

mentation and the preservation of my life and health.

Disorder in these things is not only against virtue, but

against the well-being of nature itself, which is invaded

and ravaged by it. On account of my exquisite compo

sition I was affected by hunger and thirst more painfully

than other children; and the want of nourishment was

more dangerous to me; but if it was given to me at un

seasonable times, or in excess, I bore it with patience,

until by some befitting sign I could manifest my needs.

I felt less the want of sleep on account of the oppor

tunity which it furnished me for the presence and the

heavenly conversation of the angels.

356. That I was bound and wrapped in clothes was

not painful to me, but it was a cause of much joy, for I

understood by divine light, that the incarnate Lord was

to suffer a most cruel death and was to be bound most

shamefully. Whenever J was alone during my childhood

286 CITY OF GOD

I placed myself in the form of a cross, praying in imita

tion of Him; for I knew that my Beloved was to die in

that position, although I did not know then that the Cru

cified was to be my Son. In all the difficulties, which I

underwent after I was born into the world, I was re

signed and contented, for I never lost sight of one con

sideration, which I desire thee always to keep in mind.

It is this : that thou ponder in thy heart and in thy soul

the truths, which I saw, so that thou mayest form a cor

rect judgment of all things, giving to each that esteem

and value which is its due. In regard to this the children

of Adam are ordinarily full of error and blindness, but I

desire that thou, my daughter, share it not with them.

357. As soon as I was born into the world and made

aware of the light, which shone upon me, I felt the effects

of the elements, the influence of the planets and of the

stars, of the earth which sustained me, of the nourish

ments which preserved me, and of all the other things of

this life. I gave thanks to the Author of all things, ac

knowledging his works as benefits freely bestowed upon

me, and not as dues, which He owed to me. Therefore,

when anything was wanting of the necessaries of life I re

mained in peace and contentedness and deemed it all per

fectly reasonable and proper in my regard, since I had

merited none of the gifts and could justly be deprived of

all of them. Hence, if I acknowledged this, thereby

merely asserting a truth which the human reason cannot

ignore nor deny, where have mortals their intellect, or

what use do they make of their understanding when, at

the refusal of things which they desire and of which per

haps they do not even profit, they begin to get sad and

lash themselves into fury one against the other, and even

against their God, as if they were suffering some injury

at his hands? Let them inquire what treasures and

THE CONCEPTION 287

riches they did possess before they came into life? What

services had they rendered unto God in order to merit

them? And if out of nothing there cannot arise any

thing", and if they could not merit the being which they

have received, what obligation is there on the part of

God to preserve out of justice, what was given to them

entirely gratuitously ? That God created man was of no

benefit to Himself; but to man it was a benefit, and one

as great as the being given to him, and as high as the

object for which it was given. And if in his creation

man becomes indebted so much that he never can pay his

debt, tell me what right can he invoke at present for his

preservation? Has he not received his being without

merit and many times forfeited it? How can he claim

the guarantee and pledge of unfailing plenty?

358. If the first transaction and operation was a mort

gage and a debt by which man binds himself, how can he

with such impatience demand favors? And if in spite

of all this, the supreme goodness of the Creator furnishes

him graciously with what is necessary, why should he be

agitated by the want of superfluities? O my daughter,

what an execrable disorder and what a despicable blind

ness of mortals is this? For that, which the Lord gives

them gratuitously, they do not thank Him, or even give

Him acknowledgment, and for that which He denies

them justly and sometimes most mercifully, they are rest

less and proudly desirous, and they try to procure it by

unjust and forbidden means, throwing themselves into

the very destruction which flies from them. The first sin

alone, committed by man, was sufficient to cancel man s

right to the friendly service of all the other creatures;

and if the Lord himself would not restrain them, they

would turn in vengeance upon man and refuse to render

any service or help for sustaining his life. The heavens

288 CITY OF GOD

would deny them their light and benign influences, the

fire would refuse its heat, the air would cease to serve for

respiration, and all the other things would in their par

ticular way refuse their services, since they would in jus

tice be bound to refuse them. Then when the earth

would deny its fruits, and the elements their moderation

and their assistance, and all the other creatures would

arm themselves to avenge the wrongs of their Creator

(Sap. 5, 18), perhaps disgraced man would humiliate

himself in his vileness and would not heap up the wrath

of the Lord for the unerring day of accountance, when

all his dreadful guilt will be exposed.

359. But thou, my dear friend, fly from such base in

gratitude, and humbly acknowledge that thou hast re

ceived thy being and life gratuitously, and that, gratui

tously, its Author preserves it for thee. Freely dost thou

receive all the other benefits, without any merit of thine ;

and thus, receiving much and repaying little, thou mak-

est thyself daily less worthy of favors, while the liberality

of the Most High grows continually with thy indebted

ness. Let this thought be uppermost in thee always, in

order that it awaken and move thee to many acts of vir

tue. If any of the irrational creatures fail thee, I desire

thee to rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to his Ma

jesty, and bless them for their obedience to the Creator.

If the rational creatures persecute thee, love them with all

thy heart and regard them as the instruments of divine

justice, which afford thee some opportunity of rendering

satisfaction for thy deficiency. Rather strengthen and con

sole thyself in labors, adversities and tribulations, not

only considering them as fully deserved by the faults

committed, but deeming them ornaments of the soul and

most rich jewels given thee by thy Spouse.

360. Let this be the answer to thy doubt: over and

THE CONCEPTION 289

above this I wish to give thee an instruction, which may

be found in all the chapters. Consider, my soul the

punctuality of my mother Anne in fulfilling the precept

of the law of the Lord, to whose Majesty this solicitude

was very pleasing. In this thou shouldst imitate her by

observing inviolate each and every one of the precepts of

thy rules and constitutions ; for God will reward most lib

erally this fidelity and severely punish any negligence in

this matter. Without sin I was conceived and it was not

necessary to present me to the priest in order that the

Lord might purify me; nor was this necessary for my

mother, since she was very holy. Nevertheless we hum

bly obeyed the law and thereby we merited great in

crease of virtue and grace. Despising just and wise laws

and frequently dispensing with them, destroys the wor

ship and fear of God, and fatally confuses government

among men. Beware of easily dispensing in the obliga

tions of the religious state, either for thyself or for

others. If infirmity or some other just cause make it

advisable, let it be done with moderation and with the

approbation of the confessor, thus justifying dispensation

before God and before men by the approbation of holy

obedience. If thou findest thyself weary or weakened,

do not at once become remiss in the strict observance, for

God will give thee strength according to thy faith in

Him. Do not give any dispensation on pretext of being

overworked. Make that which is less serve and advance

that which is the greater, let the creatures serve the Cre

ator. On account of thy position as superioress thou hast

less excuse; for in the observation of the laws thou must

give a good example, leading on the others. Therefore,

for thyself, no merely human motive can serve as an ex

cuse, though thou mayest sometimes excuse thy sisters

and subjects on such account. Note moreover, my dear-

290

CITY OF GOD

est, that I desire thee to lead in perfection ; therefore this

rigor is necessary, not even taking into consideration,

that the observance of the precepts is a duty to God and

men. Let no one think that it is enough to fulfill all

obligations toward the Lord, and at the same time tread

under foot the duty towards his neighbor, to whom is

due good example and avoidance of all real scandal. O

Queen and Mistress of all creation, would that I could

attain the purity and the virtue of the supernal spirits,

in order that this inferior part of my being, which weighs

down the soul (Sap. 9, 15), may prompt me to fulfill

thy celestial teachings. I have become burdensome unto

myself (Job 7, 20) ; but with thy intercession and the

gracious favor of the Most High I will be able to obey

thy will and his with a loving promptitude of heart. Let

not thy intercession and support, and the guidance of thy

holy and wise counsels ever fail me!

CHAPTER XXIII.

OF THE EMBLEMS OF THE: HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS IN

THEIR INTERCOURSE WITH THE BLESSED MARY, AND

OF THEIR PERFECTIONS.

361. It has already been said that a thousand angels

were appointed as guardians of Mary, just as there is

one for each soul. On account of the great dignity of the

most holy Mary we must assume, that each of the thou

sand guardian angels watched over Mary more solici

tously than other guardian angels watch over other souls.

Besides these thousand angels, who formed her ordinary

and constant guard, many others were at her service on

different occasions, especially after She had conceived in

her womb the divine Word incarnate. I have mentioned

above (No. 204) that the selection of these thousand

angels was made after the creation of the angelic hosts,

and after the justification of the good and fall of the

bad. The Divinity of the Word, to be clothed in its hu

man nature, and also his most pure Mother was proposed

and manifested to them, while they were yet in the state

of probation; they were then made to understand, that

they were to revere Them as their superiors.

362. When the apostate angels were chastised and the

faithful ones rewarded, the Lord proceeded according to

a most just measure and equity. As I said : in the acci

dental reward there was a certain diversity among the

angels according to the difference in their dispositions

regarding the mysteries of the incarnate Word and his

most pure Mother, which were made known to them be-

291

292 CITY OF GOD

fore and during the probation. This accidental reward

consisted especially in being selected to assist and serve

the most holy Mary and the incarnate Word, and also in

the manner and form of their visible appearance to the

Queen and of serving Her. This is what I wish to explain

in this chapter ; but at the same time I must acknowledge

my inability to do so, since it is difficult to reduce to ma

terial images and words the perfections and the opera

tions of such exalted spiritual beings. Nevertheless if I

should pass over this matter in silence, I would fail to

give a proper idea of a great portion of the most exalted

operations of the Queen of heaven during her mortal

life. For next to her intercourse with the Lord, that

with his ministers, the angelic spirits, was the most con

tinual. Therefore without the mention of this intercourse

the history of her life would be defective.

363. I presuppose all that I have until now said about

the orders, hierarchies and distinctions of the thousand

angels of her guard. But I wish here to describe in

what corporeal forms they appeared to their Queen and

Mistress. The intellectual and imaginary apparitions I

reserve for another chapter, where I intend to describe

especially the different kinds of visions, with which her

Highness was favored. The nine hundred angels, which

were chosen from the nine choirs, one hundred from

each, were selected from the number of those, who had

distinguished themselves by their esteem, love and rev

erence for the most holy Mary. They were made visible

to the blessed Virgin under the form of young men in

their early years, but of the most exquisite beauty and

courteousness. Their bodily forms showed but little

resemblance to earthly matter, for they were transpar

ently pure and like animated crystals bathed in glory,

similar to a glorified and transfigured body. With their

THE CONCEPTION 293

beauty they combined a grave and amiable composure.

Their garments covered them in flowing folds, but were

resplendent, like the most clear burnished gold, enameled

or stained with exquisite shades of color, presenting a

most wonderful and varied beauty to the sight. At the

same time all this ornament and visible presence seemed

of such a kind, that it could not be subject to the sense

of feeling nor be touched by the hand, although it could

be seen and perceived like the rays of the sun entering

into the open window and revealing the atoms of dust

in the air. But the splendor of the angels was incom

parably more beautiful and pleasing than any light of

the sun.

364. In addition, all these angels were crowned with

wreaths woven of the most tender and exquisite flowers,

that sent forth the sweetest fragrance, not of this earth

but altogether spiritual and heavenly. In their hands

they held palms of wonderful beauty and variety, which

were to signify the virtues, which most holy Mary was

to exercise, and the victories, which She was to gain by

her sanctity and glory. All this they as it were offered

Her beforehand, with great joy and jubilation. On their

breasts they bore certain devices or emblems, such as

we are accustomed to see exhibited in the uniforms or

habits of the military orders. They contained letters,

which stood for: "Mary, Mother of God," and which

contributed much toward the splendor of their adorn

ment and beauty. Their significance, however, was not

made known to Mary until the moment of the incarnation

of the Word.

365. This emblem or device was most wonderful to be

hold, on account of the great splendor, with which it

showed forth her name above all the other beauty of the

angelic ornaments. Its aspects and brilliancies were

294 CITY OF GOD

changeable, in order to indicate the variety of the mys

teries and excellences enclosed within that City of God.

It contained the most exalted name and title, and inti

mated the highest dignity, which ever can fall to the

lot of a mere creature : that of Mother of God. In this

title the angels honored in the highest degree their and

our Queen. They themselves were honored in that title,

since it was the outward sign of their allegiance to Her

and of their preferment consequent upon their devotion

and veneration for Her who deserved the veneration of

all creatures. A thousand times blessed were they, to

merit the especial love of Mary and of her most holy Son.

366. The effects of this intercourse with the holy

princes, and of their outward beauty in Mary, our Mis

tress, no one besides Herself could ever properly de

scribe. They manifested to Her in a mysterious man

ner the greatness of the attributes of God, the blessings,

which He showered upon Her in creating Her and choos

ing Her, in enriching Her and endowing Her with such

great gifts of grace and treasures of the divine right

hand, moving Her and inciting Her to such ecstasies of

love and praise. All these gifts increased with her age

and with the events of her life and, as the great work of

the Incarnation drew near, they expanded more and

more ; for then was gradually revealed to Her the mean

ing of the emblem, which these angels bore across their

breasts, which until then had been concealed from Her.

It would be impossible to describe, what ardors of love,

what profound humility, what tender affections filled the

pure heart of Mary, when this was revealed to Her and

when it dawned upon Her, what dignity and what obli

gation toward God this most peerless title involved. For

She held Herself entirely incapable and unworthy of such

an ineffable and mysterious dignity as that of Mother of

God.

THE CONCEPTION 295

367. The seventy seraphim, who assisted the Queen

were of the number of those nearest to the throne of

God, who had most signally distinguished themselves in

their devotion and admiration toward the hypostatic

union of the divine and human nature in the person of

the divine Word. For as they were most closely bound

to God by their greater knowledge and love, they also

desired more earnestly, that this mystery should be con

summated in the womb of a woman. Their reward of

essential and accidental glory corresponded to their par

ticular and signal love. This latter, the accidental glory,

which I have mentioned, consisted in their being privi

leged specially to attend upon most holy Mary and take a

part in the mysteries consummated in Her.

368. Whenever these seventy seraphim showed them

selves to Her in a visible manner, the Queen saw them

in the same form in which Isaias saw them in imagina

tion, that is with six wings. With two they covered the

head, wishing to signify by this humble gesture the in

sufficiency of their intellect for the comprehension of the

sacramental mystery at which they were assisting, and

also their belief and acknowledgment of these mysteries,

which they confessed, prostrate before the majesty and

grandeur of the Creator. Thereby they also wished

to extol with eternal praise the incomprehensible and

sacred judgments of the Most High. With the other

wings they covered the feet, which are the in

ferior extremities in closest contact with the earth, re

ferring thereby to the Queen and Mistress of heaven and

earth as being human and earthly in nature and acknowl

edging Her as the Creature excelling all others in dig

nity and grandeur above all understanding and calcula

tion of the created mind ; moreover they thereby wished

to show, that though exalted as seraphim, they could

not keep pace with the dignity and excellence of Mary.

296 CITY OF GOD

369. With the wings of their breast they beat the

air or seemed to fly, thereby intimating two things: on

the one hand, by their incessant motion and flight, the

love, the praise and reverence, which they gave to God;

on the other, in disclosing their breasts, they wished to

serve as it were to the most holy Mary as a most pure

mirror of the Divinity, reflecting its essence and opera

tions to Her during the time of her earthly pilgrimage ;

for it was not possible nor proper, that the Divinity

should be manifest to her in open vision during all that

time. The blessed Trinity wished, that their Daughter

and Spouse should, in these seraphim, the creatures clos

est to the Divinity and encircling the throne, see most

faithfully presented in living images, what She could not

continually see in its own essence and in the original.

370. By this means the heavenly Spouse enjoyed the

portrait of her Beloved even in the banishment of her

pilgrimage, being thus inflamed body and soul with his

love by his vision and intercourse through these exalted

and love-consumed princes. The manner of this inter

course, over and above that which was sensible in it,

was the same as that which they maintained among

themselves, namely, that those of a higher order enlight

en those of a lower, as I have said elsewhere (No. 202).

For although the Queen of heaven was higher and

greater in dignity and merit, yet, as David intimated (Ps.

8, 6), on account of her human nature, She was lower

than the angels. The ordinary manner of divine in

fluence and enlightenment adapts itself to the conditions

of nature and not of grace.

371. The other twelve angels are the guardian angels

of the twelve gates, of which St. John speaks in the twen

ty-first chapter of the Apocalypse (Apoc. 21, 12) as ex

plained above. They distinguished themselves by the lov-

THE CONCEPTION 297

ing praise, with which they celebrated the goodness of

God in becoming man to teach and converse with men,

and next to their joy at the Redemption of men and

their readmission into the gates of heaven by his mer

its, was their loving wonder at the important part, which

most holy Mary performed in this mystery of the Re

demption. They were especially attentive to these great

and wonderful works, by which God was to open up

heaven, in order that men might enter into eternal life,

and this latter is signified by these twelve gates of the

tribes of Israel. The reward of their signal devotion

was, that God appointed them as witnesses and, as it

were, secretaries of the mysteries of the Redemption and

that they were privileged to cooperate with the Queen

of heaven as Mother of mercy and Mediatrix of those,

who turn to Her for their salvation. Therefore I said

above (No. 273) that her Majesty, the Queen, makes

use especially of these twelve angels to assist, enlighten

and defend her clients in their necessities and particu

larly in order to draw them from sin, whenever they in

voke them and the most holy Mary.

372. These twelve angels appeared in the same corpo

real shape as those which I have first mentioned except

that they bore palms and crowns, reserved for the devout

servants of the Mistress. Their service consisted especial

ly in bringing to her mind the ineffable kindness of the

Lord toward the human race, and in inciting Her to praise

Him and petition Him for the fulfillment of his mercy.

She sent them as messengers of her prayers to the throne

of the eternal Father. They were sent also to those of

her clients, who invoked Her or whom She wished to

help and benefit, in order to enlighten them and assist

them, as happened many times to the holy Apostles ; for

often did She aid them by the ministry of angels in their

21

298 CITY OF GOD

labors for the primitive Church. Even now in our days

these twelve angels are engaged in the same ministry,

helping the devout servants of their and our Queen.

373. The eighteen angels, which completed the num

ber of a thousand were those who signalized themselves

in their compassion for the sufferings of the incarnate

Word. Their reward for this compassion was great.

They appeared to most holy Mary in wonderful beauty,

bearing many emblems of the Passion and of other

mysteries of the Redemption, especially two crosses of

the most refulgent splendor and beauty, one on their

breast and one on their arms. The sight of this won

derful display excited great admiration in the Queen, a

most tender and compassionate love toward the suffer

ings of the Redeemer of the world, and most fervent

thanks and acknowledgment of the benefits, which men

were to receive in their Redemption and rescue from cap

tivity. The great Princess very often sent these angels

to her divine Son with diverse messages and petitions on

behalf of souls.

374. In describing the forms and the ornaments of

these angels I have at the same time mentioned some

of their perfections and operations, although necessarily

in a limited way, if compared to the reality. For they are

invisible rays of the Divinity, most alert in their move

ments and operations, most powerful in strength, most

penetrating in their understanding, incapable of mistake,

unchangeable in their condition and in their purpose,

never forgetting or losing sight of that which once they

have undertaken. They are full of grace and glory with

out any fear of ever losing them. As they are without a

body and invisible, therefore whenever God wishes to

grant to man the favor of being able to see them, they

assume an aerial and apparent body, one that is adapted

THE CONCEPTION 299

to the senses and to the object intended. All these angels

of the Queen Mary were selected from the most dis

tinguished of their respective orders and choirs, their

superiority consisting principally in that of grace and

glory. They guarded their Lady without neglecting the

least point of their service during her holy life, and even

now in heaven they derive an especial accidental enjoy

ment from her presence and company. Although or

dinarily only some of them are sent to execute the spe

cial mandates of her will, yet all of them together are at

times engaged in her service, fulfilling the decrees of the

Divinity in her regard.

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

375. My daughter, on three different points, I wish to

instruct thee in this chapter. The first is that thou, by in

cessant praise and acknowledgment, show thyself thank

ful for the favor which God vouchsafed thee in appoint

ing angels to assist thee, teach thee, and guide thee

through the tribulations and sorrows. Mortals, in their

abominable ingratitude and grossness, ordinarily forget

this blessing. They do not consider, what great mercy

and condescension of the Most High it is to have or

dained these holy princes as helpers, guardians and de

fenders of men, their earthly fellow creatures so full of

miseries and sins. In forgetting how exalted in glory,

dignity and beauty these spirits are, many men deprive

themselves of numerous blessings, which they would oth

erwise obtain at the hands of these angels. Greatly do

they rouse the indignation of the Lord on this account.

Thou, however, my dearest, acknowledge these blessings

and give Him thanks with all thy heart.

376. The second point is, that thou, in every place

and at all times, preserve love and reverence toward these

300 CITY OF GOD

holy spirits, as if thou didst see them with thy corporal

eyes, and that thou dare not do before them what thou

wouldst not do in public. Cease not to exert thyself in

the service of God, even as they do and as they require of

thee. Remember that they continually see the face of

God (Matth. 18, 10) being of the blessed. Since they

at the same time see thee, let there be nothing indecent

in thee. Show thyself grateful to them for their vig

ilance, defense and protection.

377. Let the third point be, that thou live attentive to

the calls, urgings and aspirations, by which these angels

seek to rouse thee, move and excite thee to the recollec

tion of the Most High and to the exercise of all the

virtues. Be mindful how often they have responded to

thy calls, how often they have placed themselves in the

way of thy seeking, how often they have solicited for

thee signs of the love of the Spouse, kindly reprehending

thee for thy carelessness and remissness. When thou

didst lose in thy troubles and weariness the guiding star

of his light, they renewed hope in thy breast, and patient

ly corrected thee, directing thy footsteps again into the

narrow path of the justifications and testimonies of the

Lord. Do not forget, my soul, the greatness of the bene

fits bestowed upon thee in these angels, for they are above

those of many nations and generations: strive to be

grateful to thy Lord and to the angels, his ministers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OF THE HOLY EXERCISES AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE

QUEEN IN THE FIRST YEAR AND A HALF OF HER

INFANCY.

378. The enforced silence of other children in their

first years, and the slow evolution of their intellect and

of their power of speech arising from natural weakness,

was heroic virtue in the infant Queen. For if speech is

the product of the intellect and as it were the result of

its activity, and if She was in perfect possession of all

her faculties since her Conception, then the fact of her

not speaking as soon as She was born, did not arise from

the want of ability, but because She did not wish to make

use of her power. Other children are not furnished

with the natural forces, which are required to open their

mouth and move their tender tongue as required for

speech, but in the child Mary there was no such defect;

for as far as her natural powers were concerned She

was stronger than other children, and as She exercised

sovereignty and dominion over all creation, She certainly

could exercise it in regard to her own powers and facul

ties, if She had chosen to do so. Her not speaking there

fore was virtue and great perfection, which opportunely

concealed her science and grace, and evaded the aston

ishment naturally caused by one speaking in infancy.

Besides, if it is wonderful that one should speak, who

according to the natural course ought to be incapable of

speech, I do not know, whether it is not more wonderful,

301

302 CITY OF GOD

that one, who is able to speak from her birth should be

silent for one year and a half.

379. It was ordained therefore by the Most High,

that the sovereign Child should voluntarily keep this si

lence during the time in which ordinarily other children

are unable to speak. The only exception made was in

regard to the conversation held with the angels of her

guard, or when She addressed Herself in vocal prayer to

the Lord. For in regard to intercourse with God, the

Author of speech, and with the holy angels, his messen

gers, when they treated in a visible manner with Her, this

reason for maintaining silence did not hold good : on the

contrary it was befitting, that, since there was no im

pediment, She should pray with her lips and her tongue ;

for it would not be proper to keep them unemployed for

so long a time. But her mother never heard Her, nor

&lt;iid she know of her being able to speak during that

period ; and from this it can be better seen, what perfec

tion it required in Her to pass that year and a half of

her infancy in total silence. But during that time, when

ever her mother freed her arms and hands, the child

Mary immediately grasped the hands of her parents and

kissed them with great submission and reverent humility,

and in this practice She continued as long as her parents

lived. She also sought to make them understand during

that period of her age, that She desired their blessing,

speaking more by the affection of her heart than by word

of mouth. So great was her reverence for them, that

never did She fail in the least point concerning the honor

and obedience due to them. Nor did She cause them

any trouble or annoyance, since She knew beforehand all

their thoughts and was anxious to fulfill them before they

were made manifest.

380. In all her actions and movements She was gov-

THE CONCEPTION 303

erned by the Holy Ghost, being perfect in all her actions ;

yet her most ardent love was never satisfied, but She

unceasingly renewed her fervent aspirations to emulate

still greater gifts (I Cor. 12, 31). The presence of the

Most High continually preserved in this sovereign Child

the divine revelations and the intellectual visions. And

if sometimes his Providence suspended one kind of vision

or enlightenment, She was enraptured by others; for

from the clear vision of the Divinity, which I have men

tioned above and which took place as soon as She was

born and raised to heaven by the angels (No. 332)

She retained the images of what She had seen. Thus

coming from the wine cellar, where charity is set in or

der (Cant. 2, 4) her heart was wounded with love, and

returning ever toward it in contemplation, She was again

and again set afire body and soul in all her being. As

her body was yet weak and tender and this love strong

as death (Cant 8, 6), She soon felt the death pangs of

love, of which She in her tenderness would have died,

had not the Almighty strengthened Her and preserved by

a miracle the inferior part of her being and her natural

life. Many times however, the Lord permitted, that

this tender and virginal little body should be overcome

by the violence of love, so that the holy angels might

sustain Her and comfort Her in the fulfillment of the

saying of the Spouse : "Fulcite me floribus, quia amore

langueo." "Stay me up with flowers, because I languish

with love" (Cant. 11, 5). And this the most noble kind

of martyrdom was a thousand times repeated in this

heavenly Lady surpassing in it all the martyrs in merit,

and also in sufferings.

381. The pain of love is so sweet and attractive, that

the more it prevails the more it is sought, and he who suf

fers it, longs to hear him spoken of, whom he loves, thus

304 CITY OF GOD

seeking to be cured by renewal of the wound. This

most sweet deception serves to keep the soul in suspense

between a painful life and a sweet death. This was the

state of the child Mary, when speaking to her angels

and hearing them discourse about her Beloved. She

asked them many times, saying: "Ministers of my

Lord, his messengers and most beautiful works of his

hands, sparks of that divine fire, which consumes my

heart, since you enjoy his eternal beauty unveiled and

unrestrained, reveal to me the tokens of my Beloved;

what are his conditions? Tell me whether perhaps I

have displeased Him ; tell me what He desires and seeks

of me, and do not delay in lightening my pain, for I am

dying of love."

382. And the supernal spirits replied: "Spouse of

the Most High, thy Beloved is the only One, He that is

for Himself, who has no need of anything but of whom

all stand in need. He is infinite in his perfections, im

mense in his greatness, without limit in his power, in

effable in his wisdom, without measure in his goodness;

He gives a beginning to all things without having a be

ginning Himself; He governs the world without asking

consent, preserves it without having need of it, sees the

beauty of all creation without ever being comprehended

in his beauty by any one, and raises to blessedness by

his beauty those who succeed in seeing Him face to

face. Infinite are, O Lady, the perfections of thy

Spouse : they exceed thy comprehension and his high

judgments are inscrutable to the creature."

383. In such colloquies and many others, too high

for our capacity, most holy Mary passed her infancy,

conversing with the angels and the Most High, becom

ing more and more like to Him. As her fervor and

longing to see our highest Good increased, being en-

THE CONCEPTION 305

tirely enraptured in Him, She was by the disposal of

the Lord many times borne bodily by the hands of the

angels to the empyrean heaven, where She enjoyed the

presence of the Divinity. On those occasions She would

at times see God face to face, at other times by infused

images of the highest and most godlike kind. She saw

also the angels by clear and intuitive vision, their de

grees, orders and hierarchies, and many sacraments were

made manifest to Her on each occasion. As these vis

ions were often repeated She gradually, by becoming

accustomed to them and by acts of virtue which She ex

ercised in connection with them, began to appear more

a divine than a human creature. No one else would

ever be capable of such favors and of others connected

therewith ; and even the mortal nature of that Queen her

self would have been deprived of life, if She had not been

preserved by a miracle.

384. When in her childhood it was necessary to ac

cept any service or benefit at the hands of her parents

or of any other creature, She always received it with

interior humility and thankfulness, beseeching the Lord

to reward the good which they did in love toward Her.

Though She had attained such a high degree of sanctity

and though She was filled with the light of God and his

mysteries, She nevertheless judged Herself to be the

least of all creatures, and whenever She made compari

sons, She ascribed to herself the last place of all. Even

of the nourishment necessary to sustain life, She con

sidered Herself unworthy, though She was the Queen

and Mistress of all creation.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

385. My daughter, he that received more ought to

consider himself more needy, since his debt becomes so

306 CITY OF GOD

much the greater. All should humiliate themselves since

of themselves they are nothing, nor can they do any

thing or possess ought. On this account they that are

raised up by the hand of the Almighty, should humiliate

themselves as mere dust. For, left to themselves and to

their nothingness and unworthiness, they should esteem

themselves so much the more indebted and bound to

thankfulness for that which by themselves they can

never repay. Let man acknowledge its condition : for no

one can say: I have made myself, I preserve myself in

existence, I can prolong my life or postpone death. All

his being and preservation is in the hands of the Lord;

let each one therefore humble himself in his presence,

and thou, my dearest, do not forget these truths.

386. I wish also that thou esteem as a great treasure

the virtue of silence, which I have practiced from my

birth. By the light which the Most High gave me, I

was conversant with all the virtues; but I attached my

self to this one with great predilection, resolving to ad

here to it as a companion and as a friend during all my

life. Therefore I kept it inviolate, although I could

speak from the moment of my entrance into the world.

To speak without moderation and forethought is a two-

edged sword, which wounds both him that speaks and

him that hears, and thus in two ways destroys charity

or hinders it in all the virtues. From this thou canst

understand, how much God is offended by the vice of

inconsiderate and loose talk, and how justly loquacity,

and the tumult of disputation estranges his spirit and

veils his presence. For, those that talk much, cannot

keep free from grievous sins (Prov 10, 19). Only with

God and with his saints one can speak with security,

and even then it must be with forethought and discre

tion. With creatures it is very difficult to preserve the

THE CONCEPTION 307

golden middle, without danger of passing from the cor

rect and necessary to the imperfect and superfluous.

387. The way to avoid this danger is to tend contin

ually toward the other extreme, striving rather to re

flect and be silent. For the prudent medium of speak

ing only what is necessary, is found more in reflection

than in immoderate speech. Remember, my soul, that

thou canst not disport thyself in self-sought conversation

with creatures without relinquishing God in the secret

interior of thy soul; and that which thou canst not do

without impudence and insult in thy intercourse with

other creatures, thou shouldst not do in thy dealings

with thy Lord and the Lord of all. Close thy ears to

the deceitful conversations, which might induce thee to

speak what thou shouldst not; for it is not just, that

thou speak more than what is enjoined thee by thy Lord

and Master. Listen to his holy law, which He has, with

so liberal a hand, written in thy heart ; hear the voice of

thy Pastor, and answer Him there, and Him only. I

wish to impress thee with the fact, that if thou art to be

my disciple and companion, it must be by signalizing

thyself especially in this virtue of silence. Reflect much,

and write this doctrine in thy heart today, and attach

thyself more and more to this virtue ; for first I wish to

see thee established in this, and then I will teach thee

how to speak.

388. I do not dissuade thee from speaking words of

admonition and consolation to thy daughters and thy

subjects. Speak also with those, who can give thee

tokens of thy Beloved, and who can instruct and in

flame thee with his love. In such kind of conversation

thou wilt acquire a profitable silence of the soul; since

in them is excited a horror and disgust for conversa

tion of men and thou wilt learn to relish conversation

308 CITY OF GOD

about the wished-for eternal Good only. Then with the

force of love transforming thy being into that of thy

Beloved, the impetus of thy passions will weaken and

thou shalt arrive at that kind of sweet martyrdom, which

I suffered, when I complained of my body and of mortal

life ; for they seemed to me a dreary imprisonment which

hindered my flight, although not my love. O my

daughter, forget all the earthly things in the hiding

place of thy silence, and imitate me with all thy fervor

and all thy strength; for thus shalt thou arrive at that

state, to which thy Spouse invites thee. There thou

shalt hear the consoling words, which sustained me in

the pangs of my love : "My dove, dilate thy heart, and

give admission, my cherished one, to that sweet pain,

for my heart is wounded by thy love." Thus the Lord

spoke to me, and this thou thyself hast heard repeated

ly, for to those that are alone and in silence does his

Majesty speak.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE MOST HOLY CHILD MARY BEGAN TO SPEAK AT

THE AGE OF ONE YEAR AND A HALF; AND HOW SHE

WAS OCCUPIED UNTIL THE TIME OF HER DEPARTURE

TO THE TEMPLE.

389. The time had arrived, in which the most holy

Mary could profitably and with perfect propriety break

her blessed silence, in which the voice of that heavenly

Turtledove was to be heard on our earth in order that

She might be the faithful harbinger of the springtime of

grace (Cant 2, 12). But before She was commissioned

by the Lord to speak with men (which was at the age

of eighteen months), She was favored with a vision of

the Divinity, not intuitive but intellectual, which was

a summary of those already received and augmented

the previous gifts and graces. In that vision a colloquy

took place between the Child and the highest Lord,

which I tremblingly presume to reproduce in words.

390. The Queen spoke to his Majesty: "Most High

Lord and incomprehensible God, how canst Thou pursue

with so great favors thy most useless and poor creature?

How canst Thou unbend thy greatness in such loving

condescension toward thy slave, who is incapable of

making the least return? The Most High looks down

upon the servant. The Most Powerful stoops to enrich

the indigent! The Holy of holiest lowers Himself to

the dust! I, O Lord, am the little one among the crea

tures, and least of all deserve thy favors. What shall

I do in thy divine presence? How shall I requite what

309

310 CITY OF GOD

I owe to Thee? What have I, O Lord, that is not

thine, since Thou givest me being, life and activity?

But I rejoice, O my Beloved, that Thou possessest all

the good, and without Thee, the creature possesses noth

ing. I rejoice, that Thou alone canst claim the glory

of raising up the little one, of favoring the most useless,

giving existence to nothingness; for thus thy magnifi

cence shall become more known and exalted."

391. The Lord answered Her and said: "My Dove

and Beloved One, in my eyes thou hast found favor;

thine are the sweetnesses of my delights, my friend and

chosen one. I will manifest what in thee shall please Me

most." These promises of the Lord wounded Her anew

and made the most tender heart of the infant Queen

pine in throes of love, though it had already grown

strong; and the Most High in his pleasure continued

and said : "I am the God of mercies and with immense

love I am drawn toward mortals; among so many, who

have by their faults offended Me, I see some just, who

are my friends and who have served Me and do serve Me

from their heart. I have resolved to save them by send

ing my Onlybegotten, in order that they may not be de

prived of my glory, nor I of their eternal praise."

392. To this proposition the most holy child Mary

responded: "Most high Lord and powerful King,

thine are all creatures and thine the power; Thou alone

are the holy One and the supreme Ruler of all creation :

let thy own bounty move Thee, O Lord, to hasten the

coming of thy Onlybegotten for the Redemption of the

sons of Adam. Let now the desired day of my ancient

Forefathers begin to dawn and let mortals see thy eter

nal salvation. Why, O most beloved Master, since Thou

art a most kind Father of all mercies, dost Thou delay

so much the day, which thy captive and afflicted chil-

THE CONCEPTION 311

dren expect with such longing? If my life can be of any

service, I offer it gladly as a sacrifice for them."

393. The Most High urged Her with great benevo

lence, that from now on She should many times each

day pray for the hastening of the Incarnation of the

eternal Word and for the Redemption of all the human

race, and that She should bewail the sins of men, which

impede their salvation and restoration. Likewise He

told Her, that it was now time to exercise all her out

ward faculties, and that for his own greater glory it was

befitting that She should converse with human creatures.

Therefore, in order to comply with his wishes, the Child

said to his Majesty:

394. "Most high Lord and incomprehensible Ma

jesty, how can mere dust venture to treat of such hidden

and exalted mysteries? How can she, who is the least

of all the womanborn, dare to converse of secrets so

precious in thy sight? How can I win for men thy

favor, and what can a creature do, that has served Thee

in nothing? But Thou, O my Beloved, wilt be obliged

by poverty itself : in Thee the ailing will find health, the

thirsty will find the fountains of thy mercy, and the

strength to fulfill thy will. If Thou ordainest, O my

Lord, that I open my lips in order to converse and

speak with others besides Thyself who art all my good

and my desire, I beseech Thee, consider my frailty and

ward off the danger. Very hard it is for rational crea

tures not to fall into excess in conversation. If it is thy

pleasure, I would rather keep silence during all my life

in order to avoid all danger of losing Thee; for if this

should happen, I shall not be able to outlive it one mo

ment."

395. This was the answer of the most holy child

Mary, for She was full of apprehension on account of

312 CITY OF GOD

the new and dangerous duty of conversing with men

which was now enjoined on Her. As far as her inclina

tions were concerned, if God had allowed it, She de

sired to observe inviolate silence and be mute during all

her life. O great confusion and shining example for

the insipidity of mortals, that She, who could not sin in

speech, should tremble at its dangers! And we, who

cannot open our mouths without sinning in our words,

are consumed with mortal longings after the dissipation

of speech! But, O my most sweet Child and Queen of

all creation, how canst Thou desire to remain silent?

Dost Thou forget, my Mistress, that thy silence would

be the ruin of the world, the sorrow of heaven, and

also, according to our ignorant way of understand

ing it, a dreary void for the most blessed Trinity ? Dost

Thou not know, that even in a single one of thy words

namely in thy answer to the holy archangel : "Fiat nihi

secundum verbum tuum" "Let it be done to me accord

ing to thy word" (Luc. 1, 38) Thou wilt give the pleni

tude of perfection to all that exists? To the eternal

Father Thou givest a Daughter, to the eternal Son, a

Mother ; to the Holy Ghost, a Spouse ; to the angels, rep

aration; to men, redemption; to the heavens, glory;

peace to the earth; an advocate to the world; health to

the sick, life to the dead. In this answer Thou givest

existence and reality to that, which must be considered

greater than anything else outside of his own essence,

and greater than all the other works that God could de

cree and ordain. Since thus the greatest work of divine

Omnipotence and the welfare of all creation depends en

tirely on thy word how canst Thou desire to be speech

less, O my Lady and Mistress? Speak then, O Child,

who canst speak so well, and let thy voice be heard

through all the vast circles of the heavens!

THE CONCEPTION 313

396. With the most prudent answer of this Spouse

the Most High was much pleased and his heart was

again wounded by the loving fear of our great Child.

Therefore, as if fully requited by their beloved, and as

if conferring among Themselves in regard to her peti

tion, the three divine Persons spoke those words of the

Canticles: "Our sister is little and hath no breasts.

What shall we do to our sister in the day when she is

to be spoken to? If she be a wall, let us build up on it

bulwarks of silver" (Cant 8, 8). Little thou art, be

loved sister, in thy eyes, but great art thou and great

wilt thou be in our eyes. In this humility thou hast

wounded our heart with one of thy hairs (Cant. 4, 9).

Thou art little in thy own judgment and estimation, and

this is what moves Us with love for thee. Thou hast

not as yet the breasts of nourishing words ; but thou also

art not a woman according to the law of sin, for in re

gard to thee, this law does not hold, nor do We wish

that it should extend over thee. Thou humblest thy

self, though thou art great beyond all creatures: thou

fearest, though thou art secure: thou guardest against

a danger, which cannot approach thee. What shall We

do for this our sister on the day, in which she shall open

her lips according to our wish in order to bless Us while

the mortals do it in order to blaspheme against our holy

name? What shall We do in order to celebrate so fes

tive a day as that, in which she begins to speak? How

shall We reward such humble modesty of her, who was

always the delight of our eyes? Sweet was her silence,

and most sweet will be her voice in our ears. If she

is a fortress founded on the abundance of our graces and

made invincible by the power of our right hand, We will

build upon such strong walls turrets of silver, We will

heap new gifts upon the former ones, and let these our

314 CITY OF GOD

turrets be of silver so as to make them more rich and

precious. Let her words, when she begins to speak, be

most pure, candid, strong and full of meaning to our

ears; let our grace overflow from her lips, and let our

powerful arm of protection rest upon her."

397. While, according to our way of thinking, this

conference took place between the three Persons of the

Divinity, our infant Queen was strengthened and con

soled in her humble solicitude concerning the first ex

ercise of her speech. The Lord promised Her, that He

would govern her words and assist Her to direct them

all toward his service and pleasure. Then She peti

tioned his Majesty anew for his permission and blessing

to open her lips so full of grace, and, being prudent and

considerate in all things, She spoke her first words to her

parents, saint Joachim and Anne, asking of them their

blessing and thus acknowledging that from them after

God She had her life and being. The happy parents

heard Her and at the same time they saw that She was

able to walk by herself. The happy Anne in great joy

of her spirit took Her into her arms and said: "My

Daughter and Beloved of my heart, blessed and glorious

to the Lord be the hour, in which we hear thy words and

in which Thou beginnest to walk in his holy service. Let

thy words and sayings be few, well measured and con

sidered, and let thy footsteps be directed aright toward

the service and honor of our Creator."

398. The most holy Child heard these and other ex

hortations of her holy mother Anne, and She engraved

them in her tender heart to preserve them in profound

humility and obedience. During the year and a half,

which remained of the three before her departure into

the temple, She spoke but few words beside those ad

dressed to her mother; for holy Anne, in order to hear

THE CONCEPTION 315

Her speak, was wont to call Her and request Her to

speak of God and his mysteries. The heavenly Child

fulfilled her wish listening to and asking questions of

her mother ; She that excelled in wisdom all the woman-

born, desired to learn and be instructed. Thus the

Daughter and the mother passed their time in sweetest

colloquies concerning the Lord.

399. It would not be easy, nor even possible, to de

scribe the doings of the heavenly child Mary during these

eighteen months of companionship with her mother. The

latter shed copious and sweet tears of love and grati

tude when at times she looked upon her Child, more

venerable than the symbolic ark of the covenant. Yet

never did Anne reveal the secret of her heart that her

Daughter was chosen to be the Mother of the Messias,

although they often spoke of this ineffable mystery. At

such times the Child was inflamed with the most ardent

love and She spoke of it in the most exalted terms, in

nocently extolling her own dignity without being aware

thereof, while her most blessed mother, holy Anne, was

filled more and more with joy, love and solicitude for

her Daughter and her heart s Treasure.

400. The strength of the tender Child was by far in

adequate for the fulfillment of the exercises and prac

tices of humility to which her humble love urged Her

on; for this Mistress of all creatures esteemed Herself

the lowest of them all and was anxious to exhibit these

humble sentiments in her actions, by taking upon Herself

the most abject and servile occupations of the household.

She feared that if She did not serve all that were with

Her, She could not satisfy her obligations and would

fall short of her duty in the sight of the Lord. While

the real cause of her not performing all that She wished

was none other than the insufficiency of her bodily forces,

316 CITY OF GOD

and while the highest seraphim would have kissed the

place, where her sacred feet had touched; yet She was

often full of holy fear lest She be deprived of doing the

most humble services, such as cleaning and scrubbing the

house. As She was not always permitted to engage in

such things when others were present, She tried to do

it when alone, being on such occasions assisted by the

holy angels and thus in a measure reaping the fruit of

her humility through their help.

401. The family of Joachim was not rich, though at

the same time he could not have been called poor. Com-

formable to the honored standing of her family, saint

Anne desired to dress her most holy Daughter as best

she could afford within the bounds of decency and mod

esty. The most humble Child yielded to this maternal

solicitude during the time of her voluntary silence with

out protest; but when She began to speak, She humbly

asked her mother not to clothe Her in costly and showy

garments, but to procure for Her garments of coarse

and poor material, if possible, such as had already been

worn by others and of an ash-grey color, similar to that

which in our day is worn by the nuns of saint Clare.

The holy Mother, who looked upon and respected her

Daughter as her Mistress, answered: "My Daughter, I

will conform to thy desire in regard to the form and col

or of thy dress; but thy strength will not permit the

coarseness which thou desirest, and in this regard I wish

that thou obey me."

402. The Child obedient to the will of her mother and

never objecting in anything, acquiesced and allowed Her

self to be clothed in the garments which were provided.

They were of the color and form desired by Her, and

similar to the dress worn by children dedicated to a de

vout life. Although She desired them to be coarser and

THE CONCEPTION 317

poorer, She supplied this want by obedience, deeming

obedience more precious than sacrifice (I Kings 15, 22).

Thus the most holy child Mary had the merit of obe

dience to her mother and of humility in her aspirations,

deeming Herself unworthy of the use of even that which

is necessary to preserve natural life. In the virtue of

obedience toward her parents She was most distin

guished and exact during the three years of her stay with

them; by her divinely infused science She knew their

interior wishes and thus She was beforehand in fulfill

ing them to the minutest point. She asked the permis

sion and blessing of her mother for whatever She under

took to do Herself, kissing her hand with great humility

and reverence. The mother outwardly permitted this,

while inwardly She venerated the grace and exalted dig

nity of her Daughter.

403. At times She would retire to enjoy, by Herself

and with greater liberty, the company and intercourse of

her holy angels and to give outward tokens of the burn

ing love of her Spouse. In some of her exercises She

prostrated Herself, tearfully afflicting that most perfect

and tender little body of hers for the sins of mortals,

supplicating the mercy and blessings of God for them,

and striving to gain these favors by the exercise of

heroic virtues. The grief of her heart on account of the

sins made known to Her, and the pangs of love with

which it was accompanied, caused in the heavenly Child

intensest sorrow and pain, nevertheless, in order to be

in all things the Mother of mercy and the Mediatrix of

grace, She taxed also her bodily strength during that

tender age in works of penance and mortification, spar

ing no exertion that time and opportunity permitted in

order to gain grace for Herself and for us men.

404. When She reached the age of two years She be-

318 CITY OF GOD

gan to exercise her special pity and charity toward the

poor. She solicited alms for them of saint Anne, and

the kind-hearted mother readily granted her petitions,

both for the sake of the poor and to satisfy the tender

charity of her most holy Daughter, at the same time en

couraging Her who was the Mistress of mercy and

charity, to love and esteem the poor. Besides giving

what She obtained expressly for distribution among the

poor, She reserved part of her meals for the same pur

pose, in order that from her infancy it might be said of

Her more truly than of Job: from my infancy compas

sion grew with me (Job 31, 18). She gave to the poor

not as if conferring a benefit upon them, but as paying a

debt due in justice, saying in her heart: this my brother

and master deserves what he needs and what I possess

without desert. In giving alms She kissed the hands of

the poor, and whenever She was alone, She kissed their

feet, or, if this was impossible, She would kiss the

ground over which they had passed. Never did She give

an alms to the poor without conferring still greater

favors on their souls by interceding for them and thus

dismissing them relieved in body and soul.

405. Not less admirable were the humility and obe

dience of the most holy Child in permitting Herself to be

taught to read and to do other things as other children

in that time of life. She was instructed in reading

and other arts by her parents and She submitted, though

She had infused knowledge of all things created. The

angels were filled with admiration at the unparalleled

wisdom of this Child, who willingly listened to the teach

ing of all. Her holy mother Anne, as far as her intui

tion and love permitted, observed with rapture the heav

enly Princess and blessed the Most High in Her. But

with her love, as the time for presenting Her in the

THE CONCEPTION 319

temple approached, grew also the dread of the approach

ing end of the three years set by the Almighty and the

consciousness, that the terms of her vow must punctually

be fulfilled. Therefore the child Mary began to prepare

and dispose her mother, manifesting to her, six months

before, her ardent desire of living in the temple. She

recounted the benefits, which they had received at the

hands of the Lord, how much they were obliged to seek

his greater pleasure, and how, when She should be dedi

cated to God in the temple, She would be more her

Daughter than in their own house.

406. The holy Anne heard the discreet arguments of

her child Mary; but, though She was resigned to the

divine will and wished to fulfill her promise of offering

up her beloved Daughter, yet the natural force of her

love toward such an unequalled and beloved Treasure,

joined with the full understanding of its inestimable

value, caused a mortal strife in her most faithful heart

at the mere thought of her departure, which was closely

at hand. There is no doubt, that she would have lost

her life in this fierce and vivid sorrow, if the hand of

the Almighty had not comforted her: for the grace and

dignity of her heavenly Daughter was fully known to

her and had entirely ravished her heart, making the

presence of Mary more dear to her than life. Full of

this grief she said to the Child : "My beloved Daughter,

for many years I have longed for Thee and only for a

few years do I merit to have thy company; but thus let

the will of God be fulfilled ; I do not wish to be unfaith

ful to my promise of sending Thee to the temple, but

there is yet time left for fulfilling it : have patience until

the day arrives for the accomplishment of thy wishes."

407. A few days before most holy Mary reached the

age of three years, She was favored with an abstract vis-

320 CITY OF GOD

ion of the Divinity, in which it was made known to Her

that the time of her departure for the temple ordained by

God, had arrived, and that there She was to live dedi

cated and consecrated to his service. Her most pure

soul was filled with new joy and gratitude at this pros

pect and speaking with the Lord, She gave Him thanks

saying: "Most high God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

my eternal and highest Good, since I cannot praise Thee

worthily, let it be done in the name of this humble slave

by the angelic spirits; since Thou, immense Lord, who

hast need of none, dost look upon this lowly wormlet of

the earth in thy unbounded mercy. Whence this great

benefit to me, that Thou shouldst receive me into thy

house and service, since I do not even merit the most ab

ject spot of the earth for my place of habitation? But as

Thou art urged thereto by thy own greatness, I beseech

Thee to inspire the hearts of my parents to fulfill thy

holy will."

408. At the same time saint Anne had a vision, in

which the Lord enjoined her to fulfill her promise by

presenting her Daughter in the temple on the very day,

on which the third year of her age should be complete.

There is no doubt that this command caused more grief

in saint Anne, than that given to Abraham to sacrifice

his son Isaac. But the Lord consoled and comforted

Her, promising his grace and assistance in her loneliness

during the absence of her beloved Daughter. The holy

matron showed Herself prepared and ready to execute

the command of the Almighty, and she answered full of

submission by the following prayer : "Lord God, Master

of all my being, I have pledged to thy service and to the

temple my Daughter, whom Thou, in thy ineffable

mercy, hast given me : She is thine, and I return Her to

Thee with thanks for the time in which I have enjoyed

THE CONCEPTION 321

Her, for having been chosen to conceive Her and assist

in her formation. But remember, God and Lord, that in

the keeping of thy inestimable Treasure I was rich; I

enjoyed her company in this desert valley of tears, She

was the joy of my sorrow, the alleviation of my labors,

the mirror for the regulation of my life, the example of a

supernal perfection, which stimulated my remissness and

enkindled my affections. Through that Creature alone

have I hoped for mercy and grace\* and I fear, that in

being deprived of Her, I will fall away from all thy

grace. Heal, O Lord, the wound of my heart, and deal

with me not as I have deserved, but look upon me as a

kind Father of mercies, while I bring my Daughter to

the temple according to thy command."

409. Saint Joachim also had a visitation or vision of

the Lord at this time, receiving the same command as

Anne. Having conferred with each other and taking

account of the will of the Lord, they resolved to fulfill it

with humble submission and appointed the day on which

the Child was to be brought to the temple. Great was

also the grief of this holy old man, though not quite so

great as that of saint Anne, for the high mystery of her

being the future Mother of God was yet concealed from

him.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

410. My dearest daughter, keep in mind, that all the

living are born destined for death, but ignorant of the

time allowed them ; this they know for certain however,

that the term of life is short, that eternity is without

end, and that in this life only they can harvest what will

yield life or death eternal. In this dangerous pilgrimage

of life God has ordained, that no one shall know for cer

tain, whether he is worthy (Eccles. 9, 1) of his love or

322 CITY OF GOD

hate; for if he uses his reason rightly, this uncertainty

will urge him to seek with all his powers the friendship

of that same Lord. God justifies his cause as soon as

the soul acquires the use of reason; for from that time

onward He enlightens and urges and guides man toward

virtue and draws him away from sin, teaching him to

distinguish between water and fire, to approve of the

good and reject evil, to choose virtue and repel vice.

Moreover, God calls and rouses the soul by his holy

inspirations and continual promptings, provides the help

of the Sacraments, doctrines and commandments, urges

man onward through his angels, preachers, confessors,

ministers and teachers, by special tribulations and favors,

by the example of strangers, by trials, deaths and other

happenings and dispositions of his Providence; He dis

poses the things of life so as to draw toward Him all

men, for He wishes all to be saved. Thus He places at

the disposal of the creature a vast field of benevolent

help and assistance, which it can and should use for its

own advancement. Opposing all this are the tendencies

of the inferior and sensitive nature, infected with the

fomes peccati, the foment of sin, tending toward sensible

objects and by the lower appetites and repugnances, dis

turbing the reason and enthralling the will in the false

liberty of ungoverned desires. The demon also, by his

fascinations and his deceitful and iniquitous suggestions

obscures the interior light, and hides the deathly poison

beneath the pleasant exterior. But the Most High does

not immediately forsake his creatures; He renews his

mercy and his assistance, recalling them again and again,

and if they respond to his first call, He adds others ac

cording to his equity, increasing and multiplying them

in proportion as the soul corresponds. As a reward of

the victory, which the soul wins over itself, the force

THE CONCEPTION 323

of his passions and concupiscences is diminished, the

spirit is made free to soar higher and rise above its own

inclinations and above the demons.

412. But if man neglects to rise above his low desires

and his forgetfulness, he yields to the enemy of God

and man. The more he alienates himself from the good

ness of God, so much the more unworthy does he be

come of the secret callings of the Most High, and so

much the less does he appreciate his assistance, though

it be great. For the demon and the passions have ob

tained a greater dominion and power over his intellect

and have made him more unfit and more incapable of the

grace of the Almighty. Thereon, my dear daughter,

rests the whole salvation or condemnation of souls, that

is, in commencing to admit or resist the advances of the

Lord. I desire thee not to forget this doctrine, so that thou

mayest respond to the many calls which thou receivest of

the Most High. See thou be strong in resisting his ene

mies and punctually solicitous in fulfilling the pleasure

of thy Lord, for thereby thou wilt gratify Him and at

tend to the commands made known to thee by divine

light. I loved my parents dearly, and the tender words

of my mother wounded my heart ; but as I knew it to be

the will of the Lord to leave them, I forgot her house

and my people in order to follow my Spouse. The

proper education and instruction of children will do

much toward making them more free and habituated to

the practice of virtue, since thus they will be accustomed

to follow the sure and safe guiding star of reason from

its first dawn.

BOOK TWO

Treats of the Presentation of the Princess of Heaven In the Temple,

the Favors She Received at the Hand of God, the Sublime

Perfection with which She Observed the Rules of the

Temple, the Heavenly Excellence of Her Heroic Vir

tues and Visions, Her Most Holy Espousal

and other Events up to the Incarna

tion of the Son of God.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY IN THE

TEMPLE AT THE AGE OF THREE YEARS.

413. Among the types which foreshadowed the most

holy Mary in the written Law, none was more expressive

than the ark of the covenant, not only on account of the

material of which it was constructed, and its contents,

but also on account of the purposes for which it served

and the effects which the Lord wrought through it and

in connection with it in the ancient synagogue. It was

all a prototype of this Lady and of what She was to do

in the new Church of the Gospel. The incorruptible

cedar, of which it was made, not by chance, but by divine

disposition (Exod. 25, 10), typified clearly our mystical

Ark Mary, free from the corruption of actual sin and

from the secret worminess of original guilt with its in

separable ferment of disorderly passions. The finest and

purest gold (Exod. 25, 11), which covered it on the out

side and inside, certainly indicated the most perfect and

exalted graces and gifts, which shone forth in her heav

enly thoughts, in her works and activities, in her habits

325

326 CITY OF GOD

and the operations of her faculties ; so that in no exterior

or interior part of this mystical Ark could be discerned

ought, which at any moment of time was not entirely

covered by the gold of the most exquisite and finest carat

414. The stone tablets of the law, the vase of the

manna and the miraculous staff (Heb. 9, 4), which that

ancient ark contained and preserved, cannot be surpassed

in expressive significance of the eternal and incarnate

Word, enclosed within that living Ark the most holy

Mary, for He was her onlybegotten Son, the living foun

dation-rock of the evangelical Church (I Cor. 3, 11). In

this virginal ark of Mary was placed the key-stone which

was to join the Gentiles and the Jews, and was torn from

the mountain of its eternal generation (Ephes. 2, 20) in

order that on it might be written by the finger of God

the new Law of grace. Thus in the old ark Mary was

foreshadowed as the great Queen, who was to be the de

positary of all that God provided and operated for his

creatures. She also enclosed within Herself the manna

of the Divinity and of grace, and the wonder-working

staff of miracles and prodigies, so that this heavenly and

mystical Ark alone contained the fountain of grace,

namely God himself, overflowing into the rest of man

kind and forming the nucleus of all the miracles and

prodigies of God. In Mary therefore all that the Lord

desired to operate and manifest is contained and de

posited.

415. Accordingly the ark of the testament (not in it

self, but on account of the truth which it foreshadowed)

served as the seat and foot-stool of propitiation, where

the Lord was seated in the tribunal of his mercies, to lis

ten to his people, to answer them and distribute his gifts

and favors ; for the ancient ark typified most holy Mary,

the throne of grace and the true mystical propitiatory

THE CONCEPTION 327

which He had expressly made for his indwelling. Thus

it seems that the tribunal of the divine justice remains

set up in God himself, while the propitiatory and the tri

bunal of his mercy was set up in Mary, in order that to

Her, as a throne of grace, we might approach in assured

confidence to present our petitions for those benefits,

graces and mercies, which outside of the Queen Mary,

are unheard of and unattainable by the human race.

416. Such a sacred and mysterious Ark, constructed

by the hands of the Lord himself for his habitation and

as the propitiatory of his people, could not remain with

propriety outside of his temple, where was preserved that

other material ark, which was only a figure of this spir

itual and true Ark of the new covenant. Therefore its

Author ordained that She be placed in his house and

temple as soon as the first three years of her infancy

should be completed. But I am astonished to find a won

derful difference in regard to that which happened with

the primitive and figurative ark and that which came to

pass with the second and true ark of the covenant. For,

though the ancient ark had no other importance than

that of presignifying Mary and the mysteries connected

with Her, when the king David transferred it to different

places, and when afterwards Solomon his son placed it in

the temple, as in its proper place of rest, all was done

with great festivities and rejoicings of that ancient peo

ple, as is shown by the solemn processions arranged by

David from the house of Abinadab to the house of Obe-

dedom (II King 6, 10), and thence to the tabernacle of

Sion, his own city (Ibid. 12) ; likewise, when Solomon

transferred it from Sion to the new temple, which he had

built as the house of God and of prayer by command of

the Lord.

417. On all these occasions the ancient ark of the Tes-

328 CITY OF GOD

tament was borne along in public veneration and most

solemn celebrations, amid the strains of music, dancing,

sacrifices, the rejoicings of the kings and of the whole

people of Israel, as is related in the sacred history of the

second and third book of the Kings and the first and sec

ond of Paralipomenon. But our true and mystical Ark,

the most holy Mary, although She was the most precious,

the most estimable and worshipful of all the creatures,

was not brought to the temple with such solemn show

and public ostentation; during the transferring of this

mysterious Ark, the sacrifice of animals, the royal pomp,

and the royal majesty were wanting. She was carried

from the house of her father Joachim in the arms of her

humble mother Anne, who, though she was not very

poor, wished to bear her beloved Daughter on her arms

in order to present Her in the temple without ostentation

of riches, alone and unnoticed by the people. The glory

and majesty of this procession, according to the wishes

of the Most High, was to be divine and invisible. All

the sacraments and mysteries of the most holy Mary are

so exalted and hidden that according to the inscrutable

decrees of the Lord many of them are concealed to this

day. He it is that holds in his hands the time and the

hour for the revelation of all things, and of each one in

particular.

418. Lost in admiration of this wonder, prostrate in

the presence of the Most High and in the praise of his

high judgments, I was favored by his Majesty with the

following explanation: "Understand, my soul, that if I

provided that the ark of the old Testament be venerated

with so much festivity and outward show, it was because

it was an express figure of Her, who was to be the

Mother of the incarnate Word. The first ark was ma

terial and irrational, and this ostentation and celebrity

THE CONCEPTION 329

could be arranged for it without difficulty; but during

her life on earth in mortal flesh, I would not permit such

celebration in connection with the true and living ark,

Mary ; for thou and the rest of the souls are to look upon

Her as an example during your pilgrimage. I do not de

sire those who are written in my memory for eternal

election to expect honors and the inconsiderate praise

and applause of men as a part of their reward for work

ing in my honor and service during mortal life. Nor

must they be put in danger of dividing the love of their

God, who justifies them and makes them saints, with

those who merely proclaim them as such. The one and

only Creator has made them and sustains them, illu

mines and defends them ; therefore their love and attention

must be single and undivided, and it must not be diverted

even by a thankful regard for those who honor them as

just. The love of God is most sensitive, the human will

is most frail and limited ; if it is divided, it can only be

small and very imperfect in its activity, easily coming

to nought. Therefore I did not wish Her, who was to

be the example of all holiness and who was free from all

danger of a fall through my protection, to be renowned,

or specially honored during her life, nor was She to be

brought to the temple amid the outward show of honor."

419. "Moreover, I have sent my Onlybegotten from

heaven and have created Her, who was to be his Mother,

for the very purpose of drawing the world from its error

and of undeceiving mortals, who have established the un

just and sinful law, that the poor are to be despised and

the rich esteemed, that the humble are to be humiliated

and the proud to be exalted, the virtuous to be maligned

and the sinful applauded, that the timorous and modest

are to be considered as fools and the arrogant to be held

as valiant, that poverty should be considered as shameful

23

330 CITY OF GOD

and unfortunate, while riches, pomp, ostentation, splen

dor, honors, perishable pleasures should be sought and

prized by foolish and carnal men. All this the incarnate

Word and his Mother, in coming among them, were to

reprove and condemn as deceitful and false, so that mor

tals might perceive the terrible danger of loving and en

tertaining so blindly the deceitful sensible pleasures, in

which they live. Through this insensate love it happens

that they so persistently fly from humility, meekness and

poverty and evade all that pertains to the true virtue of

penance and abnegation of self. And yet these virtues

are truly acceptable in my eyes and according to my jus

tice; for the holy, the honorable, the just actions, are to

be rewarded with eternal glory, whereas the contrary

ones are to be visited by everlasting punishment."

420. "This truth earthly and carnal eyes do not see,

nor do they care to attend to the light which teaches

them. But thou, soul, observe it and write it in thy heart,

taking an example from the incarnate Word and from

his Mother, and imitating Them closely therein. She

was holy and, in my estimation, most acceptable to

Christ; to Her was due all the veneration and worship

of men, and even more than they could give ; yet I pro

vided and ordained in her regard that She receive no

honor or recognition at that time, so that She, as the

Mistress of truth, might be the most shining example of

all that is holy, perfect, estimable and safest for the in

struction and guidance of my elect. She was to be the

shining example of humility, of retirement, of contempt

and horror for the dreadful vanity of the world, of love

for sufferings, tribulations, insults, afflictions and dishon

ors inflicted by creatures. All holiness is adverse and

contrary to the applause, honors and estimation of the

world, and I decreed that the most pure Mary should not

THE CONCEPTION 331

be burdened by them, nor do I desire that my friends

should enjoy or be pleased with them. If for my glory

it sometimes happens that they become known to the

world, it is not because they have desired it or looked for

it; but because they, always remaining in the humility

and in the sentiment proper to their state, resign them

selves to my Providence. For themselves and as far as

they are concerned, they seek and love that which the

world despises and which the incarnate Word and his

most holy Mother strove after and have taught." This

was the answer which the Lord gave to my wondering

inquiry and thus did He instruct me in regard to what I

should seek and strive after.

421. The three years time decreed by the Lord hav

ing been completed, Joachim and Anne set out from

Nazareth, accompanied by a few of their kindred and

bringing with them the true living Ark of the covenant,

the most holy Mary, borne on the arms of her mother in

order to be deposited in the holy temple of Jerusalem.

The beautiful Child, by her fervent and loving aspira

tions, hastened after the ointments of her Beloved, seek

ing in the temple Him, whom She bore in her heart. This

humble procession was scarcely noticed by earthly crea

tures, but it was invisibly accompanied by the angelic

spirits, who, in order to celebrate this event, had hastened

from heaven in greater numbers than ordinary as her

bodyguard, and were singing in heavenly strains the

glory and praise of the Most High. The Princess of

heaven heard and saw them as She hastened her beauti

ful steps along in the sight of the highest and the true

Solomon. Thus they pursued their journey from Naz

areth to the holy city of Jerusalem, and also the parents

of the holy child Mary felt in their hearts great joy and

consolation of spirit.

332 CITY OF GOD

422. They arrived at the holy temple, and the blessed

Anne on entering took her Daughter and Mistress by the

hand, accompanied and assisted by saint Joachim. All

three offered a devout and fervent prayer to the Lord;

the parents offering to God their Daughter, and the most

holy Child, in profound humility, adoration and worship,

offering up Herself. She alone perceived that the Most

High received and accepted Her, and, amid divine splen

dor which filled the temple, She heard a voice saying to

Her : "Come, my Beloved, my Spouse, come to my temple,

where I wish to hear thy voice of praise and worship."

Having offered their prayers, they rose and betook them

selves to the priest. The parents consigned their Child

into his hands and he gave them his blessing. Together

they conducted Her to the portion of the temple build

ings, where many young girls lived to be brought up in

retirement and in virtuous habits, until old enough to as

sume the state of matrimony. It was a place of retire

ment especially selected for the first-born daughters of

the royal tribe of Juda and the sacerdotal tribe of Levi.

423. Fifteen stairs led up to the entrance of these

apartments. Other priests came down these stairs in

order to welcome the blessed child Mary. The one that

had received them, being according to the law one of a

minor order, placed Her on the first step. Mary, with

his permission, turned and kneeling down before Joachim

and Anne, asked their blessing and kissed their hands,

recommending herself to their prayers before God. The

holy parents in tenderest tears gave Her their blessing;

whereupon She ascended the fifteen stairs without any

assistance. She hastened upward with incomparable fer

vor and joy, neither turning back, nor shedding tears,

nor showing any childish regret at parting from her

parents. To see Her, in so tender an age, so full of

THE CONCEPTION 333

strange majesty and firmness of mind, excited the admir

ation of all those present. The priests received Her

among the rest of the maidens, and saint Simeon con

signed Her to the teachers, one of whom was the

prophetess Anne. This holy matron had been prepared by

the Lord by especial grace and enlightenment, so that

She joyfully took charge of this Child of Joachim and

Anne. She considered the charge a special favor of di

vine Providence and merited by her holiness and virtue

to have Her as a disciple, who was to be the Mother of

God and Mistress of all the creatures.

424. Sorrowfully her parents Joachim and Anne re

traced their journey to Nazareth, now poor as deprived

of the rich Treasure of their house. But the Most High

consoled and comforted them in their affliction. The

holy priest Simeon, although he did not at this time know

of the mystery enshrined in the child Mary, obtained

great light as to her sanctity and her special selection by

the Lord; also the other priests looked upon Her with

great reverence and esteem. In ascending the fifteen

stairs the Child brough to fulfillment, that, which Jacob

saw happening in sleep ; for here too were angels ascend

ing and descending: the ones accompanying, the others

meeting their Queen as She hastened up ; whereas at the

top God was waiting in order to welcome Her as his

Daughter and Spouse. She also felt by the effects of the

overflowing love, that this truly was the house of God

and the portal of heaven.

425. The child Mary, when brought to her teacher,

knelt in profound humility before her and asked her

blessing. She begged to be admitted among those under

her direction, obedience and counsel, and asked her kind

forbearance in the labor and trouble, which She would

occasion. The prophetess Anne, her teacher, received

334 CITY OF GOD

Her with pleasure, and said to Her: "My Daughter,

Thou shalt find in me a helpful mother and I will take

care of Thee and of thy education with all possible solic

itude." Then the holy Child proceeded to address Her

self with the same humility to all the maidens which

were then present; each one She greeted and embraced,

offering Herself as their servant and requesting them,

as older and more advanced than She in the duties of

their position, to instruct and command Her. She also

gave them thanks, that without her merit they admitted

Her to their company.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN

MARY.

426. My daughter, the greatest happiness, which can

befall any soul in this mortal life, is that the Almighty

call her to his house consecrated to his service. For by

this benefit He rescues the soul from a dangerous slavery

and relieves her of the vile servitude of the world,

where, deprived of true liberty, she eats her bread in the

sweat of her brow. Who is so dull and insipid as not

to know the dangers of the worldly life, which is ham

pered by all the abominable and most wicked laws and

customs introduced by the astuteness of the devil and

the perversity of men? The better part is religious life

and retirement; in it is found security, outside is a tor

ment and a stormy sea, full of sorrow and unhappiness.

Through the hardness of their heart and the total forget-

fulness of themselves men do not know this truth and

are not attracted by its blessings. But thou, O soul, be

not deaf to the voice of the Most High, attend and cor

respond to it in thy actions: I wish to remind thee, that

one of the greatest snares of the demon is to counteract

THE CONCEPTION 335

the call of the Lord, whenever he seeks to attract and

incline the soul to a life of perfection in his service.

427. Even by itself, the public and sacred act of re

ceiving the habit and entering religion, although it is

not always performed with proper fervor and purity of

intention, is enough to rouse the wrath and fury of the

infernal dragon and his demons ; for they know that this

act tends not only to the glory of the Lord and the joy

of the holy angels, but that religious life will bring the

soul to holiness and perfection. It very often happens,

that they who have received the habit with earthly and

human motives, are afterwards visited by divine grace,

which perfects them and sets all things aright. If this

is possible even when the beginning was without a good

intention, how much more powerful and efficacious will

be the light and influence of grace and the discipline of

religious life, when the soul enters under the influence of

divine love and with a sincere and earnest desire of find

ing God, and of serving and loving Him?

428. Before the Most High reforms or advances

those, who for any reason enter the religious state, it is no

more than right, that in turning away from the world

they avert also their eyes from it and blot out from their

memory all its images, forgetting all that they have in so

praiseworthy a manner left behind. Those that neglect

this requirement and are ungrateful and disloyal to

ward God, will doubtlessly fall under the punishment of

the wife of Lot (Gen. 19, 26), and if on account of the

goodness of God they do not suffer this punishment in

an equally open and visible manner, they nevertheless

undergo it interiorly, remaining congealed and full of

dryness, without fervor or advance in virtue. Forsaken

by grace they thus do not attain the end of their voca

tion, make no progress in religion, nor find any spiritual

336 CITY OF GOD

consolation in it, and do not merit to be visited by the

Lord as children, but to be left to their own resources

like unfaithful and fugitive slaves. Remember, Mary,

that for thee all the world must be crucified and dead;

that thou must have for it no memory, retain none of

its images, pay it no attention, nor have any inclination

toward any of its creatures. If sometimes it is necessary

to exercise charity with thy neighbors, see that thou or

dain it well and that thou safeguard beforehand the good

of thy soul, its security and quiet, its interior tranquillity

and peace. In these points, as far as is possible without

sin, I admonish and command thee to go to the greatest

extremes, if thou wishest to remain in my school.

CHAPTER II.

CONCERNING A SINGULAR FAVOR, WHICH THE ALMIGHTY

CONFERRED ON MOST HOLY MARY AS SOON AS SHE

WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE TEMPLE.

429. When the heavenly child Mary had dismissed

her parents and entered upon her life in the temple, her

teacher assigned to Her a place among the rest of the

maidens, each of whom occupied a large alcove or little

room. The Princess of heaven prostrated Herself on

the pavement, and, remembering that it was holy ground

and part of the temple, She kissed it. In humble adora

tion She gave thanks to the Lord for this new benefit,

and She thanked even the earth for supporting Her and

allowing Her to stand in this holy place; for She held

Herself unworthy of treading and remaining upon it.

Then She turned toward her holy angels and said to

them: "Celestial princes, messengers of the Almighty,

most faithful friends and companions, I beseech you with

all the powers of my soul to remain with me in this holy

temple of my Lord and as my vigilant sentinels, remind

ing me of all that I should do ; instructing me and direct

ing me as the teachers and guides of my actions, so that

I may fulfill in all things the perfect will of the Most

High, give pleasure to the holy priests and obey my

teacher and my companions." And addressing in par

ticular those whom I mentioned above as the twelve

angels of the Apocalypse, She said: "And I beseech

you, my ambassadors, if the Almighty permit you, go

and console my holy parents in their affliction and soli

tude."

337

338 CITY OF GOD

430. While the twelve angels executed her command,

Mary remained with the others in heavenly conversa

tion. She began to feel a supernal influence of great

power and sweetness, spiritualizing Her and elevating

Her in burning ecstasy, and immediately the Most High

commanded the seraphim to assist in illumining and pre

paring her most holy soul. Instantly She was filled with

a divine light and force, which perfected and propor

tioned her faculties in accordance with the mysteries

now to be manifested to Her. Thus prepared and ac

companied by her holy angels and many others, in the

midst of a refulgent host, the celestial Child was raised

body and soul to the empyrean heaven, where She was

received by the holy Trinity with befitting benevolence

and pleasure. She prostrated Herself in the presence of

the most mighty and high Lord, as She was wont to do

in all her visions, and adored Him in profound reverence

and humility. Then She was further transformed by

new workings of divine light, so that She saw, intuitively

and face to face, the Divinity itself. This was the second

time that It manifested Itself to Her in this intuitive

manner during the first three years of her life.

431. By no human tongue or any sensible faculty could

the effects of this vision and participation of the divine

Essence ever be described. The Person of the Father

spoke to the future Mother of his Son, and said : "My

Dove, my beloved One, I desire thee to see the treasures

of my immutable being and of my infinite perfections,

and also to perceive the hidden gifts destined for the

souls, whom I have chosen as heirs of my glory and who

are rescued by the life-blood of the Lamb. Behold, my

Daughter, how liberal I am toward my creatures, that

know and love Me ; how true in my words, how faithful

in my promises, how powerful and admirable in my

THE CONCEPTION 339

works. Take notice, my Spouse, how ineffably true it is,

that he who follows Me does not walk in darkness. I de

sire that thou, as my chosen One, be an eye-witness of

the treasures which I hold in reserve for raising up the

humble, enriching the poor, exalting the downtrodden,

and for rewarding all that the mortals shall do and suf

fer for my name."

432. Other great mysteries were shown to the holy

Child in this vision of the Divinity, for, as the object

presented to the soul in such repeated intuitive visions

is infinite, that which remains to be seen will always re

main infinite and will excite greater and greater wonder

and love in the one thus favored. The most holy Mary

answered the Lord and said : "Most high, supreme and

eternal God, incomprehensible Thou art in thy magnifi

cence, overflowing in thy riches, unspeakable in thy mys

teries, most faithful in thy promises, true in thy words,

most perfect in thy works, for Thou art the Lord, in

finite and eternal in thy essence and perfections. But,

most high Lord, what shall my littleness begin to do at

the sight of thy magnificence? I acknowledge myself

unworthy to look upon thy greatness, yet I am in great

need of being regarded by it. In thy presence, Lord, all

creation is as nothing. What shall I thy servant do, who

am but dust ? Fulfill in me all thy desire and thy pleasure ;

and if trouble and persecutions suffered by mortals in

patience, if humility and meekness are so precious in thy

eyes, do not consent, O my Beloved, that I be de

prived of such a rich treasure and pledge of thy love.

But as for the rewards of these tribulations, give them to

thy servants and friends, who deserve them better than

I, for I have not yet labored in thy service and pleasure."

433. The Most High was much pleased with the peti

tion of the heavenly Child and He gave Her to under-

340 CITY OF GOD

stand that He would admit Her to suffering and labor

for his love in the course of her life, without at the time

revealing to Her the order and the manner in which He

was to dispense them. The Princess of heaven gave

thanks for this blessing and favor of being chosen to labor

and suffer for the glory of God s name. Burning with

desire of securing such favor, She asked of his Majesty

to be allowed to make four vows in his presence:

of chastity, of poverty, of obedience, and of perpetual

enclosure in the temple whither He had called Her. To

this petition the Lord answered and said to Her: "My

Spouse, my thoughts rise above all that is created, and

thou, my chosen one, dost not yet know what is to hap

pen to thee in the course of thy life, and thou dost not yet

understand why it is impossible to fulfill thy fervent de

sires altogether in the manner in which thou now dost

imagine. The vow of chastity I permit and I desire that

thou make it; I wish that from this moment thou re

nounce earthly riches. It is also my will that as far as

possible, thou observe whatever pertains to the other

vows, just as if thou hadst made them all. Thy desire

shall be fulfilled through many other virgins in the com

ing law of grace; for, in order to imitate thee and to

serve Me, they will make these same vows and live to

gether in community and thou shalt be the Mother of

many daughters."

434. The most holy Child then, in the presence of the

Lord, made the vow of chastity and as for the rest with

out binding Herself, She renounced all affection for ter

restrial and created things. She moreover resolved to

obey all creatures for the sake of God. In the fulfillment

of these promises She was more punctual, fervent and

faithful than any who have ever made these vows or ever

will make them. Forthwith the clear and intuitive vision

THE CONCEPTION 341

of the Divinity ceased, but She was not immediately re

stored to the earth. For, remaining in the empyrean

heaven, She enjoyed another, an imaginary vision of the

Lord in a lower state of ecstasy, so that in connection

with it, She saw other mysteries.

435. In this secondary and imaginary vision some of

the seraphim closest to the Lord approached Her and by

his command adorned and clothed Her in the following

manner. First all her senses were illumined with an ef

fulgent light, which filled them with grace and beauty.

Then they robed Her in a mantle or tunic of most ex

quisite splendor, and girded Her with a cincture of vary-

colored and transparent stones, of flashing brilliancy,

which adorned Her beyond human comprehension. They

signified the immaculate purity and the various heroic

virtues of her soul. They placed on Her also a necklace

or collar of inestimable and entrancing beauty, which

contained three large stones, symbolic of the three great

virtues of faith, hope and charity; this they hung around

her neck letting it fall to her breast as if indicating the

seat of these precious virtues. They also adorned her

hands with seven rings of rare beauty whereby the Holy

Ghost wished to proclaim that He had enriched Her with

his holy gifts in a most eminent degree. In addition to

all this the most holy Trinity crowned her head with an

imperial diadem, made of inestimable material and set

with most precious stones, constituting Her thereby as

his Spouse and as the Empress of heaven. In testimony

whereof the white and refulgent vestments were emblaz

oned with letters or figures of the finest and the most

shining gold, proclaiming: Mary, Daughter of the eter

nal Father, Spouse of the Holy Ghost and Mother of the

true Light. This last name or title the heavenly Mis

tress did not understand; but the angels understood it,

342 CITY OF GOD

who, lost in wonder and praise of the Author, were as

sisting at this new and strange ceremony. Finally the

attention of all the angelic spirits was drawn toward the

Most High and a voice proceeded from the throne of the

blessed Trinity, which, addressing the most holy Mary,

spoke to Her: "Thou shalt be our Spouse, our beloved

and chosen One among all creatures for all eternity; the

angels shall serve thee and all the nations and generations

shall call thee blessed" (Luc. 1, 48).

436. The sovereign Child being thus attired in the

court dress of the Divinity, then celebrated a more glo

rious and marvelous espousal than ever could enter the

mind of the highest cherubim and seraphim. For the

Most High accepted Her as his sole and only Spouse and

conferred upon Her the highest dignity which can befall

a creature; He deposited within Her his own Divinity

in the person of the Word and with it all the treasures of

grace befitting such eminence. Meanwhile the most

Humble among the humble was lost in the abyss of love

and wonder which these benefits and favors caused in

Her, and in the presence of the Lord She spoke : "Most

high King and incomprehensible God, who art Thou and

who am I, that thy condescension should look upon me

who am dust, unworthy of such mercy? In Thee, my

Lord, as in a clear mirror seeing thy immutable being, I

behold and understand without error my lowliness and

vileness, I admire thy immensity and deprecate my noth

ingness. At the sight of Thee I am annihilated and lost

in astonishment, that the infinite Majesty should stoop to

so lowly a worm, who can merit only oblivion and con

tempt of all the creatures. O Lord, my only Good, how

art Thou magnified and exalted in this deed! What

marvel dost Thou cause through me in thy angelic spirits,

who understand thy infinite bounty, magnificence and

THE CONCEPTION 343

mercy in raising up from the dust her who in it is poor,

and placing her among the princes (Ps. 112, 7) ! I ac

cept Thee, O my King and my Lord, as my Spouse and

I offer myself as thy slave. Let not my understanding

attend to any other object, nor my memory hold any

other image, nor my will seek other object or pleasure

than Thee, my highest Good, my true and only Love.

Let not my eyes look upon human creature, nor my fac

ulties and senses attend upon anything beside Thee and

whatever thy Majesty shall direct Thou alone for thy

spouse, my Beloved, and she for Thee only, who art the

immutable and eternal Good."

437. The Most High received with ineffable pleasure

this consent of the sovereign Princess to enter into the

new espousal with her most holy soul. As upon his True

Spouse and as Mistress of all creation, He now lavished

upon Her all the treasures of his grace and power, in

structing Her to ask for whatever She desired and assur

ing Her that nothing would ever be denied Her. The

most humble Dove at once proceeded to beseech the Lord

with the most burning charity, to send his Onlybegotten

to the world as a remedy for mortals ; that all men be

called to the true knowledge of his Divinity ; that her nat

ural parents, Joachim and Anne, receive an increase of

the loving gifts of his right hand; that the poor and af

flicted be consoled and comforted in their troubles; and

that in Herself be fulfilled the pleasure of the divine will.

These were some of the more express petitions addressed

by the new Spouse on this occasion to the blessed Trinity.

And all the angelic host sang new songs of admiration in

praise of the Most High, while those appointed by his

Majesty, midst heavenly music, bore back the holy Child

from the empyrean heaven to the place in the temple,

from which they had brought Her.

344 CITY OF GOD

438. In order to commence at once to put in practice

what She had promised in the presence of the Lord, She

betook Herself to her instructress and offered her all that

her mother, saint Anne, had left for her comfort and sus

tenance, with the exception of a few books and clothes.

She requested Her to give it to the poor or use it for any

other purpose according to her pleasure, and that She

command and direct Her what She was to do. The dis

creet matron, (who was, as I have already said, the

prophetess Anne) by divine impulse accepted and ap

proved of the offering of the beautiful Child and dis

missed Her entirely poor and stripped of everything ex

cept the garments which She wore. She resolved to take

care of Her in a special manner as one destitute and

poor; for the other maidens each possessed their spend

ing money and a certain sum assigned and destined for

their wearing apparel and for other necessities according

to their inclinations.

439. The holy matron, having first consulted the high

priest, also gave to the sweetest Child a rule of life. By

thus despoiling and resigning Herself the Queen and

Mistress of creation obtained a complete freedom and

detachment from all creatures and from her own Self,

neither possessing nor desiring anything except only the

most ardent love of God and her own abasement and hu

miliation. I confess my great ignorance, my vileness and

insignificance, which make me entirely unworthy to ex

plain such supernal and hidden mysteries. For where

the expert tongues of the wise, and the science and the

love of the highest cherubim and seraphim are compelled

to be mute, what can a useless and abject woman say? I

know how much such an attempt would offend against

the greatness of these mysteries, if obedience furnished no

excuse. But even in obeying I tremble, and I fear that

what I omit and am ignorant of, is the greater, and what

THE CONCEPTION 345

I know and say is the more insignificant part of all the

mysteries and the doings of this City of God, the most

holy Mary.

INSTRUCTION OF TH MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY.

440. My daughter, among the great and ineffable

favors of the Omnipotent in the course of my life, was

the one which thou has just learned and described; for

by this clear vision of the Divinity and of the incompre

hensible essence I acquired knowledge of the most hidden

sacraments and mysteries, and in this adornment and es

pousal I received incomparable blessings and felt the

sweetest workings of the Divinity in my spirit. My de

sire to take the four vows of poverty, obedience, chastity

and enclosure pleased the Lord very much, and I mer

ited thereby that the godfearing in the Church and in the

law of grace are drawn to live under these vows, as is the

custom in the present time. This was the beginning of

that which you religious practice now, fulfilling the words

of David in the forty- fourth psalm: "After Her shall vir

gins be brought to the King;" for the Lord ordained

that my aspirations be the foundation of religious life

and of the evangelical law. I fulfilled entirely and per

fectly all that I proposed to the Lord, as far as was possi

ble in my state of life ; never did I look upon the face of a

man, not even on that of my husband Joseph, nor on that

of the angels, when they appeared to me in human form,

though I saw and knew them all in God. Never did I in

cline toward any creature, rational or irrational, nor to

ward any human operation or tendency. But in all things

I was governed by the Most High, either directly by

Himself or indirectly through the obedience, to which I

freely subjected myself.

441. Do not forget, my dearest, that the religious state

24

346 CITY OF GOD

is consecrated and ordained by the Most High for main

taining the doctrine of Christian perfection and the close

imitation of the life of my Son, and that therefore the

souls, who in religious life are sunk in sleepy forgetful-

ness of their high blessing and lead a life more listless

and lax than many worldly men, are objects of great

wrath of the Lord, and a severer judgment and chastise

ment await them than others. The demon also, ancient

and astute serpent as he is, uses more diligence in his at

tempts to overcome religious men and women, than to

conquer all the rest of worldly men ; and if one of these

religious fall, all hell exerts the greatest solicitude and

care to prevent his using the many means which religion

affords for rising from a fall, such as obedience and holy

exercises and the frequent use of the Sacraments. To

make all these remedies miscarry and be of no use to the

fallen religious, the enemy applies so many cunning snares

that it would fill with terror any one who saw them.

However, much of this is recognized in the actions and

artifices by which a lax religious soul tries to defend its

remissness, excusing it by specious arguments, if it does

not break out in disobedience and yet greater disorders

and faults.

442. Be careful therefore, my daughter, and fear so

dreadful a danger; by divine assistance of grace raise

thyself above thyself, never permitting thy will to consent

to any disorderly affection or movement. I wish thee to

consume thyself in dying to thy passions and in becom

ing entirely spiritualized, so that having extinguished

within thee all that is of earth, thou mayest come to lead

an angelic life and conversation. In order to deserve the

name of spouse of Christ, thou must pass beyond the

limits and the sphere of a human being and ascend to

another state and divine existence. Although thou art

earth, thou must be a blessed earth, without the thorns of

THE CONCEPTION 347

passion, one whose fruit is all for the Lord, its Master.

If thou hast for thy Spouse that supreme and mighty

Lord, who is the King of kings and the Lord of lords,

consider it beneath thy dignity to turn thy eyes, and much

more thy heart, toward such vile slaves, as are the human

creatures, for even the angels love and respect thee for

thy dignity as spouse of the Most High. If even among

men it is held to be a daring and boundless insolence in a

plebeian to cast longing eyes upon the spouse of a prince,

what a crime would it be to cast them on the spouse of

the heavenly and omnipotent King? And it would not be

a smaller crime if she herself would receive and consent

to such familiarity. Consider and assure thyself that the

punishment reserved for this sin is inconceivably terrible

and I do not show it to thee visibly, lest thou perish in thy

weakness. I wish that for thee my instructions suffice

to urge thee to the fulfillment of all I admonish and to

imitate me as my disciple, as far as thy powers go. Be

also solicitous in recalling this instruction to the mind of

thy nuns and in seeing that they live up to it.

443. My Mistress and my most kind Queen, in the joy

of my soul I listen to thy sweetest words, so full of spirit

and of life, and I wish to inscribe them in the interior of

my heart together with the graces of thy most holy Son,

which I beseech thee to obtain for me. If Thou give me

permission I will speak in thy presence as an ignorant

disciple with her Mistress and Teacher. I desire, O my

Mother and Protectress, though I am so unworthy and

remiss, to fulfill the four vows of my profession accord

ing to thy commands and according to my obligation,

though I am so unworthy and remiss therein; yet I be

seech Thee, give me a more full instruction, which may

serve me as a guide and direction in the fulfillment of this

duty and as a complement of these vows, which Thou

hast placed in my heart.

CHAPTER III.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE; ME

CONCERNING THE VOWS OF MY PROFESSION.

444. My dear daughter, I will not deny thee the in

struction thou askest of me with the desire of putting it

into practice ; but do thou receive it with an appreciative

and devout mind, ready to follow it in deed. The wise

man says : "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend, thou

hast engaged fast thy hand to a stranger, thou art en

snared with the words of thy mouth, and caught with thy

own words" (Prov. 6, 1). Accordingly he who has

made vows to Cod has bound his own will ; so that he has

no freedom of acting except according to the will and

direction of Him to whom he has bound himself; for he

is chained down by the words of his own mouth uttered

in the profession of his vows. Before taking his vows,

the choice of his ways was in his own hands; but having

once bound and obliged himself, let him know that he

has entirely lost his liberty and had delivered himself up

to God in his superiors. The whole ruin or salvation of

souls depends upon the use of their free will; but since

most men use it ill and damn themselves, the Most High

has established religious life under the sacred vows. Thus

the creature, by once using its liberty to make a perfect

and prudent choice, can deliver up to his Majesty that

very liberty, which so many pervert, if it remains free

and unhampered in its choice.

445. By these vows the liberty to do evil is happily

lost, and the liberty for doing good is assured. It is like

348

THE CONCEPTION 349

a bridle, which leads away from danger and directs into

the smooth and sure road. The soul is freed from the

slavery and subjection of the passions, and acquires a

new power over them, resuming her place as mistress and

queen in the government of her kingdom and remaining

subject only to the law of grace and the inspirations of

the Holy Ghost. If she thus applies her whole will solely

to the fulfillment of all that she has promised to God, the

holy Spirit will govern and direct all her operations. The

creature thereby passes from the condition and state of a

slave to that of a child of the Most High, from an earthly

to an angelic life, while the corruption and evil effects of

sin cannot exert their full power. It is impossible that

thou ever be able in this earthly life to calculate or com

prehend, what and how many are the blessings and treas

ures those souls gather for themselves, who with all their

powers and affection strive to fulfill perfectly the vows of

their profession. For I assure thee, my dearest, that

those who are perfect and punctual in their religious

obligations can equal and even surpass the martyrs in

merit.

446. My daughter, thou didst happily begin to gather

these blessings on the day when thou didst choose the bet

ter part; but remember well that thou hast bound thy

self to the eternal and mighty God, to whom the inmost

secrets of thy heart are manifest. If it is so base and de

testable to deceive and disappoint men in just promises,

how vile is it to be unfaithful to God in the most just and

holy promises? As thy Creator, Preserver and Benefac

tor, He claims thy gratitude; as Father, thy reverence;

as Spouse, thy fidelity ; as a Friend, amicable intercourse ;

as the most Faithful, He should excite thy faith and

hope ; as the highest and eternal Good, He should possess

thy love; as the Almighty, thy entire subjection; as the

350 CITY OF GOD

most just Judge, He should rouse thy humble and holy

fear. Against all these allegiances and many others thou

committest perfidious treason, in failing or hesitating to

fulfill what thou hast promised according to thy profes

sion. And if in all the nuns who have obliged themselves

to a spiritual life and conversation, it is such a monstrous

and terrible abomination to call themselves spouses of

Christ, while living as members and slaves of the devil,

how much more abominable will it be in thee, who hast

received more than they all, and therefore shouldst exceed

them in loving and exerting thyself to make a return

for such incomparable blessings and benefits.

447. Consider, O soul, how detestable this fault would

make thee in the sight of the Lord, of myself, and of the

angels and saints. For we all are witnesses of the love and

fidelity, which He has shown toward thee as a generous,

loving and faithful Spouse. Strive then with all thy

heart to avoid offending Him either in great or in small

things; do not force Him to relinquish thee and to de

liver thee over to the beastly disorders of sin; for thou

knowest that this would be a greater misfortune and

punishment than if He consign thee to the fury of the

elements, or to the wrath of all the wild animals, or even

to the rage of the demons. If all these were to execute

their anger upon thee, and if the world were to heap upon

thee all its punishments and insults, all would do thee less

damage than one venial sin against the God whom thou art

obliged to serve and love in all things and through all

things. Any punishment of this life is less dreadful than

sin ; for it ends with mortal life, but the guilt of sin, and

with it punishment, may be eternal.

448. In this life any punishment or tribulation fills

mortals with fear and dread, merely because it affects the

senses and brings them in close touch with it through

THE CONCEPTION 351

them, but the guilt of sin does not affect them nor fill

them with dread. Men are entirely taken up by that

which is visible, and they therefore do not look upon the

ultimate consequences of sin, which is the eternal punish

ment of hell. Though this is imbibed and inseparably

connected with sin, the human heart becomes so heavy

and remiss that it remains as if it were stupefied in its

wickedness, because it does not feel it present in its

senses. Though it could see and feel it by faith, this it

self remains listless and dead, as if it were wanting en

tirely. O most unhappy blindness of mortals! O torpid

negligence, that holds so many souls, capable of reason

and of glory, oppressed in deceit! There are not words

or sentences sufficient to describe this terrible and tre

mendous danger. My daughter, haste away, and fly with

holy fear such an unhappy state, and deliver thyself up to

all the troubles and torments of life, which pass soon,

rather than incur such a danger ; for nothing will be want

ing to thee, if thou do not lose God. To be convinced

that there are no small faults for thee and for thy state,

is a powerful means of saving thyself; fear greatly the

small things, for in despising small faults the Most High

knows, that the human heart invites other greater ones.

That is not a blameless love, which does not avoid all dis

pleasure of the beloved one.

449. The order which religious souls should maintain

in their desires should be : that they strive to be punctual

in fulfilling the obligations of their vows and all the vir

tues, which are connected with them. Afterwards and

secondarily they may engage in voluntary practices, such

as are called supererogatory. This order some of the

souls, who are misled by the devil to entertain an indis

creet zeal for perfection, are wont to invert; thus, while

they fail seriously in the obligations of their state, they

352 CITY OP GOD

are eager to add other voluntary exercises and practices,

which are usually of small use or benefit, or arise from a

spirit of presumption and singularity. They secretly de

sire to be looked upon as distinguished in zeal and per

fection, while in truth they are very far even from the

beginning of perfection. I do not wish to see in thee a

fault so reprehensible : but first fulfill all the duties of thy

vows and of community life, and then thou mayest add

what thou canst, according to thy ability and the inspira

tion of divine grace. This together will beautify thy

soul and will make it perfect and agreeable in the eyes of

God.

450. The vow of obedience is the principal one in reli

gion; for it implies a total renunciation and denial of one s

will. By it the religious renounces all jurisdiction or right

to say for himself: I will or I will not, I shall or I shall

not act : all this he throws aside and renounces by obe

dience, delivering himself into the hands of his superior.

In order to fulfill this obligation it is necessary for thee

not to be wise in thy own conceit, not to imagine thyself

still mistress of thy likings, thy desires, or thy opinion;

for true obedience must be of the quality of faith, so that

the commands of the superior are esteemed, reverenced

and put into execution, without any pretense of examina

tion or criticism. Accordingly, in order to obey, thou must

consider thyself without opinion, without life of thy own,

without right of speech ; but thou must allow thyself to be

moved and governed like a corpse, alive only in order to

execute devotedly all that the superior desires. Never

discuss within thyself whether thou shouldst fulfill his

commands or not, but only consider how thou canst best

execute that which is commanded. Sacrifice thy own in

clination and repress all thy appetites and passions; and

when by this efficacious determination thou art dead to

THE CONCEPTION 353

all the movements of self, let obedience be the soul and

the life of thy works. To the will of thy superior thou

must conform all thy own, with all its activity in all thy

words and works ; let it be thy prayer, to be able to quit

thy own being and receive another new one, so that noth

ing be thine and all in thee be of obedience without con

tradiction or resistance.

451. Remember that the most perfect manner of obey

ing is to avoid offending the superior by showing that you

disagree with him. He should find a willing obedience,

convincing him that his commands are obeyed promptly,

without objection or murmur, either in words or by any

other signs. The superiors take the place of God, and he

who obeys his superiors, obeys the Lord himself, who is

in them and governs them and enlightens them, so that

their commands will be for the salvation of souls. The

contempt shown to superiors passes on to God himself,

who through them manifests and makes known his will

(Luke 10, 16). Thou must persuade thyself, that the

Lord moves them to speak, and that it is the word of the

Omnipotent himself. My daughter, strive to be obedient

in order that thou mayest speak of victories (Prov. 21,

28) ; do not fear to obey, for that is the secure path ; so

secure, that God will not bring to account the errors of

the obedient on the day of judgment, but He will rather

blot out other sins in consideration of the sacrifice made

in obedience. My most holy Son offered his precious suf

ferings and death in special love for the obedient, and pro

cured for them special rights in regard to mercy and

grace, and special privileges toward the success and per

fection of all that is due under obedience. Even now, in

order to appease Him, He reminds the eternal Father of

his obedience unto death and unto the cross (Phil. 2, 8),

and so the Father is placated toward men. Because He

354 CITY OF GOD

was pleased with the obedience of Abraham and his son

Isaac, He held Himself obliged not only to save Isaac

from death, who showed himself so obedient, but to make

him the ancestor of the incarnate Word and to designate

him as the head and beginning of the great blessings.

452. The vow of poverty is a generous renunciation

and detachment from the heavy burden of temporal things.

It is an alleviation of the spirit, it is a relief afforded to

human infirmity, the liberty of a noble heart to strive

after eternal and spiritual blessings. It is a satiety and

abundance, in which the thirst after earthly treasures is al

layed, and a sovereignty and ownership, in which a most

noble enjoyment of all riches is established. All this, my

daughter, and many other blessings are contained in vol

untary poverty, and all this the sons of the world are

ignorant and deprived of, precisely because they are lov

ers of earthly riches and enemies of this holy and opulent

poverty. They do not consider, although they feel and

suffer, the heavy weight of riches, which pins them to the

earth and drives them into its very bowels to seek gold

and silver in great anxiety, sleeplessness, labors and sweat,

as if they were not men, but wild beasts that know not

what they are suffering and doing. And if they are thus

weighed down before acquiring riches, how much more

when they have come into their possession ? Let the count

less hosts that have fallen into hell with their burden, pro

claim it ; let their incalculable anxieties of preserving their

riches, and much more, let the intolerable laws, which

riches and those that possess them have foisted upon the

world, testify what is required to retain them!

453. If, on the one hand, possessions throttle the spirit

and tyrannically oppress it in its weakness, if they suppress

the sours most noble privilege of following eternal goods

and God himself : it is certain on the other hand, that vol-

THE CONCEPTION 355

untary poverty restores to man the nobility of his condi

tion and, liberating him from vile servitude and reinstat

ing him his noble freedom and mastery of all things. The

soul is never more a mistress than when she despises them,

and only then has she the more firm possession and makes

the more excellent use of riches, when she gives them

away or leaves them of her own free will ; only then her

appetite for them is best satiated, when she does not care

to possess them. Then above all is the heart set free and

made capable of the treasures of the Divinity, for which

it is furnished by the Creator with almost infinite capacity.

454. My daughter, I wish thee to study diligently this

divine philosophy and science, which the world forgets,

and not only the world, but also many religious souls, who

have promised it to God. Great is the divine wrath on

account of this fault, and suddenly will the infringers

of this vow receive heavy and unexpected punishment.

By setting aside their voluntary poverty, they have alien

ated from themselves the spirit of Christ, my most holy

Son, and all that We have come to teach men in abnega

tion and poverty. Although they do not now feel it, be

cause the Judge delays and they enjoy the abundance

which they desire, yet in the judgment they will find them

selves overwhelmed and dismayed by the rigor of their

punishment, greater than they ever expected, considered

or imagined in their forgetfulness of divine justice.

455. The temporal goods are created by the Most High

for the sole purpose of sustaining life; having attained

this end, the need of them ceases. And as this need is

limited, soon and easily satisfied, there is no reason that

the care for the immortal soul should be only fitful and

temporary, while the hunger after riches should be so per

petual and unintermitting, as it has come to be among men.

It is the height of perverseness for man to mix up the end

356 CITY OF GOD

and the means in an affair so important and urgent, that

he devote all his time, all his care, all the exertion of his

powers and all the alertness of his mind to the life of his

body, of which he knows npt the duration nor the end,

and that on the other hand, in many years of his existence

he spare for his poor soul only one hour, and that very

often the last and the worst one of his whole life.

456. Make use therefore, my dearest daughter, of the

true enlightenment, by which the Most High has un

deceived thee in regard to such a dangerous error. Re

nounce all affection or inclination for earthly things ; even

under the pretext of the necessity and poverty of thy con

vent do not be oversolicitous to procure the things used

for the sustenance of life. In exerting ordinary care, let

it be such as will not disturb thee, when thou failest to

obtain what thou desirest, and let it be without inordinate

affection, even when thou seekest it for the service of God :

for thou must know, that thy love of God shall be so much

the less, as the number of things thou lovest together with

Him is greater. Great possessions thou must renounce as

superfluous ; thou dost not need them and it is a crime to

keep them for no purpose ; the little thou standst in need

of should also be esteemed but little; for it would be a

great error to embarrass the heart with that which is of no

account and can hinder it much. If thou hast all that ac

cording to thy judgment is necessary for human wants,

thou art not in reality poor ; for to be poor properly and

strictly means to have less than what is necessary. Those,

to whom nothing is wanting, call themselves rich. To

possess more than is necessary creates unrest and affliction

of spirit ; to desire and look for what is not used will be a

poverty without quiet or satisfaction.

457. I require of thee such a freedom of spirit, as not

to attach thyself to anything, be it great or small, super-

THE CONCEPTION 357

fluous or necessary. Of the things that are necessary for

human life, accept only so much, as is needed to prevent

death or indecency. Let this latter be of the poorest and

of such as is patched up sufficient to cover thee, and in thy

nourishment seek what is most coarse, without satisfying

thy particular whims of taste, but asking for what is in

sipid and tasteless, so that on purpose thou mayst be

served with what is disagreeable and be deprived of what

the appetite craves, thus seeking in all things the greatest

perfection.

458. The vow of chastity includes purity of body and

soul; this is easily lost, and it is difficult, sometimes, ac

cording to the manner of losing it, even impossible to re

pair. This great treasure is deposited in a castle, which

has many portals and openings, and if these are not all

well guarded and defended, the treasure is without secur

ity. My daughter, in order to preserve perfectly this vow,

it is necessary to make an inviolable pact with thy senses,

not to use them, except for what is according to the dic

tates of reason and for the glory of the Creator. After

once the senses are mortified, it will be easy to overcome

thy enemies, for only through them can they conquer

thee ; for no thoughts can recur, or be awakened to activ

ity, unless fomented and excited by the images and im

pressions admitted through the exterior senses. Thou

shouldst not touch, nor look upon, nor speak to any per

son of whatever condition, whether man or woman, so as

to let their images or resemblances find entrance into thy

imagination. This carefulness, which I enjoin, will be

the guard of the purity, which I require of thee. If on

account of charity or obedience thou must converse with

them ( for only these virtues are sufficient causes for con

versing with creatures ), do it with all gravity, modesty

and reserve.

459. In regard to thy own person live as if thou wert

358 CITY OF GOD

a pilgrim and stranger in this world; be poor, mortified,

laborious, loving the hardship connected with temporal

things, without expecting alleviation or enjoyment, as one

who is absent from her home and her country, enlisted to

work and battle against powerful foes. Since the flesh

is the center of weakness and danger, it is proper that

thou carefully resist thy natural likings, and through them

the temptations of the demons. Raise thyself above thy

self, and seek a habitation far above all that is earthly in

order that thou mayest live under the shadow of Him,

whom thou desirest (Cant. 2, 3) and in his protection thou

shalt enjoy tranquillity and true refreshment. Deliver

thyself over with thy whole heart to his chaste and holy

love, without attending to any creatures, except in so far

as they may help and oblige thee to love and serve thy

Creator ; in all other respects abhor them.

460. Although no virtue should be wanting in her, who

professes herself, and is entitled to call herself, a spouse

of Christ ; yet it is the virtue of chastity which makes her

most worthy and like to her Spouse. For it is chastity,

which makes her spiritual and withdraws her from earth

ly corruption, elevating her to angelic life and to a certain

resemblance of God himself. This virtue beautifies and

adorns all the rest, raises the body to a higher existence,

enlightens the mind and preserves in the soul a nobility

above all that is corruptible. Because this virtue was in

an especial fruit of the Redemption, merited by my Son on

the Cross, where He paid for the sins of the world, there

fore holy Scripture expressly mentions that virgins ac

company and follow the Lamb (Apoc. 14, 4).

461. The vow of enclosure is the wall of chastity and of

all virtues, the preserve where they are nourished and ex

panded : it is a privilege granted by heaven to the spouses

of Christ in religion, dispensing them from the burden

some and dangerous tribute, which the freedom of the

THE CONCEPTION 359

world pays to the ruler of its vanities. By this vow the

religious live as in a secure port, while other souls navi

gate and are tossed about in the storms of a dangerous

sea. With so many advantages enclosure cannot be con

sidered as a confinement in a narrow space, for in it are

offered to the religious the spacious fields of virtue, of the

knowledge of God, of his infinite perfections, of his mys

teries, and of his benefits conferred on man. On such

spacious grounds can a nun, recreate and enjoy herself;

and only when she fails in this enjoyment, does she be

gin to feel narrow confinement in this, the greatest free

dom. For thee, my daughter, let there be no other play

ground, nor do I wish to see thee confine thyself to so

narrow limits as even the whole visible world. Rise up to

the height of the knowledge and love of God, where there

are no limits or confines to hold thee, and where thou canst

live in unbounded liberty. From that eminence thou wilt

see how small, vile and despicable is all that is created,

and how much too narrow it is to hold thy soul.

462. To the necessary enclosure of the body add also

the restrictions of the senses, in order that, imbued with

fortitude, they may preserve for thee interior purity, and

through it keep ablaze the fire of the sanctuary (Lev. 6,

12) which thou must continue to nourish and watch lest it

be extinguished. In order to better guard the senses and

profit from the vow of enclosure, do not approach the por

tals, nor the speaking-grate, nor the windows, and do not

even remember that the convent is furnished therewith,

unless it is required by some particular office or by obe

dience. Desire nothing, and therefore strive after nothing,

and do not exert thyself for that, which is not allowed

thee to desire. In retirement, solitude and circumspec

tion wilt thou find thy peace. Thereby wilt thou give me

pleasure, and merit for thyself copious fruit and the re

ward of love and grace, which thou desirest.

CHAPTER IV.

OF THE PERFECTION IN WHICH MOST HOLY MARY PASSED

HER DAYS IN THE TEMPLE, AND OF THE EXERCISES

WHICH SHE WAS ORDERED TO UNDERTAKE.

463. Let us now return to our heavenly narrative.

After the most holy Child had begun to consecrate the

temple by her holy presence and daily life, She grew from

day to day in wisdom and grace, before God and before

men. The understanding which was given me of that,

which the powerful hand of God proceeded to work in

the heavenly Princess during these years, place me as it

were at the shore of a vast and unmeasured sea, leaving

me lost in astonishment and doubt as to how I am to em

bark on such an immense ocean for the destined port. For

I am forced to leave much unsaid, and it is difficult to

describe even the smallest part. I will relate that, which

the Most High explained to me on one occasion in his

own words:

464. "The works of Her, who was to be the Mother of

the Godman, were altogether and in every way most per

fect, and even to understand them exceeds the capacity

of all human creatures and of the angels. Her interior

acts of the virtues were so precious and of such great

merit and favor, that they surpass all that the seraphim

can do ; and thou, my soul, wilt much better understand,

than be able to explain them with words of thy tongue.

But it is my will, that during thy pilgrimage in thy mortal

body thou place most holy Mary as the beginning of thy

joy, and that thou follow Her through the desert of re-

360

THE CONCEPTION 361

nunciation and abnegation of all that is human and visible.

Follow Her by a perfect imitation according to the meas

ure of thy strength and of the light which thou receivest.

Let Her be thy guiding star and thy Directress : She will

manifest to thee my will and will let thee find my holy

law which is written in Her by the power of my right

hand : meditate upon it day and night. She by her inter

cession will strike the rock of Christ s humanity (Num.

20, 11), in order that in this desert may abound the

waters of divine grace and light, so that thy thirst may be

quenched, thy understanding enlightened, and thy will

inflamed. She will be a pillar of light to illuminate thy

path (Exod. 13, 21) and a cloud to afford thee shade and

refreshment against the ardors of thy passions and the

fierceness of thy enemies."

465. "Thou wilt have in Her an angel, who will guard

and guide thee, and (Exod. 23, 21) lead thee away from

the dangers of Babylon and of Sodom, so that my pun

ishment shall not reach thee. Thou wilt have in Her a

Mother to love thee, a Friend to counsel thee, a Mistress

to direct thee, a Protectress to shield thee and a Queen

whom thou canst serve and obey as a handmaid. In the

virtues, which this Mother of the Onlybegotten exer

cised in the temple, thou wilt find a summary of all the

highest perfections according to which thou shouldst ar

range thy life ; an exact and reliable copy of all her sancti

ty ; the beauty of virginity, the loveliness of humility, the

utmost promptness in devotion and obedience, the stead

fastness of faith, the certitude of hope, the fire of love

and the most complete outline map of all the wonders of

my right hand. According to this rule thou must regu

late thy life, by this mirror thou must arrange and adorn

it, adding to the beauty and grace of a bride that wishes

to enter into the chamber of her Spouse and Lord."

25

362 CITY OF GOD

466. "If the nobility and condition of the teacher are

a spur to the disciple and tend to make his doctrine more

acceptable, who can attract thee more powerfully than thy

Instructress, who is the Mother of thy Spouse, chosen as

the most pure and holy among women, and without blem

ish of sin, being at the same time a Virgin and the Mother

of the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father, the splendor of

his Divinity in his own essence? Hear then this sover

eign Mistress; follow Her in close imitation, and meditate

without ceasing upon her admirable excellence and vir

tues. Remember, that the life and conversation She led

in the temple is the original, which all the souls, that con

secrate themselves after Her as spouses of Christ, must

copy within themselves." The above is the explanation

and instruction, which the Most High gave me in outline

concerning the life and conduct of the most holy Mary

in the temple.

467. But let us proceed now to a more particular de

scription of her actions. After the vision of the Divinity,

described in the second chapter, after She had offered

Herself entirely to the Lord and delivered up to her in

structress all that She possessed, being thus deprived of

all, entirely bound over to obedience, and hiding, beneath

the veil of these virtues, treasures of grace and wisdom

greater than that of the seraphim, She requested the priest

and her teacher to prescribe for Her an order of life and

to direct Her in the occupations, which She was to as

sume. The priest and her instructress, having together

considered her petition with the aid of a special enlighten

ment from on high and desiring to regulate from now on

the exercises of this heavenly Child of only three years,

called Her to their presence. The Princess of heaven re

mained kneeling before them during this interview and,

although they bade Her rise, She begged most humbly to

THE CONCEPTION 363

be allowed to remain in this reverent position in the pres

ence of the minister and priest of the Most High and of

her teacher, on account of their office and dignity.

468. The priest spoke to Her and said: "My Daugh

ter, as a very young Child the Lord has drawn Thee to his

house and holy temple; be thankful for this favor and

seek to profit by it by striving hard to serve Him in truth

and with an upright heart. Acquire all the virtues, in

order that thou mayest return from this holy place pre

pared and fortified against the troubles and the dangers of

this world. Obey thy Mistress Anne and commence early

to bear the sweet yoke of virtue, in order that thou mayest

find it more easy to bear during the rest of thy life"

(Thren. 3, 27). The sovereign Child answered: "Do

thou, my master, who art the minister and priest of God

and boldest his place, and thou my Mistress together with

him, command and instruct me in whatever I am to do so

that I may not commit any fault : this I beg of you, wish

ing to obey you in all things."

469. The priest and her teacher Anne felt within them

selves a great enlightenment and a divine impulse to at

tend especially to this heavenly Child and to care for Her

more than the other maidens. Conferring with themselves

about this great esteem, with which they had been in

spired, though ignorant of the mystery by which it came

to them, they resolved to devote particular attention to

her guidance and assistance. But as their care could ex

tend only to the exterior and visible actions, they w r ere

far from suspecting the interior acts and inspirations of

her heart, for over these the Most High watched with

singular protection and favor. Thus the pure heart of the

Princess of heaven remained free to advance and grow in

interior vision, without losing one instant, in which She

did not reach what is highest and most excellent in virtue.

364 CITY OF GOD

470. The priest also gave Her a rule for her occupa

tions and said : "My Daughter thou wilt assist at the ex

ercises of divine praise and song in honor of the Lord

with all reverence and devotion, and always pray to the

Most High for the necessities of his holy temple and of

his people, and for the coming of the Messias. At eight

o clock thou wilt retire for sleep and at the beginning of

dawn thou wilt arise in order to praise the Lord until the

third hour (this hour corresponds to our nine o clock in

the morning). From the third hour until evening thou

wilt occupy thyself in some manual works, in order that

thou mayest be instructed in all things. At meals, of

which thou wilt partake after thy exercise, observe be

fitting moderation. Then thou wilt go to hear the instruc

tions of thy teacher; the rest of the day thou wilt en

gage thyself in the reading of holy Scriptures, and in all

things be humble, affable, and obedient to the commands

of thy instructress."

471. The most holy Child remained on her knees, while

She listened to the words of the priest and then asked his

blessing; having kissed his hand and the hand of her mis

tress, She proposed in her heart to observe the order of

life assigned Her during her stay in the temple and as

long as they should not command her otherwise. And

She, who was the Mistress of sanctity, fulfilled their or

ders as if She were the least of all the scholars. Her de

sires and her most ardent love impelled Her to many other

external exercises, which they had not included in their

orders; but with regard to these She subjected Herself

to the minister of the Lord, preferring the sacrifice of a

perfect and holy obedience to the high dictates of her own

fervor. She knew, as Mistress of all perfection, that the

divine will is more surely fulfilled by the humble acquies

cence of obedience, than in following the highest aspira-

THE CONCEPTION 365

tions to other virtues. By this rare example let souls, and

especially those in the religious state, learn not to follow

their own effervescences and whims contrary to obedience

and the will of their superiors ; for in the latter God makes

known to us his desire and pleasure, whereas in the form

er we seek only our own fancies; in the superiors God

himself operates, in ourselves (if we work contrary to

their orders), temptations, blind passion and deceit is

active.

472. In the performance of works not commanded Her

our Queen and Lady distinguished Herself from other

maidens by asking her teacher to be allowed to serve them

all and be engaged in the humble occupation of scrubbing

and cleaning the rooms and of washing the dishes. Al

though this seemed extraordinary, especially in one of the

firstborn children, who were treated with greater consid

eration and respect, yet the incomparable humility of the

heavenly Princess could not be restrained or confined by

any consideration of what was due to her position, but

reached out for the most humble occupations. With such

an eager humility She knew how to gain time and oppor

tunity for doing such work, that She was beforehand in

assuming the tasks of others. By means of her infused

science She understood all the mysteries and ceremonies

of the temple; but She was anxious to learn them also by

study and practice, as if She were ignorant of them, nor

did She ever fail in any ceremony or duty, no matter how

small. She was most eager for humiliation and most sub

missive in her selfcontempt; every morning and evening

She asked the blessing of her teacher and kissed her hand,

and the same She did whenever She was ordered or was

permitted to perform works of humility. Sometimes,

when it was allowed Her, She kissed her feet with pro

found humility.

366 CITY OF GOD

473. The sovereign Princess was so docile, so sweet

and friendly in her actions, so ready to serve and so eager

and diligent in humbling Herself, so anxious to show

kindness and esteem toward all the maidens in the temple,

obeying them as if each had been Her Mistress, that She

ravished all the hearts. By Her ineffable and heavenly

prudence She proceeded in all her actions in such a man

ner, that She never lost an occasion for engaging in lowly

work, in humble service of her companions, and in the

fulfillment of the divine pleasure.

474. But what shall I, most vile creature, and what

shall all faithful children of the Catholic Church think,

when describing and considering such a vivid example of

humility ? It seems to us great virtue, when the inferior

obeys the superior, the lowly yields to the exalted ; and we

esteem it a great humility, that the equal submit to his

equal. But when the inferior commands and the superior

obeys, when the Queen humbles Herself before her slave,

when the most holy and the most perfect of all creatures

submits to a mere wormlet, the Queen of heaven and

earth to the least of women, and when this is done with

all her heart and in all sincerity: who is not astonished

and confounded in his vapid pride? W-ho will not see, as

in a clear mirror, his unhappy presumption? Who can

convince himself, that he knows what true humility is,

much less exercise it, when he sees it exhibited, in its real

ity and in its own element, the most holy Mary? Let us

souls, who live under the vow of obedience, approach

this light in order to perceive and correct the disorders,

which show themselves, whenever obedience to our god-

given superiors requires renouncement of our whims

and therefore becomes hard and troublesome. Here let

our hardness be crushed, let the proudest humiliate her

self and be confounded in her shameful pride ; let her ban

ish all presumption and let her not account herself obe-

THE CONCEPTION 367

dient and humble, because on certain occasions she has

yielded to the superiors, for she is yet far from thinking

herself inferior and beneath her companion, as Mary did,

who is superior to all.

475. The beauty, grace, elegance and courteousness of

our Queen were incomparable ; for all the natural graces

and gifts, which were hers in a most perfect degree, were

re-enforced by the splendor of supernatural or divine

grace, and effected a marvelous union of grace and beauty

in all her being and activity, enthralling all in love and

admiration of Her. Divine Providence moderated the out

ward demonstrations of this affection, which those who

conversed with Her, would have shown, if they had been

left to the natural force of their spontaneous love of the

Queen. In eating and in sleep, as in all other virtues, She

was most perfect : She observed the measure dictated by

temperance ; never did She exceed, nor could She, rather

She deducted from the necessary. Although her curtailed

sleep did not interrupt her high contemplation, as I have

said before (No. 352), yet She would have gladly omitted

it altogether ; in virtue of obedience however, She retired

to rest at the time appointed, and on her humble and poor

couch, strewn with the flowers of virtue (Cant. 1, 15)

and surrounded by the seraphim and the angelic host who

guarded and assisted Her, She enjoyed more exalted con

templation (outside of beatific vision), and more ardent

ecstasies of love, than all of them together.

476. She divided her time and applied it with rare pru

dence so as to give to each of her actions and occupations

its proper share. She read much in the sacred writings

of the ancients and, by means of her infused science, She

was so well versed in them and in all their profound mys

teries, that none of them was unfamiliar to Her; for the

Most High made known to Her all their mysteries and

sacraments ; She treated and conversed about them in her

368 CITY OF GOD

conferences with the holy angels of her guard, familiariz

ing Herself with them and asking about them with in

comparable intelligence and great acuteness. If this sov

ereign Mistress had written what She understood, we

would have many other additions to the sacred Scriptures ;

and we would be able to draw out of them a perfect under

standing of those writings and the deep meanings and

mysteries of all those preserved in the Church. All the

plenitude of this science She utilized for the worship,

praise and love of God : to this She applied all knowledge

without allowing one ray of her divine enlightenment to

remain sterile or idle. She was most subtile in discourse,

most profound in her intelligence, most exalted and lov

ing in her thoughts, most prudent in her choice and ar

rangement, most efficacious and sweet in her operations,

and in all things She was a most perfect example and an

object of admiration for men and angels, and even, in a

way, for the Lord himself, who had formed Her altogeth

er according to his heart and pleasure.

INSTRUCTION OF THE SOVEREIGN MISTRESS.

477. My daughter, human nature is imperfect and re

miss in practicing virtue, and easily weakens in its exer

cise ; for it continually seeks rest and evades labor with all

its might. When the soul listens to and extemporizes with

the animal and carnal part of its nature this latter will en

gross and overcome the forces of reason and of the spirit,

and will reduce them to a dangerous and shameful slavery.

This disorder is abominable and much to be feared by all ;

but God abhors it without comparison more in his minis

ters and in religious : they, as a matter of course, are sup

posed to be perfect, and therefore are injured so much

the more seriously, if they do not come out victorious in

the conflict of the passions. By remissness in battle and by

their frequent defeats they live themselves into a paralyz-

THE CONCEPTION 369

ing and self-satisfied conviction of false security, content

with the performance of certain easy outward practices

of virtue, at the same time imagining (without the least

real advancement) that they are moving mountains. The

demon then introduces other distractions and temptations,

and on account of their small appreciation of the rules and

practices of religion, they begin to weaken in all of them,

esteem them as light and unimportant matter, and, living

on in their false security, come to lose the very perception

of true virtue.

478. I desire that thou, my daughter, guard against

this error. Remember, that a voluntary remissness in re

gard to one imperfection prepares and opens the way for

others : these facilitate the commission of venial sins, these

again of mortal sins. Thus the descent is from one abyss

to another, until the bottom is found in the disregard of

all evil. In order to prevent such a misfortune it is neces

sary to intercept from afar the current of sin, for the prac

tice or ceremony, which seems but small, is an outwork

which keeps the enemy at a distance, while the precepts

and laws concerning more important matters are the for

tress walls of conscience. If the demon can break through

and gain the outer defenses, he is in better position to gain

the inner ones. If then an opening is made in the bul

warks by the commission of sin, although it may not be a

very grievous one, he already has a better opportunity to

make an assault on the interior reign of a soul. As the

soul finds herself weakened by vicious acts and habits and

without strength of grace, she does not resist the attack

with fortitude, and the devil, acquiring more and more

power over her, begins to subject and oppress her with

out opposition.

479. Consider therefore now, my dearest, how great

must be thy watchfulness, and how great is the necessity of

not falling asleep in the midst of so many dangers. Re-

370 CITY OF GOD

member that thou art a religious, a spouse of Christ, a

superior, taught and enlightened, favored with so many

singular blessings. By these privileges and many others,

which thou wilt find connected with them, thou shouldst

gage thy solicitude, for thou owest a return and corres

pondence in all of them to the Lord. Exert thyself to be

punctual in the fulfillment of all the rules and practices of

religion ; let there be no rule, no command, and no exer

cise of perfection, which ever will seem small to thee;

despise or forget none of them ; observe them all with rig

or, for in the eyes of God all is precious and of great im

port when practiced according to his pleasure. It is cer

tain, that He finds pleasure in seeing his commands ful

filled, and is offended in seeing them set aside. Therefore

in all things consider, that thou hast a Spouse, whom thou

must please, a God, whom thou must serve, a Father,

whom thou must obey, a Judge, whom thou must fear, and

a Mistress, whom thou shouldst imitate and follow.

480. In order that thou mayest fulfill all this, thou

must renew in thy soul the strong resolution not to listen

to thy inclinations, not to yield to the negligence and

weakness of thy nature ; do not omit any practice or ex

ercise on account of its difficulty, as for instance kissing

the ground, as thou has been accustomed to do according

to the custom of the religious. Both small and great per

form with a loving constancy and thus thou wilt be pleas

ing in the eyes of my Son and myself. In the works of

supererogation, after praying for a holy alacrity, ask ad

vice of thy confessor and superior, and perform them with

a spirit entirely free of any predilection or selflove. That

which they direct, accept and write in thy heart, never

resting in its punctual fulfillment. If it is possible to avail

thyself of obedience and counsel, never decide for thyself

on anything, how good soever it may appear to thee ; for

the true will of God is always manifest in holy obedience.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE PERFECTIONS OF THE MOST HOLY MARY IN THE

PRACTICE OF VIRTUES IN GENERAL, AND OF HER AD

VANCE IN THEM.

481. Virtue is a habit, which ennobles and adorns the

rational powers of the creature, and inclines it toward

doing good. It is called a habit, because it is a quality

which is permanently connected with the faculties from

which it is not so easily separated, thereby differing from a

virtuous act, which does not remain, but passes away. It

creates an alertness and facility of action tending toward

the good ; this quality is not inherent in the faculty itself,

for these faculties are indifferent toward good or evil.

Most holy Mary was adorned from the first instant of her

life with all virtues in a most eminent degree, and they

were continually augmented by new graces and by new

perfection in practice. All the virtues and merits, which

the hand of the Lord had showered upon Her, She

brought to their fullest perfection.

482. Although the faculties of this Lady and sover

eign Princess were in no sense subject to disorder, nor to

any of the repugnance, which other children of Adam

must first overcome (for sin had not touched Her, nor the

leaven of sin, which draws toward evil and resists the

good) ; yet, by virtuous habits, these already well ordered

faculties were capable of being inclined more and more to

what was most perfect, holy and praiseworthy. More

over She was a mere creature capable of suffering, and as

such She was also subject to pain, to the inclination to

ward licit repose, and to the inertia, disinclining Her

371

372 CITY OF GOD

toward the performance of some supererogatory works,

which without sin She could have omitted. In order to

overcome this natural disinclination and repugnance

habits of the most exalted virtues assisted Her, so that this

Queen of heaven vanquished them without any weakness

and was in no way hindered in pursuing the utmost per

fection in all her works.

483. On account of this beauty and harmony regarding

the habits of virtue, the soul of the most holy Mary was

so enlightened, ennobled and entirely bent on the highest

Good and last End of all creation ; so alert, prompt, effi

cient and joyful in the practice of virtue, that, if it were

possible for our weak insight to penetrate into the interior

of her sacred soul, we would there find a more wonderful

beauty than that of all creatures combined and inferior

only to that of God himself. All the perfection of crea

tures were in purest Mary as if in their own sphere and

center, and all virtues reached in Her the highest perfec

tion, so that in no manner could it ever be said of Her :

this or that is wanting in order to make Her altogether

beautiful and perfect. Besides the infused virtues, She

possessed all the acquired ones, which She augmented by

practice and exercise. In other souls, one single act can

not be called virtue, because many repeated acts are neces

sary to constitute virtue ; but in the most holy Mary each

act was so efficacious, intense and consummate, that each

one was superior to the virtues of all the other creatures.

Accordingly, as her acts of virtue were so frequent and

did not fall short in the least point of the highest degree

of perfection, how incomparably excellent were not the

habits of virtue, which the heavenly Mistress attained by

her personal exertion? The end for which something is

done is that which makes an act virtuous as being well

done. In Mary, our Mistress, this end was God himself,

THE CONCEPTION 373

highest possible end of all activity; for She did nothing

through which She was not certain to advance the greater

glory and pleasure of the Lord and She looked upon this

as the motive and ultimate end of all her actions.

484. The two kinds of virtues, the infused and the ac

quired, are founded upon a third kind, called natural vir

tue ; this is born within us as part of our rational nature

and is called synteresis. It is a certain knowledge of the

first foundations and principles of virtue, perceived by

the light of reason, and a certain inclination in the will,

corresponding to this light. Such for instance is the senti

ment, that we must love those who do us good, or that

we should not do unto others, what we do not wish to be

done to ourselves, etc. The most holy Queen possessed

this natural virtue or synteresis in the most superlative

degree, so that from the natural principles She drew all

their consequences and relations up to the universal Good,

though ever so remote ; for She reasoned from these first

principles with profoundest insight, and incredible swift

ness and accuracy. To arrive at these conclusions, She

availed Herself of her infused knowledge of created

things, especially of the more noble and vast ones, of the

heavens, the sun, the moon and stars, the arrangement of

all the heavenly bodies and of the elements. Taking in

their whole scope from beginning to end, She invited these

creatures to praise their Creator and commanded them,

as far as was in them, to raise and draw men toward their

God until they should arrive at the knowledge of the

Creator and Author of all.

485. The infused virtues are divided into two classes.

To the first belong only those, that have God himself for

their immediate object ; therefore they are called theologi

cal virtues, being faith, hope, and charity. To the second

class belong all those other virtues, which have as their

374 CITY OF GOD

proximate object some means or some honorable good,

which advances the soul toward its last end, namely God.

These are called the moral virtues, because they are inti

mately connected with established customs, and, although

they are many in number, they can be reduced to four,

which are called the cardinal virtues: prudence, justice,

fortitude and temperance. Of all these virtues and their

different species I will say farther on as much as I can in

order that I may make clear, how all of them and each

one in particular adorned the faculties of the most holy

Mary. At present I only mention in general, that none

of them was wanting in Her, and that all were possessed

by Her in the most perfect manner ; moreover they were

supplemented by the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the fruits

of the Spirit, and the Beatitudes. God did not fail to in

fuse into Her from the first moment of her Conception,

all of the graces and gifts conducive to the highest beauty

of the human soul and faculties ; and this was true of the

will as well as of the understanding, so that She had as

well the knowledge as the habit of the sciences. In order to

say it all in one word : all the good, which the Most High

could give Her as the Mother of his Son and as a mere

creature, He conferred upon Her in the most exalted de

gree. In addition to all this her virtues continually aug

mented : the infused virtues, because She added to them by

her own merits, and the acquired virtues, because She nur

tured and multiplied them by the intensity of her merito

rious acts.

INSTRUCTION OF TH MOTHER OF GOD AND MOST HOLY

VIRGIN.

486. My daughter, the Most High communicates to

all mortals without distinction the light of the natural

virtues; to those who dispose themselves by means of

THE CONCEPTION 375

them and by his graces, He concedes also the infused

virtues at the time of their justification. As He is the

Author of nature and of grace, He distributes these gifts

with greater or less abundance, according to his equity

and pleasure. In Baptism He instills the virtues of faith,

hope and charity, and with these, other virtues, by which

the creature is to co-operate and exert itself toward the

pursuit of Good, not only preserving within itself those

received in the sacraments, but acquiring others by its

own merits and exertions. This will be the greatest hap

piness and blessedness of men, that they correspond to

the love, which the Creator and Redeemer shows them,

adorning their soul and, by the infused habits, familiariz

ing themselves with the virtuous exercise of their own

will. But the failure to correspond to those inestimable

benefits brings on their greatest misfortune, because in

this disloyalty consists the first great victory of the demon

over man.

487. Of thee, my soul, I require that thou exercise

thyself and co-operate with the natural and the supernat

ural, gifts of virtue with an unceasing diligence, and that

thou acquire the habits of other virtues, which thou

shouldst augment by the frequent exercise of those, which

God so liberally and graciously has communicated to

thee. The infused gifts, joined to the virtues nurtured

and attained by the soul itself, are an adornment and ac

quisition of marvelous beauty, and very pleasing in the

eyes of the Most High. I remind thee also, my dearest,

that the Almighty has been so generous in conferring

these blessings on thy soul and has enriched it with such

great treasures of grace, that if thou shouldst fall into

disgrace, it would be thy fault, and thou wouldst incur a

greater guilt, than many generations of men. Consider

and always remember the great nobility of virtue, how it

376 CITY OF GOD

so enlightens and beautifies the soul, that even if there

were no other gain or object, the desire of possessing it

for its own sake would be entirely justifiable. Now, that

which exalts virtue beyond all comparison is, that its final

end is God himself, for whom truth and perfection, which

are its constituents, must be primarily intended; and as

soon as virtues attain this their end, namely God himself,

they will be the foundation of the happiness and blessed

ness of the creature.

CHAPTER VI.

OF THE: VIRTUE OF FAITH,, AND HOW MOST HOLY MARY

PRACTICED IT.

488. In few words the holy Elizabeth described the

greatness of the faith of most holy Mary, when, as re

ported to us by the evangelist Luke, She exclaimed:

"Blessed art thou for having believed, because the words

and promises of the Lord shall be fulfilled in Thee"

(Luke 1, 45). The faith of this great Lady must be esti

mated from the greatness of her good fortune and beati

tude, and from her ineffable dignity; for her faith in

spired Her with so great and so excellent a belief in God,

that it merited a place inferior only to God himself. She

believed that Sacrament of all sacraments and mysteries,

which was to be fulfilled in her own Self. So great was

the prudence and the divine light in Mary our Mistress,

in believing this new and unheard of mystery of the In

carnation, that it surpassed all human and angelic under

standing, and that it could be properly estimated and

understood only in the divine Mind, the workshop of the

Most High, where in the power of his right hand all the

virtues of this Queen had their origin and completion. I

always find myself taken aback and stupefied, whenever

I speak of these virtues, and more particularly of the in

terior ones ; for though great is the light and intelligence,

which were given to me concerning them, yet too limited

are human terms to describe the concept and acts of faith,

which were engendered in the mind and spirit of Her,

who was the most faithful of all creatures, or rather, of

377

26

378 CITY OF GOD

Her, who was greater in faith than all of them taken to

gether. I will say what I can, acknowledging my inability

to say what I desire, and much more, what is due to the

reality.

489. The faith of the most holy Mary was an image of

.the whole creation and an open prodigy of the divine

power, for in Her the virtue of faith existed in the high

est and the most perfect degree possible; in a certain

manner and to a great extent, it made up for the want of

faith in men. The Most High has given this excellent

virtue to mortals so that, in spite of the carnal and mortal

nature, they might have the knowledge of the Divinity

and of his mysteries and admirable works: a knowledge

so certain and infallibly secure, that it is like seeing Him

face to face, and like the vision of the blessed angels in

heaven. The same object and the same truth, which they

see openly, we perceive obscured under the veil of faith.

490. One glance at the world will make us understand,

how many nations, reigns and provinces, since the begin

ning of the world, have lost their claims to this great

blessing of the faith, so little understood by the thankless

mortals: how many have unhappily flung it aside, after

the Lord had conferred it on them in his generous mercy,

and how many of the faithful, having without their merit

received the gift of faith, neglect and despise it, letting it

lie idle and unproductive for the last end to which it is

to direct and guide them. It was befitting therefore, that

the divine equity should have some recompense for such

lamentable loss, and that such an incomparable benefit

should find an adequate and proportionate return, as far

as is possible from creatures ; it was befitting that there

should be found at least one Creature, in whom the virtue

of faith should come to its fullest perfection, as an ex

ample and rule for the rest.

THE CONCEPTION 379

491. All this was found in the great faith of the most

holy Mary and on account of Her and for Her alone, if

there had been no other creature in the world, it would

have been most proper, that God should contrive and

create the excellent virtue of faith ; for according to our

way of understanding, Mary by Herself was a sufficient

pledge to the divine Providence, that He would find a

proper return on the part of man, and that the object of

this faith would not be frustrated by the want of corres

pondence among mortals. The faith of this sovereign

Queen was to make recompense for their default and She

was to copy the divine prototype of this virtue in its high

est perfection. All the other faithful can measure and

gage themselves by the faith of this Mistress; for they

will be more or less faithful, the more or less they ap

proach the perfection of her incomparable faith. There

fore She was set as Teacher and example of all the be

lieving, including the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and

Martyrs and all that have believed or will believe in the

Christian doctrines to the end of the world.

492. Some one might ask the question : how can it be

possible, that the Queen of heaven exercised faith, since

She had clear visions of the Divinity many times, and

many more times was favored with abstract visions, which

likewise make evident that which is perceived by the un

derstanding, as was said above (No. 229, 237) and will

be said over and over again later on. On account of its

uncertainty, the Apostle says, that faith is the substance

of the things that appear not ; by which is meant, that we

have no other presence or evidence of the real existence

of the things we hope for as the ultimate realization of

our happiness, than that which is obscurely and as in a

mirror presented to us by faith. It is the force of this

infused habit, drawing us to believe what we do not see,

380 CITY OF GOD

and the infallible certitude of what is believed, which pre

sent those strong motives for prompting the will to strive

after what it desires and hopes. According to this doc

trine, it seems, that, if the most holy Virgin had ever en

joyed the vision and possession of God (for these two are

one) She was deprived of the obscurity necessary for the

existence of faith in the things, which She had seen face

to face; especially if her understanding retained the

images of what She had seen in the intuitive or open vis

ion of the Divinity.

493. But this experience was not only no hindrance to

the faith of the most holy Mary, but augmented and

raised it to its highest excellence. For the Lord wished,

that his Mother should be so wonderfully distinguished

in this virtue of faith (and likewise in the virtue of hope),

that She should therein surpass all that is given to ordi

nary wayfarers. He wished, that her understanding, in

order to befit her position as the Mistress and Artist of

these great virtues be embellished at one time by the most

perfect acts of faith and hope, at another enraptured with

the vision and the possession (even if only temporary), of

the very End and Object of faith and hope. Thus She

was prepared by her personal experience and fruition to

teach the faithful to believe what She had herself seen and

enjoyed. To join these two things in the most holy soul

of Mary was easy to the power of the Almighty ; it was

due to her dignity as his most pure Mother, and so it must

be done : no privilege, however great, was unbecoming to

Her ; and in Her none must be wanting.

494. It is true that the clear vision of a mystery is in

compatible with the obscurity of the faith by which we

believe it, and the possession of a thing excludes the hope

of it. So most holy Mary, whenever these high mysteries

were shown to Her by evident intuition or intellectual ab-

THE CONCEPTION 381

stractions did not exercise the obscure acts or habits of

faith; for on those occasions She could make use only

of her infused science. But the theological virtues of

faith and hope did not therefore remain idle all the time

of her life; for the Lord, in order to afford Her the

possibility of exercising them, suspended the influx and

activity of the clear and evident vision, thereby caus

ing a cessation of the effects of infused knowledge, and

making room for the obscurity of faith and the Lord hid

himself from Her by taking away all clear evidence of

Himself from her mind. This happened in the most high

mystery of the Incarnation, as I shall relate in its place

(Part II, 119, 133).

495. It was not proper, that the Mother of God should

be deprived of the reward of the infused virtues of faith

and hope ; yet in order to gain this reward, it was neces

sary to merit it; and in order to merit it, She must have

practiced these virtues in proportion to the reward. Just

as her merits were great beyond comparison, so the faith

in each and every one of the acts of this exalted Lady

were correspondingly great; for She perceived and ac

cepted explicitly all the truths of the Catholic religion

with the deepest and most perfect faith as a wayfarer.

Manifestly the understanding, as soon as it sees the prop

er evidence for that which it perceives, does not wait for

the consent of the will in order to believe, for before it

can receive the command of the will, it has already been

compelled to accept the truth by its evidences. Therefore

the act of believing what cannot be denied, is not meri

torious. When most holy Mary assented to the message

of the archangel, She merited an ineffable reward on ac

count of the act of faith necessary to believe such a deep

mystery; and the same was true of other acts of faith,

whenever the Most High gave Her an opportunity for its

382 CITY OF GOD

exercise by withdrawing the infused knowledge. But

even when She applied infused knowledge, She gained

great merit, on account of the love with which She util

ized it, as I have said in another place (Supra 232, 381,

384).

496. Just as little did She use the gift of infused science,

when She lost the divine Child, at least not in order to

find the place where He tarried, though this was possible to

Her in many other things. She did not then make use of

the clear images of the Divinity ; also not at the foot of the

Cross, because the Lord restricted those visions and oper

ations of her most holy soul which would have prevented

sorrow. It was becoming, that She should feel it and be

left to the strength of her faith and hope alone. The joy

occasioned by any of her visions or intelligences of the

Divinity (even if only abstractive), would naturally pre

vent pain, unless God wrought a new miracle to unite

pain with joy. It was not proper that God should work

this miracle, since on the sorrows of the Lady depended

her merits, and the imitation of her divine Son was to be

commensurate with the graces and excellences of the

Mother. Therefore She sought the Child sorrowfully, as

She herself says, in faith and lively hope; and the same

virtues were also active in witnessing the Passion and

Resurrection of her beloved Son. During those times She

depended upon Catholic faith, which then became as it

were restricted and confined to Her, as its Mistress and

Foundress.

497. Three qualities or excellences must in particular

be mentioned in speaking of the faith of the most holy

Mary: its continuity, its intensity and the intelligence

with which it was exercised. The faith of Mary as men

tioned above, was suspended only during those times,

in which She enjoyed the clearness of the intuitive, and the

THE CONCEPTION 383

evidence of the abstractive visions of the Divinity. Al

though only the Lord himself, who dispensed them, could

know when She put into operation the one or the other

kind of acts, yet the most holy Queen, in making use of

the different kinds of spiritual activity, never allowed

Her understanding to remain idle for one instant of her

life, and from the first moment of her Conception She

never lost sight of God. For when She suspended faith,

it was because She was enjoying the clear vision of God

through the highest kind of infused knowledge, and as

soon as the Lord interrupted this clear vision, She re

newed the memory of his presence by her faith. The in

terchange and succession of these acts produced in the

mind of the most holy Mary an exquisite harmony, to

which the Most High called the attention of the angels,

when He said in the eighth chapter of the Canticles:

"Thou that dwellest in the gardens, the friends hearken :

make me hear thy voice."

498. In regard to the intensity or efficacy of the faith

of this sovereign Princess, it is certain, that it exceeded

that of the Apostles, Prophets and Saints taken together

and reached the highest degree possible in a creature. It

not only exceeded the faith of all true believers, but She

supplied the faith that was wanting in all those that have

not believed and She could by Her faith enrich them all.

Thus Her faith remained firm, immovable and constant,

when the Apostles in the hour of the Passion fell away;

and if all the temptations, deceits, errors, and falsehoods

of the world were joined together, they could not prevail

or disturb the invincible faith of the Queen of believers.

She, its Foundress and Instructress, would overcome them

all and issue forth victorious and triumphant.

499. The intelligent love, with which She explicitly

believed all the divine truths, cannot be expressed in

384 CITY OF GOD

words, without misrepresenting its intensity. The most

holy Mary knew all that She believed and believed all

that She knew ; for the infused theological knowledge of

the credibility of faith s mysteries, and the understanding

of this credibility, existed in the wisest Virgin Mother in

the highest degree possible in a mere creature. Her

knowledge was kept in a constant actuality, and by means

of her memory, like that of an angel, She never forgot,

that which once She had learnt. This gift and faculty of

the understanding She kept in constant operation in order

to exercise her deep faith ; only at times, as already said,

God suspended faith by other acts of the mind (No. 492,

465). Except that She was not yet a comprehensor,

nothing was wanting in regard to her intelligence of the

matters of faith and in regard to the clear knowledge of

the Divinity. In this regard She held a position far above

that of all the wayfarers and She by Herself constituted

a class of such high degrees, as cannot be attained by any

other wayfarer to heaven.

500. And if the most holy Mary, while She exercised

the acts of faith and hope, was in what might be called

her most ordinary and therefore the lowest degree of

activity, and if in that state She excelled all the angels and

saints in merits by her faith and love, what must we say

of the excellence of her acts, her merits and her affections,

during the time in which She was exalted by the divine

power to the blessed state of highest intuitive vision and

clear knowledge of the Divinity? If this is beyond the

comprehension of the angelic mind, how can an earthly

creature ever hope to find words to describe it ? I there

fore can only express the mere wish, that all mortals

might come to a knowledge of the precious value of faith,

by learning it from this heavenly Original, in whom

THE CONCEPTION 385

faith attained its ultimate perfection and where it com

pletely fulfilled the end for which it was created. Let the

infidels, the heretics, the pagans and idolaters approach

this Mistress of faith, most holy Mary, in order to be en

lightened in their falsehoods and darksome errors and in

order to find the sure way toward the last end of their

being 1 . Let also Catholics approach and learn to under

stand the copious rewards of this virtue ; let them ask the

Lord with the Apostles to increase their faith (Luke 7,

5). Not that they ever can reach the faith of most holy

Mary, but let them ask for the desire to imitate Her and

follow Her, for by her faith She teaches us, and by her

merits She helps us to obtain this virtue.

501. Saint Paul calls the patriarch Abraham the father

of all the faithful ( Rom. 6, 11), because he first received

the promise, hoping against hope (Rom. 4, 18) . He

wishes to extol the excellence of the Patriarch s faith, be

cause he believed the promise of the Lord, that Sarah, his

wife, would bear him a son though she was sterile, and,

according to the laws of nature, incapable of concep

tion ; moreover, in offering his son as a sacrifice at God s

command, he relinquished at the same time the prospect

of the countless offspring, which the Lord had promised

to Him. This all, and many other sayings and promises

of the Lord were made impossible of fulfillment according

to the laws of nature, yet Abraham believed, that the di

vine power could execute them in a supernatural manner.

Therefore he merited to be called the Father of all the

believers and to receive the seal of his faith which justi

fied him, namely circumcision.

502. But our supereminent Lady, Alary, possesses

much greater rights and titles to be called the Mother of

386 CITY OF GOD

faith and of all the faithful. In her hand is hoisted the

standard and ensign of faith for all the believers in the

law of grace. First indeed, according to the order of

time, was the Patriarch and consequently he was ordained

to be the father and head of the Hebrew people: great

was his belief in the promises concerning Christ our Lord,

and in the works of the Most High. Nevertheless in

comparably more admirable was the faith of Mary in all

these regards and She excels him in dignity. Greater

difficulty and incongruity was there that a virgin should

conceive and bring forth, than that an aged and sterile

woman should bear fruit ; and the patriarch Abraham was

not so certain of the sacrifice of Isaac, as Mary was of the

inevitable sacrifice of her most holy Son. She is the One,

who perfectly believed and hoped in all the mysteries, and

She shows to the whole Church, how it must believe in

the Most High and in the works of his Redemption.

Having thus understood the faith of Mary our Queen, we

must admit Her to be the Mother of the faithful and the

prototype of the Catholic faith and of holy hope. And in

order to conclude this chapter, I will add, that Christ, our

Redeemer and Teacher, as He was a comprehensor and

as his most holy soul enjoyed the highest glory and the

beatific vision, had no necessity or occasion for faith, nor

could He in his own actions give us an example of this vir

tue. But what the Lord could not do in his own Person,

He did in the person of his most holy Mother, constitut

ing Her as the Foundress, the Mother and the example

of faith in his evangelical Church. And thus on the day

of universal accounting this sovereign Mistress and

Queen shall in an especial manner assist her most holy

Son in the judgment of those, who, in spite of such an ex

ample, have not believed during their stay on earth.

THE CONCEPTION 387

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, OUR LADY.

503. My daughter, the inestimable treasure of the vir

tue of divine faith is hidden to those mortals who have

only carnal and earthly eyes ; for they do not know how

to appreciate and esteem a gift and blessing of such in

comparable value. Consider, my dearest, what the world

was without faith and what it would be today if my Son

and Lord would not preserve faith. How many men whom

the world has celebrated as great, powerful and wise have

precipitated themselves, on account of the want of light of

faith, from the darkness of their unbelief into most

abominable sins, and thence into the eternal darkness of

hell ! How many kingdoms and provinces, being blind

themselves, follow these still more blind leaders until

they together fall into the abyss of eternal pains! And

they are followed by the bad Christians, who having re

ceived the grace and blessing of faith, live as if they had

it not in their hearts.

504. Do not forget, my dear friend, to be thankful for

this precious jewel which the Lord has given thee as a

dower and a wedding gift of thy espousal with Him&gt; in

order to draw thee to the bridal chamber of his holy

Church and afterwards to have intercourse with Him in

the eternal beatitude. Continually exercise this virtue of

faith, for it places thee near to thy last end, after which

thou strivest, and brings thee near to the object of thy de

sires and thy love. Faith teaches the sure way of eternal

salvation, faith is the light that shines in the darkness of

this mortal life and pilgrimage; it leads men securely to

the possession of the fatherland to which they are way

faring, if they do not allow it to die out by infidelity and

sinfulness. Faith enlivens the other virtues and serves as a

nourishment of the just man and a support in his labors.

388 CITY OF GOD

Faith confounds and fills with fear the infidels and the lax

Christians in their negligence; for it convinces them in

this world of their sin and threatens punishment in the

life to come. Faith is powerful to do all things, for noth

ing is impossible to the believer; faith makes all things

attainable and possible. Faith illumines and ennobles the

understanding of man, since it directs him in the darkness

of his natural ignorance, not to stray from the way, and

it elevates him above himself so that he sees and under

stands with infallible certainty what is far above his pow

ers and assures him of it no less than if he saw it clearly

before him. He is thus freed from the gross and vile nar

row-mindedness of those who will believe only what they

can experience by their own limited natural powers, not

considering that the soul, as long as it lives in the prison

of this corruptible body, is very much circumscribed and

limited in its sphere of action by the knowledge drawn

from the coarse activity of the senses. Appreciate, there

fore, my daughter, this priceless treasure of the Catholic

faith given thee by God, watch over it and practice it in

great esteem and reverence.

CHAPTER VII.

OF THE VIRTUE OF HOPE, AND HOW THE VIRGIN OUR I^ADY

PRACTICED IT.

505. The virtue of hope naturally follows upon that of

faith, since it is ordained as its complement. For if the

Most High instills in us the divine light of faith, and if

He wishes us, without regard to differences of position

and of age, to come into the infallible knowledge of the

Godhead and of his mysteries and promises, it is for no

other reason than that each one of us, knowing Him as

our last end and object, and learning of the means of

arriving at it, may engender within himself the vehement

desire to reach that goal. This desire, which naturally

carries with it the inclination to attain this highest Good,

is called hope and is infused into our will or natural ap

petite in Baptism. For it belongs to the proper activity

of the will to strive after eternal felicity as its greatest

good and blessing, to make use of divine grace for ob

taining it and for overcoming the difficulties which will

occur in its pursuit.

506. How excellent the virtue of hope is, may be

learned from the fact that its ultimate object is God him

self, our highest Good. Although it perceives and seeks

Him as something that is absent, yet at the same time it

seeks Him also as something that is attainable through

the merits of Christ and through the proper activity of

the one that hopes for it. The acts and operations of this

virtue are regulated by the light of divine faith and by

the prudent reliance on the infallible promise of the Lord.

389

390 CITY OF GOD

Thus hope, by means of the reasoning powers, maintains

the middle road between despair and presumption, not per

mitting man to presume on his own powers for the at

tainment of eternal glory or to set aside meritorious activ

ity on his own part, nor allowing fear or despondency to

hinder Him from exerting himself toward it on account

of the Lord s promises and assurances of final success. In

this security, guaranteed by divine faith in all that per

tains to these things and applied in prudent and sound

reasoning, man hopes without fear of being deceived and

yet also without presumption.

507. From this it can be seen that despair may arise

both from a want of believing what faith promises and

also from a failure to apply to one s own self the se

curity of the divine promises, in which one believes, but

which one falsely supposes unattainable in one s own re

gard. Between these two dangerous extremes hope di

rects us in the safe way, maintaining us in the confident

belief on the one hand that God will not deny to our

selves what He has promised to all, and on the other,

that the promise was not made unconditionally and ab

solutely, but requires our exertion and effort to merit its

fulfillment as far as it is possible with the help of divine

grace. For if God has made man capable of the vision

of eternal glory, it was not just that any one should at

tain to such felicity by sinful abuse of the very faculties

with which he is to enjoy it ; but that he use them in such

a way as to befit the end for which he received them. This

proper use of the faculties consists in the exercise of the

virtues, which prepare man for the enjoyment of his

highest good, and in seeking it already in this life by the

knowledge and love of God.

508. Now, in most holy Mary this virtue of hope

reached the highest degree possible both in regard to it-

THE CONCEPTION 391

self and in regard to all its effects, circumstances and

qualities; for the desire and the striving after the last

end, which is the vision and the fruition of God, was in

Her more active than in all other creatures; moreover

this most faithful and prudent Lady did nothing to im

pede these aspirations, but followed them up with all the

perfection possible in a creature. Not only did She pos

sess the infused virtue of faith in the promises of our

Lord and its concomitant intensity of hope ; but over and

above all this She enjoyed beatific vision, in which She

learnt to know by experience the infinite truth and fidelity

of the Most High. And although She did not have occa

sion to make use of hope, while enjoying the vision and

possession of the Divinity; nevertheless, after again re

suming Her ordinary state, She was impelled by the mem

ory of what She had enjoyed, to hope and strive after it

with so much the greater force and avidity. Thus the

longings of the Queen of all virtues constituted a certain

kind of new and particular kind of hope.

509. There was another reason why the hope of the

most holy Mary excelled the hope of all the other faith

ful joined together: namely the greatness of the pros

pective reward and glory due to this sovereign Queen,

for reward is after all the real object of hope and in Her

it was to be far above all the glory of the angels and

saints; that is, proportionate to the knowledge of this

glory assured to Her in God was also her expectation and

desire to acquire it. Moreover in order that She might

attain the highest summit of this virtue, and that She

might worthily hope for all that the powerful arm of

God would work in Her, She was befittingly furnished

with the light of a supreme faith and all the helps and

gifts pertaining thereto, and with an especial assistance of

the Holy Ghost. What we have said of the virtue of

392 CITY OF GOD

hope in the blessed Virgin in regard to its principal ob

ject must also be affirmed in regard to its secondary ob

jects, for the gifts and mysterious blessings enjoyed by

this Queen of Heaven were so great that they could not

be amplified even by the arm of the Almighty God in a

mere creature. Now as the great Lady was to receive

these favors through the medium of faith and hope, these

virtues were proportionately great, and therefore the

greatest that could possibly fall to the lot of a handiwork

of God.

510. Moreover if, as has already been said of the

virtue of faith, the Queen of heaven was endowed with

an explicit knowledge and faith of all the revealed truths

and of all the mysteries and operations of tfye Most High,

and if the acts of hope corresponded to these acts of

faith, who, except the Lord himself could ever compre

hend how many and how excellent were the acts of hope,

which the Mistress of virtues elicited, since She was aware

of her own eternal glory and felicity and of that, which

was to be wrought in the rest of the evangelical Church

by the merits of her most holy Son? For the sole sake of

Mary, as we have before said of her faith, God would

have created this virtue, and for her sake He would have

conferred it, as He really did, on the whole human race

(No. 491).

511. On this account the holy Spirit calls Her the

Mother of beautiful love and holy hope (Eccli. 25, 24) ;

for just as She became the Mother of Christ because She

furnished Him with the flesh of his body, so the holy

Spirit made Her the Mother of hope, because by her es

pecial concurrence and cooperation She conceived and

brought forth this virtue for the faithful of the Church.

Her prerogative of being the Mother of holy hope was

connected with and consequent upon Her being the

THE CONCEPTION 393

Mother of Jesus Christ our Lord, for She knew that in

her Son She would lay the foundation of all the security

of our hope. On account of these conceptions and births

of the most holy Queen, She obtained a certain dominion

and sovereignty over those graces and the promises of

the Most High, which depended upon the death of Christ,

her Son, for their fulfillment. When She of her own

free will gave conception and birth to the incarnate Word

She turned them all over to us and thereby gave birth to

our hope. Thus was accomplished in its legitimate sense

that which the Holy Ghost said to Her : "Thy plants are

a paradise" (Cant. 4, 13) ; for all that came forth from

Mary, the Mother of grace, was to constitute our happi

ness, our paradise, and our certain hope of being able to

attain them.

512. The Church has a celestial and true father in

Jesus Christ, for He engendered and founded it by his

merits and labors, and enriched it with his graces, his

example and his doctrines, as was to be expected from

the Father and Author of such an admirable work.

Therefore it was befitting that the Church should have

also a loving and kind Mother, who with sweet regale

ment and caresses, and with maternal solicitude and as

sistance, should nurse the little children at her breast (I.

Cor. 3, 2), nourish them with tender and delicious food

as long as they cannot in their infancy bear the food of

the robust and strong. This sweet Mother was most holy

Mary, who since the beginning of the Church, when the

law of grace was born in her yet tender children, began

to give forth the sweet milk of her enlightened teaching

as a merciful Mother ; and who will continue to the end

of the world thus to assist and intercede for the new chil

dren, which Christ our Lord engenders every day by his

merits and at the petitions of this Mother of mercy. She

27

394 CITY OF GOD

it is for whom they are born, who raises and nourishes

them. She is our sweet Mother, our life and our hope,

the original of the blessings, which are ours, She is the

example which we are to imitate, She is our assurance

in the pursuit of the eternal happiness, merited by her

most holy Son, She furnishes the assistance necessary for

its final attainment.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY.

513. My daughter, as with two indefatigable wings,

my spirit raised its flight by means of faith and hope

toward the endless and the highest good, until it rested

in union with God through intimate and perfect love.

Many times I tasted and enjoyed the clear vision and

fruition of Him; but as these blessings were not contin

uous in my state of pilgrimage, I supplied their place by

the exercise of faith and hope. They remained with me

during my visions and fruitions and immediately became

active during their absence, preventing any cessation in

my high aspirations. The effects of these virtues, the

love, the efforts and the desires which they excited in my

soul toward the possession of the eternal fruition of God,

cannot be adequately comprehended by the created mind

in its present limited state, but they shall be known in

God and cause eternal praise in those who will be worthy

to see Him in heaven.

514. Thou, my dearest, having received such great en

lightenment concerning the excellence of this virtue and

the works which I practiced by its help, shouldst work

without ceasing to imitate me according to the assistance

of divine grace. Renew continually and confer within

thyself the promises of the Most High and, with un

shaken confidence in their divine truthfulness, raise thy

THE CONCEPTION 395

heart to ardent desires and longings for their attainment.

In this firm hope thou canst assure thyself of arriving

through the merits of my most holy Son, at the blessed

cohabitation in the celestial fatherland and at the com

panionship of all those who there see in immortal glory

the face of the Most High. With its help thou canst

raise thy heart above earthly things and fix thy mind

upon the immutable Good, to which thou aspirest; all

visible things will appear to thee burdensome and dis

agreeable, and thou wilt esteem them as vile and con

temptible ; nothing wilt thou strive after except that most

lovable and delightful object of thy desires. In my soul

there was an ardor of hope, such as is possible only to

those who have apprehended its object in faith and tasted

it by experience ; no tongue and no words can describe

or express its intensity.

515. Besides, in order to spur thee on still more, con

sider and deplore with heartfelt sorrow the unhappiness

of so many souls who are images of God and capable of

his glory, and who through their own fault are deprived

of the true hope of enjoying it. If the children of the

holy Church would pause in their vain occupations and

would take time to consider and weigh the blessings of

unerring faith and hope, which separates them from

darkness and which, without their merit, distinguishes

them from the followers of blind unbelief, they would

without doubt be ashamed of their torpid forgetfulness

and repudiate their vile ingratitude. But let them be un

deceived, for most terrible punishments await them ; they

are most detestable in the sight of God and the saints,

because they despise the blood shed by Christ for the

very purpose of gaining them these blessings. As if all

were only a fiction they treat with contempt the blessings

of truth, hastening about during their whole life without

396 CITY OF GOD

spending even one day, and many of them not even an

hour, in the consideration of their duties and of their

danger. Weep, O soul, over this lamentable evil, and

according to thy power work and pray for its extirpation

through my most holy Son. Believe me that whatever

exertion and attempt thou makest toward this purpose

shall be rewarded by his Majesty.

CHAPTER VIII.

OF THE VIRTUE OF CHARITY IN THE MOST HOLY MARY,

OUR LADY.

516. The most excellent virtue of charity is the Mis

tress, the queen, the mother, the life and beauty of all the

other virtues ; charity governs, moves and directs them to

their ultimate and true end, charity leads them on to their

ultimate perfection, preserves them and makes them

grow, enlightens them and beautifies them, gives them

life and efficacy. If the other virtues confer each their

measure of perfection on creatures, charity gives them

perfection itself and brings them to their full complement.

Without charity all is of small value, obscure, languid,

lifeless and unprofitable, not being endowed either with

the essence or the appurtenances of true vitality. Char

ity is kind, patient, meek, without emulation, without

envy, without offensiveness, desires not to acquire, but

readily distributes all, is the cause of all good and con

sents not to evil; as far as it is concerned (I Cor. 13, 4)

it is the fullest participation in the true and ultimate

Good. O Virtue of virtues and greatest treasure of

heaven! Thou alone hast the key of paradise! Thou

art the dawn of eternal light, the sun of eternity s day,

the fire which purifies, the wine which inebriates with

new delights, the nectar which rejoices, the sweetness

which satiates without surceasing, the chamber of rest

for the soul, a bond so intimate that it makes us one with

God (Joan 17, 21), with the same bond that unites the

eternal Father to the Son, and Both to the holy Spirit.

397

398 CITY OF GOD

517. On account of the nobility of this most excellent

of all virtues, our God and Lord, according to the Gos

pel of St. John, wished to honor Himself or wished to

honor it, by calling Himself Charity (I John 4, 16).

There are many reasons why the Catholic Church attrib

utes the divine perfections of omnipotence to the Fa

ther, of wisdom to the Son, and of love to the Holy

Ghost. For the Father is the beginning, the Son is en

gendered of the Father through the divine intelligence,

and the Holy Ghost proceeds from Both through the

will. But the name of Charity and the perfection which

it implies is attributed to the Lord himself without dis

tinction of Persons, since the Evangelist says indiscrim

inately: "God is charity." This virtue in the Lord has

the distinction of being the terminus or end of all his

operations ad intra and ad extra. For on the one hand

all the divine processions (which are the operations of the

Godhead with Himself or ad infra), terminate in the re

ciprocal union and love of the three divine Persons, and

thus they constitute an indissoluble bond of unity over

and above the indivisibility of the divine Essence, proper

to it as being one and the same God. On the other hand

the works ad extra, namely the creatures, are an off

spring of divine charity and are ordained towards it, so

that, issuing from that immense sea of divine bounty,

they also return by charity and love to the source from

whence they sprang. It is peculiar to the virtue of char

ity in opposition to all the other virtues and gifts, that it

is a perfect participation of a divine virtue ; it is born of

one source, is directed back to the same, and is more

adapted to that eternal source than all other virtues. If

we call God our hope, our patience, or our wisdom, it is

because we receive them from his hand, and not because

these perfections are in God as they exist in ourselves.

THE CONCEPTION 399

But we call God our charity, not only because we re

ceive it from the Lord, and because He communicates it

to us, but because He himself is essential charity, and the

overflow of this divine perfection, which we represent to

ourselves as a form and attribute of his Divinity, re

dounds in our souls, transforming it more perfectly and

abundantly than any other virtue.

518. Other admirable qualities of charity are mani

fested in the relation between God and ourselves ; for as

this virtue is the source of our being, and afterwards our

highest end, God himself, it is also the spur and the ideal

of our affection and love of the Lord. For, if the knowl

edge that God is in Himself the infinite and highest good

is not sufficient to move and incite us to love Him, at least

the knowledge that He is our own greatest good, should

draw and oblige us toward his love. If we could not

know how to love Him before He gave his Onlybegotten

for us (I John 4, 10), we certainly cannot have an ex

cuse for not loving Him after that sacrifice. For al

though we might be exonerated for not being able to

merit such a benefit, yet now, after we have received this

sacrifice without our merit, we can certainly not be ex

cused for not acknowledging the favor.

519. The example which divine Charity furnishes for

our own, manifests still more the excellence of this vir

tue, although it is difficult for me to explain my percep

tion of this excellence. When Christ Our Lord founded

his most perfect law of love and grace, He exhorted us

to be perfect imitators of our heavenly Father, who al

lows his sun to rise over the just and the unjust without

distinction (Matth. 5, 45). Such doctrine and such an

example only He himself, the Son of the eternal Father,

could give to men. Among all the visible creatures there

is none like the sun to compare with divine charity and

400 CITY OF GOD

to show us how to imitate it; for this most noble star,

from its very nature, without hesitation and entirely ac

cording 1 to its own innate tendency, distributes its light

in all directions, and without distinction to all who are

capable of receiving it, and on its part never denies or

suspends its benevolent activity. And this it does with

out desiring acknowledgment, without imposing any

obligation on any one, without asking for benefits or re

quiring any return, without finding in the objects of its

enlightening bounty any previous goodness to move and

draw it towards them. Nor does it expect any profit in

the communication of its own blessed light, in which all

participate and share.

520. At the consideration of the noble attributes of

this created charity, who will not recognize the signa

ture of the uncreated Charity which it follows ? And who

is not ashamed of failing to imitate it? Who can claim

to have true charity in himself without copying its pro

totype? It is true our charity and love cannot create

goodness in the object of its affection, as is done by the

uncreated Charity of the Lord; nevertheless, even if by

charity we cannot make good those whom we love, we

can offer the goods of love to all without looking for the

advancement of ourselves and without proceeding to de

liberate and study whom we are to love and benefit in the

hope of being repaid. I do not wish to be understood as

saying that love is not free, nor that God was in any

way forced to create through natural necessity. All the

works ad extra, which are those of Creation, are free acts

of God. The example contained for us in divine Charity

points in another direction, namely, that the free will

must not twist or do violence to the inclination and the

impulse of charity; but in imitation of the highest Good,

which in no way hinders the divine will in its inclination

THE CONCEPTION 401

to do good, the human will must allow itself to be moved

and impelled by the inclination of charity to communicate

its goodness. For in this manner the divine Will is im

pelled to distribute the rays of its inaccessible light to all

creatures according to the capacity of each one, without

any preceding goodness, service or benefit on their side,

and without hope of such return afterwards, as the divine

Goodness stands in need of nothing.

521. This is in part the nature of Charity in its divine

original, God. Outside of God himself, however, we will

find it in the fullest perfection possible to a mere creature

in none other than most holy Mary, and in Her we find

the model after which we are more immediately to copy

our own charity. It is evident that the light proceeding

from the uncreated Sun of charity, where it is contained

without limit or circumscription, communicates itself to

all creatures even the most remote according to an order

and measurement adjusted in proportion to the proximity

or distance of each from the divine source. And this

order manifests the fullness and perfection of the divine

Providence; for without it, this Providence would show

a certain defect, confusedness and discord in the creatures

as far as the participation of his goodness and love is

concerned. The first place after God himself, in the dis

tribution of divine Charity, was due to that Soul and that

Person, who was at the same time uncreated God and

created man ; for the highest grace and participation of

love naturally was to be found where existed the closest

and most intimate union with God, as it existed and as it

will exist forever in Christ our Lord.

522. The second place is due to his most holy Mother

Mary, in whom charity and divine love found its resting

place in an especial manner. For, according to our way

of apprehending, the uncreated Charity could not be

402 CITY OF GOD

quieted until It should find a creature to which It could

communicate Itself in such great plenitude, that the love

and affection of the whole human race should in its en

tirety be reproduced in that Creature alone. It was in

tended that this chosen Creature should in Herself be

endowed with the gifts of charity, without the shortcom

ings and defects common to the rest of mortals infected

with sin, so that She by Herself would be able to supply

the balance of creation and make for it the greatest pos

sible return of love. Mary alone was chosen among all

creatures to imitate the Sun of justice in charity (Cant.

6, 9), and faithfully to copy this virtue from its Original.

She by Herself knew how to love more ardently and per

fectly than all the rest of creatures combined, to love God

entirely for his own sake, purely, intensely and without

defect, and also loving creatures for God s sake and in a

manner similar to Him. She alone adequately followed

the impulse of charity and her generous inclination of

loving the highest Good as highest Good, without any

side intentions ; and of loving the creatures on account of

their participation in God, without the thought of a re

turn or reward of her love. And in perfect imitation of

the uncreated Charity, Mary by her charity was able

and knew how to love in such a way as to make bet

ter that which is loved ; for by her love She made better

heaven and earth and all things that exist outside of God.

523. If the charity of this great Lady were put in the

balance with that of all the men and angels, hers would

outweigh theirs by far; for She by Herself exceeded

them all in her knowledge of the essence and qualities of

the divine Charity and consequently only Mary knew

how to imitate It with adequate perfection and above all

the powers of intellectual creatures. In this excess of

love and charity She repaid and satisfied the debt of in-

THE CONCEPTION 403

finite love due to the Lord from creatures, as far as He

could demand a return of them, for their return was not

to be infinite in value, that being- impossible. Just as the

love and the charity of the most holy soul of Jesus Christ

was in its greatness proportionate to the hypostatic union,

so the love of Mary was great in proportion to the ex

cellence conferred upon Her by the eternal Father, when

He appointed Her as the one, who as Mother was to con

ceive and bear his Son for the salvation of the world.

524. Thence we understand that all the gifts and the

blessings of creatures depend in some manner on the love

and charity of the blessed Virgin toward God. In Her

alone it was possible that divine Charity could exist in

this world in its highest and ultimate perfection. She

paid the whole debt of charity at a time when all men

were unable to pay or even to understand the greatness

of their debt. She, by her most perfect charity, obliged

the eternal Father to sacrifice his most holy Son for Her

self and in Redemption of the whole world; for if Mary

had loved less and if her charity had been defective, the

proper preparation for his Incarnation would have been

wanting. But as soon as any creature was found, which

resembled God so closely as She, it was, so to say, but a

natural consequence that He should descend to Her as

He did.

525. All this is the meaning of the words of the Holy

Ghost when He calls Mary the mother of beautiful love

(Eccli. 24, 24), as has already been explained correspond

ingly in regard to hope. These words to Mary signify:

Mary is the Mother of Him, who is our sweetest love,

Jesus, our Lord and Redeemer, who became the most

beautiful among men by a divine, infinite and uncreated

beauty, and by a human nature which was to be without

guilt or blemish and to which no beauty of grace that

404 CITY OF GOD

could be communicated by the Divinity, was wanting (I

Pet. 2, 22). She is also the Mother of beautiful love,

for She alone engendered in her soul the perfect love

and charity and the most beautiful affection. All the

rest of the creatures combined could not attain the beauty

and faultlessness of her Charity for theirs was not worthy

to be called absolutely beautiful. She is the Mother of

our love; for She drew it toward the earth for us; She

cultivated it for us; She taught us to know and practice

it; there is no other creature in heaven or on earth that

could be such a teacher of this beautiful love for men or

angels. Therefore all the saints are but rays of this sun,

and streamlets flowing from this ocean ; so much the bet

ter will they know how to love, the more they participate

in this love and charity of most holy Mary, and in as far

as they succeed in imitating and copying it more exactly.

526. The sources of this charity and love of our prin

cess Mary were her profound knowledge and wisdom,

derived as well from her infused faith and hope, as also

from the gifts of science, intellect and wisdom given to

Her by the Holy Ghost ; but the greatest of all the sources

of her love were the intuitive and abstractive visions of

the Divinity. Through all these mediums She reached

the highest knowledge of the uncreated Charity and

drank of it at its very fountain, and as She thus learned,

how God was to be loved for his own sake and the crea

ture for the sake of God, also how to practice and exe

cute this love with the most intense and fervent desire.

Moreover, as the power of God found no impediment or

hindrance, no inadvertence, ignorance or imperfection,

nor any tardiness of the will in this Queen, it could oper

ate in Her according to his pleasure. This was not pos

sible in other creatures, since in none of them it found

the same disposition as in most holy Mary.

THE CONCEPTION 405

527. In Her was the fulfillment of that great natural

and divine precept : "Thou shalt love thy God with thy

whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole

strength." Mary alone satisfied this obligation and debt

for all men, which in this life and before seeing God they

neither knew nor could ever fulfill entirely. This Lady

fulfilled it more perfectly during her pilgrimage than

the saints even in the state of beatitude. Moreover She

also satisfied the intentions of God in regard to this pre

cept, namely that it remain not unfruitful and as it were

frustrated on the part of wayfaring men; for most holy

Mary by Herself sanctified and fulfilled it entirely for all

of them, supplying by her charity all that was wanting in

the fulfillment of this precept among men. And probably

if God had not foreknown that Mary our Queen would

be among the number of the mortals, He would not have

given this command in this form. But on Her account

He was pleased to give it; to Her we owe not only this

command of perfect charity, but also the adequate fulfill

ment of it among men.

528. O most sweet and most beautiful Mother of beau

tiful love and charity ! Let all the nations know Thee, let

all generations bless Thee, and let all the creatures mag

nify and praise Thee! Thou alone art the perfect One,

the beloved One, the chosen Mother of uncreated Char

ity. It formed Thee and selected Thee to shine like the

sun in thy most beautiful and most perfect love (Cant. 6,

9) ! Let all us miserable children of Eve approach this

sun in order to be enlightened and inflamed. Let us ap

proach this Mother in order to be born again in love.

Let us approach this Teacher in order to be taught the

love, affection and charity which is without defect. Love

is a disposition which is pleased and satisfied with the

thing loved. Affection is a selection and separation of

406 CITY OF GOD

the beloved from other of the same kind, and charity

implied in addition to these, a high appreciation and es

teem for the goodness of the beloved. All this we will

learn from the Mother of true love, who is called by that

name precisely because her love possesses all these quali

ties. In Her we learn to love God for his own sake, rest

ing 1 satisfied in Him with all our heart; to give Him a

separate place in all our love from all that is not God, for

loving Him, together with other things, only diminishes

our love of God. We learn to appreciate Him and esteem

Him above gold and above all precious things, for in

comparison with Him all precious things are of no value,

all beauty is ugliness, and all that is great and estimable

in carnal eyes, becomes contemptible and valueless. Of

the effects of this love of the most holy Mary, this whole

history treats and of them heaven and earth are full.

Therefore I will not stay to describe more particularly

what no human tongue, nor words of men or angels can

convey.

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

529. My daughter, if I desire in maternal affection,

that thou follow me and imitate me in all the other vir

tues, then more especially do I make known and declare

to thee my desire to see thee follow me in the virtue of

charity, for this is the end and the crowning glory of all

other virtues. I desire that thou exert thy utmost

powers to copy in thy soul, with the greatest perfection,

all that thou hast learnt of my charity. Light up the

lamp of thy faith and reason in order to find this drachm

of infinite value, and after thou hast (Luke 15, 8) found

it, forget and despise all that is earthly and corruptible.

In thy own mind consider again and again, ponder and

THE CONCEPTION 407

take heed of the infinite reasons and causes that make

God lovable above all other things. In order that thou

mayest be sure that thou lovest Him perfectly and truly,

search within thyself for the following signs and effects

of that love; whether thy thought and meditation dwell

continually on God, whether his commands and counsel

find in thee no repugnance or remissness, whether thou

fearest to offend Him, whether thou seekest immediately

to appease Him after having offended Him, whether thou

grievest to see Him offended and rejoicest to see Him

served by all creatures, whether thou desirest and art de

lighted to speak continually of his love ; see whether thou

delightest in the memory of his presence, whether thou

grievest at thy forgetfulness of Him and at his absence

from thee, whether thou lovest what He loves, and ab-

horrest what He abhors, whether thou seekest to draw

all men towards his friendship and grace, whether thou

prayest with confidence; see whether thou receivest with

gratitude his benefits, whether thou dost not waste them

but rather turnst them to good account for his honor and

glory, whether thou strivest to extinguish in thyself all

the movements of the passions, which retard thee or

hinder thee in thy loving aspirations and in thy works of

virtue.

530. All these and many more are the signs of greater

or less charity in the soul. When charity is ardent and

strong, it will be especially careful not to suffer the forces

of the soul to remain idle, nor to consent to any blem

ish, because it will immediately consume and wipe it out.

It will not rest until it can taste the highest Good of its

love. For without it, this love droops, is wounded and

dies. It thirsts after that wine which inebriates the heart,

causing a forgetfulness of all that is corruptible and pass

ing (Cant. 5, 1). And as charity is the mother and the

408 CITY OF GOD

root of all virtue, its fecundity will immediately show it

self as soon as it has found a place in the soul ; it will fill

it and adorn it with the habits of the other virtues, and

engender them one after another by establishing the prac

tice of them, as the Apostle says (I Cor. 13, 4). The

soul that is in charity not only feels the effects of charity

in itself, but through charity it is secure of being loved

by God; through this divine love, it enjoys the reciprocal

effect of God s indwelling, so that the Father, the Son and

the Holy Ghost will come and live in it as their temple,

and this is a blessing which no words and no example can

properly express in this mortal life.

531. The right order of this virtue is to love God above

all the creatures, then to love oneself, and him who is

nearest to oneself, namely, our neighbor. God must be

loved with the whole understanding, without deceit, with

the whole will, without reserve or division, with the

whole mind, without forgetfulness, without diminution,

without negligence or remissness. The motive of char

ity in loving God is none else than God Himself ; for He

must be loved for his own sake, being the highest Good

and most perfect goodness and holiness. Loving God

for such motives causes the creature to love itself and the

neighbor and itself ; for both belong to one and the same

God, from whom they derive their origin, their life and

activity. He that loves God truly for Himself will also

love all that is of God and all that in some way partici

pates in his goodness. Therefore charity looks upon the

neighbor as a work and a participation of God and makes

no distinction between friend or enemy. Charity looks

only upon that which is of God and which pertains to

Him in others, no matter whether the neighbor is friend-

THE CONCEPTION 409

ly or hostile, a benefactor or a persecutor. It attends

only to the difference in the participation of the divine

and infinite goodness and according to this standard it

loves all in God and for God.

532. All other kinds of love, such as loving creatures

for less exalted motives, hoping for some kind of re

ward, advantage or return, or loving them under cover

of disorderly concupiscence, or with a mere human and

natural love, even if it should spring from naturally vir

tuous and well ordered motives, are not infused charity.

As it is usual in men to be moved by these partial excel

lences and for selfish and earthly ends, there are few who

embrace and appreciate the nobility of this generous vir

tue and who exercise it with proper perfection. For they

seek even God and pursue Him, for the sake of temporal

blessings, or for spiritual benefits and pleasures. I de

sire that thou, my daughter, drive out of thy heart all

these disorderly loves, and that thou live only in well

ordered charity, to which the Most High has inclined thy

desires. If thou so many times reaffirmest that this

virtue is so beautiful, so pleasing and so worthy of being

sought and esteemed by all creatures, apply thyself to

know it in its full excellence ; and having come to under

stand its value, set thyself to purchase this incomparable

gem by forgetting and extinguishing in thy heart all

love that is not the perfect love. Love no creatures ex

cept for God, and for what thou seest in them as coming

from God and belonging to Him, in the same manner

as a bride loves all the servants and connections of the

house of her bridegroom because they are his. Forget

to love anything not referable to God or not lovable on

his account, nor love in any other way except as I have

asked thee or the Most High has commanded thee to love.

28

410 CITY OF GOD

Thou wilt also know whether thou lovest with pure char

ity, by thy behavior towards friends and enemies, the

naturally agreeable and disagreeable, the polite and the

impolite, those that possess or do not possess natural ad

vantages. All this sort of distinction does not come from

pure charity, but from the natural inclinations and pas

sions of the appetites, which thou must govern, extin

guish and eradicate by means of this sublime virtue.

CHAPTER IX.

OF THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE AS PRACTICED BY THE MOST

HOLY QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

533. As the acts of the understanding go before the

acts of the will and direct them on the way, the virtues

pertaining to the exercise of the understanding also pre

cede those of the will. Although the proper sphere of the

intellect is to recognize the truth and comprehend it,

thereby perhaps causing a doubt whether it can be classed

as a virtue (for virtue of its very nature consists in tend

ing toward and practicing the good) ; yet it is certain that

there are also intellectual virtues, the practice of which

is praiseworthy in proportion as they conform to reason

and truth ; for these are the proper good of the intellect.

When therefore it proposes truth to the will and instructs

the will to follow its guidance, then this act of the intel

lect is theologically good, when matters of faith are con

cerned, and morally good when, as for instance in the

exercise of prudence, the operations of the appetites are

regulated. On this account the virtue of prudence comes

first as pertaining to the proper use of the understanding.

It is as it were the root of the other cardinal and moral

virtues; for these others are praiseworthy when accom

panied by prudence, and faulty and reprehensible when

devoid of it.

534. The sovereign Queen Mary possessed this vir

tue of prudence in supreme excellence and in proportion

to the height of her other virtues already described and

yet to be described. On account of her wonderful pru-

411

412 CITY OF GOD

dence the Church calls her the "Virgin most pru

dent." As this virtue governs all the others and as this

whole history treats of the exercise of these virtues in the

most holy Mary, all of what little I can say and manifest

of this sea of prudence will be nothing else than a con

tinual implied reference to her prudence, and all her

works will show the splendor of this virtue. Therefore

I will speak here more in general of the prudence of the

sovereign Queen, exhibiting the different parts and qual

ities of prudence as taught us by teachers and saints, in

order that we may thereby obtain a better understanding

of it in her regard.

535. Of the three kinds of prudence called political,

purgative and that of a soul already purified or perfect,

none was wanting in our Queen and they were hers in the

highest degree. For, although all her faculties were most

pure and perfect, or in other words, had no need of being

purified from any faultiness or opposition to virtue, yet

they could be improved as regards the natural knowledge

and in as far as the progress from goodness and holiness

to greatest goodness and holiness was concerned. This

must be understood of course only of her own works, as

far as they are compared with each other, and not in as

far as they are brought into comparison with the works

of others. For in comparison with the works of other

saints there was no great or small in this City of God,

whose foundations are above the holy mountains. But

in her own works, since they grew in charity and grace

from the first moment of her Conception, some of them,

though in themselves most perfect and superior to all

the works of the saints, were less perfect in comparison

with other acts of a later period in her life.

536. Political prudence in general is that which pon

ders and weighs all that is to be done and reduces it to

THE CONCEPTION 413

the dictates of reason, eschewing all that is not just and

good. The purgative or purifying prudence is that which

disposes and selects all things in such a way as to rectify

the heart by divine contemplation toward all celestial

things. The prudence of the purified or perfect soul is

that which directs and centres all the affections upon the

highest Good, as if no other object existed. All these

kinds of prudence existed in most holy Mary in order

that She might distinguish and know without fail, direct

and accomplish without remissness or tardiness, what

ever is most perfect and excellent in the fulfillment of her

works. Never did the judgment of this sovereign Lady

in the whole range of her activity, dictate or attach itself

to anything which was not the best and most proper. No

one ever equaled Her in disposing and directing all visi

ble or worldly matters so as to make them useful for di

vine contemplation. Therefore having perceived them so

intimately and in so many different lights of knowledge,

She was united in such a manner to the highest Good by

divine love that no preoccupation or hindrance ever pre

vented Her from resting completely in the centre of her

love.

537. It is manifest also that all the component parts

of prudence existed in their entirety in our Queen. The

first is memory, which retains in the mind things already

experienced in the past From past experiences are drawn

many rules for proceeding and acting in the present and

in the future ; because prudence concerns itself with par

ticular actions, and as there cannot be a general rule for

all of them, it is necessary to draw special rules from

many past examples and experiences stored up in the

memory. Our Sovereign was so endowed with it that

She never experienced the natural defect of forgetful-

ness ; for that which once She had understood and learnt,

414 CITY OF GOD

was ever present and immovable in her memory. In re

gard to this blessing most pure Mary transcended the

whole human and even the angelic order, because God

made Her a summary of all that was most perfect in both

of them. She contained in Herself all the essential good

ness of the human nature and all that was most perfect

and the farthest removed from blemish in the accidental

qualities of man; and many of the natural and many of

the supernatural gifts of the angelic nature She possessed

by special privilege and in a higher degree than the an

gels themselves. One of these gifts was a fixed and con

stant memory, incapable of forgetting what She had

learnt. In regard to her memory She excelled the angels

in the same proportion as She excelled them in the virtue

of prudence.

538. Only in one respect this blessing was limited in a

mysterious manner by the humble purity of the most holy

Mary : if the images of all things were to be fixed in the

memory, it was unavoidable, that also much that springs

from the vileness and sinfulness of creatures, should fill

its sacred precincts. Therefore the most humble and

pure Princess besought the Lord that the full gift of

memory should not extend itself toward the preservation

of these images, but only in so far as was necessary for

the exercise of fraternal charity towards her neighbor

and for the practice of other virtues. The Most High

granted this petition more in testimony of her most hum

ble purity than on account of any danger, to which these

images could expose Her; for the sun is not harmed by

the impurities which it may shine upon, nor are the an

gels disturbed by our vileness, since to the pure all things

are pure (Tit. 1, 15). But in this regard the Lord of the

angels wished to privilege his Mother more than them;

He wished to tolerate in her memory only those images

THE CONCEPTION 415

which pertain to the highest sanctity, honesty, cleanliness

and the most amiable purity, and what was most pleasing

to Himself. Thus her most holy soul, in regard to these

things, was without blemish, and her memory was

adorned with the representations of all that is most pure

and desirable.

539. Another component part of the virtue of pru

dence is the intelligence which principally concerns itself

with what is to be done in the present moment. It is a

correct and profound understanding of the reasons and

the principles, according to which virtuous actions are to

be performed. It reduces this understanding into action,

not only in so far as to give a comprehensive knowledge

of the excellence of virtue in general, but also in so far

as to direct our activity in the proper channel for per

forming there and then each particular work in a vir

tuous and perfect manner. Thus when I have a deep un

derstanding of the precept: "Do nothing unto others

what thou wishest not to be done unto thyself," I will at

once know that I shall not do this or that particular in

jury, because it would seem a wrong if done to me or

some one else. This kind of intelligence most holy Mary

possessed in so much the higher degree than all the rest

of creatures, as She exceeded them in knowledge of the

moral virtues, in profound penetration regarding infal

lible rectitude, and in participation of the divine right

eousness. In the light of this intelligence, derived from

the splendors of the Divinity itself, there could be no de

ceit, no ignorance, no doubt, no mere opinions, as is the

case with other creatures. For She understood and pene

trated all the truths, both in their general and their par

ticular bearings, and especially as far as their practical

application in the matter of virtue is concerned, seeing

them as they are in themselves. Thus it must be held

416 CITY OF GOD

that this part of prudence was hers in an unequalled full

ness and plenitude.

540. The third component part of prudence is called

providence. It is the most important of all the parts of

prudence, for in human actions it is most important that

the present be well ordered toward the future, so that all

things may be rightly adjusted. This is effected by provi

dence. Our Lady and Queen practiced this part of pru

dence in a degree even more excellent (if possible) than

all the other parts of prudence; for besides the vivid

memory of the past and the profound understanding of

things present, She had an unerring knowledge and un

derstanding of things to come, to which her providence

extended itself. With this knowledge and infused science

She so arranged all happenings that they were a prepara

tion for the future and nothing could come upon Her un

awares or by surprise. All things were by Her foreseen,

considered and weighed beforehand in the sanctuary of

her mind, illumined by infused light. Thus without a

shade of doubt or uncertainty, such as is the lot of other

men, She awaited the events before their arrival with

unerring certitude, so that for all things She found a

place, a time and opportune circumstances directing them

all toward the Good.

541. These three parts of prudence comprehend the

activity of the intellect in the practice of this virtue, for

they secure the good order of our actions in regard to

past, the present and the future. However, when we con

sider this virtue under another aspect, namely in so far

as it perceives the proper means for the practice of virtue

and directs the will to employ them rightly, the teachers

and philosophers mention five other points or different

kind of activities of prudence, namely ; docility, reason

ableness, cleverness, circumspection and caution. Docil-

THE CONCEPTION 417

ity is the good judgment and readiness of the creature

to be taught by others better informed than itself, and a

disposition not inflated by its own knowledge, and not

resting unduly on its own insight and wisdom. Reason

ableness, or the power of drawing correct inferences,

consists in reasoning without error from generally un

derstood principles to the particular course of action in

each single case. Cleverness is a diligent attention and

practical application of our activity to that which hap

pens, enabling us to judge rightly and follow the best

course of action, just as docility is attention to the teach

ings of others. Circumspection is a just consideration of

the circumstances connected with each good work; for it

is not sufficient that the end of our actions be good, but it

is necessary to consider the opportuneness of the circum

stances. Cautiousness is a discreet attention to the dan

gers or impediments, so that when they occur under cover

of virtue or unexpectedly, we may not be found rash or

unprepared.

542. All these complements of prudence existed in the

Queen of heaven without any faultiness and in their full

est perfection. Docility belonged to Mary as the legiti

mate daughter of her incomparable humility; for though

She had received the plenitude of science from the mo

ment of her Immaculate Conception, and though She was

the teacher and the mother of true wisdom, She neverthe

less allowed Herself to be taught by her elders, by her

equals and by those below Her, esteeming Herself as

lower than all of them and seeking to be a disciple of

those who in comparison to Her were most ignorant.

This docility She exhibited during all her life like a most

simple dove, disguising her wisdom with a greater pru

dence than that of the serpent (Matth. 10, 16). As a

Child She accepted instruction from her parents, from

Vol. 127

418 CITY OF GOD

her teacher in the temple, from her companions, and later

on from her spouse saint Joseph, from the Apostles ; from

all creatures She wished to learn, being a prodigy of hu

mility, as I have said in another place (No. 406, 472).

543. The reasonableness or prudent judgment of most

holy Mary can be easily inferred from what saint Luke

says of Her: that She kept and pondered in her heart

the mysterious events in the life of her most holy Son.

This pondering was the reasoning which She employed,

comparing cause with cause in the order in which they

occurred and happened, and by this comparison She

formed for Herself most prudent counsels, which enabled

Her to act with the perfection peculiar to Her. Although

She very often understood many things without the dis

course of reasoning by a simple intuition and in

telligence which exceeded all human understanding; yet,

as far as the actual exercise of the virtues was concerned,

She applied this process of reasoning from the abstract

principles of virtue to her own practice of them.

544. In regard to cleverness and diligent application

of the rules of prudence the sovereign Lady also was

highly privileged ; for She was not weighed down by the

heavy load of human passion and corruption, and thus

She felt not our languors and tardiness in her faculties,

but She was always alert, ready and very skillful in no

ticing and attending to all that was necessary to come to

a correct and wholesome conclusion in the performance

of virtuous actions, and in striking, readily and quickly,

the happy medium of virtue in her doings. Equally ad

mirable was most holy Mary in her circumspection; for

all her works were so accomplished that no point of per

fection was missing, and all of them stand forth in the

highest perfection possible. And as the greater part of

her actions were works of charity towards the neighbor,

THE CONCEPTION 419

and all of them most opportune; therefore in all her

teaching, admonishing, consoling, beseeching and correct

ing of her neighbor, the efficacious sweetness of her rea

sonable and pleasing manners met with its full success.

545. The last complement of prudence, called cautious

ness, which meets and evades the impediments of virtue,

was necessarily also possessed by the Queen of angels in

a greater perfection than by these spirits ; for her exalted

wisdom and the love which accompanied it, incited Her

to such caution and foresight, that no event which might

be an impediment in the exercise of the most perfect vir

tue, found Her unprepared and unprovided with a coun

ter remedy. And since the enemy, as will be described

later on, not being able to find any hold in her passions,

exerted himself so much in placing elaborate and unheard

of obstacles in her way, the most prudent Virgin had oc

casion to practice this caution many times, thereby excit

ing the wonder of the Apostles. On account of the cau

tious discretion of the most holy Mary the demon pur

sued Her with a terrified wrath and envy, burning with

a desire to know by what power She foiled such power

ful machinations and cunning snares as he devised in

order to hinder or draw Her away. For in every instance

he was vanquished and had to be witness of the most

perfect exercise of all that is virtuous in all her under

takings and works.

546. After having mentioned and described the parts

and complements of prudence, let us also examine the dif

ferent species or kinds, into which it can be divided, ac

cording to the object or the ends to which it is applied.

Prudence can be used either in our own actions and af

fairs, or for the affairs of others, and thus arise two

kinds of prudence, directing the activity which concerns

ourselves, and that which concerns our neighbors. That

420 CITY OF GOD

which governs one s own particular activity is called

enarchic prudence, and in reference to the Queen of

heaven, it is not necessary to say more in proof of her

having exercised this kind of prudence, than what has al

ready been said above about the manner in which She

regulated her own life. The prudence which regulates

the government of others is called pollyarchic ; this is sub

divided into four kinds, according to four different ways

of governing others. The first kind is that which facili

tates the government of countries by just and useful

laws ; it is proper to kings, princes and monarchs and of

all those whose authority is supreme. The second kind

is called the political prudence, which has its name from

the fact that it teaches the right government of cities or

republics. The third is called economical prudence,

which shows how to govern and manage domestic affairs

of the family or particular homes. The fourth is military

prudence, which is adapted to prosecution of wars and

management of armies.

547. None of these different kinds of prudence was

wanting in our great Queen. All were given to Her as

habits in the instant of her Conception and of her sancti-

fication so that no grace, no virtue, no perfection which

might exalt and beautify Her above all creatures, might

be wanting in Her. The Most High made Her an archive

and depositary of all his gifts, an example to all the rest

of creation thus giving an exhibition of his power and

greatness, so that in the whole heavenly Jerusalem it

might be known what He could and would do for a mere

creature. And in Mary these sublime habits of virtue did

not lie idle, for all of them She exercised in the course of

her life on many occasions as they offered themselves.

As regards economical prudence it is well known how in

comparable was the government of her domestic affairs,

THE CONCEPTION 421

when living with her spouse Joseph and with her most

holy Son ; for in his education and service She acted with

such prudence as was befitting the most occult mystery

which God entrusted to men, as I shall show in another

place, according to my understanding and ability.

548. She exercised also the governing or monarchical

prudence as the sole Empress of the Church, teaching, ad

vising and directing the sacred Apostles in the primitive

Church, thus helping to lay its foundation and to initiate

the laws, rites and ceremonies most necessary and use

ful for its propagation and establishment. Though She

obeyed the Apostles in particular matters, and consulted

especially saint Peter as the vicar of Christ and the head

of the Church, and saint John as her chaplain, yet they

and all the Christians asked her advice and followed it in

the general and particular matters relating to the govern

ment of the Church. She also taught the Christian kings

and princes who approached Her for counsel ; for many

of them sought to know Her after the Ascension of her

most holy Son into heaven. Among them especially can

be mentioned the three Kings of the East, when they

came to adore the Child. She explained and instructed

them in all that they must do for their states, with such

light and clearness that She was their star and guide on

the way to eternity. They returned to their country en

lightened, consoled and astonished at the wisdom, pru

dence and sweetness of the words which they had heard

from the mouth of a tender Maiden. In witness of all

the high praise which this Queen deserved in this regard,

it is enough to hear her own words : "By me, kings reign,

and law-givers decree just things, by me princes rule"

(Prov. 8, 13).

549. Neither was the political prudence wanting in

Her; for She taught the republics and nations, and the

422 CITY OF GOD

primitive Christians in particular, how to proceed in pub

lic acts and government of their country, how they must

obey kings and secular princes, their prelates and bishops,

how they are to convoke councils, issue the definitions

and decrees resolved upon. Even military prudence found

a place in the sovereign Queen, for also in this direction

She was consulted by some of the faithful, and She in

structed and taught them what was required to carry on

a just war with their enemies, so as to conduct them ac

cording to the justice and pleasure of the Lord. Here

can also be mentioned the courage and prudence with

which this powerful Lady vanquished the prince of dark

ness, teaching us thereby how we must battle with him;

for She overcame him by an exalted wisdom and pru

dence, greater than that shown by David in his combat

with the giant, or by Judith with Holofernes, or by Es

ther with Aman (I Kings, 17, 50, Judith 13, 10, Esth.

7, 6). Even if all these kinds of prudence had not been

needed for the actions mentioned, yet it was proper, that

this Mother of wisdom, aside of their being befitting

ornaments of her most holy soul, should possess them on

account of her being the Mediatrix and sole Advocate

of this world. For as She was to procure by her interces

sion all the blessings, which God would bestow upon

the human race, and since none of them were to be

granted without her intercession, it was necessary, that

She should know perfectly all the virtues, which She was

to obtain for men, and that these blessings, next to God,

their uncreated beginning, should flow from Her as from

an original source.

550. There are other helps, which are attached to the

virtue of prudence and which are called potential parts,

being as it were instruments with which prudence works.

They are, synesis, or the aptitude and readiness to form

THE CONCEPTION 423

sane judgments; eubulia, the faculty of giving and sug

gesting good counsel; gnome, which teaches what ex

ceptions can justly be made to general rules; and this

latter is necessary for the use of epikeia, which enables

us to judge what particular cases are to be decided by

rules higher than the ordinary. All these perfections and

excellences adorned the prudence of most holy Mary, so

that no one could give such unerring counsel in all pos

sible contingencies, nor could any one, not even the most

exalted angel, form such correct judgment in all things as

She. Above all was our most prudent Queen skilled in the

higher principles and rules of action, and such as were

above the ordinary and common laws ; but it would re

quire a long discourse even to mention the instances

here : many of them will be understood in the sequel of

this history of her most holy life. In order to conclude

this chapter on the prudence of the blessed Virgin, it is

only necessary to say, that the rule by which it is

to be measured, is none else than the prudence of the

soul of Christ, our Lord ; for it was conformed and as

similated entirely to his, since She was to be the Coad-

jutrix in all the works of wisdom and prudence, per

formed by the Lord of all creation and Savior of the

world.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

551. My daughter, I wish, that all that thou hast

written and that thou hast understood in this chapter,

be to thee an instruction and a reminder of what, I have

taught thee for the government of thy actions. Write

in thy heart and fix in thy mind the memory of all that

thou hast learnt of my prudence in all that I have

thought, desired and executed. Let this light guide thee

through the midst of the darkness of human ignorance,

424 CITY OF GOD

so that thou mayst not be disturbed or confounded by

the luring passions, nor especially by the malice and

snares laid thee by the watchful malice of thy enemies,

seeking to infect thy understanding. Not to be endowed

with all the perfections of prudence, is not culpable in the

creature; but to be negligent in learning the rules of

prudence after having been instructed how to attain this

knowledge, is a serious fault and the cause of many mis

takes and errors in the conduct of affairs. On account of

this negligence the passions countermand, impede, and

obstruct the dictates of prudence. This is especially the

case with disorderly sorrow and excessive enjoyment,

which are apt to pervert the just estimation of good or

bad. Thence arise two dangerous vices: precipitation

in our actions, impelling us to undertake things without

considering the proper means of success, and incon

stancy in our good resolutions and in the works once

begun. Ungoverned anger or indiscreet fervor, both

cause us to be precipitate or remiss in many of our

exterior actions, because they are performed without

proper moderation and counsel. Hasty judgment and

want of firmness in pursuing the good, cause the soul im

prudently to desist from its laudable enterprise ; for it

gives easy admittance to that, which is opposed to the

true good, and is highly pleased, now with the true good

ness, then again with what is but apparent and deceitful

or is presented by the passions or by the demon.

552. Against all these dangers I wish to see thee

watchful and provident ; and thou wilt be so, if thou

attend to the example, which I gave thee in my life, and

if thou obey the instructions and counsels of thy spiritual

guides; for without them thou must do nothing, if thou

wishest to proceed with docile discretion. Be assured,

that the Most High will give thee plentiful wisdom; for

THE CONCEPTION 425

a pure submissive and docile heart will draw from Him

superabundant aid. Keep in mind always the misfor

tune of the imprudent and foolish virgins, who, in their

thoughtless negligence, rejected wise counsel and cast

aside fear, instead of being solicitous; and when after

wards they sought to make up for it, they found the

portal of salvation closed against them (Matth. 25, 12).

See to it, therefore, my daughter, that thou unite the

simplicity of the dove with the prudence of the serpent,

and then thy works shall be perfect.

CHAPTER X.

OF THE; VIRTUE OF JUSTICE, AS PRACTICED BY MOST HOLY

MARY.

553. The great virtue of justice is most necessary for

the exercise of the love of God and man, and therefore

also for all human conversation and intercourse. It is a

habit by which the will is urged to give to each one what

belongs to him, and its object matter is the just and

equitable dealing, which must be observed toward God.

And as there are so many occasions in which man can

exercise or violate this equity, and in so many different

ways, the range of application of this virtue is very wide

and diffused, and there are many different species or

kinds of justice. In as far as it concerns the public and

common good, it is called legal justice; in so far as it

influences all the other virtues, it is called a general virtue,

although it does not partake of the nature of the rest.

In so far however as justice is employed for one deter

mined object and by individuals to preserve the rights of

each, it is called particular or special justice.

554. This virtue, in all its parts or kinds, the Empress

of heaven exercised toward all creatures in an eminent

degree ; for She alone knew by her greater enlightenment,

all its obligations and comprehended them perfectly.

Although this virtue does not directly have anything

to do with the natural passions, as is the case with forti

tude and temperance, yet in many instances, precisely on

account of the failure to moderate and regulate the pas

sions, justice toward the neighbor is set aside. This

426

THE CONCEPTION 427

happens with those, who out of disorderly covetousness

or lust usurp what does not belong to them. But as in

the most holy Mary there were no disorderly passions nor

any ignorance of proper measure to be maintained ac

cording to justice, She fulfilled all justice toward each

person, and showed the way of justice to all who were

privileged to hear from her mouth the words and doc

trine of eternal life. As far as legal justice is concerned,

She not only observed it to the letter by obeying the

common laws, as She did in the purification and other

prescriptions of the old Law, although, on account of be

ing the Queen and free from sin, She was exempt from

them; but no one except her most holy Son, ever ad

vanced so much as She the public and common good of

morals. For toward this end She directed all her

virtues and operations, earning thereby the divine mercy

for mankind and benefiting her neighbor in many other

ways.

555. Also the distributive and commutative justice be

longed to most holy Mary in a heroic degree. Distribu

tive justice regulates the distribution of the common

goods to individual persons. This justice her Highness

observed in many affairs, which were left to her authority

and management in the primitive Chuch : as for instance

in the distribution of the common property for the sus

tenance and other necessities of each person. Although

She never distributed money, (for that She never hand

led), yet She gave her orders and at other times her

counsel for its just application. On these and similar

occasions, She always acted up to strict equity and justice,

according to the necessities and the circumstances of each

one s condition. The same She also observed in the dis

tribution of offices and ministerial dignities among the

Apostles and the first children of the Church in their

428 CITY OF GOD

meetings and assemblies. All these things this most wise

Teacher ordered and arranged with perfect equity; for

besides her Ordinary knowledge and insight into the dis

positions of each of her subjects, She made use of prayer

and of the divine enlightenment. On this account the

Apostles and others, whom She governed, had recourse

to Her for direction and counsel, and whatever was

done under her direction, was disposed of in perfect

equity and without acceptation of persons.

556. Commutative justice procures reciprocal equal

ity in that which is given and received by individuals ; as

for instance observing the rule : to offer gift for gift, etc.,

or value for value. This kind of justice the Queen of

heaven had fewer opportunities of exercising, than other

virtues; for She never bought or sold anything for Her

self. If it was necessary to buy or commute any article,

it was done by the patriarch saint Joseph, while he lived,

and afterwards by saint John the evangelist, or some of

the Apostles. The Master of sanctity, who came to de

stroy and eradicate avarice (I Tim. 6, 10) the root of all

evil, wished to remove from Himself and from his most

holy Mother all those negotiations and transactions, in

which the fire of human covetousness is enkindled and

preserved. Therefore his Providence ordained, that

neither his own hand nor that of his purest Mother should

be soiled by the transactions of human commerce in buy

ing and selling, even if only of things necessary for the

preservation of human life. However the Queen did not

omit to teach men this virtue of commutative justice,

directing in the way of perfect justice all those, who in

the apostolate and primitive Church were engaged in

such affairs.

557. This virtue of justice comprises also other kinds

of activity in regard to the neighbor, such as judging

THE CONCEPTION 429

others in the public and civil courts, or in private. Our

Savior refers to the contrary vice, when he says in saint

Matthew: "Judge not that you may not be judged"

(Matt. 7,1). These judgments are formed by each one

according to the estimate which is in his own mind :

therefore they are just judgments, if they are conform

able to reason, and unjust, if they disagree with it. Our

sovereign Queen never exercised the office of a public or

civil judge, although She had the power to be the judge

of all the universe; but by her most equitous counsels

during the time of her life, and afterwards through her

intercession, She fulfilled what was written about Her

in the proverbs: "I walk in the paths of justice and

through me the mighty decree justice" (Prov. 8, 20, 16).

558. As regards particular judgments no injustice

ever could find a place in the most pure heart of most

holy Mary ; for She could never be imprudent in her sus

picions, or rash in her judgments, nor was She troubled

by doubts ; nor, if She had any, would She ever decide

them unkindly for the worse part. These vices of in

justice are proper and natural as it were to the children of

Adam, who are dominated and enslaved by the disorderly

passions of hate, envy, illnatured emulation, and other

evil inclinations. From these bad roots sprout unjust

suspicions with slight foundations, rash judgments

and prejudiced solution of doubts; for each one easily

presumes in his brother his own faults. Because they

are filled with hate and envy at the prosperity of their

neighbor, and rejoice at his misfortune, they lightly give

belief, where there are no grounds, only yielding to their

bad desires, and allowing their judgments to drift in ac

cordance with their wishes. From all these consequences

of sin our Queen was free, as She had no part in sin : all

was chanty, purity, sanctity and perfect love, whatever

430 CITY OF GOD

entered or came from the sanctuary of her heart: in Her

was all the grace of truth and the way of life (Eccli.

24, 25). In the plenitude of her sanctity and science

She doubted nothing, She suspected nothing ; for She was

aware of all the secrets hidden in the hearts of men

and searched their souls with the light of truth and

mercy, not suspecting evil and never attributing blame,

where none was due. On the contrary She was solicitous

to excuse the sins of men, in justice and equity yielding

to each and every one his dues. Her most earnest de

sire was to fill all men with the sweetness and the gra-

ciousness of her virtues.

559. In the two different kinds of commutative and

distributive justice there are contained many other kinds

or species of virtues, but I will only refer to them in

so far as to say, that all of them, both as habits and as

acts, were possessed by the most holy Mary in the high

est and most excellent degree. Some of these virtues

are related to justice, because they are exercised in our

intercourse with our neighbor and partake to a certain

extent, though not in all their bearings, of the nature of

justice; either because we are unable to pay fully what

we owe, or because, if we are able, the debt or obligation

is not so strict as that which is incurred by commutative

or distributive justice. I will not enter upon a full ex

planation of these virtues, since they are various and

numerous ; but in order not to pass them over entirely, I

will give a short summary, so as to show how our

Sovereign and most high Princess was adorned with all

of them.

560. It is a just obligation to give worship and

reverence to those, who are placed above us. According to

the greatness of their excellence and their dignity and

according to the benefits which we receive at their hands,

THE CONCEPTION 431

varies also our obligation and the reverence which we owe

them, although no return on our part can equal the benefit

or the dignity. The first virtue of this kind is that of

religion, by which we give to God due worship and rever

ence, though his magnificence and his gifts exceed in

finitely all that we will ever be able to return in thanks

or praise. Among the moral virtues this one is the most

noble on account of its object, namely the worship of

God, and its subject matter is as extensive as there are

ways and means of directly praising and reverencing God.

In this virtue of religion are comprehended all the interior

acts of prayer, contemplation and devotion, with all their

parts, conditions, causes, effects and purposes. Among

exterior actions, latria, which is the supreme outward

adoration due only to God, falls under this head, and with

it also all its different kinds of parts, namely: sacrifices,

oblations, tithes and vows, oaths, exterior and vocal offer

ing of praise. For in all these actions, if they are per

formed in the proper manner, God is honored and rever

enced by the creatures, just as He is very much offended

in the contrary vices.

561. The second virtue falling under the above class

is piety, by which we are inclined to honor our parents,

to whom after God we owe our being and our education.

By it we also show proper regard for those, who partici

pate in a manner of the quality of parents, such as for in

stance our relatives, or our country, which sustains and

governs us. This virtue is so important, that we must

prefer its dictates to the acts of supererogation in the

virtue of religion. So Christ the Lord teaches us in

saint Matthew, when He reprehended the pharisees for

setting aside piety toward their parents under the pre

text of the worship of God. In the third place must be

mentioned veneration, which inclines us to give honor

432 CITY OF GOD

and reverence to those, who possess some superior ex

cellence or dignity of a different kind from that of our

parents or fatherland. This virtue the doctors divide

into two kinds : dulia and obedience. Dulia is the vener

ation due to those who participate to a certain measure

in the majesty and dominion of the highest Lord God, to

whom is due, as we said above, the worship of adoration

or latria. Therefore we honor the saints by the reverence

called dulia, and likewise those in the higher dignities, to

whom we subject ourselves as servants. Obedience is

the subjection of our will, inducing us to do the will of

our superior in preference to our own. Our free will is so

estimable, that this virtue is admirable and excellent

above all the moral virtues; for the sacrifice is greater

than in any other.

562. These three virtues of religion, piety and venera

tion (observantia) were possessed by Mary in such great

plenitude and perfection, that nothing possible pertain

ing to them was wanting. What intellect can ever com

prehend the honor, veneration and worship with which

this Lady served her most beloved Son, adoring Him as

true God and Man, as Creator, Redeemer, Glorifier, the

Highest, the Infinite, the Immense in essence, in goodness

and in all attributes? She knew more of Him than any

other creature and more than all of them together ; and ac

cording to her knowledge She rendered due honor, teach

ing even the Seraphim how to reverence Him. In this

virtue She was so great a Teacher, that merely to see Her

was sufficient to rouse, urge and incite all by a secret

force to worship the supreme Lord and Author of heaven

and earth ; and without any other effort on her part She

induced many to praise God. Her prayers, contempla

tions and devotions, together with the wonderful effects

and the power of her intercession, are known to all the

THE CONCEPTION 433

angels and saints, but cannot be comprehended by them,

exciting their endless admiration. To Her all the intel

lectual creatures are indebted, since She satisfied and

made recompense not only for that which they have

culpably neglected in this regard, but also for that which

they could never attain, or execute, or merit. This Lady

outraced the salvation of the world, and if She had not

been in it, the eternal Word would not have issued from

the bosom of the Father. She excelled the seraphim from

her first instant in contemplation, in prayer, in petition,

and in devout promptitude for the service of God. She

offered the proper sacrifice, gave oblations and tithes ; and

all this in such a perfect manner, that nothing on the part

of men was more acceptable next to that of her most holy

Son. In the ceaseless praise, hymns, canticles and vocal

prayers, which She offered, She was above all the Patri

archs and Prophets; and if in the Church militant Her

doings were known as in the Church triumphant, they

would be the admiration of the world.

563. The virtues of piety and veneration her Majesty

exercised in proportion as She knew how to estimate

better her obligation toward her parents and their heroic

sanctity. The same was true in regard to her relations.

For instance, She procured special graces for John the

Baptist and his mother, for holy Elisabeth and some

others in the apostolate. Certainly, if her fatherland had

not been made unworthy of favor by the ingratitude and

hardheartedness of its inhabitants, She would have made

it the most fortunate country on earth; nevertheless, in

as far as the Most High permitted, She conferred upon it

great benefits and favors, both spiritual and material. In

reverence toward the priests She was admirable, for She

alone knew and could set proper value on the dignity of

the anointed of the Lord. She has taught us all in this

434 CITY OF GOD

matter, and also how to honor the Patriarchs, Prophets

and Saints, as well as the temporal masters and those in

authority. She omitted no act pertaining to these vir

tues, being solicitous according to time and opportunity

to instruct others in the exercise of them, especially the

first faithful in the establishment of the evangelical

Church. There, obeying not any more the verbal com

mands of her most holy Son, or of her husband, but sub

mitting to her Son s substitutes, She became an example

to the world of a new kind of obedience; for in those

times, not She owed obedience to any creature, but the

whole earth, in an especial manner, owed obedience to

Her, since She was staying upon it as its Queen and

Mistress for the very purpose of governing it.

564. There are other virtues, which can also be classed

under the head of justice; for they dispose us to yield to

others that which we owe them on account of some moral

obligation, founded upon an honest and just title. These

virtues are : gratitude or thankfulness, truth or veracity,

vindication, liberality, friendship or affability. By grati

tude we create a certain equality of ourselves with those

from whom we have received benefits giving them thanks

in return, according to the nature of the benefits and the

kindness, with which they were bestowed (which after all

is the most valuable part of the benefit). The grateful

also take into account the position and dignity of the

benefactor. Gratitude bears in mind all these elements

and can be manifested in different ways. Veracity in

clines us to be truthful in all our intercourse, as is proper

in human life and conversation, avoiding all lying,

(which is never allowed), deceitful simulation, hypocrisy,

boastfulness and irony. These vices are all opposed to

truth; and though it is possible and even advisable to

minimize when we are speaking of our own excellence or

THE CONCEPTION 435

virtue in order not to offend by boasting, yet it is not right

to do so by telling a falsehood, imputing vice to ourselves

untruthfully. Vindication is a virtue, which teaches

us to recompense or make up for damage done by our

selves or by the neighbor, satisfying for it by some pun

ishment. Among mortals the practice of this virtue is

difficult; for they are so much moved by immoderate

anger and dislike of their brethren, and so tardy in

charity and justice, this vindication of the particular or

general wellbeing is no unimportant virtue. Christ our

Lord made use of this virtue, when He expelled from the

temple those, who desecrated it by their irreverence (John

2, 15) ; Elias and Eliseus drew down fire from heaven in

order to chastise some sins (IV King 1, 20) ; and in the

Proverbs it is said : "He that spareth the rod hateth his

son" (Prov. 13, 24). Liberality or generosity serves to

distribute in a reasonable manner money or other goods,

without falling into the vices of prodigality or niggardli

ness. Friendship or affability consists in conversing and

acting in a decent and becoming manner toward all, with

out quarreling or flattery, which are the vices opposed to

friendship.

565. None of these virtues, nor any others which

might be related to justice, were wanting to the Queen of

heaven ; of all these She had the habit and practiced them

as occasion offered. Moreover as the Teacher and Mis

tress of all sanctity She- instructed and enlightened many

souls how they were to exercise and practice them with

the greatest perfection. The virtue of gratitude toward

God She exercised by acts of religion and worship, as we

have already described : for this is the best way to show

our gratitude toward Him: and as the dignity of the

most pure Mary and her concomitant sanctity was exalt

ed above all created understanding, this eminent Mistress

gave a return of gratitude proportionate to his benefits

436 CITY OF GOD

within the measure possible to a creature. The same

holds true in regard to her piety toward her parents and

her country, as mentioned above. To her fellowmen this

most humble Princess returned thanks for each favor as

if She deserved no consideration from any one ; and, al

though all favors were due to Her in justice, She never

theless gave thanks for them with gracious affability.

She alone knew and practiced this virtue to such an ex

tent, as to return thanks for injuries and offenses as if

they were great benefits ; for in her incomparable humility

She never recognized anything as an injury and con

sidered Herself under obligation for what really were

such. Moreover, as She never forgot any benefit, She

also never ceased in her gratitude.

566. About the truthfulness of Mary our Lady, little

need be said, since She who was so superior to the demon,

the father of lies and deceit, could not tolerate even the

shadow of that despicable vice. The standard, by which

the virtue of truthfulness is to be measured in our Queen,

is her dove-like charity and simplicity, which excluded all

duplicity or deceit in her intercourse with creatures. And

how could the guilt of deceit be found in the mouth of

that Lady, who with one word of truest humility falling

from her lips drew down to her womb that One, who is

essential truth and holiness? In regard to the exercise

of the virtue called vindication the most holy Mary like

wise was proficient: not only instructing others as a

Teacher during the time of the first beginnings of the

evangelical Church; but zealously advancing the honor

of the Most High and trying to convert many sinners

through fraternal correction, as was the case in regard

to Judas many times, and commanding the creatures,

(which were obedient to her wishes), to punish some of

the sinners in order that they might be converted and be

saved from the eternal punishment due to their sins. Al-

THE CONCEPTION 437

though on these occasions She was most sweet and kind

in her punishments, yet She did not remit them, whenever

necessary to secure an effective cleansing from sin. Most

of all however did She exercise retribution toward the

demon, in order to free the human race from his slavery.

567. The sovereign Queen practiced also the most ex

alted liberality and friendliness. Her generosity in giving

and distributing was on a scale befitting the Empress of

all creation and one who knows the proper value of all

invisible and visible things. This Lady never possessed

anything of her own that She did not consider just as

much the property of her neighbor as hers nor did She

ever deny anything to anybody, not even waiting till they

should pay the price of asking for it, whenever She could

be beforehand in giving. The poverty and miseries which

She alleviated, the benefits which She bestowed, the

mercies which flowed from Her, even as regards only

temporal matters, could not be recounted in an immense

volume. Her amiable friendliness toward all creatures

was so singular and admirable, that, if She had not con

cealed it with rare prudence, She would have drawn to

Herself all the world, entranced by her most sweet in

tercourse; her mildness and kindness, though tempered

by a divine seriousness and wisdom, displayed in her in

tercourse the marks of superhuman excellence. The Most

High himself regulated this perfection in Her, allowing

at times some of the signs of the sacrament of the King

to show themselves, but taking care, that the veil should

fall immediately and again conceal the mystery beneath

earthly labors, thus forestalling the applause of men. All

their honors were far below that which She deserved,

and men would never be able to attain, and would fall

either below or exceed, the correct measure of honor due

to One who was at the same time a creature and the

Mother of God. This was reserved for the time when as

438 CITY OF GOD

children of the Church, men should be enlightened by the

Catholic faith.

568. For the adequate and perfect exercise of this

great virtue of justice the doctors point out another part

or aid to it, which they call epikeia, which guides us in

some affairs, that are above the common and ordinary

rules and laws. For not all affairs, with their varying

circumstances, can be covered by the ordinary laws, and

therefore it is necessary to proceed on certain occasions

by the light of a superior and extraordinary reasoning.

This part of justice the sovereign Queen practiced on

many occasions during her life, both before, and espe

cially after the Ascension of her onlybegotten Son. In

order to regulate the affairs of the primitive Church, as I

will say in its place, She often made use of epikeia, as

required by the interests of the Most High.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF KEAVEN.

569. In this extensive virtue of Justice, my daughter,

although thou hast been taught much of its value, thou

still art ignorant of the greater part of it on account of thy

condition in this state of mortality ; and therefore also this

thy account of it is insufficient for a full understanding of

its excellence. Nevertheless thou hast in it a copious sum

mary to direct thy intercourse with creatures and thy

worship of the Most High. In regard to this latter I re

mind thee, my dearest, that the supreme majesty of the

Omnipotent is highly indignant at the offenses of mortals,

who forget the veneration, adoration, and reverence due

to Him. If some of them do render it, it is so coarse, in

attentive and discourteous, that they do not merit re

ward but chastisement. They revere and adore pro

foundly the princes and magnates of the earth ; they ask

favors and seek to obtain them with the utmost diligence ;

they are effusive in their thanks, when they succeed, pro-

THE CONCEPTION 439

testing their lifelong gratitude. But the supreme Lord,

who gives them being, life and activity, who preserves and

sustains them, who has redeemed them and raised them

to the dignity of sons, who wishes to confer upon them

his own glory, who is in Himself the infinite and the high

est Good; Him, the highest Majesty, they forget, because

they cannot see Him with their corporal eyes. As if not

all good came from Him, they return, at the highest,

merely a sluggish remembrance and a hasty thanksgiving.

I will not even mention at present, how much those offend

the most just Ruler of the universe, who wickedly break

through and overturn all the order of justice toward

their neighbor, perverting the whole natural order in

wishing to their brothers, what they would not wish for

themselves.

570. Abhor, my daughter, such execrable conduct, and

as far as thy forces will allow, make up by thy works for

this want of acknowledgment in the service of the Most

High. And as by thy state of life thou art consecrated to

the divine worship, let that be thy principal occupation

and delight, striving to imitate the angelic spirits in their

ceaseless fear and worship of the Lord. Preserve rever

ence for holy things, including also the ornaments and

sacred vessels used in divine service. During divine office,

prayer, and sacrifice see that thou remain on thy knees ;

implore with faith and receive his favors with humble

thanksgiving ; the same consideration thou shouldst show

also to all men, even if they offend thee. To all be kind,

affable, meek, simple and truthful; without deceit or

double-dealing, without detraction or illwill, without rash

judgment of thy neighbor. And in order that thou mayst

fulfill all justice, revive the memory of it constantly and

desire to do to thy neighbor that which thou wishest done

to thyself. Especially remember how my most holy Son,

and I in imitation of Him, acted toward all men.

CHAPTER XL

THE VIRTUE OF FORTITUDE, AS PRACTICED BY THE MOST

HOLY MARY.

571. The virtue of fortitude, which is the third of the

four cardinal virtues, serves to moderate the personal ac

tivity of each one s choleric affections. Although it is true

that concupiscence precedes irascibility, and therefore

temperance which regulates concupiscence, might seem to

precede fortitude, because the resistance pertaining to for

titude is exerted against that which opposes concupis

cence; nevertheless we must first treat of the activity of

the choleric affections and their moderation through forti

tude. For in the pursuit of that which is desired, success

ordinarily depends upon the intervention of the irascible

faculties for overcoming the obstacles that present them

selves. Therefore fortitude is a more noble and excellent

virtue than temperance, of which we shall treat in the

following chapter.

572. The moderation of the irascible passions by the

virtue of fortitude is made up of two elements or kinds

of activity : to give way to anger in conformity with

reason, propriety and honor, and to repress unreasonable

anger and passion, whenever it is more useful to restrain

than to allow them to act. For as well the one as the other

can be praiseworthy or blamable according to the end in

view and the circumstances of the affair in hand. The

first of these two kinds of operations of this virtue is

properly called fortitude, being called by some teachers

pugnacity (bellicositas). The second is called patience,

440

THE CONCEPTION 441

which is the more noble and excellent kind of fortitude,

and is possessed and exercised principally by the saints:

the worldly-minded, throwing aside good judgment and

usurping a false term, are apt to call patience pusillan

imity, and miscall inconsiderate and rash presumption,

fortitude. Thus it comes, that they never attain the true

practice of the virtue of fortitude.

573. In most holy Mary there were no inordinate

movements, which could call to activity the irascible affec

tions for the exercise of fortitude ; for in the most in

nocent Queen all the passions were well ordered and sub

ject to reason, and her reason was subject to God, who

governed Her in all her actions and movements. But She

was in need of this virtue in order to overcome the ob

stacles placed by the devil in diverse ways, seeking to pre

vent Her from attaining what She most prudently and

most properly desired for Herself and her most holy Son.

And in this most valiant resistance and conflict none of

the creatures ever showed more fortitude. For no one

ever encountered such conflicts and opposition as She

from the demon. But whenever it became necessary to

make use of this kind of fortitude or pugnacity with hu

man creatures, She was equally sweet and forcible, or

rather, She was just as irresistible as She was most sweet

in her activity. For this heavenly Lady alone among all

creatures was able to copy so faithfully in her operations

that attribute of the Most High, which unites irresistible

power with heavenly sweetness (Wisdom 8, 1). Thus

our Queen proceeded in her actions with fortitude, know

ing no disorderly fear in her generous heart, as She was

superior to all creation. Neither was She rash, or auda

cious, or immoderate, being alike removed from all these

vicious extremes ; for in her great wisdom She knew what

terrors were to be vanquished, and what rashness was to

30

442 CITY OF GOD

be avoided. Thus She was the chosen Woman, clothed

in the strength of fortitude and beauty (Prov. 31, 25).

574. That part of fortitude which consists in patient

endurance, most holy Mary practiced in a still more ad

mirable manner, for She alone participated in the ex

cellent patience of her most holy Son, who bore punish

ment and suffered innocently without guilt, and in a

greater measure than all those who had contracted the

guilt. The whole life of the sovereign Queen was a con

tinual suffering and tribulation, especially during the life

and passion of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Her patience

during this time exceeds the comprehension of all crea

tures ; and only the Lord who imposed this suffering upon

Her, could worthily understand its greatness. Never was

this most pure Dove excited to the least impatience against

any creature, nor did any of the immense tribulations and

sorrows of her life seem great to Her, nor was She ever

dejected on account of them, nor did She fail to accept

them all with joy and gratitude. If, according to the

Apostle, the first requisite of charity, and as it were its

firstborn, is patience (I Cor. 13, 4) ; and if our Queen was

the Mother of love (Prov. 24, 24), then She was also the

Mother of patience, and her love is the measure of her

patience. For in the degree in which we love and esteem

the eternal good, (and we should esteem it above all

visible things), in that degree will we be ready, in order to

obtain it and avoid the loss of it, to suffer all hardships

in patience. Hence most holy Mary in her love was

patient beyond all that is created and She was the

Mother of patience for us. Flying to her protection we

shall find the tower of David with its thousand shields of

patience pending from it (Cant. 4, 4), with which the

brave ones of the Church and of the militia of Christ our

Lord arm themselves for battle.

THE CONCEPTION 443

575. Our most patient Queen was never affected by the

caprices of feminine inconstancy, nor indulged in outward

signs of anger; all this She restrained by the aid of divine

light and wisdom, although these latter did not do away

with pain, but rather augmented it; for no one could

recognize the infinite misfortune of sins and offenses

against God as this Lady. But even so her invincible

heart could not be disturbed : neither the malice of Judas,

nor the injuries and insults of the pharisees could ever

cause signs of anger in her exterior. Although at the

death of her most holy Son all the insensible elements and

creatures seemed to have lost patience toward mortals,

not being able to suffer the injuries and offenses done to

their Creator, Mary alone remained unmoved and ready to

receive Judas, all the pharisees and high-priests who cruci

fied Christ, if they had chosen to return to this Mother of

piety and mercy.

576. It is true that, without thereby passing the bounds

of reason or virtue, the most meek Queen could justly

have been indignant and angry at those who delivered

over her most holy Son to such a frightful death ; for the

Lord himself punished this sin in his justice. While fol

lowing up this thought, I was informed, that the Most

High provided against these movements and kept Her

free from all motions and affections of anger, though they

would not have been unjust; for He wished to prevent

Her from being the accuser of these sinners, because He

had chosen Her as the Mediatrix and Advocate, the

Mother of mercy. Through Her were to flow all the

mercies which He wished to grant to all the children of

Adam. He wished Her to be the one Creature, that could

worthily intercede for sin and temper the wrath of the

just Judge. Solely against the demon the anger of this

Lady was given free scope. Also in so far as this passion

444 CITY OF GOD

was necessary to exercise patience and forbearance and

to overcome the impediments with which this enemy

and ancient serpent obstructed her beneficent course.

577. To this virtue of fortitude belong also mag

nanimity and magnificence because they in a manner par

take of the nature of this virtue by giving firmness to

the will in matters relating to fortitude. Magnanimity

consists in pursuing great things and thus striving after

the great honors of virtue. Its subject matter is therefore

great honorableness, from which arise many qualities pe

culiar to the magnanimous ; as for instance to abhor

flattery and the pretenses of hypocrisy, (for to love these

is the part of small and mean souls), not to be covetous,

selfishly looking only for usefulness, but rather to seek

honorable and great things; to speak little of one s self,

not to brag, and not to be easily taken up by small things,

and not to avoid the greater undertakings, to be more in

clined to give than to receive; for all these things are

worthy of honor. But this virtue is not on this account

opposed to humility, for one virtue cannot be opposed to

another. Magnanimity causes us to use our gifts and

virtues in such a way as to merit the greater honor, with

out at the same time seeking honor anxiously and un

reasonably. Humility on the other hand teaches us our

relation to God and the smallness of our desert caused by

our defects and our own lowly nature. On account of the

special difficulties connected with great and noble under

takings, fortitude, especially the fortitude called mag

nanimity, is necessary. This proportions our forces to

the execution of great works, neither allowing us to desist

from them in pusillanimity, nor to attempt them with pre

sumption, disorderly ambition, or vainglory ; for all these

vices magnanimity abhors.

578. Magnificence similarly points to the execution of

THE CONCEPTION 445

great deeds, and in this signification it may enter into

the perfection of every virtue, for in all virtues great

things may be undertaken. But as there is a special dif

ficulty in great outlays or sacrifices, magnificence more

particularly is that virtue, which inclines us to make great

sacrifices in the prudent manner, so that there be neither

niggardliness, where much is required, nor profuseness

where there is no need, wasting and destroying without

necessity. Although this seems to be the same virtue as

liberality, yet the philosophers distinguish one from the

other. Magnificence regards only the greatness of the cost,

without attending to other circumstances, whereas liberal

ity regulates the temperate love and use of money. One

can therefore be liberal without being magnificent, as lib

erality may stop short of its course, when there is ques

tion of great and important favors.

579. These virtues of magnanimity and magnificence

were possessed by the Queen of heaven in a manner, un

attainable by others capable of these virtues. Mary alone

found no difficulty or hindrance in accomplishing great

things; and She alone did everything on a grand scale,

even though the matter was small in itself. She alone

understood the full bearing of these virtues, as She did

of all the rest. She could give them their full perfection,

without gaging them by any contrary inclinations, nor

was She ignorant of the perfect manner of exercising, nor

of making them dependent upon the assistance of other

virtues. For this is wont to happen with most holy and

prudent men, who, when they cannot attain entire per

fection in all virtue, choose that which seems to be the

best of them. In all her practice of virtues this Lady was

so magnanimous, that She always performed that which

was most excellent and worthy of honor and commenda

tion. Yet though She deserved honor and praise from all

446 CITY OF GOD

creatures, She was nevertheless most magnanimous in

despising it and referring it to God alone, and She pre

served her humility while practicing the highest perfec

tion of virtue. The acts of her heroic humility stood as

it were in heavenly rivalry with the magnanimous excel

lence of all her other virtues and were like richest jewels

set in contrast with the beauteous variety of excellences

that adorned the Daughter of the King, whose glory, as

David, her father, had said (Psalm 44, 14), is all from

within.

580. Also in magnificence our Queen greatly excelled.

For although She was poor and without any affection

toward earthly things, nevertheless She dispensed most

freely those things, with which the Lord furnished Her,

as happened with the precious gifts, which the Magi

offered to the Child Jesus, and many times afterwards in

the course of her life after the Lord had ascended to

heaven. As Mistress of all creation She also showed her

great magnificence by willingly yielding the whole of it

for the common benefit and for the honor and the worship

of God. Many She instructed in this doctrine and vir

tue, which, on account of their vile customs and inclina

tions mortals practice with so much difficulty, and in

which they never reach the proper perfection of prudence.

Commonly mortals follow their inclinations and desires,

seeking only the honor and emoluments of virtue, and to

be esteemed as great and extraordinary. The honor and

glory of virtue is thus diverted from the Lord by their

wrongful hankering; and consequently, when any oc

casion presents itself for the performance of a magnan

imous and generous deed, they shrink back and fail to

execute it, on account of the littleness and meanness of

their sentiments. As their desire of seeming great, ex

cellent and worthy of admiration nevertheless remains,

THE CONCEPTION 447

they have recourse to other measures, proportionately

deceitful and really vicious, such as getting angry, show

ing arrogance, impatience, haughtiness, dislike and

boastfulness. However, these vices are not a part of

magnanimity, but of smallness and meanness of heart.

Hence, as such conduct and sentiments repel rather than

attract honor, they do not gain the honor and esteem of

the wise, but contempt and abhorrence.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

581. My daughter, if thou seekest attentively to ob

tain a full understanding of the excellence and the pro

priety of the virtue of fortitude, as is my wish, thou shalt

come into the possession of a most efficient check for the

guiding of thy irascible affections; for these are the

passions, which are most easily moved to action and are

most apt to overstep the bounds of reason. Thou shalt

also have the means of attaining to the utmost greatness

and perfection of virtue, which thou desirest, and of re

sisting and overcoming all the machinations of thy ene

mies, who seek to intimidate thee in the pursuit of what is

hard in perfection. But understand, my dearest, that the

irascible in thy nature assists the concupiscible by oppos

ing what is hostile to the object sought after by the con

cupiscible powers. On this account the irascible will de

teriorate much faster than the concupiscible as soon

as the concupiscible affections become disordered and

begin to love what is only apparently good or what

is vicious. In place of a virtuous fortitude many

execrable and deformed vices will then result. This will

also teach thee that disorderly love of one s own ex

cellence and distinction, and vainglory, which are the

sources of pride and vanity, will breed many vices pe

culiar to the irascible passions, such as discords, conten-

448 CITY OF GOD

tions, quarrels, boasting, strife, impatience, obstinacy;

moreover also vices peculiar to the concupiscible passions,

such as hypocrisy, lying 1 , vain strivings, curiosity and the

desire to appear more than is befitting to a creature, and

to conceal the meanness which truly belongs to one who

has committed sins. From all these contemptible vices

thou shalt keep thyself free, if thou wilt earnestly mortify

and restrain the inordinate movements of concupiscence

by virtue of temperance, which I will now teach thee. For

when thou strivest after that which is just and useful, al

though thou must make use of fortitude and of the well-

ordered irascible passions, it must always be done in

such a way as not to pass the proper bounds ; and there is

continual danger of allowing oneself to be carried away

by inordinate zeal for virtue, when one is subject to self-

love or any disorderly love. Sometimes this vice disguises

itself and hides under the cloak of a pious zeal, and its

victims, anxious to appear zealous for God and the good

of their neighbor, are in reality deceived and ensnared

into anger by selfish motives. On this account the patience,

which is founded in charity and which is accompanied

by generosity and magnanimity, is very honorable,

estimable and necessary ; for he that really loves the high

est and truest Good, easily bears the loss of apparent

honor and glory, despising it with magnanimity as vile

and contemptible. Even when it is freely given by his

fellow creatures, the magnanimous will set no value on it ;

he will show himself invincible and constant in all his

undertakings. Thus he will advance, according to his

opportunities, in the virtues of perseverance and patience.

CHAPTER XII.

THE; VIRTUE OF TEMPERANCE AS PRACTICED BY THE MOST

HOLY MARY.

583. In regard to good and evil man possesses two

tendencies: namely that of striving after the good and

of repelling the evil; the latter is regulated by fortitude,

which, as already demonstrated, serves to strengthen the

will against the immoderate exercise of the irascible facul

ties and inspires it with bold daring rather to suffer all

possible afflictions of the senses than to desist from the

attainment of the good. The other tendency, founded on

the concupiscible faculties, is regulated by temperance,

and this is the last and the least of the cardinal virtues;

for the good which it procures is not so universal as that

attained by the practice of other virtues, since temperance

directly is concerned only with the particular advantage

of its possessor. The doctors and teachers treat of tem

perance in another aspect: namely in so far as it can

regulate the action of all the natural appetites of man ;

in this respect temperance is a general and universal vir

tue which comprises within its scope the proper exercise

of all the virtues according to reason. We do not at

present speak of this general virtue of temperance, but

only of that temperance which serves to regulate the con

cupiscence of touch and other pleasurable concupiscences

indirectly related to the touch, but not presenting such

powerful attractions as the concupiscence of the flesh.

584. In this regard temperance holds the last place

among the virtues, its aim being less noble than that of

449

450 CITY OF GOD

others ; yet in other regards it may be said to have greater

excellence, namely in as far as it preserves man from viler

and more contemptible transgressions, namely from the

immoderate indulgence of those pleasures which are com

mon to men and the irrational brutes. Referring to this

David says that man has become like unto the beast

(Psalm 48, 13, 21), allowing himself to be carried away

by the pleasure of the senses. Intemperance is rightly

called a puerile vice ; for, just as a child is not guided by

reason, but by the spur of fancy, and does not restrain

itself, except through fear of chastisement, so also con

cupiscence cannot otherwise be checked in the indulgence

of its desires. From this dishonor and vileness man is

freed by the virtue of temperance, which teaches him to

govern himself not by his desires, but by reason. There

fore a certain decorous honorableness and comeliness dis

tinguish this virtue, by which the reason is enabled to

preserve its rule, although the indomitable passions are

hardly ever inclined to listen or yield to it willingly. On

the other hand, the subjection of man to beastly pleasures

is a great dishonor, degrading him to the position of an

irrational animal or of an unreasoning child.

585. Temperance includes the two virtues of absti

nence and sobriety ; the former being opposed to gluttony

and the latter to drunkenness. Abstinence also includes

fasting. These virtues take the first place in treating of

temperance; for nourishment, being necessary for the

preservation of life, is among the principal objects cov

eted by the appetites. After these follow others which

regulate the use of the faculties for reproduction of the

species, such as chastity and susceptibility to shame, with

their concomitant virginity and continence, opposed to

the vices of lust and incontinence and their species. Be

sides these virtues, which are the principal ones belonging

THE CONCEPTION 451

to temperance, there are others that regulate the appetite

in the less important desires. Those that regulate the

sensations of smell, hearing and sight, may be classed un

der those referring to the proper use of the sense of

touch. But there are still other kinds of virtues which

resemble some of the above, though their object is en

tirely different, such as clemency and meekness, which

are set to govern anger and wrath in the administration

of punishment, lest they turn into bestial and inhuman

cruelty. Then there is modesty, which includes four vir

tues; the first one is humility, which keeps down pride,

lest man seek in a disorderly manner his own exaltation

and honor before men; the second is studiousness, by

which one preserves the proper measure in seeking infor

mation, being opposed to vain curiosity. The third is

moderation or frugality, by which one avoids superfluous

expense and ostentation in regard to clothing and exterior

living; the fourth is the restraint of overindulgence in

pleasurable entertainment, such as playing, bodily exer

cise, dancing, jesting and the like. Although this virtue

seems to have no special name, it is of the greatest impor

tance. It goes under the generic name of modesty or

temperance.

586. It always seems to me when I describe the excel

lence of these and of the other virtues when applied to

the corresponding virtues of the Queen of heaven, that

the terms at my disposal and commonly used in order to

describe these virtues in other creatures, fall far below

the truth. The graces and gifts of the most holy Mary

were in closer correspondence with those of the divine

perfections, than all the virtues and the holiness of the

saints are with those of the sovereign Queen of virtues.

Thence it no doubt happens that whatever we can say of

her virtues by using the terms fit for describing the vir-

452 CITY OF GOD

tues of the saints, seems to fall far short of the truth;

for the latter, as great as they may have been, existed in

persons disordered and subject to imperfections and the

distempers of sin. When therefore Ecclesiasticus says

(Eccli. 26, 20), that we can have no true conception of

the excellence of the continent man, what shall we say

of the virtue of temperance in the Mistress of all vir

tues, and what of the beauty of that soul which con

tained the perfection of all virtues? All the do

mestics of this strong Woman were doubly clothed

(Prov. 31, 21) because all her faculties were clothed in

two vestments or perfections of incomparable beauty and

strength; the one, that of original justice, which sub

jected all the appetites to reason and grace; the other

that of the infused habits, which supplied new beauty

and strength for the attainment of highest perfection in

her works.

587. All the saints that have signalized themselves in

the beauty of temperance, obtained the full conquest over

the indomitable concupiscences by subjecting them in

such a manner to the rule of reason, as not to allow their

desires to reach out after anything that might afterwards

occasion them sorrow for having desired it. They ad

vanced so far, that they denied themselves all indulgence

in those concupiscences, which could be withdrawn with

out destroying human nature. Nevertheless in all these

exercises of the virtue of temperance they felt a certain

opposition within themselves, which retarded the perfect

assent of the will, or at least a certain resistance prevent

ing them from reaching the plenitude of perfection in

their actions. They complained with the Apostle of the

unhappy burden of this body of sin (Rom. 7, 24). In

most holy Mary no such dissonance could be traced ; for

without a murmur of the appetites and without a shadow

THE CONCEPTION 453

of repugnance of the dictates of her will, all her powers

acted in such harmony and concert that, like armies

marching in well ordered squadrons (Cant. 6, 3), they

moved on in heavenly unison. As She had no rebellious

passions to overcome, She exercised such great temper

ance in all her actions, that not even the suggestion of

disorder ever entered her mind. On the contrary her

activity so closely imitated the divine operations that they

seemed originated and drawn directly from this supreme

Source, turning toward it as the only rule and ultimate

end of all her perfections.

588. The abstinence and sobriety of most holy Mary

was the admiration of the angels; for though being the

Queen of all creation and experiencing the natural affec

tions of hunger and thirst, She never sought after the

delicacies that would have suited her high estate, nor ever

indulged in nourishment merely for the sake of the pleas

ures of taste, but only in order to supply her natural

wants. Even these She satisfied with such moderation

as never to exceed, or ever being capable of exceeding,

the exact measure necessary to preserve the radical hu

mors of life. Moreover She partook of nourishment in

such a way as to allow room for hunger and thirst and

so as to make allowance for the effects of grace on the

natural process of bodily nourishment. She never ex

perienced the changes of corruption arising from super

fluous eating or drinking; nor did her needs in this regard

grow greater on one day than on others; nor was She

more subject to these changes on account of the want of

food; for if at any time She detracted from the food

necessary to keep up the natural warmth, She was sup

plemented in her activity by divine grace, in which the

creature lives, not in bread alone (Matth. 4, 4). The

Lord could have sustained Her without food or drink,

454 CITY OF GOD

but He did not do it ; for it was not right that She should

lose the merit of virtuously using these things, thus af

fording us the benefit of her example and merits. As to

the kind of food and the time in which She partook of it,

we will mention these circumstances in different parts of

this history (Part II, 196, 424, 898). Of Her own

choice She never ate meat, nor did She eat more than

once a day, except when She lived with her husband

Joseph, or when She accompanied her most holy Son in

his travels; for in such circumstances, in order to con

form Herself to others, She imitated the mode of living

followed by the Lord, although at all times She was won

derful in her temperance.

589. Of the virginal purity and modesty of this Vir

gin of virgins not even the seraphim could speak worthily,

for in this virtue, though to them it is co-natural, they

were inferior to their Queen and Mistress. By the privi

lege and power of the Most High She was more free

from the contrary vice than the angels themselves, who

by their very nature could not be touched by impurity.

Mortals will never in this life be able to form a proper

idea of this virtue as it existed in the Queen of heaven;

for we are much weighed down by the earthliness, and the

pure and crystalline light of chastity is much obscured in

our souls. Our great Queen possessed this virtue in such

a degree that She might justly have preferred it even to

the dignity of being the Mother of God, if this dignity

had not been the very source of her great purity.

Measuring this virginal purity of Mary by the esteem

in which She held it, and by the dignity to which

it raised Her, we can partly estimate how great

was that virtue in her virginal body and soul. She re

solved upon this purity from the moment of her Immacu

late Conception, She vowed it at her nativity, and She

THE CONCEPTION 455

guarded it in such a manner that v She never offended

against it, or against the utmost modesty in any of her

actions or movements, nor in any attitude of her body or

soul. Accordingly She never spoke to any man except at

the command of God ; nor did She ever look into the face

of a man, and not even in the face of a woman ; and this

not on account of any danger to Her, but for the sake of

gaining merit, and for our example, and in order to exer

cise the superabundance of her heavenly prudence, wis

dom and charity.

590. Of her clemency and meekness Solomon says that

the law of clemency is on her tongue (Prov. 31, 26).

She never moved it except in order to let flow the grace

poured out on her lips (Psalm 44, 3). Meekness regu

lates wrath, and clemency moderates punishment. There

was no anger in our most mild Queen, nor did She use

the faculty of it except, as we have said above, in order

to lend fortitude to her activity against sin and the devil

or the like. But against men and the angels She made no

use of anger for the purpose of punishing them, nor was

She moved to anger by any event, nor did She ever on any

account interrupt her most perfect practice of meekness,

preserving inimitable and imperturbable equanimity both

interiorly and exteriorly ; neither did She ever show out

ward signs of inward anger in her countenance, in her

voice or in her movements. Her mildness and clemency

the Lord made use of as/ an instrument peculiarly his own,

and through it He wished to scatter all his benefits of his

ancient and everlasting mercies; on this account it was

necessary that the clemency of Mary should imitate so

closely his own as to make it a fit channel for the over

flow of his divine clemency toward the creatures. When

we consider attentively and once have understood well

the works of the divine mercy toward sinners and when

456 CITY OF GOD

we see that the most holy Mary was a fit instrument of

their distribution and application, we will then partly un

derstand the clemency of this Lady. All her corrections

were undertaken more by pleading, teaching and admon

ishing than by chastisement; She herself besought the

Lord, and He ordained that this be her course of action ;

for this incomparable Creature was to be the fountain of

clemency and the depositary of the law of clemency, of

which his Majesty should avail Himself, and from which

mortals should draw this virtue as well as all the others.

591. To discourse worthily of the other virtues, es

pecially of the humility and of the frugality and of the

poverty of most holy Mary, many books and the tongues

of angels would be required. Of these ineffable virtues

of Mary this history is replete, for in all the actions of the

Queen of heaven her incomparable humility shines forth

beyond everything else. I fear extremely to understate

the greatness of this singular virtue in the blessed Virgin

by trying to encompass in the limited terms at my dis

posal, that ocean of humility which was able to contain

and embrace the Incomprehensible and the Immense him

self. All that the angels and the saints themselves could

comprehend and practice of the virtue of humility, cannot

equal even the least part of that which our Queen attained

therein. Which of the saints or angels could ever merit

the title of Mother of God? And who, beside Mary and

the eternal Father, could ever address the incarnate Word

as Son? If then She, who in this regard attained to a dig

nity like that of the eternal Father and possessed the

graces and gifts befitting such a state, reputed Herself as

the last of all creatures and all the rest as her superiors,

what fragrance and odor of virtue did this humble spike

nard exhale for the delight of God, while She bore in

her womb the King of kings ? ( Cant. 1 , 11).

THE CONCEPTION 457

592. That the pillars of heaven, the angels (Job 26,

II), should quake and tremble in the presence of the in

accessible light of the infinite Majesty, is not to be won

dered at; for they had before their eyes the ruin of their

companions, while they themselves were confirmed in the

advantages and favors common to all. That the most

valiant and invincible of the saints should humiliate them

selves, embracing contempt and reproach, and acknowl

edging themselves unworthy of the least favors of grace,

and even of the service and succor of the creatures out

side themselves; all this was most just and only accord

ing to the natural order of things. For all of us have

sinned and infringe on the glory of God (Rom. 3, 23) ;

and no one is so holy that he cannot increase in sanctity ;

nor so perfect that some virtue is not wanting in him;

nor so innocent, that the eyes of God find nothing to rep

rehend. And if any one should be of consummate perfec

tion, he nevertheless would still remain within the sphere

of the common graces and benefits, since no one is su

perior to all in all things.

593. But just on this account the humility of the most

pure Mary was without example and without equal. For

though She was the dawn of grace, the pure beginning of

all creatures, the superior over them all, the prodigy of

the divine perfections, the centre of his love, the sphere of

the omnipotence of God, who called God her Son and was

called by Him his Mother, She nevertheless humbled Her

self to the lowest place in all creation. She, who enjoyed

the highest position, exalted above all the works of God,

so that no higher position was left for a mere creature,

humiliated Herself so far as to judge Herself unworthy

of the least estimation, distinction or honor, not even of

such as would befit the most insignificant of the rational

creatures. Not only did She deem Herself unworthy of

31

458 CITY OF GOD

the dignity of being the Mother of God and of all the

graces connected therewith, but She did not esteem Her

self deserving of the air She breathed, of the support the

earth gave to her footsteps, of the sustenance derived

from it, or of any service or kindness at the hands of

creatures ; of all things She considered Herself unworthy

and She gave thanks for all, as if She were really so un

deserving. In order to say all in a few words: that a

creature should not seek the honor which does not belong

to it or which for some reason it does not merit, is not

such a great humility, although the Most High in his in

finite kindness accepts it and considers Himself under

obligation to one who practices it in that way. But She,

most admirably exceeding all this, while deserving all ex

altation and majesty, humiliated Herself more than all

other creatures and sought neither honor nor exaltation.

Thus Mary, holding worthily the dignity of Mother of

God, annihilated Herself, and by this very humility de

served anew and in justice to be raised to the dominion

and sovereignty of all creation.

594. In proportion to this incomparable humility most

holy Mary possessed also all the other virtues, which be

long to modesty. The desire of knowing more than is

necessary, ordinarily arises from the want of humility

and charity. This is a fault not only of no use, but of

great hindrance in the advancement of virtue, as hap

pened with Dina (Gen. 24, 1), who, going out to see

what was no benefit to her, suffered such great damage

to her honor. From the same root of proud presumption

usually also springs superfluous ostentation and finery in

outward dress, and also the disorderly behavior in ges

ture and carriage, which serves sensuality and vanity, tes

tifying to the levity of the heart according to the saying

of Ecclesiasticus (19, 27) : "The attire of the body and

THE CONCEPTION 459

the laughter of the teeth, and the gait of the man, show

what he is." All the virtues opposed to these vices were

in most holy Mary in their entirety, void of all disinclina

tion or feebleness in the exercise of them. They were

like companions of her profound humility, charity and

purity, that revealed the certain tokens of a nature more

heavenly than earthly.

595. She was most studious without being curious;

for though She was replete with a wisdom far above that

of the cherubim, She studied and allowed Herself to be

taught as if ignorant of all things. Whenever She made

use of her divine science or sought to learn the will of

God, She was so prudent and attended so carefully and

exactly to all circumstances that her efforts always

wounded the heart of God and drew and inclined Him to

fulfill her most well-ordered wishes. In poverty and fru

gality She was most admirable ; for being the Mistress of

all creation and having full right to dispose of it, She

yielded all right of possession to the Lord in imitation of

her most holy Son; namely, just as the Father gave all

things into the hands of the incarnate Word, so the Word

put all into the hands of his Mother, and She, similarly

offered all things, as well in desire as in fact, for the

glory of her Son and Lord. Of the modesty of her be

havior and sweetness of her intercourse, and of all her

exterior actions, it is sufficient to repeat what is asserted

by the wise man of Athens, saint Dionysius, that She

would have deserved to be looked upon as more than

human, if faith did not teach that She is a mere creature.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

596. My daughter, thou hast said something of the

virtue of temperance and of my practice of it, so far as

thou hast understood its dignity and excellence. Yet thou

460 CITY OF GOD

hast omitted much that belongs to a full understanding

of the necessity of temperance in human actions. It was

a punishment of the first sin that man lost the perfect use

of reason, and that the passions should rise in rebellion

against him, because he rose up against God in contempt

of his most just command. In order to repair this dam

age, temperance became necessary; by it man restrains

his concupiscences within proper bounds ; he perceives the

perfect medium in that which is desirable and he is taught

to follow once more the dictates of reason, bringing him

near to the Divinity and declining to follow his concu

piscences like irrational beasts. Without this virtue it is

not possible for man to divest himself of the spoiled hu

man nature, nor to dispose himself for the graces and

wisdom of God; for they will not enter into a soul sub

ject to the body of sin (Wisdom 1, 4). He that knows

how to moderate his passions by denying them their im

moderate and bestial desires, will be able to say and ex

perience in truth, what is said of the Canticles (2, 4) :

that the King has introduced him into the cellars of his

delicious wine, and into the treasurehouse of his wisdom

and spiritual gifts; for this virtue is a storehouse of most

beautiful and fragrant virtues for the delight of the Al

mighty.

597. Although of course I wish thee to labor much

in acquiring all virtues pertaining to temperance, I desire

nevertheless that thou consider especially the beauty and

fragrance of chastity, the strength which abstinence and

sobriety in eating and drinking will give, the sweet in-

fluence of modesty in words and actions, the exalted no

bility of poverty in the use of created things. With the

help of these virtues, thou wilt attain the divine enlight

enment, the peace and tranquillity of thy soul, the serenity

of thy faculties, the right government of thy inclinations ;

THE CONCEPTION 461

thou wilt be entirely illumined with the splendors of the

divine graces and gifts; from an animal and sensual way

of living thou wilt be raised to a heavenly intercourse and

an angelic life ; and that is what I seek in thee and what

thou thyself by divine assistance art striving after. Be

careful therefore, my dearest, and watch for the divine

light in all thy actions, and let not any of thy powers be

induced to activity merely by pleasure and inclination;

but always act according to reason and for the glory of the

Most High in all things necessary for the conduct of thy

life; in eating, in sleeping, in dressing, in speaking, in

hearing, in desiring, in correcting, in commanding, in

speaking : let all be governed in thee by the light and the

pleasure of the Lord God, and not by thy own.

598. And in order that thou mayest so much the more

be captivated by the beauty and loveliness of the virtue of

temperance, consider the vileness of its contrary vices and

let thyself be deeply impressed according to the divine

light given thee; consider assiduously how ugly, abom

inable, horrible and monstrous the world is in the sight

of God and the saints on account of the enormous abom

inations, which men commit against this lovable virtue.

Look how some follow like brutes after the horrors of

sensuality, how gluttony degrades others, how some fol

low after pleasures of play and vanity, how others are

dominated by pride and presumption, how many are en

tangled in avarice and the desire of gain, how they all fol

low the impulse of passions, seeking in this life only

pleasure, while in the life to come they pile up for them

selves eternal torments and incur the loss of the beatific

vision of their God and Lord.

CHAPTER XIII.

OF THE SEVEN GIFTS OF THE HOLY GHOST AND HOW THE

MOST HOLY MARY MADE USE OF THEM.

599. The seven gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to

the light given to me on this subject, seem to me to add

something to the virtues to which they refer ; and because

they superadd to them, they must also differ from them, al

though they pursue the same object. Every benefit con

ferred by the Lord can be called a gift flowing from his

hand, although it may only be a natural benefit ; but here

we do not speak of the gifts of God included in this wide

sense of the word, not even of the infused virtues and

gifts; for not all persons, who possess one or more vir

tues, have the gifts pertaining to those virtues, or at least

they do not reach that degree of virtue that they can be

called perfect gifts, such as those mentioned by Isaias and

referred to by the doctors of the Church. Isaias says the

Holy Ghost rested upon Christ our Lord (Is. 11, 2),

enumerating seven graces, which commonly are called

gifts of the Holy Ghost, namely: the spirit of wisdom

and intellect, the spirit of counsel and fortitude, the spirit

of science and piety, and the fear of God. These gifts

were in the most holy soul of Christ, overflowing from

the Divinity to which it was hypostatically united, just

as the water is in the fountain, flowing from it and com

municating itself to other places. For we all partake of

the waters of the Savior (Is. 12, 3), grace for grace, gift

for gift (John 1, 16) ; and in Him are hidden the treas

ures of divine wisdom and science (Coloss. 2, 1).

462

THE CONCEPTION 463

600. The gifts of the Holy Ghost correspond to the

virtues to which they are related. And although not all

teachers agree in their doctrines about their correspon

dence, there can be no difference of opinion in regard to

the end or purpose of these gifts, which is none else than

to give a special kind of perfection to the faculties for the

performance of exalted and heroic acts of virtue. The

excellence of these gifts must principally include and con

sist of some specially strong inspiration or influence of

the Holy Ghost, which overcomes with greater efficacy

the impediments and moves the free will with greater

force, so that man be not remiss in his actions, but may

proceed with great fortitude and with all perfection in

those things to which that particular gift pertains. All

this the free will cannot attain without being illumined

and sustained by a specially efficacious and powerful in

fluence of the Holy Ghost, which impels him, sweetly and

pleasingly (Sap. Wisdom 8, 1) to follow the enlighten

ment, and freely to execute and accomplish what the will

under the efficacious influence of the Holy Ghost, under

takes (Rom. 8). Therefore this impulse is called in

stinct of the Holy Ghost; for although the will acts

freely and without compulsion, yet in these operations it

is much like a voluntary instrument and seems to be one,

because it acts less under the guidance of common pru

dence, as in other virtues, although it does not act with

less intelligence or liberty.

601. I will try to make myself understood to a certain

degree by referring to two different faculties of the will

that are called into action in drawing the will to pursue

virtue. The one is its own inclination or attraction to

ward the good, moving or stirring it in the same way as

gravity causes the stone to fall or lightness makes the

fire ascend toward its centre. This inclination of the will

464 CITY OF GOD

is increased more or less by the custom or habits of vir

tue (and the same is to be said in their degree about the

habits of vice), for being drawn by love, the will moves

freely and of its own accord. The other faculty is that

of the intellect, which is an enlightenment in regard to

virtue by which the will directs itself in determining its

course of action, and this enlightenment is proportionate

with the habits and the operations of the will. For the

ordinary acts, prudence and whatever deliberation it in

spires, are sufficient ; but for the more exalted operations

it requires a higher and a superior enlightenment and in

citement, that of the Holy Ghost, such as is given by the

seven gifts. Since charity and grace is a supernatural

habit, which depends on the divine Will in the same way

as the ray depends upon the sun, therefore charity is ac

companied by a particular influence of the Divinity, by

which it is moved to pursue the rest of the virtues and

good habits of the will, and much more so, when this

charity is re-enforced by the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

602. Therefore it seems to me that I perceive in the

gifts of the Holy Ghost a certain special enlightenment

in which the intellect remains to a large extent merely

passive as far as moving the will is concerned. In the

will at the same time there is a certain perfection of its

habits, which inclines it to most heroic acts in a manner

far above the ordinary forces of virtuousness. As the

movements of a stone, if another impulse beside gravity is

added, are much accelerated, so the impulse of the will

toward virtue is stronger and more excellent, if it is acted

upon by the gifts. The gift of wisdom communicates to

the soul a certain kind of taste by which it can distinguish

the divine from the human without error, throwing all

its influence and weight in all things against those in

clinations which arise from human ignorance and folly;

THE CONCEPTION 465

this gift is related to charity. The gift of intellect serves

to penetrate into the understanding of divine things and

gives a knowledge of them overwhelmingly superior to

the ignorance and slowness of the natural intellect ; while

that of science searches the most obscure mysteries and

creates perfect teachers to oppose human ignorance ; these

two gifts are related to faith. The gift of counsel guides,

directs and restrains man within the rules of prudence in

his inconsiderate activity. It is closely related to this its

own virtue. That of fortitude expels disorderly fear and

gives strength to human weakness ; it is superadded to the

cardinal virtue of that name. Piety makes the heart kind,

takes away its hardness and softens it against its own

impiety and stubborness; it is related to religion. The

fear of God lovingly humiliates the soul in opposition to

pride, and is allied to humility.

603. In the most holy Mary were all the gifts of the

Holy Ghost as in one who was undoubtedly capable

of and entitled to them ; for She was the Mother

of the divine Word, from whom the Holy Ghost,

the Giver of them, proceeds. Moreover, since these

gifts were to correspond to her dignity of Mother

of God, it follows, that they were in Her in a measure

proportionate to that dignity, and as different from that

of all the rest of the creatures as her position of Mother

of God excels that of ordinary creatures. This was nec

essary also because She enjoyed at the same time im

peccability, while the other creatures stand in such a dis

tant relation to the Holy Spirit, not only on account of

their common sin, but on account of their place in creation,

having no such proximity to the Holy Ghost. If these

gifts existed in Christ, our Redeemer and Lord, as in their

fountainhead, they were in Mary as in a lake or ocean,

from whence they are distributed over all creation : for

466 CITY OF GOD

from her superabundance they overflow into the whole

Church. This is referred to by Solomon in the book of

Proverbs, when Wisdom is made to say : that She builds

for Herself a house on seven pillars, etc., and in it She

prepares the table, mixes the wine, and invites the little

ones and the uninstructed ones drawing and raising them

up from their childhood to teach them prudence (Prov.

9, 1, 2). I will not stop to expatiate on this, but every

Catholic knows, that most holy Mary was this magnificent

mansion of the Most High, built up in strength and

beauty on these seven pillars of the gifts, so that in this

mystic palace might be held the banquet of the whole

Church. In Mary was prepared the table, at which all

we uninstructed little ones, children of Adam, may become

satiated with the activities and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

604. When speaking of these gifts as acquired by the

discipline in the exercise of virtue and the conquest of the

contrary vices, the first place must be assigned to fear of

God. In regard to Christ, Isaias begins by mentioning

the gift of wisdom, the highest one, because Christ re

ceived them as the Master and as the Head, and not as

a disciple. In the same order we are to consider them

in the most holy Mary, for in gifts She was made more

similar to her most holy Son, than other creatures. The

gift of wisdom confers a certain enlightenment, like a

second taste, by which the intellect as it were tastes the

hidden truth and searches into the highest and ultimate

causes of things, while the will, with this same taste of

truth in the highest good, distinguishes the real good from

the apparent good without fail. For he is truly wise, who

perceives without mistake the true good in order to taste

of it, and who tastes it in perceiving it. This taste of

wisdom consists in rejoicing in the highest good by an

intimate union of love, upon which follows the savouring

THE CONCEPTION 467

and relishing of the particular good gained and realized

by the exercise of the virtues inferior to love. Therefore

he is not called wise, who merely perceives truth in a

speculative manner, although he may find his delight in

that pursuit: nor is he called wise, who practices virtue

merely for the sake of obtaining a knowledge of it, and

still less he who practices it for other reasons. But he,

that perceives the highest and the true good, and in it and

for it also the minor truths, and who, on account of the

relish of this truth, acts with a sincere and unitive love of

that good, is the one who will be truly wise. This percep

tion or knowledge is supplied to wisdom by the gift of in

tellect, which precedes and accompanies it, and which

consists in an intimate penetration into the divine truths,

and in the perception of all that can be reduced and pave

the way toward them; for the Spirit searches the pro

found things of God, as the Apostle says (I Cor. 2, 10).

605. This same spirit will be necessary in order to

understand and in order to explain to a certain extent the

gifts of wisdom and intellect possessed by Mary, the

Empress of heaven. The impetus of the river, which was

withheld by the highest Goodness for so many eternal

ages, rejoiced this City of God by its flow, and through

inhabitation of the Onlybegotten of the Father and Her

self, completely filled her most holy soul; so that it

seemed, (according to our way of speaking), as if the

infinite oceans of the Divinity were drained into this sea

of wisdom as soon as She was capable of invoking the

Spirit of wisdom. And in order that She might invoke

Him, He came to Her, that She might learn wisdom with

out guile and communicate it without envy (Wisdom 7,

13). This She also did; for by means of her wisdom,

the light of the world, the eternal incarnate Word mani

fested Itself to the world, This most wise Virgin knew

468 CITY OF GOD

in her wisdom the arrangement of the whole world and

the powers of the elements (Wisdom 7, 17), the begin

ning, the middle, and the end of time with its mutations,

the course of the stars, the natures of the animals, the

fury of the wild beasts, the powers of the winds, the dis

positions and thoughts of men, the virtues of plants,

herbs, trees, fruits and roots, the hidden and occult things

beyond all thoughts of men, the mysterious ways of the

Most High : all this Mary, our Queen, knew and She de

lighted in it through the wisdom, which She drew from

its original fountain and which was embodied in all her

thoughts.

606. Thence did She receive that vapor of the power

of God and the bright emanation of his pure charity,

which made Her immaculate and preserved Her from the

pollution, which stains the soul ; and on this account She

remained a mirror without blur reflecting the Majesty of

God. Thence did She draw the spirit of intelligence, be

longing to wisdom, a spirit holy, single, manifold, subtle,

eloquent, active, undefiled, sure, sweet, loving the good

without impediment, beneficent, gentle, kind, steadfast,

assured, secure, having all power, overseeing all things

and understanding all things with clearness and with a

subtlety reaching from one end to the other (Wisdom 7,

22). All these qualities, which the wise man mentions as

belonging to the Spirit of Wisdom, were in a singularly

perfect manner the property of Mary most holy, second

ary only to the manner in which they were possessed by

her Onlybegotten. Together with wisdom came to Her

all good (Wisdom 7, 11) and in all her works She was

led on by these high gifts of wisdom and intellect. By

them She was governed in the exercise of all the rest of

her virtues, being as it were saturated with this incompar

able wisdom.

THE CONCEPTION 469

607. Something has already been said of Her other

gifts, when speaking of the gifts in general; but since all

that we can understand and say is so far beneath that

which is really to be found in this mystical city of Mary,

there always remains much to add. The gift of counsel,

in the order given by Isaias, follows that of the intellect ;

it consists in a supernatural illumination, by which the

Holy Ghost touches the interior, enlightening it beyond

all human and ordinary intelligence and thereby inclining

the soul to choose all that is most profitable, most decent

and just, and to reject all that is of the contrary kind. It

leads back the will by the immaculate and eternal laws of

God to the standard of one single love, conforming it to

perfect desire of the highest Good. Thus divinely instruct

ed, the creature lays aside the multitude of the diverse in

clinations, and the foreign and the inferior affections and

movements that may retard or hinder the human heart

from listening to or following the divine impulses and

counsels, or that may prevent man from conforming to

the living example of Christ our Lord, who in highest

council has said to the eternal Father: "Not my will be

done, but thine" (Matth. 26, 39).

608. The gift of fortitude is the participation of in

fluence of a divine virtue, which the Holy Ghost com

municates to the created will, in order that it may be hap

pily encouraged to raise itself above all that is passing

and all that is wont to inspire human weakness with fear

in temptations, sorrows, tribulations and adversities.

Overcoming and vanquishing them all, the will acquires

and maintains in itself all that is most arduous and ex

cellent in virtue; it transcends and surpasses all the vir

tues, graces, spiritual and interior exaltations, revelations,

sensible ecstasies of love ; no matter of what degree and

excellence, it leaves all behind and soars upward in divine

470 CITY OF GOD

flight, until it reaches the highest and the most intimate

union with the supreme Good after which it longed with

the most ardent desire. Then in truth flows the sweet

ness from strength (Judges 14, 14), having conquered all

things in Him that strengthened it (Philip. 4, 13). The

gift of science is an intelligent and unerring knowledge of

what must be believed and done in regard to the virtues,

and it differs from counsel, in so far as science selects,

while counsel decides; science forms a correct judgment

and counsel makes the wise choice. Science differs also

from intelligence, because intelligence penetrates into the

divine truths of faith and virtues by means of a simple in

tuition, while science knows authoritatively all that can be

deduced from the principles of faith, conforming the

outward operations of the faculties to the perfection of

the virtues and being as it were the mother and the root

of discretion.

609. The gift of piety is a divine virtue or influence by

which the Holy Ghost softens, or as it were smoothens or

melts the human will, moving it to embrace all that per

tains to the service of the Most High and to the welfare of

the neighbor. By means of this softening and sweet mild

ness of the mind, our will is ever ready, and our memory

always attentive, so that in all times and places and circum

stances we are ready to praise, bless, thank and honor the

highest Good; and likewise we are moved to act with a

tender and loving compassion toward creatures, without

failing them in their troubles and necessities. This gift

is not hindered, when it meets envy and it overlooks hate,

avarice, and spurns weakness, or littleness of mind; for

it causes in man a strong and delightful inclination by

which it proceeds sweetly and lovingly to fulfill all the

works of the love of God and the neighbor, making him

benevolent, ready to do a service, kind and diligent. On

THE CONCEPTION 471

that account the Apostle says, that the exercise of piety

is useful for all things (I Tim. 4, 8) and that it has the

promise of eternal life, being a most noble instrument of

charity.

610. In the last place comes the gift of fear, so highly

praised, exalted and recommended in many places of the

holy Scriptures and by the holy teachers, as the founda

tion of Christian perfection and as the beginning of true

wisdom; for the fear of God before all other things re

sists, banishes and destroys the arrogant foolishness of

men. This important gift consists in a loving heedfulness

and a most noble modesty and restraint, by which the soul

withdraws within itself making it conscious of its own

lowly condition, comparing its lowliness with the supreme

majesty and greatness of God, not attending merely to

its own sentiments, preventing it to be wise in its own con

ceit, and thus rilling it with awe, as the Apostle teaches

(Rom. 11, 21). This gift of fear has its different de

grees ; in the beginning it is called initial, and afterwards

it becomes filial fear ; for first the soul commences to flee

from guilt, as contrary to the highest Good ; and then it

proceeds still farther in its selfabasement and selfcon-

tempt, comparing its own littleness with God s majesty,

its ignorance with his wisdom, its poverty with his infinite

riches. Thus, finding itself in all things dependent on

God s divine will, it humiliates and subjects itself beneath

all creatures for the sake of God, acting toward Him and

towards them with a sincere love. It finally reaches the

perfection of the sons of God and arrives at the intimate

union of its powers with the Father, the Son and the Holy

Ghost.

611. If I should dilate still more in the explanation of

the gifts of the Holy Ghost, I would far exceed the limits

which I have set, and I would have to extend dispropor-

472 CITY OF GOD

tionately this discourse: that which I have said of these

gifts seems to me sufficient for the understanding of their

nature and their qualities. This understanding will en

able us properly to consider, how these gifts of the Holy

Ghost were possessed by the sovereign Queen of heaven

not only in an ordinarily sufficient degree, such as is com

monly possessed by other saints ; but that they were in

this Lady in such an excellent and privileged a degree,

as would not fall to the lot of the saints, nor be proper to

anyone inferior to Her in sanctity. Having then under

stood, in what holy fear, piety, fortitude, science and coun

sel consist and in how far they are gifts of the Holy Ghost,

let the human estimation and angelic understanding dilate,

let them soar in thought to the noblest, the most excellent,

the most perfect and the most divine: greater than all

this, and above whatever else creatures in their entirety

can conceive, will be the gifts of Mary, and the lowest of

the perfections of Mary will scarcely be within reach of

the highest that can enter the thoughts of man ; just as in

the same manner the highest perfections of our Lady

and Queen attain only in a certain sense the lowest of

Christ and the Divinity.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY MARY THE MOST HOLY

QUEEN.

612. My daughter, these most noble and excellent gifts

of the Holy Ghost, which thou hast come to understand,

are the emanations of the Divinity communicating them

selves to and transforming the holy souls: on their own

part they do not admit of any limitation but only on the

part of the subject upon which they act. If the creatures

would empty their hearts of earthly love and affections,

although their heart is limited, they would participate

without measure in the torrent of the infinite Godhead

THE CONCEPTION 473

through the inestimable gifts of the Holy Ghost. The

virtues purify the creature from the ugliness and guilt of

its vices, and thereby they begin to restore the disconcert

ed order of its faculties, which was first lost by original

sin and afterwards increased by actual sins; they add

beauty to the soul, strength and joy in doing good. But

the gifts of the Holy Ghost raise these same virtues to a

sublime perfection, adornment and beauty, by which they

dispose, beautify and fill the soul with graces and intro

duce it to the chamber of its Spouse, where it remains

united with the Divinity in a spiritual bond of eternal

peace. From this most blessed condition it proceeds

faithfully and truthfully to the practice of heroic virtues ;

and laden with them it returns to the same source from

which it issued forth, namely God himself. In his

shadow it rests and is satiated, freed from the impetuous

fury of the passions and their disorderly appetites. Such

a happiness however is the lot of few, and only by ex

perience can it actually be known, who does attain it.

613. Take heed therefore, my dearest, and study pro

foundly how thou canst ascend to the height of these

gifts ; for it is the will of the Lord and mine, that thou

ascend higher up as a guest in the feast (Luc. 14, 10)

which is prepared for thee in all the sweetness of his

blessed gifts (Ps. 20, 4) and to which thou hast been in

vited for this very purpose by this excess of liberality.

Remember that there are only two ways to eternity : the

one, which leads to eternal death by contempt of virtue

and ignorance of the Divinity; the other, which leads to

eternal life by the profitable knowledge of the Most High ;

for this is eternal life (Jno. 17, 3), that men know the

way to Him and to his Onlybegotten, whom He sent into

the world. The way of death is trodden by innumerable

wicked ones (Eccles. 1, 14), who are unaware of their

474 CITY OF GOD

own ignorance, presumption and insipid pride. To those,

whom his mercy calls to his admirable light (1 Pet. 2,9),

and whom He engenders anew as sons of light, God gives

by this regeneration a new being in faith, hope and charity,

making them his own and heirs of an eternal and godlike

fruition. Having been made sons they are endowed with

the virtues accompanying the first justification, in order

that as sons of light, they may perform corresponding

works of light ; and over and above they receive the gifts

of the Holy Ghost. And just as the material sun denies

its light and warmth to nothing that is capable and fit for

its influence, so also the divine Wisdom, emitting its voice

on the high mountains, on the royal highway and in the

most hidden paths, invites and calls out to all, and hides

itself or denies itself to no one (Prov. 8,1). But the fool

ishness of men makes them stupid and deaf, their impious

malice makes them scoffers, and their unbelieving per

versity turns them away from God, whose Wisdom finds

no place in the malevolent heart (Wisdom 1, 4), nor in a

body subject to sin.

614. Thou however, my daughter, remember thy

promises, thy vocation and thy aspirations; for the

tongue which lies to God, is an abominable murderer of

the soul (Wisdom 1, 11, 12) : see that thou do not pursue

death in the error of this life, nor draw upon thyself ruin

by the work of thy hands (Cant. 2, 4), as by divine light,

thou hast seen the sons of darkness do. Fear the powerful

God and Lord with an humble and a well-ordered fear,

and in all thy works be governed by that Master. Make

thy heart gentle, yielding and docile to discipline and

works of piety. Judge of things according to the true

value of virtue and vice. Animate thyself with an in

vincible fortitude to strive after the most arduous and ex

alted, and to endure the most adverse and exacting labors.

THE CONCEPTION 475

By discretion choose the means for attaining to these re

sults. Give way to the force of the divine light, by which

thou canst transcend all sensible things, rise to the highest

knowledge of the hidden secrets of divine wisdom and dis

tinguish between the things of the new and of the old man.

Then wilt thou be made capable of partaking of this

wisdom; for then thou wilt enter into the wine-cellar of

thy Spouse and be inebriated with his love, and his eternal

charity will be well ordered in thee.

CHAPTER XIV.

EXPLANATION OF THE DIFFERENT KINDS OF DIVINE

VISIONS ENJOYED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND THE

EFFECTS WHICH THEY WROUGHT IN HER.

615. The grace of divine visions, revelations and rap

tures, (I do not speak here of the beatific visions), al

though they are operations of the Holy Ghost, must be

distinguished from justifying grace and from virtues,

which sanctify and perfect the soul in their operations.

As not all the just, nor all the saints, necessarily have

visions or divine revelations, it is evident that sanctity and

virtuousness can exist without these gifts. It is also

evident, that revelations and visions are not dependent

upon the sanctity and perfection of those, that are thus

favored, but upon the divine will. God concedes them

according to weight and measure for the ends which He

wishes to attain in his Church (Wisdom 11, 21). God

can without doubt grant great and the most exalted

visions to those, who are less holy, and only inferior

revelations to those, who are of exalted sanctity. The

gift of prophecy and the other gifts freely given (gratis

data) He can give to those even, who are not saints;

some of the raptures moreover can arise from causes,

which have nothing to do with moral virtues. Therefore

if any comparison is made between the Prophets, their

sanctity does not enter into calculation, for that can be

estimated only by God ; but the divine light of prophecy

and the mode of receiving it, must be made the basis of

the comparison as to its being more or less exalted in its

476

THE CONCEPTION 477

different aspects. Thus it happens, that charity and

virtue, which make their possessors holy and perfect, de

pend upon the will, while visions and revelations, and

likewise some of the raptures, affect the understanding of

the intellectual part of man, the perfection of which does

not in itself sanctify the soul.

616. Nevertheless, though the gift of divine vision is

distinct from holiness and separate from it, the divine

will and providence very often joins them according to

the end and object in the gratuitous gifts of special revela

tion; for sometimes God ordains them for the public

benefit (I Cor. 12, 7) and for the common good of the

Church, as the Apostle tells us. Thus the Prophets, in

spired by the Holy Ghost and not filled with their own

imaginations (II Pet. 1, 21), spoke and prophesied to

us the mysteries of the Redemption and of the evangelical

Law (I Pet. 1, 10). When the revelations and visions

are of this kind, they are not necessarily joined with

sanctity; for Balaam was a prophet and no saint. But

generally it suited divine Providence, that the prophets

should at the same time be saints, preferring not to de

posit, at least not easily and frequently, the spirit of

prophecy and of divine revelations in impure vessels. In

some instances He, as the Allpowerful, did choose to act

in this manner, yet (not to mention many other reasons)

He did not ordinarily wish to derogate from the power of

his divine truths and teachings by the bad life of the

instrument.

617. At other times the divine revelations and visions

do not pertain to things of so general an import and they

do not concern so much the common good, but only the

particular advantage of the one who receives them; just

as the former are the effects of God s love toward his

Church, so the latter, the special revelations, are the re-

478 CITY OF GOD

suits of the special love of God toward the particular soul.

He communicates them in order to instruct his chosen

ones and in order to raise them to the highest grade of

love and perfection. In this kind of revelations the spirit

of wisdom transcends through successive generations of

holy souls, making them successively prophets and

friends of God. Just as the efficient cause of the revela

tions is the love of God shown to some particular souls,

so also their final cause or object is the holiness, the

purity and the charity of these very souls; God chooses

this means of divine revelation and vision in order to gain

this end.

618. I do not therefore say here, that revelations and

visions are the indispensable and necessary means for the

making of the saints and the perfect; many are such by

other means, irrespective of these benefits. But, even

supposing this truth, that the concession or denial of these

particular gifts depends solely upon the divine will, it is

nevertheless also a fact that on our part and on the part

of God there may be certain reasons of propriety which

induce God to communicate them more frequently to his

servants. The first among several is, that the most proper

and convenient means of rising to eternal things, entering

into them, becoming spiritualized, and arriving at the per

fect union of the soul with the highest Good, is the super

natural light concerning the mysteries and secrets of the

Most High, which comes from revelation and vision

granted to it in solitude and in its excesses of mind. For

this purpose the Lord himself invites the soul with many

promises and caresses, as is ofttimes shown in holy Scrip

ture and especially in the Canticles of Solomon.

619. The second of these reasons of propriety concerns

the Lord : for love is impatient to communicate its favors

and its mysteries to the beloved and to the friend. "I

THE CONCEPTION 479

will not now call you servants, nor treat you as servants,"

our Lord, the Master of truth said to the Apostles, "for

I have manifested to you the secrets of my Father,"

(John 15, 15). And Moses says of himself, that God

spoke to him as a friend with a friend (Exodus 23, 11).

The holy Ancestors, Patriarchs and Prophets, received

from the Holy Ghost not only general revelations, but

many other private and particular ones, and these were

tokens of the love in which God held them, as is seen from

the petition of Moses to allow him to see the face of God.

(Exod. 23, 13). The same is shown by the names, which

the Almighty applies to the chosen soul in calling it

spouse, friend, dove, sister, perfect, beloved, beautiful,

etc. (Cant. 4, 8, 9; 2, 10; 1, 14 et passim). All these

titles, though betokening much of the force of divine love

and its effects, yet fall far short of that which the supreme

King operates in those whom He wishes thus to honor;

for the Lord is mighty to do all that He desires ; and He

alone knows how to desire as a Spouse, as a Friend, as a

Father, as the highest and infinite Good, without limit or

measure.

620. The truth loses nothing of its force by its not

being intelligible to carnal wisdom : nor by the deceptions

of carnal prudence, through which some souls have been

led into false visions and revelations forged by the devil

in the garb of light. This deception has been more fre

quent in women on account of their ignorance and their

passions; however, it fell also upon many men, who

sought to appear virtuous and wise. In all of them it

has arisen from an evil root. I do not speak of those

who with diabolical hypocrisy have feigned false and

apparent revelations, visions and raptures; but I speak of

those who have been deceived by lying visions through

the agency of the devil, although such things do not

480 CITY OF GOD

happen without sin in consenting thereto. Of the former

it can be said, that they deceive, and of the latter, at least

in the beginning, that they are deceived; for the ancient

serpent, knowing them to be little mortified in their pas

sions and little practiced in the interior perception of the

divine things, implants into them with astute subtlety a

proud presumption, that they are much favored by God.

The devil robs them of their humble fear and inspires

them with vain curiosity to know high things by revela

tion, to be favored with visions, and to be distinguished

in such things above other men. Thereby they open the

gates for the entrance of satan, he fills them with deceit

ful and false illusions, far distant from divine truth, yet

having the appearance of truth in order to conceal his

poison and deceive the soul.

621. The way to avoid such dangerous deceit is to

live in humble fear and not to aspire to high things

(Rom. 11, 20) ; not to judge of our advance in the tri

bunal of our inclinations and not to trust to our own

prudence; to leave judgment to God, his ministers, and

well informed confessors, who will search into the inten

tion of our acts. Then it will soon become known,

whether the soul desires these favors as a means of vir

tue and perfection or in order to obtain honor among

men. The most secure path will always be not to desire

them, and always to fear the danger which at all times

is great and more so in the first beginnings. For the

sensible sweetness of devotion, even when it comes from

the Lord and when it is not an imposture of the devil, is

not given because the soul is already capable of the solid

food of his greater favors and secrets ; but it is given as

the food of the little ones, in order to draw them away

with greater earnestness from the faults and induce them

to greater self-denial in sensible things; not at all in

THE CONCEPTION 481

order to make them imagine that they are advanced in

virtue. Even raptures, which spring from admiration,

suppose ignorance rather than special love. As soon as

our love becomes ecstatic, fervent, yearning, quickened,

full of activity and inaccessible, impatient of any other

presence except that of its Beloved, and if besides all this,

it has a full command over all the affections of the heart ;

then the soul begins to be rightly disposed to receive the

light of mysterious revelations and of divine visions ; and

so much the better will it be disposed toward receiving

them, the more it esteems itself unworthy of the recep

tion of even much smaller favors. Wise men will not be

surprised that women have been so much favored in

these gifts ; for besides being more fervent in their love,

God also favors them for being the weakest among crea

tures and so much the more appropriate witnesses of his

power. Women also are more wanting in the acquired

science of theology than learned men, except when the

Most High infuses that science in order to illumine their

weak and uninformed judgment.

622. Having established these principles, we must

acknowledge that in most holy Mary, even if there were

no other special reasons, the revelations and visions of

the Most High were more exalted, more wonderful, more

frequent, and more divine than those of all the rest of

saints. These favors, just like all the gifts, must be

measured by her dignity, her holiness, purity, and also by

the love, which her Son and the blessed Trinity cherished

towards Her, who was the Mother of the Son, the

Daughter of the Father, and the Spouse of the Holy

Ghost. In proportion to the greatness of these preroga

tives were also the influxes of the Divinity : Christ and his

Mother being infinitely more beloved than all the rest of

the angels and men. The divine visions enjoyed by our

482 CITY OF GOD

sovereign Queen can be divided into five grades or kinds,

and I will describe each one of them, as far as has been

revealed to me.

MOST HOLY MARY S CI^AR VISION OF TH DIVINITY.

623. The highest and most excellent of all her visions

were those of the beatific vision of the divine Essence, for

in her state of pilgrimage She many times enjoyed the

unveiled vision of the Divinity. I shall mention all these

visions in the course of this history according to the time

and occasion in which She enjoyed this supreme privilege

of a creature. Some doctors are in doubt, whether the

other saints have reached this state of seeing the God

head clearly and intuitively while yet in mortal flesh ; but

whatever may be their uncertainty about such visions in

regard to other saints, no such doubt can be entertained in

regard to the Queen of heaven, and it would be an injury

to Her, if we were to measure her favors with the com

mon measure of the saints. Many more favors and graces

than were even possible in them actually were consummat

ed in the Mother of grace, and it is at least possible that

beatific vision can take place in men yet in their pilgrim

age, whatever may be the mode in which this happens.

The first requisite of a soul, which is to see God face to

face, is a degree of sanctifying grace most exalted and

far above the ordinary. Now the degree of sanctifying

grace, which Mary reached from the first moment of her

existence, was superabundant and of such perfection, that

it exceeded that of the highest seraphim. In addition to

sanctifying grace, there must be great purity of all the

faculties, without a shadow of guilt or the least inclina

tion to sin. Just as a vessel, which has contained any im

pure liquid and which is to be filled with another pure

substance, must be cleansed, washed and purified until not

THE CONCEPTION 483

a taste or odor of the former remains so as not to infect

the new substance : so all traces of sin (and much more of

actual sin) contaminate and infect the soul. And because

all these effects make the soul unfit for divine bounty, it

must be prepared before it can be united with God by the

intuitive vision and beautifying love. It must be cleansed

and purified, so that not a vestige of the odor, or the taste

of sin remains, nor any traces of vicious habits or in

clinations consequent thereon. This applies not only to

the effects and stains of mortal, but also of venial sin, all

of which cause in the soul a special turpitude, like to that,

which, according to our way of understanding such

things, ensues, when a foul breath covers and obscures the

clearness of crystal : all its brightness and purity must first

be restored to the soul before it can see God face to face.

624. Moreover, besides this purity which is as it were

the negative cleansing of the nature of him who is to en

joy the vision of God, it is necessary to cauterize the in

fection of original sin, so that it is entirely extinct and

neutralized, as if it had never existed in the creature.

Thus all trace or inward cause inclining it to any sin or

imperfection must first be done away with, and the entire

free will must, as it were, be made incapable of every

thing, which in any way is opposed to highest sanctity and

goodness. Hence, on account of what I shall mention af

terward, it will be easily understood, how difficult it is for

the soul to attain the necessary condition for the clear

vision of God in mortal flesh ; and that it can be conceded

to the creatures only with great circumspection, for most

important reasons, and after great preparation. Accord

ing to my understanding there are two kind of incon

gruities and divergencies of the sinful creature in regard

to the divine nature. The first consists in this, that God

is invisible, infinite, a pure and simple act, while man is

484 CITY OF GOD

a corporeal, earthly, corruptible and coarse substance. The

other incongruity is caused by sin, which is immensely

distant from the divine goodness, and this entails a

greater divergence and alienation than the first. But

both of them must be done away with before such ex

tremes can be united, and before the creatures can rest in

this supreme manner in the Deity and before it can as

similate itself with God so as to see and enjoy Him as He

is (I John 3, 2).

625. All the requisites of immaculate purity and

transparency, excluding all sin and imperfection, were

possessed by the Queen of heaven in a much higher de

gree than even by the angels ; for She was touched neither

by original nor by actual sin, nor by any of their conse

quences. In this regard divine grace acted more power

fully in Her, than was merited by the impeccable nature

of the angels, and in Mary there was no disproportion

nor any obstacle of sin, which could retard the vision of

God. On the other hand, besides being immaculate, the

grace given to Her in the first instance exceeded that of

the angels and saints, and Her merits were in proportion

to that grace. By her first act She merited more than

all the others, even by their most perfect and consummate

acts, which they have performed in order to reach beatific

vision. Therefore, if it is just, that in the other saints

the reward of glory merited by them be deferred until

the end of their mortal life: it does not seem against

justice, that this law was not followed so strictly in re

gard to most holy Mary and that the most high Ruler

should and really did proceed differently with Her dur

ing Her mortal existence. The most blessed Trinity

would not suffer such a long delay in regard to Her, and

manifested Itself to Her many times : since She merited it

above all the angels, seraphim and saints, who, having

THE CONCEPTION

485

less grace and merits, are enjoying the supreme beati

tude. Moreover, there was another reason why the

Divinity should manifest Itself clearly to Her: namely,

since She was elected to be the Mother of God, it was ap

propriate, that She should know by fruition and experi

ence the treasure of the infinite Deity and see Him face to

face as her God, whom having enjoyed, She was to clothe

in mortal flesh and bear about in her virginal womb, and

whom She was afterwards to treat as her Son and as her

God.

626. Even with all the aforesaid purity and sinlessness

and with the addition of sanctifying grace, the soul is not

yet worthy or capable of the beatific vision, since still

other dispositions and divine operations are required.

With these the Queen of heaven was furnished whenever

She enjoyed this vision and hence they are much more

necessary to any other soul, that is to be thus favored in

mortal flesh. After the soul has reached the state of

purity and sanctification above described, the Lord adds

a finishing touch as of a most spiritual fire, which refines

and chases it as fire does the gold, or as Isaias was puri

fied by the seraphim (Isaias 6,7). It has two effects in

the soul: first it spiritualizes and separates in it (accord

ing to our mode of understanding) the dross and earthli-

ness connected with its present existence and its union

with the bodily matter. Secondly it fills the soul with

a new light, which scatters, I do not know what obscurity

and darkness, just as the light of the morning scatters the

darkness of night. This light takes possession, leaves

the soul clarified and replenished with new splendors of

a divine fire, producing still other effects in the soul. For

if it is guilty or has been guilty of any sins, the soul de

plores these sins with incomparable sorrow and contrition,

with a sorrow, that cannot be equaled by any other human

486 CITY OF GOD

sorrow, for all are very little in comparison with it. At

the same time it feels another effect of this light : it purges

the understanding of all the images impressed upon it by

the sensible and visible things of earth. For all impres

sions and images, acquired by the senses distort the in

tellectual vision and serve only as a hindrance to the clear

vision of the supreme spiritual essence of God. There

fore it is necessary to clear and evacuate from the facul

ties all these earthly idols and images. Not only is this

necessary, in order that the soul may see God clearly and

intuitively, but equally so, in order to see Him

abstractively.

627. In the soui of our most pure Queen, there was no

fault to deplore, no after-effects of the sensible operations,

no dependence upon the body, and therefore these illumi

nations and purifications immediately wrought the other

effects, beginning to elevate her nature to a condition not

so far removed from the ultimate supreme End. In ad

dition to this they caused in this most pure soul new senti

ments and movements of humility and knowledge of the

nothingness of the creature in comparison with the Crea

tor and his blessings. Thus her inflamed heart was in

cited to many other heroic acts of virtue. Like effects

are produced in a corresponding degree in other souls,

who are to be prepared for the visions of the Deity.

628. Our curtailed insight might well hold that the

foregoing preparations are sufficient for being admitted

to the beatific vision ; but they are not : still another qual

ity is wanting, a divine emanation or light, the light of

glory. This new cleansing, though it is similar in nature

to those already spoken of, is altogether different from

them in its effects. For it raises the soul to a very high and

serene state, where, in greatest tranquillity, it enjoys the

sweetest peace, which is not felt in connection with the

THE CONCEPTION 487

first mentioned purifications, For in those the pain and

bitterness of sin is still felt, if the soul was guilty of any,

and if not, then there remains still the earthly weight of

our lower nature. These effects are not compatible with

the close approach and assimilation to the supreme bless

edness. It seems to me that the first purifications serve to

mortify, and that, which I am now referring to, serves to

revivify and heal nature. God proceeds in these things

like the painter, who first delineates the image, then ap

plies the ground colors, and at last puts on the finishing

touches, so that the picture comes to light well defined.

629. Over and above all these purifications, prepara

tions and their admirable effects, God adds still a last

one, which is the light of glory by which the soul raises

itself to attain and enjoy the beatific vision of God. In

this light the Godhead manifests Itself, for without this

light God cannot be seen by any creature. Since the

natural powers of the creature cannot attain to this light

and these preparations, therefore it is impossible to see

God by the natural faculties alone, for all this far exceeds

the forces of nature.

630. With all this beauty and adornment the Spouse

of the Holy Ghost, the Daughter of the Father, and the

Mother of the Son, was furnished for Her entrance into

the chamber of the Divinity in order to enjoy from time

to time the beatific vision and intuitive fruition. And as

these favors were given to Her according to the measure

of her dignity and grace, therefore it is impossible to en

compass the godlike proportions of her enlightenment by

the reasoning powers, or the thoughts of a creature, and

much less of an ignorant woman. Still less can the joys

of her soul be estimated or calculated, when it was thus

exalted above all that is most supreme in the highest

seraphim and saints. If in regard to all the just, even

488 CITY OF GOD

the lowest of those who enjoy God, it is infallibly true,

that neither eye has seen, nor ears heard, nor mind con

ceived, what God has prepared for his elect (I Cor. 2,9),

what must be the enjoyment of the greater saints? And

if the same Apostle who says this confesses that he cannot

repeat, what he had heard (II Cor. 12, 4), what shall we,

in our narrow limitation of powers, be able to say of the

Saint of the saints, the Mother of Him, who is the glory

of the saints? Next to the Soul of her most holy Son,

who was man and true God, She was the one, who knew

and saw the greatest mysteries and sacraments in those in

finite and hidden immensities of the Divinity. To Her

more than to all the blessed in their entirety were thrown

open the infinite treasures, the expanding vastnesses of

that inaccessible Being, unlimited by any beginning or

end. She, as the City of God, was inundated by the

ecstatic torrents of the supreme Being, overwhelming

Her with the impetuous waves of wisdom and grace,

spiritualizing and impregnating Her with the spirit of the

Divinity.

ABSTRACTIVE VISIONS OF THE) DIVINITY ENJOYHD BY MOST

HOIyY MARY.

631. The second kind of divine visions enjoyed by the

Queen of heaven was the abstractive, which is very dif

ferent and much inferior to the intuitive; it was more

frequent in Her, though not daily or continual. This

kind of knowledge or vision is communicated by the Most

High without unveiling Himself directly to the created

mind, but through a certain veil or species, by means of

which He becomes manifest. Because of this intervening

medium between the faculty and its object, this kind of

vision is very much inferior to the clear and intuitive

vision. It does not involve the real presence, though it

THE CONCEPTION 489

presupposes it intellectually in an inferior way. Although

the creature knows that it is nigh to the Divinity and

discovers the attributes, perfections and mysteries, which

as in a mirror of the will, God wishes to show and mani

fest, yet it does not feel and is not aware of his presence

so as to enjoy Him with complete satiety.

632. Nevertheless this is a great, rare and, next to the

clear vision, a more excellent favor than any other. Al

though it does not require the light of glory, but only the

light appropriate to the species themselves, and not even

the ultimate disposition and purification proper to the

light of glory; yet all the other preparations antecedent

to the intuitive vision, must go before it ; for by them the

soul enters into the antechambers of the house of the

eternal God and Lord (Psalm 45, 5). The effects of this

kind of vision are admirable, for besides the exalted state

which it presupposes in the soul and which raises it above

itself (Thren. 3, 28), it inebriates the soul (Psalm 35, 9)

with an ineffable and an inexplicable delight and sweet

ness, inflaming it with divine love, transforming it and

causing a forget fulness of and an aversion toward all

earthliness and toward itself, so that already the soul does

not any more live in itself, but in Christ and Christ in it

(Gal. 2, 20). Besides all this there remains after this

vision in the soul a light, which, if not lost by negligence

and carelessness, or by some sin, will always accompany it

to the highest pinnacle of perfection, teaching it the most

secure paths to eternity and resembling the perpetual fire

of the sanctuary (Lev. 6, 12) or the beaconlight of the

citadel of God (Apoc. 22, 5).

633. These and other effects were caused in our sover

eign Queen by abstractive vision and to such an eminent

degree, that I cannot give an explanation of my concept

in words. But some idea will be obtained, if we consider

33

490 CITY OF GOD

the condition of that most pure soul, in which there was

not the least hindrance, either of lukewarmness, nor of

the least defect, no indolence or forgetfulness, no negli

gence or ignorance, nor the least inattention ; but in which

on the contrary was the fullness of grace and of ardent

love, unfailing diligence, perpetual and unceasing praise

of the Creator, the utmost solicitude and readiness to give

Him glory, and a preparation which allowed the powerful

hand of God to operate without opposition or hindrance

whatever. She was favored with this kind of blessed

vision in the first moment of her Conception, as I have

already related before (Supra, No. 228, 236, 311, 382,

388; infra, 731, 739; Part II 6-101; Part II 537), and

will relate afterwards many times in the course of her

most holy life.

INTELLECTUAL VISIONS AND REVELATIONS OF THE MOST

HOLY MARY.

634. The third kind of divine visions and revelations

enjoyed by the most holy Mary were the intellectual ones.

Although abstractive visions or the visions of the Divinity

may be called intellectual visions, yet for two reasons I

have mentioned them especially and placed them in a high

er order. First, because the object of the abstractive visions

is altogether supreme among intellectual things, whereas

the range of these more ordinary intellectual visions ex

tends to many various objects, since they include the ma

terial and the spiritual things, and the entire field of in

tellectual truths and mysteries. The second reason is, be

cause the abstractive visions of the divine Essence are

brought about by the most exalted and supernaturally in

fused species or images of the being of God ; whereas the

common revelations and the intellectual visions take place

in diverse ways ; sometimes the intellectual images of the

THE CONCEPTION 491

objects revealed are all infused; at other times not neces

sarily all the subject-matter of the revelations is infused;

because then the same species or images, which the imag

ination or phantasy already possesses are sufficient for the

revelation. For the understanding, endowed with a new

light and a supernatural power, can apprehend the mys

teries of God from imaginary images, as happened with

Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 40, 41), and with Daniel in Baby

lon (Dan. 1, 24). This kind of revelation was given to

David; and next to the knowledge of the Essence of the

Deity, it is the most noble and secure. For neither the

demons nor the angels can infuse this supernatural light

into the understanding, since they can only cause images

and phantasies in the imagination.

635. This form of revelation was common among the

holy Prophets of the old and the new Testaments; for

the light of perfect prophecy which they possessed, ter

minated in the understanding of some hidden mystery;

and without this intelligence, or intellectual light, they

would not have been perfect prophets, nor would they

have spoken prophetically. Therefore, they that do or

say something prophetical, as for instance Caiphas and the

soldiers refusing to divide the garment of Christ our Lord

(John 11, 49; 19, 24), although they are urged to these

things by divine impulse, are not prophets in the perfect

sense; for they do not speak prophetically, that is with

divine intelligence and light. It is even true that the holy

Prophets, who are prophets in the real sense, and who call

themselves seers on account of the interior light by which

they see secret things, can perform some prophetic actions

without knowing all the mysteries included therein, or

even without knowing any of the mysteries ; but in such

cases they are not to be called prophets in the same sense,

as when they prophesy with a supernatural understanding

492 CITY OF GOD

of things. This kind of revelation is of many different

grades, which cannot here be explained ; and although the

Lord can communicate it irrespective of charity, of grace

and virtue; yet ordinarily it is accompanied by them, as

in the Prophets, Apostles and the just, and this happens

both when He manifests his secrets to them as friends,

and also when the intellectual visions or revelations are

given for the advantage and greater advancement of those

who receive them, as I have said above (No. 616) . There

fore these revelations demand a very excellent predispo

sition in those souls who are to be raised to them, and

ordinarily God does not communicate them, except when

the soul is in the state of quiet and peace, withdrawn from

the earthly things and well ordered in its faculties for the

workings of the divine light.

636. In the Queen of heaven these intelligences or rev

elations were vastly different from those which are proper

to the Saints and Prophets; for her Highness enjoyed

them continually, both in habit and in act, whenever She

was not enjoying other more exalted visions of the Divin

ity. Moreover the clearness and the extent of this intel

lectual light and all its effects were incomparably greater

in most holy Mary. For of the truths, mysteries and

sacraments of the Most High, She knew more than all the

holy Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, and more even than

all the angels combined; and She understood more pro

foundly and clearly, more unerringly and securely all that

She did know. By means of this intelligence She pene

trated to the very being of God and to his attributes as

manifested in the very smallest of his works and crea

tures. Not one of them existed in which She did not per

ceive the participation of the greatness of the Creator and

his divine foresight and providence. Most holy Mary

alone could in the fullest sense say of Herself that the

THE CONCEPTION 493

Lord had manifested to Her the uncertain and occult

things of his wisdom (Psalm 50, 8) as recorded by the

Prophet. It is impossible to describe the effects of this

intelligence in the sovereign Lady; this whole history

must serve in a manner to declare them. In other souls

they are of wonderful advantage and efficacy, for they

illumine in the highest manner the understanding, inflame

the will with incredible ardor, they undeceive, disentangle,

elevate and spiritualize the creature, and at the same time

they seem to lighten and subtilize even the gross and em-

burdened earthly body in holy emulation with the soul.

The Queen of heaven enjoyed in these visions also an

other privilege, of which, however, I will speak in the

following chapter.

IMAGINARY VISION OF MOST HOLY MARY, THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN.

637. In the fourth place must be mentioned the imag

inary visions, which are produced by sensible visions,

raised or set in motion in the imagination or phantasy.

They represent the object in a material or sensitive man

ner, in the same way as are represented those things we

see, hear, touch or taste. By means of this kind of vision

the Most High manifested to the Prophets of the old Tes

tament great mysteries and sacraments. Such happened

especially with Ezechiel, Daniel and Jeremias, and under

the influence of similar visions the evangelist saint John

wrote the Apocalypse. Since these visions partake so

much of the sensible and corporal element, they are much

inferior to the ones spoken of under the preceding head

ing. On this same account the demon can reproduce

them in appearance by exciting phantasms of the imagi

nation; he does not, however, reproduce them in reality,

494 CITY OF GOD

being the father of lies. Therefore it is necessary to be

ware of these kind of visions and to examine them in

the light of the teachings of the saints; for if the demon

perceives any cupidity toward them in the soul during

prayer or devotions, and if God permits, he can easily

work deception. Even some saints, though dreading the

dangers of such visions, were nevertheless entangled in

them by satan in his assumed light, as is related in their

lives for our instruction and warning.

638. The one in whom these imaginary visions and

revelations were without any danger and entirely secure

and divine, was most holy Mary, whose interior light

could not be obscured or invaded by the astuteness of the

serpent. Our Queen was favored with many such visions,

for of this kind were those which manifested to Her many

of the actions of her most holy Son while absent, as we

shall see in the sequence of her life (Part II, Chap. 23, 24,

25, Book V). She also perceived in imaginary visions

many creatures and mysteries, whenever the Most High

so dispensed it according to his will and providence. And

since this and many benefits received by the sovereign

Princess of heaven were ordained for most high ends,

not only for the advancement of her own sanctity, purity

and merits, but also for the advantage of the Church, of

which this great Mother of grace was to be a Teacher and

a Cooperatrix in Redemption, the effects of these visions

and her understanding of them were admirable and they

were invariably accompanied by incomparable proofs of

the glory of God, and of new and increasing gifts and

graces in the soul of most holy Mary. Of the effects of

these visions in other creatures I will speak immediately

below ; for of these and the next kind of visions, the same

can be said as far as their effects in other souls are con

cerned.

THE CONCEPTION

495

CORPOREAL VISIONS OF DIVINE ORIGIN ENJOYED BY MOST

HOLY MARY.

639. The fifth and lowest order of visions and revela

tions are those which are perceived by the corporeal and

exterior senses, and that is the reason why they are called

corporeal, although they can be brought about in two dif

ferent ways. The one kind are truly and properly called

corporeal visions, when in a visible and quantitative body

some supernatural being appears to the sight or touch, be

it God, a saint, or the demon, or a soul and the like ; such

body being formed for that very purpose by the ministry

and power of good or of bad angels from the ether or

from the phantasms, which, though it is no true or natural

body of the thing represented by it, yet is truly a quanti

tative body constructed from the ether in external dimen

sions. The other kind of corporeal visions are such in an

improper sense, rather an illusion of the sense of sight ; for

they are only an image of the object, its coloring, etc.,

which an angel can make visible by an alteration of the

intervening air. The one that sees it thinks that he looks

upon a real body actually present, though there is no such

body, but only an empty image, by which the senses are

imperceptibly fascinated. This kind of illusory visions

of the senses is not proper to the good angels nor to

divine revelation, although they are possible to God and

the angels ; such might have been the voice which Samuel

heard. But they are a favorite ruse of the demon, on

account of their deceptiveness, especially in regard to

the sight. Therefore, and because the Queen never had

this kind of visions, I will speak only of the truly cor

poreal visions, such as She really enjoyed.

640. In the holy Scriptures are many instances of cor

poreal visions granted to the saints and Patriarchs. Adam

496 CITY OF GOD

saw God represented in the form of an angel (Gen. 3, 8) ;

Abraham saw three angels (Gen. 17, 1) ; Moses saw a

bush, (Exod. 3, 2) and many times the Lord himself.

Likewise others, who were sinners, have had corporeal or

imaginary visions: as for instance Cain (Gen. 4, 9),

Baltassar (Dan. 5, 5), who saw the hand on the

wall: then imaginary images, as for instance Pharao

(Gen. 41, 2) in the vision of the cows; Nabucho-

donozor, that of the tree and the statue (Dan. 4,

12, 2, 1) and other recorded in the holy Scriptures.

These instances prove that in order to see corporeal and

imaginary visions sanctity is not required in the subject.

But it is true nevertheless, that they who obtain such an

imaginary or corporeal vision, without receiving there

from any light or intelligence, cannot be called Prophets ;

nor can they be said to receive a true revelation, but

only those who receive the necessary understanding of the

vision, as Daniel says (Dan. 10, 1). Thus Joseph and

Daniel were Prophets, not however Pharao, Baltassar,

Nabuchodonosor. Moreover those are the more important

revelation and visions, which are accompanied by a higher

intelligence, although, to judge from outward appear

ances, others may be called higher, namely, those which

represent God or the Mother of God, and the saints ac

cording to their station.

641. It is certain that in order to receive corporeal

visions it is necessary that the senses should be prepared.

The imaginary ones are often sent by God in sleep, as for

instance in the vision of Joseph, the husband of most holy

Mary (Matth. 1, 20), of the Magi Kings (2, 12) of

Pharao (Gen. 41, 2), etc. Others can be perceived while

the senses are in their full natural activity, this not being

repugnant. But the ordinary and co-natural manner of

receiving the corporeal as well as the intellectual visions,

is during some rapture or ecstasy of the external senses ;

THE CONCEPTION 497

for in such a state the interior faculties are more collected

and prepared for the perception of high and divine things.

Yet the exterior senses are apt to be a hindrance less to

the intellectual visions than to the imaginary ones, the

latter having 1 more affinity for exterior things than the

acts of the intellect. Therefore it often happens, when

ever the intellectual revelations are not infused species,

or when the affections do not suspend the action of the

senses, that most high intelligences of great and super

natural mysteries are conferred without the cessation of

the activity of the senses.

642. In the Queen of heaven this happened many

times and even frequently. For, though She was enrapt

ured during many of the beatific visions, (which in ordi

nary mortals is always required), and also during her in

tellectual and imaginary visions ; yet, even while She was

in the full use of her senses, She received higher revela

tions and intelligences than all the saints and Prophets in

their greatest ecstasies. Nor in any wise did her exterior

senses disturb her imaginary visions. For the great heart

of Mary, so full of wisdom, was not embarrassed

by the sentiments of admiration and love, which are wont

to take away the sensible activities of the other saints and

Prophets. This was true of her corporeal visions, as is

evident from the Annunciation of the message by the

archangel Gabriel (Luc. 1, 18), and although the Evan

gelists give no other instance in the course of her most

holy life, prudent and Catholic judgment cannot doubt

that they did happen at other times, for the Queen of the

heavens and of the angels was to be served by her vassals,

as we shall relate later on (No. 758) when we describe

the continuous service of her angelic guard, and of other

angels appearing in corporeal and visible form. It hap

pened also in another way, as we shall see in the following

chapter.

498 CITY OF GOD

643. Other souls must be very circumspect and care

ful in regard to these corporeal visions, since they are

subject to dangerous deceptions and illusions coming from

the ancient serpent Those who never seek them avoid a

great part of this danger. If the soul is free from such de

sire and from other disorderly affections, and if then any

corporeal or imaginary visions should happen, it must

be very cautious before performing and executing that,

which is enjoined by those visions : for it is a very bad

sign and savoring of the devil s influence, if, without any

deliberation or counsel, it immediately believes and obeys ;

since the good angels, who are our teachers in matters of

obedience, truth, prudence and holiness, do not urge such

a course of action. There are also other indications and

signs, generally accompanying the causes and the effects

of such visions, which will securely guide souls as to their

truthfulness or their falsity. But I will not enter into

these matters, in order not to be led away from my pur

pose; and besides, I submit myself in these things to the

doctors and teachers of the spiritual life.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

644. My daughter, in the enlightenment, which thou

hast received in this chapter, thou hast a certain rule of

action in regard to the visions and revelations of the Lord,

and it inculcates two precautions. The one consists in

thy subjecting these relations to the examination and the

judgment of thy confessors and superiors, asking the

Most High with a lively faith, that He give them light to

understand his divine will and truth to instruct thee fully

therein. The other consists in questioning thy own heart

and observing the effects of these revelations and visions,

prudently trying to assure thyself against any error. For

the divine influence, which accompanies them, will urge

and draw thee on, inflaming thy heart to chaste love and

THE CONCEPTION

499

reverence of God to acknowledgment of thy littleness, to

abhorrence of the earthly vanities, to desire of being de

spised by creatures, to joyful suffering, to love of the cross

and an earnest and generous acceptation of it; it will

move thee to seek the last place, to love those that perse

cute thee, to fear and abhor sin, even the slightest, to as

pire to the purest, the most perfect and refined in virtue,

to deny thyself thy own inclinations, and to unite thyself

to the highest and truest good. When He thus teaches

thee the most holy and perfect things of the Christian law

and excites thee to imitate Him and me, then thou wilt

have infallible signs of divine truth revealed to thee by the

Most High in these visions.

645. And in order that thou, dearest, mayest execute

this doctrine, which thou hast received through the kind

ness of the Most High, do not ever forget it, and do not

lose sight of the blessing of having been instructed by

Him in these things with so much loving caresses; re

nounce all human esteem and consolation, all the delight

and pleasure of the world. All that thy earthly inclina

tions demand, refuse to thyself, although it may be small

and licit in itself ; turn thy back on all sensible things, seek

ing only to love and to suffer. This is the science and

divine philosophy taught thee by the visits of the Most

High and in it thou wilt feel the force of the divine fire,

which should never through thy fault and thy negligence,

be allowed to become extinguished in thy bosom. Be alert,

dilate thy heart, gird thyself with fortitude in order to be

commissioned with great undertakings and be able to ac

complish them. Be constant in thy faith regarding these

admonitions, believing in them, esteeming them and writ

ing them in thy soul with an humble and loving affec

tion of thy heart, as being sent in faithful solicitude by

thy Spouse and transmitted to thee by me, thy Teacher

and Mistress.

CHAPTER XV.

DESCRIPTION OF ANOTHER KIND OF VISIONS AND COM

MUNICATIONS, WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY EN

JOYED WITH THE HOLY ANGELS OF HER GUARD.

646. Such is the force and efficacy of God s grace, and

of his love excited in the creature, that it can blot out in

it the very images of sin and the earthly nature of man,

(I Cor. 15, 49) and form in it a new being and celestial

image, whose conversation is in heaven (Philip 3, 20),

understanding, loving and operating not any more as a

creature of earth, but as a being celestial and divine ; for,

the force of love ravishes the heart and soul by which the

creature lives, sacrificing and transforming them to that,

which it loves. This Christian truth, believed by all, un

derstood by the learned, and experienced by the saints,

must be conceived as fulfilled in our great Queen and Lady

in so privileged a manner, that neither by the example of

what was experienced by the saints, nor by the intellect of

the angels, can it ever be comprehended or explained.

Most holy Mary as being the Mother of the Word, was

Mistress of all creation; but being a faithful representa

tion of her onlybegotten Son, She in imitation of Him

made so little use of creatures, of which She was Mistress,

that none ever used them less than She, for She excluded

all that was not absolutely necessary for the service of the

Most High and for the natural life of her most holy Son

and of Herself.

647. To this forgetfulness and withdrawal from all

500

THE CONCEPTION 501

earthly things corresponded her intercourse with heaven ;

this again was proportionate to her dignity of Mother of

God and Queen of heaven, all earthly intercourse being

thus transformed into the heavenly. It followed as a

natural consequence, that the Queen and Mistress of the

angels enjoyed singular privileges in regard to the atten

tion paid to Her by the heavenly courtiers, her vassals,

and She treated and conferred with them in a more ex

alted manner, than all the other human creatures, how

holy so ever they may be. In the twenty-third chapter of

the first book I have said something of the diverse ordi

nary visions in which the holy angels and seraphim, who

were destined and selected for her guard, manifested

themselves to our Queen and Mistress. And in the fore

going chapter I explained in general the manner and form

of the divine visions conceded to Her, having been careful

to keep in mind that in all their wide range and sphere

they were supremely exalted and divine in their nature,

their manner, and their effects upon her most holy soul.

648. In this chapter I will treat of another kind of

vision, more singular and privileged still, which the Most

High granted to most holy Mary and by which She com

municated with and visibly treated with the holy angels

of her guard and with the rest, who, in behalf of the Lord,

visited Her on diverse occasions. This mode of vision and

intercourse was of the same kind as that by which each

one of the supernal spirits knows the others as they are in

themselves, without any other image to move the intellect

than the very substance and nature of the angel thus

known. The superior angels illumine the inferior, mak

ing known to them the hidden mysteries which the Most

High reveals and manifests immediately to the higher

angels for transmission to the lowest ; for this manner of

communicating with them is befitting to the greatness and

502 CITY OF GOD

infinite majesty of the highest King and Governor of all

creation. From this it can easily be seen, that this most

orderly illumination and revelation is a favor which is

superadded to the essential glory of the holy angels. For

the essential glory they obtain immediately from the

Divinity, each one receiving the vision and fruition of

God according to the measure of his merits. One angel

cannot create essential happiness in another by illuminat

ing him or revealing to him a mystery ; for the one who

is illuminated would not thereby see God face to face,

without which he cannot be in beatitude or attain to his

last end.

649. But since the Object is infinite and is like a volun

tary mirror, there are infinite secrets and mysteries, (be

sides those which pertain to beatific knowledge), which

God can reveal to the saints and which He reveals to them

especially in the government of his Church in the world ;

in these revelations He follows the course, which I am

explaining. As these revelations are outside of the es

sential glory, the want of these revelations cannot be

called ignorance in the angels or a privation of knowl

edge ; but it is called nescience or negation ; while revela

tion is called illumination, or a purgation or purification of

that nescience. According to our mode of understanding it

might be compared to the process which takes place,

when the rays of the sun pass through many crystals in

succession, making all partake of the same light from the

first to the last, and reaching first those that are more

immediately neighboring to the light. Only one difference

must be noted in this comparison; that the prisms or

crystals are entirely passive in this process in respect to

the rays, without having any more activity than that given

by the sun, which illumines all by one operation ; but the

holy angels are passive in receiving the enlightenment and

THE CONCEPTION 503

active in communicating it to their inferiors; and more

over they communicate their light with praise, admiration

and love, all derived from the supreme Sun of justice, the

eternal and immutable God.

650. Into this admirable and divine order of revelation

the Most High introduced most holy Mary, so that She

might enjoy these privileges, which the courtiers of heaven

possessed as becoming their nature. For this purpose He

appointed the seraphim, whom I have mentioned in the

fourteenth chapter of the first book, because they were

supreme and nearest to the Divinity ; also other angels of

Mary s guard performed the same office, whenever, ac

cording to the divine will, it seemed befitting and neces

sary. The Queen of angels and men knew all these angels

and others as they are in themselves, without dependence

upon the senses or the phantasy, and without any hin

drance from the mortal or earthly body. Through this

vision and knowledge the seraphim and other angels of

the Lord illuminated and purified Her, revealing to their

Queen many mysteries, which for that very purpose they

had learned from the Most High. And although this kind

of illumination and intellectual vision was not continual

in most holy Mary ; it was very frequent, especially when,

in order to give Her opportunity for more merits and

divine movements of love, the Lord hid or absented Him

self from Her, as shall be described afterwards (Infr.

725, Part II 719, 720). On such occasions He made use

of the mediation of the angels, allowing their enlighten

ment to proceed in its order until it was communicated to

their Queen.

651. This mode of illumination did not derogate from

the dignity of the Mother of God and of the Mistress of

the angels ; for in the conferring of these benefits, the

mode of their participation was not to be determined by

504 CITY OF GOD

the dignity and sanctity of our sovereign Queen, since in

that She was superior to all the angelic orders ; but it was

determined by the present state and condition of her nature

in which She was inferior; for She was yet a wayfarer

and of a human, bodily and mortal nature. By these

illuminations She was to be raised to the angelic opera

tion and estate though yet living in mortal flesh and sub

ject to the natural use of the senses, and it was a great

privilege, yet entirely proper to her sanctity and dignity. I

believe that the hand of the Most High has extended this

favor to other souls in mortal life, although not so fre

quently as to his most holy Mother, nor with such a

plenitude and under such exalted conditions as in Her.

If many doctors (not without rood reason) conceded that

saint Paul, Moses, and other saints have enjoyed beatific

vision, it is credible, that other earthly wayfarers have

shared this kind of knowledge of the angelic nature ; for

this favor is no more than to see intuitively the angelic

substance. In regard to clearness, this vision corresponds

to the one which I have first mentioned in the foregoing

chapter, and in regard to the intellectual qualities it cor

responds to the third mentioned in the same place, al

though it does not proceed by means of imprinted images.

652. The truth is, this privilege is not ordinary or com

mon but very rare and extraordinary; and therefore it

demands in the soul a great preparation and purity of

conscience. It is incompatible with earthly affections,

voluntary imperfections, or any leaning toward sin : for

in order that the soul may enter into the angelic order

it must lead a life more angelic than human ; since if this

supernal assimilation and sympathy is wanting, the union

of such extremes would imply a monstrous dispropor

tion. With the divine grace, however, the creature (al

though yet in earthly and corruptible body) can deny it-

THE CONCEPTION 505

self all that is demanded by its passions and inclinations,

die to all visible things, eject from its memory all images

of them, and live more in the spirit than in the flesh. And

when it arrives at the enjoyment of true peace, tranquillity

and quiet of spirit, which cause in it a sweet and loving

serenity in the possession of the highest Good, then it is

less incapable of being raised to the vision of the angelic

spirits by intuitive clearness, of receiving the divine revela

tions, which they communicate to each other, and of ex

periencing the admirable effects of this kind of vision.

653. If those which our sovereign Queen received,

correspond to her purity and love, their value cannot be

estimated by men. The light communicated to Her in

these visions of the seraphim is beyond human compar

ison ; for to a certain extent the image of the Divinity is

flashed from them, as from most pure spiritual mirrors,

in which most holy Mary perceived it in all its infinite at

tributes and perfections. Also the glory, which the

seraphim themselves enjoyed, was manifested to Her in

an admirable manner by some of its effects; for as She

saw intuitively the essence of the angels, She knew much

of its secrets. By the insight into these things She was

entirely inflamed and enkindled with divine love and

many times wrapt in wonderful ecstasy. Hence in union

with the seraphim and the angels She broke forth in can

ticles of praise, celebrating the incomparable glory of the

Divinity, so that She excited the admiration of the heaven

ly spirits themselves. For though She was enlightened by

them as regards the intellect, yet by her own acts of the

will She left them far behind, and with a much greater

force of love did She quickly ascend and arrive at union

with the ultimate and the highest Good, whence She im

mediately received new impulses of the torrent of the

Divinity (Psalm 35, 9) by which She was inundated. And

34

506 CITY OF GOD

if the Seraphim had not been enjoying the presence of

the infinite Object, which was the beginning and the

end of their beatific love, they might well have been the

pupils of their most holy Queen in divine love, just as

She was theirs in regard to the illumination of the mind

derived from them.

654. Next to the immediate vision of the spiritual and

angelic substance, the more inferior intellectual vision of

the same by infused species is more common, as we said

also of the abstractive vision of the Divinity. This kind

of vision the Queen of heaven enjoyed sometimes, but it

was not so common with Her as the one mentioned ; for

though in other just souls the privilege of seeing the angels

and saints by means of intellectual images is very rare and

precious, yet in the Queen of angels it was not necessary,

because She had a more exalted intercourse and knowl

edge of them. She, therefore, enjoyed this inferior kind of

visions only when the Lord ordained that the angels

should hide themselves and when the more exalted com

munion with them was to be interrupted for her greater

merit and practice in virtue. In such time, She saw them

by intellectual or imaginary species, as mentioned in the

foregoing chapter. Divine effects are produced in other

souls by these visions of angels through intellectual

images; for these celestial beings become known to the

mind in their quality as executors and ambassadors of the

supreme King, and with them the soul holds sweet

colloquy concerning the Lord, and concerning all celestial

and heavenly things. The whole soul is illumined, taught,

directed and governed, led on and urged onward in its

ascent to the perfect union of divine love, and in its

efforts to practice that which is the most consummate,

refined and holy in spiritual life.

THE CONCEPTION 507

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

655. Admirable, my daughter, is the love, the fidelity

and the solicitude with which the angelic spirits assist

mortals in their necessities ; and most horrible is the for-

getfulness, ingratitude and grossness on the part of men in

failing to acknowledge this debt. In the bosom of the

Most High, whose face they see (Matth. 8, 10) in beatific

clearness, these heavenly spirits perceive the infinite pa

ternal love of the Father in heaven for earthly men, and

therefore they appreciate and estimate worthily the blood

of the Lamb, by which men were bought and rescued,

and they know the value of the souls thus purchased with

the treasures of the Divinity. Thence arises their watch

fulness and attention in securing the interests of the souls,

which, on account of the value set upon them by the Most

High, have been given into their charge. I wish thee

to understand well, how by the ministry of these angels,

mortals would receive great enlightenment, and incom

parable favors from the Lord, if only they did not hinder

them by their sins and abominations, and by their oblivion

of this inestimable blessing. But as they block up the

way, which God in his ineffable Providence has opened up

for conducting them to eternal felicity, the greater part of

them damn themselves, whereas, with the protection of

the angels and with a proper estimate of his blessing,

they could save themselves.

656. O my dearest daughter, since many men are so

indifferent in attending to the paternal works of my Son

and Lord, I seek in thee a special gratitude for this bless

ing. Since He has dealt with thee liberally in his appoint

ment of angels for thy guard, be attentive to their inter

course and listen to their injunctions with reverence; give

thyself over to their guidance, honor them as the am-

508 CITY OF GOD

bassadors of the Most High, seek their favor, in order

that, having been cleansed of thy sins and freed from im

perfection, inflamed with divine love, thou mayest be

come so spiritualized, as to be fit to treat with them as

their companion in the participation of the divine illumina

tions. These He will not withhold from thee, if thou

on thy part dispose thyself in the manner I desire.

657. Since thou hast desired to know in the spirit of

obedience, what was the reason that the holy angels com

municated with me in so many kinds of visions, I will re

spond to thy desires, explaining more clearly, what thou

hast understood and written with the aid of divine light

The cause of this privilege was, on the part of the Most

High, his most liberal love, with which He pursued me,

and on my part, it was the state of pilgrimage, in which

I then found myself. For it was neither possible nor be

fitting, that this life should be altogether uniform in re

gard to the acts of virtue, by which the divine Wisdom

wished to raise me above all creation. As this pilgrimage

was to be performed by me as a human wayfarer, subject

to the use of the senses with all its various coincidences of

life in the practice of virtue, I sometimes acted altogether

in a spiritual manner and without the hindrance of the

senses, when the angels communicated with me as they do

among themselves ; at other times it was necessary for me

to suffer and to be afflicted in the lower part of my soul

or in my sensitive faculties ; at other times again I suffered

want, loneliness and interior dereliction. According to the

vicissitudes of these different effects and conditions I re

ceived the favors and the visits of the holy angels. Many

times then did I speak to them by intelligence, at others

in imaginary species, at others in corporeal and sensible

vision, according as my state and necessities demanded

and the Most High ordained.

THE CONCEPTION 509

658. By all these means my faculties and senses were

illumined and sanctified through the divine influences and

blessings, in\* order that I might experience in reality all

these operations and through all of them receive the in

flux of supernatural grace. But in regard to these favors,

my dearest daughter, I wish thee to remember, that al

though God acted with such magnificent mercy toward

me, He nevertheless followed his intention of conferring

them upon me so lavishly not only because of my dignity

as his Mother, but because He took into account my co

operation and disposition by which I concurred with his

graces on my part. I withdrew all my faculties and senses

from intercourse with created things, and rejecting all that

was merely sensible and created, turned to the highest

Good and centered all the powers of my will on his holy

love. In this disposition of my soul I sanctified all my

faculties by co-operation with these favors, visions and

illuminations, having evacuated them of all human and

terrestrial pleasures. So great was the reward of my

works in mortal flesh, that thou canst not understand it,

nor describe it with mortal tongue. The liberality of the

Highest at once makes an advance payment of the bless

ings in this life as a pledge of those He has reserved for

the eternal.

659. And although the powerful arm of God by these

means wished to prepare me worthily from my Conception

for the incarnation of the Word in my womb, and to

sanctify and form my faculties and senses for the inter

course and communication with my Son : nevertheless, if

other souls would dispose themselves in imitation of me,

living not according to the flesh but according to the spirit,

free and untouched by the earthly contagion, the Most

High would show his fidelity to these souls as well and

would not deny them his blessings and favors according

to the equity of his divine Providence.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE MOST HOLY

CHILD MARY IN THE TEMPLE; THE LORD PREPARES

HER FOR TROUBLES, AND JOACHIM, HER FATHER, DIES.

660. We left our sovereign Princess, most holy Mary,

passing the years of her childhood in the temple, while we

made a diversion to speak of the virtues, gifts and divine

revelations, which She, a child in years but an adult in

supreme wisdom, received from the hand of the Most

High and which She put to practical use in her life. The

most holy Child grew in age and grace before God and

men : but always in such a proportion, that zeal exceeded

the powers of nature, and that grace was measured not by

her age, but by the beneficent designs and high purposes of

the Divinity, whose impetuous currents sought their gath

ering-place and resting-place in this City of God. The

Most High continued his gifts and favors, renewing

every hour the marvels of his powerful arm, as if all its

activity were reserved solely for most holy Mary. And

so well did her Majesty correspond in her tender age to

this divine influx, that She filled the heart of the Lord

with a perfect and adequate complacency, and all the

angels of heaven with admiration. The celestial spirits

were witnesses of something like a wonderful strife and

competition between the Most High and the child Prin

cess : the divine power, in order to enrich Her, daily draw

ing from his treasures new and old blessings reserved

solely for the purest Mary, and She, as blessed earth, not

only causing the seed of the divine word to sprout and

510

THE CONCEPTION 511

God s gifts and favors to yield fruit a hundredfold, as

was the case with the saints ; but exciting the admiration

of all the heavens that She, a tender child, should exceed

in love, thanksgiving, in praise and all virtues, the highest

and most ardent seraphim, without losing time, place,

occasion, or any service, in which She did not practice

the highest possible perfection.

661. Even in the years of her tender infancy it was

noticeable that She understood the Scriptures and She

spent much time in reading them. As She was full of

wisdom She conferred in her heart what She knew from

the divine revelations made to her own self, with what is

revealed to all men in the holy Scriptures; and therefore

in her reading and private meditation She sent up contin

ual and fervent prayers and petitions for the Redemption

of the human race and for the incarnation of the Word.

She read more ordinarily from the prophets Isaias and

Jeremias and from the Psalms, because the mysteries of the

Messias and the law of grace are more plainly expressed

and repeated in these writings. In addition to what She

herself understood and comprehended, She extended her

knowledge by asking deep and wonderful questions, and

proposing difficulties to the angels, and many times She

spoke of the mystery of the humanity of the Word with

incomparable tenderness, lovingly wondering, that He

was to become an infant, that He was to be born of a

Virgin Mother, come to manhood, as other men, suffer,

and die for all the children of Adam.

662. In these conferences and questionings the holy

angels and seraphim gave their answers, illuminating

Her, confirming and inflaming Her virginal heart with

new ardors of divine love. But they always concealed

from Her her own most high dignity, although She

many times offered Herself in profoundest humility as

512 CITY OF GOD

a slave to the Lord and to the happy Mother, whom He

was to select for his birth into the world. At other times,

interrogating the holy angels, She spoke full of admira

tion : "My princes and lords, is it possible that the Creator

himself is to be born of a creature and shall call her

Mother? That the Omnipotent and the Infinite, He that

has made the heavens and is not encompassed by them,

should be enclosed in the womb of a woman, and should

clothe Himself with the limited human nature? He that

vested in beauty the elements, the heavens and the angels,

is to become subject to suffering? Is it possible, that

there should be a Woman endowed with our human

nature, who shall be so fortunate as to be able to call Him

Son, who has made Her out of nothing, and that She

should be called Mother by Him, who is uncreated and

who created the whole universe? O unheard of wonder!

If the Author himself would not have declared it, how

could earthly frailty conceive a thing so magnificent ? O

miracle of all his miracles! O happy eyes that shall

see it and happy times that shall merit it!" To these

sentiments and exclamations the angels would on their

part respond, explaining these divine sacraments, in as

far as they did not involve and affect her own Self.

663. Each of these high and ardent affections of

humility in the child Mary was as one of those locks of

the Spouse, or darts of love, with which She so wounded

the heart of God, that, if it had not been befitting to wait

until She had arrived at the competent and opportune age

for conceiving and bringing forth the incarnate Word, his

delight could not (according to our way of thinking)

contain itself and would have assumed humanity at once

in her womb. But although She was fit for this mystery

from her childhood, as far as merits and grace were con

cerned, He waited in order to conceal and. disguise more

THE CONCEPTION 513

effectively the sacraments of the Incarnation, and in order

to protect and safeguard the honor of his most holy

Mother by postponing her virginal parturition to the age

approaching that of married women. During this delay

the Lord (according to our concept) entertained Him

self with the affectionate discourses and love-canticles of

his Daughter and Spouse, who was soon to be the worthy

Mother of the divine Word. These canticles and hymns

of our Queen and Lady, as has been shown to me by

special enlightenment, were so many and so exalted, that,

if they were written, the holy Church would possess many

more than all the Prophets and Saints have left behind ;

for She expressed and comprehended all that they have

written, and over and above understood and expressed

much more than they ever could attain. But the Most

High has provided, that the Church militant should pos

sess abundantly sufficient matter of that kind in the writ

ings of the Apostles and Prophets ; while his revelations to

his most holy Mother, are preserved and written in his

divine mind, afterwards to be made known to the

triumphant Church in as far as shall serve for the acci

dental glory of the blessed.

664. Moreover the divine condescension yielded to the

holy wish of Mary our Mistress, that, for the increase of

her prudent humility and for an example of her great

virtues to mortals, the sacrament of the King should re

main concealed (Tob. 12, 7), and, whenever it became

necessary partly to reveal it for the service of his Majesty

and the welfare of the Church, the most holy Mary pro

ceeded with such heavenly prudence, that though She

was the Teacher, She never ceased to be the most humble

Disciple. In her infancy She consulted the angels and

followed their counsels; after the incarnate Word was

born, She looked upon the Onlybegotten as her Teacher

514 CITY OF GOD

and example in all her actions and at the close of his

mysterious life and after his Ascension into heaven, the

great Queen of the universe obeyed the Apostles, as we

shall relate. This is one of the reasons why, in the

Apocalypse, saint John the evangelist disguised the mys

teries of the Lady, beneath such enigmatic words, that

they can be interpreted and applied just as well to the

Church militant as to the triumphant.

665. The Most High resolved, that the plenitude of the

graces and virtues of the princess Mary should, as it were,

anticipate the time set for reaching the apex of her merits,

and that they should extend to the most difficult and

magnanimous undertakings, as much as possible, even in

her most tender years. In one of the visions in which the

Majesty of God manifested Itself to Her, He said: "My

Spouse and my Dove, I love thee with an infinite love and

I desire of thee what is most pleasing in my eyes and

the fulfillment of all my desires. Thou art not unaware,

my Daughter, of the hidden treasure, which is contained

in hardships and tribulations, so much dreaded by the

blind ignorance of mortals, nor is it unknown to thee

that my Onlybegotten, when He shall clothe Himself in

human nature, shall teach the way of the cross as well in

words as in deeds ; that He shall leave it as a heritage to

my chosen ones ; and that He shall choose it for Himself

and establish upon it the law of grace, making humility

and patience in suffering the foundation of the firmness

and excellence of that law. For this is best suited to the

present condition of human nature, and much more so,

after it has been depraved and evilly inclined by so many

sins. It is also conformable to my equity and providence,

that the mortals should attain and merit for themselves

the crown of glory through hardships and the cross, since

my onlybegotten Son is to merit it by the same means

THE CONCEPTION 515

in human flesh. Therefore, my Spouse, thou wilt under

stand, that, having chosen thee by my right hand for my

delight, and having enriched thee with my gifts, it would

not be just, that my grace should be idle in thy heart, nor

that thy love should want its fruit, nor that thou shouldst

be excluded from the inheritance of my elect. Hence I

wish that thou dispose thyself for tribulations and sor

rows for love of Me."

666. To this proposal of the Most High the invincible

Princess Mary answered with a more courageous heart

than all the saints and martyrs have ever shown in the

world ; and She said : "Lord God and my highest King, all

my faculties and their operations, and my being itself,

which I have received of thy infinite bounty, I hold in

readiness as a sacrifice to thy divine pleasure, wishing

that it be fulfilled entirely according to the desires of thy

infinite wisdom and goodness. And if Thou give me any

freedom of choice in regard to anything, I wish only to

chose suffering unto death in love for Thee; and I be

seech Thee, my only Good, that Thou make of thy slave

a sacrifice and holocaust of suffering acceptable in thy

eyes. I acknowledge, Lord, powerful and most liberal

God, my debt, and that no creature owes to Thee so great

a return, nor are all of them together so much indebted

to Thee as I alone, who am so entirely unequal to the

task of discharging this indebtedness to thy magnificence.

But if Thou wilt admit suffering as a sort of return, let

all the sorrows and tribulations of death come over me. I

will only ask for thy divine protection, and, prostrate be

fore the throne of thy infinite Majesty, I supplicate Thee

not to forsake me. Remember, O my Lord, the faithful

promises, which Thou hast made to our Ancestors and

Prophets, that Thou wilt favor the just, stand by those

who are in tribulation, console the afflicted, be a protection

516 CITY OF GOD

and a defense to them in their tribulations. True are thy

words, infallible and certain are thy promises ; the heavens

and the earth shall sooner fall to pieces than that thy

words should ever fail. The malice of the creature cannot

extinguish thy charity toward those that hope in thy

mercy ; fulfill in me thy holy and perfect will."

667. The Most High accepted this morning offering

from his tender Spouse and holy child Mary, and with

a most benign countenance He said to Her: "Beautiful

art thou in thy thoughts, Daughter of the Prince, my

Dove, my beloved and chosen One. I accept thy desires

as highly pleasing to me and I wish that as a beginning of

their fulfillment thou take notice, that according to my

divine ordainment, thy father Joachim must pass from

this mortal to the eternal and immortal life. His death

will happen shortly and He will pass in peace and shall

be placed among the saints in limbo, to await the Redemp

tion of the human race." This announcement did not

disturb the royal heart of the Princess of heaven, the

blessed Mary ; but as the love of children for their parents

is a just debt of nature, and as in this most holy Child this

love had attained its highest perfection, the natural sor

row for the loss of her father Joachim could not be want

ing, for She loved him with a holy love. The tender

and sweet Child therefore felt, that this sorrowful com

passion was perfectly compatible with the serenity of her

magnanimous heart, and, working in all things with

grandeur, giving nature and grace each their due, She

offered an ardent prayer for her father saint Joachim.

She besought the Lord to give him grace to depend upon

Him as his powerful and true God in his transit through

a blessed death ; and asked Him to defend Joachim against

the demon especially in that hour, preserve him for and

constitute him among the number of the elect, since dur-

THE CONCEPTION 517

ing his life He had confessed and magnified his admirable

and holy name. And in order to oblige his Majesty the

more, the most faithful Daughter offered to suffer all that

the Lord might ordain.

668. The Lord accepted this petition and consoled

the heavenly Child by assuring Her, that He would assist

her father as a most merciful and kind Rewarder of those

that love and serve Him, and that He would place him

among the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At the

same time He prepared Her anew for the acceptance and

endurance of troubles. Eight days before the death of the

patriarch Joachim the most holy Mary received another

notice from the Lord, advising Her of the day and hour

in which He was to die. His death took place only six

months after Her entrance into the temple. Having re

ceived this notice from the Lord, She requested the twelve

angels, mentioned by saint John in the Apocalypse, to

assist her father Joachim and to comfort and console Him

in his sickness, which they did. For the last hours of his

life She sent all the angels of her guard asking the Lord,

to make them visible to him for his greater consolation.

God conceded this favor and confirmed all the wishes of

his chosen and only One; and the great patriarch, most

happy Joachim, saw the thousand angels which guarded

Mary. In response to her prayer and wishes the Al

mighty allowed his graces to overflow, commanding the

angels to address Joachim as follows:

669. "Man of God, may the Most High and powerful

Lord be thy eternal salvation and may he send thee from

his holy place the necessary and opportune help for thy

soul. Mary thy Daughter has sent us in order to assist

thee in this hour, in which thou must pay the debt of

mortality to thy Creator. She is a most faithful and

powerful Intercessor before the Almighty, in whose name

518 CITY OF GOD

and peace thou wilt now pass consoled and joyous from

this world, because He has made thee the father of such

a blessed Daughter. Although his incomprehensible Ma

jesty, on account of his hidden decrees, has not as yet

revealed the sacraments and dignity, in which He shall

invest thy Daughter, He wishes thee to know it now in

order that thou mayest magnify and praise Him, and in

order that the pain and sorrow of natural death may be

relieved by the joy of thy spirit at this news. Mary, thy

Daughter, is chosen and ordained by the Almighty as

the One, in whom the divine Word shall vest Himself

with human flesh and form. She is to be the happy Mother

of the Messias and the Blessed among women, the most

exalted among all creatures, and only inferior to God

himself. Thy most fortunate Daughter is to restore what

the human race lost by the first sin, and She is the high

mountain on which is to be established and constructed

the new law of grace. Since thou leavest to the world

a Daughter, through whom God will restore it and pre

pare a full remedy, do thou part from it in the joy of thy

soul, and may the Lord bless thee from Sion (Psalm 127,

5) and constitute thee in the inheritance of the saints and

bring thee to the vision and enjoyment of the blessed

Jerusalem."

670. During these words of the holy angels to

Joachim, his spouse, holy Anne, stood at the head of his

bed and by divine disposition She heard and understood

what they said. In the same moment the holy patri

arch lost the use of speech and, treading into the path

common to all flesh, he commenced his agony in a marvel

ous struggle between his joy at this message and the pain

of death. In this conflict of the interior powers of his

soul he made many fervent acts of divine love, of faith, of

admiration, of praise, of thanksgiving, of humility and

heroic acts of many other virtues. Thus absorbed in

THE CONCEPTION 519

the knowledge of so divine a mystery, he arrived at

the term of his natural life and died the precious death of

the saints (Psalm 115, 15). His holy soul was carried by

the angels to the limbo of the Patriarchs and just souls;

and, for a new consolation and light in the protracted

night in which they lived, the Most High sent the soul of

Joachim as the last messenger and legate of the Lord to

announce to the whole congregation of the just : that the

dawn of the eternal day was at hand; that the morning

light was breaking upon the world in most holy Mary,

the Daughter of Joachim and Anne ; that from Her was

to be brought forth the Sun of the Divinity, Christ, the

Redeemer of all the human race. This great news the

holy fathers and the just in limbo heard and received

with jubilee and in their exultation they sang many hymns

of thanksgiving to the Most High.

671. This happy death of the patriarch saint Joachim

happened as I said about a half year after his most holy

Daughter Mary had entered the temple. Hence She was

three and a half years old, when She was left without an

earthly father. The age of the patriarch was sixty-nine

years, divided as follows : at the age of forty-six years he

accepted saint Anne as his spouse, in the twentieth year

of his marriage, they were blessed with most holy Mary ;

and the three and a half years of the age of her age at his

death complete the sixty-nine and a half years, a few days

more or less.

672. After the death of the holy Patriarch and father

of our Queen the angels of her guard at once returned to

the presence of Mary and related to Her what had hap

pened in the passing away of her father : and immediately

the most prudent Child turned in solicitous prayers to the

Lord, asking Him to console, govern and assist her Mother

Anne with fatherly kindness in her solitude after the

death of her husband. Saint Anne also sent notice of the

520 CITY OF GOD

death of Joachim to the instructress of the heavenly Prin

cess, asking Her to console the Child in breaking this news

to Her. The teacher acted accordingly and the most wise

Child listened to her thankfully, concealing her own

knowledge. However it was with the patience and mod

esty of a Queen, and of one who was not oblivious of the

possibility of the event, which her instructress related to

Her as new. Acting in all things according to the high

est perfection, She betook Herself at once into the temple,

reiterating her sacrifice of praise, humility, patience and

of other virtues, and progressing always with more ac

celerated and beautiful steps in the eyes of the Most High

(Cant. 7, 1). As a climax of these exercises, She, as

usual, requested the holy angels to concur and assist in

blessing God.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

673. My daughter, renovate many times in the secret

of thy heart thy esteem for the blessing of tribulations,

which the hidden providence of God dispenses for the

justification of mortals. These are the judgments justified

in themselves (Psalm 18, 10, 11) and more valuable than

precious stones and gold, more sweet than the honeycomb,

to those who know how to hold them in proper esteem.

I wish thee to remember, my beloved, that to suffer and

to be afflicted with or without one s fault is a benefit of

which one cannot be worthy without special and great

mercy of the Almighty ; moreover to be allowed to suffer

for one s sins, is not only a mercy, but is demanded by

justice. Behold, however, the great insanity of the chil

dren of Adam nowadays in desiring and seeking after

emoluments, benefits, and favors agreeable to their senses,

and in sleeplessly striving to avert from themselves, that

which is painful or includes any hardship or trouble. It

would be to their greatest benefit to seek tribulations dili-

THE CONCEPTION 521

gently even when unmerited, yet they strive by all means

to avoid them even when merited, and even though they

cannot be happy and blessed without having undergone

such sufferings.

674. When gold is untouched by the furnace-heat, the

iron by the file, the grain by the grinding stone or flail,

the grapes by the winepress, they are all useless and will

not attain the end for which they are created. Why then

will mortals continue to deceive themselves, by expecting,

in spite of their sins, to become pure and worthy of en

joying God, without the furnace or the file of sorrows?

If they were incapable and unworthy of attaining to the

crown and reward of the infinite and eternal Good when

innocent, how can they attain it, when they are in darkness

and in disgrace before the Almighty? In addition to

this the sons of perdition are exerting all their powers to

remain unworthy and hostile to God and in evading

crosses and afflictions which are the paths left open for

returning to God, in rejecting the light of the intellect

which is the means of recognizing the deceptiveness of

visible things, in refusing the nourishment of the just

which is the only means of grace, the price of glory, and

above all in repudiating the legitimate inheritance, selected

by my Son and Lord for Himself and for all his elect,

since He was born and lived continually in afflictions and

died upon the cross.

675. By such standards, my daughter, must thou

measure the value of suffering, which the worldly will

not understand. Since they are unworthy of heavenly

knowledge, they despise it in proportion to their igno

rance. Rejoice and congratulate thyself in thy sufferings,

and whenever the Almighty deigns to send thee any,

hasten to meet it and welcome it as one of his blessings

and pledges of his glorious love. Furnish thy heart with

magnanimity and constancy, so that when occasion of suf-

35

522

CITY OF GOD

fering is given thee thou mayest bear it with the same

equanimity as the prosperous and agreeable things. Be

not filled with sadness in executing that which thou hast

promised in gladness, for the Lord loves those that are

equally ready to give as to receive. Sacrifice thy heart

and all thy faculties as a holocaust of patience and chant

in new hymns of praise and joy the justification of the

Most High, whenever in the place of thy peregrination

He signalizes and distinguishes thee as his own with the

signs of his friendship which are no other than the tribula

tions and trials of suffering.

676. Take notice, my dearest, that my most holy Son

and myself are trying to find among those who have ar

rived at the way of the cross, some soul, whom We can

instruct systematically in this divine science and whom

We can withdraw from the worldly and diabolical wis

dom, in which the sons of Adam, with blind stubborn

ness, are rejecting the salutary discipline of sufferings.

If thou wishest to be our disciple enter into this school,

in which alone is taught the doctrine of the cross and the

manner of reaching true peace and veritable delights.

With this wisdom the earthly love of sensible pleasures

and riches is not compatible ; nor the vain ostentation and

pomp, which fascinates the blear-eyed worldlings, who are

so covetous of passing honors, and so full of ignorant

admiration for costly grandeur. Thou, my daughter,

choose for thyself the better part of being among the

lowly and the forgotten ones of this world. I was Mother

of the Godman himself, and, on that account, Mistress of

all creation conjointly with my Son: yet I was little

known and my Son very much despised by men. If this

doctrine were not most valuable and secure, We would

not have taught it by word and example. This is the light,

which shines in the darkness (John 1, 7), loved by the

elect and abhorred by the reprobate.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PRINCESS OF HEAVEN BEGINS TO SUFFER AFFLICTION ;

GOD ABSENTS HIMSELF FROM MOST HOLY MARY : HER

SWEET AND AMOROUS SIGHS.

677. The Most High, who in his infinite wisdom dis

penses and regulates the welfare of his beloved ones

according to weight and measure, resolved to exercise our

heavenly Princess with some afflictions adapted to her

age and state of childhood. Though She was always great

in grace, He wished by this means to increase her glory.

For entirely filled with grace and wisdom was our Child

Mary ; nevertheless it was befitting, that She should learn

by experience and thus make advancement and under

stand better the science of suffering, which only expe

rience can bring to its ultimate perfection and thorough

ness. During the brief course of her tender years She had

enjoyed the delights of the Most High and his caresses,

and of the angels and of her parents, and in the temple,

the tender love of her teachers and of the priests, because

in the eyes of all of them She was most gracious and

amiable. It was now time that She should commence to

know all the good She possessed in another light and by

another knowledge ; namely, the one which is acquired by

the absence and privation of the good, and that She make

use of it for the practice of those virtues, which arise from

comparison between the state of favors and caresses with

the state of dereliction, aridity and tribulation.

678. The first affliction, which our Princess suffered,

was that the Lord suspended the continual visions, which

523

524 CITY OF GOD

He had so far vouchsafed Her. So much the greater was

the sorrow occasioned Her thereby, in proportion as it

was a new and unaccustomed experience and in propor

tion as the treasure thus withdrawn was high and

precious. Also the holy angels concealed themselves from

Her, and at the withdrawal from her sight of so many, so

excellent and heavenly beings, which took place all at once

(although they did not cease to surround Her invisibly

for her protection) , that most pure Soul seemed to Her

self entirely forsaken and left alone in the dark night

occasioned by the absence of her Beloved.

679. It was a great surprise to our little Queen ; for the

Lord, though He had in general prepared Her for the

coming of tribulations, had not specified their nature. And

as the innocent heart of the most simple Dove harbored

no thoughts, and entertained no practical conclusions ex

cept such as were conformable to her humility and in

comparable love, She explained all according to this same

light. In her humility She began to think, that She had

not merited the further presence and possession of the

lost Good on account of her ingratitude; and in her in

flamed love She sighed and yearned after It with such

great and loving affection and sorrow, that there are no

words to express them. She turned with her whole soul

to the Lord in this new state and said to Him :

680. "Highest God and Lord of all creation, infinite in

bounty and rich in mercies, I confess, my Lord, that such

a vile creature cannot merit thy favors and my soul in

utmost sorrow reproaches itself with its own ingratitude

and with the loss of thy friendship. If my ingratitude

has eclipsed the Sun, which vivified, animated and illu

mined me, and if I have been remiss in giving thanks for

the great benefits, I acknowledge, my Lord and Shepherd,

the sin of my great negligence. If, like an ignorant and

THE CONCEPTION 525

simple little sheep, I did not know how to be thankful and

do what is most acceptable in thy eyes, see me prostrate

on the earth, adhering to the dust, in order to be raised

from my poverty and destitution by Thee, my God, who

dwellest on high. Thy powerful hands have formed me

(Job 10, 8), and Thou canst not be ignorant of our com

position (Psalm 102, 14) and in what kind of a vase Thou

has placed thy treasures. My soul wastes away in bit

terness (Psalm 30, 11) ; and in thy absence, since Thou

art its sweetest life, only Thou canst restore its droop

ing life. To whom shall I go in thy absence? Whither

shall I turn my eyes without having light to direct them ?

Who shall console me, when all is affliction? Who shall

preserve me from death, when there is no life left?"

681. She also turned toward the angels and continued

without ceasing in her loving complaints, saying to them :

"Celestial Princes, ambassadors of the great and highest

King and most faithful friends of my soul : why have you

also left me ? Why do also you deprive me of your sweet

countenances and deny me your intercourse ? But I do not

wonder, my lords, at your displeasure, if through my un-

thankfulness I have merited to fall into the disgrace of

your and my Creator. Lights of the heavens, enlighten

me in my ignorance in this matter, and if I have been at

fault, correct me and obtain again for me the pardon of

my Lord. Most noble courtiers of the celestial Jerusalem,

have pity on my sorrow and dereliction : tell me where is

my Beloved ; tell me where He has hidden Himself (Cant.

3, 3). Tell me where I can find Him without wandering

about, (Cant. 1,6) and without going through the gather

ings of all the creatures. But woe to me, for you do not

answer, though you are so courteous and well know the

hiding-place of my Spouse, since He never withdraws his

face and his beauty from your sight!"

526 CITY OF GOD

682. Thereupon She turned toward all the rest of crea

tion and in continual anxieties of her love She spoke to

them and said : "Without doubt you also, being thankful,

and being armed against all the ungrateful, are ex

asperated against her, who was ungrateful. But even if

by the goodness of the Lord you permit me to remain in

your midst, although I am so vile, you cannot thereby

satisfy my longings. Very beautiful and extensive are ye,

O heavens ; beautiful and refulgent are the planets and all

the stars ; great and mighty are the elements, the earth is

adorned and clothed in the perfumed plants and herbs,

innumerable are the fishes of the waters, admirable are the

elevations of the sea, (Psalm 92, 4), swift are the birds

in their feathery weight, hidden are the minerals, coura

geous are the animals in their strength, and all of these

together serve as a gradual ascent and in a sweet harmony

teach the way to my Beloved ; yet they are but circuitous

paths for one that loves Him, and if I course swiftly over

them I find myself at the end absent from my blessedness.

For with the measured approach of these creatures to his

unmeasurable bounty, my flight is not content, my sorrow

is not allayed, my pains are unrelieved, my anguish in

creases, my desires are augmented, my heart is more in

flamed and faints away in the unsatiating love of mere

earthly things. O sweet death in the absence of my life !

O sorrowful life in the absence of my very soul and of my

Beloved! What shall I do? Whither shall I turn? How

can I live, yet how can I die? Since my life is wanting,

what force sustains me? O all you creatures, that with

your ever renewed existence and perfections give me

such tokens of my Lord, attend and see whether there

is a sorrow like unto my sorrow!" (Thren. 1, 12.)

683. Our heavenly Lady indulged her sorrow in many

other discourses, expressing them in spoken words, such

THE CONCEPTION 527

as cannot be conceived by other created understanding;

for She alone possessed the wisdom and love properly to

estimate the meaning of the absence of God in a soul,

since She alone had known and enjoyed his presence in

its highest beatitude. But if even the angels, in a holy

and loving emulation, were filled with admiration to see

a mere creature and so tender a Child exercising such a

variety of acts of the most prudent humility, of faith, of

love, of affection, and such flights of a loving heart, who

can ever explain the pleasure and delight, which the Lord

himself took in the soul of the chosen One and in its as

pirations, of which each one wounded the heart of his

Majesty and which proceeded from a greater and more

loving graciousness than He had given to the seraphim?

And if they altogether, being in the continual presence

of the Divinity could not exercise or imitate the example

given by the most holy Mary, nor fulfill the laws of love

so perfectly as She in the absence and concealment of

her God, what was the complacency of the most holy

Trinity in this Creature? This is a mystery hidden to

our littleness ; but it is meet, that we worship it in wonder

and admire it in all reverence.

684. Our most innocent Dove found no peace for her

heart nor any footrest for her affections (Gen. 8, 9) while

thus with incessant sighing She took her flight through all

the range of creation and beyond. Many times She sought

to approach the Lord in tears and loving complaints,

She turned to the angels of her guard and addressed all

the creatures as if they were capable of reason ; then She

would ascend to that highest habitation by her penetrating

intellect and her most ardent affections, where the high

est Good had met Her and where She reciprocally with It

had enjoyed ineffable delights. But the most high Lord,

her beloved Spouse, who allowed Her to possess and yet

528 CITY OP GOD

not enjoy Him as before, inflamed by this possession of

Him only more and more her most pure heart, increasing

her merits and showering upon Her continually new,

though hidden gifts, in order that, in possessing Him the

more, She might love the better, and being more loved

and possessed, She seek Him with ever greater anxious-

ness and contrivances of her fiery love. "I seek Him,"

said the heavenly Princess, "and I do not find Him (Cant.

2, 2) ; again I was awakened and, running through the

streets and squares of the city of God, I renewed my

anxieties. But alas for me! that my hands distilled the

myrrh (Cant. 5, 5) ; my diligence is of no avail, my exer

tions serve only to increase my sorrow (Cant, 6, 7). My

Beloved absents Himself: I call Him and He does not

answer me, I turn my eyes to seek Him, but the guards

and the sentinels of the city, and all creatures were an

annoyance to me and offended my sight. Daughters of

Jerusalem, holy and just souls, you I beseech, you I sup

plicate, if you meet my Beloved, tell Him that I am faint

and that I am dying with love."

685. In these sweet and loving lamentations our Queen

continued for several days, like the humble spikenard

giving forth most fragrant odors of sweetness. But the

Lord remained unmoved by her anxieties and secreted

Himself in the hidden recesses of her most faithful heart.

The divine Providence, for its greater glory and for the

superabundant merit of his Spouse, protracted this con

flict in such a manner, that it continued for some time,

though not very long; in the meanwhile our heavenly

Lady suffered more spiritual torments and anxieties than

all the saints together. For She gradually began to be

alarmed by the fear of having lost God and fallen into

disgrace on account of her own faults; and no one can

estimate or know, except the Lord himself, what and how

THE CONCEPTION 529

great was the grief of that burning heart, which had

known how to love so much. To weigh this grief be

longs to God alone, and in order that She might feel it

in its fullest extent, She was left by God to the over

whelming anxiety and fear of having lost Him.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MY LADY AND QUEEN GAVE ME.

686. My daughter, all goods are estimated according

to the appreciation in which creatures hold them: in so

far they value them, as they know them to be good. But

since there is only one true Good, and all the others merely

fictitious and apparent, it follows, that only the highest

Good is to be appreciated and recognized. Then only

shalt thou give Him true appreciation and love, when

thou shalt enjoy and esteem Him above all created things.

By this appreciation and love will also be measured the

sorrow of losing Him and from this thou canst under

stand somewhat my sentiments, at the time when the

eternal God absented Himself from me, leaving me in my

fears lest perhaps I had lost Him through my own fault.

There is no doubt, that many times the sorrows of this

anxiety and the force of love would have deprived me

of life, if the Lord himself had not preserved it.

687. Imagine then, what ought to be the grief of losing

God really by sin, if, without the bad effects of sin, the

absence of our true Good could cause such terrible suffer

ing to the soul, knowing at the same time, that it has not

lost Him, but still possesses Him, though hidden and dis

guised to its present consciousness. But this wisdom

seems far from the mind of carnal men: with a most

perverse blindness they continue to make much of the

visible and fictitious good, and they torment themselves

and are disconsolate, whenever it fails them. Because

they never taste or recognize the highest and truest Good,

530 CITY OF GOD

they take no thought or reckoning of It. And although

my most holy Son has brought a remedy for this dread

ful ignorance contracted by the first sin, by meriting for

men faith and charity, thereby affording them the pos

sibility of knowing and experiencing to a certain extent

the Good, which they never have experienced; yet, O

sorrow, how easily charity is wasted and set aside for

any kind of pleasure, and how often faith remains with

out any fruit and is involved in death ! The sons of dark

ness live as if they had only a counterfeit or doubtful

connection with eternity,

688. Fear, my soul, this so slightly accounted danger;

rouse thyself and live always in watchfulness and prepara

tion for the attacks of the enemies, who never sleep. Let

thy meditation day and night be, how thou canst provide

against losing the highest Good, which thou lovest. It is

not befitting that thou sleep or slumber in the midst of

invisible enemies. If sometimes thy Beloved hides Him

self from thee, hope in patience and seek Him solicitously

without ceasing, since thou knowest not his secret judg

ments. For the time of his absence and temptation pro

vide thyself with the oil of charity and good intention,

so that it fail thee not in time of necessity and that thou

mayest not be rejected with the foolish and negligent

virgins.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OTHER AFFLICTIONS OF OUR QUEEN, SOME OF WHICH

WERE PERMITTED BY THE LORD THROUGH THE AGENCY

OF CREATURES AND OF THE ANCIENT SERPENT.

689. The Most High continued to hide and conceal

Himself from the Princess of heaven; and to this afflic

tion, which was the most severe, his Majesty added others

in order to increase her merit, her grace and her reward,

thus inflaming more and more the most pure love of the

heavenly Lady. The great dragon and ancient serpent

was not unwatchful of the heroic works of the most holy

Mary: although he could not attain to the knowledge

of her interior acts, since they were hidden from his view,

yet he scrutinized the exterior ones which were so high

and so perfect as to arouse the pride and indignation of

that envious fiend ; for the purity and the sanctity of the

Child Mary tormented him beyond all calculation.

690. In his restless fury he called a conventicle of the

infernal leaders in order to consult about the matter with

the higher powers of hell. He addressed them as follows :

"The great triumph which we have until now obtained in

the world by the possession of so many souls who are

altogether subject to our wills, is, I am afraid and anxious,

about to be undone and counteracted by a Woman;

we cannot make light of such a danger, for we have been

warned since our creation, and afterward heard the

sentence confirmed against us, that the Woman shall

crush our head (Gen. 3, 15). Therefore we must be

watchful and discard all carelessness. You have already

531

532 CITY OF GOD

been notified of a Child, which was born of Anne, and

is growing in age and is at the same time distinguishing

Herself in virtue : I have paid careful attention to all her

actions and movements, and I have not been able to

discover in Her the effects of the seeds of malice, which

usually begin to show themselves at the dawn of reason

and at the beginning of the activity of the passions in the

rest of the children of Adam. I have always seen Her

composed and most perfect, without being able to incline

or induce Her to fall into the slightest human imperfec

tions, which are so natural in the other children. On this

account I fear, lest She be the one chosen as Mother of

Him who is to become Man."

691. "Yet I cannot convince myself of this; for She

was born as the rest of women, and subject to the com

mon laws of nature, her parents offered prayers and

sacrifices in atonement for Her and their own sins, and

brought Her to the temple just like other women. Even

if She is not the one chosen as our enemy, her childhood

points to great things and her exquisite virtue and holiness

gives promise of still greater things later on ; nor can I

bear the prudence and discretion with which She acts in

all her affairs. Her wisdom enrages me, her modesty

irritates me, her humility annihilates me and oppresses

me, and her whole behavior provokes me to unbearable

wrath. I abhor Her more than all the children of Adam.

There is in Her a special power, which often makes it im

possible for me to approach Her; if I assail Her with

suggestions, She does not admit them, and all my efforts

in her regard until this hour have been entirely fruitless.

Hence it is important for us all that we find a remedy ;

and we must make the greatest exertions, lest our power

be ruined. I desire the destruction of this soul more than

that of all the world. Tell me then, what means and

I

THE CONCEPTION 533

what contrivances must we use in order to overcome Her.

I will certainly offer high and liberal rewards to any one

who shall accomplish her downfall."

692. The matter was ventilated in that confused

synagogue, convoked solely for our ruin, and one of the

chiefs of the horrible council said : "Our chief and Lord,

do not allow thyself to be tormented by such a small

matter, for a weak little Maiden cannot be so invincible

and powerful as all of us that follow thee. Thou hast

deceived Eve, (Gen. 3, 4), dragging her down from the

high position which she held, and through her thou didst

also conquer her head Adam ; then why shouldst thou not

be able to overcome this Woman, her descendant, who

was born after the first fall? Promise thyself even at

this moment such a victory; and in order to obtain it

we will persist in tempting Her though She resist many

times, and, if necessary, we will not stop at yielding some

of our greatness and haughtiness, in the hope of finally

deceiving Her. If that does not suffice, we will try to

destroy her honor or her life."

693. Other demons added their advice and said to

Lucifer: "By experience we know, O powerful chief,

that to bring about the downfall of many souls, the most

effective way is to make use of other creatures, and by

their means we often succeed where we otherwise fail.

Let us then plan and contrive the ruin of this Woman

in this way, first finding out the best time and the most

favorable opportunity. Above all it is necessary, that

we apply all our sagacity and astuteness to make Her

lose grace by some sin. As soon as this mainstay and

bulwark of the just is lost to Her, we can persecute and

ensnare Her in her forsakeness, and there will be no one

to snatch Her from our grasp, and we must exert our

selves to reduce Her to despair of all remedy."

534 CITY OF GOD

694. Lucifer expressed his thanks for these encourag

ing counsels of his followers and co-operators in crime.

He commanded and exhorted the most astute in malice

among them to accompany him as leader in this arduous

enterprise ; for he did not wish to trust it to other hands.

Although the demons assisted him, Lucifer himself in

person was always at the fore in tempting Mary and her

most holy Son in the desert, as well as during the whole

course of their lives, as we shall see later on.

695. In the meanwhile our heavenly Princess con

tinued to sigh and grieve over the absence of her Beloved,

and thus the infernal squadron found Her, when they

rushed forward to begin their temptations. But the

divine power, which overshadowed Her, hindered the

assaults of Lucifer, so that he could not approach very

closely to Her, nor could he execute all that he had in

tended. By permission of God the hellish host excited in

her faculties many suggestions and various thoughts of

highest iniquity and malice; for the Lord did not judge it

to be alien to the Mother of Grace, that She should be

tempted in all things, although She was to be without sin

in temptation, as was afterwards her most holy Son.

696. It cannot easily be conceived how much in this

new conflict the most pure and innocent heart of Mary

suffered, seeing Herself assailed by suggestions so foreign

and so distant from the ineffable purity and nobility of

her heavenly mind. When the ancient serpent perceived

the affliction and tears of the great Lady, he imagined

that he had on this account more power over Her, being

blinded by his own pride and not knowing the secrets of

heaven. Therefore, animating his infernal helpers, he

said to them : "Let us persecute Her now, let us persecute

Her; already it seems we are gaining our end, for She

feels sorrowful, which is an opening for discouragement."

THE CONCEPTION 535

In this mistaken conviction, they suggested new thoughts

of dejection and despair, and they assailed Her with

terrible imaginations, but in vain; for as this flawless

stone was struck by occasions of more exalted virtues, so

also it gave forth more generously the sparks and flames

of divine love. Our invincible Queen was so superior to

this infernal battery, that her interior showed no signs

of change nor even of an understanding of such terrible

suggestions, except in so far as to concentrate Herself

the more in the exercise of her incomparable virtues and

allow the flames of divine love, which burned in her

breast, to ascend so much the higher.

697. The dragon, though seeing her courage and

constancy, and though feeling the force of the divine

assistance, knew nothing of the hidden wisdom and pru

dence of our sovereign Queen. Nevertheless he persisted

in his pride and besieged the City of God in diverse ways

and several kinds of warfare. The astute enemy during

this warfare often changed his engines of war, but his

machinery was like the sting of a weak hornet against a

diamond, or adamantine wall. Our Princess was that

strong woman (Prov. 31, 11) on whom the heart of her

husband confidently relied, without the least anxiety lest

his desires should be frustrated in Her. Her adornments

were fortitude (Prov. 31, 25) which filled Her with

beauty, and her vestments were purity and charity, which

served Her as a helmet. The unclean and proud serpent

could not look upon this Creature without being blinded

anew in the fury of his confusion ; therefore he resolved

to take away her life, and the horde of malignant spirits

began to exert their utmost powers toward this end. In

this attempt they spent some time, but with just as little

success.

698. The knowledge of this hidden mystery caused in

536 CITY OF GOD

me great wonder, especially when I considered the ex

tremes, to which the fury of Lucifer was allowed to pro

ceed against the most holy Mary in her tender years and

when I beheld the hidden and vigilant defense and protec

tion of the Most High. I saw how attentive the Lord was

toward his chosen and only One among creatures; and

I saw at the same time all hell lashed into fury against

Her and exerting against Her in fullest indignation such

a wrath as had never till then been exerted against any

other creature ; and I saw the facility with which God

neutralizes the infernal power and astuteness. O more

than unhappy Lucifer! How much greater is thy pride

and arrogance than thy strength! (Isaias 16, 6.) Very

weak and helpless art thou in spite of thy high-flown

pretentious; begin to confide less in thyself and expect

no such great triumphs; for a tender Child crushes thy

head and sends thee back conquered in all things and

altogether vanquished. Acknowledge now that thou canst

do and knowest but little, since thou wast even ignorant of

the sacrament of the King. Acknowledge that his power

has humiliated thee by the instrument thou hadst de

spised, by a feeble Woman, by a Child in its natural weak

ness. O how evident would thy ignorance also become

in regard to men, if they would avail themselves of the

protection of the Most High, and of the example, the

imitation and the intercession of that victorious and

triumphant Mistress of angels and men!

699. During these varying temptations and combats

the fervent prayers of most holy Mary never ceased, and

She spoke to the Lord: "Now, O my most high God,

while I am in tribulation, be with me (Psalm 90, 15) ;

now that I call to Thee with my whole heart and seek thy

justifications, (Psalm 118, 14) let my prayers come to

thy ears; now that I suffer such violence, wilt Thou

THE CONCEPTION 537

answer for me (Isaias 38, 14). Thou, my Lord and

Father, be my strength and my refuge (Psalm 30, 4), and

because of thy holy name Thou wilt deliver me from

danger; thou wilt lead me the sure way and nourish me

as thy Daughter." She repeated also many mysteries of

the holy Scriptures, especially passages from the Psalms,

to invoke his aid against the invisible enemies. With

these invincible arms, losing not an atom of interior

peace, equanimity and resignation, but rather confirming

Herself more therein, She raised her spirit on high,

battled with, resisted, and conquered satan to the in

expressible delight of the Lord and for her greater merit.

700. After the most holy Virgin had successfully

fought these secret temptations and battles, the serpent

instituted a new conflict by means of creatures. For this

purpose he secretly kindled the sparks of envy and emula

tion against the most holy Mary in the hearts of her

maiden companions of the temple. This contagion was

much the harder to counteract, as it arose from the

punctuality with which our heavenly Princess distin

guished Herself in the practice of all virtues, growing in

wisdom and grace before God and man. For where the

prodding of ambition is, the very light of virtue darkens

and blinds the judgment, and at last enkindles the flames

of envy. The dragon through his secret suggestions per

suaded these simple maidens, that the light of this sun,

most holy Mary, would obscure them and cause them to

be little noticed; that on her account their own negli

gences were more clearly apparent to the priests and their

teacher; and that Mary alone was preferred in the esti

mation and judgment of all.

701. The companions of our Queen allowed the devil

to sow this bad seed in their bosoms ; for they were heed

less and little experienced in spiritual ways. They allowed

36

538 CITY OF GOD

it to increase until it grew into a sort of interior abhor

rence af the most pure Mary, and this into anger. Filled

with this anger, they began to look upon and treat Her

with hatred, not being able to endure the modesty of that

most innocent Dove. For the dragon had incited them

and had already imbued the incautious girls with some

of his own wrath. The temptation continuing, its effects

became manifest and the temple maidens began to plot

among themselves, ignorant of the spirit that moved

them. They agreed among themselves to molest and

persecute the unknown Princess of the world, until She

should be forced to leave the temple. Accordingly they

called Her aside and spoke to Her very sharp words,

treating Her at the same time very haughtily. They

called Her a hypocrite and reproached Her with schem

ing to obtain the favor of the priests and of their teacher,

while seeking to discredit all the other girls by her com

plaints and her exaggerations of their faults, whereas

She was the most useless of them all and therefore de

served their hatred as an enemy.

702. These contumelies and many other accusations

the most prudent Virgin bore without disturbance and

with equable humility. She answered: "My friends

and my mistresses, you are right no doubt in saying, that

I am the least and the most imperfect among you; but

then you, my sisters, being better informed, must pardon

me my faults and must teach me in my ignorance. Direct

me therefore, that I may succeed in doing better and

act according to your pleasure. I beseech you, my

friends, not to deny me your good will, which, though

I am so imperfect, I sincerely wish to merit; for I love

you and reverence you as a servant, and I will obey you

in all things, in which you desire to make a trial of my

good will. Command me then, and tell me what you

wish of me."

THE CONCEPTION 539

703. These humble and sweet reasonings of the most

humble Mary did not soften the hardened hearts of her

associates and companions, for they were infected by the

poisonous fury of the dragon against Her. Precisely

on account of her sweet humility he became so much the

more infuriated, and thus turned this sweet antidote

against the poisonous bite into a means of inflaming 1

them with open wrath against Her who was the great

sign in heaven (Apoc. 12, 15). For many days this

persecution continued, during which the heavenly Lady

sought in vain to appease the hate of her companions

by her humility, patience, modesty and tolerance. On the

contrary the demon was emboldened to inspire them

with many thoughts full of temerity, urging them to lay

violent hands on the most humble lamb and maltreat

Her, even so far as to take away her life. But the Lord

did not permit the execution of such sacrilegious sugges

tions; and the farthest which they were allowed to pro

ceed, was to insult Her by words or to inflict some blows.

This quarreling remained concealed from the teacher of

the maidens and from the priests, and during this time

most holy Mary gained incomparable merits in the sight

of the Almighty, because She took occasion to exercise

all the virtues, as well in regard to God as also in regard

to the creatures, which were persecuting and hating Her.

She performed heroic acts of charity and humility, yield

ing good for evil, blessings for curses, prayers for

blasphemies (I Cor. 4, 13), fulfilling in all things the

most perfect and the highest requirements of the divine

law. Before the Lord She exercised the most exalted

virtues, by praying for his creatures who were persecut

ing Her; and She excited the admiration of the angels,

by humiliating Herself as if She were the vilest of mor

tals deservedly treated in that way. In all these things

540 CITY OF GOD

She surpassed the conceptions of men and the highest

merits of the seraphim.

704. It happened one day, that, impelled by the dia

bolical suggestions, these girls brought Mary to a retired

room, where they could act with more safety. Here they

began to heap unmeasured injuries and insults upon Her,

in order to excite Her to weakness or anger and to entrap

Her imperturbable modesty into some hasty action. But

as the Queen of virtues could not even for a moment be

subject to vice, She showed Herself immovable, and She

answered them with great kindness and sweetness. Being

enraged beyond bounds on account of not succeeding in

their purpose, her companions raised their voices in dis

cordant strife, so that they were heard in the temple and

by such unwonted noise caused great astonishment and

confusion. The priests and the teacher hastened to the

place whence the noise proceeded, and the Lord permitted

a new humiliation of his Spouse, for they asked with

severity, what was the cause of this strife. While the

most meek Dove remained silent, the other maidens

angrily answered and said : "Mary of Nazareth brings us

all into strife and quarreling by her horrid conduct: for

in your absence, She irritates and provokes us in such

a manner, that if She does not leave the temple, it will

be impossible to keep any peace with Her. When we

allow Her her own way, She becomes overbearing; if

we reprehend Her, She makes fun of all of us by pros

trating Herself at our feet with feigned humility, and

afterwards She quarrels anew and throws all into up

roar."

705. The priests and the instructress brought the Mis

tress of the world into another room, and there they

severely reprehended Her, giving full credit at that time

to all the accusations of her companions, and, having

THE CONCEPTION 541

exhorted Her to reform and behave as one living in the

house of God, they threatened to expel Her from the

temple, if She would not mend Her conduct. This threat

was the most severe punishment, which they could have

given Her, even if She had been guilty; so much the more

severe was it, when She was altogether innocent of any of

the faults imputed to Her. Whoever will obtain from

the Lord some understanding of a part only of the pro

found humility of the most holy Mary will also under

stand somewhat of the effects of these mysteries in her

most innocent heart; for She judged Herself to be the

most vile of the womanborn, the most unworthy to live

among them and to burden the earth with her presence.

This threat cruelly lacerated the heart of the most pru

dent Virgin, and in tears She answered and said to the

priests : My masters, I acknowledge the favor, which

you do me in correcting and teaching me, the most im

perfect and despicable of creatures; but I beseech you,

pardon me, you who are the servants of the Most High,

and overlooking my defects, direct me in all things so

that I may reform and from now on give pleasure to his

Majesty and to my sisters and companions. With the

grace of the Lord I will resolve this anew and will

commence from today."

706. Our Queen added other words full of sweetest

innocence and modesty; and therewith the instructress

and the priests dismissed Her, enjoining anew upon Her

that doctrine, of which She herself was the most wise

Teacher. Immediately She betook Herself to her com

panions, and prostrating Herself at their feet, She asked

them pardon, as if the faults, with which they had charged

Her, could ever have been shared by the Mother of all in

nocence. They received Her this time with more good will,

because they thought that her tears were the effect of the

542 CITY OF GOD

punishment and the warning of the priests and the in

structress, whom they had induced to act thus in pur

suance of their badly governed passions. The dragon,

who was secretly contriving this entanglement, urged the

incautious hearts of all these girls to still greater haugh

tiness and presumption, and as they had now made head

way in the estimation of the priests themselves, they pro

ceeded to greater audacity in discrediting and lowering the

good name of the most pure Virgin. Accordingly by insti

gation of the devil, they fabricated new accusations and

lies ; but the Most High never permitted them to say any

thing very grave and dishonorable of Her, whom He had

chosen as the most holy Mother of his Onlybegotten. He

merely allowed the indignation and deceit of the maidens

to go so far as to exaggerate very much some small

faults, which were even in themselves altogether fictitious,

but which they accused Her of. Moreover they were

permitted to practice many feminine intrigues, to which

their own restlessness drove them. In these different

ways and in the reprehensions of her instructress and

of the priests our most humble Lady Mary found many

occasions of exercising virtues, of increasing the gifts

of the Most High, and of exalting Her merit.

707. In all this our Queen acted with the plenitude of

perfection in the eyes of the Lord, who regaled Himself

with the sweetest odor of that humble spikenard (Cant.

1, 18), maltreated and despised by the creatures, who

did not know Her. She repeated and continued her

clamors and her sighs on account of the absence of her

Beloved; and on one of these occasions She said: "My

highest Good and Lord of infinite mercies, if Thou who

art my Lord and my Maker, hast forsaken me, it is not

strange, that all the creatures abhor me and rise up

against me. All this my ingratitude to thy benefits well

THE CONCEPTION 543

merits ; nevertheless I will always acknowledge and con

fess Thee as my refuge and my treasure. Thou alone art

my God, my Beloved and my rest : If then Thou art this

to me, how can my afflicted heart come to rest? The

creatures do only that with me, which they should; but

they do not go so far in this as I merit, because Thou, O

my Lord and Father, in punishing, art so sparing, and in

rewarding art so generous. Discount, O Lord, my negli

gences by my sorrow of having lost thy interior presence,

and pay back with a liberal hand the benefits, blessings,

which thy creatures gain for me in forcing me to ac

knowledge thy goodness and my meanness. Raise, O

Lord, the needy one from the dust of the earth (I Reg.

2, 8) and renew her, who is poor and the most abject

of the creatures, and then may I see thy divine face and

be saved." (Psalm 79, 5).

708. It would not be possible, nor is it necessary, to

relate all that happened to our Queen in this test of her

virtues. But leaving Her at present therein, and con

sidering Her behavior, we will have in Her a living

example, teaching us to bear with exultation all the

troubles, pains and strifes, which are so necessary in order

to satisfy for our sins and subject our necks to the yoke

of mortification. There was no sin nor any deceit in our

most innocent Dove, yet, in humble silence and patience,

She suffered ungrounded hate and persecution. Let us

then be confounded in her presence, that we should deem

slight injuries irreparable offenses which must be avenged ;

whereas all offenses, of whatever kind, are to be held but

slight by those, who have God for their enemy. The

Most High was mighty to preserve Her from all persecu

tion, but then He could not have shown his power in

leading Her out of it unharmed, nor would He have

given Her such dear pledges of his love, nor would She

544 CITY OF GOD

have reaped the sweet fruit of loving her enemies and

her persecutors. We make ourselves unworthy of such

great blessing in raising an outcry against creatures

whenever we are injured and our proud heart rises up

against God himself, who arranges all things; for it re

fuses to subject itself to its Creator and Justifier, who

knows what is necessary for our salvation.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST BLESSED

MARY.

709. Take notice then, my Daughter, that the ex

ample of these events of my life should serve thee for thy

instruction and direction. Treasure up this example lov

ingly in thy bosom and allow it to dilate thy heart, so as

to receive with joy the persecutions and calumnies of

creatures, whenever thou art made partaker of such hap

piness. The sons of perdition, who serve vanity, are

ignorant of the treasure of suffering injuries and of par

doning them, and they make a boast of vengeance, which

even according to the requirements of the natural reason

is reprehensible and arises from a heart brutal and beast

ly, rather than from a human. On the other hand, he who

pardons injuries magnanimously and forgets them, al

though he may not have divine faith nor the light of the

Gospel, becomes noble and excellent, and does not pay

vile tribute to the fierce and irrational brutality of re

venge.

710. And if the vice of revenge is so contrary even

to the dictates of nature, consider, my daughter, how

much it is opposed to grace and how hateful and abomi

nable the vengeful are in the eyes of my most holy Son,

who made Himself man, suffered and died for no other

purpose than to forgive and to obtain the pardon of the

Almighty for the injuries committed by the human race.

THE CONCEPTION 545

Against this tendency of his whole life and against his

whole nature and infinite bounty, vengeance is arrayed;

as far as in him lies, the vindictive man destroys entirely,

as well God himself as all his works. And for this at

tempt he well merits, that God should destroy him with

all his might. Between the person who pardons and

suffers injuries, and the vindictive, there is the same

difference as between the one and only heir and the deadly

enemy; this one provokes all the wrath of God and the

other merits and obtains all blessings; because in this

virtue he exhibits a most perfect image of the celestial

Father.

711. I wish thee, O soul, to understand, that to suffer

injuries with equanimity and to pardon them entirely for

the Lord, will be more acceptable in his eyes, than if thou

choose of thy own will to do the most severe penance and

shed thy own blood for Him. Humble thyself before

those who persecute thee, love them and pray for them

from thy true heart ; thereby shalt thou turn toward thee

in love the heart of thy God and rise to the perfection

of holiness, and thou shalt overcome hell in all things.

That great dragon, who persecutes all men, was con

founded many times by my humility and meekness, and

his fury could not tolerate the sight of these virtues.

From them he fled more swiftly than the sun s rays. I

gained great victories for my soul and won glorious

triumphs for the exaltation of the Divinity. When any

creature rose up against me, I conceived no anger toward

it, for I knew in reality it was an instrument of the Most

High, directed by his Providence for my special good.

This knowledge and the consideration, that it was a crea

ture of my Lord, capable of grace, excited me to love it

truly with a greater fervor, and I did not rest until I

could reward this benefit of persecution by obtaining for

it eternal life, as far as was possible.

546

CITY OF GOD

712. Strive after, therefore, and labor for the imita

tion of that, which thou hast understood and written;

show thyself most meek, peaceful and agreeable toward

those, who molest thee; esteem them truly in thy heart,

and do not take vengeance of thy Lord by taking ven

geance on his instruments, nor despise the inestimable

jewel of injuries. As far as lies in thee always give good

for evil, (Rom. 12, 14) benefits for injuries, love for

hate, praise for blame, blessings for malediction. Then

wilt thou be a perfect daughter of thy Father (Matth. 5,

43), the beloved spouse of thy Lord, my friend and my

most cherished daughter.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MOST HIGH ENLIGHTENS THE PRIEST CONCERNING

THE SPOTLESS INNOCENCE OF MOST HOLY MARY ; SHE

HERSELF IS INFORMED OF THE APPROACHING DEATH

OF HER MOTHER, SAINT ANNE, AND IS PRESENT AT

THIS EVENT.

713. The Lord did not sleep, nor did He slumber

(Psalm 120, 4) during the clamors of his beloved spouse

Mary, although He pretended not to hear them, delight

ing in the prolonged exercise of her sufferings, which

occasioned so many glorious triumphs and the admira

tions and praises of the supernal spirits. The smoulder

ing fire of the persecution already mentioned continued

unabated, in order that the Phenix, Mary, might many

times renew Herself from the ashes of her humility, and

in order that her most pure heart be regenerated over

and over again to new estates and conditions of divine

grace. But when the opportune time arrived for putting

an end to the blind envy and jealousy of those ensnared

maidens, and in order that their petulance might not al

together discredit Her who was to be the excellence of

nature and grace itself, the Lord spoke to the priest in

his sleep and said to Him: "My servant Mary is

pleasing in my eyes, and She is my perfect and my chosen

One: She is entirely innocent of anything of which

She is accused." The same revelation was given to

Anne, the instructress of the maidens. That morning

the priest and the instructress conferred with each other

about the message, which both had received. Being

547

548 CITY OF GOD

now certain, they repented of the deceit, into which they

had been led, and called the Princess Mary, asking her

pardon for having given credit to the false report of the

girls and offering Her all the reparation necessary to de

fend Her from the persecution and the sufferings con

sequent upon it.

714. She that was the Mother and origin of humility,

after listening to their words, answered the priest and

the instructress: "My superiors, I am the one that de

serves your reprehensions and I beseech you do not hold

me unworthy of undergoing them, since I ask for them

as most necessary to me. The intercourse with my

sisters, the other maidens, is most highly prized by me,

and I do not wish to be deprived of it through my fault,

since I owe them so much for having borne with me;

and as a return for that benefit, I desire to serve them

more faithfully; nevertheless if you command me any

thing else, I stand prepared to obey your will." This

answer of the most holy Mary still more comforted and

consoled the priest and the instructress; and they ap

proved of her humble petition, but from that time on they

attended to Her and observed Her with new reverence

and affection. The most humble Maiden begged to kiss

the hand of the priest and of the matron, asking for

their blessing according to her custom; with this they

dismissed Her. Just as the parched desire of the thirsty

for drink is increased at the sight of clear water with

drawn beyond their reach, so was the heart of Mary our

Mistress filled with yearning regret for the exercise of

suffering. Thirsting and burning for the divine love

She feared lest through the watchful care of the priest

and of the instructress, She should from thenceforward

be deprived of the treasure of affliction.

715. Seeking- solitude and speaking with God alone,

THE CONCEPTION 549

She addressed Him: "Why, O Lord and most beloved

Master, such severity with me? Why such a long ab

sence and such a forgetfulness of her, who cannot live

without Thee? And if in the protracted solitude and

separation from thy sweet and loving presence, I was

consoled by the pledges of thy affection, given to me in

the afflictions and sufferings for thy sake, how shall I

be able to live now in my dereliction without this solace ?

Why, O Lord, dost Thou so soon withdraw thy beneficent

hand from me in refusing me this favor? Who besides

thyself could have changed the sentiments of the priests

and of the instructress? But I do not merit the benefit

of their charitable reprehensions, nor am I worthy to

bear affliction; for I am equally unworthy of thy most

loving visit and delightful presence. If I have not been

able to please Thee, my Father and Lord, I will make

amends for my negligence. There can be no relief from

the depression of my spirit as long as the joy of thy

presence is wanting to my soul. But I continue to

hope that thy divine pleasure, O my Spouse, be fulfilled

in all things."

716. The enlightenment of the priests and the in

structress concerning Mary abated the persecutions of

the maidens. The Lord also restrained them and pre

vented the demon from inciting them thereafter. But

the time, during which He absented Himself and during

which He hid Himself from this heavenly spouse, lasted

(wonderful to relate!) ten years; although the Most

High interrupted this absence a few times by allowing

the veil to fall from his face for the relief of his Be

loved; but it was not often that He dispensed this favor

during that time, and He did it with less lavishness and

tenderness than in the first years of her childhood. This

absence of the Lord was ordained for our Queen in order

550 CITY OF GOD

that She might, by actual exercise of all perfection, be

made worthy for the dignity to which She was destined

by the Most High. For if She had continually enjoyed

the vision of his Majesty in the manner described by us

in the fourteenth chapter of this book, She could not

have suffered according to the common order of a mere

creature.

717. But during this retirement and absence of the

Lord, although most holy Mary missed the intuitive and

abstractive visions of the divine Essence and of the angels

as mentioned above, her most holy soul and her faculties

enjoyed more gifts of grace and more supernatural en

lightenment, than all the saints ever attained or received.

For in regard to this the hand of God never withdrew

from Her. But in comparison with the frequent visita

tions of the Lord in her first years, I call the state of

her privation of his presence for such a long time, an

absence and withdrawal of the Lord. It commenced

eight days before the death of her father, saint Joachim,

and afterwards the persecution of hell began, followed by

the persecutions on the part of creatures. They lasted

until our Princess reached the age of twelve years. Hav

ing passed this age, the holy angels on a certain day,

without manifesting themselves, spoke to Her as fol

lows : "Mary, the end of the life of thy holy mother Anne

as ordained by the Most High, is now about to arrive,

and his Majesty has resolved to free her from the prison

of her mortal body and bring her labors to a happy ful

fillment."

718. At this unexpected and sorrowful message the

heart of the affectionate Daughter was filled with com

passion. Prostrating Herself in the presence of the Most

High, She poured forth a fervent prayer for the happy

death of her mother saint Anne in the following words :

THE CONCEPTION 551

"King of the ages, invisible and eternal Lord, immortal

and almighty Creator of the Universe, although I am but

dust and ashes and although I must confess, that I am

in debt to thy greatness, I will not on that account be

prevented from speaking to my Lord (Gen. 18, 17), and

I pour out before thee my heart, hoping, O my God, that

Thou wilt not despise her, who has always confessed

thy holy name. Dismiss, O Lord, in peace thy servant,

who has with invincible faith and confidence desired to

fulfill thy divine pleasure. Let her issue victoriously and

triumphantly from the hostile combat and enter the por

tal of thy holy chosen ones; let thy powerful arm

strengthen her; at the close of her mortal career, let that

same right hand, which has helped her to walk in the

path of perfection, assist her, and let her enter, O my

Father, into the peace of thy friendship and grace, since

she has always sought after it with an upright heart"

719. The Lord did not respond expressly in words to

this petition of his Beloved; but his answer was a mar

velous favor, shown to Her and to her mother, saint

Anne. During that night his Majesty commanded the

guardian angels of the most holy Mary to carry Her bod

ily to the sickbed of her mother and one of them to remain

in her stead, assuming for this purpose an aerial body

as a substitute for hers. The holy angels obeyed the

mandate of God and they carried their and our Queen

to the house and to the room of her holy mother Anne.

Being thus brought to the presence of her mother, the

heavenly Lady kissed her hand and said to her: "My

mother and mistress, may the Most High be thy light

and thy strength, and may He be blessed, since He has

in his condescension not permitted me in my necessity to

remain without the benefit of thy last blessing; may I

then receive it, my mother, from thy hand." Holy Anne

552 CITY OF GOD

gave her last blessing to Mary and with overflowing

heart also thanked the Lord for the great favor thus

conferred upon Herself. For She knew the sacrament

of her Daughter and Queen, and she did not forget to

express her gratitude for the love, which Mary had

shown her on this occasion.

720. Then our Princess turned toward her mother

and comforted her against the approach of death; and

among many other words of incomparable consolation,

She spoke also the following: "Mother, beloved of my

soul, it is necessary that we pass through the portal of

death to the eternal life, which we expect; bitter and

painful is the passage, but also profitable. For it is insti

tuted by the divine Goodness as the beginning of our

security and rest; it satisfies by itself for the negligences

and shortcomings of the creature in fulfilling the duties.

Accept death, O my mother ; through it pay the common

debt with joy of spirit, and depart in confidence to the

company of the holy Patriarchs, Prophets, the just and

the friends of God, who were our ancestors. There

await with them the beatitude, which the Most High

will send to us through our Savior and his Redemption.

The certainty of this hope will be thy consolation until

we attain to the full possession of that which we expect."

721. Saint Anne answered her Daughter with a re

turn of love and in a spirit of joy worthy of herself and

of such a Daughter on such an occasion. In maternal

tenderness she said: "Mary, my beloved Daughter, ful

fill now thy obligation by not forgetting me in the pres

ence of our Lord God and Creator and reminding Him

of the need I have of his protection in this hour. Re

member what thou owest to her, who has conceived Thee

and bore Thee in her womb nine months, who after

wards nourished Thee at her breast and has always held

THE CONCEPTION 553

Thee in her heart. Beseech the Lord, my Daughter, that

He extend a hand of mercy toward me, his useless crea

ture, who has her beginning only through his mercies,

and that I may receive his blessing in this hour of my

death; for I place my confidence and have always placed

it altogether in his holy name. Do not leave me, my Be

loved, before Thou hast closed my eyes. Thou wilt be

left an orphan and without the protection of man; but

thou wilt live under the guardianship of the Most High ;

confide in the mercies which He has shown of old.

Daughter of my heart, walk in the path of the justifica

tions of the Lord and ask his Majesty to govern thy

aspirations and thy powers and to be thy Teacher in

the holy law. Do not leave the temple before choosing

thy state of life, and let it be done only with the sound

advice of the priests of the temple, and continue to pray

to the Lord that He dispose of thy affairs according to

his own pleasure. Pray that, if it be his will to give

Thee a spouse, he may be of the tribe of Juda and of the

race of David. The possessions of thy father Joachim

and of myself, which shall belong to Thee, share with

the poor, with whom thou shouldst deal in loving gen

erosity. Keep thy secret hidden within thy Bosom and

ask the Omnipotent without ceasing to show his mercy

by sending his salvation and redemption through his

promised Messiah. Ask and beseech his infinite bounty

to be thy protection, and may his blessing come over

Thee together with mine."

722. In the midst of such exalted and heavenly collo

quies the blessed mother saint Anne felt the throes of

death approacihing and, reclining upon the throne of

grace, that is, in the arms of her most holy Daughter

Mary, she rendered her most pure soul to her Creator.

Having closed the eyes of her mother, as saint Anne

had requested, and leaving the sacred body in position

37

554 CITY OF GOD

for burial, the Queen Mary was again taken up by the

holy angels and restored to her place in the temple. The

Most High did not impede the force of her filial love,

which naturally would cause a great and tender sorrow

at the death of her mother and a sense of loneliness at

being deprived of her assistance. But these sorrows

were most holy and perfect in our Queen, governed by

the graces of her most prudent innocence and purity.

In the midst of them She gave praise to the Most High

for the infinite mercies, which He had shown to her

mother both in life and in death, while her sweet and

loving complaints on account of the absence of the Lord

continued unabated.

723. However this most holy Daughter could not

know the full extent of the consolation afforded her

mother in having Her present at her death. For the

Daughter was not aware of her own exalted dignity and

the sacrament connected with Her, as was known to the

mother. This she had always kept secret, as the Most

High had commanded her. But finding at her bedside Her,

who was the light of her eyes and of the whole world,

and having the privilege of expiring in her arms, all the

desires of her mortal life were fulfilled, making its end

more happy than that of all the mortals up to that hour.

She died, not so much in the fullness of years as in the

fullness of merits, and her most holy soul was placed by

the angels in the bosom of Abraham, where she was

recognized and reverenced by all the Patriarchs,

Prophets and the just, who were in that place. This

most holy matron was naturally endowed with a great

and generous heart, with a clear and aspiring intellect

fervent and at the same time full of tranquillity and peace.

She was of medium stature, somewhat smaller than her

Daughter, most holy Mary ; her face was rather round,

of a suffused whiteness, her countenance was always

THE CONCEPTION 555

equable and composed, and finally She was the mother of

Her, who was to be the Mother of God himself; this

dignity in itself included many perfections. Saint Anne

lived fifty-six years, portioned off into the following

periods; at the age of twenty-four she espoused saint

Joachim and she remained without issue for twenty

years ; then in the forty- fourth year she gave birth to the

most holy Mary, and of the twelve years which she lived

during the lifetime of Mary, three were passed in her

company and nine during her absence in the temple,

which altogether make fifty-six years.

724. Concerning this great and admirable woman, as

I have been informed, some grave authors assert, that

saint Anne was married three times and that in each one

of these marriages she was the mother of one of the

three Marys; others have the contrary opinion. The

Lord has vouchsafed to me, solely on account of his

goodness, great enlightenment concerning the life of this

fortunate saint; yet never was it intimated to me that

she was ever married except to saint Joachim, or that

she ever had any other daughter besides Mary, the

Mother of Christ. Perhaps because it does not per

tain to nor was necessary for the history which I

am writing, information was not given to me whether

the other Marys who are called her sisters, were or were

not her cousins, that is daughters of the sister of saint

Anne. When her spouse saint Joachim died, she was in

the forty-eighth year of her age, and the Most High

selected and set her apart from the race of women, in

order to make her the mother of Her, who was the Su

perior of all creatures, inferior only to God, and yet his

Mother. Because of her having such a Daughter and of

her being the grandmother of the Word made man, all

the nations may call the most fortunate saint Anne

blessed.

556 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION BY THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

725. My daughter, the most valuable science of man

is to know how to resign himself entirely into the hands

of his Creator, since He knows why he has formed him

and for what end each man is destined. Man s sole duty

is to live in obedience and in the love of his Lord. God

will charge himself most solicitously with the care of

those that thus confide in Him; He will take upon Him

self the management of all the affairs and all the events

of this life in order to draw blessings and benefits for

those that thus trust in his fidelity. He afflicts and cor

rects the just by adversities, He consoles and rejoices

them with his favors, He inspires them with hope in his

promises, and threatens them and inspires them with fear

by his threats; He absents Himself in order to attract

their love, He shows Himself to the souls in order to

reward and preserve them in fervor, and in all these

things He makes the lives of the chosen ones more de

lightful and beautiful. All this happened to me in that

which thou hast written of me ; He visited me and pre

pared me in his mercy with many different kinds of bless

ings, difficulties and labors, persecutions of creatures,

and the separation from my parents and from all men.

726. In the midst of these various trials the Lord did

not forget my weakness, for with the sorrow for the

death of my mother, holy Anne, He combined the con

solation and comfort of permitting me to be present at

her death. O my soul, how many blessings do men lose

by not attaining to this wisdom! They hold themselves

aloof from the divine Providence, which is powerful and

sweet and unfailing, which measures the orbs of heaven

and the elements; which counts the footsteps, discerns

the thoughts, and disposes everything for the benefit of

THE CONCEPTION 557

the creatures. Instead of all this men are given over to

their own solicitudes, which are inefficient and weak,

blind, uncertain and inconsiderate. From this false be

ginning originate and follow irreparable evils for man;

for he deprives himself of the divine protection and falls

from the dignity of having his Creator as his Helper and

Defender. What is still worse, if by his carnal wisdom

and by diabolical astuteness to which man resigns him

self, he succeeds sometimes in obtaining what he seeks,

he deems himself fortunate on account of this, his own

misfortune! And with sensible pleasure he imbibes the

poison of eternal death in the deceitful delight, which he

has gained, while incurring the alienation and abhorrence

of his God.

727. Mind well, then, my daughter, this danger, and

let thy whole solicitude be to cast thyself securely into

the arms of thy provident God and Lord. He being in

finite in wisdom and power, loves thee much more than

thou lovest thyself, and He knows and desires for thee

greater goods, than thou ever canst learn to desire and

request. Confide in his goodness and in his promises,

which do not admit of failure; remember what He says

through his Prophet to the just: that it is well with man

(Is. 3, 10) since God takes upon Himself his desires and

cares, and charges Himself with them in order to deal

with them according to his generosity. By means of

this most secure confidence thou wilt even in this mortal

life enjoy the blessedness of a tranquil and peaceful con

science; and although thou mayest find thyself sur

rounded by the tempestuous waves of trial and adversity

which cast over thee the sorrows of death (Psalm 17,

5), and although the terrors of hell may surround Thee,

suffer thou and hope in patience, so that thou err not

from the portal of the grace and the good will of the

Most High.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MOST HIGH MANIFESTS HIMSELF TO F.IS BELOVED

MARY, OUR PRINCESS, BY CONFERRING ON HER AN

EXTRAORDINARY FAVOR.

728. Already our heavenly Princess felt that the day

of the clear vision of the Divinity was approaching and

that like the harbingers of early dawn, the rays of the

divine light were breaking upon her soul. Her heart

began to be inflamed by the nearness of the invisible fire,

which illumines but does not consume; and made atten

tive by this new clearness, She questioned her angels

and said to them : "My friends and lords, my most faith

ful and vigilant sentinels, tell me : what hour is it of my

night? And when will the bright light of the day arise,

in which my eyes shall see the Sun of justice which

illumines them and gives life to my affections and my

soul?" The holy princes answered Her and said:

"Spouse of the Most High, thy wished-for light and

truth is near; it will not tarry long, for already it ap

proaches." At these words the veil which hid the view

of these spiritual substances was slightly lifted; and the

holy angels became visible, showing themselves as dur

ing her first years in their own essence, without hin

drance or dependence of the bodily senses.

729. With these hopes and with the vision of the heav

enly spirits the anxieties of most holy Mary concerning!

the sight of her Beloved were somewhat allayed. But

this kind of love seeks after the most noble Object, and

without It, although enjoying the presence of the angels

558

THE CONCEPTION 559

and saints, the heart, wounded by the arrows of the Om

nipotent, will not come to rest Nevertheless, our heav

enly Princess, rejoiced by this alleviation, spoke to her

angels and said to them : "Sovereign Princess and flames

of that inaccessible light, in which my Beloved dwells,

why have I for so long a time been unworthy of your

sight? Wherein have I been displeasing to you and

failed to satisfy you? Tell me, my lords and teachers,

wherein I have been negligent, in order that I may not

again be forsaken by you through my own fault." "O

Lady and Spouse of the Almighty," they answered, "we

obey the voice of our Creator and are governed by his

holy will, and as his spirits, He commissions us and sends

us out in his service. He commanded us to conceal our

selves during the time in which He himself withdrew

from sight. But though hidden we remained present,

solicitous for thy protection and defense, fulfilling his

command by remaining in thy company without being

visible."

730. "Tell me then, where is my Lord at the present

time, my highest God, my Maker. Tell me, whether

my eyes shall see Him soon, or whether perhaps I have

displeased Him, in order that I may, as a most insignifi

cant creature, bitterly bewail the cause of this punish

ment. Ministers and ambassadors of the highest King,

be moved by my afflicted love and give me tokens of my

Beloved." "Soon, O Lady," they answered, "Thou shalt

see Him whom thy soul desires, let thy sweet sorrows

turn to hope; our God will not withhold Himself from

those that seek Him so truly; great, O Mistress, is his

loving Goodness with all those that cling to Him and He

will not be niggardly in satisfying thy wishes." The

holy angels openly called Her Mistress, as they were sure

of her most prudent humility and as they could conceal

560 CITY OF GOD

the full meaning of this title under pretense of her posi

tion as Spouse of the Most High ; for She knew that they

had been eye-witnesses of the espousal, which his Ma

jesty had celebrated with their Queen. And as his wis

dom had ordered, that in all else, except in the title and

dignity of Mother of the Word, which was to remain

concealed to Her until the proper time, the holy angels

were to show Her great reverence; so they were solici

tous to give Her many tokens of respect, although they

covertly honored Her much more for what they knew in

secret, than for that which they manifested to Her

openly.

731. During these conferences and loving colloquies

the heavenly Princess awaited the approach of her

Spouse and her highest delight, while the seraphim, who

attended Her, commenced to prepare Her by new en

lightenment of her faculties ; a sure pledge of the begin

ning of the Good for which She hoped. But as these

favors augmented the fire of her love without allowing

Her as yet to reach the desired end, they only augmented

the heartrending anguish of her love, and with sighs

She spoke to the seraphim, saying: "Most exalted spirits,

who stand close to my highest Good, ye clear mirrors,

whence reflected I was wont to see Him in the joy of

my soul, tell me, where is the light which illuminates

you and fills you with beauty? Tell me, why does my

Beloved tarry so long? Tell me, what hides Him, and

why my eyes cannot see Him? If it is through my fault,

I will amend my ways ; if I do not merit the fulfillment

of my wishes, I will conform myself to his will; and if

He seeks his pleasure in my sorrow, I will suffer in the

joy of my heart; but tell me, how can I live without

having my own life? How shall I direct myself with

out light?"

THE CONCEPTION 561

732. To her sweet complaints the holy seraphim an

swered : "Lady, thy Beloved is not absent when for thy

good He tarries and withholds Himself ; in order to con

sole his beloved, He afflicts them, in order to give so

much the more joy, He aggrieves them, in order to be

sought after, He withdraws from them. He wishes that

Thou sow in tears (Psalm 125, 5), and so gather after

wards the sweet fruits of sorrow. If the Beloved did

not hide Himself, He would not be sought after with

that anxiety which is caused by his absence, nor would

the soul renew its affections, nor increase in the apprecia

tion due to that Treasure."

733. They transmitted to Her that light, of which I

have spoken (No. 625), in order to purify her faculties;

not because there were any defects to be remedied, for

She could not be guilty of any defects. On the contrary

all her actions and operations during the absence of the

Lord had been meritorious and holy. Nevertheless it

was necessary that She be endowed with new gifts, in

order to tranquilize her spirit and her faculties, which

had been moved by affectionate labors and anxieties

during the absence of the Lord, and also in order to with

draw Her from her present state and raise Her to a posi

tion, where She could enjoy new and different favors,

for in order that her faculties might again be propor

tioned to the high Object and to the manner of enjoying

It, they must necessarily be renewed and redisposed. All

this the holy seraphim proceeded to do with Her in the

manner already described in book second, chapter four

teenth. When the Lord conferred upon Her the final

adornment and the quality necessary for the immediate

vision about to take place.

734. As far as I can explain, this successive elevation

of the faculties of the heavenly Queen engendered those

562 CITY OF GOD

particular affections and sentiments of love and virtues

which the Lord desired, and in the midst of these eleva

tions his Majesty withdrew the veil. Then after his

long concealment He manifested Himself to his only

Spouse, his beloved and most holy Mary, by an abstrac

tive vision of the Divinity. Although this vision was

given through abstractive images and not intuitive, yet it

was most clear and exalted in its kind. By it the Lord

dried the continual tears of our Queen, rewarded her

affection and her loving anxiety, satisfied all her desires

and overwhelmed Her with delight as She reclined in the

arms of her Beloved (Cant. 8, 5). Then was renewed the

youth of that aspiring Eagle, winging its flight into the

impenetrable regions of the Divinity (Psalm 102, 5), and

by the after-effects of this vision She ascended whither no

other creature can ascend, or no other intellect can reach

outside of God s.

735. The joy which filled the most pure Mistress on

the occasion of this vision must be measured as well by

the extreme sorrow through which She had passed as by

the accumulation of merits which She had gained. I can

only say that, in so far and by how much sorrow had

abounded, so also now overflowed her joy; and that her

patience, her humility, her fortitude, her constancy, her

loving anxieties were the most remarkable and the most

exquisite that ever until that time or ever after could

have existed or can exist in any creature. This most

unparalleled Lady alone could understand the excellence

of that wisdom and could appreciate the greatness of the

loss sustained in being deprived of the vision of God and

in being far from his presence. She alone having suf

fered and measured this great loss in humility, and with

fortitude, to make it conducive to her sanctification by

ineffable love, and afterwards to appreciate the blessings

and the joy of its recovery.

THE CONCEPTION 563

736. Being 1 then elevated to this vision and having

prostrated Herself in the divine presence, the most holy

Mary said to his Majesty: "Lord and most high God,

incomprehensible and highest Good of my soul, since

Thou raisest up such a poor and worthless worm as my

self, receive, O Lord, in humble thankfulness of my soul,

the homage due from me to thy goodness and glory, to

gether with that which thy courtiers render unto Thee;

and if any of the service which came from me, so low

and earthly a creature, has displeased Thee, reform that,

which in my works has been unsatisfactory to Thee, my

Lord. O Goodness and Wisdom incomparable and in

finite, purify my heart and renew it, in order that it may

be pleasing, humble, penitent and acceptable in thy sight.

If I have not borne the insignificant troubles and the

death of my parents as I should, and if I have in any

thing erred from that which is pleasing to Thee, perfect

my faculties and all my works, O most high God, as my

powerful Lord, as my Father, and as the only Spouse of

my soul."

737. To this humble prayer the Most High an

swered: "My Spouse and my Dove, the grief for the

death of thy parents and the sorrow occasioned by the

other troubles is the natural effect of human nature and

no fault; and by the love with which Thou has con

formed Thyself to the dispositions of my Providence in

all things, Thou hast merited anew my graces and my

blessings, I am the One that distributes the true light

and its effects by my wisdom ; I am the Lord of all, that

calls forth the day and the night in succession; I cause

tranquillity and I set bounds to the storms, in order that

my power and my glory may be exalted and in order

that through them the soul might steer more securely

with the ballast of experience and hasten more expedi-

564 CITY OF GOD

tiously through the violent waves of tribulation, arriv

ing- at the secure harbor of my friendship and grace,

and obliging Me by the fullness of merit to receive it

with so much the greater favor. This, my Beloved, is

the admirable course of my wisdom and for this reason

I concealed Myself during all that time from thy sight;

for from Thee I seek whatever is most holy and most

perfect Serve Me then, my beautiful One, who am thy

Spouse, thy God of infinite mercy and whose name is

admirable in the diversity and variety of my great

works."

738. Our Princess issued from this vision altogether

renovated and made godlike; full of the new science of

the Divinity and of the hidden sacraments of the King,

confessing Him, adoring Him, and praising Him with

incessant canticles and by the flights of her pacified and

tranquilized spirit. In like proportion also was the in

crease of her humility and of all the other virtues. Her

most ardent prayer was to penetrate more and more

deeply into that which is most perfect and most pleas

ing to the will of the Most High, and to fulfill and exe

cute it in her actions. Thus passed a number of days,

until that happened, which is to be related in the next

chapter.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

OUR MISTRESS.

739. My daughter, many times I shall repeat to thee

the lesson containing the greatest wisdom for souls,

which consists in the knowledge of the cross, in the

love of sufferings, and in putting this knowledge into

practice by bearing afflictions with patience. If the con

dition of mortals were not so low, they would covet

sufferings merely for the sake of their God and Lord,

THE CONCEPTION 565

who has proclaimed them to be according to his will

and pleasure; for the faithful and loving servant should

always prefer the likings of his lord to his own con

venience. But the worldlings in their torpidity are

moved neither by the duty of conforming to their

Father and Lord, nor by his declaration that all their

salvation consists in following Christ in his sufferings

and that his sinful children must reap the fruit of the

Redemption by imitation of their sinless Chief.

740. Accept then, my dearest, this doctrine and en

grave it deeply into thy heart. Understand that as a

daughter of the Most High, as a spouse of my Son,

and as my disciple, even if from no other motive, thou

must acquire the precious gem of suffering and thus be

come pleasing to thy Lord and Spouse. I exhort thee,

my daughter, to select the sufferings of his Cross in

preference to his favors and gifts and rather embrace

afflictions than desire to be visited with caresses; for in

choosing favors and delights thou mayest be moved by

selflove, but in accepting tribulations and sorrows, thou

canst be moved only by the love of Christ. And if pref

erence is to be given to sufferings rather than to de

lights, wherever it can be done without sin, what fool

ishness is it, when men pursue so blindly the deceitful

and vile delights of the senses, and when they abhor so

much all that pertains to suffering for Christ and for

the good of their soul?

741. Thy incessant prayer, my daughter, should be

always to repeat : here I am, Lord, what wilt Thou do

with me? Prepared is my heart, I am ready and not

disturbed; what dost Thou wish me to do for Thee?

These sentiments should fill thy heart in their full and

true import, repeating them more by sincere and ardent

affection, than by word of mouth. Let thy thoughts be

566 CITY OF GOD

exalted, thy intentions most upright, pure and noble,

desiring to fulfill in all things the greater pleasure of

the Lord, who with measure and weight dispenses both

sufferings and the favors of his graces. Examine and

search within thyself without ceasing, by what senti

ments, by what actions, and in what occasion thou may-

est guard against offense and in what thou canst please

thy Beloved most perfectly, and thus learn what thou

must strive to correct or what thou must aspire to with

in thyself. Every disorder, be it yet so small, and all

that may be less pure and perfect, see thou curtail and

expunge immediately, even though it seem allowable or

even of some profit; all that is not most pleasing to the

Lord, thou must consider as evil, or as useless for thy

self ; and no imperfection must appear small to thee, if

it is displeasing to God. With this anxious fear and

holy solicitude thou shalt walk securely; and be certain,

my dearest daughter, that it cannot enter into the mind

of man, what copious reward the most high Lord re

serves for those souls that live in this kind of attention

and solicitude.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE MOST HIGH COMMANDS THE MOST HOLY MARY TO

ENTER THE STATE OF MATRIMONY AND HER RE

SPONSE TO THIS COMMAND.

742. At the age of thirteen and a half years, having

grown considerably for her age, our most charming

Princess, most pure Mary, had another abstractive

vision of the Divinity of the same order and kind as

those already described. In this vision, we might say,

happened something similar to that which the holy

Scriptures relate of Abraham, when God commanded

him to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, the only pledge

of all his hopes. God tempted Abraham, says Moses

(Gen. 12, 2), trying and probing the promptness of

his obedience in order to reward it. We can say the

same thing of our great Lady, that God tried Her in

this vision, by commanding Her to enter the state of

matrimony. Thence we can also understand the truth

of the words: How inscrutable are the judgments of

the Lord and how exalted are his ways and thoughts

above our own (Rom. 11, 33) ! As distant as heaven

is from earth, were the thoughts of most holy Mary

from the plans which the Most High now made known

to Her, by commanding Her to accept a husband for

her protection and company; for as far as depended

upon her will She had desired and resolved during all

her life not to have a husband (433, 586) and She had

often repeated and renewed the vow of chastity, which

She had taken at such a premature age.

567

568 CITY OF GOD

743. As already mentioned, the Lord had celebrated

his solemn espousal with the Princess Mary (435) when

She was brought to the temple, confirming and approv

ing her vow of chastity, and solemnizing it by the pres

ence of the glorious hosts of angels. The most inno

cent Dove had withdrawn Herself from all human in

tercourse, relinquishing entirely all that might be called

worldly interest and attention, or love and desire of

creatures. She was altogether taken up and transformed

by the pure and chaste love of that highest Good which

never fails, knowing that She would be only more

chaste in its love, more pure in its contact, and more

virginal in its acceptance. When therefore, without any

other explanation, the command of the Lord reached Her,

that She now accept an earthly spouse and husband,

what surprise and astonishment was it to this heav

enly Maid, who, in her fixed confidence was living

so secure in the possession of God himself as her Spouse

and who now heard from Him such a command?

Greater was this trial than that of Abraham (Gen. 22,

1, etc.), for he did not love Isaac in the same degree as

most holy Mary loved inviolate chastity.

744. Nevertheless at this unexpected command the

most prudent Virgin suspended her judgment, and pre

served the calmness of her hope and belief more per

fectly than Abraham. Hoping against hope (Rom. 4,

18), She made answer to the Lord saying: "Eternal

God and incomprehensible Majesty, Creator of heaven

and earth, and of all things contained therein, Thou, O

Lord, who weighest the winds (Job 28, 25), and by

thy commands settest bounds to the sea and subjectest

all creation to thy will, canst dispose of me, thy worth

less wormlet, according to thy pleasure, without mak

ing me fail in that which I have promised to Thee ; and

THE CONCEPTION 569

if it be not displeasing to Thee, my good Lord, I con

firm and ratify anew my desire to remain chaste dur

ing all my life and to have Thee for my Lord and

Spouse ; and since my only duty as a creature is to obey

Thee, see Thou to it, my Spouse, that according to thy

Providence I may escape from this predicament in which

thy holy love places me." There was, however, some

uneasiness in the most chaste maiden Mary, as far as

her inferior nature was concerned, just as happened

afterwards at the message of the archangel Gabriel

(Luke 1, 8) ; yet, though She felt some sadness, it did

not hinder Her from practicing the most heroic obedi

ence which until then had fallen to her lot, and She re

signed Herself entirely into the hand of the Lord. His

Majesty answered her: "Mary, let not thy heart be dis

turbed, for thy resignation is acceptable to Me and my

powerful arm is not subject to laws; by my disposition

that will happen, which is most proper for Thee."

745. Consoled only by this vague promise of the

Lord, most holy ; Mary recovered from her vision and

returned to her ordinary state. Left between doubt and

hope by the divine command and promise, She was full

of solicitude, for the Lord intended that She should

multiply Her tearful sentiments of love and confidence,

of faith, humility, of obedience, of purest chastity and

of other virtues, impossible to enumerate. In the mean

time, while our great Lady applied Herself to vigilant

prayer, and to her resigned and prudent sighs and so

licitude, God spoke in sleep to the high priest, saint

Simeon, and commanded him to arrange for the mar

riage of Mary, the daughter of Joachim and Anne of

Nazareth ; since He regarded Her with special care and

love. The holy priest answered, asking what was his

will in regard to the person, whom the maiden Mary

38

570 CITY OF GOD

was to marry and to whom She was to give Herself as

Spouse. The Lord instructed Him to call together the

other priests and learned persons and to tell them that

this Maiden was left alone and an orphan and that She

did not desire to be married; but that, as it was a cus

tom for the firstborn maidens not to leave the temple

without being provided for, it was proper She should

be married to whomever it seemed good to them.

746. The highpriest obeyed the divine order and, hav

ing called together the other priests, he made known to

them the will of the Most High, informing them of the

favor in which his Majesty held this Maiden, Mary of

Nazareth, according as it had been revealed to him. He

told them that as She was an inmate of the temple and

was now without parents, it was their duty to provide for

Her and find a husband worthy of a Maiden so modest,

virtuous and of such unimpeachable conduct as was hers

in the temple. Moreover, as Mary was of noble lineage

and as her property and other considerations made this

marriage particularly important, it was necessary to con

sider well to whom She was to be entrusted. He added

also that Mary of Nazareth did not desire to be mar

ried; but that at the same time it would not be proper

to dismiss Her from the temple unmarried, since She

was an orphan and a firstborn daughter.

747. Having conferred about this matter among

themselves the priests and learned men, moved by divine

impulse, concluded that, in a matter where so much was

involved and where the Lord himself had favorably in

terfered, it would be best to inquire farther into his

holy will and to ask Him to designate in some manner

who should be the most appropriate person to be the

spouse of Mary. Knowing that her spouse must be of

the house and of the race of David in order to comply

THE CONCEPTION 571

with the law, they appointed a day, on which all the free

and unmarried men of that race, who then might be in

Jerusalem, were to be called together in the temple. It

happened to be the very day on which our Princess com

pleted her fourteenth year. As it was necessary to

notify Her of the result of their conference and to ask

Her consent, the highpriest Simeon called Her and in

formed her of their intention to give Her a spouse be

fore dismissing Her from the temple.

748. The most prudent Virgin, with a countenance

betokening virginal modesty, answered the priest with

great composure and humility: "Sir, as far as my in

clinations are concerned, I desire to preserve perpetual

chastity during all my life; for I wished to dedicate

myself to God in the service of this holy temple in re

turn for the great blessings which I have received in it;

I never had the intention or the desire to enter the state

of matrimony, since I consider myself incapable of ful

filling the duties connected with it. This was my in

clination, but thou, my master, who art to me in place

of God, wilt teach me what is according to his holy

Will." "My Daughter," answered the priest, "thy holy

desires are acceptable to the Lord; but remember, that

no maiden of Israel abstains from marriage as long as

we expect the coming of the Messias conformably to the

divine prophecies. Therefore all who obtain issue of

children among our people, esteem themselves happy

and blessed. In the matrimonial state Thou canst serve

God truly and in great perfection; and in order that

Thou mayest obtain a companion according to the heart

of God and who will be conformable to thy wishes, we

will pray to the Lord, as I have told Thee, asking Him

to single out a husband for Thee, who shall be pleasing

to Him and of the line of David; do Thou also pray

572 CITY OF GOD

continually for the same favor, in order that the Most

High may favor Thee and may direct us all."

749. This happened nine days before the one ap

pointed for the execution and realization of their re

solve. During this time the most holy Virgin multi

plied her prayers, beseeching the Lord with incessant

tears and sighs, to fulfill his divine pleasure in that

which She had so much at heart. On one of those nine

days the Lord appeared to Her and said to Her: "My

Spouse and my Dove, let thy afflicted heart expand and

let it not be disturbed or sad ; I will attend to thy yearn

ings and to thy requests, I will direct all things, and will

govern the priests by my enlightenment; I will give

Thee a spouse selected by Myself, and one who will put

no hindrance to thy holy desires, but who, by my grace

will prosper Thee in them. I will find for Thee a per

fect man conformable to my heart and I will choose him

from the number of my servants; my power is infinite,

and my protection and aid shall never fail Thee."

750. The most holy Mary answering said: "Highest

Good and Love of my soul, Thou well knowest the secret

of my bosom and my desires, which Thou hast excited

in me from the first moment of the existence received

from Thee; preserve me, then, my Spouse, pure and

chaste, as I have desired for Thee and through Thee.

Do not despise my sighs and deprive me not of thy

countenance. Remember, my Lord and God, that I am

but a useless wormlet, weak and despicable on account

of my insignificance; and if I should fall away from

virtue in the state of matrimony, I shall disappoint Thee

and my desires; provide Thou for my security and be

not deterred by my demerits. Although I am but use

less dust (Gen. 18, 27), I will call on thy greatness, O

Lord, trusting in thy infinite mercies."

THE CONCEPTION

573

751. The most chaste Maiden also approached her

holy angels, whom She surpassed in sanctity and purity,

and conferred with them many times concerning her

anxieties in regard to the new state, which She was ex

pected to enter. One day the holy spirits said to Her:

"Spouse of the Most High, since Thou canst not ignore

this title, nor much less the love which He, who is al

mighty and unfailing in his truth, has shown Thee, let

thy heart, O Mistress, be at peace; for sooner will the

heavens and the earth fail, than the fulfillment of his

promises (Matth. 24, 27). All the events of thy life

succeed each other according to the foreknowledge of

thy Spouse; and his powerful arm, which governs the

elements and all creatures, can suspend the forces of the

impetuous waves and temper the vehemence of the ele

ments, so that neither fire will burn nor the earth show

its weight His high judgments are secret and holy, his

decrees are most just and wonderful, nor can creatures

comprehend them; though they must revere them. If

his Majesty wishes that Thou serve Him in matrimony,

it will be better for Thee to please Him therein, than to

displease Him in some other state of life. He will no

doubt provide for Thee the most holy and perfect ; trust

Thou securely in his promises." This advice of the

angels quieted somewhat the anxieties of our Princess.

She asked them anew for protection and assistance, and

that they present to the Lord in her name her entire

subjection to that which his divine pleasure should or

dain in her regard.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE PRINCESS OF

HEAVEN.

752. My dearest daughter, most high and venerable

are the judgments of the Lord, and they should not be

574 CITY OF GOD

scrutinized by mortals, since they are impenetrable. His

Majesty commanded me to enter the state of matrimony

and at the same time concealed from me the sacrament

dependent upon entering it. Matrimony was required,

in order that my parturition might be respectable in the

eyes of the world, and that the Word, made incarnate

in my womb, might be reputed as the son of my hus

band, since at the same time the world was to remain

ignorant of this mystery. It was also a suitable means

to conceal this mystery from Lucifer and the demons,

who in such rage were bent on wreaking their fury

upon me. When they saw me enter the married state

as other women, their fury was appeased, not thinking

it compatible, that She should have a husband, who was

to be the Mother of God himself; Lucifer himself was

somewhat quieted by this means and made a truce with

his malice. The Lord had also other ends in view,

which have become manifest, although, on account of

circumstances, they were hidden to me at that period of

my life.

753. I wish Thee to understand, my daughter, that

the certain prospect of being espoused to any man, with

out at the same time knowing the mystery concealed

from me by the Lord, was the greatest sorrow and af

fliction, which until then I had ever experienced; and if

the divine power had not strengthened me in this pain,

and had not given me some kind of confidence, although

it was only obscure and undetermined, I would have lost

my life in this suffering. But from this event thou

shouldst learn how complete must be the resignation of

the creature to the will of the Most High, and how it

must restrict its shortsighted judgment and guard

against scrutinizing the secrets of a Majesty so exalted

and mysterious. If any danger or difficulty seems to

THE CONCEPTION 575

present itself in that which the Lord commands, let

man confide in Him and firmly believe that he was not

placed therein in order to be forsaken, but in order that

he may come forth victorious and triumphant, if he co

operates on his own part with the assistance given by

the Lord. Whenever the soul seeks to scrutinize the

decrees of his wisdom and satisfy itself before it obeys

and believes, let it be convinced that it defrauds the

Creator of its glory and honor, and at the same time

loses for itself the merit of its works.

754. I was aware that God is superior to all crea

tures and that He had no need of our foresight ; for He

seeks only the subjection of our will, since the creature

cannot give Him counsel, but only obedience and praise.

And although, on account of not knowing what He

wished of me and ordained for me in the state of matri

mony, the love, which I had for chastity caused me

much affliction; yet that grievous sorrow did not make

me curious and inquisitive, but served to make my obe

dience more excellent and pleasing in his eyes. By this

example thou thyself must regulate the subjection to

that which thou perceiyest to be according to the pleas

ure of the Lord thy Spouse, resigning thyself entirely to

his protection and confiding in the firmness of his prom

ises. And wherever thou hast the approbation of thy

priests and superiors, allow thyself to be governed with

out any resistance to their commands and to the divine

aspirations.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ESPOUSAL OF MOST HOLY MARY WITH THE MOST

CHASTE SAINT JOSEPH.

755. On the day on which, as we have said in the pre

ceding chapter, our Princess Mary completed the four

teenth year of her life, the men, who at that time in the

city of Jerusalem were descendants of the tribe of Juda

and of the race of David, gathered together in the tem

ple. The sovereign Lady was also of that lineage.

Among the number was Joseph, a native of Nazareth,

and then living in Jerusalem; for he was one of the de

scendants of the royal race of David. He was then

thirty-three years of age, of handsome person and pleas

ing countenance, but also of incomparable modesty and

gravity; above all he was most chaste in thought and

conduct, and most saintly in all his inclinations. From

his twelfth year he had made and kept the vow of chas

tity. He was related to the Virgin Mary in the third

degree, and was known for the utmost purity of his life,

holy and irreprehensible in the eyes of God and of men.

756. All these unmarried men gathered in the temple

and prayed to the Lord conjointly with the priests, in

order to be governed by the holy Spirit in what they

were about to do. The Most High spoke to the heart of

the highpriest, inspiring him to place into the hands of

each one of the young men a dry stick, with the com

mand that each ask his Majesty with a lively faith, to

single out the one whom He had chosen as the spouse

of Mary. And as the sweet odor of her virtue and no-

576

THE CONCEPTION 577

bility, the fame of her beauty, her possessions and her

modesty, and her position as being the firstborn in her

family was known to all of them, each one coveted the

happiness of meriting Her as a spouse. Among them

all only the humble and most upright Joseph thought

himself unworthy of such a great blessing; and remem

bering the vow of chastity which he had made and re

solving anew its perpetual observance, he resigned him

self to God s will, leaving it all to his disposal and being

filled at the same time with a veneration and esteem

greater than that of any of the others for the most noble

maiden Mary.

757. While they were thus engaged in prayer the staff

which Joseph held was seen to blossom and at the same

time a dove of purest white and resplendent with ad

mirable light, was seen to descend and rest upon the

head of the saint, while in the interior of his heart God

spoke : "Joseph, my servant, Mary shall be thy Spouse ;

accept Her with attentive reverence, for She is accept

able in my eyes, just and most pure in soul and body,

and thou shalt do all that She shall say to Thee." At

this manifestation and token from heaven the priests de

clared saint Joseph as the spouse selected by God him

self for the maiden Mary. Calling Her forth for her

espousal, the Chosen one issued forth like the sun, more

resplendent than the moon, and She entered into the

presence of all with a countenance more beautiful than

that of an angel, incomparable in the charm of her

beauty, nobility and grace ; and the priests espoused Her

to the most chaste and holy of men, saint Joseph.

758. The heavenly Princess, more pure than the stars

of the firmament, with tearful and sorrowful counte

nance and as the Queen of majesty, most humble yet

uniting all perfections within Herself, took leave of the

578

CITY OF GOD

priests, asking their blessing, and of her instructress and

her companions, begging their pardon. She gave thanks

to all of them for the favors received at their hands dur

ing her stay in the temple. The humility of her be

havior enhanced the prudence and aptness of her words

for the performance of these last duties in the temple;

for on all occasions She spoke in few and weighty

words. She took leave of the temple not without great

grief on account of the sacrifice of her inclinations and

desires. In the company of attendants who were some

of the more distinguished laymen in the service of the

temple, She betook Herself with her spouse Joseph to

Nazareth, the native city of this most fortunate married

couple. Joseph, although he had been born in that place,

had, by the providential disposition of circumstances,

decided to live for some time in Jerusalem. Thus it

happened that he so improved his fortune as to become

the spouse of Her, whom God had chosen to be his own

Mother.

759. Having arrived at their home in Nazareth,

where the Princess of heaven had inherited the pos

sessions and estates of her blessed parents, they were

welcomed and visited by their friends and relatives

with the joyful congratulations customary on such occa

sions. After they had in a most holy manner complied

with the natural duties of friendship and politeness, and

satisfied the worldly obligations connected with the con

versation and intercourse of their fellowmen, the two

most holy spouses, Joseph and Mary, were left at leisure

and to their own counsel in their house. Custom had

introduced the practice among the Hebrews, that for the

first few days of their married state the husband and

wife should enter upon a sort of study or trial of each

others habits and temperament, in order that afterwards

THE CONCEPTION 579

they might be able to make reciprocal allowance in their

conduct one toward the other.

760. During this time saint Joseph said to his spouse

Mary : "My spouse and Lady, I give thanks to the Lord

most high God for the favor of having designed me as

your husband without my merits, though I judged my

self unworthy even of thy company; but his Majesty,

who can raise up the lowly whenever He wishes, showed

this mercy to me, and I desire and hope, relying on thy

discretion and virtue, that Thou help me to make a

proper return in serving Him with an upright heart.

Hold me, therefore, as thy servant, and by the true love

which I have for thee, I beg of thee to supply my

deficiencies in the fulfillment of the domestic duties and

of other things, which as a worthy husband, I should

know how to perform ; tell me, Lady, what is thy pleas

ure, in order that I may fulfill it."

761. The heavenly Spouse heard these words with an

humble heart, and yet also with a serene earnestness,

and She answered the saint: "My master, I am fortu

nate, that the Most High, in order to place me in this

state of life, has chosen thee for my husband and that

He has given me such evident manifestation of his will,

that I serve thee; but if thou givest me leave I will

speak of my thoughts and intentions, which I wish to

manifest to thee for this purpose." The Most High

forestalled the sincere and upright heart of saint Jo

seph with his grace and inflamed it anew with divine

love through the word of most holy Mary, and he an

swered Her, saying: "Speak, Lady, thy servant hears."

On this occasion the Mistress of the world was sur

rounded by the thousand angels of her guard, in visible

form. She had asked them to be present in that man

ner, because the Lord, in order that the most pure Vir-

580 CITY OF GOD

gin might act with greater grace and merit, had per

mitted her to feel the respect and reverence, with which

She was bound to speak to her husband and left her to

the natural shyness and dread, which She always felt in

speaking to men alone; for She had never done this,

except perhaps by accident with the highpriest.

762. The holy angels obeyed their Queen and, visible

only to Her, stood in attendance. In this glorious com

pany She spoke to her spouse saint Joseph, and said to

him: "My lord and spouse, it is just that we give

praise and glory with all reverence to our God and Cre

ator, who is infinite in goodness and incomprehensible

in his judgments. To us, who are so needy, He has

manifested his greatness and mercy in choosing us for

his service. I acknowledge myself among all creatures

as more beholden and indebted to Him than all others,

and more than all of them together; for, meriting less,

I have received from his liberal hand more than they.

At a tender age, being compelled thereto by the force of

this truth, which, with the knowledge of the deceitful-

ness of visible things, his divine light made known to

me, I consecrated myself to God by a perpetual vow of

chastity in body and soul ; his I am and Him I acknowl

edge as my Spouse and Lord, with fixed resolve to pre

serve for Him my chastity. I beseech thee, my master,

to help me in fulfilling this vow, while in all other things

I will be thy servant, willing to work for the comfort of

thy life as long as mine shall last. Yield, my spouse, to

this resolve and make a like resolve, in order that, of

fering ourselves as an acceptable sacrifice to our eternal

God, He may receive us in the odor of sweetness and

bestow on us the eternal goods for which we hope."

763. The most chaste spouse Joseph, full of interior

joy at the words of his heavenly Spouse, answered Her:

THE CONCEPTION 581

"My Mistress, in making known to me thy chaste and

welcome sentiments, thou hast penetrated and dilated

my heart. I have not opened my thoughts to Thee be

fore knowing thy own. I also acknowledge myself un

der greater obligation to the Lord of creation than other

men; for very early He has called me by his true en

lightenment to love Him with an upright heart; and I

desire Thee to know, Lady, that at the age of twelve

years I also made a promise to serve the Most High

in perpetual chastity. On this account I now gladly

ratify this vow in order not to impede thy own; in the

presence of his Majesty I promise to aid Thee, as far

as in me lies, in serving Him and loving Him according

to thy full desires. I will be, with the divine grace, thy

most faithful servant and companion, and I pray Thee

accept my chaste love and hold me as thy brother, with

out ever entertaining any other kind of love, outside the

one which Thou owest to God and after God to me."

In this conversation the Most High confirmed anew the

virtue of chastity in the heart of saint Joseph, and the

pure and holy love due to his most holy spouse Mary.

This love the saint already had in an eminent degree,

and the Lady herself augmented it sweetly, dilating his

heart by her most prudent discourse.

764. By divine operation the two most holy and

chaste Spouses felt an incomparable joy and consolation.

The heavenly Princess, as one who is the Mistress of all

virtues and who in all things pursued the highest per

fection of all virtues, lovingly corresponded to the de

sires of saint Joseph. The Most High also gave to saint

Joseph new purity and complete command over his nat

ural inclinations, so that without hindrance or any trace

of sensual desires, but with admirable and new grace,

he might serve his spouse Mary, and in Her, execute his

582 CITY OF GOD

will and pleasure. They immediately set about dividing

the property inherited from saint Joachim and Anne,

the parents of the most holy Virgin; one part they of

fered to the temple, where She had stayed, another they

destined for the poor, and the third was left in the hands

of the holy spouse saint Joseph to be disposed of accord

ing to his judgment. Our Queen reserved for Herself

only the privilege of serving Him and of attending to

the household duties. For from intercourse with out

siders and from the management of property, buying or

selling, the most prudent Virgin always kept aloof, as I

will mention farther on (552, 553).

765. In his former life saint Joseph had learnt the

trade of carpentering as being a respectable and proper

way of earning the sustenance in life. He was poor in

earthly possessions, as I have said above. He therefore

asked his most holy Spouse, whether it was agreeable to

Her, that he should exercise his trade in order to be

able to serve Her and to gain something for distribution

among the poor ; since it was necessary to do some work

and not to remain idle. The most prudent Virgin ap

proved of this resolve, saying that the Lord did not wish

them to be rich, but poor and lovers of the poor, desir

ous of helping them in as far as their means would

allow. Then arose between the two Spouses a holy con

test, who should obey the other as superior. But She,

who among the humble was the most humble, won in

this contest of humility; for as the man is the head of

the family, She would not permit this natural order to

be inverted. She desired in all things to obey her

spouse saint Joseph, asking him solely for permission to

help the poor, which the saint gladly gave.

766. As saint Joseph during these days by divine en

lightenment learnt to know more and more the qualities

THE CONCEPTION 583

of his spouse Mary, her rare prudence, humility, purity

and all her other virtues exceeding by far his thoughts

and estimates, he was seized with ever new admiration

and, in great joy of spirit, continued to praise and thank

the Lord again and again for having given him a Com

panion and Spouse so far above his merits. And in

order that this work of the Most High might be entirely

perfect (for it was the beginning of the greatest, which

He was to execute by his Omnipotence) He ordained

that the Princess of heaven, by her mere presence and

intercourse, should infuse into the heart of her spouse a

holy fear and reverence greater than words could ever

suffice to describe. This effect was wrought upon saint

Joseph by an effulgence or reflection of the divine light,

which shone from the face of our Queen and which was

mingled with an ineffable and always visible majesty.

So much the more was this due to Her than to Moses

descending from the mountain, (Exod. 24, 30) as her

intercourse and conversation with God had been more

extended and intimate.

767. Soon after most holy Mary had a vision of the

Lord, in which God spoke to Her: "My most beloved

Spouse and Chosen one, behold how faithful I am to

my promises with those who love Me. Correspond

therefore now to my fidelity by observing all the laws of

a spouse, in holiness, purity and all perfection and let

the company of my servant Joseph, whom I have given

Thee, help thee thereto. Obey him as thou shouldst

and listen to his advice." The most holy Mary re

sponded: "Most high Lord, I praise and magnify Thee

for thy admirable disposition and providence in my re

gard, though I am so unworthy and poor a creature;

I desire to obey Thee and please Thee as one hav

ing greater obligation to Thee than any other. Be-

584 CITY OF GOD

stow upon me, my Lord, thy divine favor, in order

that I may be assisted in all things and governed accord

ing to thy pleasure, and also in order that I may attend

to the duties of the state, in which Thou hast placed

me, never as Thy slave erring from thy commands and

wishes. Show me thy good will and blessing and with

it I will strive to obey and serve thy servant Joseph,

in such a manner as Thou, my Lord and Maker, com-

mandest."

768. On such heavenly beginnings was founded the

home and the married life of the most holy Mary and

saint Joseph. From the eighth of September, when

they were espoused, until the twenty-fifth of March fol

lowing, when the Incarnation of the divine Word took

place (as I will say in the second part), the two Spouses

thus lived together, being prepared in the meanwhile for

the work designated for them by the Most High.

769. But I cannot at this juncture withhold my words

of congratulation at the good fortune of the most happy

among men, saint Joseph. Whence is it, O man of God,

that thou among all sons of Adam, shouldst have the

happiness and good fortune of possessing God himself

in such a manner, that He conducted Himself and was

reputed as thy only Son? The eternal Father gives to

Thee his Son, and the Son gives to thee his true and

real Mother, and the Holy Ghost entrusts to thee his

Spouse, while the whole blessed Trinity in its turn

yields and espouses to thee as thy legitimate wife its

chosen One, its only One, elect as the sun? Dost thou

realize, O Saint, thy dignity? Dost thou know thy ex

cellence? Dost thou understand, that thy Spouse is the

Queen and Lady of heaven and earth and that Thou art

the depositary of the inestimable treasures of God him

self? Be mindful, man of God, of thy entrusted pledge

THE CONCEPTION 585

and know, that if thou art not envied by the angels and

seraphim, thou hast certainly filled them with wonder

and astonishment at thy good fortune and at the sacra

mental mystery connected with thy matrimony. Accept

the congratulations for such great happiness in the name

of the whole human race. Thou art the archive of the

history of the divine mercies, the master and spouse of

Her, who is inferior only to God himself; thou findest

thyself enriched and prosperous in the sight of all men

and of the angels themselves. Remember our poverty

and misery, and remember me the most worthless worm

of the earth: for I desire to be thy client, blessed and

favored by thy powerful intercession.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

770. My daughter, in the example of the matrimonial

life wherein the Most High placed me, thou findest a

reproof for those souls, who allege their life in the world

as an excuse for not following perfection. To God

nothing is impossible, and nothing is likewise impossible

to those, who with a lively faith, hope in Him, and re

sign themselves entirely to his divine Providence. I

lived in the house of my spouse with the same perfec

tion as in the temple; for in changing my state of life I

altered neither my sentiments nor the desire and anxiety

to love and serve God; on the contrary I added to my

solicitude lest the obligations of a spouse should hinder

me in God s service. On this account God favored me

and disposed and accommodated powerfully all things in

conformity to my desires. The Lord will do the same

for all men, if on their part they correspond. They

however blame the state of matrimony, deceiving them

selves; for the hindrance to a holy and perfect life, is

not the state, but the vain and superfluous cares and

39

586 CITY OF GOD

anxieties, in which they involve themselves forgetting

the sweetness of the Lord and seeking and preferring

their own.

771. And if there is no excuse for not living a perfect

life in the world, still less will the duties and obliga

tions of the religious state be an excuse. Never imagine

thyself exempt from the pursuit of perfection on account

of being a superioress; for since God has placed thee

in office by obedience, thou must not despair of his

assistance and protection ; He himself will each day as

sume the responsibility of strengthening thee and helping

thee to fulfill thy duties, without relaxing in the pursuit

of a perfect love due to God. Oblige Him by the

sacrifice of thy own will, submitting in humble patience

to all that his divine Providence may ordain. If thou

dost not hinder the course of his Providence, I assure

thee of his protection and of the power of his divine arm

to direct thee and guide all thy actions toward perfec

tion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN EXPLANATION OF CHAPTER xxxi OF THE PROVERBS

OF SOLOMON, TO WHICH THE LORD REFERRED ME RE

GARDING THE LIFE OF MOST HOLY MARY IN MATRI

MONY.

772. As soon as the Princess of heaven, Mary, found

Herself so unexpectedly in the new state of matrimony,

She raised her pure soul to the Father of light for illu

mination and direction in the fulfillment of all its obli

gations according to his pleasure. In order to give me

some insight into her holy thoughts at this time, the

Lord referred me to the last chapter of the Proverbs, in

which Solomon outlined the virtues of our Lady in de

scribing the qualities and doings of a valiant woman.

Discoursing on this chapter I will say as much as I can

of what I was made to understand regarding Her. The

chapter begins with the words : "Who shall find a valiant

woman? The price of Her is as of things brought from

afar off and from the uttermost coasts." This question

is one implying admiration in regard to our great and

valiant woman Mary and a doubt in regard to all other

women, when compared with Her; for none other as

valiant can be found in the whole range of the human

and natural existence. All the others are weak and

wanting, not one being exempt from tribute to the demon

through the guilt of sin. Who then will find another

woman? Not the kings and monarchs, nor the princes

of the earth, nor the angels of heaven, nor the divine

power itself will find another, since it had not created

587

588 CITY OF GOD

another like Her : She is the only one, without a peeress

or one resembling Her, who was exalted in dignity ac

cording to the measure of his own Omnipotence. For

He could not have given Her more than his own eternal

Son, consubstantial, equal to Him in immensity, un

created and infinite.

773. Accordingly the price of this Woman is as some

thing coming from afar, since upon earth and among

creatures there was none like to Her. The price of a

thing is the value for which a thing is bought or at

which it is estimated ; then is its price known, when it is

known at what value it is held or estimated. The price

of this valiant woman Mary was set in the council of

the most blessed Trinity, when God himself claimed or

purchased Her for Himself in advance of all the other

creatures, having received Her in real purchase as a sort

of return for the creation of the whole human nature.

The price and payment, which He gave for Mary, was

the incarnate Word itself and the eternal Father (ac

cording to our way of speaking) considered Himself

sufficiently repaid by Mary. For finding this valiant

Woman in his divine mind, He set such a value on Her,

that He devoted his only Son to be at the same time his

Son and Hers: and the Son himself took from Her

human flesh and chose Her as Mother. Thus this pur

chase price by which the Most High acquired and

appropriated Her, included his wisdom, goodness, omnip

otence, justice and all other attributes, and all the

merits of his Son, releasing beforehand the whole human

race from debt; so that, if all men were to be lost as

Adam had lost himself, He would still have left Mary

and her Son. Hence truly She was estimated at a price

so distant, that all creation would not be able to reach

an estimate and appreciation of it. This is meant by the

saying "that She came from afar."

THE CONCEPTION 589

774. By this term "afar" are also to be understood

the ends of the earth; for God is the last end and the

beginning of all creation, from which all things proceed

and to which all things return, as the streams return

to the sea (Eccles. 1, 7). Also the empyrean heaven

is the final material end of all corporeal matter; and it

is called in an especial way the footstool of the Divinity

(Isaias 66, 1). Yet, in another sense, the end of natural

life and the full perfection of virtue might be called the

ends of the earth, for in these is fulfilled the purpose of

man s natural existence; being called forth by the Crea

tor for the knowledge and love of God, He himself is

the ultimate and most apparent end of life and action.

All this is included, when the price of most holy Mary

is said to come from the farthest ends. Her graces,

gifts and merits came and commenced from the ultimate

regions, they began where those of the other saints,

the Virgins, Confessors, Martyrs, Apostles and Patri

archs ended : they in all their lives and all their sanctity

did not arrive at the point where Mary merely com

menced. And if Christ, her Son and our Lord, calls

Himself the end of the works of Abraham, so can it be

said with equal justice, that the price of most holy Mary

is as from the farthest ends; for all her purity, inno

cence and sanctity came from her most holy Son as the

exemplary, anteceding and principal cause of Her alone.

775. "The heart of her husband trusteth in Her, and

he shall have no need of spoils." (Prov. 31, 11). It is

certain that the heavenly Joseph is called the husband

of this valiant Woman, as he had legitimately espoused

Her; and it is also certain, that his heart confided in

Her, believing that on account of her incomparable vir

tues all true blessings would come to him. But especially

did he trust in Her when he perceived her pregnancy

590 CITY OF GOD

and yet was ignorant of its mysterious origin; for then

he believed and hoped against hope (Rom. 4, 18) ; all

indications being adverse and having no other founda

tion for his hopeful belief, than the holiness of such a

Spouse and Wife. And although he resolved to leave

Her (Matth. 1, 19) as he saw the outward tokens of

pregnancy with his own eyes without the slightest knowl

edge of the cause ; yet he never ventured to distrust her

honor and modesty, nor did he ever diminish in his holy

and pure love, with which his most upright heart was

bound to such a Spouse. Nor was he disappointed in

anything, nor was he in need of spoils; for if spoils are

things that are superfluous, then this man was abundant

ly supplied with them, as soon as he knew who was his

Spouse and what belonged to Her.

776. But this heavenly Mistress had another Man,

who confided in Her, and to Him principally does Solo

mon refer ; and this Man was her own Son, the true God

and Man, who confided in this Woman to the extent of

his own life and honor in the face of all creation. In

this confidence was included the greatness of both these,

his life and his honor; for neither God could confide

more to Her, nor could She correspond better so as to

assure Him of superabundant return. O what a miracle

of the infinite power and wisdom! That God should

trust Himself to a mere creature and a woman, assum

ing flesh in her womb and of her very substance! To

call her Mother with unchangeable confidence, and She

to call Him Son, nurse Him at her breast and have Him

subject to her commands! That She should be his Co-

adjutrix in the rescue and restoration of the world,

the Depositary of the Divinity, the Dispensatrix of his

infinite treasures and of the merits of his most holy

Son, and of all the merits of his life, his miracles, his

THE CONCEPTION 591

preaching, his death and of all the other mysteries! All

this He confided to most holy Mary. But our wonder

increases, when we find that He was not frustrated in

his confidence; for we see that a mere Creature recog

nized and could adequately fulfill such a trust, without

failing in the least point, and in such a manner, that

She could not act with greater faith, love, prudence,

humility and perfection of all holiness. Her Man found

Himself in no need of spoils, but rich, prosperous and

well supplied with honor and renown. Therefore Scrip

ture adds :

777. "She will render him good, and not evil, all the

days of her life." That for which most holy Mary

makes a return to her Man, I understand to be the bless

ing, which Christ, her true Son, rendered unto Her ;

for what, She herself rendered is already mentioned.

The equity, which the Lord observes in remunerating

with the greatest blessings and favors even the smallest

good deed, w r ill enable us to form some idea of those

which flowed from the divine power upon our Queen

during her life. They commenced from the first instant

of her existence and were showered upon Her more

abundantly than upon the highest angels as a fitting ad

junct of her preservation from original sin; She cor

responded with these favors in an adequate manner and

co-operated with them to the utmost limit, and all the

deeds of her life were without remissness, negligence or

tardiness. What wonder then, that only her most holy

Son was superior to Her and that all the rest of the

creatures were left behind as it were at an infinite dis

tance ?

778. "She hath sought wool and flax, and hath

wrought by the counsel of her hands." A well beseem

ing praise and worthy of a valiant woman: that she

592 CITY OF GOD

should be industrious and diligent within her home, spin

ning flax and weaving linen for the shelter and comfort

of her family, providing these things for the inmates

and for others, who may be benefited thereby. This is

profitable counsel, which is put in practice by hands in

dustrious and not idle; for the idleness of a woman,

who lives from hand to mouth, is a proof of base fool

ishness and of other vices, which cannot be imputed

without shame. In this exterior virtue, which in a

married woman is the foundation of good domestic

management, most holy Mary was a valiant woman and

a worthy example to all the womankind. For She was

never idle, but was diligently engaged in preparing linen

and wool for her spouse and for her Son and for many

poor, whom She aided by the labor of her hands. Never

theless, since She joined in the most perfect manner the

works of Martha with those of Mary, She was more

busy with the counsels of her heart in regard to interior

works than in the works of her hand. Preserving the

memory of the divine visions and the sayings of the holy

Scriptures, She was never interiorly at leisure, but con

tinued to utilize and increase the gifts and virtues of her

soul. Accordingly the text continues:

779. "She is like the merchant ship, she bringeth her

bread from afar." As this visible world is called an un

quiet and stormy sea, those that live upon it and are

tossed about upon it, can appropriately be called ships.

All are engaged in this navigation in order to earn their

bread, namely the sustenance and the maintenance of

this life, which is meant by bread. That vessel brings

its bread from the farthest distance, which is farthest

from what it is to procure; and that, which spends

more labor upon it, gains the more, since it brings it

from afar by so much the greater difficulty. There is a

THE CONCEPTION 593

sort of agreement between God and man, that while

they, as servants cultivate the earth and work upon it

in the sweat of their brow, making use of the secondary

causes by which the Lord of all succors them, the earth

in return should sustain man and pay him for his per

spiration and labor. What happens in regard to this

temporal contract, happens also in regard to the spiritual,

namely, that he who does not work shall also not eat.

780. Among all the children of Adam most holy Mary

was the rich and prosperous merchant ship, which

brought her own and our bread from afar. No one ever

was so discreetly diligent and zealous in the government

of her house; no one so solicitous for that, which in

divine prudence She deemed necessary for its support

and for succoring the needy. She merited and earned

all this by the most prudent solicitude, by which She

brought it from afar; for She was far removed from

our vicious nature and from all its doings. How much

She thus acquired, merited and distributed to the needy

ones is impossible to conceive. But still more estimable

and admirable was the spiritual and living Bread, which

She drew down from heaven for us; for She not only

drew It from the bosom of the Father, whence It would

not have descended, if It had not been drawn by this

valiant Woman, but It would never have come to this

world, so greatly unworthy of It, if It had not been

brought in the ship of Mary. Although She could not,

as a mere creature, merit the advent of God into the

world, yet She merited the hastening of his advent,

and She merited, that He should come in the rich ship of

her womb; for, since God could not take abode in any

other inferior to Her in merit, She alone induced Him

to become visible and to communicate Himself, and to

nourish those who were so far off.

594 CITY OF GOD

781. "And She hath risen in the night, and given a

prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens."

Not less laudable is this activity of the valiant woman,

that she deprived Herself of the repose and sweet rest

of the night in order to govern her family, directing her

domestics, her husband, her sons and relations, and also

her servants to perform their duties and all that is neces

sary for the welfare of the family. This kind of valor

and prudence does not look upon night as the time for

disengaging itself and forgetting in sleep its duties and

obligations ; withdrawal from work should not be sought

merely to satisfy a whim, but as a necessary means for

returning to it so much the more ardently. Our Queen

was truly admirable in this prudent kind of economy;

although She had no servants in her family, because her

love of obedience and humility did not permit her to

charge any one but Herself with the servile duties of the

house; nevertheless, in the care for her most holy Son

and for her spouse Joseph, She rendered the most vigi

lant service and never was She guilty of any remissness,

forgetfulness, tardiness, or inadvertency in providing

what was necessary for them, as I shall have occasion

to relate in the whole of the succeeding discourse.

782. But what tongue could ever describe the untir

ing watchfulness of this valiant Woman? She arose

and was on her feet in the night, when divine secrets

were still withheld from her heart; and in the hidden

darkness of the mystery of her matrimony She lived

in vigilant hope of its unravelment, attentive to execute

humbly and obediently, whatever was commanded to

Her. She provided all the necessary nourishment for her

domestics and servants, namely her interior faculties and

her exterior senses, and distributed to each one its sus

tenance in the labor of the day, so that while they were

THE CONCEPTION 595

engaged in the outward service, the spirit might not find

itself needy and unprovided. She commanded the fac

ulties of her soul to follow the inviolable rule of seek

ing its sustenance from the light of the Divinity, of

being incessantly occupied in the ardent meditation and

contemplation of the holy law day and night, never al

lowing it at any time to be withdrawn therefrom by

exterior work or occupation of her state of life. This

was the government and the nourishment of the servants

of her soul.

783. Also to the other servants, the exterior senses,

She distributed their legitimate occupation and nourish

ment; making use of the jurisdiction, which She pos

sessed over these faculties, She commanded, that, as

servants, they serve the spirit ; that, though in the world,

they be dead to it and ignore its vanities and live solely

in as far as was necessary for nature and grace; that

they be not taken up with sensible delights, except in

so far as the superior part of the soul should allow and

communicate by its overflowing influence. She placed

boundaries and limits to all their operations, so that

without the slightest imperfection they were appropriated

to the sphere of divine love, all of them serving and

co-operating with it without resistance, unwillingness or

tardiness.

784. In another way also She arose and governed Her

Domestics. For there was another kind of night in

which this valiant Woman rose and other servants for

which She provided. She arose in the night of the an

cient Law, in the obscure dawn of the future light : She

came into the world at the decline of that night and with

ineffable foresight She proffered and distributed the

nourishment of grace and of eternal life to all her do

mestics and to the servants, namely her own people, to

596

CITY OF GOD

the rest of the human race, to the holy Fathers and the

just of her own nation, and to the sinners, slaves and

captives of all the world. And She gave it so truly and

so fully, that the nourishment was taken from her own

substance and from her own blood, since it originated in

her virginal womb.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED: THE REST OF THE

THIRTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF THE PROVERBS is EX

PLAINED.

785. No quality of a valiant woman could be want

ing in our Queen, for She was the fountain of virtue and

of grace. Our text continues in the sixteenth verse:

"She hath considered a field and bought it: with the

fruits of her hand She hath planted a vineyard." The

field of highest perfection, where the abundant and fra

grant fruits of virtue are reared, was the one which

most holy Mary considered; and as She was inspecting

and taxing it by the clearness of the divine light, She

recognized the treasure, which was buried in it. In

order to buy this field She exchanged for it her prop

erty rights in all the earth, of which She was truly the

Queen and Mistress, preferring the possession of this

field to all other things and abdicating in favor of it the

use and right of all her possessions. This Mistress alone

could dispose of all creation, for She alone had the full

possession of it, and She alone could buy the whole field

of holiness. She alone could examine and estimate its

full value and She alone, next to God, appropriated to

Herself, the field of the Divinity and its attributes, while

the other saints could appropriate only a part "With

the fruits of her hands She hath planted a vineyard."

She planted the holy Church, not only by giving us her

most holy Son to form and constitute it, but by being

Herself his Coadjutrix, and after his Ascension, remain-

597

598 CITY OF GOD

ing the Mistress of the Church, as will be related in

the third part of this history. She planted the vineyard

of the paradise, which that fierce beast Lucifer had

ruined and devastated, thus restoring it to fruitfulness

by her solicitude. She planted the vineyard of her

most great and magnanimous heart, setting in it the

sprouts of virtue and the most fertile vines, from which

Christ in the winepress of the Cross distilled the most

sweet wine of his love to inebriate his beloved and

nourish his friends (Cant. 5, 1).

786. "She hath girdled her loins with strength, and

hath strengthened her arm." The greatest strength of

those who call themselves strong is in their arm, with

which they perform hard and difficult works : and the

most difficult work of earthly men consists in restrict

ing their passions and inclinations and subjecting them

to reason. Therefore the holy text says of this valiant

Woman, that She both girds her loins and strengthens

her arm. Our Queen was subject to no passions or dis

orderly inclinations, which She would have to suppress

in her most innocent person ; but this did not hinder Her

from being more courageous in restricting Herself than

all the children of Adam, whose interior is thrown into

disorder by the consequences of sin. Without having

need thereof her virtues and her love urged Her to

practice greater mortification than the most wicked in

clinations could ever have required. None of those, who

were infected by sin and who were bound to satisfy for

it, ever exerted such strength in mortifying their dis

orderly passions, as our Princess Mary exerted in gov

erning and mortifying more and more all her faculties

and senses. She chastised her most innocent and vir

ginal body by incessant penances, watchings, fasts,

prostrations in the form of the cross, as we shall say

THE CONCEPTION 599

later on (Part II, 12, 232, 442, 568, 898, 990, 991 ; Part

III, 581) ; She denied to her senses all rest and indul

gence, not because they were in disorder, but so as con

tinually to perform what was most holy and acceptable

before God, being never weak, never remiss or negligent

in bringing all her works to the full measure and efficacy

of grace.

787. "She hath tasted and seen that her traffic is

good : her lamp shall not be put out in the night." The

Lord is so kind and faithful with creatures, that, when

He commands us to gird ourselves with mortification

and penance, (since the kingdom of heaven suffers vio

lence and must be gained by force (Matth. 12, 12), on

account of this violence to our inclinations, He rewards

our efforts with a joy and consolation, that fill our

heart with delight. By this joy we know how good is

this exchange of the highest good for those works of

mortification by which we restrain our hankering after

temporal pleasure; for as a prepayment we receive the

joys of the Christian truth and in it a pledge of eternal

life. And the more we engage in this kind of com

merce, the more we will gain and the greater will be

our esteem for this commerce.

788. If we, who are subject to sin, experience this

truth, how much more intimately did most holy Mary

understand and appreciate it? And if in us, in whom

the night of sin is so dense and persistent, the divine

light of grace can be preserved by means of penance

and mortification of our passions, how must this light

have burned in the heart of that most pure Creature?

She was not oppressed by the infection of our gross and

corrupted nature; She had not been scorched by the

tinder of disobedience; She was not stung by the re

proaches of a bad conscience, nor by the fear of actual

600 CITY OF GOD

sin; and besides all this She was enlightened beyond all

conception of angels or men : She understood well and

enjoyed this kind of commerce, without extinguishing,

in the troubles and dangers of this life, the light-giving

lamp of the Lamb (Apoc. 31, 19).

789. "She hath put out her hand to strong things,

and her ringers have taken hold of the spindle." The

valiant Woman, who with the exertion and the labor of

her hands increases her virtues and the goods of her

family, who girds Herself with fortitude against her

passions, who recognizes the delights of the commerce

of virtue, could well extend and reach out her hand to

ward great things. Most holy Mary, did this unhindered

by her state and its obligations; for, elevating Herself

above Herself and above all earthly things, She enlarged

her aspirations and extended her operations to what was

greatest and mightiest in the spheres of divine love and

knowledge, rising above all human and angelic natures.

And as with her espousal She approached nearer and

nearer to the dignity and state of Mother, She continued

to expand her heart and extend her hand to new works of

holiness, until She fitted Herself to co-operate in the

most arduous and sublime work of the divine Omnip

otence, namely the Incarnation of the Word. Of all

this I will say more in the second part, when explaining

the preparation of our Queen for this great mystery

(Part II, 1 to 160). And because the mere resolve or

determination to do great things and without their ful

fillment is futile and of no practical consequence, there

fore it is said : "And her fingers have taken hold of the

spindle," which means to say, that our Queen really

executed all the great, arduous and difficult works, ex

actly as She had intended and proposed in her most

well ordered mind. In all things She was found true,

THE CONCEPTION 601

and far from the exaggeration and mere outward show

of a woman, who carries the distaff at her girdle, but

does not take hold of the spindle. Therefore it is added :

790. "She hath opened her hand to the needy and

stretched out her hand to the poor." The prudent

woman and housewife shows great courage in being

liberal with the poor, never yielding to weakness of

mind, or cowardly diffidence, lest, on account of her

alms, her family should suffer; for the most powerful

means of increasing all possessions is to part liberally

with them for the poor of Christ, who even in this life

knows how to give a hundredfold in return (Marc. 10,

30). Most holy Mary distributed to the poor and to the

temple the inheritance of her parents, as I said above

(761) ; besides this She gave the labor of her hands to

assist in the works of mercy; for without contributing

her personal exertion and labor, She could not have

satisfied her pious and generous love of the poor. It

is no wonder, that the avaricious world of today should

feel want and poverty in temporal things, since men are

become so deficient in kindness and pity for the poor:

they use that, which God created for the sustenance of

the needy and for the salvation of the rich, only for

satisfying their vanities.

791. Our most kind Queen and Lady, however, did

not extend only her own hands to the poor: She also

drew forth the Almighty hand of the omnipotent God;

for as yet He had not extended the helping hand of his

divine Word towards mortals, who did not merit, or

rather, who were making themselves unworthy of such

a favor, this valiant Woman gave Him hands, hands

extended and opened for the benefit of us poor captives

afflicted by the misery of sin. Because this neediness

and poverty was the lot of all men, Scripture uses the

40

602 CITY OF GOD

word "poor" in the singular; for all the human race was

like one poor person, capable of providing for itself no

more than if all men had been only one single poor

person. The hands of our Savior, Christ our Lord,

extended for our Redemption and opened for the dis

tribution of his gifts and merits, were none other than

the very hands of most holy Mary ; for He, as her Son,

had them from Her and without Mary the unfortunate

race would never have seen them opened for their relief.

They were hers also in many other respects.

792. "She shall not fear for her house in the cold of

snow: for all her domestics are clothed in double gar

ments." Having lost the Sun of Justice, the warmth

of grace and original justice, our nature was buried un

der the frozen snow of sin, with all its power for doing

good restricted, impeded and congealed. Thence arise

the difficulties in the performance of holy works, the

slowness of our actions, our inattention and negligence,

our instability and numerous other defects in the practice

of virtue; thence it comes, that we find ourselves, after

the commission of sin, deprived of the love of God,

without shelter or covering against temptations. Our

heavenly Queen was free from all these impediments and

defects in body and soul; for all her domestics, that is

her interior and exterior faculties, were sheltered from

the frost of sin by double vestments. On the one hand

She was protected by original justice and the infused

virtues, together with the virtues acquired by her own

exertions from the first moment of her activity. On

the other hand She was also protected by the double

vestment of the common graces, which She received on

her own account, and those, which She received in an

especial manner on account of her dignity as Mother of

God. I will not detain myself in describing her provi-

THE CONCEPTION 603

dent care for her own household ; for in other women the

care which they bestow in this matter, may be praise

worthy because it is necessary ; in the house of the Queen

of heaven and earth, most holy Mary, it was not neces

sary to multiply the garments: not for Her Son, since

He possessed but one; not for Herself, nor for her

spouse Joseph, since their poverty was their greatest

adornment and shelter.

793. "She hath made for herself clothing of tapestry :

fine linen, and purple is her covering." This metaphor

likewise indicates the spiritual adornments of this

Woman ; it was a garment variegated and strong, serving

completely as a covering and defending Her from the

inclemencies and rigors of the rainstorms; for this is

the purpose, for which strong blankets, raincoats and

the like are woven. The long cloak of virtue and gifts

of Mary was impenetrable to the powerful streams of

temptation and assault, which the great red and san

guinary dragon poured out against Her and which saint

John saw in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 1, 15). Greater

than the strength of this vestment was the beauty and

variety of her virtues, woven into it and not merely

apparent; for they had, so to say, become a part of her

flesh and blood, and of the substance of her nature from

the very moment, in which She obtained her existence

in grace and original justice. In Her were the purple

of charity, the white of chastity and purity, the azure

of hope, with all the other variety of gifts and graces,

which clothed Her about entirely and adorned Her in

all their beauty. Also the white and the red, which

the Spouse designates as the special tokens of the hu

manity and the Divinity of the Son, adorned Her (Cant.

5, 10) ; for as She gave to the Word the red of his

most holy Humanity, He in return gave her the splendor

604

CITY OF GOD

of the Divinity, not uniting both these natures in her

virginal womb, but leaving in his Mother emanations

and rays of the Divinity more excellent than in all the

other creatures together.

794. "Her husband is honorable in the gates, when

he sitteth among the senators of the land." Just as

in the olden times judgment was held under the city

gates, so at the portals of eternal life, judgment is pro

nounced separately over each one; whereas on the last

day we are to expect the general judgment of the whole

world. In the universal judgment saint Joseph, one of

the men of the most holy Mary, will take his seat among

the nobility of the kingdom of God; for he will sit in

judgment with the Apostles over the world, enjoying

this privilege as the spouse of the valiant Woman, the

Queen of all, and as the putative father of the supreme

Judge. The other Man of this Lady is her Son, as I

have already said (774), and He is acknowledged and

recognized as the supreme Lord and true Judge both in

the particular judgment, and in that, which is to be

held over the angels and all men. This supreme power

devolves in part also upon most holy Mary; for it was

She, who gave Him the flesh, with which He redeemed

the world.

795. "She made fine linen, and sold it, and delivered

a girdle to the Chananite." In this solicitous labor of

the valiant Woman are pointed out two excellences of

our great Queen. First She made a linen so pure, so

spacious and large, that the eternal Word, although He

had to constrain and limit his greatness, could descend

and clothe Himself in it, and She sold it to no one

else than the Lord himself, who gave Her in return his

own Son. For there was nothing in all creation, which

was of sufficient price to buy this linen sheet of the

THE CONCEPTION 605

purity and sanctity of Mary, nor could any man merit to

be her son, except the Son of God himself. She also

gave, not sold, most graciously, a cincture to the Chan-

anite, cursed by his father (Gen. 9, 25) ; for all those

that participated in the first malediction and were de

spoiled and subjected to disorderly appetites and inclina

tions, could now gird themselves anew by the cincture

which most holy Mary procured for them through her

only and firstborn and only Son and through the law

of grace. Thereby being able to reform themselves

and gird themselves with new strength. No excuse re

mains for the foreknown and the damned, angels and men,

since all of them had the means to restrain themselves

against their disorderly passions, equally with the predes

tined. For they can avail themselves of the graces gratui

tously obtained for them by most holy Mary and no pay

ment is required for them.

796. "Strength and beauty are her clothing, and she

shall laugh in the latter day." Another new adornment

and vestment of the valiant Woman are strength and

beauty: strength makes Her invincible in suffering and

in operating against the infernal powers; beauty gives

her exterior grace and admirable decorum in all her

actions. On account of these two prerogatives our

Queen was amiable in the eyes of God, and of the

angels, and of the world. She was not only free from

all reprehension of sin and defect, but She possessed

that double grace and beauty, which pleased and charmed

so much the holy Spirit, when He said, that She was

entirely beautiful and pleasing to Him (Cant. 4, 7).

And where there is no fault to be deplored, there also

is no cause of mourning on the last day, when none of

the mortals shall be without such cause except this our

Lady and her most holy Son. All others were tainted

606

CITY OF GOD

with some defect, for which they must grieve, and on

that day the damned will weep for not having properly

wept over their sins before. On that day this valiant

Woman shall be full of delight and joy, returning thanks

for her own incomparable felicity, as also for the execu

tion of the divine justice against the wicked and re

bellious by her most holy Son.

797. "She hath opened her mouth to wisdom, and the

law of clemency is on her tongue." This great excellency

of the valiant Woman is not to open her mouth for

ought except to teach the fear of the Lord, or in pur

suance of some work of clemency. This our Queen and

Lady fulfilled in the highest perfection. She opened

her mouth as the Mistress of wisdom, when She said

to the holy archangel : "Fiat mihi secundom verbum

tuum" (Luke 1, 38) and whenever She spoke, it was as

the most prudent Virgin and as one filled with the

knowledge of the Most High, as a Teacher to all, and

as one interceding for the miserable children of Eve. The

law of clemency was always on her lips, as a most kind

Mother of mercy and her intercession and prayer is by it

self an inviolable law, on which our deliverance depends

in all our necessities ; we are safe, if only we know how

to induce Her to open her mouth and move Her tongue

for our intercession.

798. "She hath looked well to the path of her house,

and hath not eaten her bread idle." It is no small honor

for the mother of a family to keep a strict watch over

all the ways of augmenting most unfailingly its property

and happiness; but in this divine prudence none except

Mary gave an altogether perfect example to mortals.

She alone knew how to investigate and search all the

ways to justice and to find the straight roads by which

with greater security and speed the Divinity can be

THE CONCEPTION 607

reached. She attained to this knowledge so expedi-

tiously, that She outstripped all mortals and even the

cherubim and seraphim themselves. She recognized and

detected good and evil, the height and the depth of

sanctity, the extent of human weakness, the astuteness

of our enemies, the dangers infesting the world and all

that is terrestrial. At the same time She put all her

knowledge into practice, never eating her bread idle,

and receiving neither her soul nor divine grace in vain

(Psalm 23, 4). And thus She merited what follows.

799. "Her children rose up, and called her blessed:

her husband, and he praised Her." Great and glorious

things have the true sons of this Woman said of Her

in the Church militant, calling Her most blessed among

women; and let not those, that have not risen up and

praised Her, call themselves Her children, nor learned,

nor wise, nor devout. Yet although all the saints of

the Church have spoken, being inspired and moved by

her Man and Spouse, Christ and the Holy Ghost, never

theless it seems as if He has as yet only kept silence

and has not yet risen to publish the countless and ex

alted mysteries concerning his most holy Mother. I

was given to understand, that they are so great as to be

reserved for revelation only in the triumphant Church

after the last judgment; for it would not be opportune

to manifest them now to this world, which is unworthy

and incapable of understanding such wonders. There

Christ will speak, the Man of Mary, in order to manifest

his and her glory, and for the joy of the saints, the

prerogatives and the excellences of that Lady; there

shall we know them in full. Here it is sufficient, that

we reverently recognize them under the veil of faith,

and that we live now in the hope of fully understanding

these great blessings in the future life.

608 CITY OF GOD

800. "Many daughters have gathered together riches:

thou hast surpassed them all." All the souls, that have

come to the attainment of the grace of the Most High,

are called his daughters; and all the merits, gifts and

graces, which they gained or could gain, are true riches^

for earthly possessions have unjustly usurped the name

of riches. Great will be the number of the predestined :

He that has enumerated the stars by their names knows

it (Psalm 144, 4). But Mary has gathered more riches

than all who are children of Adam and of Herself; She

alone attained such a position, not only so as to be

called their Mother, and they, her children ; but so as to

become the Mother of God himself ; for in this She far

surpasses all the glory that the entire number of the

predestined ever possessed or will possess. And because,

in comparison with these riches and gifts of interior

grace and their corresponding glory the exterior and

apparent outward appearance of women, which is held

in so high esteem by them, is but vanity, Solomon adds

and says:

801. "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain; there

fore the woman that feareth the Lord, shall be praised.

Give her of the fruits of her hands; and let her works

praise her in the gates." The world falsely esteems as

gracious many things, that are not so, and that have no

more of beauty and grace in them than what they derive

from the erroneous judgment of the ignorant; as for

example the outward appearance of virtue in our works ;

the pleasure excited by sweet and eloquent words; wit

and elegance in our speech or behaviour ; the benevolence

of superiors, or popularity. All this is deceitful and

fallacious, no less than the beauty of a woman, which

vanishes in so short a time. She who fears God and

teaches others to fear Him, merits truly the praise of

THE CONCEPTION 609

men and of the Lord himself. And because God him

self wishes to praise Her, Scripture says: "Give her of

the fruit of her hands:" He proportions his praise also

to the excellence of the deeds publicly known to Her,

and intimates, that these deeds themselves proclaim Her

praise. The praise of men is of small value to one who

degrades herself by her own conduct. Accordingly the

Most High wishes that the deeds of his most holy

Mother shall become manifest in the portals of his holy

Church in so far as is possible and opportune, as I said

above ; while the greater glory and praise is reserved for

Her in the heavenly Church and will endure through all

the ages and ages. Amen.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

802. In this chapter of holy Scriptures thou hast at

thy disposal many points of information for thy proper

guidance; and although thou hast not touched upon all

that it contains, yet I wish, that thou write in thy in

most heart, as well that which thou hast declared, as

also that which thou hast omitted, and I wish that thou

put it into practice. For this purpose it is necessary,

that thou live retired within thyself, forgetful of all the

visible and terrestrial things, most attentive to the divine

light, which assists thee and protects thy sensible facul

ties with double vestments against the influences of luke-

warmness and coldness on the way of perfection; and

it is necessary, that thou resist the incitements of thy

unruly passions. Gird them and restrict them by the

powerful means of the fear of God. Withdrawn from

the deceitful outward appearances, raise thy mind to

the contemplation and the understanding of thy interior

condition and of the paths, which the Lord has shown

thee for seeking Him in secret and for finding Him with-

610 CITY OF GOD

out danger of error. Having- once tasted the intercourse

with heavenly things, do not allow thy negligence to

extinguish in thy mind the divine light, that illumines

and enlightens thee in darkness. Eat not thy bread in

idleness; but work without relaxing in solicitude, and

then thou shalt eat of the fruit of thy diligence.

Strengthened by the Lord, thou wilt perform works

worthy of his regard and complaisance and thou wilt run

after the odor of his ointments until thou arrive at their

eternal possessions. Amen.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@ Volume 2 Incarnation @@@@@@@@@@@@@@

MYSTICAL

CITY OF GOD

THE MIRACLE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE

AND THE ABYSS OF HIS GRACE

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN

MOTHER OF GOD

OUR QUEEN AND OUR LADY, MOST HOLY MARY

EXPIATRIX OF THE FAULT OF EVE

AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Manifested in these later ages by that Lady to her handmaid

SISTER MARY OF JESUS

Superioress of the convent of the Immaculate Conception of the town

of Agreda, of the province of Burgos in Spain, under

obedience to the regular observance

of the seraphic father

SAINT FRANCIS

For new enlightenment of the world, for rejoicing

of the Catholic Church, and encouragement of men.

Translation from the Original Authorised Spanish Edition

BY

FISCAR MARISON

Begun on the Feast of the Assumption

1902

MdV

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I.

THE MOST HIGH BEGINS TO PREPARE IN MOST HOLY MARY THE

MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION; THE EVENTS OF THE NINE

DAYS PRECEDING THIS MYSTERY, ESPECIALLY THE HAPPENINGS

OF THE FIRST DAY 23

CHAPTER II.

THE LORD ON THE SECOND DAY CONTINUES HIS FAVORS IN PREPA

RATION FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD IN THE MOST

HOLY MARY 33

CHAPTER III.

WHAT FAVORS THE MOST HIGH CONFERRED ON MOST HOLY MARY

ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE NOVENA BEFORE THE INCARNATION 40

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOST HIGH CONTINUES HIS FAVORS TO MOST HOLY MARY ON

THE FOURTH DAY 47

CHAPTER V.

HIS MAJESTY MANIFESTS NEW MYSTERIES AND SACRAMENTS TO

GETHER WITH THE WORKS OF THE FIFTH DAY OF THE CREATION

TO MOST HOLY MARY, AND HER HIGHNESS CONTINUES TO PRAY

FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD 53

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOST HIGH MANIFESTS TO MARY, OUR MISTRESS, ADDITIONAL

MYSTERIES AND SHOWS HER THE WORKS OF THE SIXTH DAY

OF CREATION 61

vii

CONTENTS

CHAPTER XXIV.

MOST HOLY MARY LEAVES THE HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS AND RETURNS

TO HER HOME IN NAZARETH 244

CHAPTER XXV.

THE JOURNEY OF MOST HOLY MARY FROM THE HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS

TO HER HOME IN NAZARETH 251

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DEMONS HOLD A MEETING IN HELL IN ORDER TO TAKE COUNSEL

AGAINST MOST HOLY MARY 258

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LORD PREPARES MOST HOLY MARY TO MEET LUCIFER IN BATTLE

AND THE DRAGON BEGINS TO PERSECUTE HER 268

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LUCIFER WITH ALL HIS SEVEN LEGIONS PERSISTS IN TEMPTING

MOST HOLY MARY; SHE CONQUERS THE DRAGON AND CRUSHES

HIS HEAD 287

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I.

SAINT JOSEPH BECOMES AWARE OF THE PREGNANCY OF HIS SPOUSE,

THE VIRGIN MARY, AND IS FILLED WITH ANXIETY, AS HE

KNOWS THAT HE HAD NO PART IN IT 301

CHAPTER II.

THE ANXIETIES OF SAINT JOSEPH INCREASE; HE RESOLVES TO

LEAVE HIS SPOUSE, AND HE BETAKES HIMSELF TO PRAYER ON

THIS ACCOUNT 312

CHAPTER III.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD SPEAKS TO SAINT JOSEPH IN HIS SLEEP

AND MAKES KNOWN TO HIM THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNA

TION HIS BEHAVIOR THEREAFTER 322

CHAPTER IV.

SAINT JOSEPH ASKS PARDON OF THE MOST HOLY MARY, HIS

SPOUSE, AND THE HEAVENLY LADY CONSOLES HIM WITH

GREAT PRUDENCE . 332

CONTENTS xi

CHAPTER V.

SAINT JOSEPH RESOLVES TO DEVOTE HIMSELF ENTIRELY TO THE

SERVICE OF MOST HOLY MARY; THE BEHAVIOR OF HER MAJESTY,

AND OTHER PARTICULARS OF THE LIFE OF MARY AND JOSEPH . . . 343

CHAPTER VI.

SOME OF THE SAYINGS AND CONVERSATIONS OF MOST HOLY MARY

AND JOSEPH REGARDING DIVINE THINGS; OTHER WONDERFUL

EVENTS 353

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOST HOLY MARY PREPARES THE SWADDLING-CLOTHES AND

THE LINENS FOR THE DIVINE INFANT WITH ARDENT LONGINGS

TO SEE IT BORN 363

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EDICT OF OESAR AUGUSTUS IS PUBLISHED, COMMANDING ALL

SUBJECTS OF THE EMPIRE TO REGISTRATE ; AND WHAT SAINT

JOSEPH DID WHEN HE HEARD OF IT 374

CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNEY OF MOST HOLY MARY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM

IN THE COMPANY OF THE HOLY SPOUSE JOSEPH AND OF THE

HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS 382

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR IS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN BETHLEHEM,

JUDA 393

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOLY ANGELS ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD IN DIF

FERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD, AND THE SHEPHERDS COME

TO ADORE HIM 411

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT WAS CONCEALED FROM THE DEMON CONCERNING THE MYSTERY

OF THE BIRTH OF THE INCARNATE WORD, AND OF OTHER

HAPPENINGS UNTIL THE CIRCUMCISION.. . 420

xii CONTENTS

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOST HOLY MARY IS INFORMED OF THE WILL OF THE LORD,

THAT HIS ONLYBEGOTTEN SON BE CIRCUMCISED, AND SHE

CONFERS ABOUT IT WITH SAINT JOSEPH : THE MOST HOLY NAME

OF JESUS IS BROUGHT FROM HEAVEN 432

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DIVINE INFANT IS CIRCUMCISED AND RECEIVES THE NAME

JESUS 446

CHAPTER XV.

THE MOST HOLY MARY REMAINS IN THE PORTAL OF THE NATIVITY

UNTIL THE COMING OF THE MAGI KINGS 455

CHAPTER XVI.

THE THREE KINGS OF THE ORIENT COME TO ADORE THE WORD MADE

MAN IN BETHLEHEM 467

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MAGI KINGS RETURN ONCE MORE TO SEE AND ADORE THE INFANT

JESUS I THEY OFFER THEIR GIFTS ON TAKING LEAVE, AND RETURN

BY A DIFFERENT ROUTE TO THEIR HOMES 478

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOST HOLY MARY AND JOSEPH DISTRIBUTE THE GIFTS RECEIVED

FROM THE MAGI; AND THEY REMAIN IN BETHLEHEM UNTIL

THEIR DEPARTURE FOR THE PRESENTATION OF THE INFANT

JESUS IN THE TEMPLE 485

CHAPTER XIX.

MOST HOLY MARY AND JOSEPH DEPART WITH THE INFANT JESUS,

IN ORDER TO FULFILL THE LAW, BY PRESENTING HIM IN THE

TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM 496

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE INFANT JESUS IN THE TEMPLE AND

WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT OCCASION . . 506

CONTENTS xiii

CHAPTER XXL

THE LORD PREPARES THE MOST HOLY MARY FOR THE FLIGHT INTO

EGYPT ; THE ANGEL SPEAKS TO SAINT JOSEPH ; AND OTHER

MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH 516

CHAPTER XXII.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH BEGIN THE JOURNEY TO EGYPT; ACCOM

PANIED BY THE ANGELIC SPIRITS, THEY ARRIVE AT THE CITY

OF GAZA 529

CHAPTER XXIII.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH PURSUE THEIR JOURNEY FROM THE CITY

OF GAZA TO HELIOPOLIS IN EGYPT 539

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HOLY TRAVELERS, JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, ARRIVE IN EGYPT,

AND AFTER SOME WANDERINGS THEY COME TO HELIOPOLIS,

WHERE GREAT MIRACLES ARE WROUGHT 549

CHAPTER XXV.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DIVINE WILL, JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH

SETTLE DOWN TO DWELL NEAR THE CITY OF HELIOPOLIS AND

THEY REGULATE THEIR DAILY LIFE DURING THEIR BANISH

MENT 558

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF THE WONDERS WHICH THE INFANT JESUS, MOST HOLY MARY

AND JOSEPH WROUGHT AT HELIOPOLIS IN EGYPT 568

CHAPTER XXVII.

HEROD RESOLVES TO MURDER THE INNOCENTS : MOST HOLY MARY

IS AWARE OF THIS. SAINT JOHN IS CONCEALED BY HIS

RELATIVES 575

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT THE AGE OF ONE YEAR THE INFANT JESUS SPEAKS TO SAINT

JOSEPH AND REQUESTS HIS MOTHER TO CLOTHE HIM AND

ALLOW HIM TO WALK. HE COMMENCES TO CELEBRATE THE

DAY OF HIS INCARNATION AND OF HIS BIRTH 583

xiv CONTENTS

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MOST HOLY MOTHER CLOTHES THE INFANT JESUS IN THE

SEAMLESS TUNIC) SHE PUTS SHOES ON HIS FEET. THE DOINGS

AND OBSERVANCES OF THE LORD 591

CHAPTER XXX.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH RETURN TO NAZARETH AT THE COMMAND

OF THE LORD 601

What the Universities of Europe, the Religious

Orders and Learned Men Say of the

"Ciudad de Dios."

FORTY years after the first appearance of the

"Ciudad de Dios" the great universities of Europe

were called upon to give their opinion about this

great work. All the faculties, except the Jansenistic

members of the Sorbonne at Paris, published highest

recommendations. At the same time the learned men

and teachers of each religious order that maintained

institutions of learning in Europe, were asked to con

tribute their opinions. The following religious orders

complied: The Augustinians, Benedictines, Carmelites,

Dominicans, Jesuits, Cistercians, Basilians, Trinitarians,

Mercedarians, Minims, Hieronymites, Premonstraten-

sians, Reformed Augustinians, Theatines, Minors of the

Regular Clergy, all unanimously endorsing the favorable

decision previously published by the University of Sala

manca. To the approbation of nearly all the Univer

sities and Religious Orders, were then added the high

eulogiums of other learned men, great divines, bishops

and princes of the Church and of the Popes and the

Roman Congregations. As a sample of what these wit

nesses said concerning the wonderful "Ciudad de Dios,"

we here select the official approbation of the University

of Lou vain, one of the great Universities of Europe,

xv

xvi TESTIMONIES

After pointing out that God s power of giving private

revelations to whom He chooses, must not be circum

scribed, and after referring to some general rules in

regard to private revelations, the document proceeds to

say:

"Now, while abiding the decision of the Church con

cerning the revelations, which are given us under the

title of The City of God, we, having read the whole

work, say and are of the opinion, that the faithful can

read it without danger to their faith and without damage

to the purity of morals ; for there is not found anything

within it, which could lead to relaxation or to indiscreet

rigor; but on the contrary, we have come to the conclu

sion that it will be most useful for enlivening and aug

menting the piety of the faithful, the veneration of the

most holy Virgin, and the respect for the sacred

mysteries."

"The strong and the weak, the wise and the ignorant,

and in fine, all the world will gather richest fruit from

the reading of these books: for they contain what is

most sublime in theology and in a style so simple, easy

and perspicuous that, in order to enter deeply into an

understanding of the holy mysteries, no more is necessary

than to read them with sound judgment."

"Combined with this simplicity are found many doc

trines and valid proofs, free from contradictions and not

easily found in other writings. This History explains

more than a thousand difficulties in holy Scripture, in

a manner equally natural and wonderful. At every step

are encountered exquisite interpretations, until now un

known, and which had been hidden beneath the mere

TESTIMONIES xvii

letter, but are laid open in these writings and brought

to the light. In short, the whole work is a beautiful

web of scripture passages which, though spun from its

different books, are directly and specially woven into a

whole for the purpose intended by the Venerable Mother/

"In addition thereto the instructions given by the most

holy Virgin at the end of each chapter contain the purest

morality, instruct, entertain, and at the same time sweetly

inculcate the love of virtue and abhorrence of vice, paint

ing them in the most vivid and natural colours. They

do not only convince the intellect, but they contain such

a special unction, that they enkindle a sacred ardor in the

soul. In meditating upon them one certainly will expe

rience a delight not met with in ordinary writings; and

the more they are read the greater is the delight expe

rienced. Finally, the whole work contains something so

unwonted and attractive that, once begun, the reading of

it can scarcely be relinquished."

"The novelty and variety found in these writings

delight and recreate the reader beyond all that is pleasant

in the world, at the same time instructing him and in

spiring him with new fervor. All can easily persuade

themselves that, if the interior life of Christ our Lord

and of the most holy Virgin was not just as described in

these books, it could certainly have been like it ; and that

it would have been well worthy of Them, if it was as it

is there depicted. All that is there said is befitting the

majesty and humility of Christ, and in correspondence

with the holiness of the Virgin and the dignity of the

Mother; since there is found nothing in the whole work

which was not worthy of both one and the other.

"Notwithstanding all this, we should not at all won-

xviii TESTIMONIES

der if the book met with men who are disposed to be

critical ; for what book is there which can hope to escape

the opposition of the people of our times? God has not

even provided that the sacred Scriptures should be free

from such attack among the greater part of the learned

of this world. The whole philosophy of the pagans

causes them to join the number of those who are opposed

to the cross of Christ crucified ; and among that number

are also the libertines of our day."

"Of course there are certain points in this work which

might give rise to apparent difficulties, and some of them

occurred, and do occur, to us. But, in accordance with

what we have said of the excellence and usefulness of

this work, we have come to the conclusion that these few

passages must not hinder us from giving it the com

mendation already given; besides, we must confess that

we might possibly be ourselves mistaken in making these

objections."

This seemed to us the most reasonable course, since

in this book there is something more than human. Any

thing so excellent and sublime cannot be ascribed to an

over-excited imagination, since the whole work is con

sistent throughout. Nor can it be believed to be the

work of a perverted mind, for, with a constant equa

nimity, it treats of the most deeply hidden and abstruse

matters without involving itself in any contradictions;

though often also it descends to innumerable minute and

particular circumstances."

"There are contained in this work such noble, such

devout circumstantial and pertinent discourses, as cannot

be the result of mere discursive thought. Nor can it be

attributed to the demon; for, from beginning to end, it

TESTIMONIES xix

suggests and breathes nothing but humility, patience and

endurance of hardships."

"Therefore, just as Ciudad must without a doubt be

attributed to the venerable Mother of Agreda, who is

claimed as its author, so she cannot have composed it

without particular help from on high. Our conclusive

opinion is, that the City of God, for the good of the

public, and for the advantages to be derived therefrom,

should be brought forth to the light. This is our judg

ment, which we submit entirely to the supreme decision

of the Holy See, to whom alone belongs the right of

finally judging such writings."

Louvain, 20th of July 1715.

(Signed) HERMANN DAMEN,

Doctor, Professor Ordinary ar.d

Regent of the Theological

Faculty, Don of Saint Peter,

President of the College of

Arras, Censor of Books, etc.

ANTON PARMENTIER,

Doctor, Professor Ordinary,

Regent of the Theological

Faculty, President of the Great

College of Theologians, etc.

APPROBATIONS

THE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad

de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3,

1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks

and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne,

known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting- the

publication and reading of the "Ciudad de Dios." Similar

decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII,

Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were

followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites,

approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which

the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and writ

ten by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is

officially established. The great pope Benedict XIII,

when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revela

tions as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed

Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy,

objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was

peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his

objections as interfering with the decree of pope

Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was

promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men

of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has re

sulted so far in securing her the title of Venerabilis, thus

clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us

hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many

pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

xxi

xxii APPROBATIONS

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles

wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German

translation in 1885, which was approved and highly

recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the follow

ing terms:

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approba

tion to the annotated translation of the Spanish original

"Ciudad de Dios" of Mary of Jesus and recommend this

book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occa

sion of great spiritual blessings."

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

iji IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-

Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Ger

many, etc.

"According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and

Clement XI the book known as Ciudad de Dios written

by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may

be read by all the faithful."

"A number of episcopal approbations, the recommen

dations of four renowned universities, namely, of Tou

louse, Salamanca, Alcala and Louvain, and of prominent

members of different orders, coincide in extolling the

above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal

D Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty

years of his previous life as of small consequence in com

parison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in

all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the

Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Ven

erable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbe Emery,

adds: "Only since I read the revelations of Mary of

Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother."

APPROBATIONS xxiii

"We therefore do not hesitate in granting our epis

copal approbation to "Ciudad de Dios" and wish to

recommend it to the faithful and especially to our

clergy."

X FRANZ ALBERT,

Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.

September 12, 1885.

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios"

is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edi

tion of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God

and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Admin

istrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo,

chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immacu

late Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to

compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for

the printing of the new edition of the "City of God"

now about to be published by the religious of the above-

named convent, with the authenticated autograph

manuscript of that work there preserved, and hav

ing ascertained by a personal revision of a great part

of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently

and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him

by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition

of Ciudad de Dios, with the exception of a few mere

orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to

the autograph of that work as composed and written

by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal] \*& JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

xxiv APPROBATIONS

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right

Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this

English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father :

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English

translation of the work entitled Ciudad de Dios. Wish

ing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at

variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and se

cure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the

newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridg

ment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I

contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part

III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publi

cation of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these

divisions as follow :

THE CONCEPTION, Books 1 and 2.

THE INCARNATION, Books 3 and 4.

THE TRANSFIXION, Books 5 and 6.

THE CORONATION, Books 7 and 8.

Stuarnattott

lje ;jpgtme of t&e aife of t&e J^oip ^ot&er

of &lt;Doti from tfte incarnation of tftc SDibine

in f)cr tair ginal ^omfa to tljc Return

of t&e i^olp f amilp from

INTRODUCTION

1. When I was ready to present before the throne of

God the insignificant results of my labors in writing the

first part of the most holy life of Mary, the Mother of

God, I wished to subject it to the scrutiny and correction

of the divine light, by which I had been guided in my

shortcomings. I was very anxious to be consoled by the

renewed assurance, and benign approval of the Most

High, and to know, whether He wished me to continue

or to abandon this work, which is so far above my low

liness. The Lord responded saying: "Thou hast written

well, and according to our pleasure ; but We desire thee

to understand, that in order to manifest the mysteries

and most high sacraments of the rest of the life of our

only and chosen Spouse, Mother of our Onlybegotten,

thou hast need of a new and more exalted preparation.

It is our wish that thou die to all that is imperfect and

visible, and that thou live according to the spirit; that

thou renounce all the occupations and habits of an earthly

creature and assume instead those of an angel, striving to

attain in them a still greater purity and an entire con

formity with what thou art to understand and write."

2. In this answer of the Most High I understood, that

such a high perfection of life and habits and such an

unwonted exercise of virtues was proposed and required

of me, that, full of diffidence, I became disturbed and

fearful of undertaking a work so arduous and difficult

for an earthly creature. I felt within myself great re

pugnance rising up in the flesh against the spirit. The

3

4 INTRODUCTION

spirit called me with interior force, urging me to strive

after the disposition, which was required of me, and

advancing as argument the pleasure of the Lord and the

benefits accruing to myself. On the other hand the law

of sin (Rom. 7, 23), which I felt in my members,

opposed the divine promptings and discouraged me by

the fear of my own inconstancy. I felt a great distaste,

which deterred me and a great pusillanimity which filled

me with fear. In this excitement I began to believe, that

I was not capable of treating about such high things,

especially as they were so foreign to the condition and

estate of a woman.

3. Overcome by fears and difficulties, I resolved not

to continue this work, and to use all possible means to

adhere to this determination. The common enemy knew

my fear and cowardice, and, as his utmost cruelty is

more aroused against the weak and disheartened, he made

use of this very disposition to attack me with incredible

fury. It seemed to him, that I was left without help in

his hands. In order to conceal his malice, he sought to

transform himself into an angel of light, pretending to

be very solicitous for my soul and for my welfare.

Under this false pretext he perfidiously deluged me with

his suggestions and doubts; he represented to me the

danger of damnation and frightened me with punish

ments similar to those of the chief of the angels

(Is. 14, 12), since I had sought in my pride to compre

hend, what was above my powers and in opposition to

God himself.

4. He pointed out to me many souls, who, professing

virtue, were deceived by some secret presumption and by

yielding to the insinuations of the devil ; and he made me

believe, that in so far as I sought to scrutinize the secrets

of the divine Majesty (Prov. 25, 27), I could not but be

INTRODUCTION 5

guilty of pride and presumption, thus being already

judged. He urged very strongly, that the present times

were ill suited for such matters and sought to confirm

his assertion by what happened to some well known per

sons, who were found to labor under deceit and error.

He reminded me of the dread of the spiritual life in

others; how great would be the discredit, which would

arise by any mistake of mine and what evil effect it would

have on those of little piety; all this I would know by

experience and to my regret, if I persisted in writing

about this matter. And as it is true evidently, that all

the opposition to the spiritual life and the small esteem

in which the mystic virtues are held, is caused by that

mortal enemy, so, for the purpose of doing away with

Christian devotion and piety in many souls, he succeeds

in deceiving some and in sowing the cockle among the

good seed of the Lord (Matth. 13, 25). Thus he causes

confusion and obscures the true sentiment concerning it,

making it more difficult to distinguish the darkness from

the light. I am not surprised to see him succeed therein,

as the true discernment is the special work of God and of

those, who participate in his true wisdom, and do not

govern themselves only by earthly insight.

5. It is not easy during this mortal life to discern true

prudence from the false; for often also the good inten

tion and zeal warp the human judgment, when counsel

and light from on high are wanting. I had occasion to

learn this in the execution of that which I am about to

undertake : for some persons, well known as devout, not

only those who loved me on account of their piety and

desired my welfare, but also those who were less loving

and considerate : all alike at one time wished to deter me

from this undertaking, and also from the path, which I

was going, as if I was proceeding upon it by my own

6 INTRODUCTION

choice. Their fear of drawing discredit or confusion

upon those who were striving after piety with me, or

upon religion or my neighbors, and especially upon the

convent in which I lived, caused them anxiety and to me,

affliction. I was much enamoured by the security, which

the ordinary paths of the other nuns seemed to offer; I

acknowledge, that this suited more my own insight and

my inclination and desires, and was urged upon me still

more by my timidity and my great fears.

6. Cast about upon these impetuous waves, my heart

sought to reach the port of obedience in order to re

assure me in the bitter sea of my confusion. To add to

my tribulation, it began to be rumored about in our

order, that my spiritual father and superior, who had for

many years directed my soul and who well understood

my interior trials, who moreover had commanded me to

write the preceding part of this history, who would most

likely encourage, quiet, and console me, was suggested

for removal to a higher office. The suggestion was not

acted upon, but it occasioned his absence for many days,

and the dragon took advantage of all this in order to

pour out against me the furious river of his wrath

(Apoc. 13, 15). Thus, though in vain, he exerted all

his malice, on this occasion and others, to entice me from

obedience and deprive me of the guidance of my superior

and master.

7. In addition to all the contradictions and temptations

already mentioned, and many others not possible to de

scribe, the demon sought to deprive me of my health,

causing many aches, indispositions and disorders of the

whole body. He harassed me with insurmountable sad

ness and conflicting thoughts ; he seemed to confuse my

understanding, hinder correct thinking, weaken my will

power, and sift me in body and soul. And it happened

INTRODUCTION 7

that in the midst of this confusion I committed some

faults, which were serious enough in me, although they

were committed not so much in malice as from human

fraility. Nevertheless the serpent sought to use them

for my destruction more than any other means ; for thus

having interrupted the flow of good works, his fury was

let loose to cause still greater faults in this embarrass

ment by inveigling me to exaggerate my guilt. To this

he drove me by impious and most insidious suggestions,

seeking to persuade me, that all that I had experienced in

the path which I had trodden, was false and erroneous.

8. As these insinuations, on account of the faults com

mitted and on account of my continual consternation and

fears, began to appear plausible, I resisted them less than

others ; and it was only through the special mercies of the

Lord, that I did not fall entirely from all belief and hope

in a remedy. But I found myself so entangled in diffi

culties and surrounded by darkness, that I may say, the

groanings of death encompassed me and the sorrows of

hell engulfed me (Ps. 17, 5) inspiring me with dread of

extreme peril. I resolved to burn the manuscripts of the

first part of this divine history and to desist from writing

the second. The angel of satan, who inspired me with

this resolution, induced me also to withdraw myself from

the whole undertaking: to put an end to the pursuit of

the spiritual life, to neglect my interior life, and not to

communicate about it with any one. Thus would I be

able to do penance for my sins, appease the Lord, pro

pitiate Him, and retain his friendship. In order to make

sure of the effects of his concealed malice he proposed,

that I make a vow not to write any more on account of

the danger of being deceived and of deceiving; but that

instead, I amend my life, retrench my imperfections and

embrace penance.

8 INTRODUCTION

9. With this masque of seeming virtue the dragon

pretended to establish his damnable counsels and cover

himself with the skin of a sheep, while in reality he acted

as a bloodthirsty and devouring wolf. He persevered

for some time in this attack and all alone I remained for

fifteen days in a night of darkness, without relief or con

solation either human or divine : without the former,

because I was without the help and the counsel of obedi

ence, and without the latter, because the Lord had inter

rupted the flow of his favors, his enlightenments and

continual inspiration. Above all was I distressed by

despair of salvation and in it, the persuasion, that death

and the danger of my eternal damnation was approach

ing; all this was instigated and fostered in me by the

enemy.

10. But as the aftertastes of his temptations are so

bitter and end but in despair, the very disturbance, by

which he upset the whole republic of my powers and

acquired habits, made me more wary of fulfilling any

thing which he urged on me and proposed to me. He

availed himself of the continual fear, which tormented

me with the dread of offending God and of losing\* his

friendship and when, in my doubts, I applied myself to

works of piety, he sought to draw me away. This very

fear however made me hesitate at what the astute dragon

had tried to convince me of and in this uncertainty I

deferred giving assent to it. My high regard for obedi

ence also, by which I had been ordered to write, and the

contrariness of that which I felt in my interior, helped

me to resist and to recoil at his suggestions. Above all

the assistance of the Most High defended me and

permitted not the beasts to snatch my soul, which amid

sighs and groans confessed Him. I cannot describe in

words the temptations, combats, troubles, dismays and

INTRODUCTION 9

afflictions, which I suffered in this battle: for I saw

myself placed in such a state, that in my judgment there

was really no greater difference between my condition

and that of the damned, except that in hell there is no re

demption, while in mine it was still possible.

11. One day, in order to get some respite, I cried out

from the bottom of my heart saying : "O woe is me, that

I have come to such a state! and woe to my soul, which

finds itself therein! Whither shall I turn, since all the

portals of my salvation are closed?" Immediately a

strong and sweet voice gave answer within myself:

"Whither dost thou wish to go outside of God himself?"

By this answer I perceived that my cure was at hand in

the Lord, and at the breaking of this dawn I began to

raise myself from the depth of the confusion, into which

I was cast, and I felt a powerful increase in the fervor of

my desires and in the acts of faith, hope and charity. I

debased myself in the presence of the Most High and, in

firm confidence in his goodness, I wept over my faults

with bitter sorrow. I confessed them many times and

sighing from the depth of heart, I began to seek again the

former light and truth. And as the divine Wisdom

comes forth to meet those by whom it is invoked

(Wis. 6, 17), it advanced toward me in delight and

cleared away the night of my confusion and tormenting

afflictions.

12. Presently that bright day broke, which I had de

sired so much; the quiet possession of peace returned;

I enjoyed the sweet love and vision of my Lord and

Master, and with it I again perceived, why I should

believe, accept and esteem the benefits and favors, which

his mighty arm wrought in me. I gave Him thanks as

far as was in my power ; and I saw, who I was and who

Cod is; that a creature by itself can do nothing, that it

10 INTRODUCTION

is nothing, because sin is nothing. I saw also what man

can do when raised up and assisted up by the divine right

hand, being much more than can be imagined by our

earthly faculites. Humbled in the perception of these

truths and in the presence of the inaccessible light,

(which is vast and strong, without deceit or falsehood),

my heart flowed over in sweet affections of love, praise

and thanksgiving. For now I understood, that He had

guarded and defended me, so that in the confused night

of temptations my lamp might not be extinguished

(Prov. 31, 18) ; and in the depth of my gratitude I

annihilated myself to the dust and humiliated myself

as a worm of the earth.

13. To make this benefit more certain, I immediately

heard an interior exhortation, without knowing clearly

from whence it proceeded ; while it severely reprehended

me for my disloyalty and my wrongful ways, it at the

same time admonished and enlightened, instructed and

corrected me. It furnished me with a deep understand

ing of good and evil, of virtue and vice, of what was

secure, useful and beneficial, as well as their contraries;

it laid open to me the way of eternity, gave me a knowl

edge of the means and of the end, of the value of life

everlasting, and of the miserable unhappiness and the so

little considered ruin of endless perdition.

14. In the profound knowledge of these two extremes,

I confess that I was dumbfounded and cast about be

tween the fear of my dreadful infirmity and the desire

of reaching the happiness, of which I was unworthy on

account of my demerits. I was full of the thought of

the kindness and mercy of the Most High ; and the fear

of losing Him : I beheld the two different ends awaiting

the creatures: eternal glory and eternal misery; and it

seemed a small matter to me to suffer all the pains and the

INTRODUCTION 11

torments of the world, of purgatory and hell itself, in

order to attain to the one and to avoid the other. And

although I perceived, that the divine help is assured

to those who seek to make use of it, yet as I also saw

by this light, that life and death are in our hands

(Eccli. 15, 18), and that our weakness or malice may

prevent the proper use of grace, and that the tree will

lie for all eternity as it once has fallen (Eccles. 11, 3),

on this account I was overcome by the deepest sorrow,

which penetrated my heart.

15. This sorrow was increased by a most severe

answer or inquiry, which came from the Lord. For

while I found myself thus annihilated in the conscious

ness of my weakness and danger and by the thought of

having offended his justice, so that I dared not raise my

eyes toward Him, He met my speechless sorrow by the

advances of his mercy, saying to me in answer to them :

"Which dost thou wish, my soul? Which dost thou

seek? Which of these ways wilt thou choose? What is

thy resolve ?" This question was an arrow to my heart :

for although I knew for certain, that the Lord knew my

desires better than I myself, the delay between the ques :

tion and the answer was incredibly painful to me; I

wished, if possible, that the Lord should anticipate my

answer and should not show Himself ignorant of the

response, which I would give. But, impelled by great

emotion, I made response in words coming from the in

nermost of soul, and said; "Lord and omnipotent God!

The path of virtue, the way of eternal life do I chose,

this do I desire, and in this do Thou place me ; and as I

do not merit it in thy justice, I appeal to they mercy, and

I offer for myself the infinite merits of thy most holy

Son and my Redeemer, Jesus Christ."

16. I was made aware, that this highest Judge re-

12 INTRODUCTION

membered the promise, which is given to the Church,

that He would grant all that is asked in the name of his

Onlybegotten (John 16, 23), that in Him and on his

account my petition was granted and its fulfillment

hastened according to my poor wishes. Certain conditions

were made and proposed to me by an intellectual voice,

saying to me interiorly: "Soul, created by the hand of

the Almighty, if thou wishest, as one of the elect, to

follow in the path of the true light and attain the position

of a most chaste spouse of the Lord, who calls thee, it

is befitting, that thou observe the laws and precepts of

love. The first thing required of thee is, that thou reject

entirely all earthly inclinations, renouncing all and every

affection toward the transient things, so that thou have

no love or affection toward any created being, no matter

how useful, beautiful or agreeable it may appear to thee.

Cherish no created image, harbor no earthly affection;

let thy will rest in no created object, except in so far as

thy Lord and Spouse shall command thee for the well-

ordering of thy love, or in so far as thou canst be aided

thereby to love Him alone/

17. "And when, after thus reaching this perfect abne

gation and renunciation of thyself, thou shalt have freed

and disentangled thyself from all earthly things, seek

the Lord, raising thyself with the swift wings of the

dove toward the high habitation, in which He, in his

condescension, wishes to place thy spirit; so that there

thou mayest live in his presence and have a secure dwell

ing-place. This great Lord is a most jealous Spouse and

his love and emulation are strong as death (Cant. 8, 6).

He wishes to adorn thee and set thee in a secure place,

in order that thou mayest not issue from it, or leave his

presence for another, where thou findst Him not or en-

joyest not his caresses. He, with whom thou art to con-

INTRODUCTION 13

verse without mistrust, wishes to sign thee with his own

hand, and this is a most equitable law, which the spouses

of the great King must observe; for even those in the

world observe it, in order to show their faithfulness. It

is due to the nobility of thy Spouse, that thou observe

a behavior corresponding to the dignity and position

conferred by Him, wtihout descending to anything not

befitting this estate or making thee unworthy of the

adornment lavished upon thee for entrance into his bridal

chamber."

18. "Next I require of thee, that thou despoil thyself

with diligence of the vestments torn by thy faults and

imperfections, soiled by the effects of sin, and made

odious by the inclinations of nature. His Majesty wishes

to wash off the stains, to purify and renew thee with his

beauty, but under condition, that thou never lose sight

of the poor and despicable vestments of which thou hast

been divested, so that in the memory and knowledge of

this benefit, thou mayest spread the odor of sweetness

for this great King by the nard of thy humility

(Cant 1, 11), and so that thou mayest never forget the

return, which thou owest to the Author of thy salvation.

Thus will He, by the precious balsam of his blood, purify

thee, heal thy wounds and enlighten thee copiously."

19. "In addition to all this" (this voice continued to

say) "in order that thus forgetting all earthly things

thou mayest be coveted by the highest King, seek to

adorn thyself with the jewels, which He in his pleasure

has prepared for thee. The vestments, which shall cover

thee, are to be whiter than the snow, more brilliant than

the diamond, more resplendent than the sun and yet they

will be at the same time so delicate, that they will easily

be spoiled by any negligence, making thee abominable in

the sight of thy Spouse. But if thou preserve them in

2-3

14 INTRODUCTION

the purity which He desires, thy steps will be beautiful

as the Prince s daughter (Cant. 7, 1), and his Majesty

will be pleased with thy sentiments and thy words. As a

cincture of thy vestment He will give thee the knowledge

of his divine power and his holy fear, in order that, hav

ing bound thy inclinations, thou mayest direct thyself by

his pleasure. The jewels of thy necklace, which adorn

thy neck, signifying thy humble submission, shall be the

costly stones of faith, hope and charity. As a clasp for

thy hair (which are the high and exalted thoughts and

thy heavenly intelligences), thou wilt have from Him the

infused science and wisdom, and the embroideries of thy

vestments shall be all the beauty and richness of the vir

tues. Thy diligence in performing what is most perfect

shall serve thee as sandals, and they laces shall be the

avoidance and restraints, that thou wilt use in order to

keep from evil. The rings, which will beautify thy

fingers, shall be the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost; and

the beauty of thy face shall be the participation of the

Divinity, which on account of his holy love, shall shine

therefrom. Thereto thou shalt add the coloring of con

fusion for having offended Him, in order that it may

make thee ashamed of offending Him in the future, com

paring at the same time the coarse and sordid habits of

the past with those that now adorn thee."

20. "And because thy own merits would make but a

poor and miserable return for such a high espousal, the

Most High wishes to ratify this contract by singling out,

as if for thee alone, the infinite merits of thy Spouse

Jesus Christ, and He makes thee a partaker of all his

possessions and treasures in the heavens and upon earth.

For all belongs to this supreme Lord (Esther 13, 11),

and of all this thou shalt be mistress as his spouse for

thy own use and for the greater love of Him. But

INTRODUCTION 15

remember, soul, that in order to obtain such a gift, thou

must hide all this within thyself, without ever losing thy

secret; for I warn thee of the danger of soiling thy

beauty with the least imperfection; but if at any time

thou committest such an imperfection out of weakness,

rise from it at once, like a strong one, and acknowledg

ing it, weep over the small fault as if it had been, the most

grievous."

21. "And in order that thou mayest have a dwelling-

place and habitation befitting such a great estate, thy

Spouse does not wish to set thee any limit, but it is his

pleasure, that thou dwell in the infinite regions of his

Divinity and that thou roam about and disport thyself

through the illimitable fields of his attributes and per-

fections. where the view of the intellect is without re

straint, where the will is delighted without shadow of

misgiving, and where the inclinations are satiated without

bitterness. This is the paradise always delightful, where

the most beloved brides of Christ find their recreation,

where they gather the fragrant flowers and myrrh, and

where the infinite is found for those that have renounced

the imperfect nothing. There will thy habitation be

secure ; and in order that thy intercourse and companion

ship may be in correspondence with it, I desire that thou

converse with the angels, holding them as friends and

companions, and copying from them, during their fre

quent conversations and intercourse with thee, their vir

tues by faithful imitation."

22. "Take notice" (continued the voice) "O soul of

the greatness of this benefit; for the Mother of thy

Spouse and the Queen of heaven adopts thee anew for her

daughter, receives thee as her disciple, and assumes the

place of a Mother and of a Teacher toward thee. Through

her intercession dost thou receive those special favors and

16 INTRODUCTION

they are all granted to thee that thou mayest write her

most holy life. On this account thou hast been pardoned

without thy merit, and that, which otherwise thou

wouldst not have reached, has been conceded to thee.

What would become of thee, O soul, if it were not for

the Mother of mercy? Thou wouldst already have

perished, if her intercession had failed thee; poor and

useless would have been thy works, if, by divine con

descension, thou hadst not been selected to write this

history, but the eternal Father chose thee for his daugh

ter, in view of this work, and for a spouse of his Onlybe-

gotten Son ; and the Son received thee to his close em

braces, and the Holy Spirit selected thee for his enlight

enments. The document of this contract and espousal is

written and imprinted on the white parchment of the

purity of most holy Mary : there the finger and the power

of the Most High have written it ; the ink is the blood of

the Lamb; the executor is the eternal Father; the tie

which binds thee to Christ is the Holy Spirit ; the bonds

men are the merits of the same Jesus Christ and of his

Mother; for thou art but a vile worm, having nothing to

offer and being expected to give merely thy free consent."

23. So far the admonishing voice, which I heard. Al

though I judged it to be that of an angel, yet whether

such it was, I could not ascertain clearly, for I did not

perceive it in the same way as at other times. Such mani

festations and disclosures accommodate themselves to

the dispositions of the soul at the time of their reception,

as for instance it happened to the disciples at Emmaus

(Luke 24, 16). Many other experiences I had in order

to overcome the opposition of the serpent against the

writing of this history, but it would draw out this intro

duction too much to mention them now . I continued my

prayers for some days, asking the Lord to govern and

INTRODUCTION 17

direct me in order not to make a mistake, and represent

ing to Him my incapacity and timidity. His Majesty

persisted in exhorting me to ordain my life toward all

purity and the greatest perfection, and in urging me to

continue in it after having begun. And especially the

Queen of the angels intimated to me her will many times,

and with great sweetness and tenderness commanded me

to obey Her as her daughter and write her most holy

life, which I had commenced.

24. To all this I wished to add the security of obedi

ence. Without saying anything of that, which I had

heard from the Lord and from his most holy Mother, I

asked my confessor and superior what he would direct

me to do in this matter. He answered by commanding

me under obedience to continue and to write the second

part of this history. Finding myself thus compelled both

by the Lord and by obedience, I returned again to the

presence of the Most High, where I found myself one

day in prayer, and, renouncing my whole self and recog

nizing my insignificance and liability to err, I prostrated

myself before his Majesty and said : "My Lord, my Lord,

what wishest Thou to do with me?" Whereupon I re

ceived the following intelligence.

25. It seemed to me, that the divine light of the blessed

Trinity showed me my own self full of poverty and

defects, and severely reprehending me for them, fur

nished me at the same time with the highest doctrine and

salutary directions for a perfect life, and for this purpose

God purified and enlightened me anew. I became aware

that the Mother of grace, most holy Mary, standing

before the throne of the Divinity, was interceding and

pleading for me. With such assistance my confidence

took new life and profiting by the clemency of such a

Mother, I addressed myself to Her and spoke to Her only

18 INTRODUCTION

these words : "My Lady and my Refuge, consider, as a

true Mother, the poverty of thy slave." It seemed to me

as if She heard my prayer and speaking with the Most

High, She said: "My Lord, I wish to receive this use

less and poor creature anew as a daughter and adopt her

as my own." (Truly this was the act of a most liberal

and mighty Queen!) But the Most High answered:

"My Spouse, for such a great favor as this, what does

this soul bring in return ? She does not deserve it, being

a useless and destitute worm, and thankless for our

gifts."

26. O wonderful power of the divine word! How

shall I describe the effects produced in me by this answer

of the Allpowerful? I humbled myself to the depth of

my nothingness and I was filled with the knowledge of

the misery of creatures and of my own ingratitude

toward God. My heart sank within me in sorrow for my

sins and in the desire of obtaining the unmerited happi

ness of being the child of that Sovereign. I raised my eyes

full of dread to the throne of the Most High and my

visage was transported in fear and hope ; I turned toward

my Advocate, and desiring to be admitted as her slave,

since I did not merit the title of daughter, I spoke from

the bottom of my heart without forming any words ; and

I heard the great Lady say to the Lord :

27. "Divine Lord and my God, it is true, this poor

creature has nothing to offer to thy justice, but I offer

for her the merits and the blood, which my most holy

Son poured out for her and with it I present also the

dignity of Mother of thy onlybegotten Son, which I re

ceived from thy ineffable kindness, all the works, which

I performed in thy service in having borne Him in my

womb, and nourished Him with the milk of my breast,

and above all I offer Thee thy own bounty and Divinity ;

INTRODUCTION 19

I earnestly entreat Thee to consider this creature as my

adopted daughter and disciple for whom I will stand

security. Under my guidance She will amend her faults

and perform her works according to thy pleasure."

28. The Most High, (may He be eternally praised for

hearing the petition of the great Queen interceding for

the least of his creatures), yielded to these prayers, and

immediately in the joy of my soul I felt immense effects,

such as are impossible to describe ; with my whole heart I

turned toward all the creatures of heaven and earth, and,

not being able to contain my exultation, I invited them to

exalt for me and with me the Author of grace. It seemed

to me that I addressed them in the following words : "O

ye inhabitants and courtiers of heaven and all ye living

creatures, formed by the hand of the Most High, behold

this marvel of his liberality and mercy and bless and

exalt Him for all eternity, since He has raised from the

dust the most vile of the universe and has enriched the

most destitute; He has honored the most unworthy,

though He is the highest God and the powerful King.

And since you, sons of Adam, here see the poorest orphan

succored, the greatest sinner pardoned ; issue forth from

your ignorance, raise yourself from your listlessness and

renew your hope; for if his powerful arm has assisted me,

if He has called and forgiven me, all of you can hope for

your salvation ; and if you wish to assure yourselves of

it, seek, seek the protection of the most holy Mary, ask

Her for her intercession, and you will find Her to be the

Mother of ineffable mercy and clemency."

29. I turned also to this most exalted Queen and said

to Her : "Aye, O my Lady, now I do not call myself an

orphan, since I have a Mother, and a Mother, who is the

Queen of all creation ; I shall not any more be ignorant,

since I have as Teacher the Mistress of divine wisdom,

20 INTRODUCTION

not poor, since I have as Lord Him, who is Master of

all the treasures of heaven and earth; I have a Mother,

who protects me; an Instructress, who teaches and cor

rects me; a Mistress, who commands and governs me.

Blessed art Thou amongst all women, wonderful among

all creatures, admirable in heaven and on earth, and let

all confess thy greatness with eternal praises. Since it is

not easy or possible for the least among creatures, the

lowest worm of the earth to give Thee any return : re

ceive it then from the divine right hand and in the divine

vision, where Thou standest in the presence of God en

joying Thyself through all eternity : I shall remain thy

acknowledged and bounden slave, praising the Almighty

as long as my life shall last, since his liberal mercy has

so favored me, as to give me my Queen as my Mother

and Teacher. Let my loving muteness praise Thee, since

my tongue has not words or terms adequate for doing

it; for all of them are strained and limited."

30. It is not possible to describe what the soul feels

during such mysterious favors. They were the source

of great good to my soul, for immediately I was made

aware of a perfection of life, and of works for which I

fail to find terms. But all this, the Most High told me,

was given to me on account of the most holy Mary and in

order to write her life. It was intimated to me, that by

ratifying this blessing, the eternal Father chose me to

manifest the sacraments of his Daughter; that the Holy

Spirit poured out his light and inspirations that 1 might

declare the hidden gifts of his Spouse ; and that the most

holy Son appointed me to manifest the mysteries of his

most pure Mother Mary. And in order that I might be

come capable of this work, the Holy Trinity enlightened

and bathed my soul in a special light of the Divinity and

the divine power touched up my faculties as with a

INTRODUCTION 21

pencil, furnishing them with new habits for the perfect

execution of this work.

31. The Most High also commanded me to strive to

imitate with all my heart, according to my weak powers,

all that I should understand and write about the heroic

virtues and the most holy operations of the heavenly

Queen, guiding my life according to her example.

Knowing how unfit I am for the fulfillment of this obli

gation, the same most kind Queen offered to me anew

her favor, help and instruction for all that the Lord

commanded and pointed out to me. Then I asked for

the blessing of the most holy Trinity in order to begin

the second part of this heavenly history. I felt that all

three persons of the Godhead conferred their blessing

upon me. Issuing from the trance, I sought to wash

my soul in the Sacraments and, full of contrition for

my sins, in the name of the Lord and of obedience, I

set myself about this work for the glory of the Most

High and for his most holy Mother, the ever immaculate

Virgin Mary.

32. This second part comprises the life of the Queen

of the angels from the mystery of the Incarnation to

the Ascension of Christ our Lord into heaven, which is

the principal and the most important part of this history,

for it includes the whole life and mysteries of the Lord

himself with his Passion and most holy Death. I wish

only to remark here, that the graces and blessings

conceded to most holy Mary in preparation for the

Incarnation, began to flow from the moment of her

Immaculate Conception; already at that time, in the

intention and the decree of God, She was the Mother of

the Word. But in the measure as the realization of the

Incarnation drew nigh, the favors and gifts of grace con

tinued to increase. Although they seemed to be all of

22 INTRODUCTION

the same kind and nature from the beginning, yet they

continued to augment and increase; and there are not

terms new and varied enough to equal in their signifi

cance these increases and advances in the blessings con

ferred. Thus it becomes necessary in this narrative to

measure all by the infinite power of the Lord, who,

giving\* much, retains enough to give infinitely more,

while the capacity of each soul, and especially the soul

of the Queen of heaven, is in its way infinite, being

able to receive ever more and more. And this happened

with the soul of holy Mary, until She arrived at a summit

of holiness and participation of the Divinity, to which no

other creature has attained nor will ever attain in all

eternity. May the Lord himself enlighten me, that I

may follow up this work according to his divine pleasure.

Amen.

BOOK ONE

BOOK III, I OF II PART

Contains the most Exquisite Preparations of the Almighty for the Incar

nation of the Word in Mary most Holy; the Circumstances Accom

panying this Mystery; the Exalted State, in which the Blessed

Mother was placed; her Visit to Saint Elisabeth and the

Sanctificationof the Baptist: Her Return to Nazareth

and a Memorable Battle of the Virgin with Lucifer

CHAPTER I.

THE MOST HIGH BEGINS TO PREPARE IN MOST HOLY MARY

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION ; THE EVENTS OF

THE NINE DAYS PRECEDING THIS MYSTERY, ES

PECIALLY THE HAPPENINGS OF THE FIRST DAY.

1. In order that her most faultless life might be to all

an example of the highest holiness, the Most High had

placed upon our Queen and Mistress the duties of a spouse

of saint Joseph which was a position requiring more inter

course with her neighbors. The heavenly Mistress,

finding Herself in this new estate, was filled with such

exalted thoughts and sentiments in the fulfillment of her

duties, and ordered all the activities of her life with such

wisdom, that She was an object of admirable emulation

to the angelic spirits and an unparalleled example for

men. Few knew Her and still fewer had intercourse with

Her : but these happy ones were so filled with that celestial

influence of Mary, that with a wonderful joy and with

unwonted flights of spirit they sought to express and

23

24 CITY OF GOD

manifest the light, which illumined their hearts and

which they knew came from Her. The most prudent

Queen was not unaware of these operations of the Most

High; but neither was it yet time, nor would her most

profound humility as yet consent to their becoming

known to the world. She continually besought the Lord

to hide them from men, to make all the favors of his right

hand redound solely to his praise, and to permit Her to

be ignored and despised by all the mortals, in as far as

his infinite goodness would not be offended thereby.

2. These prayers were accepted by her divine Spouse

with great benignity and his providence arranged all

things in such a manner, that the very light, which

incited men to proclaim her greatness, at the same time

caused them to be mute. Moved by divine power, they

refrained from expressing their thoughts, inwardly prais

ing the Lord for the light, which they felt within them

selves. Filled with marvel they suspended their judg

ment, and leaving behind the creatures, they sought their

Creator. Many turned from sin at the mere sight of

Her; others amended their lives; all were affected at

seeing Her and experienced heavenly influences in their

souls. But immediately they forgot the source of these

influences; for if they could have remained in her pres

ence, or could have retained the memory of her image,

and if God had not prevented it by a mystery, nothing

would have been able to divert their attention from Her

and all would have sought Her without wavering.

3. In such fruitful occupations and in augmenting the

gifts and graces from which all this good proceeded, our

Queen, the Spouse of Joseph, busied Herself during the

six months and seventeen days, which intervened between

her espousal and the Incarnation of the Word. I cannot

pretend to refer even briefly to her great heroic acts of

THE INCARNATION 25

all the virtues, interior and exterior, to all her deeds of

charity, humility, religion, and all her works of mercy,

the alms and benefactions ; for this exceeds the power of

the pen. The best I can do is to sum up and say : that

the Most High found in most holy Mary the fulfillment

of all his pleasure and of his wishes, as far as is possible

in the correspondence of a creature with its Creator. By

her sanctity and merits God felt Himself as it were

obliged, and, (according to our way of speaking), com

pelled, to hasten his steps and extend the arms of his

Omnipotence to bring about the greatest of wonders con

ceivable in the world before or after: namely the Incar

nation of the Onlybegotten of the Father in the virginal

womb of this Lady.

4. In order to proceed with a dignity befitting Himself,

God prepared most holy Mary in a singular manner

during the nine days immediately preceding this mystery,

and allowed the river of his Divinity to rush impetuously

forth (Psalm 45, 5) to inundate this City of God with

its floods. He communicated such great graces and

gifts and favors, that I am struck dumb by the perception

of what has been made known to me concerning this

miracle, and my lowliness is filled with dread at even the

mention of what I understood. For the tongue, the pen,

and all the faculties of a creature fall far below any pos

sibility of revealing such incomprehensible sacraments.

Therefore I wish it to be understood, that all I say here

is only an insignificant shadow of the smallest part of

these wonders and ineffable prodigies, which are not at

all to be encompassed by our limited words, but only by

the power divine, which I do not possess.

5. On the first day of this most blessed novena the

heavenly Princess Mary, after a slight rest, according to

the example of her father David and according to the

26 CITY OF GOD

diurnal order and arrangement laid out for Her by the

Lord, left her couch at midnight (Psalm 118, 62), and,

prostrate in the presence of the Most High, commenced

her accustomed prayer and holy exercises. The angels,

who attended upon Her, spoke to Her and said : "Spouse

of our King and Lord, arise, for his Majesty calls Thee."

She raised Herself with fervent affection and answered :

The Lord commands the dust to raise itself from the

dust." And turning toward the countenance of the

Lord, who called Her, She added: "Most high and

powerful Master, what wishest Thou to do with me?"

At these words her most holy soul was raised in spirit

to a new and higher habitation, closer to the same Lord

and more remote from all earthly and passing things.

6. She felt at once, that She was being prepared by

those illuminations and purifications, which at other times

She had experienced in some of the most exalted visions

of the Divinity. I do not dwell on them, since I have

described them in the first part (Part I, 620-629). The

Divinity manifested Itself not by an intuitive, but by an

abstractive vision; however so clearly, that by it She

understood more of this incomprehensible Object, than

what the blessed see and enjoy by intuition. For this

vision was more exalted and more profound than the

others of that kind ; since this heavenly Lady made Her

self more capable day by day and, because She made such

perfect use of graces, She disposed Herself for ever

greater ones. Moreover, the repeated enlightenments

and visions of the Divinity continually enabled Her

to respond more and more befittingly to its infinite

operations.

7. In this vision our Princess Mary learned most high

secrets of the Divinity and of its perfections, and espe

cially of God s communications ad extra in the work of

THE INCARNATION 27

%

creation. She saw that it originated in the goodness and

liberality of God, that creatures were not necessary for

supplementing his Divine existence, nor for his infinite

glory, since without them He was glorious through the

interminable eternities before the creation of the world.

Many sacraments and secrets were manifested to our

Queen, which neither can nor should be made known to

all; for She alone was the only One (Cant. 6, 8; 7, 6),

the chosen One, selected by the highest King and Lord

of creation for these delights. But as her Highness in

this vision perceived this impulse and inclination of the

Divinity to communicate Itself ad extra with a force

greater than that which makes all the elements tend

toward their center, and as She was drawn within the

sphere of this divine love, She besought the eternal

Father with heart aflame, that He send his Onlybegotten

into the world and give salvation to men, since in this

manner He should satisfy, and, (speaking humanly),

execute the promptings of his Divinity and its perfections.

8. These petitions of his Spouse were very sweet to

the Lord, they were the scarlet lace, with which She

bound and secured his love. And in order to put his

desires into execution He sought first to prepare the

tabernacle or temple, whither He was to descend from

the bosom of the eternal Father. He resolved to furnish

his beloved and chosen Mother with a clear knowledge

of all his works ad extra, just as his Omnipotence had

made them. On the first day therefore, and in this same

vision, He manifested to Her all that He had made on

the first day of the creation of the world, as it is recorded

in Genesis, and She perceived all with greater clearness

and comprehension, than if She had been an eye-witness ;

for She knew them first as they are in God, and then as

they are in themselves.

28 CITY OF GOD

9. She perceived and understood, how the Lord in

the beginning (Gen. 1; 1, 5), created heaven and earth;

in how far and in what way it was void, and how the

darkness was over the face of the abyss; how the spirit

of the Lord hovered over the waters and how, at the

divine command, light was made, and what was its

nature; how, after the darkness was divided, it was

called night and the light day, and how thus the first

day was made. She knew the size of the earth, its

longitude, latitude and depth, its caverns, hell, limbo and

purgatory with their inhabitants; the countries, climes,

the meridians and divisions of the world, and all its

inhabitants and occupants. With the same clearness She

knew the inferior orbs and the empyrean heaven; how

the angels were made on the first day ; She was informed

of their nature, conditions, diversity, hierarchies, offices,

grades and virtues. The rebellion of the bad angels was

revealed to Her, their fall and the occasion and the cause

of that fall, though the Lord always concealed from Her

that which concerned Herself. She understood the pun

ishment and the effects of sin in the demons, beholding

them as they are in themselves ; and at the conclusion of

the first day, the Lord showed to Her, how She too was

formed of this lowly earthly material and endowed with

the same nature as all those, who return to the dust;

He did not however say, that She would again return to

it; yet He gave Her such a profound knowledge of the

earthly existence, that the great Queen humiliated Her

self to the abyss of nothingness ; being without fault, She

debased Herself more than all the children of Adam with

all their miseries.

10. This whole vision and all its effects the Most High

arranged in such a way as to open up in the heart of Mary

the deep trenches that were required for the foundations

THE INCARNATION 29

of the edifice, which He wished to erect in Her: namely

so high a one, that it would reach up to the substantial

and hypostatic union of the human and divine nature.

And as the dignity of Mother of God was without limits

and to a certain extent infinite, it was becoming that She

should be grounded in a proportionate humility, such as

would be without limits though still within the bounds

of reason itself. Attaining the summit of virtue, this

blessed One among women humiliated Herself to such

an extent, that the most holy Trinity was, as it were, fully

paid and satisfied, and (according to our mode of under

standing) constrained to raise Her to the highest position

and dignity possible among creatures and nearest to the

Divinity itself. In this highest benevolence his Majesty

spoke and said to Her :

11. "My Spouse and Dove, great is my desire of

redeeming man from sin and my immense kindness is

as it were strained in waiting for the time, in which I

shall descend in order to repair the world ; ask Me con

tinually during these days and with great affection for

the fulfillment of this desire. Prostrate in my royal

presence let not thy petitions and clamors cease, asking

Me that the Onlybegotten of the Father descend in

reality to unite Himself with the human nature." Where

upon the heavenly Princess responded and said : "Lord

and God eternal, whose is all the power and wisdom,

whose wish none can resist (Esther 13, 9), who shall

hinder thy Omnipotence? Who shall detain the im

petuous current of thy Divinity, so that thy pleasure

in conferring this benefit upon the whole human race

remain unfulfilled? If perhaps, O my Beloved, I am a

hindrance to such an immeasurable benefit, let me perish

before I impede thy pleasure ; this blessing cannot depend

upon the merits of any creature ; therefore, my Lord and

2-4

30 CITY OF GOD

Master, do not wait, as we might later on merit it so

much the" less. The sins of men increase and the offenses

against Thee are multiplied ; how shall we merit the very

blessing, of which we become daily more unworthy? In

Thee thyself, my Lord, exists the last cause and motive

of our salvation; thy infinite bounty, thy numberless

mercies incite Thee, the groans of thy Prophets and of

the Fathers of thy people solicit Thee, the saints sigh

after Thee, the sinners look for Thee and all of them

together call out to Thee ; and if I, insignificant wormlet,

on account of my ingratitude, am not unworthy of thy

merciful condescension, I venture to beseech Thee, from

the bottom of my heart, to speed thy coming and to

hasten thy Redemption for thy greater glory."

12. When the Princess of heaven had finished this

prayer, She returned to her ordinary and more natural

state ; but anxious to fulfill the mandate of the Lord, She

continued during that whole day her petitions for the

Incarnation of the Word and with the deepest humility

She repeated the exercises of prostrating Herself to the

ground and praying in the form of a cross. For the

Holy Ghost,, who governed Her, had taught Her this

posture, by which She so highly pleased the most blessed

Trinity. God saw, in the body of the future Mother of

the Word, as it were the crucified person of Christ and

therefore He received this morning sacrifice of the most

pure Virgin as an advance offering of that of his most

holy Son.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

13. My daughter, the mortals are not capable of un

derstanding the ineffable operations of the arm of the

Omnipotent in preparing me for the Incarnation of the

eternal Word. Especially during the nine days, which

THE INCARNATION 31

preceded this exalted sacrament was my spirit elevated

and united with the immutable being of the Divinity. I

was submerged in the ocean of his infinite perfections,

participating in all those eminent and divine effect, which

are beyond all presentiment of the human hearts. The

knowledge of creatures communicated to me penetrated

into their very essence, so that it was more profound and

piercing than that of all the angelic spirits, though their

knowledge of creation, on account of the beatific vision,

is altogether admirable. Moreover the images of them

all were impressed upon my mind to be used by me

according as I desired.

14. What I wish of thee today is to take notice how

I used this knowledge and to imitate me according to

thy power with the help of the infused light, which thou

hast received for this purpose. Profit by the knowledge

of creatures by making of them a ladder to ascend unto

God thy Creator ; so that thou mayest seek in all of them

their first beginning and their last end. Let them serve

thee as a mirror from which the Godhead is reflected,

reminding thee of his Omnipotence and inciting thee to

the love, which He seeks in thee. Be thou filled with

wonder and praise at the greatness and magnificence of

the Creator and in his presence humiliate thyself to the

dust. Shun no difficulty or suffering in order to become

meek and humble of heart. Take notice, my dearest,

that this virtue of humility was the firm foundation of

all the wonders, which the Most High wrought in me;

and in order that thou mayest esteem this virtue so much

the more, remember that of all others, it is at the same

time the most precious, the most delicate and perishable ;

for if thou lose it in any respect, and if thou be not

humble in all things without exception, thou wilt not

be humble in anything. Remember thy earthly and cor-

32 CITY OF GOD

ruptible nature, and be not ignorant of the fact, that the

Most High has providentially formed man in such a way

that his own existence and formation intimate and re

hearse the important lesson of humility never allowing

him to be without this salutary teaching. On this

account He has not formed him of the most excellent

material, and has concealed the noblest part of his being

in the sanctuary of his interior (Exod. 30, 24), teaching

him to weigh as in a balance on the one side, the infinite

and eternal existence of the Lord, and on the other, his

own ignoble material existence. Thus he is to give unto

God what belongs to Him, and to himself what belongs

to his own self (Matth. 22, 21).

15. Most zealously I attended to this adjustment, be

coming an example and guide therein to all the mortals.

I wish that thou also do it in imitation of me, and that

thou zealously study to acquire the humility, which

pleases the Most High and myself, who desire thy true

advancement. I wish that thy perfection be built up in

the deep trenches of thy own self-knowledge; in order

that the deeper its foundations are laid, to so much the

higher and more exalted perfection may rise the edifice

of thy virtue. Thus thy will shall find a most intimate

conformity with that of the Lord, who looks down from

the eminence of his throne upon the humble of the earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE LORD ON THE SECOND DAY CONTINUES HIS FAVORS

IN PREPARATION FOR THE INCARNATION OF THE

WORD IN THE MOST HOLY MARY.

16. In the first part of this history (Part I, 219), I

mentioned, that the most pure body of Mary was con

ceived and perfectly formed within the space of seven

days. The Most High wished to work this miracle, in

order that this most holy soul might not have to wait so

long as the souls of ordinary mortals. He wished it to

be created and infused before the usual time, (as it also

really happened), in order that this beginning of the

reparation of the world might have some similarity to

the beginning of its creation. This correspondence again

took place at the coming of the Redeemer so that, having

formed the new Adam, Christ, God might rest as one

who had strained all the powers of his Omnipotence in

the greatest of his works; and that He might enjoy the

most delicious Sabbath of all his delights. And as these

wonders necessitated the intervention of the Mother of

the divine Word, who was to give Him a visible form,

and as She was to unite the two extremes, man and God,

it was proper that She should bear relation to both.

Her dignity was inferior only to that of God and supe

rior to all that was not God ; to this dignity belonged also

a proportionate knowledge and understanding, as well of

the highest essence of the Divinity, as also of all the

inferior creatures.

17. Following up his intention, the supreme Lord con-

33

34 CITY OF GOD

tinued the favors, by which He wished to dispose most

holy Mary for the Incarnation during nine days, as I have

begun to explain. On the second day, at the same hour

of midnight, the Virgin Mary was visited in the same way

as described in the last chapter. The divine power raised

Her up by the same elevations and illuminings to prepare

Her for the visions of the Divinity. He manifested

Himself again in an abstractive manner as on the first

day, and She was shown the works performed on the

second day of the creation. She learnt how and when

God divided the waters (Gen. 1, 6), some above and

others below, establishing the firmament, and above it

the crystal, known also as the watery heaven. Her in

sight penetrated into the greatness, order, conditions,

movements and all the other qualities and conditions of

the heavens.

18. And in the most prudent Virgin this knowledge

did not lay idle, nor remain sterile ; for immediately the

most clear light of the Divinity overflowed in Her, and

inflamed and emblazoned Her with admiration, praise and

love of the goodness and power of God. Being trans

formed as it were with a godlike excellence, She produced

heroic acts of all the virtues, entirely pleasing to his

divine Majesty. And as in the preceding first day God

had made Her a participant of his wisdom, so on this

second day, He made Her in corresponding measure a

participant in the divine Omnipotence, and gave Her

power over the influences of the heavens, of the planets

and elements, commanding them all to obey Her. Thus

was this great Queen raised to Sovereignty over the sea,

the earth, the elements and the celestial orbs, with all the

creatures, which are contained therein.

19. This sovereignty and supreme power belonged to

the dignity of most holy Mary on account of the reason

THE INCARNATION 35

mentioned above ; and besides for two other special ones ;

the first: because this Lady was the privileged Queen,

exempt from the common law of sin and its conse

quences: therefore She was not to be put in the same

general class with the insensate sons of Adam, against

whom the Omnipotent armed the creatures (Wisd. 5, 18)

for vengeance of his injuries and for the punishment of

their frenzy. For if they had not in their disobedience

turned against their Creator, neither would the elements

nor their dependencies have been disobedient toward

them, nor would they have molested them, nor turned

against them the rigor and inclemency of their activity.

And if this rebellion of the creatures is a punishment of

sin, it could not justly extend itself to the most holy

Mary, who was immaculate and without fault. Nor was

it just, that She should be less privileged than the angels,

who were not subject to these consequences of sin, or

deprived of the dominion over the elementary powers.

Although most holy Mary was of corporeal and terres

trial substance, yet She raised Herself above all corporeal

and spiritual creatures, and made Herself Queen and

Mistress of all creation. In this, therefore, She deserved

so much the higher credit, as it was the rarer and the

more precious. More must be conceded to the Queen

than to her vassals, more to the Mistress than to the

servants.

20. The second reason is, because her most holy Son

was Himself to obey this heavenly Queen and his Mother.

Since He was the Creator of the elements and of all

things, it follows naturally that they should obey Her, to

whom the Creator subjected Himself, and that they

should be commanded by Her. Was not the person of

Christ himself, in so far as his human nature was con

cerned, to be governed by his Mother according to the

36 CITY OF GOD

constitution and law of nature? This privilege of sov

ereignty tended also greatly to enhance the virtues and

merits of most holy Mary, for thereby that which in

ourselves is usually done under constraint and against

our will, was performed by Her freely and meritoriously.

This most prudent Queen did not use her sovereignty

over the elements and the creatures indiscriminately and

for her own alleviation and comfort ; but She commanded

the creatures not to suspend their activities and influences

in as far as they would naturally be painful and incon

venient to Her. For in these things She was to be like

her most holy Son and suffer conjointly with Him. Her

love and humility did not permit Her to withhold and

suspend the inclemencies of the creatures in her regard,

since She knew how valuable suffering is and how

estimable in the eyes of the Lbrd.

21. Only on some occasions, when She knew that it

was not for her benefit but necessary for her Son and

Creator, the sweet Mother restrained the force of the

elements and their influences, as we shall see farther on

during her journey to Egypt and on other occasions,

where She most prudently judged it proper, that the

creatures recognize their Creator and reverence Him,

or protect and serve Him in some necessity (Infr. 543,

590, 633). What mortal will not marvel at the knowl

edge of such a new miracle? To see a mere earthly

creature, yet One clothed with the sovereignty and

dominion of the whole creation, esteem Herself in her

own eyes as the most unworthy and insignificant of the

creatures, and, in these humble sentiments, command the

wrath of the winds and all the rigors of the natural

elements to turn against Her and under obedience fulfill

her command ! In obeying Her, however, these elements,

full of reverence and courtesy toward such a Mistress,

THE INCARNATION 37

yielded to her wishes, not in vengeance of the wrongs of

their Creator, as they do in regard to the rest of the

children of Adam, but in order to respect her commands.

22. In the presence of this humility of our invincible

Queen, we mortals cannot deny our most arrogant vanity

and presumption, or rather our audacity, since, seeing

that on account of our insane outrages we merit the

furious rebellion of the elements and of all the harmful

forces of the universe against us, we complain of their

rigor, as if their molestations were an injury. We depre

cate the rigor of the cold, we complain of the exhaustion

of heat; all painful things we abhor, and we condemn

with all energy these ministers of divine justice and seek

our own comforts and delights, as if they were to last

forever and as if it were not certain that we are only

drawing therefrom a heavier punishment of our faults.

23. But returning to the consideration of the knowl

edge and power given to the Princess of heaven and the

other gifts preparing Her worthily for the position of

Mother of God, we can understand their excellence, for

we see in them a certain infinity or boundlessness, par

ticipating of the Divinity, and similar to that which was

afterwards possessed by the most holy soul of Christ.

For She not only knew all creatures in God, but compre

hended them in such a way as to master them and at

the same time reserve capacity for knowing many others,

if there had existed more to be known. I call this knowl

edge an infinity, because it seems to partake of the quali

ties of infinite knowledge and because, in one and the

same action of her mind and without successive ad

vertence, She saw and perceived the number of the

heavens, their latitude and profundity, their order,

motions, qualities, their matter and form; the elements

with all their changes and accidents : all of these She

38 CITY OF GOD

knew at the same time. The only thing the most wise

Virgin did not know was the immediate end of this

knowledge until the moment of her consent and the ful

fillment of the ineffable mercy of the Most High. She

continued during these days her most fervent prayers for

the coming of the Messias, according to the command of

the Lord. And He had given Her to understand that

He would not tarry, as the time destined for his arrival

was at hand.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

GAVE ME.

24. My daughter, from what thou art going to learn

of the favors and blessings conferred upon me in prepa

ration for the dignity of Mother of God, I wish thee to

perceive the admirable order of his wisdom in the cre

ation of man. Take notice, therefore, that his Creator

made him out of nothing, not in order to be a slave, but

in order to be the king and the master of all creation

(Gen. 1, 26), and in order that he make use of creatures

in sovereignty, command and mastery; yet at the same

time man was to recognize himself as the image of his

Maker and the work of his hand, remaining more de

voted to God and more submissive to his will than the

creatures to man; for all this was demanded by justice

and reason. And in order that man might not be with

out information and knowledge of the Creator and of

the means of perceiving and executing his will, He added

to his natural light a greater one, more penetrating, more

limpid, more certain, more free and extensive, namely the

light of divine faith, by which man might know the

existence of God and of his perfections, and conjointly

THE INCARNATION 39

with these, his works. Furnished with this knowledge

and dominion man was established in good standing,

honored and enriched, having no excuse for not devoting

himself entirely to the fulfillment of the divine will.

25. But the foolishness of man disturbs this order and

destroys this harmony, when, being created as the lord

and king of creatures, he enslaves himself, subjecting

himself to them, and degrading his dignity in using visi

ble things not as a prudent master, but as an unworthy

vassal. For he debases himself beneath the lowest of

creatures, by losing sight of the fact that he is their

superior. All this perversity arises from the use of crea

tures not for the service of the Creator through well

ordered faith, but for the indulgence of the passions and

the delights of the senses. Hence also arises man s great

abhorrence of those things which are not pleasing to the

senses.

26. Thou, my dearest, look faithfully toward thy Cre

ator and Lord and in thy soul seek to copy the image of

his divine perfections : lose not the mastery and dominion

over creatures, let none of them infringe upon thy

liberty; but seek to triumph over all of them, allowing

nothing to interpose itself between thee and thy Creator.

Subject thyself gladly, not to the pleasurable in creatures,

since that will obscure thy understanding and weaken thy

will, but to the adverse and the painful resulting from

their activity. Suffer this with joyous willingness, for

I have done the same in imitation of my Son, although

I had the power to neutralize their molestations and had

no sins to atone for.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT FAVORS THE MOST HIGH CONFERRED ON MOST

HOIvY MARY ON THE THIRD DAY OF THE NOVENA

BEFORE THE INCARNATION.

27. The right arm of the Most High, which threw

open the doors of the Divinity to most holy Mary, con

tinued to enrich and adorn at the expense of his infinite

attributes this most pure spirit and virginal body which

He had chosen as his tabernacle, as his temple, and as

the holy city of his habitation. And the heavenly Lady,

engulfed in this vastness of the Divinity, winged her

flight day by day farther away from earthly things, and

transformed Herself more and more into a heavenly

being, discovering ever new sacraments in the Most High.

For as He is the infinite Object of desire, although the

appetite is satiated with that which is received, always

more remains to be desired and understood. Not all the

hierarchies of the angels, nor all men together, have

attained such preferment in blessings, mysteries and

sacraments as this Princess attained, especially as regards

those due to Her as Mother of the Creator

28. On the third day of preparation at which I have

now arrived, having again been prepared as on the first

day, the Divinity manifested Itself anew in abstractive

vision. Too slow and inadequate are our powers for

understanding the increase of the gifts and graces, which

the Most High then lavished on heavenly Mary; and at

this juncture I am at a loss for words to explain even

the least portion of what I p^eeiyed. I can only express

THE INCARNATION 41

myself by saying, that the divine wisdom and power pro

ceeded in a manner worthy of Her, who was to be the

Mother of the Word, so as to ensure, as far as is possible

for a creature, that likeness and proportion, which was

due to the divine Persons. Whoever has even a faint

understanding of the distance which lies between the two

extremes, the infinite God and the limited human crea

ture, can comprehend so much the better, what is neces

sary to bring them together and establish a proportion.

29. More and more the Queen of heaven reflected his

infinite attributes and virtues; more and more brilliantly

shone forth her beauty under the touch of the pencil of

the divine Wisdom and under the colors and lights added

to it from on high. On this day She was informed of

the works of creation as they happened on the third day.

She learned when and how the waters, which were be

neath the firmament, flowed together in one place

(Gen. 1, 9), disclosing the dry land, which the Lord

called earth, while He called the waters the sea. She

learned in what way the earth brought forth the fresh

herbs, and all plants and fructiferous trees with their

seeds, each one according to its kind. She was taught

and She comprehended the greatness of the sea, its depth

and its divisions, its correspondence with the streams

and the fountains, that take their rise from it and flow

back into it; the different plants and herbs, the flowers,

trees, roots, fruits and seeds ; She perceived how all and

each one of them serve for the use of man. All this our

Queen understood and penetrated with the keenest insight

more clearly, distinctly and comprehensibly than Adam

or Solomon. In comparison with Her all those skilled

in medicine in the world would appear but ignorant even

after the most thorough studies and largest experience.

The most holy Mary knew all that was hidden from

42 CITY OF GOD

sight, as Wisdom says (Wis. 7, 21); and just as She

learned it without any fiction, She also communicates it

without envy. Whatever Solomon says there in the

book of Wisdom was realized in Her with incomparable

and eminent perfection.

30. On some occasions our Queen made use of this

science in order to exercise her charity toward the poor

and needy, as will be related in the sequence of this his

tory (No. 668, 867, 868, 1048; III. 159, 423): She had

it under perfect control, and it was as familiar to Her as

the well-trained musician is with his instrument. The

same was true of all the rest of the sciences, whenever

She found it desirable or necessary to make use of them

in the service of the Most High. For She was Mistress

of all of them more perfectly than any of the mortals who

ever did excel in any art or science. She was versed in

the virtuous qualities and activities of the stones, herbs

and plants, and in Her was true what Christ our Lord

promised to the Apostles and first Christians, that

poisonous draughts would not hurt them. This privi

lege belonged to the Queen as a sovereign, so that neither

poison or any other thing could ever injure Her or

cause Her any harm except with her permission.

31. These privileges and favors the most prudent

Princess and Lady always kept concealed, and She made

no use of them for Herself, as I have said, desiring not

to be deprived of a share in the suffering, which had been

chosen by her most holy Son. Before conceiving Him

and becoming his Mother, She was inspired with divine

knowledge and science concerning the passibility of the

Word made flesh. And when She became Mother She

saw and experienced this truth in her Son and Lord him

self and therefore She gave a greater license, or rather

a more strict command, to creatures to afflict Her, since

THE INCARNATION 43

She saw the results of this activity in their own Creator.

Hence, as the Most High did not wish his only and

chosen Spoue to be continually molested by the crea

tures, even though She herself desired it, He often

restrained them and neutralized their operations, so that

the heavenly Princess, unhindered by them, might occa

sionally enjoy the delights of the most high King.

32. There is another special favor, which the most

holy Mary received for the benefit of the mortals on the

third day and in that vision of the Divinity; for during

this vision God manifested to Her in a special way the

desire of his divine love to come to the aid of men and

to raise them up from all their miseries. In accordance

with the knowledge of his infinite mercy and the object

for which it was conceded, the Most High gave to Mary

a certain kind of participation of his own attributes, in

order that afterwards, as the Mother and Advocate of

sinners, She might intercede for them. This participa

tion of the most holy Mary in the love of God and in

his inclination to help Her, was so heavenly and powerful

that if from that time on the strength of the Lord had

not come to her aid, She would not have been able to

bear the impetuosity of her desire to assist and save man

kind. Filled with this love and charity, She would, if

necessary or feasible, have delivered Herself an infinite

number of times to the flames, to the sword and to the

most exquisite torments of death for their salvation. All

the torments, sorrows, tribulations, pains, infirmities She

would have accepted and suffered; and She would have

considered them a great delight for the salvation of

sinners. Whatever all men have suffered from the be

ginning of the world till this hour, and whatever they

will suffer till the end, would have been a small matter

for the love of this most merciful Mother. Let therefore

44 CITY OF GOD

mortals and sinners understand what they owe to most

holy Mary.

33. From that day on, we can say, the heavenly Lady

continued to be the Mother of kindness and great mercy,

and for two reasons : first, because from that moment She

sought with an especial and anxious desire to communi

cate without envy the treasures of grace, which She had

comprehended and received; and therefore such an ad

mirable sweetness grew up in her heart, that She was

ready to communicate it to all men and to shelter them

in her heart in order to make them participants of the

divine love, which there was enkindled. Secondly, be

cause this love of most holy Mary for the salvation of

men was one of the principal dispositions required for

conceiving the eternal Word in her virginal womb. It

was eminently befitting that She should be all mercy,

kindness, piety and clemency, who was Herself to con

ceive and give birth to the Word made man, since He

in his mercy, clemency and love desired to humiliate Him

self to the lowliness of our nature, and wished to be born

of Her in order to suffer for men. It is said : like begets

like: just as the water partakes of the qualities of the

minerals through which it flows ; and although the birth

of Christ originated in the Divinity, yet it also partook

of the conditions of the Mother as far as was possible.

She therefore would not have been suitable for concur

rence with the Holy Ghost in this conception, in which

only the activity of the man was wanting, if She had not

been endowed with perfections corresponding to those of

the humanity of Christ.

34. The most holy Mary issued from this vision with

ever increasing fervor, and during all the rest of the day

She occupied Herself in the prayers and petitions com

manded Her by the Lord. The heart of her Spouse was

THE INCARNATION 45

wounded with love, so that (according to our mode of

thinking") He already longed for the day and the hour

when He should rest in the arms and recline at the breast

of his Beloved.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY QUEEN GAVE ME.

35. My dearest daughter, great were the favors which

the hand of the Most High showered upon me in the

visions of the Divinity, vouchsafed me during the nine

days before his conception in my womb. And although

He did not manifest Himself intuitively and altogether

unveiled, yet He did it in an exalted manner and with

such effects as are reserved to his wisdom. In the re

membrance of what I perceived in this vision, I rose to

the true perception of the position which God held in

comparison to men and men in comparison to God; my

heart was inflamed with love and was torn with sorrow ;

for I realized the immensity of his love towards mortals,

and their most ungrateful oblivion of his incomprehensible

goodness. Many times would I have died at the thought

of these extremes, if God himself had not comforted and

preserved me. This sacrifice of his servant was most

pleasing to his Majesty and He accepted it with greater

complacency than all the holocausts of the old Law; for

He beheld my humility and delighted in it very much.

Whenever I performed these exercises, He showed great

mercy to me and to my people.

36. These sacraments, my dearest, I manifest to thee

in order to encourage thee to imitate me, as far as is

possible will thy weak forces aided by grace. Look

upon the works, which thou hast learnt of, as a pattern

and example to be closely followed. Meditate much, and

weigh over and over again as well in the light of grace

2-5

46 CITY OF GOD

as in that of reason, how exactly mortals ought to cor

respond to this immense kindness of God and to his

eagerness to assist them. Compare at the same time the

heartless obduracy of the children of Adam. I wish

that thy heart be softened in affectionate thankfulness

toward the Lord and melted in sorrow at these unhappy

proceedings of men. I assure thee, my daughter, that

on the day of the general adjustment, the cause of the

greatest wrath of the just Judge shall be man s most

ungrateful forgetfulness of this truth ; and the confusion

of men on account of this wrath shall be such, that on

that day they would of their own accord cast themselves

into the abyss of pain, if there were no ministers of divine

justice to visit this retribution upon them.

37. In order to avoid such an abominable fault and

in order to forestall such a horrible chastisement, renew

in thyself the memory of the blessings, which thou hast

received at the hands of his love and infinite clemency;

and remember that God has distinguished thee in prefer

ence to the souls of many generations. Do not make the

mistake of considering these great favors and special

gifts as conferred on thee for thyself alone: they were

conferred also for the sake of thy brethren : for the divine

mercy is extended to all men. Therefore the return,

which thou owest to the Lord, must be made first for

thyself and then for thy brethren. And because thou art

poor, offer up the life and merits of my most holy Son,

and with them, all that I have suffered by the forces of

my love. Thus wilt thou make thyself pleasing to God

and tender some recompense for the ingratitude of

mortals. In all these things exercise thyself repeatedly

many times, remembering in the meanwhile what I

thought and felt in similar acts and exercises.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOST HIGH CONTINUES HIS FAVORS TO MOST HOLY

MARY ON THE FOURTH DAY.

38. Still the favors and most exalted mysteries of the

Most High toward our Queen and Lady in preparing Her

for approaching dignity of Motherhood continued. The

fourth day of this preparation had arrived and at the

same hour She was again raised to the abstractive vision

of the Divinity. But this vision was accompanied by

new effects of exalted enlightenments in this most pure

Soul. The divine power and wisdom has no bounds or

limits; to his operations only our will, or the limitation

of our created nature, offers resistance. But in the will

of most holy Mary the divine power found no hindrance,

for all her works were executed with plenitude of holi

ness and entirely according to the pleasure of the Lord,

drawing Him on, as He himself said, and wounding his

heart with love (Cant. 4, 9). Only in so far as most

holy Mary was a mere creature was the power of the

divine arm limited; but within these limits it could act

without bound or restriction, and without measure, offer

ing Her the waters of wisdom from the purest and most

crystalline founts of the Divinity.

39. The Most High manifested to Her in this vision,

by most special enlightenments, the new Law of grace

which the Redeemer of the world was to establish, the

Sacraments contained in it, the end for which He would

leave them in his new Church of the Gospel, the gifts

and blessings prepared for men, and his desire, that all

47

48 CITY OF GOD

should be saved and that all should reap the fruit of the

Redemption. And so great was the wisdom, which the

most holy Mary drew from these visions, wherein She

was taught by the highest Teacher and the Corrector of

the wise (Wis. 7, 15), that, if by any means man or angel

could describe it, more books would have to be written

of this science of our Lady than all those which have

been composed in this world concerning all the arts and

sciences, and all the inventions of men. And no wonder

her science was greater than that of all other men : for

into the heart and mind of our Princess was emptied and

exhausted the ocean of the Divinity, which the sins and

the evil disposition of the creatures had confined, repressed

and circumscribed. It was concealed within its own

source until the proper time, which was no other than

the hour in which She was chosen as Mother of the

Onlybegotten of the Father.

40. Joined with the sweetness of this divine science,

our Queen felt a loving, yet piercing sorrow, which this

very science continued to renew. She perceived in the

Most High the ineffable treasures of grace and blessings,

which He had prepared for mortals and She saw the

weight of the Divinity as it were inclined toward the

desire of seeing all men enjoy them eternally. At the

same time She saw and considered the wicked disposition

of the world, and how blindly mortals impeded the flow

of these treasures and deprived themselves of participa

tion of the Divinity. From this resulted a new kind of

martyrdom full of grief for the perdition of men and of

the desire of remedying such lamentable loss. This

caused Her to offer up the most exalted prayers, peti

tions, sacrifices, humiliations and heroic acts of love of

God and of men, in order that no one, if possible, should

henceforth damn himself, and that all should recognize

THE INCARNATION 49

their Creator, and Redeemer, confess Him, adore and

love Him. All this took place in this very vision; but

as these petitions were of the same kind as those already

described, I do not expatiate on them here.

41. In conjunction therewith the Lord showed Her

also the works of creation performed on the fourth day

(Gen. 1, 14-17). The heavenly Princess Mary learned

how and when the luminaries of heaven were formed in

the firmament for dividing day and night and for indi

cating the seasons, the days and the years; how for this

purpose was created the great light of heaven, the sun,

presiding as the lord of the day, and joined with it, the

moon, the lesser light, which reigns over the darkness

of the night. In like manner were formed the stars of

the eighth heaven, in order that they might gladden the

night with their brilliance and preside with their various

influences over both the day and the night. She under

stood what was the material substance of these luminous

orbs, their form, their size, their properties, their various

movements and the uniformity as well as the inequality

of the planets. She knew the number of the stars, and

all their influences exerted upon the earth, both in regard

to the living and the lifeless creatures; the effects and

changes, which they cause in them by these influences.

42. This is not in conflict with what the Prophet says,

(Psalm 146, 4), that God knows the number of the stars

and has called them by their names; for David does not

thereby deny to his Majesty the liberty of conceding to

a creature that as a privilege which He possesses by

nature. It is plain, that since this knowledge is com

municable and since it would contribute to Mary s excel

lence, it should not be denied to Her. Has He not con

ferred upon Her greater favors, and has He not made

Her the Queen of the stars and of all other creatures?

50 CITY OF GOD

And this knowledge was as it were only a sequel of her

dominion and sovereignty over the powers, influences

and movements of all the celestial orbs, since they were

commanded to obey Her as their Queen and Lady.

43. In consequence of this command, which the Lord

gave to the celestial orbs and in accordance with the

dominion which most holy Mary obtained over them, She

possessed such power, that if She commanded the stars

to leave their positions in heaven, they would obey Her

instantly and would hasten to the regions which She

chose to designate. The same is true of the sun and

the planets : all would pause in their course and suspend

their operations to execute the command of Mary. I

have already said above (No. 21) that sometimes her

Highness made use of this sovereignty; for, as we shall

see farther on, it happened a few times in Egypt, where

the rays of the sun are exceedingly strong, that She com

manded the sun to moderate its heat and not to molest

or fatigue the infant God, its Master. And the sun

obeyed Her therein, causing inconvenience and suffering

to Her, because She wished it, and yet respecting the

tender years of the Sun of justice, whom She held in her

arms. The same happened also with other stars, and on

a few occasions She detained the sun in its course, as I

will mention later.

44. Many other hidden sacraments the Most High mani

fested to our great Queen in this vision, and what I have

said and will say of all these mysteries, leaves me dissat

isfied and with a heart as it were torn asunder : for I see,

that I can say little of that which I understand and, in

proportion, I understand still less of what really did

happen to the heavenly Lady. Many of the mysteries

concerning Her are reserved for the last day, when her

most holy Son shall proclaim them, since now we are not

THE INCARNATION 51

capable of receiving their revelation. The most holy

Mary issued from this vision still more inflamed and

filled with the Divinity, entirely transformed by the

knowledge of God s attributes and perfections; and her

advance in virtues kept pace with her progress in divine

favors. She multiplied her requests, her fervent sighs,

and her meritorious works, in order to hasten the Incar

nation of the Word and our salvation.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY QUEEN GAVE ME.

45. My dearest daughter, I wish that thou busy thyself

much in meditating and pondering upon that which thou

hast understood of my doings and sufferings at the time,

when the Most High gave me such a deep insight into

his goodness, which drew Him as with an infinite force

to enrich men, and when He showed me the want of cor

respondence and the dark ingratitude of the mortals.

When I turned from the consideration of this most

liberal condescension of the Most High, to the perception

and understanding of the foolish hard-heartedness of the

sinners, my soul was pierced with an arrow of mortal

anguish, which remained for life. And I wish to tell

thee of another mystery: many times the Most High in

order to heal the affliction and consternation of my heart

in this sorrow, sought to console me by saying : "Accept

Thou, my Spouse, the gifts, which the blind and ignorant

world in its unworthiness despises and is incapable of

receiving and understanding." With these words the

Most High was accustomed to set free the currents of

his divine bounty, which rejoiced my soul more than

human powers can comprehend, or tongue explain.

46. I desire, therefore, that thou, my friend, be now

my companion in the sorrow which I suffered and which

52 CITY OF GOD

is so little noticed by the living. In order to imitate me

therein and in the effects of this most just grief, thou

must deny thyself, forget thyself entirely, and crown

thy heart with the thorns of sorrow at the behavior of

mortals. Weep thou in seeing them laugh at their

eternal damnation, for such weeping is the most legiti

mate occupation of the true spouses of my most holy Son.

Let them seek their delight only in the tears, which they

pour out on account of their sins and those of the igno

rant world. Thus prepare thy heart in order that the

Lord may make thee a participant of his treasures; not

in order to become rich, but in order that his Majesty

may fulfill his most generous love toward thee and in

order that souls may find justification. Imitate me in all

that I teach thee, since thou knowest that this is my

desire in favoring thee.

CHAPTER V.

HIS MAJESTY MANIFESTS NEW MYSTERIES AND SACRA

MENTS TOGETHER WITH THE WORKS OF THE FIFTH

DAY OF THE CREATION TO MOST HOLY MARY, AND

HER HIGHNESS CONTINUES TO PRAY FOR THE INCAR

NATION OF THE WORD.

47. The fifth day of the novena, which the most blessed

Trinity celebrated in the temple of most holy Mary, in

order that the eternal Word might assume human shape

in Her, had arrived. Just as in the preceding days She

was elevated to an abstractive vision of the Divinity,

and, as the veil fell more and more from the secrets of

the infinite wisdom, She discovered new mysteries also

during this day. For the preparations and enlighten

ments emitted ever stronger rays of light and divine

graces, which flashed into her most holy soul and emptied

the treasures of infinity into her faculties, assimilating

and transforming the heavenly Lady more and more to

a likeness of her God in order to make Her worthy of

being his Mother.

48. In this vision, showing Himself to Her with in

effable signs of affection, the Most High spoke to the

heavenly Queen and manifested to Her additional secrets,

saying : "My Spouse and my Dove, in the secret of my

bosom thou hast perceived the immense bounty, to which

my love for the human race inclines Me, and the treas

ures, which are secretly prepared for their happiness : so

powerful is this love in Me, that I wish to give them

my Onlybegotten for their instruction and salvation.

53

54 CITY OF GOD

Thou hast also seen something of the small returns, of

their most listless ingratitude and contempt, in which

men hold my clemency and love. Yet, although I have

shown thee part of their malice, I wish, my friend, that

thou shouldst once more know in Me, how small is the

number of those who are to know and love me as my

chosen ones; and how great and extended is the number

of the ungrateful and the reprobate. The innumerable

sins and abominations of these impure and defiled men,

whom I have foreseen in my infinite knowledge, retard

my bounteous mercy and have locked up the treasurehouse

of my Divinity, making the world entirely unworthy of

receiving my gifts/

49. The Princess Mary, through these words of the

Most High, was instructed in the great mysteries re

garding the number of the predestined and the reprobate ;

and also regarding the hindrances and impediments by

which sinful men delayed the coming of the eternal Word

as man into the world. Having present before Herself

the vision both of the infinite bounty and equity of the

Creator and of the measureless iniquity and malice of

men, the most prudent Mistress, inflamed by the fire of

divine love, spoke to his Majesty and said :

50. "My Lord and infinite God of wisdom and incom

prehensible sanctity, what mystery is this, which Thou

hast manifested to me? Without measure are the mis

deeds of men, so that only thy wisdom can comprehend

them. But can all these and many more, perhaps, extin

guish thy bounty and love, or vie with them? No, my

Lord and Master, it must not be so; the malice of men

must not detain thy mercy. I am the most useless of

all the human race; yet on its behalf I remind Thee of

thy fidelity. Infallibly true it is, that heaven and earth

will come to naught, before thy word can fail (Is. 51, 6),

THE INCARNATION 55

and it is also true, that Thou hast many times given thy

word through the holy Prophets; and Thou hast prom

ised them by word of mouth, a Redeemer and our salva

tion. How then, my God, can these promises fail of ful

fillment without conflicting with thy infinite wisdom; or

how can man be deceived without conflicting with thy

goodness ? In order to induce Thee to fulfill thy promise

and to secure them eternal felicity through thy incarnate

Word, I have nothing to offer on the part of mortals nor

can any creature oblige Thee; and if this blessing could

be merited, then thy infinite and bounteous clemency

would not thereby be glorified. Only through thy own

Self can this obligation be imposed upon Thee, for only

in God can a sufficient reason be found for his becoming

man: in Thee alone was the reason and the motive for

our creation, and therefore in Thee alone also the reason

for our reparation after our fall. Do not seek, my God

and most high King, for merits, nor for a greater motive,

than thy own mercy and the exaltation of thy holy

name."

51. "It is true, my Spouse," answered the Most High,

"that on account of my goodness I bound Myself to the

promise of vesting Myself in human nature and of dwell

ing among them, and that no one could merit in my sight

such a promise; but the ungrateful behavior of men, so

abominable in my sight and in my justice, does not merit

the execution of this promise. For though I seek only

their eternal happiness as a return of my love, I perceive

and find only obduracy, by which they are certain to

waste and despise the treasures of my grace and blessing.

They will yield thorns instead of fruit, great insults for

benefits, and base ingratitude for my unbounded and gen

erous mercy; and the end of all these evils will be for

them the privation of my vision in eternal torments.

56 CITY OF GOD

Take notice of these truths recorded in the secrets of my

wisdom, my Friend, and weigh these great sacraments;

for to thee my heart is laid open, so that thou canst see

the justice of my proceeding."

52. It is impossible to describe the hidden secrets,

which most holy Mary then saw in the Lord; for She

perceived in Him all the creatures of the past, present

and the future, and the position of each one in creation,

the good and bad actions and the final ending of each one.

If She had not been strengthened, She could not have

preserved her life under the effects and feelings caused

by the knowledge and insight into these hidden sacra

ments and mysteries. But as his Majesty, in these new

miracles and blessings had such high ends in view, He

was not sparing but most liberal with the beloved One,

whom He had chosen as his Mother. And as our Queen

derived this science from the bosom of God itself, She

participated also in the fire of his eternal Charity, which

inflamed Her with the love of God and the neighbor.

Therefore, continuing her intercession, She said :

53. "Lord and eternal God, invisible and immortal, I

confess thy justice, I magnify thy works, I adore thy

infinite Essence and hold in reverence thy judgments.

My heart melts within me with tenderest affection, when

I perceive thy unlimited bounty toward men and their

dark ingratitude and grossness toward Thee. For all of

them, O my God, Thou seekest eternal life; but there are

few who are thankful for this inestimable benefit, and

many who will perish by their malice. If on this ac

count, O my eternal Good, Thou relinquishest thy under

taking, we mortals are lost; but while Thou, in thy

divine fore-knowledge, perceivest the sins and the malice

of men who offend Thee so much, Thou also foreseest thy

Onlybegotten made man and his works of infinite price

THE INCARNATION 57

and value in thy sight ; and these will counterbalance and

exceed the malice of sin beyond all comparison. Through

this Godman let thy equity be conquered and on his

account give us Him now ! and in order to urge my

petitions upon Thee once more in the name of the human

race, I unite myself with the spirit of this Word, already

made man in thy mind, and pray for his coming in fact

and for the eternal life of men through his hands."

54. At this prayer of most pure Mary, the eternal

Father (in our way of speaking) represented to Himself

his Onlybegotten as borne in the virginal womb of this

great Queen; and He was moved by her humble and

loving petitions. His apparent hesitation was merely a

device of his tender love in order to enjoy so much the

longer the voice of his Beloved, causing her sweet lips

to distil most sweet honey (Cant. 4, 11) and her

emissions to be like those of paradise (Cant. 4, 13).

And to draw out still more this loving contention, the

Lord answered Her: "My sweetest Spouse and chosen

Dove, great is that which thou askest of Me and little is

that which obliges Me on the part of men ; how then shall

such a singular blessing be conferred on those unworthy

ones? Leave Me, my friend, to treat them according to

their evil deserts." Our powerful and kind Advocate re

sponded : "No, my Master, I will not desist from my

importunity; if much I ask, I ask it of Thee, who are

rich in mercies, powerful in action, true in thy words.

My father David said of Thee and of the eternal Word :

"The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent : Thou

art a priest forever according to the order of Melchise-

dech" (Ps. 109, 4). Let then that Priest come, who is

at the same time to be the sacrifice for our rescue; let

Him come, since Thou canst not repent of thy promise ;

for Thou dost not promise in ignorance. Let me be

58 CITY OF GOD

clothed, O my sweet love, with the strength of this Man

God, which will not allow me to put a stop to my impor

tunity, until Thou give me thy blessing as to my father

Jacob" (Gen. 32,26).

55. In this contest (just as it once happened to Jacob)

our Lady and Queen was asked, what was her name ;

and She said: "I am a daughter of Adam, formed by

thy hands from the insignificant dust." And the Most

High answered : "Henceforth Thou shalt be called :

Chosen for the Mother of the Onlybegotten." But the

latter part of this name was heard only by the courtiers

of heaven, while to Her it was as yet hidden until the

proper time. She therefore heard only the word

"Chosen." Having thus protracted this amorous con

tention according to the disposition of his divine wisdom

and as far as served to inflame the heart of this elected

One, the whole blessed Trinity gave to Mary, our most

pure Queen, the explicit promise, that They would now

send into the world the eternal Word made man. Filled

with incomparable joy and exultation by this fiat, She

asked and received the benediction of the Most High.

Thus this strong Woman issued forth from the contest

with God more victorious than Jacob ; for She came out

rich, strong and laden with spoils, and the One that was

wounded and weakened (to speak in our way) was God

himself; for He was drawn by the love of this Lady to

clothe Himself in that sacred bridal chamber of her

womb with the weakness of our passible nature. He

disguised and enveloped the strength of his Divinity, so

as to conquer in allowing Himself to be conquered, and

in order to give us life by his death. Let the mortals see

and acknowledge, how most holy Mary, next to her most

blessed Son, is the cause of their salvation.

56. During this vision were also revealed to this great

THE INCARNATION 59

Queen the works of the fifth day of the creation in the

manner in which they happened; She saw how, by the

force of the divine command, were engendered and pro

duced in the waters beneath the firmament, the imperfect

reptiles, which creep upon the earth, the winged animals

that course through the air, and the finny tribes that glide

through the watery regions. Of all these creatures She

knew the beginnings, the substance, the form and figure

according to their kinds; She knew all the species of the

animals that inhabit the fields and woods, their condi

tions, peculiarities, their uses and connections ; She knew

the birds of heaven (for so we call the atmosphere),

with the varied forms of each kind, their ornaments,

feathers, their lightness; the innumerable fishes of the

seas and the rivers, the differences between the whales,

their forms, composition and qualities, their caverns and

the foods furnished them by the sea, the ends which they

serve, the use to which they can be put in the world.

And his Majesty especially commanded all these hosts of

creatures to recognize and obey most holy Mary, giving

Her the power to command all of them, as it happened

on many occasions to be mentioned later on (No. 185,

431, 636). Therewith She issued from the trance of

this day and She occupied Herself during the rest of it

in the exercises and petitions, which the Most High had

pointed out to Her.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY LADY GAVE ME.

57. My daughter, the more complete knowledge of the

wonderful operations of the arm of the Almighty in

raising me during the abstractive visions of the Divinity

to the dignity of Mother, is reserved for the predestined

when they shall come to know them in the heavenly

60 CITY OF GOD

Jerusalem. There they shall understand and see them

in the Lord Himself and with that special delight and

astonishment, which the angels experienced, when the

Most High revealed these things to them for his exal

tation and praise. And since his Majesty has shown

Himself so lovingly generous toward thee, giving thee

in preference to all the generations of men, such great

knowledge and light concerning these so hidden sacra

ments, I desire, my friend, that thou signalize thyself

above all creatures in praising and magnifying his holy

name for the works of his powerful arm in my regard.

58. At the same time thou must strive, with all thy

power, to imitate me in the works, which I performed by

the aid of these great and wonderful blessings. Pray

and sigh for the eternal salvation of thy brethren, and

that the name of my Son may be extolled by all and

known to the whole world. Thou must establish the habit

of this kind of prayer, by a constant resolve, founded

upon firm faith and unshaken confidence, and by never

losing sight of thy misery in profound humility and self-

abasement. Thus prepared, thou must battle with

the divine love for the good of thy people, firmly con

vinced, that the most glorious triumphs of divine love

may especially be looked for in its dealings with the

humble, who love God in uprightness. Raise thyself

above thyself and give Him thanks for the special bless

ings conferred upon thee and for those conferred upon

the human race. Transformed by this divine love, thou

wilt merit other gifts, both for thyself and for thy

brethren ; and whenever thou findest thyself in his divine

presence, do thou ask for his benediction.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOST HIGH MANIFESTS TO MARY, OUR MISTRESS,

ADDITIONAL MYSTERIES AND SHOWS HER THE WORKS

OF THE SIXTH DAY OF CREATION.

59. While the Most High continued the proximate

preparation of our heavenly Princess for the reception of

the eternal Word in her virginal womb, She, on her part,

persevered without intermission in her fervent sighs and

prayers to hasten his coming into the world. When the

night of the sixth of these days, which I have begun to

describe, had arrived, and when She had previously been

elevated by still more profound illuminations, She was

again called and invited in spirit to the abstractive vision

of the Divinity. Although this happened in the same

manner as at other times, yet it was accompanied by more

heavenly effects and by a more profound insight into the

attributes of the Most High. She remained nine hours

in this trance and issued from it at the third hour. Yet,

although the high vision of the essence of God ceased at

that hour, the most holy Mary continued to enjoy another

kind of vision and prayer. This was indeed inferior to

the first, but in itself was most exalted and more excel

lent than that experienced by any of the saints or the

just. The gifts and favors so far described partook more

and more of the divine during the last days preceding the

Incarnation, without at the same time being a hindrance

to the active occupations of her married state, for here

Martha had no right to complain, that Mary forsook her

in her ministrations (Luc. 10, 40).

60. Having seen God in this vision She was immedi

ately shown the works on the sixth day of the creation of

2-6 61

62 CITY OF GOD

the world. She witnessed, as if She Herself had been

present, how at the command of the Lord the earth

brought forth the living beings according to their kinds,

as Moses says (Gen. 1, 24). Holy Scripture here refers

to the terrestrial animals, which being more perfect than

the fishes and birds in life and activity, are called by a

name signifying the more important part of their nature.

She saw and understood all the kinds and species of

animals, which were created on this sixth day, and by

what name they were called: some, beasts of burden,

because they serve and assist man, others, wild beasts,

as being more fierce and untamed; others, reptiles, be

cause they do not raise themselves or very little from the

earth. She knew and comprehended the qualities of all

of them : their fury, their strength, the useful purposes

which they serve, and all their distinctions and singular

ities. Over all these She was invested with dominion and

they were commanded to obey Her. She could without

opposition on their part have trodden upon asps and

basilisks, for all would have meekly borne her heel. Many

times did some of these animals show their subjection to

her commands, as when, at the birth of her most Holy

Son, the ox and the ass prostrated themselves and by

their breaths warmed the infant God at the command of

his blessed Mother.

61. In this plenitude of knowledge and science our

heavenly Queen understood perfectly the secret ways of

God in making all creation serve for the benefit of man,

and how much man owes to his Creator on this account.

And it was most proper that She should possess this

knowledge and understanding, so that with it She might

be able to give fitting thanks for these blessings. Neither

men nor angels have done so, failing to correspond and

falling short of their duty in this regard. All these voids

THE INCARNATION 63

were filled by the Queen of all, and She satisfied for the

debt of gratitude, which we could not or would not pay.

Through Her, divine equity was duly satisfied, consider

ing Her as a medium between itself and the creatures.

By her innocence and gratitude She became more pleasing

to his Majesty than all the rest of the creatures. The

mysterious advent of God into the world was thus being

prepared: for the last hindrance was removed by the

sanctification of Her, who was to be his Mother.

62. After seeing the creation of all the irrational

creatures, She became aware, how the most blessed Trin

ity, in order to complete and perfect the world, said :

"Let us make man to our image and likeness"

(Gen. 1, 26), and how by virtue of this divine decree the

first man was formed of the earth as the first parent of all

the rest. She had a profound insight into the harmonious

composition of the human body and soul and of their

faculties, of the creation and infusion of the soul into

the body and of its intimate union with the body. Of the

structure of the human body and all its parts, She

obtained a deep knowledge: She was informed of the

number of the bones, veins, arteries, nerves and ligatures ;

of the concourse of humors to compose the befitting

temperaments, the faculties of nutrition, growth and loco

motion ; She learned in what manner the disturbances or

changes in this harmony caused the sicknesses, and how

these can be cured. All this the most prudent Virgin

understood and comprehended without the least error,

better than all the wise men of the world and better than

even the angels.

63. The Lord manifested to Her also the happy state

of original justice, in which He placed the first parents

Adam and Eve; She understood their condition, beauty

and perfection of innocence and grace, and for how short

64 CITY OF GOD

a time they persevered in it. She perceived how they

were tempted and overcome by the astuteness of the

serpent (Gen. 2, 51), and what were the consequences

of their sin ; and how great were the fury and hate of the

demon against the human race. At the vision of all

these things our Queen made great and heroic acts of

virtue, highly pleasing to God. She understood, that

She was a daughter of these first parents and that She

descended from a nature so thankless to its Creator. In

the remembrance of this She humiliated Herself in his

divine presence, thereby wounding the heart of God and

obliging Him to raise Her above all that is created. She

took it upon Herself to weep for the first sin and for all

the rest, that followed from it, as if She Herself had been

guilty of them all. Hence, even at that time, that first

sin might have been called a fortunate fault, which caused

tears so precious in the eyes of the Lord, and which

earned us such sureties and pledges of our Redemption.

64. Rendering worthy thanks to the Creator for the

magnificent work of the creation of man, She reflected

deeply on his disobedience, the seduction and deception

of Eve, and She inwardly resolved to yield that perpetual

obedience, which these first parents had refused to their

Creator. So acceptable in his eyes was this subjection,

that his Majesty in the presence of the heavenly courtiers

decreed the immediate fulfillment and execution of that,

which was prefigured in the history of the king Assuerus,

by whom the queen Vashti was repudiated and deprived

of royal dignity on account of disobedience, while the

humble and gracious Esther was raised to her place

(Esther?, 2).

65. There was an admirable similarity between that

event and these mysteries ; for the exalted and true King,

in order to show the greatness of his powers and the

THE INCARNATION 65

treasures of his Divinity, had prepared the great banquet

of his creation, and having spread the liberal repast for

all the creatures, invited the guests, that is the human

race, by the creation of its first parents. Vashti, our

mother Eve, disobeyed, failing to submit herself to the

divine command, and now amid the wonderful acclama

tion and jubilee of the angels, the true Assuerus ordered

the most humble Esther to be on that day elevated to

Sovereignty over all creation, this Esther being none

other than the most holy Mary, full of grace and beauty,

chosen among all the daughters of men as their Restor-

atrix and the Mother of his Christ.

66. In the plenitude of this mystery the Most High

infused into the heart of our Queen a new abhorrence

of the demon, such as filled Esther toward Aman

(Esther 7, 10) ; and thus it happened, that She thrust

him from his position of superiority and command over

the world. She crushed the head of his pride, hanging

him on the gallows of the Cross, where he had hoped to

destroy and conquer the Godman, but was himself chas

tised and overcome by it. Toward all this the most holy

Mary was instrumental, as we shall relate in its place

(Vol. Ill, 653). Just as the envy of the dragon against

the Woman, that is this heavenly Lady, commenced in

heaven, when he saw Her clothed with the sun

(Apoc. 12, 4, Part I, 95) ; so this strife continued until

he was deprived of his tyrannous dominion. Just as the

most faithful Mardocheus was given the position of the

proud Aman (Esther 6, 10) ; so also was honored the

most chaste and faithful Joseph, who continually urged

Her to pray for the liberty of her people. This was the

constant subject of conversation between Joseph and his

most pure Spouse; for this very purpose was he raised

to the summit of sanctity, and to the exalted dignity of

66 CITY OF GOD

holding the sealing ring of the highest King

(Esther 8, 2), whereby he received authority to com

mand the Godman himself, as is related in the Gospel.

Having experienced all these mysteries, our Queen issued

from her vision.

INSTRUCTION, WHICH THE HEAVENLY QuEEN GAVE ME-

67. Wonderful, my daughter, was the gift of humil

ity, which the Most High conferred upon me in the event

described by thee. And since his Majesty does not reject

the prayers of those, that dispose themselves to receive

it, I desire that thou imitate me and be my companion in

the exercise of this virtue. I had no part in the sin of

Adam, for I was exempted from his disobedience; but

because I partook of his nature and by it was his daugh

ter, I humiliated myself in my estimation to nothingness.

In the light of this example then, how far must those

humiliate themselves, who not only have had a part in

the first sin, but also have committed other sins without

number? The aim and motive of this humiliation more

over, should not be to remove the punishments of those

sins, but to make restoration and recompense for the

diminution and loss of honor, which was thereby occa

sioned to the Creator and Lord.

68. If a brother of thine should grievously offend thy

natural father, thou wouldst not be a loving and loyal

daughter of thy father, nor a true sister to thy brother,

if thou wouldst not grieve for the offense and weep not

over his ruin as over thy own ; for to the father is due

reverence and to thy brother thou owest love as to thy

self. Consider then, dearest, and examine in the proper

light, how much difference there is between thy Father

who is in heaven and thy natural father, and how all of

you are his children, bound together by the strictest

THE INCARNATION 67

obligation of brethren and of servants of one true Master.

Just as thou wouldst shed tears of humiliation and con

fusion at some ignominious fault of thy natural brother;

so I wish that thou do it for the sins, which the mortals

commit against God, sorrowing for them in confusion

as if thou wert responsible for them thyself. That is

what I did at the thought of the disobedience of Adam

and Eve and of all the evils, which ensued therefrom to

the human race. And the Most High was pleased with my

charitable interest ; for most agreeable in his sight are the

tears shed for the sins, which are forgotten by those, that

have committed them.

69. At the same time see thou bear ever in mind, that,

no matter how great and rare are the favors received

from the Most High, thou do not despise the danger of

sin nor contemn the solicitous and humble performance

of the ordinary duties of precept and charity. For these

do not oblige thee to leave the presence of God: faith

teaches thee, and inspiration should govern thee, to bear

Him with thee in all occupations and places, quitting thy

self and thy inclinations, but fulfilling in all things the

will of thy Lord and Spouse. Do not allow thyself to be

led in these sentiments by the trend of thy own inclina

tions, nor by that which seems to agree with thy own

interior liking and taste; for many times the greatest

danger is hidden beneath this cloak. In such doubts and

hesitations let holy obedience be thy umpire and master ;

through it thou canst decide securely, and thou wilt need

no other criterion for thy actions. Great victories and

advances in merit are connected with the true submission

of self and subjection of our own judgments to those of

others. Thou shouldst never wish to retain for thyself

the power to will or not to will : then thou shalt sing of

victories and overcome thy enemies.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOST HIGH CELEBRATES A NEW ESPOUSAL WITH

THE PRINCESS OF HEAVEN IN ORDER TO INAUGURATE

THE NUPTIALS OF THE INCARNATION. HE ADORNS

HER FOR IT.

70. Great are the works of the Most High, for all of

them were and are executed with the plenitude of knowl

edge and goodness, ordained in equity and number

(Wis. 11, 21). None of them is faulty, useless or in

effectual, superfluous or vain ; all are exquisite and mag

nificent, finished and executed according to the full meas

ure of his holy will. Such He desired them to be, in

order that He might be known and magnified in them.

But in comparison to the mystery of the Incarnation, all

the works of God ad extra, although they are in them

selves great, stupendous and marvelous, more to be ad

mired than comprehended, are only a small spark, issuing

from the unfathomable abyss of the Divinity. This great

sacrament of vesting Himself in a passible and mortal

nature is pre-eminently the great work of his infinite

power and wisdom and the one which immeasurably ex

cels all the other works and wonders of his powerful

arm. For in this mystery, not merely a spark of the

Divinity, but that whole vast volcano of the infinite God

head, broke forth and communicated itself to men, unit

ing Itself by an indissoluble and eternal union to our

terrestrial human nature.

71. If this wonderful sacrament of the King is to be

measured only by his own vastness, it follows that the

Woman, in whose womb He was to become man, de

served to be so perfectly adorned with the plenitude of

68

THE INCARNATION 69

his treasures, that no gift or grace within the range of

possibility be omitted, and all these gifts be so consum

mate, that nothing is wanting to them. As all this was

reasonable and altogether befitting the greatness of

the Omnipotent, He certainly fulfilled it in the most holy

Mary, much better than king Assuerus did with the

gracious Esther (Esther 2, 9), when he raised her to his

magnificent throne. The Most High visited our Queen

Mary with such great favors, privileges and gifts, that

the like was never even conceived in the mind of creatures,

and, when She issued forth in the presence of the cour

tiers of this great King of the eternal ages (I Tim. 1, 17),

they recognized and exalted in Her the power of God,

at the same time understanding, that He, who chose to

select a woman for his Mother, knew also how to make

her worthy of assuming that position.

72. The seventh day of this mysterious preparation

for the approaching sacrament arrived, and in the same

hour as already mentioned, the heavenly Lady was called

and elevated in spirit, but with this difference, that She

was bodily raised by her holy angels to the empyrean

heaven, while in her stead one of them remained to rep

resent Her in corporeal appearance. Placed into this

highest heaven, She saw the Divinity by abstract vision

as in other days; but always with new and more pene

trating light, piercing to new and more profound myster

ies, which God according to his free will can conceal or

reveal. Presently She heard a voice proceeding from

the royal throne, which said : "Our Spouse and chosen

Dove, our gracious Friend, who hast been found pleasing

in our eyes and hast been chosen among thousands : We

wish to accept thee anew as our Bride, and therefore We

wish to adorn and beautify thee in a manner worthy of

our design."

70 CITY OF GOD

73. On hearing these words the most Humble among

the humble abased and annihilated Herself in the pres

ence of the Most High more than can be comprehended

by human power. Entirely submissive to the divine pleas

ure and with entrancing modesty, She responded: "At

thy feet, O Lord, lies the dust and abject worm, ready

is thy poor slave for the fulfillment of all thy pleasure in

her. Make use, O eternal Good, of this thy insignificant

instrument according to thy desire, and dispose of it with

thy right hand." Presently the Most High commanded

two seraphim, of those nearest to his throne and highest

in dignity to attend on this heavenly Virgin. Accom

panied by others, they presented themselves in visible

form before the throne, and there surrounded the most

holy Mary, who was more inflamed with divine love than

they.

74. It was a spectacle worthy of new wonder and

jubilee for all the angelic spirits to see in this heavenly

place, never touched by other feet, an humble Maiden

consecrated as their Queen and raised to the closest

proximity to God of all the created beings; to see that

Woman, whom the world ignored and held in obliv

ious contempt, so highly esteemed and appreciated

(Prov. 31, 10) ; to see our human nature in its first fruits

receiving the pledge of superiority over the celestial

choirs and already assuming its place among them. O

what a holy and just envy must such a strange wonder

have caused in the ancient courtiers of that heavenly

Jerusalem ! What thoughts rose up within them in praise

of its Author! What sentiments of humility did it awaken

in them, subjecting all their high understandings to the

decrees of the divine Will! They saw that He was holy

and just, who exalted the humble, who favored human

lowliness and raised it above the angelic choirs.

THE INCARNATION 71

75. While the inhabitants of heaven were lost in their

praiseworthy admiration, the most blessed Trinity,

(according to our imperfect mode of understanding and

speaking), conferred within Itself, how pleasing in its

sight was the Princess Mary, how perfectly and com

pletely She had corresponded with the blessings and

gifts confided to Her, how adequately She had augmented

the glory of the Lord; and how free She was of any

fault, defect or hindrance, that might compromise the

dignity of her predestined Motherhood of the Word.

Accordingly the three Persons of the Trinity resolved to

raise this Creature to the highest position of grace and

friendship of God, such as no creature had ever or would

ever attain; and then and there They gave to Her more

than to all the rest of creatures together. The most

blessed Trinity was pleased and rejoiced in seeing that

the supreme holiness of Mary was such as had been con

ceived and determined for Her in the divine intellect.

76. In correspondence with this holiness, and as a

completion of it, and as a testimony of the benevolence

with which the Lord wished to communicate to Her ever

new influences of his Divinity, He ordained and com

manded, that most holy Mary be visibly clothed and

adorned with mysterious vestments and jewels, which

should symbolize the interior graces and privileges of a

Queen and of a heavenly Spouse. Although such bridal

adornment had already been conferred upon Her before

that time, when She was presented in the temple

(Part I, 436) ; yet now this was done under new and

wonderful conditions; for it was to serve as the imme

diate preparation for the miracle of the Incarnation.

77. Presently therefore, upon the command of the

Lord the two seraphim clothed most holy Mary with a

tunic or ample robe, which, as a symbol of her purity and

72 CITY OF GOD

grace, was so exquisitely white and resplendent, that if

one single ray of the light so profusely emitted by it

would flash into the world, it would by itself give more

refulgence than all the stars combined, even if they were

all suns; and in comparison with it, all the light, which

is known to us, would appear as darkness. While the

seraphim vested Her, the Most High gave Her a pro

found understanding of the obligation entailed thereby :

namely, that She must make a befitting return to his

Majesty, by proportioning her faithful love and the ex

alted perfection of her actions to that, which She had

now learnt. Nevertheless, the purpose, for which the

Lord intended these blessings, that is his Incarnation

through Her, continued to be hidden to her mind. All

the rest of the mysteries our Lady understood and for

all of them She humiliated Herself with ineffable pru-

ence, and She asked the divine assistance for corre

sponding to these favors and blessings.

78. Over this robe the same seraphim placed a girdle,

as a symbol of the holy fear, which was infused into Her.

It was very rich, with jewels of extreme refulgence and

beauty. At the same time the fountain of light bursting

forth from the Divinity enlightened and illumined the

heavenly Princess, so that She understood the exalted

reasons, why God should be feared by all the creatures.

With this gift of fear of the Lord She was appropriately

girded, as befitted a Creature, who was to treat and con

verse so familiarly with her Creator as his Mother.

79. Presently She perceived, that the seraphim

adorned Her with most beautiful and abundant hair,

held together by a rich clasp, more brilliant than pure

and polished gold. She understood, that in this em

bellishment was conceded to Her the privilege of

spending her whole life in exalted and divine thoughts,

THE INCARNATION 73

inflamed by the subtlest charity as signified by the gold.

In connection with this privilege She was established

anew in the habits of unclouded wisdom and science,

exquisitely binding up the hair of exalted thoughts by an

ineffable participation in the wisdom and science of God

himself. Sandals or shoes were also given to Her, to

indicate, that all her steps and movements would be most

beauteous (Cant. 7, 1), tending always to the high and

holy aim of the greater glory of the Most High. And

these shoes were laced with the especial grace of anxious

diligence in doing good both before God and man

(Luke 1, 39), as it happened when She hastened to

visit saint Elisabeth and saint John; and thus this

Daughter of the Prince issued most beautiful in her

footsteps (Cant. 7, 1).

80. Her arms were adorned with bracelets, filling Her

with magnanimity for undertaking great works in par

ticipation of the divine magnificence ; and thus She

always extended them toward courageous deeds

(Prov. 31, 19). Her fingers were embellished by rings,

in order that in smaller or more inferior matters She

might act in a superior manner, exalted in aim and pur

pose and in all respect making her doings grand and

admirable. To this they added a necklace, set with in

estimable and brilliant jewels and containing symbols

of the three most excellent virtues of faith, hope and

charity in correspondence with the three divine Persons.

Conjointly with this gift they renewed in Her the habits

of these most noble virtues, which She would especially

need in the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption.

81. In her ears they hung earrings of gold, filigreed

with silver (Cant. 1, 10), thus preparing her ears for

the message, which She was shortly to hear from the arch

angel Gabriel, and at the same time they furnished Her

74 CITY OF GOD

with knowledge in order that She might listen attentively

and give discreet and acceptable answers to the divine

proposals. Thus would the pure silver of her innocence

resound in the ears of the Lord and re-echo, in the bosom

of the Divinity, those charming and sacred words : "Fiat

mihi secundum verbum tuum." "Be it done to me ac

cording to thy word" (Luke 1, 38).

82. Then they spread over her garment inscriptions,

which at the same time served as embroidery or borders

of the finest colors mixed with gold. Some of them bore

the legend.: "Mary, Mother of God;" others: "Mary,

Virgin and Mother." But these inscriptions were not

intelligible to Her, nor were they explained to Her, but

their meaning was known to the holy angels. The differ

ent colors symbolized the habits of all the virtues in the

most excellent degree and their active exercise, surpassing

all that was ever practiced by the rest of the intellectual

creatures. And as a complement of all this beauty, they

furnished Her as if with lotions for her face, by illumi

nating Her with the light drawn from the proximity and

participation of the inexhaustible Being and perfection

of God himself. For as She was destined actually and

truly to shelter within Her virginal womb the infinite

perfection of God, it was befitting, that She should have

received it beforehand by grace in the highest measure

possible to a mere creature.

83. In this adornment and beauty our Princess Mary

stood before the Lord so beautiful and charming, that

even the supreme King could desire Her as Spouse

( Ps. 44, 12). I do not detain myself here in repeating

what I have already said, what I will yet say in this

history about her virtues ; I only say that this adornment

was accompanied by new features and effects altogether

divine. All this was proper to the infinite power and to

THE INCARNATION 75

its immense perfection and sanctity, which offer to our

comprehension ever new fields of speculation. And when

there is question of this ocean of perfection in most holy

Mary, we certainly can hope only to skirt its shores. My

understanding of that which I perceive, is always preg

nant with vast fields of thought, on which I cannot

expatiate.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY

GAVE ME.

84. My daughter, the work-shops and treasure-rooms

of the Most High are those of a divine Lord and omnip

otent King, and therefore without number or limit are

the riches and treasures which they contain for the en

dowment of his chosen brides. He can enrich innumer

able others just as He has enriched my soul, and yet

infinitely more will remain. Although He will give to no

creature as much as He has conferred upon me, it is not

because He is not able or does not wish, but because no

one will dispose himself for his grace as I did. But the

Almighty is most liberal with some souls and enriches

them so munificently, because they impede his gifts less,

and dispose themselves better than others.

85. I desire, my most beloved, that thou place no ob

stacle to the love of thy Lord; but I wish, that thou

dispose thyself for the jewels and gifts, intended for thee

in order to make thee worthy of his bridal chamber.

Remember that all the just souls receive this adornment

from his hands, though each one according to the degree

of the friendship and grace, which makes them capable of

receiving them. If thou wishest to attain the highest

purity of that perfection and become worthy of standing

in the presence of thy Lord and Spouse, strive to be

76 CITY OF GOD

robust and strong in love ; and thou knowest, that this is

augmented in the same degree, as mortification and self-

abnegation are practiced. Thou must deny thyself and

forget all earthly things; thou must expel all thy mean

ings toward thyself and toward visible things, in the

divine love solely thou must increase and advance. Wash

and purify thyself in the blood of thy Redeemer, Christ,

and apply this cleansing many times by renewing thy

loving sorrow for thy sins. Thereby wilt thou find grace

in his eyes and thy beauty will be desired by Him, and all

thy adornments will be full of the greatest perfection and

purity.

86. And as thou hast been so highly favored and dis

tinguished by the blessings of the Lord, it is just that

thou, more than many generations of men, give thanks

and with incessant praises magnify Him for what, He

has condescended to do for thee. If this vice of ingrati

tude is so vile and reprehensible in the creatures, who owe

Him little and in their earthliness and coarseness, forget

the benefits of the Lord ; greater will thy guilt be in fall

ing short of thy obligations. And do not deceive thyself

with the pretext of being humble; for there is a great

difference between thankful humility and humble thank-

lessness. Remember that the Lord very often shows

great favors to the unworthy, in order to manifest his

goodness and munificence. On the contrary let no one

become inflated, but let every one acknowledge so much

the more his unworthiness, using it as a medicine and

treacle against the poison of presumption. But gratitude

will agree with this humble opinion of self, since we must

acknowledge, that every good gift comes from the Father

of lights and cannot ever be merited by creatures

(James 1, 17). All have their source only in his good

ness, binding us and obliging us to grateful recognition.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR GREAT QUEEN, IN THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD,

PI^EADS FOR THE HASTENING OF THE INCARNATION

AND OF THE REDEMPTION OF MAN, AND HIS MAJESTY

YIEU)S TO HER PRAYER.

87. The heavenly Princess, most holy Mary, had now

attained such fullness of grace and beauty and the heart

of God was so wounded by her tender affections and

desires (Cant. 4, 9), that He was so to say irresistibly

drawn to begin his flight from the bosom of the eternal

Father to the bridal-chamber of her virginal womb and

end the long delay of more than five thousand years.

Nevertheless, since this new wonder was to be executed in

the plenitude of his wisdom and equity, the Lord arranged

this event in such a way, that the Princess of the heavens

Herself, being the worthy Mother of the incarnate Word,

should at the same time be also the most powerful Media

trix of his coming and the Redeemer of his people much

more than Esther was of Israel (Esther ch. 7 and 8).

In the heart of most holy Mary burned the flame, which

God himself had enkindled, and without intermission She

prayed for the salvation of the human race. However,

as yet the most humble Lady restrained Herself in

modesty, knowing that on account of the sin of Adam,

the sentence of death and of eternal privation from the

vision of God had been promulgated (Gen. 3, 19).

88. A heavenly strife thus arose in the most pure heart

of Mary between her love and her humility, and, lost in

these sentiments, She repeated many times: "Oh who

shall be able to secure the salvation of my brethren ! Oh

who shall be able to draw from the bosom of the eternal

2-7 77

78 CITY OF GOD

Father his Onlybegotten and make Him a partaker of our

mortality! Oh who shall oblige Him to give to our

human nature the kiss of his mouth, for which the bride

asks Him! (Cant. 1,1). But how can we, the children

and descendants of the malefactor, who committed the

crime, ask for this favor? How can we draw Him

toward us, whom our fathers repelled? Oh my Love, if

I could but see Thee at the breasts of thy Mother, the

human nature! (Cant 8, 1). Oh Light of lights, God

of the true God, would that Thou descend, bending down

thy heavens (Ps. 143, 5) and shedding thy light upon

those that live sitting in darkness ! ( Is. 9, 2 ) . Would that

Thou pacify thy Father, and, by thy right hand that is

by his Onlybegotten, hurl the proud Aman, thy enemy,

the devil, from his height ! Who shall be the Mediatrix,

who shall draw from the celestial altar, as with tongs

of gold (Is. 6, 6), that ember of the Divinity, for the

purification of the world, as once did the seraphim, ac

cording to the word of the prophet Isaias!"

89. This prayer most holy Mary repeated during the

eighth day of her preparation, and at midnight, being

wrapped and entranced in the Lord, She heard his

Majesty responding to Her : "My Spouse and my Dove,

come, my Chosen one, for the common law does not

apply to thee (Esther 15, 13). Thou art exempt from

sin and thou art free from its effects since the moment

of thy Conception. When I gave being to thee, I turned

away from thee the sceptre of my justice and laid upon

thy neck that of my great clemency, in order that the

general edict of sin might not touch thee. Come to Me,

and be not dismayed in the consciousness of thy human

nature; I am He, that raises the humble, and fills with

riches those that are poor. Thou hast Me for thy Friend

and my liberal mercies shall be at thy disposal."

THE INCARNATION 79

90. These words our Queen heard intellectually and,

as in the preceding night, She presently felt Herself

raised by the holy angels bodily to heaven, while in her

stead remained one of the angels of her guard. Again

She ascended to the presence of the Most High, so en

riched by the treasures of his graces and gifts, so fortu

nate and beautiful, that She singularly excited the wonder

of the supernal spirits. They broke out in praise of the

Almighty, saying: "Who is this, that ascends from the

desert, overflowing with delights? (Cant. 8, 5). Who is

She, that so attracts and compels her Beloved as to bear

Him with Her to the earthly habitation? Who is She,

that rises as the dawn, more beautiful than the moon,

chosen as the sun? (Cant. 6, 9). How refulgent doth

She rise from the darkness of the earth? How is She

so courageous and strong, being clothed in such fragile

nature? How does She in her strength overcome the

Almighty? And how comes it that the heavens, which

are closed against the children of Adam, are thus thrown

open to this singular Woman, sprung from the same

race?"

91. The Most High received his holy and chosen

Bride, most holy Mary, into his presence. Although this

happened not in an intuitive, but in an abstractive

vision of the Divinity; it was accompanied with incom

parable favors of light and purification proceeding from

the Lord himself, such as were specially reserved for this

day. For they were so divine, that, in our way of speak

ing, God himself who wrought them, was astonished and

was charmed with the work of his hand. As if entranced

with love, He spoke to Her and said: "Revertere,

revertere, Sulamitis, ut intueamur te" (Return, return, O

Sulamitess, that We may behold thee). "My Spouse, my

most perfect and beloved Dove, pleasing in my sight.

80 CITY OF GOD

turn and advance toward Us, that We may behold thee

and be charmed by thy beauty. I do not regret to have

created man and I delight in his formation, since thou

hast been born of him. Let my celestial spirits see how

justly I have desired and do desire to choose thee as my

Spouse and the Queen of all the creatures. Let them

see what good reason I have to rejoice in this my bridal

chamber, from whence my Onlybegotten, next to that of

my own bosom, shall derive the greatest glory. Let all

understand, that if I justly repudiated Eve, the first queen

of the earth, on account of her disobedience, I now place

thee and establish thee in the highest dignity, showing my

magnificence and power in dealing with thy purest

humility and self-abasement."

92. This day was for the angels a day of jubilation

and rejoicing greater than any since their creation. And

when the most blessed Trinity thus chose and appointed

his Spouse and Mother of the Word for the Queen and

Lady of the creatures, the holy angels and all the celes

tial court of Spirits acknowledged and received Her as

their Mistress and Superior, and they sung sweet hymns

of glory in her honor and in praise of her Author. Dur

ing these hidden and admirable mysteries the heavenly

Queen Mary was absorbed in the abyss of the Divinity

and in the light of his infinite perfections: and thereby

the Lord prevented Her from attending to all that hap

pened. Thus the sacrament of her Mothership of the

Onlybegotten still remained hidden to Her until the

proper time. Never did the Lord deal in such a manner

with any nation (Ps. 147, 20), nor did He ever show

Himself so great and powerful in any creature, as on

this day in most holy Mary.

93. The Most High added yet other favors, saying to

Her with extreme condescension : "My chosen Spouse,

THE INCARNATION 81

since Thou hast found grace in my eyes, ask of Me with

out restraint, what thou desirest, and I assure thee, as

the most faithful God and powerful King, that I shall

not reject thy petitions nor deny thee what thou askest."

Our great Princess humiliated Herself profoundly and

relying on the promise and royal word of the Lord, and

inspired with highest confidence, She answered saying:

"My Lord and highest God, if I have found grace in thy

eyes (Gen. 18, 3, 27), although I am dust and ashes, I

will speak in thy divine presence and pour out to Thee

my heart" (Ps. 61, 9). Again his Majesty assured Her

and commanded Her to ask in the presence of all the

heavenly court, for whatever She desired, even if it were

a part of his kingdom (Esther 5, 3). "I do not ask, O

Lord, for a part of thy kingdom in my own behalf,"

answered most holy Mary, "but I ask for the whole of

it for all the race of men, who are my brothers. I be

seech Thee, highest and powerful King, that according

to thy immense kindness Thou send us thy Onlybegotten

our Redeemer, in order that He may satisfy for the sins

of all the world, that thy people may gain the freedom

so much desired, and that, through the satisfaction thus

rendered to thy justice, peace may be declared among

men upon (Ezech. 34, 25) earth, and that the portals of

heaven, closed by sin, may be thrown open for its in

habitants. Let all flesh see thy salvation (Is. 52, 10) ;

let peace and justice give each other that close embrace

and the kiss, which David asked for (Ps. 84, 11) ; let us

mortals possess a Teacher, a Guide and a Savior

(Is. 30, 20), a Chief, who shall live and dwell with us

(Baruch. 3, 38) . Let the day of thy promises dawn upon

us, O my God, let thy words be fulfilled, and let the

Messias, expected for so many ages, arrive. These are

my anxious desires, and for this do I breathe forth my

82 CITY OF GOD

sighs, since Thou showest to me the condescension of thy

infinite clemency."

94. The highest Lord, who wished to bind Himself

by her prayer, disposed and incited the petitions of his

beloved Spouse ; benignly He inclined toward Her and

answered Her with singular clemency : "Pleasing to my

Will are thy requests, and acceptable are thy petitions:

it shall be done as thou askest. I desire, my Daughter

and Spouse, what thorn seekest ; and as a pledge of this,

I give thee my word and promise thee, that very shortly

my Onlybegotten shall descend to the earth and shall vest

Himself and unite Himself with the human nature. Thus

thy acceptable wishes shall be executed and fulfilled."

95. With this assurance and divine promise our great

Queen Princess felt new enlightenment and security in

her spirit, convincing Her, that the end of that long pro

tracted and prolix night of sin and of the ancient Law

was approaching and that the brightness of human Re

demption was about to dawn. And because the rays of

the Sun of Justice, whose dawn was soon to arise from

Her, so closely and so intensely enveloped Her about,

She became Herself the most beautiful aurora, inflamed

and refulgent as it were with the fiery clouds of the

Divinity, which transformed all things within Her. All

afire with love and gratitude for the approaching Re

demption, She gave unceasing praise to the Lord both

in her own name and in that of all the mortals. In this

occupation She passed that day, after the angels had again

restored Her to the earth. 1 must grieve at my igno

rance and shortcomings in explaining these so exalted

mysteries; and if learned men and great students can

not give an adequate explanation of these things, how

shall it be given by a poor and lowly woman? May my

ignorance be supplemented by the light of Christian

THE INCARNATION 83

charity and my presumption be atoned for by my

obedience.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MOST HOLY MARY, THE QUEEN,

GAVE ME.

96. My dearest daughter, how far removed is worldly

wisdom from the admirable operations of the divine

power in these sacraments of the Incarnation of the

divine Word in my womb ! Flesh and blood cannot reach

them, and not the angels and seraphim, though they be

of the highest; nor can they know mysteries so deeply

hidden and so far above the ordinary course of grace.

Praise thou, my beloved, the Lord for them with inces

sant love and thankfulness. Be thou not any longer

slow in understanding the greatness of his divine love

and his readiness to benefit his friends and dear ones,

whom He desires to elevate from the dust and enrich

in diverse manners. As soon as thou hast penetrated

into this truth, it will oblige thee to thank Him and incite

thee to undertake the great things, that become a most

faithful daughter and spouse.

97. And in order that thou mayest dispose thyself and

be inspired so much the more, I remind thee, that the

Lord often says these same words to his chosen ones:

"Revertere, revertere, ut intueamur te." For He de

rives just as great pleasure from their deeds, as when

a father rejoices in his beloved and well-behaved son,

whom he looks upon many times with great affection;

or as an artist, when he beholds with pride the perfect

works of his hands; or as a king, who inspects the rich

city, which he has added to his dominions; or as one,

who is pleased with his much beloved friend. There is

only this difference: the Most High finds incomparably

more delight than all these in the souls, which He has

84 CITY OF GOD

chosen for his blessings; and in proportion as they dis

pose themselves and advance in virtue, the Lord also

multiplies his favors and benefits. If the mortals, that

attain to the light of faith, would enter into this truth,

they would, merely on account of this complacence of

the Almighty in their good deeds, not only preserve

themselves from sin, but they would zealously engage

in great works until death and eagerly show their loving

servitude to Him, who is so liberal in rewarding, and

so generous in his favors.

98. When, on this eighth day which thou hast de

scribed, the Lord in heaven spoke to me these words :

"Revertere, revertere," asking me to turn toward Him

and allow the celestial spirits to look upon me; I was

made aware, that the pleasure, which his divine Majesty

derived in beholding me, by itself exceeded all the de

light and complacency, which He ever derived from all

the most saintly souls in the height of their sanctity. In

his gracious condescension He was more pleased in me

than in all the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors, Virgins

and all the rest of the saints. And this pleasure and

complacency of the Most High overflowed and enriched

my spirit with such an influx of grace and participation

of the Divinity, that thou canst neither understand nor

explain it as long as thou art in the mortal flesh. But

I tell thee of this hidden mystery, in order that thou

mayest bless its Author, and that, while yet thy exile from

the fatherland continues, thou dispose and exert thyself

in my place and name to extend and reach out thy hands

to great things (Prov. 31, 19). Give to the Lord the

satisfaction expected of thee, and strive after it, thus

earning his blessings and soliciting them for thyself and

thy neighbor with perfect charity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOST HIGH RENEWS ALL HIS FAVORS AND BENEFITS

IN THE MOST HOLY MARY AND, AS THE ULTIMATE

PREPARATION FOR THE INCARNATION, MAKES HER

SOVEREIGN AND QUEEN OF ALL THE UNIVERSE.

99. On the last day of the novena of immediate

preparation of the tabernacle (Ps. 45, 5), which He was

to sanctify by his coming, the Most High resolved to

renew his wonders and multiply his tokens of love, re

peating the favors and benefits which up to this day He

had conferred upon the Princess Mary. But the Al

mighty chose to work in such a way, that in drawing

forth from his infinite treasures his gifts of old, He al

ways added thereto such as were new. All of these dif

ferent kinds of wonders were appropriate to the end He

had in view : lowering his Divinity to the human nature

and raising a woman to the dignity of Mother of God.

In descending to the lowliness of man s estate, God

neither could, nor needed to change his essence: for,

remaining immutable in Himself, He could unite his

Person to our nature; but an earthly woman, in ascend

ing to such an excellence that God should unite with

Her and become man of her substance, apparently must

traverse an infinite space and be raised so far above other

creatures, as to approach God s infinite being itself.

100. The day had then arrived, in which most holy

Mary was to reach the last stage and be placed so close

to God, as to become his Mother. In that night, at the

hour of greatest silence, She was again called by the

85

86 CITY OF GOD

same Lord as it had happened on the other days. The

humble and prudent Queen responded: "My heart is

prepared (Ps. 107, 2), my Lord and exalted Sovereign:

let thy divine pleasure be fulfilled in me." Immediately

She was, as on the preceding day, borne body and soul

by the hands of her angels to the empyrean and placed

in the presence of the royal throne of the Most High;

and his divine Majesty raised Her up and seated Her

at his side, assigning to Her the position and throne,

which She was to occupy forever in his presence. Next

to the one reserved for the incarnate Word, it was the

highest and the most proximate to God himself; for it

excelled incomparably that of any of the other blessed,

and that of all of them together.

101. From this position She saw the Divinity by an

abstractive vision, as at other times, and his Majesty,

hiding from Her the dignity of Mother of God, mani

fested to Her such unusual and such high sacraments,

that on account of their sublimity and my insignificant

capacities, I cannot describe them. Again She saw in

the Divinity all things created and many other possible

and future ones. The corporeal things God manifested

and made known to Her by corporeal and sensible images,

as if they had been presented to her ocular vision. The

fabric of the universe, which before this She had known

in parts, now appeared to Her in its entirety, distinctly

pictured as upon canvas, with all the creatures contained

therein. She saw the harmony, order, connection and

dependence of each toward each, and of the divine will,

which had created them, governs and preserves them,

each in its place and mode of existence. Again She

saw all the heavens and the stars, the elements, and

those that lived in them, purgatory, limbo, hell and all

the occupants of these caverns. Just as the position of

THE INCARNATION 87

the Queen of creation was above all creatures and in

ferior only to that of God, so also the knowledge given

to Her was superior to that of all created things being

inferior only to that of the Lord.

102. While thus the heavenly Lady was lost in ad

miration of what the Almighty showed to Her, and was

wrapped in praise and exaltation of the Lord, his Ma

jesty spoke to Her and said : "My chosen Dove, all the

visible creatures, which thou beholdest, I have created

and preserved in all their variety and beauty by my

Providence, solely for the love of men. And from all

the souls, which I have until now created and which

are predestined to be created unto the end, I shall choose

and select the congregation of the faithful, who shall be

set apart and washed in the blood of the Lamb in the

Redemption of the world. They shall be the special fruit

of his Redemption, and they shall enjoy its blessings

through the new law of grace and the sacraments to be

instituted by the Redeemer; and afterwards those that

persevere shall partake of my eternal glory and friend

ship. For these chosen ones I have primarily created

these wonderful works! and if all of them would strive

to serve Me, adore and acknowledge my holy name; as

far as I am concerned, I would for each and every one of

them create these great treasures and assign all over to

them as their possession.

103. "And if I had created only one being capable of

my grace and glory, I would have made it the lord and

master of all creation ; for this would be a much smaller

favor than to make it partaker of my friendship and of

eternal happiness. Thou, my Spouse, shalt be my chosen

One and thou hast found grace in my sight; and there

fore I make thee Mistress of all these goods and I give

thee dominion and possession of them all, so that, if

88 CITY OF GOD

them art a faithful spouse according to my wishes, thou

mayest distribute and dispose of them according as thou

desirest and according as thy intercession shall direct;

for this is the purpose, for which they are given into thy

possession." Therewith the most blessed Trinity placed

a crown on the head of our Princess Mary, consecrat

ing Her as the sovereign Queen of all creation. Upon it

was spread and enameled the inscription: Mother of

God; but its meaning was not known to Her at this

time. The heavenly spirits, however, knew it and they

were filled with admiration at the magnificence of the

Lord toward this Maiden, most fortunate and blessed

among womankind. They revered and honored Her as

their legitimate Queen and as Sovereign of all creation.

104. All these portents of love the right hand of the

Most High wrought according to the order most befit

ting his infinite wisdom; for before coming down to

assume flesh in the virginal womb of this Lady, it was

proper that all his courtiers should acknowledge his

Mother as their Queen and Mistress, and give Her due

honor as such. It was certainly proper and just that God

should first make Her Queen before making Her

Mother of the Prince of eternities ; for She that was to

bear a Prince, must necessarily first be a Queen and be

acknowledged as Queen by her vassals. That the angels

should know Her as Mother, was not improper, nor was

there any necessity of concealing it from them. But on

the other hand it seemed due to the majesty of the Di

vinity, that the tabernacle chosen for his indwelling

should appear before them prepared and adorned with

all that was highest in dignity and perfection, in nobility

and magnificence to the full extent, in which it was pos

sible. Thus then, was She presented to the holy angels,

THE INCARNATION 89

and recognized by them, as their honored Queen and

Lady.

105. In order to put the last touch to this prodigious

work of preparing the most holy Mary, the Lord ex

tended his powerful arm and expressly renewed the

spirit and the faculties of the great Lady, giving Her

new inclinations, habits and qualities, the greatness and

excellence of which are inexpressible in terrestrial terms.

It was the finishing act and the final retouching of the

living image of God, in order to form, in it and of it,

the very shape, into which the eternal Word, the essen

tial image of the eternal Father (II Cor. 4, 4) and the

figure of his substance (Heb. 1, 3), was to be cast. Thus

the whole temple of most holy Mary, more so than that

of Solomon, was covered with the purest gold of the

Divinity inside and out, (III Kings, 6, 30), so that no

where could be seen in Her any grossness of an earthly

daughter of Adam. Her entire being was made to

shine forth the Divinity; for since the divine Word was

to issue from the bosom of the eternal Father to descend

to that of Mary, He provided for the greatest possible

similarity between the Mother and the Father.

106. No words at my disposal could ever suffice to

describe as I would wish, the effects of these favors in

the heart of our great Queen and Mistress. Human

thought cannot conceive them, how then can human

words express them? But what has caused the greatest

wonder in me, when I considered these things in the

ligfat given to me, is the humility of this heavenly

Woman and the mutual contest between her humility and

the divine power. Rare and astonishing prodigy of hu

mility, to see this Maiden, most holy Mary, though

raised to the supremest dignity and holiness next to God,

yet humiliating Herself and debasing Herself below the

90 CITY OF GOD

meanest of the creatures; so that, by the force of this

humility, no thought of her being destined for the Moth-

ership of the Messias could find entrance into her mind !

And not only this: She did not even have a suspicion of

anything great or admirable in Herself (Ps. 130, 1).

Her eyes and heart were not elated ; on the contrary the

higher She ascended by the operation of the right hand

of her God, so much the more lowly were her thoughts

concerning Herself. It was therefore just, that the Al

mighty should look upon her humility (Luke 1, 48), and

that therefore all generations should call her fortunate

and blessed.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN AND MISTRESS OF

HEAVEN GAVE ME.

107. My daughter, the soul that has only a selfish and

servile love is not a worthy spouse of the Most High,

for she must not love or fear like a slave, nor is she sup

posed to serve for her daily wages. Yet although her

heart must be a filial and generous love on account of

the excellence and immense goodness of her Spouse, she

must nevertheless also feel herself much bounden to

Him, when she considers how rich and liberal He is;

how, on account of his love for souls. He has created

such a variety of visible goods in order that they might

serve those who serve Him; and especially, when she

considers how many hidden treasures He has in readi

ness in the abundance of his sweetness (Ps. 30, 20) for

those that fear Him as his true children. I wish that

thou feel deeply obliged to thy Lord and Father, thy

Spouse and Friend, at the thought of the riches given

to those souls, who become his dearest children. For,

as a powerful Father, He holds in readiness these great

THE INCARNATION 91

and manifold gifts for his children, and if necessary, all

of his gifts for each one of them in particular. In the

midst of such motives and incentives of love the disaf

fection of men is inexcusable, and at the sight of so

many blessings, given without measure, their ingratitude

is unpardonable.

108. Remember, also, my dearest, that thou wast no

foreigner, or stranger in this house of the Lord, his

holy Church (Ephes. 2, 19) ; but thou wast made a do

mestic and a spouse of Christ among the saints, favored

by his gifts and by the dowry of a bride. Since all the

treasures and riches of the bridegroom belong to the

legitimate spouse, consider of how great possessions He

makes thee participant and mistress. Enjoy them all,

then, as his domestic, and be zealous for his honor as a

much-favored daughter and spouse; thank Him for all

these works and benefits, as if they had all been pre

pared for thee alone by the Lord. Love and reverence

Him for thyself and for all thy neighbors, to whom God

has been so liberal. In all this imitate, with thy weak

faculties, that which thou hast understood of what I

have done. I assure thee also, daughter, that it will be

very pleasing to me, if thou magnify and praise the Om

nipotent with fervent affection, for the favors and riches

which, beyond all human conception, the divine right

hand showered upon me.

CHAPTER X.

THE BLESSED TRINITY SENDS THE ARCHANGEL GABRIEL

AS A MESSENGER TO ANNOUNCE TO MOST HOLY MARY

THAT SHE IS CHOSEN AS THE MOTHER OF GOD.

109. For infinite ages had been appointed the con

venient hour and time, in which the great mystery of

piety (I Tim. 3, 16), which was approved by the Spirit,

prophesied to men, foretold to the angels, and expected

in the world, was to be drawn from the hidden recesses of

the divine wisdom in order to be appropriately mani

fested in the flesh. The plenitude of time (Gal. 4, 4)

had arrived, that time which until then, although filled

with prophecies and promises, was nevertheless void and

empty. For it wanted the fullness of the most holy

Mary, by whose will and consent all the ages were to

receive their complement, namely the eternal Word

made flesh, capable of suffering and redeeming man.

Before all ages this mystery was prearranged in such a

way, that it should be fulfilled through the mediation

of this heavenly Maiden. Since now She existed in the

world the Redemption of man and the coming of the

Onlybegotten of the Father was not longer to be de

layed. For now He would not need to come and live

as if by sufferance merely in tents (II Kings 7, 6) or

in a strange house; but He could enjoy a free welcome

as in His temple and as in his own house, one that had

been built and enriched at his own preordained expense,

more so than the temple of Solomon at the expense of

his father David (I Par. 22, 5).

92

THE INCARNATION 93

110. In this predetermined time then the Most High

resolved to send his onlybegotten Son into the world.

And comparing, (according to our way of understand

ing and speaking), the decrees of his eternity with the

prophecies and testimonies made to man from the be

ginning of the world, and all this together with the po

sition of sanctity to which He had raised most holy Mary,

He judged that all the circumstances were favorable for

the exaltation of his holy name, and that the execution

of his eternal will and decree should be made manifest to

the angels and be commenced by them. His Majesty

spoke to the archangel Gabriel in such words or lan

guage as He was accustomed to use in intimating his

will to the holy angels. Although God usually illumines

the holy spirits by commencing with the higher angels,

who in turn purify and illumine the others in their order

down to the least among them, thus making known the

revelations of the Divinity; yet on this occasion this

usage was not maintained, for the holy archangel re

ceived his message immediately from the mouth of God.

111. At the bidding of the divine will the holy Ga

briel presented himself at the foot of the throne intent

upon the immutable essence of the Most High. His Ma

jesty then expressly charged him with the message,

which he was to bring to the most holy Mary and in

structed him in the very words with which he was to

salute and address Her. Thus the first Author of the

message was God himself, who formed the exact words in

his divine mind, and revealed them to the holy archangel

for transmission to the most pure Mary. At the same

time the Lord revealed to the holy prince Gabriel many

hidden sacraments concerning the Incarnation. The

blessed Trinity commanded him to betake himself to the

heavenly Maiden and announce to Her, that the Lord

2-8

94 CITY OK GOD

had chosen Her among women to be the Mother of the

eternal Word, that She should conceive Him in her vir

ginal womb through operation of the Holy Ghost with

out injury to her virginity. In this and in all the rest

of the message, which he was to declare and manifest to

this great Queen and Mistress, the archangel was in

structed by the blessed Trinity itself.

112. Thereupon his Majesty announced to all the

other angels that the time of the Redemption had come

and that He had commanded it to be brought to the

world without delay ; for already, in their own presence,

the most holy Maty had been prepared and adorned to

be his Mother, and had been exalted to the supreme dig

nity. The heavenly spirits heard the voice of their Crea

tor, and with incomparable joy and thanksgiving for the

fulfillment of his eternal and perfect will, they intoned

new canticles of praise, repeating therein that hymn of

Sion : "Holy, holy, holy art thou, God and Lord Sabaoth

(Is. 6, 3). Just and powerful art Thou, Lord our God,

who livest in the highest (Ps. 112, 5) and lookest upon

the lowly of the earth. Admirable are all thy works,

most high and exalted in thy designs."

113. The supernal prince Gabriel, obeying with sin

gular delight the divine command and accompanied by

many thousands of most beautiful angels in visible forms,

descended from the highest heaven. The appearance of

the great prince and legate was that of a most hand

some youth of rarest beauty; his face emitted resplen

dent rays of light, his bearing was grave and majestic,

his advance measured, his motions composed, his words

weighty and powerful, his whole presence displayed a

pleasing, kindly gravity and more of godlike qualities

than all the other angels until then seen in visible form

by the heavenly Mistress. He wore a diadem of exqui-

THE INCARNATION 95

site splendor and his vestments glowed in various colors

full of refulgent beauty. Enchased on his breast, he

bore a most beautiful cross, disclosing the mystery of

the Incarnation, which He had come to announce. All

these circumstances were calculated to rivet the affec

tionate attention of the most prudent Queen.

114. The whole of this celestial army with their

princely leader holy Gabriel directed their flight to Naz

areth, a town of the province of Galilee, to the dwelling

place of most holy Mary. This was an humble cottage

and her chamber was a narrow room, bare of all those

furnishings which are wont to be used by the world in

order to hide its own meanness and want of all higher

goods. The heavenly Mistress was at this time fourteen

years, six months and seventeen days of age; for her

birthday anniversary fell on the eighth of September and

six months seventeen days had passed since that date,

when this greatest of all mysteries ever performed

by God in this world, was enacted in Her.

115. The bodily shape of the heavenly Queen was

well proportioned and taller than is usual with other

maidens of her age ; yet extremely elegant and perfect in

all its parts. Her face was rather more oblong than

round, gracious and beautiful, without leanness or gross-

ness; its complexion clear, yet of a slightly brownish

hue; her forehead spacious yet symmetrical; her eye

brows perfectly arched; her eyes large and serious, of

incredible and ineffable beauty and dovelike sweetness,

dark in color with a mixture tending toward green; her

nose straight and well shaped; her mouth small, with

red-colored lips, neither too thin nor too thick. All the

gifts of nature in Her were so symmetrical and beautiful,

that no other human being ever had the like. To look

upon Her caused feelings at the same time of joy and

96 CITY OF GOD

seriousness, love and reverential fear. She attracted the

heart and yet restrained it in sweet reverence ; her beauty

impelled the tongue to sound her praise, and yet her

grandeur and her overwhelming perfections and graces

hushed it to silence. In all that approached Her, She

caused divine effects not easily explained; She filled the

heart with heavenly influences and divine operations,

tending toward the Divinity.

116. Her garments were humble and poor, yet clean,

of a dark silvery hue, somewhat like the color of ashes,

and they were arranged and worn without pretense, but

with the greatest modesty and propriety. At the time

when, without her noticing it, the embassy of heaven

drew nigh unto Her, She was engaged in the highest

contemplation concerning the mysteries which the Lord

had renewed in Her by so many favors during the nine

preceding days. And since, as we have said above, the

Lord himself had assured Her that his Onlybegotten

would soon descend to assume human form, this great

Queen was full of fervent and joyful affection in the ex

pectation of its execution and inflamed with humble love,

She spoke in her heart : "Is it possible that the blessed

time has arrived, in which the Word of the eternal

Father is to be born and to converse with men? (Baruch

10, 38) . That the world should possess Him ? That men

are to see Him in the flesh ? ( Is. 40. 5 ) . That his inacces

sible light is to shine forth to illumine those who sit in

darkness? (Is. 9, 2). O, who shall be worthy to see and

know Him! O, who shall be allowed to kiss the earth

touched by his feet!"

117. "Rejoice, ye heavens, and console thyself, O

earth (Ps. 95, 11) ; let all things bless and extol Him,

since already his eternal happiness is nigh ! O children of

Adam, afflicted with sin, and yet creatures of my Be-

THE INCARNATION 97

loved, now shall you raise your heads and throw off the

yoke of your ancient servitude! (Is. 14, 25). O, ye an

cient Forefathers and Prophets, and all ye just, that are

detained in limbo and are waiting in the bosom of Abra

ham, now shall you be consoled and your much desired

and long promised Redeemer shall tarry no longer ! ( Agg.

2, 8). Let us all magnify Him and sing to Him hymns

of praise! O who shall be the slave of Her, whom

Isaias points out as his Mother (Is. 7, 4) ; O Emmanuel,

true God and Man ! O key of David, who art to unlock

heaven ! ( Is. 22, 22 ). O eternal Wisdom ! O Lawgiver

of the new Church ! Come, come to us, O Lord, and end

the captivity of thy people; let all flesh see thy salva

tion!" (Is. 40, 5).

118. In these petitions and aspirations, and in many

more too deep for my tongue to explain, the most holy

Mary was engaged at the hour, when the holy angel

Gabriel arrived. She was most pure in soul, most per

fect in body, most noble in her sentiments, most exalted

in sanctity, full of grace and so deified and pleasing in

the sight of God, that She was fit to be his Mother and

an instrument adapted for drawing Him from the bosom

of the Father to her virginal womb. She was the power

ful means of our Redemption and to Her we owe it on

many accounts. And therefore it is just, that all gen

erations and nations shall bless and forever extol Her

(Luke 1, 48). What happened at the entrance of the

heavenly embassy, I will relate in the following chapter.

119. I wish only to state here a fact worthy of admira

tion, that for the reception of the message of the arch

angel and for the execution of the exalted mystery,

which was to be wrought in the heavenly Lady by her

consent, his Majesty left Her without any other aid than

the resources of her common human nature and those

98 CITY OF GOD

furnished Her by the faculties and virtues of her ordi

nary condition, such as have been described in the first

part of this history (Part I, 674-714). The Most High

disposed it thus, because this mystery was to be enacted

as a sacrament of faith conjointly with hope and char

ity. And therefore the Lord provided Her with no spe

cial aid, leaving Her to her belief and hope in his divine

promises. Thus prepared She experienced what I shall

try to relate in my inadequate and limited terms. The

greatness of these sacraments makes my ability to ex

plain them appear so much the more insufficient

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

120. My daughter, with special affection I manifest

to thee now my will and desire that thou make thyself

worthy of the intimate and familiar converse with God,

and that for this purpose thou dispose thyself with great

zeal and solicitude, weeping over thy sins, and forgetting

and rejecting all the visible things, so that thou have no

thought henceforth for any other thing outside of God.

Therefore thou must begin to practice all that I have

taught thee until now, and whatever I will yet teach

thee in the balance of this history. I will accompany

thee and guide thee on the course with which thou must

maintain in this familiar intercourse and in regard to

the favors, which thou receivest through his condescen

sion, entertaining Him in thy heart by means of the

faith, light and grace given to thee. If thou dost not

first conform to this my admonition, and prepare thy

self accordingly, thou wilt not reach the fulfillment of

thy desires, nor shall I reap the fruit of my instruc

tions, which I give to thee as thy Teacher.

121. Since thou has found, without any merit of

THE INCARNATION 99

thine, the hidden treasure and the precious pearl of my

teachings and instruction (Matth. 13, 44), despise all

other things, in order to possess and secure for thyself

this prize of inestimable value; for with it thou shalt

receive all other goods and thou wilt make thyself

worthy of the intimate friendship of the Lord and of

his perpetual indwelling in your heart. In exchange for

this great blessing, I desire that thou die to all earthly

things and that thou offer the thankful love of an en

tirely purified will. In imitation of me be thou so

humble, that as far as thou art concerned, thou be per

suaded and convinced of thy entire worthlessness and in

capability, not meriting to be considered even as a slave

of the servants of Christ.

122. Remember, I was far from imagining, that the

Most High had designed me for the dignity of Mother

of God; and this was my state of mind although He

had already promised his speedy coming into the world

and although He had commanded me to desire after

Him with such great affection, that on the day before

the execution of this mystery I thought I would die and

my heart would burst with loving sighs, if the divine

Providence had not comforted me. He dilated my spirit

with the firm hope, that the Onlybegotten of the eternal

Father would descend from heaven without delay; yet

on the other hand, my humility inclined me to fear, lest

my presence in the world might perhaps retard his com

ing. Contemplate then, my beloved, this secret of my

breast, and what an example it is for thee and for all the

mortals. And since it is difficult for thee to understand

and describe such high wisdom, look upon me in the

Lord, in order that by his divine light, thou mayest

mediate and comprehend the perfection of my actions;

follow me by imitating me, and walk in my footsteps.

CHAPTER XL

MARY LISTENS TO THE MESSAGE OF THE HOLY ANGEL;

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION IS ENACTED BY

THE CONCEPTION OF THE ETERNAL WORD IN HER

WOMB.

123. I wish to confess before heaven and earth and

its inhabitants, and in the presence of the Creator of the

universe and the eternal God, that in setting myself to

write of the profound mystery of the Incarnation, my

feeble strength deserts me, my tongue is struck mute,

my discourse is silenced, my faculties are benumbed, my

understanding is eclipsed and overwhelmed by the divine

light, which guides and instructs me. In it all is per

ceived without error and without any deviousness ; I see

my insignificance and I am made aware of the empti

ness of words and the insufficiency of human terms for

doing justice to my concepts of this sacrament, which

comprehends at one and the same time God himself and

the greatest and most wonderful work of his Omnipo

tence. I see in this mystery the divine and admirable

harmony of his infinite providence and wisdom, with

which from all eternity He has ordained and prearranged

it, and by which He directed all creation toward its ful

fillment. All his works and all his creatures were only

well adjusted means of advancing toward this apex of

his aims, the condescension of a God in assuming human

nature.

124. I saw that the eternal Word had awaited and

chosen, as the most opportune time and hour for his

100

THE INCARNATION 101

descent from the bosom of the Father, the midnight of

mortal perversion (Wis. 18, 14), when the whole pos

terity of Adam was buried and absorbed in the sleep of

forgetfulness and ignorance of their true God, and when

there was no one to open his mouth in confessing and

blessing Him, except some chosen souls among his

people. All the rest of the world was lost in silent dark

ness, having passed a protracted night of five thousand

and about two hundred years. Age had succeeded age,

and generations followed upon generations, each one in

the time predestined and decreed by the eternal Wisdom,

each also having an opportunity to know and find Him,

its Creator; for all had Him so nigh to them, that He

gave them life, movement and existence within their own

selves (Acts 17, 28). But as the clear day of his inac

cessible light had not arrived, though some of the mor

tals, like the blind, came nigh to Him and touched Him

in his creatures, yet they did not attain to the Divinity

(Rom. 1, 23) and in failing to recognize Him, they cast

themselves upon the sensible and most vile things of the

earth.

125. The day then had arrived in which the Most

High, setting aside the long ages of this dark ignorance,

resolved to manifest Himself to men and begin the Re

demption of the human race by assuming their nature

in the womb of most holy Mary, now prepared for this

event. In order to be able to describe what was revealed

concerning this event to me, it is necessary to make men

tion of some hidden sacraments connected with the de

scent of the Onlybegotten from the bosom of the Fa

ther. I assume as firmly established what the holy faith

teaches in regard to the divine Persons, that although

there is a real personal distinction between the three Per

sons, yet there is no inequality in wisdom, omnipotence or

102 CITY OF GOD

other attributes, just as little as there is in the divine

nature; and just as They are equal in dignity and in

finite perfection, so They are also equal in these opera

tions ad extra, which proceed from God himself for the

production of some creature or temporal object. These

operations are indivisibly wrought by three divine Per

sons; for not one Person alone produces them, but all

Three in so far as They are one and the same God, pos

sessing one and the same wisdom, one and the same

understanding and will. Thus what the Son knows and

wishes, that also the Father knows and wishes; and so

also the Holy Ghost knows and wishes whatever is

known and willed by the Father and the Son.

126. In this indivisibility of action the three Persons

wrought and executed, by one and the same act, the mys

tery of the Incarnation, although only the person of the

Son accepted for Himself the nature of man, uniting it

to Himself hypostatically. Therefore we say that the

Son was sent by the eternal Father, from whose intelli

gence He proceeds, and that the Father sent Him by the

intervening operations of the Holy Ghost As it was

the Person of the Son which came to be made man, this

same Person before descending from the heavens and

the bosom of the Father, in the name of that same hu

manity to be received by Him, made a conditional re

quest, that, on account of his foreseen merits, his salva

tion and satisfaction of the divine justice for sins be ex

tended to the whole human race. He desired the fiat or

ratification of the most blessed will of the Father, who

sent Him, for the acceptance of this Redemption by

means of his most holy works and his passion, and

through the mysteries, which He was to enact in the

new Church and in the law of grace.

127. The eternal Father accepted this petition and the

THE INCARNATION 103

foreseen merits of the Word; He conceded all that was

proposed and asked for the mortals, and He himself

confirmed the elect and predestined souls as the inheri

tance and possession of Christ forever. Hence, Christ

himself, our Lord, through saint John says that He has

not lost nor has allowed to perish, those whom the

Father had given him (John 18, 9). In another place it

is said : that no one shall snatch his sheep from his hands

nor from those of his Father (John 17, 12). The same

would hold good of all those that are born, if they would

avail themselves of the Redemption, which, as it is suffi

cient, should also be efficacious for all and in all; since

his divine mercy desired to exclude no one, if only all of

them would make themselves capable of receiving its

benefits through the Redeemer.

128. All this, according to our way of understanding,

happened in heaven at the throne of the most blessed

Trinity as a prelude to the fiat of the most holy Mary, of

which I will presently speak. At the moment, in which

the Onlybegotten of the Father descended to her virginal

womb, all the heavens and the creatures were set in com

motion. On account of the inseparable union of the di

vine Persons, the Three of Them descended with the

Word, though the Word alone was to become incarnate.

And with the Lord their God, all the hosts of the celes

tial army, issued from heaven, full of invincible strength

and splendor. Although it was not necessary to pre

pare the way, since the Divinity fills the universe, is

present in all places and cannot be impeded by anything;

nevertheless all the eleven material heavens showed

deference to their Creator, and, together with the in

ferior elements, opened up and parted as it were, for his

passage; the stars shone with greater brilliancy, the

moon and sun with the planets hastened their course in

104 CITY OF GOD

the service of their Maker, anxious to witness the great

est of his wonderful works.

129. Mortals did not perceive this commotion and re

newal of all the creatures ; both because it happened dur

ing the night, as well as because the Lord wished it to

be known only to the angels. These with new wonder

praised Him, knowing these profound and venerable

mysteries to be hidden from men. For they knew that

men were far removed from understanding these won

derful benefits, so admirable even in the eyes of angelic

spirits. To these angelic spirits alone was at that time

assigned the duty of giving glory, praise and reverence

for these benefits to their Maker. However, in the

hearts of some of the just the Most High infused at that

hour a new feeling and affection of extraordinary joy

of which they became conscious. They conceived new

and grand ideas concerning the Lord; some of them

were inspired and began to confer within themselves,

whether this new sensation, which they felt, was not the

effect of the coming of the Messias in order to redeem

the world ; but all this remained concealed, for each one

thought, that he alone had experienced this renewal of

his interior.

130. In the other creatures there was a like renovation

and change. The birds moved about with new songs

and joyousness; the plants and trees gave forth more

fruit and fragrance; and in like proportion all the rest

of the creatures received and felt some kind of vivifying

change. But among those that received the greatest

share, were the Fathers and Saints in limbo, whither the

archangel Michael was sent with the glad message, in

order to console them and cause in them the fullness

of jubilee and praise. Only for hell it was a cause of

new consternation and grief; for at the descent of the

THE INCARNATION 105

eternal Word from on high, the demons felt an impet

uous force of the divine power, which came upon them

like the waves of the sea and buried all of them in the

deepest caverns of their darkness without leaving them

any strength of resistance or recovery. When by divine

permission they were again able to rise, they poured

forth upon the world and hastened about to discover

what strange happening had thus undone them. How

ever, although they held several conferences among them

selves, they were unable to find the cause.

The divine Power concealed from them the sacra

ment of the Incarnation and the manner in which most

holy Mary conceived the incarnate Word (No. 326).

Not until the death of Christ on the cross did they arrive

at the certainty, that He was God and true man, as we

shall there relate.

131. In order that the mystery of the Most High

might be fulfilled, the holy archangel Gabriel, in the

shape described in the preceding chapter and accom

panied by innumerable angels in visible human forms

and resplendent with incomparable beauty, entered into

the chamber, where most holy Mary was praying. It

was on a Thursday at six o clock in the evening and at

the approach of night. The great modesty and restraint

of the Princess of heaven did not permit Her to look at

him more than was necessary to recognize him as an

angel of the Lord. Recognizing him as such, She, in

her usual humility, wished to do him reverence; the holy

prince would not allow it; on the contrary he himself

bowed profoundly as before his Queen and Mistress, in

whom. he adored the heavenly mysteries of his Creator.

At the same time he understood that from that day on

the ancient times and the custom of old whereby men

should worship angels, as Abraham had done (Gen. 28,

106 CITY OF GOD

2), were changed. For as human nature was raised to

the dignity of God himself in the person of the Word,

men now held the position of adopted children, of com

panions and brethren of the angels, as the angel said to

Evangelist Saint John, when he refused to be wor

shipped (Apoc. 19, 10).

132. The holy archangel saluted our and his Queen

and said: "Ave gratia plena, Dominus tecum, benedicta

tu in mulieribus" (Luke 1, 28). Hearing this new sal

utation of the angel, this most humble of all creatures

was disturbed, but not confused in mind (Luke 1, 29).

This disturbance arose from two causes : first, from her

humility, for She thought Herself the lowest of the crea

tures and thus in her humility, was taken unawares at

hearing Herself saluted and called the "Blessed among

women;" secondly, when She heard this salute and be

gan to consider within Herself how She should receive

it, She was interiorly made to understand by the Lord,

that He chose Her for his Mother, and this caused a still

greater perturbance, having such an humble opinion of

Herself. On account of this perturbance the angel pro

ceeded to explain to Her the decree of the Lord, saying :

"Do not fear, Mary, for thou hast found grace before

the Lord (Luke 1, 30) ; behold thou shalt conceive a

Son in thy womb, and thou shalt give birth to Him, and

thou shalt name Him Jesus; He shall be great, and He

shall be called Son of the Most High," and the rest as

recorded of the holy archangel.

133. Our most prudent and humble Queen alone,

among all the creatures, was sufficiently intelligent and

magnanimous to estimate at its true value such a new

and unheard of sacrament; and in proportion as She

realized its greatness, so She was also moved with ad

miration. But She raised her humble heart to the Lord,

THE INCARNATION 107

who could not refuse Her any petition, and in the secret

of her spirit She asked new light and assistance by which

to govern Herself in such an arduous transaction; for,

as we have said in the preceding chapter, the Most High,

in order to permit Her to act in this mystery solely in

faith, hope and charity, left Her in the common state

and suspended all other kinds of favors and interior ele

vations, which She so frequently or continually enjoyed.

In this disposition She replied and said to holy Gabriel,

what is written in saint Luke: "How shall this happen,

that I conceive and bear; since I know not, nor can

know, man ?" At the same time She interiorly represented

to the Lord the vow of chastity, which She had made

and the espousal, which his Majesty had celebrated with

Her.

134. The holy prince Gabriel replied (Luke 1, 24) :

"Lady, it is easy for the divine power to make Thee a

Mother without the co-operation of man ; the Holy Spirit

shall remain with Thee by a new presence and the virtue

of the Most High shall overshadow Thee, so that the

Holy of holies can be born of Thee, who shall himself

be called the Son of God. And behold, thy cousin Elisa

beth has likewise conceived a son in her sterile years

and this is the sixth month of her conception ; for noth

ing is impossible with God. He that can make her con

ceive, who was sterile, can bring it about, that Thou,

Lady, be his Mother, still preserving thy virginity and

enhancing thy purity. To the Son whom Thou shalt

bear, God will give the throne of his father David and

his reign shall be everlasting in the house of Jacob. Thou

art not ignorant, O Lady, of the prophecy of Isaias (Is.

7, 14), that a Virgin shall conceive and shall bear a son,

whose name shall be Emmanuel, God with us. This

prophecy is infallible and it shall be fulfilled in thy per-

108 CITY OF GOD

SOIL Thou knowest also of the great mystery of the

bush, which Moses saw burning without its being con

sumed by the fire (Exod. 3, 2). This signified that the

two natures, divine and human, are to be united in such

a manner, that the latter is not consumed by the divine,

and that the Mother of the Messias shall conceive and

give birth without violation of her virginal purity. Re

member also, Lady, the promise of the eternal God to

the Patriarch Abraham, that, after the captivity of his

posterity for four generations, they should return to

this land; the mysterious signification of which was, that

in this, the fourth generation,\* the incarnate God is to

rescue the whole race of Adam through thy co-operation

from the oppression of the devil (Gen. 15, 16). And

the ladder, which Jacob saw in his sleep (Gen. 28, 12),

was an express figure of the royal way, which the eternal

Word was to open up and by which the mortals are to

ascend to heaven and the angels to descend to earth.

To this earth the Onlybegotten of the Father shall lower

Himself in order to converse with men and communicate

to them the treasures of his Divinity, imparting to them

his virtues and his immutable and eternal perfections."

135. With these and many other words the ambassa

dor of heaven instructed the most holy Mary, in order

that, by the remembrance of the ancient promises and

prophecies of holy Writ, by the reliance and trust in

them and in the infinite power of the Most High, She

might overcome her hesitancy at the heavenly message.

But as the Lady herself exceeded the angels in wisdom,

prudence and in all sanctity, She withheld her answer,

\*In the autograph manuscript Mary of Agreda explains this fourth genera

tion as follows:

"The mystery of this fourth generation is that there are four generations:

ist, that of Adam without a father or mother; 2nd, that of Eve without a mother;

3rd, of our own, from a father and mother; 4th, that of our Lord Jesus Christ,

from a Mother without a father."

THE INCARNATION 109

in order to be able to give it in accordance with the

divine will and that it might be worthy of the greatest

of all the mysteries and sacraments of the divine power.

She reflected that upon her answer depended the pledge

of the most blessed Trinity, the fulfillment of his prom

ises and prophecies, the most pleasing and acceptable of

all sacrifices, the opening of the gates of paradise, the

victory and triumph over hell, the Redemption of all the

human race, the satisfaction of the divine justice, the

foundation of the new law of grace, the glorification of

men, the rejoicing of the angels, and whatever was con

nected with the Incarnation of the Onlybegotten of the

Father and his assuming the form of servant in her

virginal womb (Philip 2, 7).

136. A great wonder, indeed, and worthy of our ad

miration, that all these mysteries and whatever others

they included, should be intrusted by the Almighty to

an humble Maiden and made dependent upon her fiat.

But befittingly and securely He left them to the wise and

strong decision of this courageous Woman (Prov. 31,

11), since She would consider them with such mag

nanimity and nobility, that perforce his confidence in Her

was not misplaced. The operations, which proceed

within the divine Essence, depend not on the co-opera

tion of creatures, for they have no part in them and God

could not expect such co-operations for executing the

works ad intra; but in the works ad extra and such as

were contingent, among which that of becoming man

was the most exalted, He could not proceed without the

co-operation of most holy Mary and without her free

consent. For He wished to reach this acme of all the

works outside Himself in Her and through Her and He

wished that we should owe this benefit to this Mother of

wisdom and our Reparatrix.

2-9

110 CITY OF GOD

137. Therefore this great Lady considered and in

spected profoundly this spacious field of the dignity of

Mother of God (Prov. 21, 11) in order to purchase it

by her fiat; She clothed Herself in fortitude more than

human, and She tasted and saw how profitable was this

enterprise and commerce with the Divinity. She com

prehended the ways of his hidden benevolence and

adorned Herself with fortitude and beauty. And hav

ing conferred with Herself and with the heavenly mes

senger Gabriel about the grandeur of these high and

divine sacraments, and finding Herself in excellent con

dition to receive the message sent to Her, her purest

soul was absorbed and elevated in admiration, reverence

and highest intensity of divine love. By the intensity of

these movements and supernal affections, her most pure

heart, as it were by natural consequence, was contracted

and compressed with such force, that it distilled three

drops of her most pure blood, and these, finding their

way to the natural place for the act of conception, were

formed by the power of the divine and holy Spirit, into

the body of Christ our Lord. Thus the matter, from

which the most holy humanity of the Word for our Re

demption is composed, was furnished and administered

by the most pure heart of Mary and through the sheer

force of her true love. At the same moment, with a

humility never sufficiently to be extolled, inclining

slightly her head and joining her hands, She pro

nounced these words, which were the beginning of our

salvation: "Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum" (Luke

1,31).

138. At the pronouncing of this "fiat," so sweet to

the hearing of God and so fortunate for us, in one in

stant, four things happened. First, the most holy body

of Christ our Lord was formed from the three drops of

THE INCARNATION 111

blood furnished by the heart of most holy Mary. Sec

ondly, the most holy soul of the same Lord was created,

just as the other souls. Thirdly, the soul and the body

united in order to compose his perfect humanity.

Fourthly, the Divinity united Itself in the Person of the

Word with the humanity, which together became one

composite being in hypostatical union ; and thus was

formed Christ true God and Man, our Lord and Re

deemer. This happened in springtime on the twenty-

fifth of March, at break or dawning of the day, in the

same hour, in which our first father Adam was made

and in the year of the creation of the world 5199,

which agrees also with the count of the Roman Church

in her Marty rology under the guidance of the Holy

Ghost. This reckoning is the true and certain one, as

was told me, when I inquired at command of my supe

riors. Conformable to this the world was created in the

month of March, which corresponds to the beginning of

creation. And as the works of the Most High are per

fect and complete (Deut. 32, 4), the plants and trees

come forth from the hands of his Majesty bearing fruit,

and they would have borne them continually without in

termission, if sin had not changed the whole nature, as

I will expressly relate in another treatise, if it is the will

of the Lord; now however I will not detain myself

therewith, since it does not pertain to our subject.

139. In the same instant, in which the Almighty cele

brated the nuptials of the hypostatic union in the womb

of most holy Mary, the heavenly Lady was elevated to

the beatific vision and the Divinity manifested Itself to

Her clearly and intuitively. She saw most high sacra

ments, of which I will speak in the next chapter. The

mysteries of the inscriptions, with which She was

adorned and which the angels exhibited as related in the

112 CITY OF GOD

seventh chapter (No. 82, also Part I, 207, 363-4), were

made clear to Her each in particular. The divine Child

began to grow in the natural manner in the recess of

the womb, being nourished by the substance and the

blood of its most holy Mother, just as other men; yet

it was more free and exempt from the imperfections, to

which other children of Adam are subject in that place

and period. For from some of these, namely those that

are accidental and unnecessary to the substance of the act

of generation, being merely effects of sin, the Empress of

heaven was free. She was also free from the superflui

ties caused by sin, which in other women are common and

happen naturally in the formation, sustenance and

growth of their children. For the necessary matter,

which is proper to the infected nature of the descend

ants of Eve and which was wanting in Her, was sup

plied and administered in Her by the exercise of heroic

acts of virtue and especially by charity. By the fervor

of her soul and her loving affections the blood and hu

mors of her body were changed and thereby divine

Providence provided for the sustenance of the divine

Child. Thus in a natural manner the humanity of our

Redeemer was nourished, while his Divinity was recre

ated and pleased with her heroic virtues. Most holy

Mary furnished to the Holy Ghost, for the formation of

this body, pure and limpid blood, free from sin and all

its tendencies. And whatever impure and imperfect

matter is supplied by other mothers for the growth of

their children was administered by the Queen of heaven

most pure and delicate in substance. For it was built

up and supplied by the power of her loving affections

and her other virtues. In a like manner was purified

whatever served as food for the heavenly Queen. For,

as She knew that her nourishment was at the same time

THE INCARNATION 113

to sustain and nourish the Son of God, She partook of it

with such heroic acts of virtue, that the angelic spirits

wondered how such common human actions could be

connected with such supernal heights of merit and per

fection in the sight of God.

140. The heavenly Lady was thus established in such

high privileges in her position as Mother of God, that

those which I have already mentioned and which I shall

yet mention, convey not even the smallest idea of her

excellence, and my tongue cannot describe it. For,

neither is it possible to conceive it by the understanding,

nor can the most learned, nor the most wise of men

find adequate terms to express it. The humble, who are

proficient in the art of divine love, become aware of it

by infused light and by the interior taste and feeling, by

which such sacraments are perceived. Not only was

most holy Mary become a heaven, a temple and dwelling

place of the most holy Trinity, transformed thereto, ele

vated and made godlike by the special and unheard of

operation of the Divinity in her most pure womb; but

her humble cottage and her poor little oratory was con

secrated by the Divinity as a new sanctuary of God. The

heavenly spirits, who as witnesses of this marvelous

transformation were present to contemplate it, magni

fied the Almighty with ineffable praise and jubilee; in

union with this most happy Mother, they blessed Him in

his name and in the name of the human race, which was

ignorant of this the greatest of his benefits and mercies.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

141. My daughter, thou art filled with astonishment

at seeing, by means of new light, the mystery of the

humiliation of the Divinity in uniting Himself with the

114 CITY OF GOD

human nature in the womb of a poor maiden such as I

was. I wish, however, my dearest, that thou turn thy

attention toward thyself and consider, how God humili

ated Himself, and came into my womb, not only for my

self alone, but for thee as well. The Lord is infinite in

his mercy and his love has no limit, and thus He at

tends and esteems and assists every soul who receives

Him, and He rejoices in it, as if He had created it alone,

and as if He had been made man for it alone. There

fore with all the affection of thy soul thou must, as it

were, consider thyself as being thyself in person bound

to render the full measure of thanks of all the world

for his coming; and for his coming to redeem all. And

if, with a lively faith thou art convinced and confessest,

that the same God who, infinite in his attributes and

eternal in his majesty, lowered Himself to assume

human flesh in my womb, seeks also thee, calls thee, re

joices thee, caresses thee, and thinks of thee alone, as if

thou wert his only creature (Gal. 2, 20) ; think well and

reflect to what his admirable condescension obliges thee.

Convert this admiration into living acts of faith and

love; for, that He condescends to come to thee, thou

owest entirely to the goodness of the King and Savior,

since thou thyself couldst never find Him nor attain

Him.

142. Considering merely that which this Lord can

give thee outside of Himself, it will appear to thee

grand, even when thou perceivest it only by a mere

human intelligence and affection. It is certainly true that

any gift from such an eminent and supreme King is

worthy of all estimation. But when thou beginst to

consider and know by divine light, that this gift is God

Himself and that He makes Thee partaker of his Di

vinity, when thou wilt understand, that without thy God

THE INCARNATION 115

and without his coming, all creation would be as noth

ing and despicable in thy sight; thou wouldst want to

enjoy thyself and find rest only in the consciousness of

possessing such a God, so loving, so amiable, so power

ful, sweet and affluent ; who, being such a great and in

finite God, humiliates Himself to thy lowliness in order

to raise thee from the dust and enrich thy poverty, per

forming toward thee the duties of a Shepherd, of a

Father, a Spouse and most faithful Friend.

143. Attend, therefore, my daughter, in the secret of

thy heart to all the consequences of these truths. Ponder

and confer within thyself about this sweetest love of the

great King for thee; how faithful He is in his gifts and

caresses, in his favors, in the works confided to thee, in

the enlightenment of thy interior, instructing thee by

divine science in the infinite greatness of his Being, in

his admirable works and most hidden mysteries, in uni

versal truth and in the nothingness of visible existence.

This science is the first beginning and principle, the

basis and foundation of the knowledge which I have

given thee in order that thou mayest attain to the de

corum and magnanimity, with which thou art to treat

the favors and benefits of this thy Lord and God, thy

true blessedness, thy treasure, thy light and thy Guide.

Look upon Him as upon the infinite God, loving, yet

terrible. Listen, my dearest, to my words, to my teach

ings and discipline, for therein are contained the peace and

the enlightenment of thy soul.

CHAPTER XII.

OF THE FIRST ACTS OF THE MOST HOLY SOUL OF CHRIST

OUR LORD IN THE FIRST INSTANT OF HIS CONCEPTION

AND OF THE CORRESPONDING ACTS OF HIS MOST PURE

MOTHER.

144. In order to understand what were the first acts

of the most holy Soul of Christ our Lord, we must refer

to that which has been said in the preceding chapter

(No. 138), namely, that all that substantially belonged

to this divine mystery, the formation of the body, the

creation and the infusion of the soul, and the union of

the individual humanity with the person of the Word,

happened and was completed in one act or instant; so

that we cannot say that in any moment of time Christ

our highest Good was only man. For from the first in

stant He was man and true God ; as soon as his human

ity arrived at being man, He was also God; therefore

He could not at any time be called a mere man, not for

one instant; but from the very beginning He was God-

man or Mangod. And as the active exercise of the

faculties is co-existent with operative essences, therefore

the most holy soul of Christ our Lord, in the same in

stant in which the Incarnation took place, was beatified

by intuitive vision and love. According to our way of

speaking, the powers of his intellect and will immediately

united with the Divinity itself. For his human essence

joined the Divinity in one instant by hypostatic union,

and thus his human faculties in their most perfect ac

tivity were united with the essence of God himself, so

116

THE INCARNATION 117

that both in essence and in operation He was entirely

deified.

145. The wonder about this sacrament is that so

much glory, yea, the greatness of the immense Divinity,

was enclosed within such a small compass, not larger

than the body of a bee, or not greater than a small al

mond. For the dimension of the most holy body of

Christ was not any greater than that at the instant when

the conception and hypostatic union took place. More

over in this small compass was included the highest

glory as well as the capability for suffering; for the hu

manity was at the same time glorified and also passible,

it was both a Comprehensor and a Viator, possessing

heaven though yet on his pilgrimage to heaven. God, how

ever, in his infinite power and wisdom, could thus contract

Himself and enclose his infinite Deity within the sphere

of a body thus minute by a new and admirable mode of

existence, without in the least ceasing to be God. By the

same Omnipotence He provided that this most holy soul

of Christ, in its superior faculties and in its most noble

operations, should be in the state of glory and enjoying

beatitude; while all this immense glory was at the same

time compressed, as it were, into the superior parts of

his soul, suspending the effects and gifts of glory, that

would otherwise naturally have communicated them

selves to his body. On this account He could be at the

same time a viator, subject to suffering, enabling Him to

procure our salvation by means of his Cross, Passion

and Death.

146. In order to be fully equipped for these and for

whatever the most holy humanity was to perform, all

the habits, natural to his faculties and necessary for their

activity and operation both as Comprehensor and as

Viator, were infused into it at the moment of his con-

118 CITY OF GOD

ception. Thus He was furnished with the infused

science of the blessed; with the sanctifying grace and

the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which according to Isaias

rested upon the Christ (Is. 11, 2). He possessed all the

virtues, except faith and hope; for these are incom

patible with the beatific vision and possession, and were

wanting in Him; likewise were wanting in the Holy of

the holy ones, all other virtues, which presuppose any

imperfection; since He could not sin, nor was deceit

found in his mouth (I Pet. 2, 22). The dignity and ex

cellence of his science and grace, the virtues and perfec

tions of Christ our Lord need not be mentioned here,

for that is taught by the sacred doctors and masters of

theology in a profuse manner. For me it is sufficient to

state that all this was as perfect as was possible to the

divine power and that it cannot be encompassed by hu

man understanding. For the most holy soul of Christ

drank from the very fountain of the Divinity (Ps.

35, 10) and could do so without limit or retrenchment,

as David says (Ps. 109, 7). Therefore He must have

been possessed of the plenitude of all virtues and per

fections.

147. Thus adorned and deified by the Divinity and its

gifts, the most holy soul of Christ our Lord proceeded

in its operations in the following order: immediately it

began to see and know the Divinity intuitively as It is

in Itself and as It is united to his most holy humanity,

loving It with the highest beatific love and perceiving

the inferiority of the human nature in comparison with

the essence of God. The soul of Christ humiliated it

self profoundly, and in this humility it gave thanks to

the immutable being of God for having created it and

for the benefit of the hypostatic union, by which, though

remaining human, it was raised to the essence of God.

THE INCARNATION 119

It also recognized that his most holy humanity was

made capable of suffering, and was adapted for attaining

the end of the Redemption. In this knowledge it of

fered itself as the Redeemer in sacrifice for the human

race (Ps. 39, 8), accepting the state of suffering and

giving thanks in his own name and in the name of man

kind to the eternal Father. He recognized the composi

tion of his most holy humanity, the substance of which

it was made, and how most holy Mary by the force of

her charity and of her heroic virtues, furnished its sub

stance. He took possession of this holy tabernacle and

dwelling; rejoicing in its most exquisite beauty, and,

well pleased, reserved as his own property the soul of

this most perfect and most pure Creature for all eternity.

He praised the eternal Father for having created Her

and endowed Her with such vast graces and gifts; for

having exempted Her and freed Her from the common

law of sin, as his Daughter, while all the other descen

dants of Adam have incurred its guilt (Rom. 5, 18).

He prayed for the most pure Lady and for saint Joseph,

asking eternal salvation for them. All these acts, and

many others, were most exalted and proceeded from

Him as true God and Man. Not taking into account

those that pertain to the beatific vision and love, these

acts and each one by itself, were of such merit that they

alone would have sufficed to redeem infinite worlds, if

such could exist.

148. Even the act of obedience alone, by which the

most holy humanity of the Word subjected itself to suf

fering and prevented the glory of his soul from being

communicated to his body, was abundantly sufficient for

our salvation. But although this sufficed for our salva

tion, nothing would satisfy his immense love for men

except the full limit of effective love (John 13, 1) ; for

120 CITY OF GOD

this was the purpose of his life, that He should consume

it in demonstrations and tokens of such intense love,

that neither the understanding of men nor of angels was

able to comprehend it. And if in the first instant of his

entrance into the world He enriched it so immeasur

ably, what treasures, what riches of merits must He

have stored up for it, when He left it by his Passion and

Death on the cross after thirty-three years of labor and

activity all divine! O immense love! O charity without

limit ! O mercy without measure ! O most generous kind

ness! and, on the other hand, O ingratitude and base

forgetfulness of mortals in the face of such unheard of

and such vast benefaction! What would have become

of us without Him? How much less could we do for this

our Redeemer and Lord, even if He had conferred on

us but small favors, while now we are scarcely moved

and obliged by his doing for us all that He could? If

we do not wish to treat as a Redeemer Him, who has

given us eternal life and liberty, let us at least hear Him

as our Teacher, let us follow Him as our Leader, as our

guiding light, which shows us the way to our true hap

piness.

149. This Lord and Master did not work for Himself,

nor did He preempt his soul, nor gain this augmentation

of grace, for Himself, but entirely for us. He had no

need of all this, nor could He receive an increase of

grace or glory, since He was filled with them (John 1,

14), as saint John says; for He was the Onlybegotten

of the Father at the same time that He was man. In

this He had no equal, nor could He have an imitator.

All the saints and mere creatures gained merits for

themselves and labored for reward; the love of Christ

alone was without self interest and altogether for us.

And if He wished to enter and go through the school

THE INCARNATION 121

of bodily experience of this life (Luke 2, 52), it was

in order to teach us and enrich us by his obedience (Heb.

5, 8), while He turned over to us his infinite merits and

his example, in order that we might be wisely instructed

in the art of loving 1 . For this is not learned perfectly by

affection and desire, unless it is truly and effectively

practiced in deeds. I do not enlarge upon the mysteries

of the most holy life of Christ our Lord, on account of

my incapacity, and I refer to the Gospels, selecting only

that which will seem necessary for the heavenly history

of his Mother, our Lady. For the lives of this Son and

his most holy Mother are so intimately connected and

intertwined with each other, that I cannot avoid making

references to the Gospels and besides add other facts,

which are not mentioned by them concerning the Lord

and which were not necessary in their narratives for

the first ages of the Catholic Church.

150. These operations of Christ our Lord in the first

instant of his conception were followed, in another es

sential instant, by the beatific vision of the Divinity,

which we have mentioned in the preceding chapter (No.

139) ; for in one instant of time many instants of essence

can take place. In this vision the heavenly Lady per

ceived with clearness and distinction the mystery of the

hypostatic union of the divine and the human natures in

the person of the eternal Word, and the most holy

Trinity confirmed Her in the title and the rights of

Mother of God. This in all rigor of truth She was,

since She was the natural Mother of a Son, who was

eternal God with the same certainty and truth as He was

man. Although this great Lady did not directly co

operate in the union of the Divinity with the humanity,

She did not on this account lose her right to be called

the Mother of the true God; for She concurred bv ad-

122 CITY OF GOD

ministering the material and by exerting her faculties,

as far as it pertained to a true Mother ; and to a greater

extent than to ordinary mothers, since in Her the con

ception and the generation took place without the aid

of a man. Just as in other generations the agents,

which bring them about in the natural course, are called

father and mother, each furnishing that which is neces

sary, without however concurring directly in the crea

tion of the soul, nor in its infusion into the body of the

child; so also, and with greater reason, most holy Mary

must be called, and did call Herself, Mother of God;

for She alone concurred in the generation of Christ,

true God and Man, as a Mother, to the exclusion of any

other natural cause; and only through this concurrence

of Mary in the generation, Christ, the Man-God, was

born.

151. The Virgin Mother of Christ also understood in

this. vision the future mysteries of the life and death of

her sweetest Son and of the Redemption of the human

race, together with those of the new law of the Gospel,

which was to be established in connection therewith. To

Her were also manifested other great and profound

secrets, which were made known to none other of the

saints. The most prudent Queen, seeing Herself thus

in the immediate presence of the Deity and furnished

with the plenitude of divine gifts and science as became

the Mother of the Word, lost in humility and love,

adored the Lord in his infinite essence, and without de

lay also in its union with the most holy humanity. She

gave Him thanks for having favored Her with the dig

nity of Mother of God and for the favors done to the

whole human race. She gave thanks and glory also for

all the mortals. She offered Herself as an acceptable

sacrifice in his service, in the rearing up and nourishing

THE INCARNATION 123

of her sweetest Son, ready to assist and co-operate

(as far as on her part it would be possible), in the work

of the Redemption; and the holy Trinity accepted and

appointed Her as the Coadjutrix in this sacrament. She

asked for new graces and divine light for this purpose

and for directing Herself in the worthy ministration of

Her office as Mother of the incarnate Word, that She

might treat Him with the veneration and magnanimity

due to God himself. She offered to her holiest Son all

the children of Adam yet to be born and the saints of

limbo; and in the name of all and of Herself She per

formed many acts of heroic virtue and asked for great

favors, which however I will not stop to mention, as I

have already done in regard to others on different occa

sions. For from these it can easily be conjectured what

petitions this heavenly Queen made on this occasion,

which so far excelled all the other fortunate and happy

days of her previous life.

152. But She was especially persistent and fervent

in her prayer to obtain guidance of the Almighty for

the worthy fulfillment of her office as Mother of the

Onlybegotten of the Father. For this, before all other

graces, Her humble heart urged Her to desire, and this

was especially the subject of her solicitude, that She

might be guided in all her actions as becomes the Mother

of God. The Almighty answered Her : "My Dove, do

not fear, for I will assist thee and guide thee, directing

thee in all things necessary for the service of my only-

begotten Son." With this promise She came to Herself

and issued from her ecstasy, in which all that I have

said had happened, and which was the most wonderful

She ever had. Restored to her faculties, her first action

was to prostrate Herself on the earth and adore her

holiest Son, God and Man, conceived in her virginal

124 CITY OF GOD

womb; for this She had not yet done with her external

and bodily senses and faculties. Nothing that She could

do in the service of her Creator, did this most prudent

Mother leave undone. From that time on She was con

scious of feeling new and divine effects in her holiest

soul and in her exterior and interior faculties. And

although the whole tenor of her life had been most

noble both as regards her body as her soul; yet on this

day of the incarnation of the Word it rose to still greater

nobility of spirit and was made more godlike by still

higher reaches of grace and indescribable gifts.

153. But let no one think that the purest Mother was

thus favored and so closely united with the humanity

and Divinity of her holiest Son, only in order to con

tinue to enjoy spiritual delights and pleasures, free from

suffering and pain. Not so, for in closest possible imi

tation of her sweetest Son, this Lady lived to share

both joy and sorrow with Him; the memory of -what

She had so vividly been taught concerning the labors

and the death of her holiest Son, was like a sword

piercing her heart. This sorrow was proportionate to

the knowledge and love, which such a Mother had of

such a Son, and which his presence and intercourse so

continually recalled to her mind. Although the whole

life of Christ and of his most holy Mother was a con

tinued martyrdom and suffering like that of the cross,

and was filled with incessant pain and labors; yet in

the most pure and loving heart of the heavenly Queen

there was also this special feature of suffering, that to

her inward sight as a most loving Mother, the passion,

torments, ignominies and death of her Son were for

ever present. And by this continued sorrow of thirty-

three years She took upon Herself the long vigil of our

Redemption and during all this time this sacrament was

THE INCARNATION 125

concealed in her bosom without companionship or allevi

ation from any creatures.

154. With this loving sorrow, full of the sweetest an

guish, She often looked upon her holiest Son both be

fore and after his birth, and speaking to Him from her

innermost heart, She would repeat these words: "Lord

and God of my soul, most sweet Son of my womb, why

hast Thou given me the position as Mother and yet

connected with it the sorrowful thought of losing Thee,

leaving me an orphan, bereft of thy desirable company?

Scarcely art Thou put in possession of a body for thy

earthly life, when Thou art notified of the sentence of

a sorrowful death for the rescue of men. The first of

thy actions is one of superabundant merit in satisfaction

for his sins. O would that the justice of the eternal

Father were thereby satisfied and thy sufferings and

death fall upon me! From my body and blood Thou

hast composed thine own, without which it would not

be possible for Thee to suffer, since Thou art the im

mutable and immortal God. If therefore I have fur

nished Thee the instrument or the matter of thy suffer

ings, let me too suffer with Thee the same death. O

inhuman sin, how, being so cruel and the cause of so

much evil, couldst thou nevertheless be so fortunate,

that thy Repairer should be One, who on account of his

infinite Goodness, can make thee a "happy fault!" O

my sweetest Son and my love, who shall be thy guard,

who shall defend Thee from thy enemies? O would

that it were the will of the Father, that I guard Thee

and save Thee from death, or die in thy company, and

that Thou never leave mine! But that which happened

to the patriarch Abraham, shall not now take place

(Gen. 22, 11) ; for the predestined decree shall be exe

cuted. Let the will of the Lord be fulfilled." These

2-10

126 CITY OF GOD

loving sighs were many times repeated by our Queen, as

I shall say farther on, and the eternal Father accepted

them as an agreeable sacrifice, while they were the sweet

est diversion of her most holy Son.

INSTRUCTION WHICH OUR QUEEN AND LADY GAVE ME.

155. My daughter, since thou hast, by faith and divine

light, arrived at a knowledge of the grandeur of God

and of his ineffable condescension in coming down from

heaven for thee and for all the mortals, let not this

benefit be for the idle and fruitless. Adore the essence

of God with profound reverence, and praise Him for

what thou knowest of his goodness. Receive not light

and grace in vain (II Cor. 6, 1) ; and study the encourag

ing example given by my most holy Son and myself

in imitation of Him, as thou hast come to be instructed

in it; for as He was the true God, and I his Mother

(for in so far as He was man his most holy humanity

was created), let us humiliate ourselves in the remem

brance of our lowly human nature and confess the great

ness of the Divinity, greater than any creature can com

prehend. Do this especially when thou receivest the

same Lord in the holy Sacrament. In this admirable

Sacrament my most holy Son with Divinity and humanity

comes to thee and remains with thee in a new and incom

prehensible way. His great condescension is manifest,

though it is little taken notice of and respected by

mortals, nor does it find the return due to such love.

156. Let then thy acknowledgment be accompanied

with as much humility, reverence and worship as is pos

sible to thy combined powers and faculties ; for though

they be exerted to the utmost limit, they will always

fall short of what thou owest to God and of what He

THE INCARNATION 127

deserves. And in order that thou mayest as far as

possible make up for thy deficiencies, offer up that, which

my most holy Son and I have done; unite thy spirit and

thy affections in union with the Church triumphant and

militant, offering at the same time thy life as a sacrifice

and praying that all nations may know, confess and adore

their true God who became man for all. Thank Him for

the benefits, which He has conferred and confers on all,

whether they know Him or not, whether they confess

or repudiate Him. Above all I ask of thee, my dearest,

to do that which is most acceptable to the Lord and most

pleasing to me ; that thou grieve, and in sweet affection

mourn over the gross ignorance and dangerous tardiness

of the sons of men; over the ingratitude also of the

children of the Church, who, having received the light

of the divine faith, yet live in such interior forgetfulness

of the works and benefits of the Incarnation, yea, of God

himself, and so much so, that they seem to differ from

infidels only in some ceremonies and exterior worship.

They perform these without spirit or heartiness, many

times offending and provoking the divine justice which

they should placate.

157. Through this ignorance and torpidity it happens

that they are not prepared to receive and acquire the

true science of the Most High. They bring upon them

selves the loss of the divine light and they deserve to

be left in the heavy darkness, making themselves more

unworthy than the infidels themselves and entailing upon

themselves an incomparably greater chastisement. Mourn,

over such great damage of thy neighbors and pray for

help from the bottom of thy heart. And in order that

thou mayest put away from thy own self such formidable

dangers, do not undervalue the favors and benefits,

which thou receivest, nor, even under pretense of humil-

128 CITY OF GOD

ity, belittle or forget them. Remember and consider how

distant was the journey, which the grace of the Most

High has made in order to call thee (Ps. 18, 7). Pon

der in thy mind, how it has waited upon thee and con

soled thee, assured thee in thy doubts, quieted thee in

thy fears, ignored and pardoned thy faults, multiplied

favors, caresses and blessings. I assure thee, my daugh

ter, that thou must confess in thy heart, that the Most

High has not done such things with any other genera

tion; thou of thyself canst do nothing; thou art poor

and more useless than others. Let then thy thanks be

greater than that of all the creatures.

CHAPTER XIII.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE STATE IN WHICH MOST HOLY

MARY FOUND HERSELF AFTER THE INCARNATION OF

THE DIVINE WORD IN HER VIRGINAL WOMB.

158. The deeper I begin to understand the divine ef

fects and conditions which were caused by the concep

tion of the eternal Word in the Queen of heaven, the

more am I involved in the difficulties of describing this

event. For I find myself immersed in exalted and com

plicated mysteries, while my intellect and my power of

expression are entirely insufficient for encompassing what

is presented to me. Nevertheless my soul experiences

such great sweetness and such delight in spite of this

deficiency, that I cannot bring myself to repent entirely

of my undertaking ; at the same time obedience animates

me and also compels me to overcome the hardships,

which in a weak and womanly mind would be insuper

able, if the assurance and encouragement coming from

this source would not assist me. This is true especially

of this chapter, in which I am to treat of the gifts of

glory enjoyed by the blessed in heaven. Taking their

prerogatives as models I will try to describe the state of

the heavenly Empress Mary after becoming the Mother

of God.

159. For this purpose I will speak of the blessed from

two points of view : of their own perfection and of their

relation to God. As regards the latter, the Divinity is

made clear and manifest to them with all its perfections

and attributes. This is called the object of their beati-

129

130 CITY OF GOD

tude, their glory, the substantial joy, the ultimate

end, wherein the whole creature finds its adequate end

and rest. On the part of the saints there are the beatific

operations of vision and love, and of others necessarily

connected with that most happy state, which neither the

eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, nor can enter into

the thoughts of men (Is. 64, 4; I Cor. 2, 29). Among

the gifts and prerogatives of this glory of the saints,

some are called endowments freely given as to a spouse

entering upon the spiritual matrimony, which is con

summated in the joys of the eternal felicity. Just as

the earthly spouse acquires possession and dominion of

her endowments and enjoys in common with her hus

band the use of them, so also in glory these gifts are

made to the saints as their own, while their use is com

mon both to them, in as far as they themselves rejoice

in them, and to God, in as far as He is glorified in them

by the saints. And these ineffable gifts are more or

less excellent according to the merits and the dignities of

each. But they are not given to those, who are not of the

same nature as the Spouse, namely Christ our Lord;

hence only to men, not to angels. For the incarnate

Word has not entered into any espousals with the angels,

(Heb. 2, 16) as He has done with men, by uniting Him

self with them in that great sacrament mentioned by the

Apostle, (Eph. 5, 32), in Christ and in the Church. Since,

however, the Bridegroom Christ, as man, is composed

of body and soul, just like the rest of men, therefore

both body and soul are to be glorified in his presence

and the gifts of glory are both for the body and the

soul. Three of these gifts pertain to the soul and they

are called vision, comprehension and fruition; and four

pertain to the body: clearness, impassibility, subtility

THE INCARNATION 131

and agility, and these are properly the effects of intuitive

vision overflowing from the glory of the soul.

160. In all these gifts our Queen Mary participated

to a certain extent already in this life; especially after

the Incarnation of the Word in her virginal womb. It

is true that these gifts are given to the saints as com-

prehensors, being pledges and dowries of the eternal and

imperishable felicity, and as it were securities for

the unchangeableness of their state. On that account

they are not conferred upon those still on the way to

heaven. But upon holy Mary these gifts were conferred

as a viator; hence not as on a comprehensor, not per

manently, but from time to time and step by step, and

with a certain difference, as we shall explain. In order

that the appropriateness of this rare blessing in the

sovereign Queen may be the better understood, let that,

which I have said in the seventh and following chapters

before the Incarnation, be remembered; for there the

preparation and espousal with which the Most High

favored his most blessed Mother in accordance with

her dignity, are explained. On the day in which the

divine Lord assumed human nature in her virginal womb,

this spiritual marriage, as far as the heavenly Lady is

concerned, was consummated by that most exalted and

exquisite beatific vision, which, as we have said, was

then vouchsafed to Her. But for the other faithful the

Incarnation was as it were an espousal, which is to be

consummated in their heavenly fatherland (Osea 2, 19).

161. Our great Queen possessed another prerequisite

for these privileges: She was exempt from all stain of

original and actual sin and was confirmed in grace by

actual impeccability. Thus She was capable of celebrat

ing this marriage in the name of the Church militant

and to make promises in the name of all its members

132 CITY OF GOD

(Eph. 5, 32) ; for in this matter, as She was the Mother

of the Savior, his foreseen merits found their applica

tion through Her. By her transient vision of the glory

of the Divinity, She became the accepted surety for all

the children of Adam, that this same reward will not

be denied to any of those, who shall use the grace of

their Redeemer to merit it. The divine incarnate Word

certainly was highly pleased to find, that his most burn

ing love and his infinite merits should immediately bear

fruit in Her, who at the same time was his Mother, his

first Spouse and the bridal chamber of his Divinity;

and that his rewards should fall upon One, in whom

there was no hindrance. By conferring these privileges

and favors upon his most holy Mother, Christ our Salva

tion, indulged and partly satiated his love for Her and

in Her, for all the mortals ; too long a delay did it seem

to the divine love, to wait thirty-three years until He

should manifest his Divinity to his own Mother. Al

though He had shown Her this favor at other times,

as related in the first part (No. 382, 429), yet on this

occasion of his Incarnation He did it in a more excel

lent manner; one which corresponded with the glory,

of his most holy soul. However, all this in Her was

not permanent, but renewed from moment to moment

with the flow of time, in as far as was compatible with

the ordinary state of pilgrimage.

162. Conformably to this, God, on the day in which

most holy Mary assumed the position of Mother of the

eternal Word by conceiving Him in Her womb, invested

us with a right to our Redemption, founded upon the

espousal of the human nature with Himself. In the

consummation of this spiritual marriage by the beatifica

tion of the most holy Mary and the conferring upon

Her the gifts of glory, the same reward was also prom-

THE INCARNATION 133

ised to us, if we should make ourselves worthy of it

through the merits of his most holy Son, our Redeemer.

But so far did the Lord raise his Mother above all the

glory of the saints in the blessings of this day, that all

the angels and men, even in their highest reaches of

beatific vision and love, cannot attain to that which the

heavenly Queen then attained; the same must also be

said of the gifts of glory, which overflowed from the

soul to her body ; for all of them corresponded with her

innocence, holiness and merits, and these again corre

spond with that highest of all dignities possible to a crea

ture: that of being the Mother of her Creator.

163. Coming now to these gifts in particular, the first

gift to her soul was the clear and beatific vision, which

corresponds to the obscure knowledge of faith in the

viators. This vision was given to the most holy Mary

at the times and in the manner already explained and

to be explained later. Besides these intuitive visions,

She had many other abstractive ones of the Divinity,

of the kind mentioned above. Although all these were

transient, yet they left in her mind most exquisite and

various images furnishing Her with such a clear and

exalted knowledge of the Divinity, that no words can

be found to express it. In this our Lady was singularly

privileged before all other creatures, and thus She pos

sessed the permanent effects of the gifts of glory as far

as compatible with her position as viator. When at

times the Lord hid himself from Her, suspending the

use of these images for certain high ends, She made use

of infused faith, which in Her was superexcellent and

most efficacious. In such manner, one way or the other,

her soul never lost sight of that divine Object, nor wan

dered from It even for a moment. However, during

the nine months in which She bore in her -womb the

134 CITY OF GOD

incarnate Word, She enjoyed even greater visions arid

gifts of the Divinity.

164. The second of these gifts is comprehension, pos

session or apprehension. This consists in the attainment

of the end, corresponding to the virtue of hope, whereby

we seek after the final Object in order to possess It

without danger of ever losing It. This possession and

comprehension in most holy Mary corresponded to the

visions mentioned ; because seeing the Divinity, She pos

sessed It. Whenever She depended on faith alone, hope

was in Her more firm and secure than in any other

creature ; and more than this ; for, as the security of

possession in the creature is founded to a great extent

upon sanctity and impeccability, our heavenly Lady on

this account was so privileged, that the firmness and

security of her possession of God, although She was a

pilgrim, equaled in certain respects the firmness and

security of the blessed. For on account of her stainless

and unimpeachable sanctity She was assured of never

losing God; although the cause of this security in Her

as Viatrix was not the same as in the glorified saints.

During the months of her pregnancy She enjoyed this

possession of God in various ways by special and won

derful graces, through which the Most High manifested

Himself and united Himself to her most pure Soul.

165. The third gift is fruition, which corresponds to

charity, since charity does not cease but is perfected in

glory (I Cor. 13, 8) ; for fruition consists in loving the

highest Good possessed by us. This is the charity of

heaven, that, just as God is known and possessed as He

is in Himself, so also He is loved for his own sake. True,

even now, while we are yet viators, we love Him for his

own sake ; but there is a great difference. Now we love

him in desire and we know Him not as He is in Himself,

THE INCARNATION 135

but as He is represented to us by incongruous images

or by enigmas (I Cor. 13, 12; John 3, 2) ; therefore our

love is not perfected, nor do we rest in it, or find the

plenitude of delight therein, though there is much to in

cite us. But in the clear vision and possession we shall

see Him as He is in Himself and we shall see Him

through Himself, not through enigmas ; thus we shall

love Him as He should be loved and as far as we can

love Him respectively; our love will be perfected and

the fruition of Him will be satiated, without leaving any

thing to be desired.

166. Most holy Mary participated in this fruition more

abundantly than in any other; for even though her most

ardent love might, in a certain respect, have been inferior

to that of the blessed whenever She was without the

clear vision of the Divinity, yet it was superior in many

other points of excellence, even while remaining in the

lower state. No one ever possessed the divine science

in the same degree as this Lady, and by it She under

stood how God is to be loved for Himself. This science

was perfected by the memory of what She had seen and

enjoyed higher in degree than the angels. And as her

love was nourished by this knowledge of God, it neces

sarily exceeded that of the blessed in all that did not

pertain to immediate fruition and unchangeableness as

to increase or augmentation. On account of her pro

found humility the Lord condescended to an arrange

ment, whereby She could act as a Viatrix remaining

in a holy fear of displeasing her Beloved. This burning

love was of the most perfect kind and tended entirely to

ward God himself; it caused in Her ineffable joy and

delight, proportioned to the excellence of her love.

167. In regard to the gifts of the body, redounding

from the gifts of glory, and other gifts of the soul con-

136 CITY OF GOD

stituting the accidental part of the glory of the blessed,

I will say, that they serve for the perfection of the

glorious bodies in the activity of their senses and motive

powers. By them the bodies are assimilated to the soul

and throw off the impediments of their earthly gross-

ness, enabling them to obey the wishes of the souls,

which in that most happy state cannot be imperfect or

opposed to the will of God. The senses require two gifts :

one to refine the reception of sensible images, and this

is perfected by the gift of clearness ; the other, to repel

all activity or passivity hurtful and destructive of the

body, and this is done by the gift of impassibility. Two

other gifts are required in order to perfect the power

of motion: one, in order to overcome the resistance or

impediment of gravity, furnished by the gift of agility;

the other, in order to overcome the resistance of other

bodies, furnished by the gift of subtlety. With these

gifts the body becomes glorious, clear, incorruptible,

agile and subtle.

168. In all these privileges our great Queen and Lady

participated during her mortal life. The gift of clear

ness disposes the body to receive the light and at the

same time to give it forth, doing away with earthly

opaqueness and obscurity and making it more transparent

than clearest crystal. Whenever most holy Mary enjoyed

the clear and beatific vision, her virginal body partic

ipated in this privilege in a measure beyond all human

calculation. The after-effects of this purity and clear

ness would have been most wonderful and astounding,

if they could have been made perceptible to the senses.

Sometimes they were noticeable in her most beautiful face,

as I will say later on, especially in the third part; yet

they were not known or perceived by all who conversed

with Her, for the Lord interposed a curtain or veil, in

THE INCARNATION 137

order that they might not always or indiscriminately be

manifested. But in many respects She herself enjoyed

the advantages of this gift, though it was disguised, sus

pended or hidden to the gaze of others ; She for instance

was not inconvenienced by earthly opaqueness, as the

rest of men.

169. Saint Elisabeth perceived something of this clear

ness, when at the sight of Mary she exclaimed: "And

whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should

come to me ?" (Luke 1, 43) . The world was not capable

of perceiving this sacrament of the King (Tob. 12, 7),

nor was it opportune to manifest it at that time. Yet to

a certain extent her face was always more bright and

lustrous than that of other creatures. Also in other re

spects it exhibited qualities altogether above the natural

order of other bodies, which produced in Her a most

delicate and spiritualized complexion, like that of an

animated crystal. This presented to the touch not the

asperity natural to the flesh, but the softness as it were

of the purest and the finest silk, so that I cannot find

any other comparison to make myself understood. Yet

all this should not appear strange in the Mother of God;

for She bore Him in her womb and She had seen Him

often, even face to face. For the Israelites could not look

upon Moses face to face, nor bear the splendor, which

shone forth from him after his communication with the

Lord upon the mountain (Exod. 34, 29), though it was

much inferior to that vouchsafed to most holy Mary.

There is no doubt, that if God had not by a special provi

dence withheld and hidden the splendor in reality due to

the countenance and the body of his most pure Mother,

it would have brightened the world more than a thousand

suns combined. None of the mortals could, by natural

power, have sustained its brilliancy; since, even thus

138 CITY OF GOD

restrained and concealed, it was sufficient to cause in

them the same effects, which saint Dionysius the Areop-

agite experienced in looking upon Her and which he

describes in his letter to Paul.

170. Impassibility produces in the glorified body such

a condition, that no agent, except God himself, can by

any activity or influence, change or disturb it, no matter

how powerful this activity may be. Our Queen par

ticipated in this gift in two ways : first, in regard to the

temperament and humors of the body. She possessed

these in such a delicate measure and proportion, that She

could not contract or suffer any infirmities, nor was

She subject to .any other human hardships which arise

from the inequality of the four humors, being in this

regard as it were almost impassible. Secondly, in re

gard to the dominion and commanding power, which

She had over all the creatures, as mentioned above,

(No. 13, 18, 43, 56, 60) ; for none of them had power to

act contrary to her will and consent. We can add still

another participation of impassibility: the assistance of

the divine power in proportion to her innocence. For, if

it is said, that the first parents in paradise could not

suffer a violent death as long as they persevered in orig

inal justice, it must not be understood to mean that they

enjoyed this privilege by intrinsic or inherent powers

(for if a lance would have wounded them they could

die), but they enjoyed it through the assistance of

the Lord, who would always prevent them from being

wounded. If then the first parents possessed this priv

ilege and could transmit it to their descendants as their

servants and vassals, it was due, by a much better title,

to the innocence of the sovereign Mary; and so in truth

was She endowed with it.

171. Our most humble Queen made no use of these

THE INCARNATION 139

privileges, for She renounced them in imitation of her

most holy Son and in order to labor and gain merits

for our benefit; in spite of them She wished to suffer

and She really suffered more than the martyrs. Human

intellect cannot weigh correctly the greatness of these

labors. We shall speak of them throughout this heavenly

history, leaving much more untold, for common language

and words cannot encompass them. But I must advert

to two things : first, that the sufferings of our Queen

bore no relation to any sins of her own, for She had

none to atone for; and therefore She suffered none of

the bitterness, which is mixed with pains endured in

the memory and consciousness of our own guilt of sins

committed. Secondly : that in her sufferings She was

divinely sustained in accordance with the ardors of her

love, for She could not naturally endure so much suf

ferings, as her love called for, or as much as, on ac

count of this very love, the Lord allowed Her to endure.

172. Subtility is a gift, which takes away from the

glorified body the density or grossness natural to quanti

tative matter and which enables it to penetrate other

bodies and to occupy the same place with them. The

subtilized bodies of the blessed therefore are endowed

with qualities peculiar to the spirit and can without

difficulty penetrate the quantitative matter of other

bodies. Without dividing or separating them it can

occupy the same place. Thus our Lord s body, coming

forth from the grave (Matth. 28, 2) and entering the

closed doors (John 20, 19), penetrated the material en

closing these places. Most holy Mary participated in

this gift not only while She enjoyed the beatific visions,

but also otherwise according to her will and desire, as

happened many times in her life in her bodily appear

ances to some persons, of which we shall yet relate;

140 CITY OF GOD

for in all these She made use of her gift of subtlety

penetrating other bodies.

173. The last gift of the body enables the glorified

body to move from place to place instantly and without

the impediment of terrene gravity, in the manner of pure

spirits, which move by their own volition. Mary most

holy possessed a continual and wonderful participation

in this agility, especially as a direct result of the divine

visions. She did not feel in her body the force of weight

and gravity; therefore She could walk without feeling

the inconvenience usual to that kind of exercise ; She could

move about with instantaneous speed, without feeling any

shock or fatigue as we would feel. All this belonged

naturally to the quality and condition of her body, so

spiritualized and well-formed. During the time of her

pregnancy She felt even less the weight of her body;

although, in order to bear her share of labors, She al

lowed hardships to produce their effect. She was so ad

mirable and perfect in the possession and use of these

privileges, that I find myself wanting in words to ex

press all that has been made manifest to me concerning

them; for it exceeds all that I have said or am able to

say.

174. Queen of heaven and my Mistress, since Thou

hast condescended to adopt me as thy daughter, thy

word will remain a pledge, that Thou wilt be my Guide

and Teacher. Relying on this promise I presume to

propose a difficulty, in which I find myself : How does it

come, my Mother and Lady, that thy most blessed soul,

after it had enjoyed the clear intuition of God accord

ing to the disposition of his Majesty, did not remain in

the state of blessedness? And why can we not say,

thnt Thou didst remain in this state of beatitude, since

there was no sin nor any other obstacle to this state

THE INCARNATION 141

in Thee, according- to the dignity and sanctity revealed

to me by the supernatural light?

ANSWER AND EXPLANATION OF OUR QUEEN AND LADY.

175. My dearest daughter, thou doubtest as one that

loves me and askest as one not knowing. Consider then,

that the perpetuity and durability of blessedness and

felicity is destined for the saints, since their happiness is

to be entirely perfect; if it would last only for some

time, it would be wanting in the completeness and ade

quacy necessary for constituting it as the highest and

most perfect happiness. At the same time it is incom

patible with the common law and ordinary course, that

the creature be glorified and at the same time be subject

to sufferings, even though it be without sin. If this law

did not hold good with my most holy Son (John 1, 18),

it was became He was at the same time God and man

and it was not befitting that his most holy soul, being

hypostatically united with the Divinity, should be with

out the beatific vision ; and as He was at the same time

Redeemer of the human race, He could not suffer nor

pay the debt of sin, that is pain, if He had not possessed

a body capable of suffering. But I was a mere creature,

and therefore I could have no claim to the vision, which

to Him was due as a God. Moreover I could not be

said to have permanently enjoyed the state of blessedness,

because it was conceded to me from one time to another.

Under these conditions I was capable of suffering at one

time and enjoying blessedness at another; moreover it

was more usual for me to suffer and to gain merits, than

to be blessed, since I belonged to the viators and not to

the comprehensors.

176. Justly the Most High has ordained, that the

2-11

142 CITY OF GOD

blessedness of eternal life should not be enjoyed in this

mortal existence (Exod. 33, 20), and that immortality

should be reached by passing through existence in a mor

tal body and by gaining merits in a state of suffering,

such as is the present life of men (Rom. 6, 23). Al

though death in all the sons of Adam was the stipend

and punishment of sin (Rom. 6, 23), and therefore

death and all the other effects and chastisements had no

rights in me, who had not sinned; yet the Most High

ordained, that I also, in imitation of my most holy

Son, should enter into felicity and eternal life by the death

of the body (Luke 24, 26). There was nothing in

congruous in this for me, but it afforded me many ad

vantages, allowing me to follow the royal way of all

men and gain many merits and great glory by suffering

and dying. Another advantage resulted therefrom for

men, for they saw that my most holy Son and I myself,

who was his Mother, were truly human as they them

selves, since we proved to them our mortality. Thereby

the example, which we left them became much more

efficacious and they would be induced to imitate the

life, which we led and which redounded so much to the

greater glory and exaltation of my Son and Lord, and

of myself. All this would have come to nought, if the

visions of the Divinity had been continuous in me. How

ever, after I conceived the eternal Word, the benefits

and favors were more frequent and greater, since I was

then brought into close connection with Him. This is

my answer to thy questions. No matter how much thou

hast meditated and labored in manifesting the privileges

and their effects enjoyed by me in mortal life, thou

wilt never be able to comprehend all that the powerful

arm of the Omnipotent wrought in me. And much less

THE INCARNATION 143

canst thou describe in human words what thou hast un

derstood.

177. Now attend to the instruction, which I will give

thee regarding the preceding chapters. If I was the

model to be imitated in the way I responded to the

coming of God into the soul and into the world by show

ing due reverence, worship, humility, and thankful love,

it follows, that if thou, (and in the same way the rest

of the souls), art solicitous in imitating me, the Most

High will come and produce the same effects in thee

as in myself; though they may be not so great and

efficacious. For if the creature, as soon as it obtains the

use of reason, begins to advance toward the Lord as it

should, directing its footsteps in the path of life and sal

vation, his Most High Majesty will issue forth to meet it,

(Wis. 6, 15), being beforehand with his favors and

communications; for to Him it seems a long time to

wait for the end of the pilgrimage in order to manifest

Himself to his friends.

178. Thus it happens, that by means of faith, hope

and charity, and by the worthy reception of the Sacra

ments, many divine effects, wrought by his condescen

sion, are communicated to the souls. Some are com

municated according to the ordinary course of grace and

others according to a more supernatural and wonderful

order; and each one will be more or less conformable

to the disposition of the soul and to the ends intended

by the Lord, which are not known at present. And if

the souls do not place any obstacle on their part, He

will be just as liberal with them as with those who dis

pose themselves, giving them greater light and knowledge

of his immutable being, and by a divine and exceedingly

sweet infusion of grace, transforming them into a like

ness of Himself and communicating to them many of

144 CITY OF GOD

the privileges of the beatified. For after He is found

He allows Himself to be taken possession of and enjoyed

by that hidden embrace, which the Spouse felt, when

She said: "I will hold Him and not dismiss Him"

(Cant. 3, 4). Of this possession and of his presence the

Lord himself will give many token and pledges, in order

that the soul may possess Him in peace like the blessed,

although always only for a limited time. So liberal as

this will God, our Master and Lord, be in rewarding the

objects of his love for the labors accepted by them for

his sake and fearlessly undertaken to gain possession of

Him.

179. In this sweet violence of love the creature begins

to withdraw from and die to all earthly things; and

that is why love is called strong as death. From this

death arises a new spiritual life, which makes the soul

capable of receiving new participations of the blessed

and their gifts ; for it enjoys more frequently the over

shadowing of the Most High and the fruits of the high

est Good, which it loves. These mysterious influences

cause a sort of overflow into the interior and animal

parts of the creature, producing a certain transparency

and purifying it from the effects of the spiritual dark

nesses; it makes it courageous and as it were indifferent

to suffering, ready to meet and endure all that is adverse

to the inclinations of the flesh. With a certain subtle

thirst it begins to seek after all the difficulty and violence

incident to the attainment of the kingdom of heaven

(Matth. 11, 12); it becomes alert and unhindered by

earthly grossness, so that many times the body itself be

gins to feel this lightness in regard to its own self; the

labors, which before seemed burdensome, become easy.

Of all these effects thou hast knowledge and experience,

THE INCARNATION 145

my daughter, and I have described and rehearsed them

for thee, in order that thou mayest dispose thyself and

labor so much the more earnestly; so that the divine

activity and power of the Most High, in working out

his pleasure in thee, may find thee well disposed and free

from resistance and hindrance.

CHAPTER XIV.

OF THE ATTENTION AND CARE, WHICH THE MOST HOLY

MARY BESTOWED UPON THE FRUIT OF HER WOMB AND

SOME HAPPENINGS IN REGARD TO IT.

180. As soon as our Lady and Queen issued from the

trance, in which She had conceived the eternal incarnate

Word, She prostrated Herself upon the earth and adored

Him in her womb, as I have already said in the twelfth

chapter (No. 152). This adoration She continued all

her life, commencing it at midnight every day and re

peating these genuflexions three hundred times, until the

same hour of the following night, and oftener, whenever

She had opportunity ; in this She was even more diligent

during the nine months of her divine pregnancy. In

order to comply entirely with the new duties consequent

upon the guarding of this Treasure of the eternal Father

in the virginal bridal chamber, She directed all her at

tention toward frequent and fervent prayer. She was

solicitous in sending up many and reiterated petitions to

be able worthily to preserve the heavenly Treasure con

fided to Her. Accordingly She dedicated anew to the

Lord her soul and all her faculties, practicing all virtues

in a heroic and supreme degree, so that She caused new

astonishment in the angels. She also consecrated and

offered up all the motions of her body to the worship

and service of the infant Godman within Her. Whether

She ate, slept, labored or rested, She did it all for the

nourishment and conservation of her sweetest Son, and

146

THE INCARNATION 147

in all these actions She was inflamed more and more

with divine love.

181. On the day following the Incarnation, the thou

sand guardian angels which attended upon most holy

Mary, appeared in corporeal form and with profound

humility adored their incarnate King in the womb of

the Mother. Her also they acknowledged anew as their

Queen and Mistress and rendered Her due homage and

reverence, saying: "Now, O Lady, Thou art the true

Ark of the testament (Deut. 10, 5), since Thou con-

tainest the Lawgiver himself and preservest the Manna of

heaven (Heg. 9, 4), which is our true bread. Receive,

O Queen, our congratulations on account of thy dignity

and happiness, for which we also thank the Most High;

since He has befittingly chosen Thee for his Mother and

his tabernacle. We offer anew to Thee our homage

and service, and wish to obey Thee as vassals and ser

vants of the supreme and omnipotent King, whose Mother

Thou art." These protestations and homages of the

holy angels excited in the Mother of wisdom incom

parable sentiments of humility, gratitude and love of

God. For in this most prudent heart, where all things

were weighed with the scales of the sanctuary accord

ing to their true value and weight, this reverence and

acknowledgment of the angelic spirits proclaiming Her

as their Queen, was held in high esteem. Although it

was a greater thing to see Herself the Mother of the

King and Lord of all creation, yet all her blessings and

dignities were made more evident by these demonstra

tions and homages of the holy angels.

182. The angels rendered this homage as executors

and ministers of the will of the Most High. When their

Queen and our Lady was alone, all of them attended

upon Her in corporeal fprm, and they assisted Her in

148 CITY OF GOD

her outward actions and occupations; and when She

was engaged in manual labor, they administered to Her

what was needed. Whenever She happened to eat alone

in the absence of saint Joseph, they waited upon Her

at her poor table and at her humble meals. Everywhere

they followed Her and formed an escort, and helped

Her in the services rendered to saint Joseph. Amid all

these favors and obsequious attendance the heavenly

Lady did not forget to ask permission from the Master

of masters for all her operations and undertakings and

to implore his direction and assistance. So exact and so

well governed were all her exercises according to the

plenitude of perfection, that the Lord alone could com

prehend and properly weigh them.

183. Besides the ordinary guidance during the time

in which She carried in her most holy womb the in

carnate Word, She felt his divine presence in diverse

ways, all admirable and most sweet. Sometimes He

showed Himself to Her by abstractive vision, as men

tioned above. At other times She saw and beheld Him

as He was now present in the virginal temple, united

hypostatically with the human nature. At other times

the most holy humanity was manifested to Her, as if in

a crystalline monstrance, composed of her own maternal

womb and purest body; this kind of vision afforded

special consolation and delight to the great Queen. At

other times She perceived how the glory of his most holy

soul overflowed into the body of the divine Child, com

municating to It some of the effects of its own blessed

ness and glory and how the clarity and light of the natural

body of her Son passed over in a wonderfully sweet

ineffable and divine manner into Herself as Mother. This

favor transformed Her entirely into another kind of

being, inflaming her heart and causing in Her such

THE INCARNATION 149

effects as no created capacity can explain. Let the in

tellect of the highest seraphim extend and dilate as much

as it may, it would nevertheless find itself overwhelmed

by this glory (Prov. 25, 27) ; for the entire being of the

heavenly Queen was an intellectual and animated heaven,

and in Her was summarized the divine glory and great

ness, in a measure that even the vast confines of the

heavens themselves could not encompass.

184. These and other prerogatives alternated and suc

ceeded each other in accordance with the exercises of the

divine Mother, and such variety as suited the different

kinds of work which She performed. All her doings,

whether spiritual or manual or otherwise of the body,

served her God or benefited her neighbors, being under

taken and accomplished by this prudent Maiden to pro

duce a harmony admirable and most sweet before the

Lord, and wonderful to the angelic spirits. And when,

by the disposition of the Most High, the Mistress of the

world returned to a more natural state, She suffered

mortal agony, caused by the force and violence of her

love ; for to Her could in truth be applied what Solomon

says in the name of the Spouse : "Stay me with flowers,

compass me about with apples" (Cant. 2, 5) ; and thus

it would happen, that by the piercing wounds of these

sweet arrows of love She was brought near to the end

ing of her life. But in this necessity the powerful arm

of the Most High was wont to strengthen Her in a su

pernatural manner.

185. Sometimes, in order to afford Her sensible relief,

innumerable birds would come to visit Her by the com

mand of the Lord. As if they were endowed with in

tellect, they would salute Her by their lively movements,

and dividing into harmonious choirs, would furnish Her

with sweetest music, and they would wait for her bless-

150 CITY OF GOD

ing before again dispersing. This happened in a special

manner soon after She had conceived the divine Word,

as if they wished to congratulate Her on her dignity in

imitation of the angels. The Mistress of all creatures

on that day spoke to the different kinds of birds and

commanded them to remain and praise with Her the

Creator, in thanksgiving for the creation, and for the

existence and beauty given to them and to sing his

praises for their conservation. Immediately they obeyed

Her as their Mistress and anew they began to form

choirs, singing in sweetest harmony and bowed low to

the ground to worship their Creator and honor the

Mother, who bore Him in her womb. They were ac

customed to bring flowers to Her in their beaks and place

them into her hands, waiting until She should command

them to sing or to be silent according to her wishes. It

also happened that in bad weather some birds would

come and seek the protection of the heavenly Lady, and

She took them in and nourished them, in her admirable

innocence glorifying the Creator of all things.

186. And our weak ignorance must not be estranged

at these wonders, for, though the incidents might be

called small, the purposes of the Most High are great

and venerable in all his works; and also the works of

our most prudent Queen were great, no matter of what

kind they might have been. And who is so presump

tuous as to ignore the importance of knowing how much

of God s essence and perfections are manifest in the

existence of all the creatures? How important it is to

seek Him and find Him, to bless Him and magnify Him

in all his creatures, as admirable, powerful, generous and

holy? Why should it not be our duty to imitate Mary,

who overlooked no time, place or occasion, to attain this

object ? And how also shall our ungrateful forget fulness

THE INCARNATION 151

not be confounded, and our hardness of heart not be

softened? How can our listless heart fail to be aroused,

when we see ourselves reprehended and urged for very

shame to thankfulness by the irrational creatures ? Merely

for the slight participation of the Divinity that consists

in bare existence, they proclaim his praises without in

termission ; whereas we men, who are made to the image

and likeness of God, furnished with the powers of know

ing\* Him and enjoying Him eternally, forget Him so

far as not even to know Him, and instead of serving Him,

offend Him! Thus it comes that in no wise can men be

preferred to the brute animals, since they have become

worse than the brutes (Ps. 48, 13).

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY OUR MOST HOLY QUEEN

AND LADY.

187. My daughter, thou hast received my instruction

until now in order to desire and strive after the heavenly

science, which I wish thee so earnestly to acquire and

which shall teach thee to understand profoundly, what

decorous reverence is due to God. I remind thee once

more, that this science is very hard to learn and little

coveted by men on account of their ignorance ; for thence,

to their great loss, it arises that, in conversing with the

Most High or rendering Him service or worship, they

fail to form a worthy concept of his infinite greatness,

and to free themselves from the darksome images of

their earthly occupations, which make them torpid and

carnal, unworthy and unfit for the magnificent inter

course with the supernal Deity. And this ill-bred

coarseness entails another disorder: namely, that when

ever they converse with their neighbors, they do it with

out order, measure or discretion, become entangled in

152 CITY OF GOD

their outward actions, and losing the memory and pres

ence of their Creator in the excitement of their passions,

are completely entangled in what is earthly.

188. I desire therefore, my dearest, that thou fly from

this danger and learn the science, of the immutable being

and infinite attributes of God. In such a way must thou

study Him and unite thyself to Him, that no created being

will come between thy soul and the true and highest

Good. At all times and in all places, occupations and

operations thou must keep Him in sight, without re

leasing Him from the intimate embrace of thy heart

(Cant. 3, 4). Therefore I command thee to treat Him

with a magnanimous heart, with decorum and reverence,

with deepfelt fear of the soul. And whatever pertains

to his divine worship, I desire that thou handle with

all attention and care. Above all in order to enter into

his presence by prayer and petitions, free thyself from

all sensible and earthly images. And since human frailty

cannot always remain constant in the force of love, nor

always experience the sweet violence of its movements

on account of its earthly nature, thou shouldst seek other

assistance, such as will help thee toward the same end

of finding thy God. Such help, for instance, is afforded

by his praise in the beauty of the heavens and of the

stars, in the variety of the plants, in the pleasant vista

of the fields, in the forces of the elements, and especially

in the exalted nature of the angels and in the glory of his

saints.

189. But bear continually in mind especially this par

ticular caution, not to seek any earthly alleviation in any

event or in any labor which thou art to undergo, nor to

indulge in any diversion coming from human creatures;

and especially not in those coming from men, for an ac

count of thy naturally weak and yielding character, so

THE INCARNATION 153

much adverse to giving pain, thou placest thyself in dan

ger of exceeding and overstepping the limit of what is

allowed or just, following, more than is proper for the

religious spouses of my most holy Son, thy sensible lik

ings. The risks of this negligence all the human crea

tures incur; for if full reins are given to frail human

nature, it will not give heed to reason, not to the true

light of the Spirit; but, forgetting them entirely, it will

blindly follow the impulse of its passions and pleasures.

Against this general danger is provided the enclosure and

retirement of the souls consecrated to my Son and Lord,

in order to cut off the root of those unhappy and dis

graceful occasions for those religious, who would will

ingly seek them and entangle themselves in them. Thy

recreations, my dearest, and those of thy sister religious,

must be free from such danger and deadly poison. Seek

always those, which thou shalt find in the secret of thy

breast and in the chamber of thy Beloved, who is faith

ful in consoling the sorrowful and in assisting the af

flicted.

CHAPTER XV.

MOST HOLY MARY IS INFORMED OF THE WILL OF THE

LORD, THAT SHE VISIT HOLY ELISABETH ; SHE ASKS

SAINT JOSEPH FOR PERMISSION TO GO, REMAINING

SILENT ABOUT ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED TO HER.

190. By the words of the heavenly messenger, the

archangel Gabriel, most holy Mary had been informed,

that her cousin Elisabeth (who was held to be sterile)

had conceived a son and that She was already in the

sixth month of her pregnancy. Afterwards, in one of

the intellectual visions, the Most High revealed to Her,

that in a miraculous birth, Elisabeth would bring forth

a son, who would be great before the Lord (Luke 1, 15) ;

a Prophet and the Forerunner of the incarnate Word;

also other great mysteries of the holiness and of the per

sonality of saint John were revealed to Her. On this

same occasion and on others the heavenly Queen was in

formed, that it would be agreeable and pleasing to the

Lord, if She would visit her cousin, in order that as

well Elisabeth as also the child in her womb might be

sanctified by the presence of their Redeemer; for his

Majesty was anxious to communicate the benefits of his

coming into the world and his merits to his Precursor,

in order to make of him as it were the well seasoned

first fruit of his Redemption.

191. At the news of this sacramental mystery the

most prudent Virgin, with admirable jubilee of spirit,

rendered thanks to the Lord for such great condescension

and favor vouchsafed to the soul of the Precursor and

154

THE INCARNATION 155

Prophet and to his mother Elisabeth. Signifying her

readiness to fulfill the divine pleasure, She spoke to his

Majesty and said: "Most high Lord, beginning and

cause of all good, let thy name be eternally glorified,

acknowledged and praised by all the nations. I, the

least of thy creatures, give thee humble thanks for the

liberal kindness, which thou wishest to show to thy ser

vant Elisabeth and to the son of her womb. If it is

according to the promptings of thy condescension, that I

serve thee in this work, I stand prepared, my Lord, to

obey eagerly thy divine mandates." The Most High

answered Her: "My Dove and my Beloved, elect among

creatures, truly I say to thee, that on account of thy in

tercession and thy love I will, as a Father and most

liberal God, take care of thy cousin Elisabeth and of the

son, who is to be born of her: I will choose him as my

Prophet and as the Precursor of the Word, which is

made man in thee ; I will look upon them as belonging to

thee and intimately connected with thyself. Therefore

I wish, that my and thy Onlybegotten go to see the

mother, in order to free the son from the chains of the

first sin and in order that, before the common and ordi

nary time decreed for other men, his voice and praise

may sound up to my ears (Cant. 2, 14), and that the

mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption may be

revealed to his sanctified soul. Therefore I wish thee

to visit Elisabeth; for We three Persons of the blessed

Trinity have chosen her son for great deeds conformable

to our pleasure."

192. To this command of the Lord the most obedient

Mother responded : "Thou knowest, my Lord and God,

that all the desires of my heart seek but thy divine pleas

ure and that I wish to fulfill diligently whatever Thou

commandest to thy humble servant. Allow me, my God,

156 CITY OF GOD

to ask permission from my husband Joseph and that I

make this journey according to his will and direction.

And in order that I may not diverge from what is thy

pleasure, do Thou govern me during that journey in all

my actions, direct my footsteps to the greater glory of

thy name (Ps. 118, 113). Accept therefore the sacri

fice, which I bring in going out in public and in leaving

my cherished retirement. I wish to offer more than my

desires, God and King of my soul, I hope to be made able

to suffer all that will conduce to thy greater service and

pleasure purely for thy love, so that the longings of my

soul may not remain entirely unfulfilled."

193. When our great Queen came out of this vision,

She called upon the thousand angels of her guard, who

appeared to Her in bodily forms, and told them of the

command of the Most High. She asked them to assist

Her with careful solicitude in this journey, to teach Her

how to fulfill all the commands according to the greater

pleasure of the Lord, to defend Her and guard Her

from dangers so that She might conduct Herself in all

things during that journey in the most perfect manner.

The holy princes, with wonderful devotion, offered to

obey and serve Her. In the same manner the Mistress

of all prudence and humility was wont to act also on

other occasions. For though She was Herself more wise

and more perfect in her deeds than the angels, yet be

cause She was yet in the state of pilgrimage and endowed

with a nature lower than that of the angels, She was

always solicitous to attain the plenitude of perfection by

consulting and asking for the aid of her guardian angels,

though they were her inferiors in sanctity. Under their

direction, as also by the promptings of the holy Spirit,

all her human actions were well disposed and well or

dered. The heavenly spirits obeyed Her with alacrity

THE INCARNATION 157

and punctuality, such as was proper to their nature and

due to their Queen and Lady. They held sweet inter

course and delightful colloquy with Her, and alternately

with Her they sang highest songs of praise and adora

tion of the Most High. At other times they conversed

about the supernal mysteries of the incarnate Word, the

hypostatic union, the sacrament of the Redemption, the

triumphs to be celebrated by Him, the fruits and blessings

acruing therefrom to mortals. It would necessitate

lengthening out this work too much, if I were to write

all that has been revealed to me about these conversa

tions.

194. The humble Spouse proceeded immediately to

ask the consent of saint Joseph for executing the man

date of the Most High, and, in her consummate prudence,

She said nothing of these happenings, but simply spoke

to him these words : "My lord and spouse, by the divine

light it was made known to me, that through condescen

sion of the Most High the prayer of my cousin Elisabeth,

the wife of Zacharias, has been heard ; she has conceived

a son, though she was sterile. Since she has obtained

this singular blessing, I hope that through God s infinite

bounty, her Son will greatly please and glorify the Lord.

I think that on this occasion I am under obligation to

visit her and converse with her on certain things for her

consolation and spiritual encouragement. If this is ac

cording to thy liking, my master, I will perform it with

thy permission, for I am entirely subject to thy will and

pleasure. Consider then what is best for me and com

mand what I am to do."

195. This prudent silence of the most holy Mary, so

full of humble subjection, was very agreeable to the

Lord; for She showed Herself thereby worthy and ca

pable of receiving the deposit of the great sacraments

2-12

158 CITY OF GOD

of the King (Tob. 12, 7). Therefore, and on account

of the confidence in his fidelity with which She proceeded,

his Majesty disposed the most pure heart of saint Joseph,

giving him his divine light to act conformably to his will.

This is the reward of the humble, who ask for counsel :

that they will find it with certainty and security (Eccli.

32, 29). It is also the peculiar prerogative of a holy

and discreet zeal to be able to give prudent advice to

those that ask. Full of this holy counsel saint Joseph

answered our Queen : "Thou knowest already, my Lady

and Spouse, that my utmost desires are to serve Thee

with all diligence and attention; for I am bound to

have this confidence in thy great virtue, that Thou wilt

not incline toward anything, which is not according to

the greater pleasure and glory of the Most High; and

this is my belief also in regard to this journey. Lest

thy making this journey alone and without the company

of thy husband cause surprise I will gladly go with Thee

and attend to thy wants on the way. Do Thou appoint

the day on which we shall depart together."

196. The most holy Mary thanked her prudent spouse

Joseph for his loving solicitude and for his attentive co

operation with the will of God in whatever he knew to

be for his service and honor. They both concluded to

depart immediately on their visit to the house of saint

Elisabeth (Luke 1, 39), and prepared without delay

the provisions, which consisted merely in a little fruit,

bread and a few fishes, procured by saint Joseph. In

addition to these he borrowed an humble beast of burden,

in order to carry their provisions and his Spouse, the

Queen of all creation. Forthwith they departed from

Nazareth for Judea ; the journey itself I will describe in

the following chapter. On leaving their poor dwelling

the great Mistress of the world knelt at the feet of her

THE INCARNATION 159

spouse Joseph and asked his blessing in order to begin

the journey in the name of the Lord. The saint was

abashed at the rare humility of his Spouse, with which

He had already been impressed by experience on so many

other occasions. He hesitated giving Her his benedic

tion ; but the meek and sweet persistence of the most holy

Mary overcame his objections and he blessed Her in the

name of the Most High. The heavenly Lady raised

her eyes and her heart to God, in order to direct her

first steps toward the fulfillment of the divine pleasure

and willingly bearing along in her womb the Onlybe-

gotten of the Father and her own, for the sanctification

of John in that of his mother Elisabeth.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY QUEEN AND

LADY GAVE ME.

197. My dearest daughter, many times I have confided

and manifested to thee the love burning within my

bosom : for I wish that it should be ardently re-enkindled

within thy own, and that thou profit from the instruction,

which I give thee. Happy is the soul, to which the Most

High manifests his holy and perfect will ; but more happy

and blessed is he, who puts into execution, what he has

learned. In many ways God shows to mortals the high

ways and pathways of eternal life: by the Gospels and

the holy Scriptures, by the Sacraments and the laws of

the holy Church, by the writings and examples of the

saints, and especially, by the obedience due to the guid-

ings of its ministers, of whom his Majesty said : "Who

ever hears you, hears Me;" for obeying them is the

same as obeying the Lord himself. Whenever by any

of these means thou hast come to the knowledge of the

will of God, I desire thee to assume the wings of humility

160 CITY OF GOD

and obedience, and, as if in ethereal flight or like the

quickest sunbeam, hasten to execute it and thereby ful

fill the divine pleasure.

198. Besides these means of instruction, the Most

High has still others in order to direct the soul ; namely,

He intimates his perfect will to them in a supernatural

manner, and reveals to them many sacraments. This

kind of instruction is of many and different degrees ; not

all of them are common or ordinary to all souls ; for the

Lord dispenses his light in measure and weight (Wis.

11, 21). Sometimes He speaks to the heart and the

interior feelings in commands; at others, in correction,

advising or instructing : sometimes He moves the heart to

ask Him; at other times He proposes clearly what He

desires, in order that the soul may be moved to fulfill

it; again He manifests, as in a clear mirror, great mys

teries, in order that they may be seen and recognized by

the intellect and loved by the will. But this great and

infinite Good is always sweet in commanding, powerful

in giving the necessary help for obedience, just in his

commands, quick in disposing circumstances so that He

can be obeyed, notwithstanding all the impediments

which hinder the fulfillment of his most holy will.

199. In receiving this divine light, my daughter, I

wish to see thee very attentive, and very quick and dili

gent in following it up in deed. In order to hear this

most delicate and spiritual voice of the Lord it is neces

sary, that the faculties of the soul be purged from earthly

grossness and that the creature live entirely according to

the spirit ; for the animal man does not perceive the ele

vated things of the Divinity (I Cor. 2, 14). Be atten

tive then to his secrets (Is. 24, 16) and forget all that

is of the outside; listen, my daughter, and incline thy

ear; free thyself from all visible things (Ps. 44, 11).

THE INCARNATION 161

And in order that thou mayest be diligent, cultivate love ;

for love is a fire, which does not have its effect until

the material is prepared; therefore let thy heart always

be disposed and prepared. Whenever the Most High bids

thee or communicates to thee anything for the welfare

of souls, or especially for their eternal salvation, devote

thyself to it entirely; for they are bought at the in

estimable price of the blood of the Lamb and of divine

love. Do not allow thyself to be hindered in this matter

by thy own lowliness and bashfulness; but overcome the

fear which restrains thee, for if thou thyself art of small

value and usefulness, the Most High is rich (I Pet. 1,

18), powerful, great, and by Himself performs all things

(Rom. 10, 12). Thy promptness and affection will not

go without its reward, although I wish thee rather to be

moved entirely by the pleasure of thy Lord.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE JOURNEY OF THE MOST HOLY MARY ON HER VISIT

TO SAINT ELISABETH AND HER ENTRANCE INTO THE

HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS.

200. "And Mary rising up in those days," says the

sacred text, "went into the hill country with haste, into

a city of Judea" (Luke 1, 39). This rising up of our

heavenly Queen signified not only her exterior prepara

tions and setting out from Nazareth on her journey, but

it referred to the movement of her spirit and to the divine

impulse and command which directed Her to arise in

teriorly from the humble retirement, which She had

chosen in her humility. She arose as it were from the

feet of the Most High, whose will and pleasure She

eagerly sought to fulfill, like the lowliest handmaid, who

according to the word of David (Ps. 122, 2) keeps her

eyes fixed upon the hands of her Mistress, awaiting her

commands. Arising at the bidding of the Lord She

lovingly hastened to accomplish his most holy will, in

procuring without delay the sanctification of the Precur

sor of the incarnate Word, who was yet held prisoner

in the womb of Elisabeth by the bonds of original sin.

This was the purpose and object of this journey. There

fore the Princess of heaven arose and proceeded in

diligent haste, as mentioned by the Evangelist saint Luke.

201. Leaving behind then the house of her father and

forgetting her people (Ps. 44, 11), the most chaste

spouses, Mary and Joseph, pursued their way to the

house of Zacharias in mountainous Judea. It was twenty-

162

THE INCARNATION 163

six leagues distant from Nazareth, and the greater part

of the way was very rough and broken, unfit for such

a delicate and tender Maiden. All the convenience at

their disposal for the arduous undertaking was an hum

ble beast, on which She began and pursued her journey.

Although it was intended solely for her comfort and

service, yet Mary, the most humble and unpretentious of

all creatures, many times dismounted and asked her

spouse saint Joseph to share with Her this commodity

and to lighten the difficulties of the way by making use

of the beast. Her discreet spouse never accepted this

offer ; and in order to yield somewhat to the solicitations

of the heavenly Lady, he permitted her now and then to

walk with him part of the way, whenever it seemed to

him that her delicate strength could sustain the exertion

without too great fatigue. But soon he would again ask

Her, with great modesty and reverence, to accept of this

slight alleviation and the celestial Queen would then obey

and again proceed on her way seated in the saddle.

202. Thus alleviating their fatigue by humble and

courteous contentions, the most holy Mary and saint

Joseph continued on their journey, making good use of

each single moment. They proceeded alone, without ac

companiment of any human creatures; but all the thou

sand angels, which were set to guard the couch of Solo

mon, the most holy Mary, attended upon them (Cant.

3, 7). Although the angels accompanied them in cor

poreal form, serving their great Queen and her most

holy Son in her womb, they were visible only to Mary.

In the company of the angels and of saint Joseph, the

Mother of grace journeyed along, filling the fields and

the mountains with the sweetest fragrance of her pres

ence and with the divine praises, in which She unceas

ingly occupied Herself. Sometimes She conversed with

164 CITY OF GOD

the angels and, alternately with them, sang divine canticles

concerning the different mysteries of the Divinity and

the works of Creation and of the Incarnation. Thus

ever anew the pure heart of the immaculate Lady was

inflamed by the ardors of divine love. In all this her

spouse saint Joseph contributed his share by maintaining

a discreet silence, and by allowing his beloved Spouse to

pursue the flights of her spirit; for, lost in highest con

templation, he was favored with some understanding of

what was passing within her soul.

203. At other times the two would converse with

each other and speak about the salvation of souls and

the mercies of the Lord, of the coming of the Redeemer,

of the prophecies given to the ancient Fathers concerning

Him, and of other mysteries and sacraments of the Most

High. Something happened on the way, which caused

great wonder in her holy spouse Joseph : he loved his

Spouse most tenderly with a chaste and holy love, such

as had been ordained in Him by the special grace and

dispensation of the divine love itself (Cant. 2, 4) ; in

addition to this privilege (which was certainly not a small

one) the saint was naturally of a most noble and cour

teous disposition, and his manners were most pleasing

and charming; all this produced in him a most discreet

and loving solicitude, which was yet increased by the

great holiness, which he had seen from the beginning

in his Spouse and which was ordained by heaven as

the immediate object of all his privileges. Therefore

the saint anxiously attended upon most holy Mary arid

asked her many times, whether She was tired or fatigued,

and in what he could serve Her on the journey. But

as the Queen of heaven already carried within the

virginal chamber the divine fire of the incarnate Word,

holy Joseph, without fathoming the real cause, expe-

THE INCARNATION 165

rienced in his soul new reactions, proceeding from the

words and conversations of his beloved Spouse. He felt

himself so inflamed by divine love and imbued with

such exalted knowledge of the mysteries touched upon

in their conversations, that he was entirely renewed and

spiritualized by this burning interior light. The farther

they proceeded and the more they conversed about these

heavenly things, so much the stronger these affections

grew, and he became aware, that it was the words of his

Spouse, which thus filled his heart with love and inflamed

his will with divine ardor.

204. So great were these new sensations, that the

prudent Joseph could not help but pay the greatest at

tention to them. Although he knew that all this came

to him through the mediation of most holy Mary, and

although it was a wonderful consolation to him, that

She was the cause, he meditated upon it without curiosity,

and, on account of his great modesty, he did not dare to

ask Her any questions. The Lord having ordained it thus,

for it was not yet time, that he should know the sacra

ment of the King, which was already completed in her

virginal womb. The heavenly Princess beheld the in

terior of her spouse, knowing all that passed within

his soul ; and in her prudence She reflected how it would

naturally be unavoidable, that he should come to know

of her pregnancy; for there would be no possibility of

concealing it from her most beloved and chaste spouse.

The great Lady did not know at the time, how God would

arrange this matter; yet, although She had not received

any intimation or command to conceal this mystery, her

heavenly prudence and discretion taught Her that it

would be proper to conceal it as a great sacrament, greater

than all other mysteries. Therefore She kept it secret,

saying not a word about it to her husband, neither after

166 CITY OF GOD

the message of the angel, nor during this journey, nor

later on, during the anxieties occasioned to saint Joseph

at becoming aware of her pregnancy.

205. O admirable discretion and prudence more than

human! The great Queen resigned Herself entirely to

the divine Providence, hoping that God would arrange

all things; yet She felt anxiety and pain, at the thought

of what her husband might think, and of her inability

to do anything in order to dissipate his anxiety. This

anxiety was increased by the attentive care and service,

lavished by him upon Her with so much love and affec

tion; since his faithful services certainly deserved a cor

responding return on her part as far as was prudently

possible. Therefore, in loving solicitude and in pursuance

of her desires to solve this coming difficulty, She prayed

to the Lord, asking Him to grant his divine assistance

and guidance to saint Joseph, when it should arrive. In

this state of suspense, in which She found Herself, her

Highness performed great and heroic acts of faith, hope

and charity, of prudence, humility, patience and fortitude,

imbuing all her activity with the plenitude of holiness

and reaching in all things the summit of perfection.

206. This journey was the first pilgrimage begun by

the divine Word, four days after He had entered the

world; for his most ardent love would not suffer any

longer delay or procrastination in enkindling the fire,

which He came to scatter in the world (Luke 12, 49),

and in beginning his justification of mortals with his

Precursor. This haste He communicated also to his

holy Mother, in order that She might arise without de

lay and fly on her visit to Elisabeth (Luke 1, 39). The

most heavenly Lady on this occasion served as the coach

of the true Solomon ; but much more richly adorned and

more elegant, as Solomon himself infers in the canticles

THE INCARNATION 167

(Cant. 3, 9). Therefore this journey was glorious and

occasioned great joy to the Onlybegotten of the Father.

For He traveled at his ease in the virginal chamber of his

Mother, enjoying the sweet tokens of her love. At the

time She alone was the archive of this Treasure, the

secretary of so great a sacrament, and She adored Him,

blessed and admired Him, spoke and listened to Him,

and answered Him; She reverenced Him and thanked

Him for Herself and for all the human race, much more

than all the men and the angels together.

207. In the course of the journey, which lasted four

days, the two holy pilgrims, Mary and Joseph, exercised

not only the virtues which were interior and had God

for their immediate object, but also many other outward

acts of charity toward their neighbors ; for Mary could

not remain idle at the sight of want. They did not find

the same hospitable treatment at all the inns of the road ;

for some of the innkeepers, being more rude, treated them

with slight consideration in accordance with their natural

disposition; others received them with true love inspired

by divine grace. But the Mother of mercy denied to no

one such help as She could administer; and therefore,

whenever She could decently do so, She hastened to visit

and hunt up the poor, infirm and afflicted, helping them

and consoling them, and curing their sicknesses. I will

not stop to relate all that happened on the way, but will

only mention the good fortune of a poor sick girl, whom

our great Queen found in passing through a town on the

first day of her journey. She was moved to tenderest

compassion at the sight of her grievous illness ; and, mak

ing use of her power as Mistress of the creatures, She

commanded the fever to leave the maiden and the

humors to recompose and reduce themselves to their

natural state and condition. At this command and at

168 CITY OF GOD

the sweet presence of the purest Mother, the sick maiden

was suddenly freed and healed from her pains of body

and benefited in soul ; so that afterwards She lived more

and more perfectly and attained the state of sanctity;

for the image of the Authoress of her happiness re

mained stamped within her memory and her heart was

enkindled with a great love toward the heavenly Lady,

although She never again saw Her, nor was the miracle

ever made public.

208. Having pursued their journey four days, the

most holy Mary and her spouse arrived at the town of

Juda, where Zachary and Elisabeth then lived. This

was the special and proper name of the place, where

the parents of saint John lived for a while, and there

fore the Evangelist saint Luke specifies it, calling it

Juda, although the commentators have commonly be

lieved that this was not the name of the town in which

Elisabeth and Zacharias lived, but simply the name of

the province, which was called Juda or Judea; just as

for the same reason the mountains south of Jerusalem

were called the mountains of Judea. But it was ex

pressly revealed to me that the town was called Juda

and that the Evangelist calls it by its proper name; al

though the learned expositors have understood by this

name of Juda the province, in which that town was sit

uated. This confusion arose from the fact that some

years after the death of Christ the town Juda was de

stroyed, and, as the commentators found no trace of

such a town, they inferred that saint Luke meant the

province and not a town; thus the great differences of

opinion in regard to the place, where most holy Mary

visited Elisabeth, are easily explained.

209. As holy obedience has enjoined upon me the

duty of clearing up these doubts, on account of the

THE INCARNATION 169

strange inconsistency in the sayings of learned men, I

will also add to what I have already said, that the house

in which the visitation took place was built upon the

very spot on which now the faithful pilgrims, who

travel to or live in the holy Land, venerate the divine

mysteries transacted during the visit. Although the

town of Juda itself, where the house of Zacharias stood

is ruined, the Lord did not permit the memory of the

venerable locality in which those great mysteries tran

spired, and which were hallowed by the footsteps of

most holy Mary, of Christ our Lord, and of the Baptist

as well as of his holy parents, to be blotted out and ef

faced from the memory of men. Therefore it was by

divine influence, that the ancient Christians built up

those churches and restored the holy places, in order to

preserve by the agency of divine light the traditional

truth and to renew the memory of the admirable sacra

ments. Thus we ourselves, the faithful of our times,

can enjoy the blessing of venerating and worshipping 1

the sacred localities, proclaiming and confessing our

Catholic faith in the works of our Redemption.

210. For the better understanding of these things

let it be remembered that after the demon had become

aware on Calvary that Christ our Lord was God and

the Redeemer of men, he sought with incredible fury

to blot out the remembrance of Him from the land of

the living, as Jeremias says (Jer. 11, 19) ; and the same

is to be said of the memory of his most holy Mother.

Thus he managed to have the most holy Cross hidden

and buried under ground and to have it delivered as

spoil of war to the Persians; and in the same way he

procured the ruin and obliteration of many holy places.

On this account the holy angels carried back and forth

so many times the venerable and holy house of Loretto;

170 CITY OF GOD

for the same dragon who pursued the heavenly Lady

(Apoc. 12, 13), had already excited the minds of the

inhabitants of that land to tear down and raze to the

ground that most sacred oratory, which had been the

workshop of the Most High in the mystery of the In

carnation. The same astute hatred of the enemy urged

him to blot out the town of Juda, aided partly by the

negligence of the inhabitants, who gradually died off,

partly also by untoward events and happenings. Yet the

Lord did not allow all traces of the house of Zachary to

be effaced or obliterated, on account of the sacraments,

which were there enacted.

211. This town was distant from Nazareth, as I have

said, twenty-six leagues, and about two leagues from

Jerusalem, and it was situated in that part of the Judean

mountains, where the stream Sorec takes its rise. After

the birth of saint John and the return of the most holy

Mary and her spouse Joseph to Nazareth, saint Elisa

beth received a divine revelation that a great calamity

and slaughter impended over the infants of Bethlehem

and its vicinity. And though this revelation was inde

terminate and unclear, it nevertheless induced the mother

of saint John to betake herself with Zacharias, her hus

band, to Hebron, which was eight leagues more or less

from Jerusalem; for they were rich and noble, and they

had dwellings not only in Juda and Hebron, but they

had houses and possessions also in other places. When

the most holy Mary and Joseph were on their way flying

from Herod to Egypt (Matth, 2, 14) after the birth of

the Word and some months after the birth of saint John,

saint Elisabeth and Zacharias were in Hebron. Zacharias

died four months after our Lord was born, which was

ten months after the birth of his son John. It seems to

me I have now sufficiently solved this doubt, and it

THE INCARNATION 171

ought to be evident that the house of the Visitation was

neither in Jerusalem, nor in Bethlehem, nor in Hebron,

but in the town called Juda. I saw that this is the true

explanation, which was made known to me by divine

light together with the other mysteries of this heavenly

history; afterwards, when I was constrained by obe

dience to ask about this matter, a holy angel again made

the same declaration to me.

212. It was at this city of Juda and at the house of

Zacharias that most holy Mary and Joseph arrived. In

order to announce their visit, saint Joseph hastened

ahead of Mary and calling out saluted the inmates of

the house, saying: "The Lord be with you and fill your

souls with divine grace." Elisabeth was already fore

warned, for the Lord himself had informed her in a

vision that Mary of Nazareth had departed to visit her.

She had also in this vision been made aware that the

heavenly Lady was most pleasing in the eyes of the Most

High; while the mystery of her being the Mother of

God was not revealed to her until the moment, when

they both saluted each other in private. But saint Elisa

beth immediately issued forth with a few of her family,

in order to welcome most holy Mary, who, as the more

humble and younger in years, hastened to salute her

cousin, saying: "The Lord be with you, my dearest

cousin," and Elisabeth answered : "The same Lord re

ward you for having come in order to afford me this

pleasure." With these words they entered the house of

Zacharias and what happened I will relate in the follow

ing chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH OUR QUEEN AND LADY GAVE ME.

213. My daughter, whenever the creature holds in

proper esteem the good works and the services, which

172 CITY OF GOD

the Lord commands for his glory, it will feel within

itself great facility of operation, great sweetness in un

dertaking them, and a readiness and alacrity in continu

ing and pursuing them. These different feelings then

give testimony of their being truly useful and com

manded by God. But the soul cannot experience these

affections, if it is not altogether devoted to the Lord,

keeping its gaze fixed upon his divine pleasure, hearing

of it with joy, executing it with alacrity and forgetting

its own inclination and conveniences. The soul must

be like the faithful servant, who seeks to do only the

will of his master and not his own. This is the manner

of obeying, which is fruitful and which is due from all

the creatures to their God and much more from all the

religious, who explicitly promise this kind of obedience.

In order that thou, my dearest, mayest attain to it per

fectly, remember with what esteem David in many places

speaks of the precepts (Ps. 118), of the sayings and of

the justifications of the Lord ; and remember the effects,

which they caused in that Prophet and even now in the

souls. He says that they make the infants wise (Ps.

18, 8), rejoice the heart of men (Ps. 18, 9), that they

enlighten the eyes of the soul, so that they become a

most brilliant light for its footsteps (Ps. 118, 105), that

they are more sweet than honey (Ps. 18, 11), more de

sirable and more estimable than the most precious stones.

This promptitude and subjection to the divine will and

to his laws made David so conformable to the heart of

God. These are the kind of souls his Majesty seeks for

his servants and friends (I Kings 13, 14, Acts 13, 22).

214. Attend therefore, my daughter, with all solici

tude to the works of virtue and perfection, which thou

knowest to be desirable in the eyes of the Lord. De

spise none of them nor withdraw from any of them and

THE INCARNATION 173

cease not to exercise them, no matter how violently thy

inclinations and thy weakness should oppose their exer

cise. Trust in the Lord and proceed to put them into

execution, and soon his power will overcome all diffi

culties. Soon thou wilt also know by happy experience

how light is the burden and how sweet is the yoke of the

Lord (Matth. 11, 13). He did not deceive us when He

spoke those words, as might be argued by the tepid

and the negligent, who in their torpidity and distrust,

tacitly repudiate the truth of this statement. I wish also

that thou, in order to imitate me in this perfection, take

notice of the favor, which the divine condescension

vouchsafed me in furnishing me with a most sweet love

and affection for the creatures as participators in the

divine goodness and existence. In this love I sought

to console, alleviate and enliven all the souls; and by a

natural compassion I procured all spiritual and cor

poreal goods for them ; to none of them, no matter how

great sinners they might have been, did I wish any

evil; on the contrary I was urged by the great compas

sion of my tender heart to procure for them eternal sal

vation. From this also arose my anxiety concerning

the grief, which was to grow out of my pregnancy to

my spouse saint Joseph; for to him I owed more than

to all other creatures. Tender compassion filled my

heart, especially for the suffering and the infirm, and I

tried to obtain some relief for all. In these virtues then

I wish that thou, making use of the knowledge of them

given to thee, most prudently imitate me.

2-13

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SALUTATION GIVEN TO SAINT ELISABETH BY THE

QUEEN OF HEAVEN, AND THE SANCTIFICATION OF

JOHN.

215. When the most holy Mother Mary arrived at the

house of Zacharias, the Precursor of Christ had com

pleted the sixth month of his conception in the womb

of saint Elisabeth. The body of the child John had

already attained a state of great natural perfection ;

much greater than that of other children, on account of

the miracle of his conception by a sterile mother and

on account of the intention of the Most High to make

him the depositary of greater sanctity than other men

(Matth. 11, 11). Yet at that time his soul was yet filled

with the darkness of sin, which he had contracted in

the same way as the other children of Adam, the first

and common father of the human race; and as, accord

ing to the universal and general law, mortals cannot

receive the light of grace before they have issued forth

to the light of the sun (Rom. 5, 7) ; so, after the first,

the original sin contracted by our nature, the womb of

the mother must serve as a dungeon or prison for all of

us, who have laden upon ourselves this guilt of our

father and head, Adam. Christ our Lord resolved to

anticipate this great blessing in his Prophet and Pre

cursor by conferring the light of his grace and justifi

cation upon him six months after his conception by

saint Elisabeth, in order that he might be distinguished

174

THE INCARNATION 175

as well in holiness, as he was in his office of Precursor

and Baptist.

216. After the first salutation of Elisabeth by the

most holy Mary, the two cousins retired, as I have said

at the end of the preceding chapter. And immediately

the Mother of grace saluted anew her cousin saying:

"May God save thee, my dearest cousin, and may his

divine light communicate to thee grace and life" (Luke

1, 40). At the sound of most holy Mary s voice, saint

Elisabeth was filled by the Holy Ghost and so enlight

ened interiorly, that in one instant she perceived the

most exalted mysteries and sacraments. These emo

tions, and those that at the same time were felt by the

child John in the womb of his mother, were caused by

the presence of the Word made flesh in the bridal cham

ber of Mary s womb, for, making use of the voice of

Mary as his instrument, He, as Redeemer, began from

that place to use the power given to Him by the eternal

Father for the salvation and justification of the souls.

And since He now operated as man, though as yet of

the diminutive size of one conceived eight days before,

He assumed, in admirable humility, the form and pos

ture of one praying and beseeching the Father. He

asked in earnest prayer for the justification of his future

Precursor and obtained it at the hands of the blessed

Trinity.

217. Saint John was the third one for whom our

Redeemer made special petition since his presence in

the womb of his mother. His Mother was the first

for whom He gave thanks and prayed to the Father;

next in order was her spouse, saint Joseph, for whom the

incarnate Word offered up his prayers, as we have said

in the twelfth chapter; and the third one was the Pre

cursor saint John, whom the Lord mentioned by name in

176 CITY OF GOD

his prayers to the Father. Such was the great good for

tune and privilege of saint John, that Christ our Lord

presented to the eternal Father the merits of his Passion

and Death to be endured for men; and in view thereof

He requested the sanctification of this soul. He ap

pointed and set apart this child as one who is to be born

holy as his Precursor and as a witness of his coming into

the world (John 1, 7) ; as one who was to prepare the

hearts of his people in order that they might recognize

and receive Him as the Messias. He ordained that for

such an exalted ministry the Precursor should receive

all the graces, gifts and favors which are befitting and

proportionate to his office. All this the Father granted

just as the Onlybegotten had requested it of Him.

218. This happened before the most holy Mary had

put her salutation into words. At the pronunciation of

the words mentioned above, God looked upon the child

in the womb of saint Elisabeth, and gave it perfect use

of reason, enlightening it with his divine light, in order

that he might prepare himself by foreknowledge for the

blessings which he was to receive. Together with this

preparation he was sanctified from original sin, made an

adopted son of God, and filled with the most abundant

graces of the Holy Ghost and with the plenitude of all

his gifts; his faculties were sanctified, subjected and sub

ordinated to reason, thus verifying in himself what the

archangel Gabriel had said to Zacharias; that His son

would be filled with the Holy Ghost from the womb of

his mother (Luke 1, 17). At the same time the for

tunate child, looking through the walls of the maternal

womb as through clear glass upon the incarnate Word,

and assuming a kneeling posture, adored his Redeemer

and Creator, whom he beheld in most holy Mary as if

enclosed in a chamber made of the purest crystal. This

THE INCARNATION 177

was the movement of jubilation, which was felt by his

mother Elisabeth as coming from the infant in her

womb (Luke 1, 44). Many other acts of virtue the

child John performed during this interview, exercising

faith, hope, charity, worship, gratitude, humility, devo

tion and all the other virtues possible to him there. From

that moment he began to merit and grow in sanctity,

without ever losing it and without ever ceasing to exer

cise it with all the vigor of grace.

219. Saint Elisabeth was instructed at the same time

in the mystery of the Incarnation, the sanctification of

her own son and the sacramental purpose of this new

wonder. She also became aware of the virginal purity

and of the dignity of the most holy Mary. On this oc

casion, the heavenly Queen, being absorbed in the vision

of the Divinity and of the mysteries operated by it

through her most holy Son, became entirely godlike,

filled with the clear light of the divine gifts which She

participated; and thus filled with majesty saint Elisabeth

saw Her. She saw the Word made man as through a

most pure and clear glass in the virginal chamber, lying

as it were on a couch of burning and enlivened crystal.

The efficacious instrument of all these wonderful ef

fects was the voice of most holy Mary, as powerful as

it was sweet in the hearing of the Lord. All this force

was as it were only an outflow of that which was con

tained in those powerful words: "Fiat mihi secundum

verbum tuum," by which She had drawn the eternal

Word from the bosom of the Father down to her soul

and into her womb.

220. Filled with admiration at what She saw and

heard in regard to these divine mysteries, saint Elisa

beth was wrapt in the joy of the Holy Ghost; and,

looking upon the Queen of the world and what was

178 CITY OF GOD

contained in Her, she burst forth in loud voice of praise,

pronouncing the words reported to us by saint L,uke :

"Blessed are Thou among women and blessed is the

fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the

Mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold

as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my

ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy, and blessed

art Thou, that has believed, because those things shall

be accomplished, that were spoken to Thee by the Lord."

In these prophetic words saint Elisabeth rehearsed the

noble privileges of most holy Mary, perceiving by the

divine light what the power of the Lord had done in

Her, what He now performed, and what He was to ac

complish through Her in time to come. All this also

the child John perceived and understood, while listen

ing to the words of his mother; for she was enlight

ened for the purpose of his sanctification, and since he

could not from his place in the womb bless and thank

her by word of mouth, she, both for herself and for

her son, extolled the most holy Mary as being the in

strument of their good fortune.

221. These words of praise, pronounced by saint

Elisabeth were referred by the Mother of wisdom and

humility to the Creator; and in the sweetest and softest

voice She intoned the Magnificat as recorded by saint

Luke (Ch. 1, 46-55).

46. My soul doth magnify the Lord;

47. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48. Because He hath regarded the humility of his

handmaid ; for behold from henceforth all genera

tions shall call me blessed.

49. Because He that is mighty hath done great

things to me; and holy is his name.

THE INCARNATION 179

50. And his mercy is from generation unto gen

eration to them that fear Him.

51. He hath shewed might in his arm; He hath

scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

52. He hath put down the mighty from their seat

and hath exalted the humble.

53. He hath filled the hungry with good things;

and the rich He hath sent empty away.

54. He hath received Israel, his servant, being

mindful of his mercy;

55. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and

his seed forever/

222. Just as saint Elisabeth was the first one who

heard this sweet canticle from the mouth of most holy

Mary, so she was also the first one who understood it

and, by means of her infused knowledge, commented

upon it. She penetrated some of the great mysteries,

which its Authoress expressed therein in so few sen

tences. The soul of most holy Mary magnified the

Lord for the excellence of his infinite Essence; to Him

She referred and yielded all glory and praise (I Tim. 1,

17), both for the beginning and the accomplishment of

her works. She knew and confessed that in God alone

every creature should glory and rejoice, since He alone

is their entire happiness and salvation (II Cor. 10, 17).

She confessed also the equity and magnificence of the

Most High in attending to the humble and in confer

ring upon them his abundant spirit of divine love (Ps.

137, 6). She saw how worthy of mortals it is to per

ceive, understand and ponder the gifts that were con

ferred on the humility of Her, whom all nations were

to call blessed, and how all the humble ones, each one

according to his degree, could share the same good for

tune. By one word also She expressed all the mercies,

180 CITY OF GOD

benefits and blessings, which the Almighty showered

upon Her in his holy and wonderful name ; for She calls

them altogether "great things" since there was nothing

small about anything that referred to this great Queen

and Lady.

223. And as the mercies of the Most High over

flowed from Mary s plenitude to the whole human race,

and as She was the portal of heaven, through which they

issued and continue to issue, and through which we are

to enter into the participation of the Divinity; therefore

She confessed, that the mercy of the Lord in regard to

Her is spread out over all the generations, communi

cating itself to them that fear Him. And just as the in

finite mercies raise up the humble and seek out those

that fear God; so also the powerful arm of divine jus

tice scatters and destroys those who are proud in the

mind of their heart, and hurls them from their thrones

in order to set in their place the poor and lowly. This

justice of the Lord was exercised in wonderful splendor

and glory upon the chief of all the proud, Lucifer and

his followers, when the almighty arm of God scattered

and hurled them (because they themselves precipitated

themselves) from their exalted seats which befitted their

angelic natures and their graces, and which they occu

pied according to the original (Isaias 14; Apoc. 12)

decree of the divine love. For by it He intended that

all should be blessed (I Tim. 2, 4) while they, in trying

to ascend in their vain pride to positions, which they

neither could attain nor should aspire to, on the con

trary cast themselves from those which they occupied

(Isaias 14, 13). In their arrogance they were found

opposed to the just and inscrutable judgments of the

Lprd, which scattered and cast down the proud angel

and all his followers (Apoc. 12, 8). In their place were

THE INCARNATION 181

installed the humble of heart through the mediation of

most holy Mary, the Mother and the treasure house of

his ancient mercies.

224. For the same reason this divine Lady says and

proclaims that God enriches the needy, filling them with

the abundance of his treasures of grace and glory; and

those that are rich in their own estimation and pre

sumptuous arrogance, and those who satisfy their heart

with the false goods, which the world esteems as riches

and happiness, the Most High has banished and does

banish from his presence, because they are void of the

truth, which cannot enter into hearts filled and occupied

with falsehood and deceit. He received his servants and

his children, the people of Israel, remembering his mer

cies in order to teach them, wherein prudence, truth and

understanding (Bar. 3, 14), wherein free and abundant

life and nourishment, wherein the light of the eyes and

peace consists. He taught them the way of prudence

and the hidden paths of wisdom and discipline, which

is concealed from the princes of the gentiles, and is not

known to the powerful, who dominate over the beasts

of the earth and entertain themselves and play with the

birds of the air and heap up treasures of gold and silver.

Nor can the sons of Agar and the inhabitants of Teman,

who are the wise and the proudly prudent of this world,

ever attain this wisdom. But to those that are sons of

the light (Galat. 3, 7), and who are sons of Abraham by

faith, hope and obedience, the Most High distributes it;

for in this manner has it been promised to his posterity

and his spiritual children, made secure by the blessed

and happy Fruit of the virginal womb of the most holy

Mary.

225. Saint Elisabeth looking upon Mary the Queen

of creation understood these hidden mysteries ; and not

182 CITY OF GOD

only those, which I am able to express here, did this for

tunate matron understand, but many more and greater

sacraments, which my understanding cannot compre

hend ; nor do I wish to dilate upon all that have been

shown to me, lest I unduly extend this history. But the

sweet discourses and conversations, which these two holy

and discreet ladies held with each other, reminded me of

the two seraphim, which Isaias saw above the throne of

the Most High, repeating the divine and always new

canticle: Holy, holy, etc., while they covered their head

with one pair of wings, their feet with another, flew

with the third pair (Isaias 6, 2). It is certain that the

inflamed love of these two holy women exceeded that

of all the seraphim, and Mary by Herself loved more

than they all together. They were consumed in the flame

of divine love, extending the two wings of their hearts

in order to manifest to each other their love and in order

to soar into the most exalted intelligence of the mys

teries of the Most High. With two more wings of

rarest knowledge they covered their faces; because both

of them discussed and contemplated the sacrament of

the King (Tob. 12, 7), guarding its secrets within

themselves all their lives; also because they restrained

their discourse and subjected it to their devoted faith,

without giving scope to proud inquisitiveness. They also

covered the feet of the Lord and their own with the

third pair of seraphic wings, because they were lowered

and annihilated in their own humble estimation of them

selves at the sight of such great Majesty. Moreover

since most holy Mary enclosed within her virginal womb

the God of majesty himself, we can with reason and

with literal truth say, that She covered the seat where

the Lord sat enthroned.

226. When it was time to come forth from their re-

THE INCARNATION 183

tirement, saint Elisabeth offered herself and her whole

family and all her house for the service of the Queen

of heaven. She asked Her to accept, as a quiet retreat,

the room which she herself was accustomed to use for

her prayers, and which was much retired and accom

modated to that purpose. The heavenly Princess ac

cepted the chamber with humble thanks, and made use

of it for recollecting Herself and sleeping therein, and

no one ever entered it, except the two cousins. As for

the rest She offered to serve and assist Elisabeth as a

handmaid, for She said, that this was the purpose of

visiting her and consoling her. O what friendship is

so true, so sweet and inseparable, as that which is

formed by the great bond of the divine love! How ad

mirable is the Lord in manifesting this great sacrament

of the Incarnation to three women before He would

make it known to any one else in the human race! For

the first was saint Anne, as I have said in its place; the

second one was her Daughter and the Mother of the

Word, most holy Mary; the third one was saint Elisa

beth, and conjointly with Her, her son, for he being yet

in the womb of his mother, cannot be considered as dis

tinct from her. Thus "the foolishness of God is wiser

than men," as saint Paul says.

227. The most holy Mary and Elisabeth came forth

from their retirement at nightfall, having passed a long

time together; and the Queen saw Zacharias standing

before Her in his muteness, and She asked him for his

blessing as from a priest of the Lord, which the saint

also gave to Her. Yet, although She tenderly pitied

him for his affliction, She did not exert her power to

cure him, because She knew the mysterious occasion of

his dumbness; yet She offered a prayer for him. Saint

Elisabeth, who already knew the good fortune of the

184 CITY OF GOD

most chaste spouse Joseph, although he himself as yet

was not aware of it, entertained and served him with

great reverence and highest esteem. After staying three

days in the house of Zacharias, however, he asked per

mission of his heavenly Spouse Mary to return to Naza

reth and leave Her in the company of saint Elisabeth

in order to assist her in her pregnancy. The holy hus

band left them with the understanding that he was to

return in order to accompany the Queen home as soon

as they should give him notice; saint Elisabeth offered

him some presents to take home with him ; but he would

take only a small part of them, yielding only to their

earnest solicitations, for this man of God was not only a

lover of poverty, but was possessed of a magnanimous

and noble heart. Therewith he pursued his way back to

Nazareth, taking along with him the little beast of bur

den, which they had brought with them. At home, in

the absence of his Spouse, he was served by a neigh

boring woman and cousin of his, who, also when most

holy Mary was at home, was wont to come and go on

the necessary errands outside of the house.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN AND LADY GAVE ME.

228. My daughter, in order that thy heart may be

ever more and more inflamed with the desire of gaining

the grace and friendship of God, I wish very much

that thou grow in the knowledge of the dignity, excel

lence and happiness of a soul, that has been endowed

with this privilege; however, remember that it is so ad

mirable and of so great a value that thou canst not com

prehend it, even if I would explain it to thee ; and much

less canst thou express it in words. Look upon the

Lord and contemplate Him by means of the divine light,

THE INCARNATION 185

which thou receivest, and then thou wilt understand that

the Lord performs a greater work in justifying a soul

than in having created all the orbs of heaven and the

whole earth with all the beauty and perfection contained

within them. And if on account of the wonders which

creatures are able in part to perceive in these works by

the senses, they are impressed with the greatness and

power of God, what would they say and think if they

could see with the eyes of their soul the preciousness and

beauty of grace in so many creatures, who are capable

of receiving them?

229. There are no terms of human language equal to

the task of expressing what participations and perfec

tions of God are contained in sanctifying grace. It is

little to say that it is more pure and spotless than the

snow; more refulgent than the sun; more precious than

gold or precious stones, more charming, more amiable

and pleasing than all the most delightful feasts and en

tertainments, and more beautiful than all that in its en

tirety can be imagined or desired by the creatures. Take

notice also of the ugliness of sin, in order that by the

opposite thou mayest come to so much the better under

standing of the beauty of grace; for neither darknesses,

nor rottenness, nor the most horrible, the most dreadful,

nor the foulest of creatures can ever be compared to sin

and to its ugliness. The martyrs and saints understood

much of this mystery (Heb. 11, 36), who in order to

secure the beauty of grace and preserve themselves

from the ruin of sin, did not fear fire, nor wild beasts,

nor the sword, nor torments, nor prisons, ignominies,

pains, afflictions, nor death itself, nor prolonged and per

petual suffering; for to escape all these must be counted

for little or nothing, and must scarcely be thought

of in comparison with one degree of grace, which souls

186 CITY OF GOD

may attain, even though they be the most abject of the

whole world. All this the men, who esteem and seek

after the fugitive and apparent beauty of creatures, are

ignorant of; and whatever does not present to them

this deceitful beauty, is for them vile and contemptible.

230. Thou perceivest therefore something of the

greatness of the blessing, which the incarnate Word con

ferred upon his Precursor in the womb of his mother;

and because saint John recognized it, he leaped for joy

and exultation in the womb of his mother. Thou wilt

also see what thou thyself must do and suffer in order

to attain this happiness, and in order not to lose, or in

the least impair this most precious beauty by any fault,

nor retard its consummation by any imperfection, no

matter how small. I wish that in imitation of my cousin

Elisabeth, thou do not enter into any friendship with

any human creatures, except those, with whom thou

canst and shouldst converse about the works of the Most

High and of his mysteries, and with whom thou canst

learn to pursue the true path of his divine pleasure. Al

though thou art engaged in important undertakings and

works, do not forget or omit thy spiritual exercises and

the strictness of a perfect life; for this must not only be

preserved and watched over, when all things go

smoothly, but also under the greatest adversity, diffi

culty and labor; for imperfect human nature takes oc

casion of the slightest circumstance to relax its vigilance.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOST HOLY MARY ARRANGES THE ORDER OF HER DAILY

EXERCISES IN THE HOUSE OF ZACH ARIAS; SOME IN

CIDENTS IN HER INTERCOURSE WITH SAINT ELISA

BETH.

231. When the Precursor John had been sanctified

and saint Elisabeth, his mother, had been endowed with

such great gifts and blessings, and when thus the princi

pal object of Mary s visit was fulfilled, the great Queen

proceeded to arrange her daily life in the house of Zach-

arias; for her occupations could not be uniformly the

same as those She was accustomed to in her own house.

In order to direct her desire by the guidance of the Holy

Ghost She retired and placed Herself in the presence of

the Most High, asking Him as usual to guide Her and

direct Her in that which She was to do during her stay

in the house of his servants Elisabeth and Zacharias; so

that She might in all things be pleasing to Him and

fulfill entirely his pleasure. The Lord heard Her peti

tion and answered Her saying: "My Spouse and my

Dove, I will direct all thy actions and I will direct thy

footsteps in the fulfillment of my service and pleasure,

and I will make known to thee the day on which I wish

thee to return to thy home. In the meanwhile remain

in the house of my servant Elisabeth and converse with

her. As for the rest, continue thy exercises and prayers,

especially for the salvation of men, and pray also, that I

withhold my justice in dealing with their incessant of

fenses against my bounty. Conjointly with thy prayers

thou shalt offer to Me the Lamb without spot (I Pet. 1,

187

188 CITY OF GOD

19) which thou bearest in thy womb and which takes

away the sins of the world (John 1, 291). Let these

now be thy occupations."

232. In conformity with this instruction and new

mandate of the Most High, the Princess of heaven or

dered all her occupations in the house of her cousin

Elisabeth. She rose up at midnight in accordance with

her former custom, spending the hours in the continued

contemplation of the divine mysteries and giving to wak

ing and sleep the time, which most perfectly and exactly

agreed with the natural state and conditions of her

body. In labor and repose She continued to receive new

favors, illuminations, exaltation and caresses of the

Lord. During these three months She had many visions

of the Divinity, mostly abstractive in kind. More fre

quent still were the visions of the most holy humanity

of the Word in its hypostatic union; for her virginal

womb, in which She bore Him, served Her as her con

tinual altar and sanctuary. She beheld the daily growth

of that sacred body. By this experience and by the

sacraments, which every day were made manifest to Her

in the boundless fields of the divine power and essence,

the spirit of this exalted Lady expanded to vast propor

tions. Many times would She have been consumed and

have died by the violence of her affections, if She had

not been strengthened by the power of the Lord. To

these occupations, which were concealed from all, She

added those, which the service and consolation of her

cousin Elisabeth demanded, although She did not apply

one moment more to them, than charity required. These

fulfilled, She turned immediately to her solitude and

recollection, where she could pour out the more freely

her spirit before the Lord.

233. Not less solicitous was She to occupy Herself in-

THE INCARNATION 189

teriorly, while She was engaged for many hours in man

ual occupations. And in all this the Precursor was so

fortunate that the great Queen, with her own hands,

sewed and prepared the swaddling clothes and coverlets

in which he was to be wrapped and reared; for his

mother Elisabeth, in her maternal solicitude and atten

tion, had secured for saint John this good fortune, hum

bly asking this favor of the heavenly Queen. Mary with

incredible love and subjection complied with her request

in order to exercise Herself in obedience to her cousin,

whom She wished to serve as the lowest handmaid; for

in humility and obedience most holy Mary always sur

passed all men. Although saint Elisabeth sought to

anticipate Her in much that belonged to her service,

yet, in her rare prudence and wisdom, Mary knew how

to forestall her cousin, always gaining the triumph of

humility.

234. In this regard a great and sweet competition

arose between the two cousins, which was very pleasing

to the Most High and wonderful in the sight of the

angels; for saint Elisabeth was very solicitous and at

tentive in serving our Lady and great Queen, and in

commanding also the same service to be rendered Her

by all the inmates of the house. But She, who was the

Teacher of virtues, most holy Mary, being still more

attentive and eager to serve, met and diverted the anxie

ties of her cousin, saying: "My dear cousin, I find my

consolation in being commanded and in obeying during

all my life; it is not good that thy love should deprive

me of the comfort I feel therein ; since I am the younger

one, it is proper that I serve not only thee, as my mother,

but all in thy house ; deal with me as with thy servant as

long as I am in thy company/ Saint Elisabeth an

swered: "My beloved Lady, it beseems much more that

2-14

190 CITY OF GOD

I obey Thee and that Thou command and direct me in

all things; and this I ask of thee with greater justice.

For if Thou, the Mistress, wishest to exercise humility,

I on my part owe worship and reverence to my God and

Lord, whom Thou bearest in thy virginal womb, and I

know that thy dignity is worthy of all honor and rev

erence." And the most prudent Virgin rejoined: "My

Son and Lord did not choose me for his Mother, in

order that I receive reverence as mistress; for his king

dom is not of this world (Joan 18, 36), nor did He

come into it in order to be served; but to serve (Matth.

20, 28), and to suffer, and to teach obedience and hu

mility to mortals (Matth. 11, 29), condemning fastidi

ousness and pride. Since therefore his Majesty teaches

me this and the Highest calls Himself the ignominy of

men (Ps. 21, 22), how can I, who am his slave and do

not merit the company of creatures, consent that thou

serve me, who art formed according to his image and

likeness?" (Gen. 1, 27).

235. Saint Elisabeth still insisted and said : "My Mis

tress and Protectress, this is true for those, who do not

know the sacrament which is enclosed in Thee. But I,

who have without merit been informed by the Lord, will

be very blamable in his eyes, if I do not give Him in

Thee the veneration which is due to Him as God, and

to Thee as his Mother; for it is just that I serve Both,

as a slave serves his masters." To this the most holy

Mary answered : "My dear sister, this reverence which

thou owest and desirest to give, is due to the Lord,

whom I bear within my womb, for He is the true and

highest Good and our Redeemer. But as far as I am

concerned, who am a mere creature and among creatures

only a poor worm, look upon me as I am in myself, al

though thou shouldst adore the Creator, who chose my

THE INCARNATION 191

poor self as his dwelling. By his divine enlightenment

thou shalt give unto God, what is due to Him, and allow

me to perform that which pertains to me, namely to

serve and to be below all. This I ask of Thee for my

consolation and in the name of the Lord, whom I bear

within me."

236. In such blessed and happy contentions most holy

Mary and her cousin Elisabeth passed some of their

time. But the divine prudence of our Queen caused in

Her such an alertness and ingenuity in matters concern

ing humility and obedience, that She never failed to find

means and ways of obeying and of being commanded.

However, during all the time in which She stayed with

saint Elisabeth, all this was done in such a way that

both according to their condition treated with the high

est respect the sacrament of the King which had been

entrusted to their knowledge, and which was deposited

in the most holy Mary. This high respect in Mary was

such as befitted the Mother and the Mistress of all vir

tue and grace, and in Elisabeth, such as was worthy of

the prudent matron, so highly enlightened by the holy

Spirit. By this light she wisely directed her behavior

in regard to the Mother of God, yielding to her wishes

and obeying Her in whatever she could, and at the same

time reverencing her dignity, and in it, her Creator. In

her inmost heart she made the intention that if she

were obliged to give any command to the Mother of

God, she would do it only in order to obey and satisfy

her wishes; and whenever she did it, she asked permis

sion and pardon of the Lord, at the same time never

ordering anything by direct command, but always by

request; and she would use greater earnestness only in

such things as were conducive to Mary s convenience, as

for instance, that She take some sleep or nourishment.

192 CITY OF GOD

She also asked Mary to make a few articles for her with

her own hands; Mary complied, but saint Elisabeth

never made use of them, except to preserve them with

the greatest veneration.

237. In this way most holy Mary put into practice

the doctrine of the eternal Word who humiliated Him

self so far, that, being the form of the eternal Father,

the figure of his substance, true God of the true God, He

nevertheless assumed the form and condition of a ser

vant (Heb. 1, 3, Philip 2, 6, 7). This Lady was the

Mother of God, Queen of all creation, superior in ex

cellence and dignity to all creatures, and yet She re

mained the humble servant of the least of them; and

never would She accept homage and service as if due to

Her, nor did She ever exalt Herself, or fail to judge of

Herself in the most humble manner. What shall we

now say of our most execrable presumption and pride?

Since, full of the abomination of sin, we are so sense

less as to claim for ourselves with dreadful insanity

the homage and veneration of all the world? And if

this is denied us, we quickly lose the little sense which

our passions have left us. This whole heavenly history

bears the stamp of humility, and is a condemnation of

our pride. And since it is not my office to teach or cor

rect, but to be taught and to be corrected, I beseech and

pray all the faithful children of light to place this ex

ample before their eyes for our humiliation.

238. It would not have been difficult for the Lord to

preserve his most holy Mother from such extreme low

liness and from the occasions in which She embraced it ;

He could have exalted Her before creatures, ordaining

that She be renowned, honored and respected by all;

just as He knew how to procure homage and renown

for others as Assuerus did for Mardocheus. Perhaps,

THE INCARNATION 193

if this had been left to the judgment of men, they would

have so managed that a Woman more holy than all the

hierarchies of heaven, and who bore in her womb the

Creator of the angels and of the heavens, should be sur

rounded by a continual guard of honor, withdrawn

from the gaze of men and receiving the homage of all

the world; it would have seemed to them unworthy of

Her to engage in humble and servile occupations, or

not to have all things done only at her command, or to

refuse homage, or not to exercise fullest authority. So

narrow is human wisdom, if that can be called wisdom,

which is so limited. But such fallacy cannot creep into

the true science of the saints, which is communicated to

them by the infinite wisdom of the Creator, and which

esteems at their just weight and price these honors with

out confounding the values of the creatures. The Most

High would have denied his beloved Mother much and

benefited Her little, if He had deprived and withdrawn

from Her the occasion of exercising the profoundest

humility and had instead exposed Her to the exterior

applause of men. It would also be a great loss to the

world to be without this school of humility and this ex

ample for the humiliation and confusion of its pride.

239. From the time of her receiving the Lord as her

Guest in her house, though yet in the womb of the Vir

gin Mother, the holy Elisabeth was much favored by

God. By the continued conversation and the familiar

intercourse with the heavenly Queen in proportion as

she grew in the knowledge and understanding of the

mysteries of the Incarnation, this great matron advanced

in all manner of sanctity, as one who draws it from its

very fountain. A few times She merited to see most

holy Mary during her prayers, ravished and raised from

the ground and altogether filled with divine splendor and

194 CITY OF GOD

beauty, so that she could not have looked upon her face,

nor remain alive in her presence, if she had not been

strengthened by divine power. On these occasions, and

at others whenever she could be witness of them without

attracting the attention of most holy Mary, she pros

trated herself and knelt in her presence, and adored the

incarnate Word in the virginal temple of the most holy

Mother. All the mysteries which became known to her

by the divine light and by the intercourse with the great

Queen, saint Elisabeth sealed up in her bosom, being a

most faithful depositary and prudent secretary of that

which was confided to her. Only with her son John

and with Zacharias, during the short time in which he

lived after the birth of his son, saint Elisabeth con

versed to some extent concerning those sacraments

which had become known to all. But in all this she acted

as a courageous, wise and very holy woman.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN MOST HOLY MARY

GAVE ME.

240. My daughter, the favors of the Most High and

the knowledge of his divine mysteries, in the attentive

souls, engender a kind of love and esteem of humility,

which raises them up with a strong and sweet force, like

that which causes fire to ascend, like the gravity which

causes a stone to fall, each of them striving to reach its

own and natural sphere. This is done by the true light,

which places the creature in the possession of a clear

knowledge of its own self and attributes the graces to

the proper source, whence all perfect things come (James

1, 17) ; and thus it brings all things into correct bal

ance. And this is the most proper order of right reason

which overthrows and as it were exerts violence against

THE INCARNATION 195

the false presumption of mortals. On account of this

presumption of pride the heart, wherein it lives, cannot

strive after contempt, nor bear it, nor can it suffer a su

perior over itself, and is offended even at equals; it

violently opposes all in order to place itself alone above

all fellow creatures. But the humble heart is abased

in proportion to the benefits it received, and in its in

terior quietly grows a desire or an ardent hunger for

self-abasement and for the last place ; it is violently dis

turbed in not finding itself esteemed as the inferior of

all and in being deprived of humiliation.

241. In me, my dearest, thou wilt find exhibited the

practical application of this doctrine ; since none of the

favors and blessings, which the right hand of the Most

High lavished upon me, were insignificant. Yet never

was my heart inflated with presumption above itself

(Ps. 110, 1), nor did it ever know anything else than to

desire to be abased and occupy the last place among all

creatures. The imitation of this I desire especially of

thee; let thy ambition be to take the last place, to live

in subjection to all others; abased and considered as

useless, in the presence of the Lord and of men, thou

must judge thyself as less than the dust of the earth

itself. Thou canst not deny, that in no generation has

any one been more favored than thou, and no one has

merited these favors less than thou. How then wilt thou

make any return for this great debt of gratitude if thou

dost not humiliate thyself below all others and more

than all the sons of Adam; and if thou dost not awaken

within thyself exalted and loving sentiments concerning

humility? It is good to obey the prelates and instruc

tors, therefore do it always. But I desire that thou

go much farther, and that thou obey the most insignifi

cant of thy fellow beings in all that is not sinful, and in

196 CITY OF GOD

such a way, as if thou wert obeying the highest of thy

superiors; and I desire that in this matter thou be very

earnest, as I was during my earthly life.

242. Thou must, however, be circumspect in regard

to the obedience to thy inferiors, so that they may not,

knowing of thy anxiousness to obey in all things, seek

to induce thee to obey in things unseemly and unbecom

ing. Thou canst do much good by giving them the

good and orderly example of obedience, without caus

ing them to lose any of their subjection and without

derogating from thy authority as their superioress. If

any disagreeable accident or injury should happen,

which affects thee alone, accept it gladly, without so

much as moving thy lips in self-defense, or making

any complaints. Whatever is an injury to God do thou

reprehend without mixing up any of thy own grievances

with those of his Majesty; for thou shouldst never find

any cause for self defense, but always be ready to defend

the honor of God. But neither in the one nor the other,

allow thyself to be moved by disorderly anger and pas

sion. I wish also, that thou use great prudence in hid

ing and concealing the favors of the Lord, for the sacra

ment of the King is not to be lightly manifested (Tob.

12, 7), nor are carnal men capable or worthy of the

mysteries of the Holy Ghost (I Cor. 2, 14). In all

things imitate and follow me, since thou wishest to be

my beloved daughter; this thou wilt attain by obeying

me and thou wilt induce the Almighty to strengthen

and direct thy footsteps to that which I desire to ac

complish in thee. Do not resist Him, but dispose and

prepare thy heart sweetly and quickly to obey his light

and grace. Let grace not be void in thee (II Cor. 6,

1), but labor diligently and let thy actions be performed

in all perfection.

CHAPTER XIX.

OF SOME CONVERSATIONS, WHICH MOST HOLY MARY

HELD WITH HER ANGELS IN THE HOUSE OF SAINT

ELISABETH, AND OF OTHERS, WHICH SHE HELD WITH

HER COUSIN.

243. The plenitude of the wisdom and grace of most

holy Mary, being 1 of such immense capacity, could not

remain idle at any point of time, nor in any place or

occasion. For it gave forth the plenitude of all perfec

tion, active at all times and seasons to the fullest extent of

duty and possibility, without ever falling short of the

holiest and the most excellent in virtue. And as in all

places She acted the part of a pilgrim on earth and of

an inhabitant of heaven, and as She herself was the in

tellectual and most glorious heaven, the living temple, in

which God himself had made his habitation ; so She also

carried with Her her own oratory and sanctuary and in

this respect there was for Her no difference between her

own house and that of her cousin saint Elisabeth, nor

could any other place, time or occupation be a hindrance

to Her in this regard. She was placed above all things

and without any outside claim She incessantly devoted

Herself to the influence of the love, which was contin

ually in her sight. Yet at the same time She conversed

with the creatures at opportune times and treated with

them according as occasion required, giving as much at

tention to them, as the most prudent Mistress could fit

tingly spare for each in particular. And as her most

frequent conversings during the three months, in which

197

198 CITY OF GOD

She remained in the house of Zacharias, were with saint

Elisabeth and with the holy angels of her guard, I shall

relate in this chapter something of that which formed

the subject of her conferences with them, and also men

tion other things, which happened in her intercourse

with the saint.

244. When She was left alone and free to Herself

our heavenly Princess passed many hours ravished and

elevated in divine contemplations and visions. Some

times during these trances, sometimes outside of them,

She was accustomed to converse with her angels about

the sacraments and mysteries of her interior love. One

day, soon after She had arrived at the house of Zacha

rias, She spoke to them in the following manner : "Heav

enly spirits, my guardians and companions, ambassadors

of the Most High and luminaries of his Divinity, come

and strengthen my heart, which is captured and wounded

by his divine love; for it is afflicted with its own limita

tions in that it cannot properly respond to the obliga

tions which are known to it and which dictate its de

sires. Come, ye supernal princes, and praise with me the

admirable name of the Lord and let us magnify his holy

judgments and operations. Help this poor little worm

to praise its Maker, who condescends kindly to look

upon its insignificance. Let us talk of the wonders of

my Spouse; let us discuss the beauty of my Lord, of

my beloved Son! let my heart find relief in uniting its

inmost aspirations to your own, my friends and com

panions; for you do know the secrets of my Treasure,

which the Lord has deposited within me in the narrow

ness of so fragile and constrained a vase. Great are

these sacraments and admirable these mysteries; and I

contemplate them with sweet affection, but their su

pernal greatness overwhelms me, the profundity and the

THE INCARNATION 199

greatness of my love overpowers me even while they

inflame my heart. In the ardor of my soul I cannot rest

satisfied and I find no repose ; for my desires surpass all

that I can accomplish and my obligations are greater

than my desires ; I am dissatisfied with myself, because

I do not exert myself as much as I desire, because I do

not desire to accomplish as much as I should, and be

cause I find myself continually falling short and van

quished by the greatness of the returns which are due.

Ye heavenly seraphim, listen to my loving anxieties; I

am fallen sick with love (Cant. 2, 5). Open to me

your bosoms, whence the beauty of my God is flashed

forth, in order that the splendors of his light and the

visions of his loveliness may replenish the life, which

wastes away in his love."

245. "Mother of our Creator and our Mistress," an

swered the holy angels, "Thou possessest truly the Al

mighty and our highest Good. Since Thou hast Him so

closely bound to Thee and art his true Spouse and

Mother, rejoice in Him and keep Him with Thee for

all eternity. Thou art the Spouse and the Mother of

the God of love, and as in Thee is the only cause and

fountain of life, no one shall live with Him as Thou,

our Queen and Mistress. But do not seek to find re

pose in a love so inflamed; for thy state and condition

of a pilgrim do not permit thy love to attain the repose

of perfect consummation, nor will it cease to aspire to

new and greater increase of merit and triumph. Thy

obligations surpass without comparison those of all the

nations; but they are to increase and grow continually;

never will thy so vastly inflamed love equal its Object,

since It is eternal and infinite and without measure in

its perfection; Thou shalt always be happily vanquished

by its greatness ; for no one can comprehend It ; only He

200 CITY OF GOD

himself comprehends Himself and loves Himself in the

measure, in which He deserves to be loved. Eternally,

O Lady, shalt Thou find in Him more to desire and

more to love, since that is required by the essence of his

greatness and of our beatitude."

246. In these colloquies and conferences the fire of di

vine love was more and more enkindled in the heart of

most holy Mary; in Her was exactly fulfilled the com

mand of the Lord (Levit. 6, 12), that in his tabernacle

and on his altar should burn continually the fire of the

holocaust and that the priest of the ancient law should

see to its perpetual nourishment and maintenance. This

precept was executed to the letter in the most holy Mary,

for in Her were jointly contained the altar and the new

Highpriest, Christ our Lord, who nourished and aug

mented its flame day by day, by administering new ma

terial in favors, blessings, graces and communications

of his Divinity; while the exalted Lady on her part,

contributed her ceaseless exertions, which were ineffably

enhanced in value by the continual flow of the graces

and sanctity of the Lord. From the moment in which

this Lady entered into the world, this conflagration of

his divine love took its rise, in order never to be extin

guished on this altar through all the eternities of God

himself. For as lasting as this eternity and as contin

uous was and will be the fire of this living sanctuary.

247. At other times She spoke and conversed with the

holy angels, when they appeared to Her in human forms,

as I have said in several places. Most frequently this con

versation turned about the mystery of the incarnate

Word ; and in this She manifested so profound a knowl

edge in citing the holy Scriptures and the Prophets

that She caused wonder even in the angels. On one oc

casion in speaking to them of these venerable sacra-

THE INCARNATION 201

ments, She said : "My lords, servants of the Most High

and his friends, my heart is pierced and torn by arrows

of grief, when I meditate on what the sacred Scriptures

say of my most holy Son or what Isaias and Jeremias

wrote (Gen. 22, 2; Isai. 33, 2; Jerem. 11, 18) concern

ing the most bitter pains and torments in store for Him.

Solomon says (Wis. 2, 20), that they shall condemn

Him to a most ignominous death and the Prophets al

ways speak in weighty and superlative terms of his Pas

sion and Death, which all are to be fulfilled in Him. O

were it the will of his Majesty that I live at that time in

order to offer myself to die instead of the Author of my

life! My soul is sorely afflicted in the consideration of

these infallible truths and that my God and my Lord

should come forth from my womb only in order to suf

fer. O who will guard Him and defend Him against

his enemies! O tell me, ye heavenly princes, by what

services or by what means can I induce the eternal Fa

ther to divert the rigor of his justice upon me, in order

that the Innocent, who cannot have any guilt upon Him,

may be freed from punishment? Well do I know that

in order to satisfy the infinite God for the offenses of

men, the satisfaction of the incarnate God is required;

but by his first act my most holy Son has merited more

than all the human race can lose or demerit by its of

fenses. Since this is sufficient, tell me, is it not possible

that I die in order to relieve Him from his death and

torments? My humble desires will not be annoying to

my God, and my anxieties will not be displeasing to

Him. Yet, what am I saying? and to what lengths do

sorrow and love drive me, since I must be subject in

all things to the divine will and its perfect fulfillment?"

248. Such and like colloquy the most holy Mary held

with her angels, especially during the time of her preg-

#

202 CITY OF GOD

nancy. The holy spirits met all her anxieties and com

forted her with great reverence, consoling Her by re

newing the memory of the very sacraments, which She

already knew and by reminding Her of the reasonable

ness and propriety of the death of Christ for the salva

tion of the human race, for the conquest of the demons

and spoliation of their power, for the glory of the

eternal Father and the exaltation of the most holy and

highest Lord his Son (Tim. 2, 14). So great and ex

alted were the mysteries touched upon in these dis

courses of the Queen with the holy angels, that neither

can the human tongue describe, nor our capacity compre

hend them in this life. When we shall enjoy the Lord

we shall see what we cannot at present conceive. From

this little which I have said, our piety can help us to

draw conclusions in regard to others much greater.

249. Saint Elisabeth was likewise much versed and

enlightened in the divine Scriptures, and much more so

since the Visitation; and therefore our Queen conversed

with Her concerning these heavenly mysteries, which

were known and understood by the matron, instructing

and enlightening her by heavenly teachings; for through

her intercession Elisabeth was enriched with many bless

ings and gifts of heaven. Many times she wondered

at the profound wisdom of the Mother of God, and

blessed Her over and over again, saying: "Blessed art

Thou, my Mistress and Mother of my Lord, among all

womankind (Luke 1, 42) ; and may the nations know

and magnify thy dignity. Most fortunate art Thou on

account of the rich Treasure, which Thou bearest in

thy virginal womb. I tender to Thee my humble and

most affectionate congratulations for the joy with which

thy spirit shall be filled, when Thou shalt hold in thy

arms the Son of justice and nurse Him at thy virginal

THE INCARNATION 203

breasts. Remember me thy servant, O Lady, in that

hour and offer my heart in sacrifice to thy most holy

Son, my true and incarnate God. O who shall merit to

serve Thee from now on and attend upon Thee! But if

I am unworthy of this good fortune, may I enjoy that

of being borne in thy heart; for I fear (not without

cause) that mine will be torn asunder, when I must part

from Thee." Many other sentiments of sweetest and

most tender love saint Elisabeth uttered in her personal

intercourse with the most holy Mary ; and the most pru

dent Lady consoled her, strengthened and enlivened her

by her divinely efficacious reasonings. These so exalted

and heavenly dealings of Mary were diversified by many

other acts of humility and self-abasement in serving not

only her cousin Elisabeth, but also the servants of her

house. Whenever She could find an occasion, She

swept the house of her relative, and always her oratory

at regular times; and with the servants She washed the

dishes, and performed other acts of profound humility.

Let no one think it strange that I particularize in these

small matters; for the greatness of our Queen has made

them of importance for our instruction and in order that

knowing of them, our pride may vanish and our vile-

ness may come to shame. When saint Elisabeth learnt

of the humble services, performed by the Mother of

piety, She was deeply moved and tried to prevent them;

and therefore the heavenly Lady concealed them from

her cousin wherever it was possible.

250. O Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth, my

Protectress and Advocate, although Thou art the

Teacher of all sanctity and perfection, lost in astonish

ment at thy humility, I dare, O my Mother, to ask Thee :

how was it possible that, knowing of the Onlybegotten

of the Father within thy virginal womb, and wishing in

204 CITY OF GOD

all things to conduct Thyself as his Mother, thy great

ness should abase itself to such lowliness, as sweeping

the floor and similar occupations ; since, according to our

notions, Thou couldst, on account of the reverence due

co thy most holy Son, easily have excused Thyself with

out failing against the duties of thy most perfect Moth

erhood. My desire is, O Lady, to understand how thy

Majesty was governed in this matter.

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

251. My daughter, in order to solve thy difficulty

more explicitly than as already noted down in the fore

going chapter, thou must remember that no occupation

or exterior act pertaining to virtue, no matter how lowly

it may be, can, if it is well-ordered, impede the worship,

reverence and exaltation of the Creator of all things ; for

these acts of ^virtue do not exclude one another ; but they

are all compatible with one another in the creature, and

much more in me, who lived in the continual presence of

the highest Good without ever losing It out of sight by

exterior activity. I adored and remembered God in all

my actions, referring them all to his greater glory; and

the Lord himself, who orders and creates all things, de

spises none of them, nor is He offended, or irritated by

their smallness. The soul that loves Him, is not dis

concerted by any of these little things in his divine pres

ence; for it seeks and finds Him as the beginning and

the end of all creatures. And because terrestrial crea

tures cannot exist without these humble performances

and without others that are inseparable from our lowly

condition and the preservation of our nature, it is neces

sary to understand this doctrine well, in order that we

may be governed by it. For if we engage in these

THE INCARNATION 205

thoughts and occupations without reference to their Cre

ator, they will cause many and great interruptions in the

practice of virtue and in our merits, as well as in the

right use of interior advantages. Our whole life will be

blameworthy and full of reprehensible defects, little re

moved from the earthliness of creatures.

252. According to this doctrine thou must so regu

late thy terrestrial occupations, whatever they may be,

that thou do not lose thy -time, which can never be re

covered. Whether thou eat, labor, rest, sleep, or watch,

in all times and places, and in all occupations, adore,

reverence and look upon thy great and powerful Lord,

who fills all things and conserves all things (I Cor. 10,

3; Matth. 11, 29). I wish also that thou pay special

attention to that which moved and incited me most to

perform all acts of humility; namely, the thought that

my divine Son came in the guise of humility in order

to teach the world this virtue in word and example, to

inculcate the hate of vanity and pride and rooting out

its seed sown by Lucifer among mortals in the first sin.

His Majesty gave me such a deep knowledge of how

much He is pleased with this virtue, that in order to be

allowed to perform only one of the acts mentioned by

thee, such as sweeping the floor or kissing the feet of

the poor, I would have been ready to suffer the greatest

torments of the world. Thou wilt never find words to

express the love for humility which I had, nor to de

scribe its excellence and nobility. In the Lord thou

wilt know and understand what thou canst not describe

in words.

253. But write this doctrine in thy heart and observe

it as the rule of thy life; continue to exercise thyself in

the contempt of all things belonging to human vanity,

and esteem them as odious and execrable in the eyes of

2-15

JOc CITY OF GOD

the Most High. But in connection with this humility of

thy life, let thy thoughts always be of the noblest and

thy conversation in heaven and with the angelic spirits

(Philip 3, 20) ; deal with them and converse with them

in order to obtain new light concerning the Divinity and

the mysteries of Christ my most holy Son. With crea

tures let thy intercourse be such as will continually in

crease thy fervor and serve thee as means of advancing

and profiting by means of humility and divine love. In

thy own mind assume the lowest place beneath all crea

tures, so that when the occasion and the time of exer

cising the acts of humility arrive, thou mayest be found

prompt and willing to exercise them. Only then wilt

thou be the mistress of the passions, if first thou hast

acknowledged thyself in thy heart as the least and weak

est and most useless of all the creatures.

CHAPTER XX.

SOME SPECIAL FAVORS WHICH MOST HOLY MARY CON

FERRED UPON SEVERAL PERSONS IN THE HOUSE OF

Z AC H ARIAS,

254. It is a well known quality of love to be active as

the fire in works of kindness, wherever it finds occasion ;

and this is especially true of the fire of spiritual love;

for it will reach out in search of material, as soon as this

falls short The Master has taught lovers of God so

many ways and methods of pursuing virtue, that there

is no need of remaining idle. And as love is not blind

nor insane, it knows well the qualities of the noble ob

ject it aims at. Its only concern is that not all men love

it properly; and thus it seeks to communicate this love

without strife or envy. We know that the love of all

the other saints, though most fervent and holy, appears

limited in comparison with that of most holy Man\*.

Yet if their love is admirable and powerful, inciting them

to vast works of zeal for souls, what immense works

then must not the love this great Queen have accom

plished for the benefit of her fellowmen, since She was

the Mother of the divine love (Eccli. 24, 24), and since

She carried with her the true and living fire that was to

enkindle the world ? ( Luke 12, 49) . Let all the mortals

learn from this heavenly history how much they owe to

the love of this Lady. Although it will be impossible to

notice all the particular instances of the benefits con

ferred on the souls by Her, nevertheless, in order that

from some of them, many more may be inferred, I will

207

208 CITY OF GOD

relate a few that our Queen conferred while in the

house of her cousin Elisabeth.

255. One of the servants in that house was of per

verse inclination, restless, subject to anger, and accus

tomed to swear and curse. With all these vices and dis

orders, she still knew how to make herself agreeable to

her masters, but at the same time she was so given over

to the power of the demon that this tyrant could easily

induce her to throw herself into all sorts of miseries

and mistakes. For fourteen years many devils sur

rounded and accompanied her without intermission in

order to make certain the capture of her soul. Only

when this woman came into the presence of the Mis

tress of heaven, most holy Mary, these enemies with

drew; for, as I have said in other places, the virtue issu

ing from our Queen tormented them, and especially dur

ing that time when She carried within her virginal re

pository the powerful God and Lord of all virtues. As

on the one hand this woman was freed from her cruel

exactors, being released from the evil influences of their

company, and as on the other hand she experienced

within her the beneficial effects of the sweet vision and

intercourse of the Queen, she began to be much at

tracted and moved toward Mary and she sought to be

in her presence and offered to serve Her with much af

fection, striving to pass all the time possible with Her

and watching Her with reverence; for among her

distorted inclinations she had also a good one, which

was a natural kindness and compassion for the needy

and the humble, so that she was naturally drawn to

ward them and ready to do them good.

256. The heavenly Princess, who saw and knew all

the inclinations of this woman, the state of her con

science, the danger of her soul and the malice of the

THE INCARNATION 209

demons against her, turned upon her an eye of mercy

and watched her with the love of a mother. Although

her Majesty knew that the company and the interference

of the demons was a just punishment for the sins of this

woman, yet She interceded for her and obtained for her

pardon, remedy and salvation. She commanded the de

mons, in virtue of the authority conceded to Her, to

leave this creature and not dare to disturb her or molest

her thenceforth. As they could not resist the sway of our

great Queen, they yielded and fled in highest consterna

tion, not knowing how to account for such power of

the most holy Mary. They conferred about it in as

tonishment and indignation, saying: "Who is this

Woman, that exerts such dominion over us? Whence

does such strange power come, which enables Her to

perform all that She wishes?" The demons therefore

conceived new wrath and indignation against Her, who

had crushed their heads (Gen. 3, 15). The happy

woman, however, was snatched from their claws. Mary

admonished her, corrected her, and taught her the way

of salvation, and changed her into a woman of kind

and meek disposition. She persevered therein during all

her life, being well aware, that all this had come to

her through the hands of our Queen ; although she did

not know nor penetrate into the mystery of her dignity,

she remained humbly thankful and lived a holy life.

257. Not in a better state than this servant was an

other woman living in the neighborhood of the house

of Zacharias, who as a neighbor was wont to come and

listen to the conversation of the family of saint Elisa

beth. She lived a licentious life, far from honorable,

and when she heard of the arrival of our great Queen

in that town, of her modesty and retirement, she spoke

of Her lightly and with some curiosity: "Who is

210 CITY OF GOD

Stranger, that has come as a guest of our neighbors,

and who gives Herself such holy and recollected airs?"

In the vain and inquisitive desire of spying out novelty,

as is customary with such kind of people, she managed

to get sight of the heavenly Lady and scrutinized her

dress and her countenance. Her intention was imperti

nent and presumptuous ; but far different the effect : for

having succeeded in scrutinizing most holy Mary, she

teft with a wounded heart : the presence and the sight

of the Queen transformed her into a new woman. Her

inclinations were altogether changed, and without know

ing by what efficacious influence the change came about,

she felt its power and began to shed abundant floods

of tears in deepfelt sorrow for her sins. Merely on ac

count of having fixed her attentive gaze . in curiosity

upon the Mother of virginal purity, this happy woman

received in return the love of chastity and was freed

from the sensual habits and inclinations of her former

life. In that very hour she sorrowfully retired to weep

over her wicked life. Whenever later on she desired

to converse with the Mother of grace, her Highness,

in order to confirm her, permitted it. For as Mary knew

what had happened and as She bore within Her the

origin of grace, the Sanctifier and Justifier by whose

power She fulfilled her office of Advocate of sinners

She received her with maternal kindness, admonished

and instructed her in virtue, dismissing her strengthened

and confirmed for perseverence in her new life.

258. In this manner our great Lady performed many

works and caused many admirable conversions in a great

number of souls; although it was done in silence and

hidden to all. The whole family of saint Elisabeth and

Zacharias were sanctified by her intercourse and conver-

THE INCARNATION 211

sation. Those who were just, experienced new increase

of gifts and favors; those that were not, She justified

and enlightened by her intercession; all of them were

captured by reverential love of Her so completely, that

each one strove to obey Her and acknowledge Her as

mother, as protectress and as a consolation in all their

necessities. The mere privilege of seeing Her, without

any words, was sufficient to produce all these effects;

yet She was careful not to omit whatever seemed neces

sary to obtain this end. As She penetrated the secrets

of all hearts and knew the state of each one s conscience,

She knew how to apply the opportune medicine. Some

times, not always, the Lord manifested to Her the final

end of those She met : informing Her, which were

chosen and which were reprobate, predestined for hap

piness or foreknown as damned. At sight of both one

and the other her heart broke forth in admirable flashes

of most perfect virtue : for when She knew of any that

were just and predestined, She bestowed upon them

many blessings, which She also does now in heaven,

and the Lord looked with favor upon her beneficence.

Exerting incredible and prayerful diligence She asked

Him to preserve them in his grace and friendship. When

ever She saw any one in sin, She asked from the bot

tom of her heart for his justification and ordinarily

She also obtained it. But if it happened to be one of

the reprobate, She wept bitterly and humiliated Herself

in the presence of the Most High for the loss of that

image and work of the Divinity ; She redoubled her heart

felt prayers, offerings and humiliations in order that no

others might damn themselves, and her whole being was

one flame of divine love, which never rested nor re

posed in accomplishing great things.

212 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY QUEEN AND

LADY GAVE ME.

259. My dearest daughter, within two limits, as if

within two extremes, all the harmony of thy powers and

wishes must move. They are : to preserve thyself in the

grace and friendship of God, and to seek the same good

fortune for others. In this let all thy life and activity be

consumed. For such high purpose I wish that thou spare

no labor, beseeching the Lord and offering thyself in

sacrifice unto death, accepting actually all that is op

portune and possible. Although, in order to solicit the

good of souls, thou need not make any great ado before

creatures, since that is not appropriate to thy sex; yet

thou must seek and prudently apply all the hidden means,

that are most efficacious within thy knowledge. If thou

wilt be my daughter and a spouse of my most holy

Son, consider that the possessions of our house are the

rational creatures, which He acquired as a rich prize at

the cost of his life (I Cor. 6, 20) and of his blood; for

through their own disobedience they were lost to Him

(Gen. 3, 6), after He had created and selected them

for Himself.

260. Hence whenever the Lord sends to thee, or

throws in thy way, a needy soul and makes thee aware

of its state, labor faithfully to assist it. Pray and weep

with heartfelt and fervent love, that God may furnish

the remedy for such great and dangerous evil, and do

not neglect any means, divine or human, as far as thou

art concerned, in order to obtain the salvation of eternal

life for the soul entrusted to thee. By means of the

prudence and moderation which I have taught thee, thou

must not grow weary in admonishing, nor in praying

for that which will benefit that soul; and in all secrecy

THE INCARNATION 213

continue thy labor in its behalf. Likewise I wish, that

whenever it is necessary, thou command the demons in

the powerful name of the Almighty and my own, to

depart and leave in peace the souls oppressed by them;

and as all this is to be done in secret, thou canst in all

propriety animate and encourage thyself to this kind of

work. Remember that the Lord has placed thee, and

will place thee in a position to exercise this doctrine. Do

not forget it, nor fail in understanding, how much thou

art bounden to his Majesty to use care and solicitude in

extending the possessions of thy Father s house. Do not

rest until thou accustom thyself to do this with all dili

gence (Phil. 4, 13). Fear not, for thou canst do all in

Him that strengthens thee ; and his power will strengthen

thy arm to do great things (Prov. 31, 27).

CHAPTER XXI.

SAINT ELISABETH ASKS THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN TO AS

SIST AT HER CONFINEMENT AND IS ENLIGHTENED CON

CERNING THE BIRTH OF JOHN.

261. Already two months had passed since the coming

of the Princess of heaven into the house of holy Elisa

beth ; and the discreet matron was even now filled with

grief at the thought of the departure and of the absence

of the Mistress of the world. She dreaded the loss of

so great a blessing as her presence was, and with reason,

since she knew, that it could not come within the range

of human merits; in her holy humility she scrutinized

her heart, fearing lest any fault of hers might be the

cause of the setting of that beautiful moon and of the

Sun of justice within the virginal Womb. Sometimes

She wept and sighed in private, because she could find

no means of prolonging their stay, which had shed much

clear light of grace in her soul. She asked the Lord

with many tears to inspire her Cousin, the most holy

Lady Mary, not to forsake her ; at least, not to withdraw

so soon her sweet company. She served Her with great

reverence and solicitude and studied to oblige Her. It is

no wonder, that so saintly, attentive and prudent a woman

should ask for that which even the angels coveted. For

in addition to the divine light, which she had received

from the Holy Ghost concerning the supreme dignity

and sanctity of the Virgin Mother, she had the personal

experience of her most sweet intercourse and conversa

tion, and all this combined had ravished her heart, so that

214

THE INCARNATION 215

without divine aid, she could not have survived the part

ing, after once having known and conversed with the

blessed Lady.

262. In order to find some consolation, saint Elisa

beth resolved to open her heart to the heavenly Lady,

who was, however, not ignorant of her sorrow; and she

said to Her in great submission and humility : "Cousin,

dear Lady, on account of the respect and consideration,

with which I am bound to serve Thee, I have not until

now dared to speak of my desire and of the sorrow in

my heart; give me now the permission to relieve it by

making them known. The Lord has condescended in

his mercy to send Thee hither, in order that I might have

the unmerited blessing of conversing with Thee and of

knowing the mysteries, which his divine Providence has

entrusted to Thee, my Mistress. Unworthy I am to

praise Him eternally for this favor (Dan. 3, 53). Thou

art the living temple of his glory, the ark of the Testa

ment, containing the Manna, which is the food of the

angels (Heb. 9, 4). Thou art the tablet of the true

law, written in his own Being (Ps. 77, 25). I appreciate

in my lowliness how rich his Majesty has made me, that

without my merit I should entertain in my own house

the Treasure of heaven and Her, whom He has chosen

as his Mother among all women. I justly fear that I

displease Thee and the Fruit of thy womb by my sins,

and that therefore thou wilt forsake thy slave, with

drawing the great blessing, which I now enjoy. Pos

sibly, if it be thy pleasure, I might have the happiness

of serving Thee and remaining with Thee all the rest

of my life. If it is a hardship for Thee to return to thy

dwelling, it will be most convenient for Thee to stay in

my house. If Thou wilt call thy holy spouse Joseph and

live with him here as my masters, I will serve you with

216 CITY OF GOD

affectionate readiness of heart. Although I do not merit

what I ask, I beseech Thee not to despise my humble

petition, since the Lord can surpass by his mercies all

my merits and desires."

263. The most holy Mary heard with sweetest com

placency the petition of her cousin Elisabeth and an

swered her : "Dearest friend of my soul, thy holy wishes

are acceptable in the eyes of the Most High. I also

thank thee from my heart; but in all our undertakings

and resolves it is necessary that we conform to the divine

will and entirely subject ourselves to it. Although this

is the duty of all creatures, thou knowest, that it is my

duty before all others, since by the power of his arm He

has raised me from the dust and in boundless love has

looked upon me (Luke 1, 53). All my words and move

ments must be guided by the divine will of my Lord and

Son and I must not desire anything except what is ac

cording to his pleasure. Let us present to his Majesty

thy desires, and whatever He in his goodness shall or

dain, that let us execute. I must also obey my spouse

Joseph, for without his order and consent, I can neither

decide upon my occupations, nor upon my dwelling-

place; it is just, my dearest, that we obey our superiors."

264. Saint Elisabeth yielded to the persuasive words

of the Princess of heaven and answered with humble

submission : "My Lady, I am ready to obey thy will

and revere thy teaching. I wish only once more to com

mend to Thee my sincere affection and heartfelt devo

tion to thy service. If my wishes cannot be fulfilled and

are contrary to the will of God, I desire at least, if pos

sible, that Thou, my Queen, do not forsake me until my

son shall come forth to the light; in order that, just as

within my womb he has adored and recognized his Re

deemer in thy own, so he may enjoy his divine presence

THE INCARNATION 217

and enlightenment before any other creature; and that

he may receive thy blessing for the first advances in life

(Prov. 16, 9) by the presence of Him, who is to direct

his footsteps. And do Thou, the Mother of grace, pre

sent Him to the Creator and obtain from his goodness

the perseverance in that grace, which he received at

the sound of thy sweetest voice, when it came to my

unworthy ears. Let me behold my child in thy arms,

where the God, who made and preserves heaven and

earth, is likewise to rest (Is. 42, 5). Let not thy mater

nal kindness be strained or diminished by my sins ; deny

not this consolation to me, nor to my son this great hap

piness, which as a mother I ask and unworthily desire

for him."

265. Most holy Mary did not wish to refuse and She

promised to pray the Lord for the fulfillment of this

request of her cousin, asking her at the same time to

unite her prayers with hers in order to knov Ms most

holy will. Accordingly the two mothers of the two most

holy Sons born into the world betook themselves to the

oratory of the heavenly Princess and presented their peti

tions to the Most High. Most pure Mary fell into an

ecstasy, wherein She was enlightened anew concerning

the mysterious life and the dignity of the Precursor and

concerning his work in preparing the hearts of men for

the reception of their Redeemer and Teacher, and She

made known to saint Elisabeth these sacraments in as

far as it was proper. She was informed of the great

sanctity of her saintly cousin, also, that she had only

a short while to live and that Zacharias would die before

her. The kind Mother lovingly besought -the Lord to

assist her at her death and to fulfill her wishes in regard

to her son. In regard to the other fond desires, the most

prudent Virgin made no request, for in her heavenly wis-

218 CITY OF GOD

dorn She immediately saw, that to live always in the

house of her cousin was not advisable, nor according to

the will of the Most High.

266. To these petitions his Majesty answered: "My

Spouse and my Dove, it is my pleasure that thou assist

and console my servant Elisabeth at her childbirth, which

is to be very soon; for there are only eight days left

before that event. After her son shall be circumcised,

thou shalt return to thy home with thy spouse Joseph.

After his birth thou shalt offer to Me my servant John

in pleasing sacrifice; and continue, my Beloved, to pray

to Me for the salvation of souls." Saint Elisabeth united

her prayers with those of the Queen of heaven and earth,

beseeching the Lord to command his Mother and Spouse

not to forsake her during her confinement. During this

prayer the Lord revealed to her, that her confinement

was close at hand, and informed her also of many other

things for her relief and consolation in her anxiety.

267. Most holy Mary issued from her trance and, hav

ing finished their prayer, the two mothers conferred upon

the nearness of the confinement of saint Elisabeth as made

known to them by the Lord; and anxious to make sure

of her good fortune, the holy matron asked our Queen :

"My Lady, pray tell me, whether I shall have the hap

piness of thy assistance at my impending confinement?"

Her majesty answered: "My beloved cousin, the Most

High has heard our prayers and deigned to command

me to assist on that occasion. This I will do, not only

remaining till then, but also until the circumcision of thy

child, which will take place in fifteen days." At this

resolve of the most holy Mary the joy of her cousin

was renewed; she acknowledged this great favor in

humble thankfulness to the Lord and to the holy Queen.

THE INCARNATION 219

Thus rejoiced and enlivened by mutual conferences, the

holy matron began to prepare for the birth of her son

and for the departure of her exalted Cousin.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE HEAVENLY QUEEN

AND LADY MARY.

268. My daughter, whenever our desires arise from

loving affection and are accompanied by a good inten

tion, the Most High is not offended at our making them

known, as long as it is done with submission and resigna

tion to the dispositions of his divine Providence. When

the soul presents itself before the Lord with such senti

ments, He looks upon it as a Father and grants to it

what is proper, withholds what is improper or does not

conduce to its true welfare. The desire of my cousin

to remain with me all her life arose from a pious and

praiseworthy zeal; but it was not in harmony with the

plans of the Most High, by which He had already ar

ranged the conduct, travels and events of my life. Though

the Lord denied her this request He was not displeased,

but granted her whatever would not hinder the decrees

of his infinite wisdom and whatever would benefit her

or her son John. On account of the love shown toward

me by the mother and son, and on account of my inter

cession, the Almighty enriched them with many blessings

and favors. For to ask Him with upright intention

and through my mediation, is always the most efficacious

means of moving his Majesty.

269. I wish that thou offer up all thy petitions and

prayers in the name of my most holy Son and my own ;

and be assured without doubt, that they will be heard, if

they are joined with the upright intention of pleasing

God. Look upon me with loving affection as thy Mother,

220 CITY OF GOD

thy refuge and thy help; trust thyself to my devoted

love, and remember, my dearest, that my desire for thy

greater good urges me to teach thee the means of ob

taining great blessings and favors of divine grace at

the most liberal hands of God. Do not make thyself

unfit for them, nor hinder them by thy timidity. And

if thou wishest to induce me to love thee as my much-

beloved daughter, rouse thyself to a fulfillment of what

I tell thee and manifest to thee. Toward this direct thy

careful efforts, resting satisfied only when thou hast

labored hard to put my teachings into practice.

CHAPTER XXII.

BIRTH OF THE PRECURSOR OF CHRIST AND WHAT THE

LADY MARY DID ON THIS OCCASION.

270. The hour for the rising of the morning star,

which was to precede the clear Sun of justice and an

nounce the wished-for day of the law of grace, had ar

rived (John 5, 35). The time was suitable to the Most

High for the appearance of his Prophet in the world;

and greater than a prophet was John, who pointing out

with his finger the Lamb (John 1, 29), was to prepare

mankind for the salvation and sanctification of the world.

Before issuing from the maternal womb the Lord re

vealed to the blessed child the hour in which he was to

commence his mortal career among men. The child had

the perfect use of his reason, and of the divine science

infused by the presence of the incarnate Word. He

therefore knew that he was to arrive at the port of

a cursed and dangerous land, and to walk upon a world

full of evils and snares, where many are overtaken by

ruin and perdition.

271. On this account the great child was as it were

in a state of suspense and doubt: for on the one hand,

nature having nourished his body to that state of perfec

tion, which is proper to birth, he recognized and felt, in

addition to the express will of God, the compelling forces

of nature which urged him to leave the retreat of the

maternal womb. On the other hand he contemplated

the dangerous risks of mortal life. Thus he hesitated

between the fear of danger and the desire to obey. And

2-16 221

222 CITY OF GOD

he debated within himself : "If I meet this danger of

losing God, whither shall it lead me? How can I safely

converse with men, of whom so many are enveloped in

darkness and wander from the path of life ? I am in the

obscurity of my mother s womb, but I must leave it for

a more dangerous darkness. I was imprisoned here,

since I received the light of reason; but more must I

dread the unrestrained freedom of mortals. But let me,

O Lord, fulfill thy will and enter the world; for to exe

cute it is always best. To know that my life and my

faculties shall be consumed in thy service, highest King,

will make it easier for me to come forth to the light and

begin life. Bestow, O Lord, thy blessing for my passage

into the world."

272. By this prayer the Precursor of Christ merited

new graces and blessings at his birth. The fortunate

child knew by the indwelling of God in his mind, that

he was sent to perform great things and was assured of

the necessary help. Before describing this most happy

birth, I will try to explain the scriptural dates concerning

it. It must be remembered, that the miraculous preg

nancy of saint Elisabeth lasted nine days less than nine

months. For on account of the fecundity miraculously

restored to a barren woman, the fruit conceived matured

for parturition in this shorter time. When the angel

Gabriel announced to most holy Mary, that her cousin

was in the sixth month of her pregnancy, it must be un

derstood to mean, that eight or nine days were still

wanting for the completion of the sixth month. I have

also said in chapter sixteen that the heavenly Lady de

parted on the fourth day after the incarnation of the

Word for her visit to saint Elisabeth. Saint Luke does

not say, that most holy Mary departed immediately, but

"in those days," and though She went "in haste," yet

THE INCARNATION 223

she consumed four days on her journey, as said in the

same chapter (No. 207).

273. I likewise reminded the reader, that when the

Evangelist says, that holy Mary remained about three

months in the house of saint Elisabeth, there were only

two or three days missing; for in all respects the Evan

gelist was exact in his words. Accordingly most holy

Mary, our Lady, was present not only at the confine

ment of saint Elisabeth and at the birth of John, but

also at the naming and circumcision of saint John, as I

will now show. Counting eight days after the incarna

tion of the Word, our Lady arrived at the house of

Elisabeth on the evening of the second of April, if we

reckon according to our solar months; adding thereto

three months less two days, we have the first of July, the

eighth day of the birth of saint John, and early next

day most holy Mary departed on her return to Nazareth.

Saint Luke mentions the return of our Queen before he

speaks of the birth of saint John, although this happened

before She returned. The sacred text anticipates the

mention of the journey, in order to have done with it,

and not to interrupt the thread of the narrative of the

Precursor s birth. This is what I was told to write down

in explanation of the text.

274. Her time approaching, saint Elisabeth felt the

child in motion as if he wanted to place himself on his

feet; but he was merely following the ordinary course

of nature and the dictates of obedience. Some moderate

pains overtook the mother and she informed the Princess

Mary. But she did not call Her to be present at the

birth, because reverence for the dignity of Mary and for

the Fruit within her womb, prudently withheld her from

asking, what might not seem befitting. Nor was the

great Mistress in the same room, but She sent her the

224 CITY OF GOD

coverings and swaddling-clothes, which She had made

for the fortunate child. Presently thereafter he was

born, very perfect and complete in shape, and by the

freedom from impure matter showed signs of the purity

of his soul. He was wrapped in the coverings sent by

Mary, which therefore had already been great and ven

erable relics. Shortly after, when saint Elisabeth had

composed herself, most holy Mary, at the command of

the Lord, issued from her oratory, in order to pay her

visit to the mother and child and give them her bless

ing.

275. At the request of his mother the Queen received

in her arms the new-born child and offered him as a new

oblation to the eternal Father, and his Majesty, well

pleased, accepted it as the first-fruits of the Incarnation

and of the divine decrees. The most blessed child, full

of the Holy Ghost, acknowledged his sovereign Queen,

showing Her not only interior, but outward reverence

by a secret inclination of his head, and again he adored

the divine Word, which was manifested to him in her

womb by an especial light. And as he also was aware,

that he was privileged before all men, the grateful child

performed acts of fervent thanksgiving, humility, love

and reverence of God and of his Virgin Mother. The

heavenly Queen, in offering him to the eternal Father,

pronounced this prayer for him: "Highest Lord and

Father, all holy and powerful, accept in thy honor this

offering and seasonable fruit of thy most holy Son and

my Lord. He is sanctified by the Onlybegotten and

rescued from the effects of sin and from the power of

thy ancient enemies. Receive this morning s sacrifice,

and infuse into this child the blessings of thy holy Spirit,

in order that he may be a faithful minister to Thee and

to thy Onlybegotten." This prayer of our Queen was

THE INCARNATION 225

efficacious in all respects, and She perceived how the

Lord enriched this child, chosen as his Precursor; and

She also felt within Herself the effects of these admirable

blessings.

276. While the Queen of the Universe held the in

fant in her arms, She was for a short time secretly

wrapt in sweetest ecstasy; during it She offered up this

prayer for the child, holding it close to the same breast

where the Onlybegotten of the Eternal and her own was

soon to rest. This was the singular prerogative of the

great Precursor, granted to none among the saints.

Therefore it is not surprising, that the angel called him

great in the eyes of the Lord; for before he was born,

the Lord visited and sanctified him, and being born,

he was placed on the throne of grace; he was embraced

by the arms, which were to enfold the incarnate Word

God, and thereby excited in the sweetest Mother of God

the entrancing desire of holding within them the Son

of the Most High, filling Her with delightful affections

for his Precursor, the new-born child. Saint Elisabeth,

being divinely informed of these sacraments, beheld her

wonderful child in the arms of Her, who was his Mother

in a more exalted sense than she herself, she being his

mother only, as to his natural being, while most holy

Mary held that position as to his existence in the order

of grace. All this caused a most sweet tie of affection

between the most blessed women and in the child, who

likewise was enlightened in regard to these mysteries.

By the motions of his tender body he manifested the

joy of his spirit, clinging to the heavenly Lady and seek

ing to attract her caresses and to remain with Her. The

sweetest Lady fondled him, but with such majestic mod

eration, that She did not kiss him, as his age would have

permitted; for She preserved her most chaste lips intact

226 CITY OF GOD

for her most holy Son. Nor did She look intently into

his face, directing all her intention to the holiness of his

soul. So great was the prudence and modesty of the

great Queen of heaven in the use of her eyes, that She

would scarcely have known him by sight.

277. When the birth of John become known, all the

relations and acquaintances, as saint Luke says, gathered

to congratulate saint Zacharias and Elisabeth, for his

house was rich, noble and honored in the whole province

and their piety attracted the hearts of all that knew them.

Having known them so many years without children

and being aware of the sterility and advanced age of

Elisabeth, all were stirred to amazement and joyful

wonder, and they looked upon the birth of the child

rather as a miracle than as a natural event. The holy

priest Zacharias remained mute and unable to manifest

his joy by word of mouth ; for the hour of his miraculous

cure had not arrived. But, freed of his incredulity, he

showed his joy in other ways and he was full of affec

tionate gratitude and praise for the rare blessing, which

he had now witnessed with his own eyes. His behavior

we shall describe in the next chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

278. My dearest daughter, do not be surprised, that

my servant John feared and hesitated to come into the

world. Life can never be loved by the ignorant devotee

of the world in the same degree, as the wise, in divine

science, abhor and fear its dangers. This science was

eminently possessed by the Precursor of my most holy

Son; hence knowing of the loss which threatened, he

feared the risk. But, since he that knows and dreads

the treacherous seas of this world, sails so much the

THE INCARNATION 227

more securely over their unfathomed depths, it served

him in good stead for entering securely into the world.

The fortunate child began his career with such disgust

and abhorrence of all earthly things, that his horror never

abated. He made no peace with the flesh (Mark 6, 17),

nor partook of its poison, nor allowed vanity to enter his

senses nor obstruct his eyes; in abhorrence of the world

and of worldly things, he gave his life for justice. The

citizen of the true Jerusalem cannot be in peace or in

alliance with Babylon; nor is it possible to enjoy at

the same time the grace of the Most High and the

friendship of his declared enemies; for no one can serve

two hostile masters, nor can light and darkness, Christ

and Beliel, harmonize (Matth. 4, 4).

279. Guard thyself, my dearest, against those living in

darkness and the lovers of the world more than against

fire ; for the wisdom of the sons of this world is carnal

and diabolical, and their ways lead to death. In order

to walk the way of truth, even at the cost of the natural

life, it is necessary to preserve the peace of the soul.

Three dwelling-places I point out for thee to live in,

from which thou must never intentionally come forth.

If at any time the Lord should bid thee to relieve the

necessities of thy fellow creatures, I desire that thou do

not lose this refuge. Act as one who lives in a castle

surrounded by enemies, and who perchance must go to

the gate to transact necessary business. He acts with

such wariness, that he will pay more attention to safe

guard his retreat and shield himself, than to transact

business with others, being always on the watch and

on guard against danger. So must thou live, if thou

wishest to live securely ; for doubt not, that enemies more

cruel and poisonous than asps and basilisks surround

thee.

228 CITY OF GOD

280. Thy habitations shall be the Divinity of the Most

High, the humanity of my most holy Son, and thy own

interior. In the Divinity thou must live like the pearl

in its shell, or like the fish in the sea, allowing thy

desires and affections to roam in its infinite spaces. The

most holy humanity shall be the wall, which defends thee;

and his bosom shall be the place of thy rest, and under

his wings shalt thou find refreshment (Ps. 16, 8). Thy

own interior shall afford thee peaceful delight through

the testimony of a good conscience (Cor. 2, 12), and

it will, if thou keep it pure, familiarize thee with the

sweet and friendly intercourse of thy Spouse. In order

that thou mayest be aided therein by retirement of the

body, I desire that thou remain secluded in thy choir

or in thy cell, leaving it only, when obedience or charity

make it inevitable. I will tell thee a secret: there are

demons, whom Lucifer has expressly ordered to watch

for the religious, who come forth from their retire

ment, in order to beset them and engage them in battle

and cause their fall. The demons do not easily go into

the cells, because there they do not find the occasions

afforded by conversations and the use of the senses,

wherein they ordinarily capture and devour their prey

like ravenous wolves. They are tormented by the re

tirement and recollection of religious, knowing that they

are foiled in their attempts, as long as they cannot entice

them into human discourse.

281. It is also certain that ordinarily the demons have

no power over souls, unless they gain entrance by some

venial or mortal fault. Mortal sin gives them a sort of

direct right over those who commit it; while venial sin

weakens the strength of the soul and invites their attacks.

Imperfections diminish the merit and the progress of

virtue, and encourage the enemy. Whenever the astute

THE INCARNATION 229

serpent notices that the soul bears with its own levity

and forgets about its danger, it blinds it and seeks to

instill its deadly poison. The enemy then entices the

soul like a little heedless bird, until it falls into one

of the many snares from which there seems to be no

escape.

282. Admire then, my daughter, what thou hast

learned by divine enlightenment and weep in deepest

sorrow over the ruin of so many souls absorbed in such

dangerous tepidity. They live in the obscurity of their

passions and depraved inclinations, forgetful of the

danger, unmoved by their losses, and heedless of their

dealings. Instead of fearing and avoiding the occa

sions of evil, they encounter and seek for them in

blind ignorance. In senseless fury they follow their

pleasures, place no restraint on their passionate desires,

and care not where they walk, even if to the most dan

gerous precipices. They are surrounded by innumerable

enemies, who pursue them with diabolical treachery, un

ceasing vigilance, unquenchable wrath and restless dili

gence. What wonder then, that from such extremes,

or rather from such unequal combat, irreparable defeats

should arise among the mortals? And that, since the

number of fools is infinite, the number of the reprobate

should also be uncountable, and that the demon should

be inflated by his triumphs in the perdition of so many

men? May the eternal God preserve thee from such a

misfortune; and do thou weep and deplore that of thy

brethren, continually asking for their salvation as far

as is possible.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE GOOD COUNCIL AND INSTRUCTION, WHICH MOST

HOLY MARY GAVE TO SAINT EUSABETH AT HER RE

QUEST; SAINT JOHN IS CIRCUMCISED AND RECEIVES

HIS NAME; ZACHARIAS PROPHESIES.

283. After the birth of the Precursor of Christ the

return of most holy Mary was unavoidable ; and although

the prudent Elisabeth had found consolation in resign

ing herself to the divine will, she could not restrain

her desire of securing for herself the good counsel and

instruction of the Mother of wisdom. Therefore She

spoke to Her and said : "My Mistress and Mother of the

Creator, I know, that Thou art preparing to leave me

and that I am to be deprived of thy loving intercourse,

help and protection. I beseech Thee, my Cousin, furnish

me with some good counsel, which will help me to con

form all my actions to the greater pleasure of the Most

High. In thy virginal womb Thou bearest Him, who is

the Corrector of the wise and the fountain of light

(Wis. 7, 15) ; through Him Thou canst communicate it

to all. Let some of the rays, which illumine thy purest

soul fall upon thy servant, in order that I may be en

lightened in the paths of justice, until I arrive at the

vision of the God of gods in Sion." (Ps. 22, 3.)

284. These words of saint Elisabeth moved the most

holy Mary to tender compassion and She spoke words

that served her cousin as celestial guidance for the rest

of her life. This, She said, would be of short duration ;

but the Most High would take care of her child, and She

230

THE INCARNATION 231

herself had prayed for him to the Almighty. Although

it is not possible to record all the sweet words of counsel,

which the heavenly Lady spoke to saint Elisabeth before

her departure, I will write down some of them, as far

as I have understood them and as far as they can be

reproduced by our insufficient language. Most holy Mary

said : "My beloved cousin, the Lord has selected Thee for

the fulfillment of most exalted mysteries. He has con

descended to enlighten thee concerning them and wishes,

that I should open to thee my heart. Thy name is

written within it for remembrance before his Majesty.

I will not forget the devoted kindness with which thou

hast treated me, the most useless of creatures ; and from

my most holy Son and Lord I hope thou shalt receive a

plentiful reward/\*

285. "Keep thy mind and spirit fixed on high and by

the light of divine grace preserve the vision of the un

changeable and infinite being of God and the remem

brance of his immense goodness, which moved Him to

create out of nothing all the intellectual creatures in order

to bestow upon them his glory and his gifts of grace.

The extreme mercy of the Most High, in favoring us

more than all other creatures with his knowledge and

light, ought to incite us to make up by our thankfulness

for the blind ingratitude of mortals, who are so far re

moved from acknowledging and praising their Creator.

This shall be our task, that we keep our hearts free and

unhindered in our advance toward the last end. There

fore, my beloved, I charge thee to keep it unhampered

and unburdened of all earthly things, free from even

such as pertain to thy possessions, in order that, void

of earthly hindrances, it may attend to the divine calls.

Hope in the coming of the Lord (Luke 12, 36), so

that when He arrives, thou mayest answer his call joy-

232 CITY OF GOD

fully and not with convulsive violence at the thought

of leaving thy body and all earthly things. Now, while

it is time to suffer and earn the crown, let us gain merit

and hasten to be united intimately with our true and

highest God."

286. "As long as thy husband Zacharias lives, seek

to love, serve and obey him with especial earnestness.

Look upon thy miraculous child as a continual sacrifice to

his Creator; in God and for God thou canst love him as

a mother; for he shall be a great Prophet, and in the

spirit of Elias he shall defend the honor of the Most

High and exalt his name. My most holy Son, who has

chosen him for his Precursor and for the harbinger of

his coming, will favor him with the special gifts of his

right hand (Matth. 11, 9) and make him great and won

derful among the nations, manifesting to the world

his great sanctity."

287. "See that the holy name of thy God and the Lord

of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob be honored and reverenced

by all thy house and family (Tob. 4). Above all be

anxiously careful to relieve the needs of the poor, as far

as is possible; enrich them with the temporal goods so

lavishly given to thee by thy God ; show a like generosity

to the needy, knowing that these earthly goods are more

theirs than yours, since we are the children of the heav

enly Father to whom all things belong. It is not proper,

that the child of a rich father should live in superfluity,

while his brethren live in poverty and need. In this thou

canst make thyself especially pleasing to the Good of

undying mercy. Continue in thy former practices and

follow out thy plans of still greater charity, since Zachar

ias has given this work into thy hands. With his per

mission thou canst be generous. Confirm thy hopes in

all the tasks imposed upon thee by the Lord, and with

THE INCARNATION 233

thy fellow beings practice kindness, humility and patience

in the joy of thy soul, although some of them will give

thee occasion to increase thy crown of merit. Bless

God eternally for having manifested to thee his exalted

mysteries and pray for the salvation of souls with un

abated love and zeal. Pray also for me, that his Majesty

may govern and guide me worthily to preserve the sacra

ment confided by his goodness to so lowly and poor a

servant as I am. Send for my husband in order that

I may have his company while returning to Nazareth.

In the meanwhile prepare for the circumcision of thy

child and call him John ; for this name was given to him

according to an unchangeable decree of the Most High."

288. These counsels of most holy Mary together with

other words of eternal life produced in the heart of saint

Elisabeth such divine affections, that for a time, she was

lost in the exalted teachings and sentiments of these

heavenly doctrines and made mute by the force of the

spiritual light infused into her. For the Lord, by means

of the living words of his most pure Mother, enlivened

and renewed the heart of his servant. When the flow of

her tears had moderated, she answered: "My Mistress

and Queen of the universe, speech fails me in alternate

sorrow and consolation. Hear Thou the words of my

inmost heart, which my tongue cannot express. My

affections shall witness, what my lips leave unspoken.

May the Lord, who is the enricher of our poverty,

return to Thee the favor Thou showest me. I beseech

Thee, who art the fountain of all my help and the source

of all my blessings, to obtain for me the grace to fulfill

thy counsels and to bear the great sorrow of losing thy

company."

289. Then they bespoke the arrangements for the cir

cumcision of the child, for the time appointed by the

234 CITY OF GOD

law was approaching. Complying with the custom ob

served among the Jews, especially among the more dis

tinguished, many relatives and other acquaintances of the

house of Zacharias began to gather, in order to resolve

upon the name to be given to the child; for, in addition

to the ordinary preparations and consultations concerning

the name to be given to a son, the high position of

Zacharias and Elisabeth and the news of the miraculous

fecundity of the mother naturally suggested the existence

of some great mystery to the minds of all their relations.

Zacharias was still dumb, and therefore it was necessary

that saint Elisableth should preside at this meeting.

Over and above the high esteem which she inspired, she

now exhibited such evident signs of the exalted renewal

and sanctification of her soul, which resulted from the

knowledge of the mysteries and from the intercourse

with the Queen of heaven, that all her relatives and

friends noticed the change. For even in her counte

nance she exhibited a kind of effulgence which made her

mysteriously attractive and was the reflection of the

Divinity, in whose presence she lived.

290. At this meeting was present also the heavenly

Lady Mary, for Elisabeth had earnestly besought Her,

and had even compelled Her by a sort of reverent and

humble command. The great Lady obeyed, but She

begged the Most High not to make known any of her

great privileges, lest She draw upon Herself the applause

or veneration of others. The desire of the most Hum

ble among the humble was granted. And as the world

persists in ignoring those who fail to use ostentation,

nobody took particular notice of Her except saint Elisa

beth, who looked upon Her with outward and inward

reverence and who knew, that on Her depended the

success of this consultation. As is recorded in the

THE INCARNATION 235

Gospel of saint Luke, some of those present in the meet

ing suggested that the infant be named after his father:

but the prudent mother, seconded by the most holy Mary,

said: "My son must be named John." Her relatives

objected, that none of their family bore that name; for

the names of illustrious forefathers were always held in

great esteem, and were preferred in order to incite their

bearers to the imitation of ancestral virtues. Saint Elisa

beth again expressed herself to the effect, that the child

should be called John.

291. The relatives then appealed by signs to Zacha-

rias, who, being unable to speak, asked for a pen and

declared his will by writing upon the tablet : "Johannes

est nomen ejus." "John is his name." At the same

time most holy Mary, making use of her power over all

nature, commanded the dumbness to leave him, his

tongue to be loosened, as the moment had arrived when

it should bless the Lord. At this heavenly command he

found himself freed from his affliction, and, to the as

tonishment and fear of all present, he began to speak,

as narrated by the Evangelist. What I say here is not

adverse to the Gospel narrative; for, although it is there

related, that the angel foretold Zacharias that he should

remain mute until his message should be fulfilled, yet

God, when He reveals any decree of his will, absolutely

unfailing as they are, does not always reveal the means

or the manner of their fulfillment, foreseen by Him in

his infinite foreknowledge. Thus the archangel an

nounced to Zacharias the punishment of his unbelief, but

he did not tell him that he should be freed from it by the

intercession of most holy Mary, although this also had

been foreseen and decreed.

292. Therefore, just as the voice of our Lady Mary

was the instrument for the sanctification of the child

236 CITY OF GOD

John and his mother, so her secret mandate and her inter

cession had the effect of loosening the tongue of Zach-

arias, filling him with the holy Spirit and the gift of

prophecy. Hence he broke forth in the words (Luke 1,

68-79) :

68. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; because

He hath visited and wrought the redemption of his

people :

69. And hath raised up an horn of salvation to us,

in the house of David his servant :

70. And he hath spoken by the mouth of his holy

prophets, who are from the beginning;

71. Salvation from our enemies, and from the hands

of all that hate us :

72. To perform mercy to our fathers, and to re

member his holy testament,

73. The oath, which he swore to Abraham our

father, that he would grant to us,

74. That being delivered from the hand of our

enemies, we may serve him without fear,

75. In holiness and justice before him, all our days.

76. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of

the Highest : for thou shalt go before the face of the

Lord to prepare his ways :

77. To give knowledge of salvation to his people:

unto the remission of their sins :

78. Through the bowels of the mercy of our God,

in which the Orient from on high hath visited us:

79. To enlighten them that sit in darkness, and in

the shadow of death: to direct our feet into the way

of peace."

293. In the divine canticle of the Benedictus Zacharias

embodied all of the highest mysteries, which the ancient

prophets had foretold in a more profuse manner con-

THE INCARNATION 237

earning the Divinity, Humanity and the Redemption of

Christ, and in these few words he embraces many great

sacraments. He also understood them by the grace and

light, which rilled his spirit, and which raised him up in

the sight of all that had come to attend the circumcision

of his son ; for all of them were witnesses to the solving

of- his tongue and to his divine prophecies. I will hardly

be able to give an explanation of the deep meaning of

these prophecies, such as they had in the mind of that

holy priest.

294. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel," he says,

knowing that the Most High could have saved his people

and given them eternal salvation merely by desiring it

or speaking one word, but He exerted not only his power,

but showed also his immense goodness and mercy, the

Son of the eternal Father himself coming down to visit

his people and to become their Brother in the human

nature ; their Teacher by his example and doctrine, their

Redeemer by his life, passion and death of the Cross.

At these words Zacharias understood the union of the

two natures in the person of the Word and in heavenly

clearness he saw this mystery realized in the virginal

bridal-chamber of the most holy Mary. He understood

also the exaltation of the Humanity by the triumph of

the Godman, in earning the salvation of the human race

according to the promises made to David and his ances

tors (II Kings 7, 12; Ps. 131, 11). He understood

that the same promise had been made to the whole world

by the prophecies of the Saints and Patriarchs from the

beginning. For from the first creation God commenced

to direct the course of nature and grace toward his

coming into the world, and to ordain all his works since

the time of Adam toward this same blessed end.

295. He understood that the Most High in this man-

2-17

238 CITY OF GOD

ner provided for us the means of obtaining grace and

eternal life lost by our enemies in their pride and stub

born disobedience, which hurled them into hell ; and the

seats which would have been theirs, if they had been

obedient, were reserved for the obedient among the

mortals. He saw how ever since then the enmity which

the serpent had conceived against God was now turned

against men, because we were decreed and enshrined in

the eternal mind according to his divine will (Apoca

lypse 12, 17) ; how Adam and Eve, our first parents,

having fallen from his friendship and grace, were not

given over to chastisement, like the rebellious angels, but

were raised to a state of hope (Wisdom 10, 2) ; and

that, in order to assure their descendants of his mercy,

God provided the prophecies and figures of the old Tes

tament, which were to be fulfilled in the coming of the

Redeemer and Savior. To make this promise still more

certain it was made to Abraham under an oath, affirm

ing that he would be the father of all his people and of

all the children of the faith (Gen. 22, 16). Assured of

this stupendous and vast blessing, namely that of receiv

ing his own Son made man, we may serve God free from

the fear of our enemies ; for by our adoption and regen

eration they are already overcome and subdued through

our Redeemer (Gal. 4, 5).

296. In order that we may understand what the Word

has earned for us in restoring to us this liberty in the

service of God, he says : that He has renewed the world

in sanctity and justice, and founded the new law of

grace for all the days of this world, and for the time of

life given to each of the children of the Church. In it

they not only can, but they should live in holiness and

justice. And as Zacharias saw in his son John the be

ginning of all these sacraments, he turns to him and con-

THE INCARNATION 239

gratulates him, because of the dignity and sancity of his

office, saying : And thou, child, shalt be called a prophet

of the Most High; for thou shalt go before his face,

namely his Divinity, and prepare his ways by spreading

the light of his coming, and giving notice to the people

of the Jews concerning eternal life, which is Christ our

Lord, the promised Messias (Mark 1, 41). Thus might

they dispose themselves by the baptism of penance for

the remission of their sins and become convinced that

the Messias has come to take away not only their sins,

but those of the whole world (John 1, 29) ; since it

is through his mercy and on account of his merits

(Tit 3, 5) that He visits us, by descending from the

bosom of the eternal Father and by being born as man.

He it was that brought light to those who had lost the

truth for so many ages, who were sitting in darkness and

in the shadows of death. He it was who by his own

example taught us to direct our steps toward the true

peace, which we were awaiting.

297. Much more clearly than I can explain, Zacharias

perceived these mysteries in their plenitude and depth,

and expressed them in his prophecies. Some of those

present were likewise enlightened, becoming aware that

the time of the Messias and of the fulfillment of the

ancient prophecies was at hand. Full of astonishment at

these unexpected wonders and prodigies, they exclaimed :

"Who shall this child be, since the hand of the Most

High is in him so marvelous and powerful?" In ac

cordance with the letter of the law, and with the concur

rence of his father and mother, the child was then cir

cumcised and named John ; and the report of these won

ders spread through all the mountains of Judea.

298. Queen of the universe, I admire the wonderful

works wrought through thy intervention by the arm of

240 CITY OF GOD

the Lord in his servants Elisabeth, John and Zacharias.

At the same time I reflect on the different courses pur

sued by divine Providence and on thy rare discretion.

Thy most sweet voice served the son and the mother as

an instrument of sanctification, filling them with the Holy

Ghost, and this remained hidden; then again thy secret

prayer and command solved the tongue of Zacharias, and

this was manifested to all the bystanders, revealing the

effects of God s grace in the holy priest. I cannot find

the reason for this diversity, and therefore I make known

to Thee my ignorance, so that Thou mayest instruct me

as my Teacher.

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF THE

WORLD.

299. For two reasons, my daughter, the divine effects

wrought through me by my Son in saint John and Elisa

beth were concealed, while those in Zacharias were mani

fest. First, because Elisabeth spoke out clearly in praise

of the incarnate Word and of me; yet at the time it was

not proper that either this mystery or my dignity should

be openly known; the coming of the Messias was to be

manifested by other more appropriate means. Secondly,

not all hearts were so well prepared as that of Elisabeth

for receiving such precious and unprecedented seed of

divine knowledge, nor would they have welcomed such

sacramental revelation with due reverence. On the other

hand it was more becoming that Zacharias in his priestly

dignity should proclaim what was then to be made

known; for the beginnings of the heavenly light would

be accepted more readily from him than from saint

Elisabeth, especially while he was present. That which

she said, was reserved to bring forth its effects in due

THE INCARNATION 241

time. Although the words of God have their own

inherent force; yet the more sweet and acceptable man

ner of communicating with the ignorant and the un

skilled in divine mysteries is by means of the priest.

300. Likewise it was proper that the dignity and

honor of the priesthood should receive its due; for the

Most High holds the priests in such esteem, that if He

finds them in the right disposition, He exalts them and

fills them with his Spirit in order that the world may

venerate them as his chosen and anointed ones. More

over the wonders of the Lord run less risk in priests,

even when they are more openly revealed to them. If

they live up to their dignity, their works in comparison

with those of the other creatures, are like those of the

angels and of the seraphim. Their countenance should

be resplendent, like that of Moses, when he came forth

from converse with the Lord (Exod. 34, 29). At least

they should deal with the rest of men in such a manner

that they be honored and revered as next to God. I

desire that thou understand, my dearest, that the Most

High is greatly incensed against the world in this

matter: as well against the priests as against laymen.

Against the priests because, forgetting their exalted dig

nity, they debase themselves by a contemptible, degraded

and scandalous life, giving bad example to the world by

mixing up with it to the neglect of their sanctification.

And against the laymen, because they act with a fool

hardy presumption toward the anointed of the Lord,

whom, though of imperfect and blameworthy lives,

they ought to honor and revere as taking the place of

Christ, my most holy Son, on earth.

301. On account of this reverence due to the priest

hood my behavior toward saint Zacharias was different

from that toward Elisabeth. For, although the Lord

242 CITY OP GOD

wished, that I should be the instrument, by which the

gifts of the holy Spirit should be communicated to both;

yet I saluted Elisabeth in such a manner, that I at the

same time showed a certain authority, exerting my power

over the original sin of her son; for at my words this

sin was forgiven him, and both mother and son were

rilled with the Holy Ghost. As I had not contracted

original sin and was exempt from it, I possessed do

minion over it on this occasion: I commanded as the

Mistress, who had triumphed over it by the help of the

Lord (Gen. 3, 5), and who was no slave of it, as all

the sons of Adam, who sinned in him (Rom. 5, 12).

Therefore the Lord desired that, in order to free John

from the slavery and chains of sin, I should command

over it as one who never was subject to its bondage. I

did not salute Zacharias in this authoritative way, but I

prayed for him, observing the reverence and decorum

due to his dignity and my modesty. I would not have

commanded the tongue of the priest to be loosened, not

even mentally and secretly, if the Most High had not

enjoined it upon me, intimating at the same time, that the

defect of speech hardly suited his office, for a priest

should stand ready to serve and praise the Almighty with

all his powers. In regard to the respect due to priests I

will tell thee more on another occasion ; let this suffice at

present for the solution of thy doubt.

302. But from my instruction today learn especially

to seek direction in the way of virtue and of eternal life

in all thy intercourse with men, be they above or below

thee in dignity. Imitate therein me and my cousin Elisa

beth, with due discretion asking all to direct thee and

guide thee; for in return for such humility the Lord will

provide thee with secure counsel and divine light for

exercising thy discreet and sincere love of virtue. Drive

THE INCARNATION 243

away, or do not allow thyself to be influenced by even

the least breath of flattery and avoid the conversations

which expose thee to it; for such deceitful pleasure

darkens the light and perverts the unsuspecting- mind.

The Lord is so jealous of the souls especially beloved by

Him, that He will immediately turn away from them if

they find pleasure in the praises of men and seek to

recompense themselves by their flatteries; since by this

levity they become unworthy of his favors. It is not

possible to unite in a soul the adulations of the world

and the caresses of the Most High. For these latter

are sincere, holy, pure, and lasting: they humiliate,

cleanse, pacify and illumine the heart ; while on the other

hand the flatteries of creatures are vain, fleeting, deceit

ful, impure and false, issuing from the mouths of those

who are all liars (Ps. 115, 11) ; and whatever is deceitful

is a work of the enemy.

303. Thy Spouse, my dearest daughter, does not wish

thy ears to be enthralled by deceitful earthly talk, nor

contaminated by the flatteries of the world. Therefore

I desire that thou keep them closed and well guarded

against all these poisonous influences. If thy Lord is

pleased to speak to thy heart the words of eternal life, it

is proper that thou thyself be deaf and lifeless to all that

is earthly. All else should be to thee a deadly torment

in comparison with the caresses of his love. Remember

that thou owest Him the perfection of thy love, and that

all hell will combine against thee, in order to ensnare

thee by thy natural tenderness to be sweet and loving

toward creatures, and less grateful to the eternal God.

Watch over thyself, and see that thou resist this un

faithfulness, trusting in thy beloved Master and Spouse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MOST HOIvY MARY LEAVES THE HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS

AND RETURNS TO HER HOME IN NAZARETH.

304. At the call of Elisabeth, the most fortunate of

husbands, saint Joseph, had come in order to attend

most holy Mary on her return to her home in Nazareth.

On arriving at the house of Zacharias he had been wel

comed with indescribable reverence and devotion by saint

Elisabeth and Zacharias; for now also the holy priest

knew that he was the guardian of the sacramental treas

ures of heaven, though this was yet unknown to the

great patriarch saint Joseph himself. His heavenly

Spouse received him in modest and discreet jubilation,

and, kneeling before him, She, as usual, besought his

blessing, and also his pardon, for having failed to serve

him for nearly three months during her attendance upon

her cousin Elisabeth. Though She had been guilty of

no fault, not even of an imperfection in thus devotedly

fulfilling the will of God in conformity with the wishes

of her spouse, yet, by this courteous and endearing act

of humility, She wanted to repay her husband for the

want of her consoling companionship. The holy Joseph

answered that as he now again saw Her, and again en

joyed her delightful presence, he was relieved of the pain

caused by her absence. In the course of a few days

they announced the day of their departure.

305. Thereupon the princess Mary took leave of the

priest Zacharias. As he had already been enlightened

by the Lord concerning her dignity, he addressed

244

THE INCARNATION 245

Her with the greatest reverence as the living sanctuary

of the Divinity and humanity of the eternal Word. "My

Mistress," he said, "praise and bless eternally thy Maker,

who in his infinite mercy has chosen Thee among all his

creatures as his Mother, as the sole Keeper of all his

great blessings and sacraments. Be mindful of me, thy

servant, before thy Lord and God, that He may lead

me in peace through this exile to the security of the

eternal peace which we hope for, and that through thee

I may merit the vision of his Divinity, which is the

glory of the saints. Remember also, O Lady, my house

and family, and especially my Son John, and pray to the

Most High for thy people."

306. The great Lady knelt before him and in pro

found humility asked him to bless Her. This Zacharias

hesitated to do and instead asked Her to give him her

blessing. But nothing could overcome the humility of

Her who was the Teacher of that virtue and of all holi

ness; and therefore She importuned the priest for his

blessing until he yielded to the impulse of the divine light.

In the words of holy Scripture, he said to Her : "The

right arm of the almighty and true God assist Thee

always, and deliver Thee from all evil (Ps. 120, 7).

Possess thou the grace of His unfailing protection, and be

filled with the dew of heaven and with the fruits of

the earth, and let Him give Thee abundance of bread

and wine (Gen. 27, 28) ; let the nations serve Thee and

let the generations worship Thee, since Thou art the

tabernacle of God (Eccl. 24, 12) ; be Thou the Mistress

of thy brethren, and let the sons of thy mother kneel in

thy presence. Those that praise and bless Thee shall

be honored and blessed; and those that bless and extol

Thee not shall be cursed. In Thee let all nations know

246 CITY OF GOD

their God (Judith 13, 31), and through Thee let the

name of the most high God of Jacob be glorified."

307. In return for this prophetic blessing, most holy

Mary kissed the hand of the priest and asked him to for

give Her the faults committed in his house. The saintly

old man was much moved by these parting words of the

most pure and amiable of creatures, and ever thereafter

bore hidden within him the memory of the mysteries

revealed to him concerning the most holy Mary. Only

once, when he was present at a meeting of the priests

in the temple, who were congratulating him on account

of the birth of his son and the restoration of his speech,

he was moved by the excess of his joy and he answered

them : "I believe firmly that the Most High has visited

us and has already sent us the promised Messias, who

will redeem his people." But he spoke no further of

what he really knew of the mystery. The holy priest

Simeon, however, who was present and heard these

words, was seized with great joy of spirit and by divine

impulse exclaimed: "Let not, O Lord God of Israel,

thy servant depart from this valley of misery before he

has seen thy salvation and the Redeemer of his people."

To this prayer he afterwards alluded when, at the presen

tation of infant God in the temple, He received Him

into his arms, as we shall see later on. Until that event

took place he desired more and more ardently to see the

incarnate Word.

308. Leaving Zacharias in tears, Mary betook Herself

to her cousin Elisabeth. As She was a cousin of Mary,

of a tender heart, and as She had enjoyed so many days

of sweet intercourse, and had received so many favors

of the Mother of grace, she was almost overcome with

grief at the mere thought of now losing the source

whence so many blessings had flown and were yet to

THE INCARNATION 247

flow, if she could only retain it. Hence, when the time

for taking leave of the Mistress of heaven and earth

finally arrived her heart was torn with sorrow, and she

could say only a few words amid her copious tears and

sighs revealing her inmost soul. The serene Queen, be

ing superior to all inordinate movements of the natural

passions, in affable modesty spoke to Elisabeth: "My

beloved cousin, do not grieve so much over my de

parture, since the charity of the Most High, in whom I

truly love thee, knows no distance of time or place. In

Him I behold thee, and I keep thee in my mind; and

thou also wilt find me in that same presence. Short is

the time of our bodily separation, since all the days of

human life are so fleeting (Job 14, 5), and if we gain

the victory over our enemies we shall very soon see our

selves and enjoy ourselves in the celestial Jerusalem,

where there is no sorrow, no weeping, no separation

(Apoc. 21, 4). In the meanwhile thou wilt find all

blessings in the Lord and also me thou wilt find and

possess in Him. He will remain in thy heart and con

sole thee." Our most prudent Queen said no more to

allay the grief of saint Elisabeth ; instead She knelt down

at her feet and asked her blessing, and her pardon for

what might have been disagreeable in her intercourse

with her; nor would Mary yield to the protests of Elisa

beth until her petition was granted. Elisabeth then in

sisted on her part and asked the blessing of the heavenly

Lady in return, and not wishing to deny her this con

solation, most holy Mary complied.

309. The Queen visited also the child John, received

him in her arms and bestowed upon him many myste

rious blessings. The wonderful infant by divine dispen

sation spoke to the Virgin, although in a low and in

fantile voice: "Thou art the Mother of God himself,

248 CITY OF GOD

the Queen of all creation, the Keeper of the ineffable

Treasure of heaven, my help and protection: grant me,

thy servant, thy blessing, and may thy intercession and

favor never fail me." Three times he kissed the hand of

the Queen of heaven; likewise he adored the incarnate

Word in her virginal Womb, and asked Him for his

benediction and grace. The infant God manifested his

pleasure and benevolence toward his Precursor, while the

most happy Mother Mary beheld and understood all that

was passing. In all things She acted with the plenitude

of divine science, venerating all these mysteries accord

ing to their proper import; for She responded with a

magnanimous heart to all the works of his divine wisdom

(II Mach. 2, 9).

310. The whole household of Zacharias had been sanc

tified by the presence of most holy Mary and of the

incarnate Word in her womb; all its inmates had been

edified by her example, instructed by her conversations

and teachings, and sweetly affected by her intercourse

and modest behavior. While She had drawn toward

Herself all the hearts of that happy family, She also

merited and obtained for them from her most holy Son

the plenitude of celestial gifts. Holy Joseph was held

in high veneration by Zacharias, Elisabeth and John ; for

they had come to know his high dignity before he him

self was yet aware of it. The blessed Patriarch, happy

in his Treasure, the full value of which as yet he did not

know, took leave of all and departed for Nazareth : what

happened on the way I will narrate in the following

chapter. But before they began their journey most holy

Mary, on bended knees, besought saint Joseph to bless

Her, as She was accustomed to do on such occasions, and

after She had received his blessing, they betook them

selves on their journey.

THE INCARNATION 249

INSTRUCTION BY THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

311. My daughter, the happy souls which God has

chosen for his intimate friendship and perfection must

keep themselves in continual readiness and peace, in order

to perform all that his Majesty may ordain without hesi

tation or delay. That is what I did when the Most High

commanded me to leave the beloved retreat of my house

and betake myself to Elisabeth; likewise, when he or

dered me to return. I obeyed in all these things with

joyful alacrity; and although I had received so many

benefits from Elisabeth and her family and so many

tokens of love and friendship, as thou hast seen, yet,

knowing the will of the Lord, I set aside all obligation

and my own inclination and followed them only so far

as was strictly demanded by charity and compassion, and

in so far as the promptest obedience to the divine com

mand permitted.

312. My dearest daughter, how wilt thou not hasten

to obtain this true and perfect resignation as soon as thou

knowest its vast value! How pleasing it is in the eyes

of the Lord, and how profitable for thy soul! Labor

then to attain it in imitation of me, as I have already

so often invited thee and urged thee. The greatest hin

drances toward its attainment are the leanings and special

likings to earthly things; for these make the soul un

worthy of the caresses of the Lord and of knowing

fully his will. And even if the soul knows his will, the

base love of unworthy things will keep the soul from

fulfilling it; for on account of its inclinations, it will be

wanting in the ready and joyful obedience required by

the Lord. Take notice of this danger, my daughter, and

do not allow any particular affection to enter into thy

heart, for I wish that thou be well versed and perfect in

250 CITY OF GOD

this art of divine love, and that thy obedience be that of

an angel, and thy love that of a seraphim. Thus show

thyself in all thy actions, for to this my love urges thee,

and thus art thou taught by the knowledge and light

imparted to thee.

313. I do not say that thou must do away with all

sensible feeling, for that is not naturally possible to the

creature; but whenever thou meetest adverse happenings,

or when thou art deprived of what is useful, necessary

or agreeable thou must bear it with joyful resignation

and give praise to the Lord, because his will is being

fulfilled in thy regard. By seeking only his pleasure,

and considering all else as of passing moment, thou wilt

gain a quick and easy victory over thyself, and thou wilt

seek all occasions to humiliate thyself under the mighty

hand of the Lord (I Pet. 5, 6). I also exhort thee to

imitate me in my esteem and veneration of the priests,

and that thou always ask their blessing before speaking

to them and in leaving them. Do this also in regard to

the Most High before beginning any work. Toward thy

superiors always show thyself devoted and submissive.

If any married women come to seek thy advice, exhort

them to be obedient to their husbands (Tit. 5, 2), peace

fully subjecting themselves, living retired in their houses

and carefully fulfilling their obligations toward their

families. Tell them not to give themselves up entirely

to their occupations, nor to lose themselves in their daily

cares on pretext of necessity; for much more must be

trusted to the goodness and liberality of God than to

one s own immoderate bustle and activity. In whatever

happened to me in my condition, thou wilt find true

instruction and example ; and my whole life will be an

example of perfection for the guidance of souls, and

therefore I will not need to give thee further direction.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE JOURNEY OF MOST HOLY MARY FROM THE HOUSE

OF ZACHARIAS TO HER HOME IN NAZARETH.

314. Returning from the town of Juda to Nazareth

the most holy Mary, the living tabernacle of God, pur

sued her way through the mountains of Judea in the

company of her most faithful spouse saint Joseph. Al

though the Evangelists do not make mention of any haste

in this journey homeward, such as is recorded by saint

Luke and occasioned by the special mystery connected

with it, yet the great Princess made also this return

journey with great expediency, on account of the events

which awaited Her at home. All the journeys of this

heavenly Lady were a mystical counterpart of her spir

itual and interior advances. For She was the true

tabernacle of the Lord, which was to find no definite

resting-place in this mortal pilgrimage (I Par. 17, 5) ;

on the contrary, progressing daily from one stage to

another and to higher condition of wisdom and grace,

She continually pushed forward on her pilgrimage to the

promised land (Numb. 7, 89) ; and She bore continually

with Her on her journey the true propitiatory, whence

She drew ceaseless increase of her gifts and acquired for

us eternal salvation.

315. The great Queen and saint Joseph again consumed

four days in their return journey, as they had done on

their coming. On the way they maintained the same

divine conversations, and they experienced events similar

to those already mentioned in chapter sixteenth. In the

251

252 CITY OF GOD

ordinary practices of humility, in which they vied with

each other, our Queen always came out victorious, except

when saint Joseph called obedience to his aid; because

She considered obedience the greater humility. As She

was already in her third month of pregnancy, She was

more attentive and careful in her journey; not that her

pregnancy caused her any difficulties, for it was on the

contrary a most sweet alleviation of any hardships. But

this careful and prudent Mother was filled with the con

sciousness of her Treasure; for She beheld day by day

the natural growth of the body of her most holy Son in

her virginal womb. Notwithstanding the ease and light

ness of her pregnancy, She nevertheless was subject to

the exertion and the fatigue of the journey; for the sov

ereign Lady made no use of her privileges to diminish

her sufferings, but She gave free scope to the fatigues

and inconveniences of travel in order to be in all things

our teacher and the faithful image of her most holy Son.

316. As the divine Fruit of her womb was naturally

of the most perfect growth, and as She was Herself of

the most comely and well-proportioned shape without

any defect whatever, it was natural that her condition

should become noticeable, and She knew that it would

be impossible to conceal it much longer from her hus

band. Already She began to look upon him with greater

tenderness and compassion in view of the shock which

his love would feel on noticing her condition. Gladly

would She have turned it aside if She had known that

such was the will of God. But the Lord gave Her no

intimation of his will in these anxious thoughts; for He

had ordained that the event should come about in such a

way as to increase his glory and the merits both of saint

Joseph and of the Virgin Mother. Nevertheless the

great Lady besought his Majesty to fill the heart of her

THE INCARNATION 253

spouse with patience and wisdom, and to assist him with

grace, that he might act in this conjuncture according to

the divine pleasure. For She was convinced that it

would occasion him great grief to see her pregnant.

317. In the course of the journey the Mistress of the

world performed some wonderful works, although always

in secret. It happened that when they arrived at a place

not far from Jerusalem some people from another town

came to the same hostelry. They brought with them a

young woman seeking a cure for her sickness in the larger

and more populous city. She was known to be very sick,

but no one knew what was her sickness or the cause of

it. This woman had lived a very virtuous life. On this

account the enemy, who knew her character and her ad

vanced virtues, began to direct his attacks especially

against her, as he always does against the friends of God,

since he considers them his own enemies. He caused

her to commit some sins and, in order to force her from

one abyss into another, he tempted her with despondent

thoughts and disorderly grief at her fall. Having thus

upset her judgment this dragon found entrance into

her body, and now he, with many other demons, had pos

session of her. I have already said in the first part that

the infernal dragon, when he saw in heaven the woman

clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12, 1), conceived a great

wrath against all virtuous women. Of her progeny are

all those that follow Mary, as may be judged from that

same chapter of the Apocalypse. On this account he

exerted all his arrogance and tyranny in the possession

of the body and soul of this afflicted woman.

318. The heavenly Princess saw her in the tavern and

knew of her affliction, which was unknown to the others.

Moved by her motherly pity, She begged her most holy

Son to give health of body and soul to the unfortunate

2-18

254 CITY OF GOD

woman. Perceiving that the divine will was inclined to

mercy, She used her power as Queen and commanded the

demons instantly to leave this creature never to return.

Moreover, She banished them to the infernal depths, their

lawful and appropriate dwelling. This command of our

great Queen and Lady was not given vocally, but men

tally, in such a way as to be perceptible to the impure

spirits. It was so powerful that Lucifer and his com

panions hastened to leave that body and hurl themselves

into the infernal darkness. The fortunate woman was

freed and seized with wonder at the unhoped-for de

livery; and in her inmost heart she was drawn toward

the most pure and holy Lady. She looked upon Her

with an especial veneration and love, thereby deserving

two other favors. One was that she was filled with a

most sincere sorrow for her sins ; the other, that the evil

effects or traces of the demoniacal possession under

which she had suffered were effaced. She was aware that

the mysterious Stranger, whom she had so fortunately

met on her way was concerned in the heavenly blessing.

She therefore spoke to Her, and our Queen answered

with words that went straight to the heart ; She exhorted

her to perseverance and also merited it for her during

the rest of her life. Her companions likewise recognized

the miracle; but they attributed it to their promise of

bringing her to the temple of Jerusalem and of offering

some gift for her. This promise they fulfilled, praising

God, but remaining ignorant of the source of their good

fortune.

319. Vast and furious was the wrath of Lucifer when

he found himself and his demons dispossessed and cast

out from their abode by the mere word of this woman

Mary. Full of wrathful astonishment, he exclaimed:

"Who is this weak Woman, that commands us and op-

THE INCARNATION 255

presses us with so much power? What new surprise is

this, and how can my pride stand it? We must hold a

council and see how we can unite to destroy Her." Since

I will say more of their doings in the next chapter, I

leave them to their wrathful designs. Our pilgrims in

the meanwhile came to another tavern, the master of

which was a man of bad habits and character; and as a

beginning of his happiness, God ordained that he should

receive most holy Mary and Joseph with a good will and

marks of kindness. He showed them more courtesy and

good services than he was accustomed to show to others.

In order to return his hospitality with still greater kind

ness the great Queen, who knew the sad state of his

interior, prayed for him, justifying his soul and causing

him to change his life. Her prayers had also the effect

of adding to his worldly possession, for on account of

the small favor done to his heavenly guests, God in

creased them from that time on. Many more miracles

the Mother of grace wrought in this journey, for all her

doings were divine (Cant. 4, 13), and all who were of

proper disposition were sanctified by meeting Her. They

finished their journey at Nazareth, where the Princess

of heaven set her house in order and cleaned it with the

assistance of her holy angels, for they vied with Her in

humility and were anxious to serve and honor Her by

taking part in these humble occupations. The holy

Joseph applied himself to his ordinary daily work, pro

viding for the sustenance of the Queen ; and his trusting

heart was not deceived in Her (Prov. 31, 11). She

girded Herself with new strength for the mysteries

which She awaited, and She put forth her hands to

valiant deeds, enjoying in her soul the undimmed vision

of the Treasure of her womb and, connected with it,

256 CITY OF GOD

incomparable delights and blessings. Thus She con

tinued to gain vast merits and made Herself unspeak

ably pleasing to God.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

320. My daughter, the faithful souls and children of

the Church, who know God, must make no distinction of

time, place or occasions in the practice of faith and the

other virtues connected with it. For God is present in

all things and fills them with his infinite being (Jer. 23,

24), and in all places and circumstances faith will enable

them to see and adore Him in spirit and in truth

(John 4, 22). Just as preservation follows upon cre

ation, and as breathing follows upon life, and just as

there is no intermission in the breathing, nourishment

and growth of man until the end is reached : so the

rational creature, after having been regenerated by faith

of grace, must never interrupt the course of the spiritual

life, continually pursuing works of life by faith, hope and

charity in all places and at all time (James 2, 26). On

account of their forgetfulness and carelessness, the chil

dren of men, and especially the members of the Church,

possess the life of faith as if they had lost it, allowing it

to die for want of charity. These are the ones who

have received in vain this their new soul, as David says,

because they neglect it as if they had never obtained it

(Psalm 23, 4).

321. I desire, my dearest, that thy spiritual life be just

as continual as thy natural life. Thou must continue to

lead a life such as is required by the grace and gifts of

the Most High, believing and hoping in the Lord, loving,

praising and adoring Him in spirit and in truth, no

THE INCARNATION 257

matter what changes there may be in time, occupation

or place, He is in all things and He wishes to be loved

and served by all rational creatures. I therefore charge

thee that whenever souls come to thee full of this forget-

fulness of their faults, and harassed by the demons, thou

pray for them with lively faith and confidence. If the

Lord does not always fulfill what thou desirest and what

they ask, He will follow his own secret counsel, and thou

wilt have pleased Him by having acted as a true spouse

and daughter. If thou faithfully followest my instruc

tions, I assure thee that He will confer upon thee many

special privileges for the benefit of souls. Consider what

I did at the sight of souls displeasing to the Lord, and

how zealously I worked for all, and for some in par

ticular. To imitate and oblige me, do thou likewise work

and pray for those whose interior becomes known to thee

through the Lord or through other means; admonish

them with prudence, humility and resignation; for the

Almighty does not desire thee to proceed noisily, nor

that the results of thy labors be always manifest, but that

they remain hidden. In this He conforms Himself to

thy naturally retiring disposition and to thy desires, and

He seeks what is most secure for thee. And, although

thou must pray for all souls, yet thou must pray more

earnestly for those whom the divine will points out to

thee.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DEMONS HOLD A MEETING IN HELL IN ORDER TO

TAKE COUNSEL AGAINST MOST HOLY MARY.

322. At the instant of the incarnation of the Word, as

I said in chapter eleventh (140), Lucifer and all hell

felt the power of the right arm of the Almighty which

hurled them to the deepest of the infernal caverns.

There they remained overwhelmed for some days, until

the Lord in his admirable providence allowed them to

come forth from this captivity, the cause of which they

did not know. The great dragon then arose and scoured

the earth, spying- everywhere for new developments to

which he might attribute the rout which he and all his

satellites had experienced. This search the proud prince

of darkness would not trust entirely to his companions,

but he himself issued forth in their company to course

about upon the globe, seeking with the most cunning

malice to find what he wanted. He spent in this search

three months and finally returned to hell just as ignorant

of the true cause as when he had come forth. For the

great mysteries of heaven were not intelligible to him

at that time, because the darkness of his malice did not

permit him either to rejoice in their wonderful effects or

to glorify and bless their Author. This was reserved to

us men, for whom Redemption was inaugurated.

323. The enemy of God was very much confused and

aggrieved, without knowing how to account for it. In

order to discuss the matter, he called together all the

infernal hosts, without excusing or permitting a single

258

THE INCARNATION 259

one of the demons to be absent. In this convention,

from a place of vantage, he addressed the meeting in this

manner : "You well know, my subjects, with what great

anxiety I, ever since God has cast us out from his dwell

ing and deprived us of our might, have sought to avenge

myself and tried to destroy the power of the Almighty.

Although I cannot do anything to injure Him, I have

spared no time or exertion in extending my dominion

over men whom He loves. By my own strength I have

peopled my reign (Job 41, 25) and many nations and

tribes obey and follow me (Luke 4, 6). Day by day I

draw toward myself innumerable souls, depriving them

of the knowledge and possession of God, in order that

they may not enjoy the happiness which we have lost.

I ensnare them to these eternal pains which we suffer,

since they will follow my teachings and guidance : on

them I will wreak the vengeance which I have conceived

against their Creator. But all this appears of small con

sequence to me in the face of the sudden overthrow which

we have experienced; for an attack so powerful and

ruinous has not happened to us since we were hurled from

heaven. I must acknowledge that as well your as my

power has met a serious shock. This new and extraor

dinary defeat must have some new cause, and our weak

ness, I fear, is the beginning of our ruin."

324. "This matter will require renewed diligence, for

my fury is unquenchable and my vengeance remains insa

tiable. I have scoured the whole earth, observed all its

inhabitants with great care, and yet I have found nothing

notable. I have watched and persecuted all the virtuous

and perfect women who are of the race of Her whom

we saw in heaven, and whom I expected to meet among

them. But I find no sign of her having as yet been

born; for I do not find one who possesses the marks of

260 CITY OF GOD

Her who is to be the Mother of the Messias. A Maiden

whom I feared on account of her great virtues, and

whom I persecuted in the temple, is already married;

and therefore She can not be the one we look for, since

Isaiah says She is to be a Virgin (Is. 7, 14). Never

theless I fear and detest this Maiden, since such a vir

tuous Woman might give birth to the Mother of the

Messias or to some great prophet. To this hour I have

not been able to overcome Her in anything, and of Her

life I understand less than of that of others. She has

always valiantly resisted me, as She eludes my memory;

or remembering Her, I cannot approach Her. I have

not yet been able to decide whether these difficulties in

regard to Her are miraculous, or arise from my forget-

fulness, or whether they are simply the consequences of

the contempt in which I hold such an insignificant

Maiden. But I will consider this matter; for recently

we could not resist the power of her command, by which

we were dispossessed of our right to dwell in those per

sons from whom She drove us. This certainly requires

satisfaction, and She merits my wrath solely on account

of what She has shown Herself to be on these occasions.

I resolve to persecute Her and overcome Her, and do

you yourselves assist me in this enterprise with all your

strength and malice; and those who will distinguish

themselves in this conquest shall receive great rewards

at my hands."

325. The whole infernal rabble, which had listened

attentively to Lucifer, praised and approved his inten

tions, and they told him not to worry over this Woman,

for She would easily be overcome and he should not be

without his triumphs over Her, since his power was so

great and ruled all the world (John 14, 30). Then they

set about discussing the means of entrapping most holy

THE INCARNATION 261

Mary, supposing Her to be a woman of distinguished

and remarkable virtue and holiness, but not the Mother

of the incarnate Word ; for at that time, as I have said,

the demons were ignorant of the hidden sacrament con

nected with Her. Accordingly Lucifer and his com

panions in malice immediately entered upon a mighty

conflict with the heavenly Princess, thus making it pos

sible for Her to crush the head of the infernal dragon

many times (Gen. 3, 15). Yet, though this was a

great battle, and one of the most remarkable conflicts of

her life, She fought another one later on after the

Ascension of her most holy Son into heaven. Of this I

will speak in the third part of this history. It was very

remarkable, because Lucifer at that time already knew

Her as the Mother of God. Saint John speaks of it in

the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, as I will explain

in its place.

326. In dispensing the mysteries of the Incarnation the

providence of the Most High was most admirable, and

so it is even yet in the government of the Catholic

Church. There is no doubt that it is befitting the strong

and sweet providence of God to hide many things from

the demons, which are better unknown to them; as well

because they are unworthy of knowing the sacred mys

teries (for the reason given above in number 318), as

also because the divine power becomes more manifest in

keeping the demons in subjection. But it is especially

necessary that they remain in ignorance in order that

the works of God in the Church and his sacraments may

take their course in greater peace ; also in order that the

unmeasured wrath of the demons may be more effectively

curbed by not allowing them to proceed according to their

malice. Although the Almighty could always repress

and restrain the devils by force, yet He proceeds in this

262 CITY OF GOD

matter according to what is most appropriate to his infi

nite goodness. On this account the Lord concealed from

these enemies the dignity of the most holy Mary and the

wonderful manner of her pregnancy, as well as her

virginal integrity before and after the birth ; and He con

cealed it still more effectively by giving her a husband.

Likewise they were uncertain of the Divinity of Christ

our Lord until the moment of his Death ; only then they

saw that they had been deceived and misled in regard to

many mysteries of the Redemption. Instead of inciting

the Jews to inflict upon Him the most cruel death, they

would have sought to prevent it, and they would have

tried to retard our Redemption by making known to the

world that Christ is the true God. Therefore, when

saint Peter confessed Him as such, Christ forbade him

and the rest of the Apostles to make it known to any

body (Matth. 16, 20). Although, on account of the

miracles He wrought and the exorcisms which He per

formed (Luke 8, 28), they almost began to suspect Him

to be the Messias, and called Him Son of God; yet his

Majesty would not allow them to publish it about. Nor

did they call Him so with certain conviction. For their

suspicions subsided when they saw our Lord despised and

fatigued : they could never penetrate the mystery of the

Savior s humility and their inflated pride kept them in

darkness.

327. Since Lucifer then did not kno\*v the dignity

of Mary the Mother of God at the time of this persecu

tion, fierce as it was, it was not so terrible as the one She

suffered later on, when He knew who She was. If in

this present occasion he had known that She was the

One whom he had seen in heaven clothed with the sun

and (Apoc. 12, 1) that She was to crush his head

(Gen. 3, 15), he would have been lashed into devouring

THE INCARNATION 263

fury and consumed in fiery wrath. If they were so

fearfully enraged at the mere thought of her sanctity and

perfection, it is certain, that, had they known her great

ness, they would, as far as would be allowed them, have

disturbed the whole universe, in order to make an end of

Her. However, since they on the one hand were igno

rant of the mysteries of the heavenly Lady and other

hand felt the effects of her extreme virtue and sanctity,

they were on this occasion thrown into confusion and

doubt, asking each other : who this Woman could be,

against whom they saw their power dwindle into insig

nificance? And whether perhaps She was not the one

who was to hold first place among creatures ?

328. Others judged that She could not possibly be the

Mother of the Messias, for whom men were waiting;

for besides having a husband, She with her husband

belonged to the poorest, humblest, and the most insig

nificant people in this world : they had wrought no public

miracles or prodigies, nor had they attracted the esteem

or reverence of any of their fellowmen. As Lucifer and

his associates are so proud, they could not persuade

themselves that such extreme humility and self-debase

ment can consort with the dignity of Mother of God.

Lucifer thought that God in his power would not choose

for Himself what the devil had considered unworthy of

his own dignity, which he knew was beneath that of the

Almighty. In short, he was deceived by his own arro

gance and giddy pride, for these are the vices which are

most apt to darken the intellect and to drag the will to

ruin. On this account Solomon says, that their own

malice has made them blind (Sap. 2, 21), in order that

they might not know that the eternal Word was to

make use of such means in order to destroy the arro

gance and haughtiness of the dragon. For his thoughts

264 CITY OF GOD

were distant from those of the Almighty farther than

the earth is distant from heaven (Is. 55, 9). He

thought that God would come from heaven into the

world with great show of strength and opposition, humil

iating by his power the proud princes and monarchs,

which the demon had filled with his own arrogance ; and

so well had he succeeded, that many, who reigned before

the time of Christ, were inflated with such pride and pre

sumption, as to have lost their common sense and to

have forgotten that they were mortal and earthly. Lucifer

judged of all these things according to his own vanity

and according to his own method of proceeding against

the works of the Lord.

329. But the infinite Wisdom took measures beyond

all the calculations of Lucifer: for He came to conquer

him not only by his Omnipotence, but by humility, meek

ness, obedience and poverty, which are the weapons of

his warfare (II Cor. 10, 4) ; far from Him are the

empty show and vanity maintained by the riches of the

world. He came disguised and hidden in the outward

appearance of lowliness; He chose a poor Mother. All

that the world values, He came to despise, teaching the

true science of life in word and example. Thus the

devil found himself deceived and overcome by the very

things that were most repugnant and unbearable to him.

330. In ignorance of all these mysteries Lucifer spent

some days in spying out and reconnoitering the natural

condition of most holy Mary, her character, temperament,

inclinations, the tranquillity, evenness and considerateness

of her conduct; but the enemy could discover no flaw.

Seeing the perfection and sweetness of all that concerned

Her, and that She was like an impregnable wall, he re

turned to his demons and laid before them the great

difficulty of tempting Her. All of them projected mighty

THE INCARNATION 265

plans of attack, encouraging each other in trying to solve

the difficulties. Of the execution of these designs, of the

glorious triumphs of the heavenly Princess over all her

enemies, and of the foiling of all their damned and ma

licious counsels, I will speak in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, THE MOST HOLY MARY.

331. My daughter, I wish that thou be very cautious

and watchful in regard to the ignorance and darkness,

by which the demon commonly ensnares mortals and

makes them forget their eternal salvation and the con

tinual danger of its loss through his persecutions. Men

are lost in forgetful rest and sleep, as if there were no

vigilant and powerful enemies. This dreadful careless

ness arises from two causes: on the one hand men are

so taken up with their earthly and sensible being

(I Cor. 2, 14), that they do not feel any other evils ex

cept those concerning the animal nature in them; all

that is interior is harmless in their estimation. On the

other hand, since the princes of darkness are invisible and

unperceived by any of the senses (Ephes. 6, 12) and

since carnal men neither touch, nor feel, nor see them,

they forget the fear of them. Yet for this very reason

they ought to be more attentive and careful, since invis

ible enemies are more cunning and adroit in injuring us

by their treachery. So much the more certain is the

danger, the more concealed it is, and so much the more

deadly are the wounds, the less they are felt and recog

nized.

332. Listen, my daughter, to most important truths

concerning eternal life. Attend to my counsels, follow

my instructions and receive my warnings; for if thou

266 CITY OF GOD

pass them by unheeded, I will cease to speak to thee.

Hear what thou hast not until now known of the dis

position of these enemies. I wish to make known to thee

that no intellect, nor any tongue of man or angels can

describe the wrath and fury which Lucifer and his

demons entertain against mortals just because they are

images of God and because they are capable of enjoying

Him for all eternity. The Lord alone can comprehend

the wicked malice of these proud and rebellious spirits

against his holy name and against his worship. If these

foes were not restrained by his almighty arm they would

in one moment destroy the world; they would like fam

ishing lions, like wild beasts and fierce dragons, despatch

all mankind and tear them to pieces. Now however

the most kind Father of all mercies wards off and curbs

their wrath and He bears his little children in his arms

in order that they may not fall a prey to these hellish

wolves.

333. Consider then, as seriously as thou canst,

whether anything deserves greater pity, than to see so

many men misled into danger and made forgetful of it;

how some of them cast themselves into it on account of

their lightheartedness, some of them for trivial reasons,

others for a short and instantaneous pleasure, others

through negligence, and yet others on account of their in

ordinate appetites, tearing themselves away from the

places of refuge, in which the Almighty has placed them,

to fall into the hands of such cruel and furious enemies ;

and not only to feel their fury for an hour, a day, a month,

or a year, but to suffer indescribable and unmeasured tor

ments for all eternity. Thou shouldst be rilled with fear

and wonder, my daughter, to see such horrible and dread

ful foolishness among the impenitent mortals and to see

even the faithful, who have come to know and confess

THE INCARNATION 267

all this by faith, so far lose their understanding and allow

themselves to be so insanely blinded by the devil that

they neither regard nor avoid this danger.

334. In order that thou mayest fear it and preserve

thyself the better, remember that this dragon knows thee

and lurks about thee ever since the hour of thy creation

and entrance into this world. Night and day he rest

lessly prowls about seeking some chance of capturing

thee as a prize. He observes thy natural inclinations

and also the gifts of the Lord, in order to combat thee

with thy own weapons. He charges other demons with

thy ruin and promises reward to those that are more

diligent in securing it. They weigh thy actions carefully,

watch thy footsteps, and work zealously to lay snares for

thee in all thy undertakings. I desire thee to meditate

on these truths in the Lord, who will show thee whither

they lead; compare them afterwards with thy own ex

perience and thou wilt understand, whether thou hast

any occasion for sleep in the midst for such dangers.

Although this watchfulness is important for all the

woman-born, it is more necessary to thee than to others

for especial reasons : and if I do not mention them all

,to thee now, do not doubt, that thou must live with great

vigilance and caution. It suffices to remind thee of thy

soft and yielding nature, which thy enemies will strive

to make use of for thy destruction.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE LORD PREPARES MOST HOLY MARY TO MEET LUCIFER

IN BATTLE AND THE DRAGON BEGINS TO PERSECUTE

HER.

335. The eternal Word, already made man in the

womb of Mary the Virgin, and possessing Her as his

Mother, was aware of the designs of Lucifer, not only

through the uncreated knowledge of his Godhead, but

also by the created knowledge of his humanity. He pre

pared the defense of his tabernacle, which was more

estimable in his sight than all the rest of the creatures.

In order to clothe the invincible Lady with new strength

against the foolhardy daring of the treacherous dragon

and his hosts, the most holy humanity of Christ, rose up

as it were in an attitude of defense in the virginal

chamber of Mary in order to meet and offer battle to

the princes of darkness. In this position He prayed to

the Father and asked Him to renew his favors and graces

in Mary, in order that She might with added strength

crush the head of the ancient serpent, that this Woman

might humiliate and overcome him, frustrate his designs

and all his powers, and that She come forth triumphant

and victorious over hell to the glory and praise of God and

of his virginal Mother.

336. The prayer of Christ our Lord was punctually

fulfilled in the most blessed Trinity. Then, in an inde

scribable manner, her most holy Son was shown to Mary

in her virginal womb. In this vision the plenitude of

graces and unspeakable gifts were vouchsafed to Her.

268

THE INCARNATION 269

Illumined anew with additional light of wisdom She

recognized the highest and most hidden mysteries im

possible to describe. She understood especially that

Lucifer had prepared vast designs of pride against the

glory of the Lord; and that his arrogance rose up to

drink the pure waters of Jordan (Job 40, 18). The

Most High, informing Her of these things, said to Her :

"My Spouse and my Dove, the infernal dragon thirsts

with such wrath against my holy name and all those that

adore it, that he wishes to drag toward him all without

exception and with daring presumption he tries to blot

out my name from the land of the living. - I wish thee,

my Beloved, to come to the defense of my cause and of

my holy name, by giving battle to the cruel enemy; and

I will be with thee in battle, since I am in thy virginal

womb. I wish that thou confound and destroy the

enemies before I appear in the world ; for they are con

vinced that the Redemption of the world is nigh and

therefore they desire to gain over and ruin all souls

without exception, before the world is redeemed. I trust

this victory to thy fidelity and love. Do thou battle in

my name, just as I in thee, against this dragon and

ancient serpent" (Apoc. 12, 9).

337. These words of the Lord and the knowledge of

these secrets so moved the heart of the heavenly Mother,

that I cannot find expression for that which then hap

pened. When She understood, that her most holy Son

wished Her to defend the honor of the Most High, She

was so inflamed with divine love and filled with such in

vincible fortitude, that, if each one of the demons would

have been an entire hell and filled with the fury of all its

inmates, they altogether would have been only like a

few weak ants, compared to the incomparable strength

of this our valiant Leader. All of them She would have

2-19

270 CITY OF GOD

vanquished and destroyed by the smallest part of her

virtues and of her zeal for the honor and glory of the

Lord. And her divine Protector and Helper ordained

this glorious triumph of his most holy Mother over hell,

in order that the arrogance of his enemies might no

longer lord it over us nor rest assured of being able to

destroy the world. But He wished to hasten its Redemp

tion and put us mortals under obligation not only to the

inestimable love of his most holy Son, but also to Mary,

our heavenly Defender and Reparatrix. She was to

issue forth to battle, stop his progress, vanquish and

suppress him, placing mankind on a proper footing for

the reception of their Redeemer.

338. O sons of men, dull and slow of heart ! How is

it that you do not heed such admirable blessings ? Who

is man, that Thou shouldst honor and favor Him thus

(Ps. 8, 5), O most high King! Thy own Mother and

our Mistress Thou sendest out to labor and combat in

our defense! Who ever heard of similar happenings?

Who has ever shown such force and ingenuity of love?

Where is our intellect ? Who has deprived us of the use

of reason? What hardness of heart is this? What has

drawn us into such vile ingratitude? What shameful

conduct of men, who, while they claim to love and honor

Her so much, are guilty of such low and infamous in

gratitude as to forget such an obligation? The true

nobility and honor of the sons of Adam would rather

seem to consist in thanking Her incessantly and sacrific

ing their lives in gratitude !

339. The obedient Mother, offering Herself to battle

with Lucifer for the honor of her most holy Son, of the

holy Trinity and our own, answered Him that had com

manded Her, saying : "My Lord and highest Good, from

whom I have received my being and all the grace and

THE INCARNATION 271

light which I possess: to Thee I belong entirely, and

Thou, Lord, hast condescended to be my Son. Do with

thy servant, what shall be to thy greater glory and pleas

ure. For if Thou art in me, and I in Thee, who shall

be powerful enough to resist thy will? I shall be the

instrument of thy almighty arm : give me thy strength

and come with me, and let us go forth to battle against

the dragon with all his followers." In the meanwhile

Lucifer issued from the meeting, now rilled with such

hateful spite against Her, that he considered the perdition

of all the other souls as of small consequence. If we

could know the fury of satan as it is in reality, we would

understand better what God says to holy Job, that he

counts steel as straw and bronze as rotten wood

(Job 41, 18). Such was the wrath of the dragon against

most holy Mary; and such it is even now against the

souls; for if he esteemed the most holy, the invincible

and most strong Woman to be no more than a dried up

leaf, what will he do to sinners, who like empty and de

caying reeds do not withstand him? (Ephes. 6, 16).

Living faith alone and humility of heart are the double

armor which enable them to procure glorious victory.

340. In order to begin his battle Lucifer brought with

him the seven legions with their seven principal leaders,

whom after the fall from heaven he had appointed to

tempt men to the seven capital sins (Apoc. 12). Each of

these seven squadrons he charged with the duty of ex

erting their utmost strength against the immaculate

Princess. The invincible Lady was occupied in prayer,

when the Lord permitted the first legion of devils to

begin the battle by tempting Her to the sin of pride, to

which special work they had been appointed. They

sought to approach the heavenly Queen by trying to cause

changes in her natural passions and inclinations, for this

272 CITY OF GOD

is the ordinary way in which the demons find access to

other mortals ; and they thought that She was infected in

the same way as other men with passions disordered by

sin. They could not however come as close to Her as

they wished, for they were repelled by the fragrance of

her virtues and holiness, which tormented them more

than the fire which consumes them. In spite of this

obstacle and although the very sight of most holy Mary

pierced them with raging torments, they nevertheless

ignored their pains and lashed themselves into furious

and ungovernable wrath in their obstinate endeavors to

approach nearer to Her and exert upon Her their cursed

and damnable influence.

341. The most holy Mary, who was alone and left

only to her natural forces, stood prepared for the assault

of those countless demons; yet She by Herself was as

formidable and terrible (Cant. 6, 3) to them as many

armies in battle array. They presented themselves before

Her (Ps. 118, 85) in the most horrid masks and with

wicked lies. But the sovereign Queen, teaching us how

to conquer, did not change her position nor was moved

interiorly or exteriorly, nor did She show any emotion

of fear in her countenance. She took no notice of them,

nor attended to them any more than if they had been

the weakest ants. She despised them with an invincible

and magnanimous heart ; for this kind of battle, as it is a

battle of virtues, is not accompanied by the extremes of

noise and excitement, but is fought in all tranquillity, in

outward and inward peace and modesty. Just as little

could She be moved by the passions and the appetites ; for

these were not in subservience to the devil in our Queen.

In Her they were all swayed by reason, and this again

was subject to God, since none of her faculties had been

cast into disorder by the first sin, as in the rest of the

THE INCARNATION 273

children of Adam. Therefore the arrows of these

enemies, as David says, were like those of little children

(Ps. 63, 8), and their armories were like those which

were without ammunition. Only to themselves were

they harmful, for their weakness only brought upon

them confusion. Although they were not aware of the

innocence and the original justice of most holy Mary

and therefore did not understand that She was not to

be injured by the common temptations; yet by the

Majesty of her bearing and her constancy they could

conjecture their ill-success and how She despised them.

Their efforts were not of the least avail ; for, as says the

Apostle in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 12, 18) and as I have

mentioned in the first part (1-129), the earth helped the

Woman, who was clothed with the sun, when the dragon

opened upon Her the flood of his impetuous temptations ;

meaning thereby, that the earthly body of this Lady had

not been vitiated in its faculties and passions, as those of

others, who had been touched by sin.

342. The demons then assumed corporeal shapes of

the most horrible and dreadful kind; and they began to

emit fearful howls, roaring with terrible voices, pre

tending to rush upon Her and threatening destruction;

they shook the earth and the house, striving also by other

furious assaults to frighten and disturb the Princess of

the world; so that at least in this, or in making Her

desist from prayer, they might seem victorious. But the

invincible and magnanimous heart of most holy Mary

was not disturbed, nor moved in the least. It must be

remembered, that in order to enter upon this battle, the

Lord left Her entirely to the resources of her own faith

and virtue. He suspended the effects of the other favors

and privileges, which She was wont to enjoy at other

times. The Most High wished it so, in order that the

274 CITY OF GOD

triumph of his Mother might be more glorious and

honorable; besides this there were the other reasons,

which God has in allowing the souls to be tempted in

this manner. His judgments are unsearchable and un

knowable (Rom. 11, 33). At times the great Lady

would repeat : "Who is like unto God, that lives in the

highest and looks upon the humble in heaven and on

earth?" (Ps. 112, 5). By these words She routed the

hosts that opposed Her.

343. Then these hungry wolves laid aside their terri

ble shapes : they assumed sheeps clothing, transforming

themselves into angels of light, resplendent and beautiful.

Approaching the heavenly Lady, they said: "Thou hast

conquered, Thou hast conquered, we come to attend on

Thee and reward thy fortitude and invincible courage."

Surrounding Her, they protested their friendship in flat

tering and deceitful terms. But the most prudent Lady

withdrew within Herself, suspended all the activity

of her senses and, raising Herself above Herself

(Thren. 3, 28) by means of the infused virtues, adored

the Lord in spirit and in truth (Jno. 4, 23). De

spising all the snares of these evil tongues and their

deceitful lies, She spoke to her most holy Son : "My Lord

and Master, Light of light and my Strength, in thy help

alone do I place all my confidence and the exaltation of

thy holy name. All those that speak otherwise I abjure,

abhor and detest." But the doers of evil persevered in

their insane attempts against the Mother of knowledge

and continued to extol beyond the skies Her, who had

humiliated Herself beneath the lowest of creatures. They

protested that they wished to exalt Her above all women

and confer upon Her an exquisite favor: they would

select Her in the name of the Lord for the Mother of the

THE INCARNATION 275

Messias, and they assured Her that her holiness would

be greater than that of the Patriarchs and Prophets.

344. Lucifer himself was the author of this new plot

and his malice is here made known for a warning to

other souls. But it was ridiculous to offer to Mary, the

Queen of heaven, a dignity already her own. They

themselves were ensnared and deceived, not only in offer

ing what they neither knew nor were able to give, but

also in being ignorant of the sacrament of the King so in

timately connected with the most blessed Woman, whom

they persecuted. Nevertheless the iniquity of the dragon

was great, because he knew that he could not fulfill what

he promised. He tried to spy out whether perhaps our

blessed Lady held that dignity, or whether She would

give him some signs, by which he could conjecture it.

Most holy Mary was aware of this double-dealing of

Lucifer, and admirably met it with a quiet firmness. She

answered the deceitful flatteries by quietly continuing

her prayer and adoring the Lord. Prostrated upon the

floor She humiliated Herself, confessing Herself as the

most despicable of creatures, more despicable than the

dust under her feet. By this humble prayer and prostra

tion She cut off the presumptuous pride of Lucifer as

long as this temptation lasted. As for the rest which

happened, the cunning of the demons, their cruelty and

lying deceits on this occasion, it seemed to me, that I

should not relate all, nor that I should expatiate on all

that has been shown to me ; let this much suffice for our

instruction; for not all can be trusted to the ignorance

of weak and earthly creatures.

345. Dismayed and routed, the first host of enemies

retired and gave way to the second. These were to

tempt Her, who was the most poor of human kind, to

the sin of avarice. They offered to Her great riches,

276 CITY OF GOD

gold, silver, and most precious gems and in order that

these might not seem empty promises, thy placed before

Her a great quantity of these riches, although they were

only apparent; for they thought that they could exert

greater influence on her will by actually presenting these

objects before Her. They accompanied this offer with

many deceitful words and told Her that God had sent

Her all this for distribution among the poor. When

they saw that all this had no effect upon Her, they

changed their tactics and urged, that since She was so

holy, it was a great wrong that She should remain so

poor. It was more reasonable that She possess these

riches, than that they remain in the hands of wicked

sinners, for this would be an injustice and a disarrange

ment of the divine Providence that the just be visited

with poverty, while God s wicked enemies abound in

riches and affluence.

346. In vain the net is spread before the eyes of the

bird in its flight, says the wise man. This was true of

all the temptations of our sovereign Queen; but the

malice of the serpent was much more preposterous in

regard to this temptation of avarice, for this Phoenix of

poverty was so far removed from the earth, and winged

her flight so far above that of even the seraphim, that

such a vile and contemptible snare was entirely in vain.

The most prudent Lady, although She possessed divine

wisdom, never undertook to argue with these enemies, as

in truth nobody should ; for they battle against the mani

fest truth and will not admit defeat, even when they

must acknowledge its effects. The most holy Mary made

use of some words of the holy Scriptures and repeated

them with serene humility. On this occasion She selected

the words of the 1 18th Psalm : "Haereditate acquisivi test-

imonia tua in aeternum." "I have acquired for my heri-

THE INCARNATION 277

tage and for my riches the keeping of thy testimonies and

thy laws, my Lord" (Ps. 118, 112). She made use of

many other passages, gratefully praising and blessing the

Most High, because He had created and preserved Her

without her merits. In this most wise manner She re

jected and overcame the second temptation, to the con

fusion and torment of these agents of iniquity.

347. Then advanced the third legion, led on by the

prince of impurity who assails the weakness of the flesh.

These made so much the greater efforts, because they

foresaw more clearly the improbability of success ; and in

truth they gained less than all the others, if one may

speak of more or less in these different temptations of the

Virgin Mary. They tried to suggest to Her vile images

and to produce before her eyes unspeakable monstrosities.

But all their efforts vanished in midair ; for the most pure

Virgin, as soon as She had recognized the first signs of

this vice, withdrew entirely within Herself and suspended

all the activity of her senses. Thus not even the shadow

of a suggestion or indecent image could enter her

thoughts, since none of her faculties were in action. With

the most ardent longing She renewed many times her

vow of chastity in the presence of the Lord, and She

merited more on this occasion than all the virgins that

ever existed or will exist in this world. The Almighty

furnished Her with such virtue, that in comparison the

sudden expulsion of the cannon ball from the cannon, is

but a poor image of the force with which these enemies

were repelled from the presence of most holy Mary when

they sought to touch her purity by their temptations.

348. The fourth legion undertook to test her meek

ness and patience, seeking to move this mildest Dove to

anger. This temptation was most annoying, for the

demons overturned the whole house: they broke and

278 CITY OF GOD

shattered everything contained therein, and in such a

manner as to cause the greatest amount of annoyance

to the most meek Lady ; but her holy angels soon repaired

all the damage. Foiled in this attempt, the demons as

sumed the shapes of some women known to the serenest

Princess. They flew at Her with greater wrath and fury

than if they had been real women ; they added outrageous

insults, dared to threaten Her, and took possession of

things most necessary. But all these were only despicable

tricks in the eyes of Her that knew them; for none of

their pranks and assaults escaped the penetration of the

most holy Mary. She disregarded them altogether and

despised them entirely, without giving any signs of being

moved or influenced by them. The demons then chose

a real woman of a disposition adapted to their purposes,

whom they influenced by diabolical art against the Prin

cess of heaven. For this purpose one of the demons as

sumed the shape of an acquaintance of this Woman and

began to tell her that this Mary, the wife of Joseph, had

slandered her in her presence and had accused her of

many gross faults, which this demon invented for the

occasion.

349. The deceived woman, who was naturally very

much inclined to anger, hastened furiously to our meekest

Lamb and hurled at Her the vilest accusations and in

sults. She, however, allowing the angry woman to pour

out her wrath gradually began to speak to her in words

so humble and sweet, that She changed her entirely, ap

peased and softened her heart. When She had thus

brought her about, She consoled and admonished her

against the wiles of the devil. As this woman was poor,

Mary added some alms and dismissed her in peace. Thus

also this attempt was foiled, just as were many others,

by which Lucifer tried to irritate our meekest Dove and

THE INCARNATION 279

bring her into discredit. The Most High always defended

the honor of his most holy Mother, making use of her

own perfection in virtue and of her prudence and humil

ity, so that the devil could never succeed in harming her

good name in the least. She always acted so prudently

and with so much meekness and wisdom, that the multi

tude of the hellish attempts were totally ineffectual. The

tranquillity and meekness of the sovereign Lady during

these temptations of the dragon caused the admiration

of the angels. Even the demons were full of astonish

ment, (though of a different kind), at seeing such be

havior in a mere creature and that a woman; for never

had they seen the like.

350. The fifth legion followed with temptations to

gluttony. Although the ancient serpent did not bid our

Queen to turn stones into bread (Matth. 4, 3) as he after

wards presumed to do with her most holy Son (for he

had not seen Her do such great wonders, since they had

been withheld from his knowledge), yet he tempted Her

like the first woman with the pleasures of the taste

(Gen. 1). They placed before Her a great feast, in order

to incite and mislead her appetite by outward allurance;

they tried to influence the humors of her body, so as to

cause in Her a counterfeit hunger and they used other

means to attract her attention to what they were offering.

But all their labor was in vain and without effect; for

from all these material and earthly things the noble heart

of our Princess was as far removed as heaven is from

earth. Just as little did She use her senses in order to

enjoy the pleasures of taste, yea She never even took

notice of them ; for in all things She had set Herself to

counteract what our first mother Eve had done. Eve

incautiously and heedlessly had looked upon the beauty

of the tree of knowledge and upon its sweet fruit,

280 CITY OF GOD

and then had reached out her hand to eat, thus beginning

our woe. Not so most holy Mary, who withdrew and

locked up her senses, although She was in no such danger

as Eve. Our first mother was overcome for our perdi

tion, while our Queen conquered for our rescue and sal

vation.

351. Much dismayed by the discomfitures of the pre

ceding hosts, the spirits of envy approached. Though

they could not estimate the full perfection of the deeds

of the Mother of sanctity, they nevertheless felt her in

vincible strength. They had seen Her so unmovable that

they almost despaired of enticing Her to any of their

wicked purposes. Nevertheless the insatiate hatred of

the dragon and his inmeasurable pride would not yield;

they laid new plots in order to provoke the Lady most

beloved of the Lord and of men to envy in others what

She Herself possessed and even what She abhorred as

useless and dangerous. They drew up a long list of

natural blessings possessed by others and denied to Her.

And as they thought that supernatural gifts would move

Her more, they mentioned great spiritual favors and

blessings, which the Almighty had conferred upon others

and not upon Her. But how could these lying repre

sentations move Her, who was the Mother of all the

graces and gifts of heaven? For the blessings of all the

creatures taken together were less than her single privi

lege of being the Mother of the Author of grace. Pre

cisely because his Majesty had so favored Her and be

cause the fire of his charity burned within Her, She

ardently desired, that the hand of the Most High enrich

and favor her fellowmen so much the more. How then

could envy find room, where charity abounded?

(I Cor. 13, 4). But the fierce enemies would not desist.

They pictured to the Queen the apparent happiness of

THE INCARNATION 281

those, who in their riches and good fortune, considered

themselves happy and exalted in this world. They in

duced several persons to approach most holy Mary and

describe to Her the consolation of being rich and well-to-

do. As if this deceitful happiness of mortals had not

been condemned so often in holy Scriptures (Ps. 48),

and as if contempt of riches had not been the very science

and doctrine, which the Queen of heaven and her most

holy Son had come to exemplify in their lives for the

benefit of the whole world!

352. Those persons, who came to our heavenly Mother,

were exhorted by Her to use the temporal goods and

riches well and to give thanks for them to the Author of

all good. She Herself fulfilled this duty, making up for

the habitual ingratitude of men. Although the most

humble Lady judged Herself unworthy of the least of

blessings of the Most High; yet Her own sanctity and

exalted dignity in point of fact gave witness to the words

of holy Scriptures saying in her name : "With me are

glorious riches and justice. For my fruit is better than

gold and precious stone" (Prov. 8, 18). "In me is all

grace of the way and the truth, in me is all hope of life

and of virtue" (Eccli. 24, 25). In this exalted excel

lence of virtue She conquered all her enemies, astonishing

and confusing them by this new experience. For they

were made to feel that where they had exerted their

greatest force and their deepest cunning, they gained least

and experienced the greatest repulse.

353. Nevertheless the demons stubbornly persisted and

proceeded with the seventh temptation, which was that of

idleness. They sought to cause in Her a corporeal indis

position, or a feeling of weakness and fatigue, accom

panied by dejection of spirit. This is a trick of satan

little known and under its cover the sin of laziness causes

282 CITY OF GOD

much ruin among souls and prevents much progress in

virtue. They suggested moreover that She postpone

some exercises on account of weariness in order to be

able to perform them so much the better after having

rested. This too is one among many other tricks of satan,

and we do not often discover it or know what to do

against it. They also sought maliciously to hinder the

most holy Lady in some exercises by means of human

creatures, whom they sent to visit Her at unseasonable

times, trying to impede the performance of some of her

holy exercises and occupations at the time and hour set

for them. But all these delusions were detected by the

most prudent and alert Princess. She evaded them by

her wise precautions, without permitting the enemy to

succeed in any of them and acting in all things up to the

standard of the most exquisite perfection. Her enemies

were obliged to desist, hopelessly foiled and repulsed.

Lucifer was full of rage against his companions and

against himself. But in their fury and insane pride, they

resolved to make one more general assault upon Mary,

as I will relate in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE MOST HOLY

QUEEN MARY.

354. My daughter, although thou hast only very

briefly summed up my lengthy battle against temptations,

I wish that from what thou hast written and from what

thou knowest otherwise concerning these things, thou

learn the manner of resisting and overcoming the powers

of hell. The surest way of fighting the demon is to de

spise him, looking upon him as the enemy of the Most

High, who has lost all fear of God and all hope of good ;

who in his stubbornness has deprived himself of all means

THE INCARNATION 283

of recovery and is without sorrow for his wickedness.

Relying on this indubitable truth thou shouldst show thy

self far superior to him, exalted and unflinching in thy

thoughts, and treat him as a contemner of the honor and

worship of his God. Knowing that thou art defending

so just a cause, do not let thy courage sink; but resist

and counteract him with great strength and valor in all

his attempts, as if thou wert fighting at the side of the

Lord himself; for there is no doubt that his Majesty

assists all those that enter loyally into his battles. Thou

art truly in good hope and in the way of eternal life

glory, as long as thou laborest faithfully for thy Lord

and God.

355. Remember then, that the demons detest and

abominate that which thou desirest and lovest, namely

the honor of God and thy eternal felicity; and that they

are striving to deprive thee of that which they cannot

restore to themselves. God has reprobated the demon,

while He offers to thee his grace, his virtues and his

strength in order to overcome his and thy enemy and to

procure for thee the happy end of eternal peace; only

thou must work faithfully and keep the commandments

of the Lord. The arrogance of the dragon is great

(Is. 16, 6), yet his weakness is greater; and he does not

represent more than a weak atom in the face of the

divine power. Yet as his cunning and malice far ex

ceed that of mortals (Job 41, 21), it is not advisable to

allow the soul to bandy words with him, whether he is

present invisibly or visibly; for from his darksome mind,

as from a smoking furnace, issue the shadows of con

fusion, obscuring the judgments of mortals; if they

listen to him, he will fill their minds with deceits and

darkness, so that they will neither recognize the truth and

the beauty of virtue, nor the vileness of his poisonous

284 CITY OF GOD

falsehoods. Thus the souls will be made unable to dis

tinguish the precious from the worthless, life from death,

truth from error (Jer. 15, 19), and they easily fall into

the clutches of this fierce and wicked dragon.

356. In temptation let it be thy invariable course not

to attend to anything which he proposes, not to listen,

not to argue with him concerning aught. If thou canst

withdraw and place thyself at a distance, so as not to

perceive or recognize his wicked attempts, so much the

more secure thou wilt be for thus looking upon him only

at a distance. The demon always seeks to prepare the

way for his deceits, especially in souls which he fears

will resist his entrance unless he can thus facilitate his

approach. He is accustomed to begin by causing sorrow

or dejection of heart, or he makes use of other trickery

or snares, by which he diverts or withdraws the soul from

the love of the Lord ; then he comes with his poison, con

cealed in the golden cup in order to diminish the horror

of the soul. As soon as thou noticest in thyself any of

these signs, ( for thou hast thy experience, obedience and

instructions for a guide), I wish that with the wings of

the dove thou direct thy flight to the high refuge of the

Almighty (Ps. 54, 7), calling upon Him for aid and

proffering the merits of my most holy Son. To me also

shouldst thou fly for protection as I am thy Mother and

Teacher, and to thy devoted angels, and to all the rest of

thy advocates in the Lord. Quickly close up thy senses

and consider thyself as dead to them, or as a soul already

belonging to the other life, whither the jurisdiction and

the exacting tyranny of the serpent does not reach.

Occupy thyself so much the more earnestly in the exer

cise of the virtue contrary to the vice to which he tempts

thee, and especially in acts of faith, hope and love, which

THE INCARNATION 285

dispel cowardice and doubt, and weaken the influence of

discouragement and fear in the human heart.

357. The arguments for overcoming Lucifer thou must

seek in God alone; and do not disclose them to your

enemy, lest he meet thee with fallacies and confusing pre

tense. Besides knowing it to be dangerous, esteem it as

unworthy of thee to argue with him openly, or to pay

particular attention to him, who is not only the enemy of

thy Beloved but also of thee. Show thyself superior

to him and highmindedly apply thyself to the practice of

all virtues. Be content with this treasure and withdraw

thyself; for the most skillful battle of the sons of God

consists in flying farthest from evil. The devil is proud

and is deeply hurt by contempt; in the presumption of

his arrogance and vanity he desires above all the attention

of men. On this account he is so persistent in pursuing

us step by step; for in his deceitfulness he cannot rely

upon the force of truth, but on his persistent counter

feiting of the good and the true. As long as this slave of

wickedness is not despised, he never believes himself dis

covered and he continues, like an importunate fly, to buzz

about the spot tainted by the greatest corruption.

358. Not less warily must thou conduct thyself, when

thy enemy makes use of other creatures for thy destruc

tion. This he does in two ways : either leading them on

to immoderate love, or to undue dislike or hatred. As

soon as thou noticest a disorderly affection in those with

whom thou conversest, observe the same precaution as in

flying from the demon; yet with this difference, that

while thou hatest him as thy enemy, thou consider the

others as God s creatures to whom thou must not deny

the consideration due to them on account of his Majesty.

But in as far as withdrawing from them is concerned,

act as if they were thy enemies; for in regard to the ser-

2-20

286 CITY OF GOD

vice, which the Lord requires of thee and in regard to

thy present condition, it is the devil who operates in these

persons toward separating thee from thy God and from

thy duty. If on the other hand they hate and persecute

thee, answer them with meekness and love, praying for

them with intimate affection of thy heart (Matth. 5, 44).

If it should be necessary, soothe the wrath of thy per

secutors with sweet words, and undeceive those who are

led astray by false reports. Do this not in order to ex

cuse thyself, but in order to pacify thy brothers and for

their inward and outward peace; thus thou wilt at one

and the same time conquer thyself and those who hate

thee. In order to be well practiced in this way of acting

it is necessary to cut off the very roots of the capital sins,

to tear them out, and to die to the movements of the

appetites. For in these appetites the seven capital vices

to which the devil leads men, are rooted, and in these dis

orderly and undisciplined passions he sows the germs of

the seven sins.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WITH AU, HIS SEVEN LEGIONS PERSISTS IN

TEMPTING MOST HOLY MARY; SHE CONQUERS THE

DRAGON AND CRUSHES HIS HEAD.

359. Even if the prince of darkness and wickedness

had now retreated, his exorbitant pride would have been

sufficiently discomfited and humiliated by the victories,

which had been gained by the Queen of heaven. But as,

even if vanquished, he continues to rise up against God

with insatiate malice, he did not acknowledge his defeat

(Ps. 73, 23). Finding himself conquered, and conquered

so completely by an apparently insignificant and weak

Woman, though he and his hosts had overcome so many

valiant men and high-minded women, his fury raged on

ward, though in smothered flames of wrath. God had

permitted the enemies to become aware of the pregnancy

of the most holy Mary, though leaving them under the

impression, that it was entirely a natural process ; for the

Divinity of the Child and other mysteries connected with

It always remained hidden to these enemies. Hence they

persuaded themselves that this was not the promised

Messias, since they held this Child to be a man like the

rest of the human race. This error also confirmed them

in the mistake that most holy Mary was not the Mother

of the Word (Gen. 3, 15) : Both of whom were to crush

the head of the dragon. Yet they were persuaded that

of a Woman so valiant and victorious, some man of dis

tinguished sanctity would be born. The great dragon,

convinced of this, conceived against the fruit of the most

287

288 CITY OF GOD

holy Mary that vast fury mentioned in the twelfth chap

ter of the Apocalypse and referred to in this history, and

he awaited the birth of her Son in order to devour Him.

360. Whenever Lucifer directed his looks toward this

Child enclosed in the womb of the most holy Mary, he

felt a mysterious power oppressing him. Although his

presence seemed to cause only a certain weakening and

deadening of his strength; yet this was sufficient to en

rage him and to make him seek by all means the destruc

tion of this suspicious Child and of his victorious Mother.

Assuming the most fearful shapes of fiercest bulls and

terrible dragons or of other monsters, he sought to ap

proach Her without ever being able to succeed. He

rushed upon Her, but found himself repulsed, without

knowing by whom or how. He struggled like a wild

beast in chains and gave forth awe-inspiring howls, which,

if God had not prevented their being heard, would have

terrified the world and would have frightened many men

to death. He shot forth from his mouth fire and fumes

of sulphur mixed with poisonous spittle. All this the

heavenly Princess Mary saw and heard, without being

moved more than if She saw a gnat. He caused disturb

ances in the air, upon the earth, or in her house, dis

arranging and overthrowing it in all its parts; but most

holy Mary still remained unmoved, retaining her inward

and outward tranquillity and peace and showing Herself

invincibly superior to all his attempts.

361. Lucifer, finding himself thus vanquished, opened

his most impure mouth and set in motion his lying and

defiled tongue. He loosened the floodgates of his malice

and spouted forth in the presence of the heavenly Empress

all the heresies and infernal falsehoods of the sects, which

he and his associates spread through the world. For

after they had been hurled from heaven and after they

THE INCARNATION 289

were informed that the divine Word was to assume

human flesh in order to be the Chief of a race, which He

would replenish with graces and celestial teachings, the

dragon resolved to concoct falsehoods and heresies, in

opposition to all the truths concerning the knowledge,

love and worship of the Most High. In this occupation

the demons consumed many years before the coming of

Christ, the Lord of the world; and all this poisonous

deceit Lucifer, the ancient serpent, had stored up within

himself. Now he poured it out in the presence of the

Mother of truth and purity ; hoping to infect Her by all

the falsehoods, which He had conceived against the truth

of God up to that day.

362. They are not fit to be described here, even less so

than some of the temptations indicated in the last chap

ter; for it would be dangerous not only for the weak

souls, but even the strongest must fear the pestilential

breath of Lucifer, who on this occasion exhaled all his

deceitful malice. According to what I saw, I believe

doubtlessly, that there was no error, idolatry or heresy

known to have existed in the world to this day, which

this dragon did not vomit forth in the hearing of the

sovereign Mary. Therefore the Church can truly con

gratulate Mary on account of her victories, affirming of

Her, that She by Herself has smothered and extinguished

all the heresies of the whole world (Office B. V. M.).

Thus in truth our victorious Sulamite, armed with her

virtues advanced like an army in battle array (Cant. 7, 1)

to confound, overwhelm and destroy the infernal hosts.

All their falsehoods, and each one in particular, She re

futed, contradicting, detesting and anathematizing all

of them with invincible faith and sublime constancy. She

proclaimed the various truths opposed to his falsehoods,

magnifying the Lord by means of them as true, just and

290 CITY OF GOD

holy. She broke out into songs of praise, in which his

virtues and doctrines were extolled as true, holy, immac

ulate and altogether praiseworthy. In fervent prayer

She besought the Lord to humiliate the arrogance of the

demons by preventing them from spreading so freely

their poisonous errors through the world, and asking Him

to diminish the influence of the false teachings, which

they had already sowed and which they were yet allowed

to sow among men.

363. On account of this victory of the great Queen

and on account of her prayers, I perceived that the Most

High in justice set narrower bounds to the demons, so

that they would not be able to scatter the seeds of error

as much as they intended and as much as the sins of men

would merit. Although their sins are the cause of so

many heresies and sects unto this day, yet they would

have caused many more, if most holy Mary had not

crushed the head of the dragon by such great victories,

by her prayers and petitions. I have been informed of a

great mystery, which affords us consolation in this con

flict of the holy Church against her wicked enemies.

Namely, on account of this triumph of most holy Mary

and on account of another, which She gained over the

demons after the Ascension of our Lord (Part III, 528),

the Almighty, in reward of her battles, decreed, that

through her intercession and virtue all the heresies and

sects of the world against the holy Church were to be

destroyed and extinguished. The time appointed for this

blessing was not made known to me; probably, the ful

fillment of this decree is dependent upon some tacit and

unknown condition . Yet I am sure, that if the Catholic

princes and their subjects would seek to please this great

Queen of heaven and betake themselves to her intercession

as being their especial Patroness and Protectress, and if

THE INCARNATION 291

they would direct all their influence and riches, all their

power and sovereignty toward the exaltation of the faith

and the honor of God and of purest Mary (for this may

perhaps be the condition imposed), they would be as it

were the instruments, by which the infidels would be re

futed and vanquished, the sects and errors infesting the

world would be repressed, and splendid and magnificent

victories would be gained for the Catholic truth.

364. Before the birth of Christ our Redeemer it

seemed to Lucifer (as was intimated in the foregoing

chapter) that his coming was retarded by the sins of the

world. In order to prevent his coming altogether he

sought to increase this hindrance by multiplying the

aberrations and crimes of mortals. This iniquitous

pride of the devil the Lord confounded by the magnifi

cent triumphs of his most holy Mother. After the Birth

and the Death of the Redeemer, the malicious dragon

sought to hinder and divert the fruits of his blood and

redemption. For this purpose he began to sow and

spread the errors, which after the times of the Apostles

have afflicted and do now afflict the Church. The vic

tory over this infernal malice was likewise left by Christ

in the hands of his most holy Mother : for She alone could

merit, and did merit, such a victory. Through Her

idolatry was extinguished by the preaching of the Gos

pel; through Her were brought to naught the ancient

sects of Arius, Nestorius and Pelagius and of others;

She it was that instigated the zeal and solicitude of

kings, princes, fathers, and doctors of the holy Church.

Hence, how can it be doubted, if the Catholic princes,

both of the Church and of the state, would use the proper

diligence, aiding as it were this heavenly Lady, that She

on her part would not fail to help them, conferring upon

them happiness in this life and in the next, and cutting-

292 CITY OF GOD

down all the heresies of the world? For this very pur

pose the Lord has so enriched so greatly as well the

Church as the Catholic reigns and monarchies. If it

were not for this purpose, it were better that they remain

poor. It was not proper that all the results of the Gos

pel should be obtained through miracles, but through

natural means, obtainable by the proper application of

riches. But it is not for me to judge whether they ful

fill this obligation or not. I have only to report what

the Lord himself has made known to me : that those

who hold the titles of honor and sovereignty conferred

by the Church, without coming to her aid and defense

and without applying their riches toward preventing the

waste of the blood of Christ our Savior, are usurpers

and unjust possessors of those titles: for in this very

thing should the difference between Christian and infidel

princes consist.

365. Coming back to my subject, I say that the Most

High, in his infinite foresight, well knew the iniquity

of the dragon, and that in the pursuit of his wrath

against the Church he would bring to disorder many of

the faithful, striking down the stars of the heaven of the

militant church, namely the faithful, and thus seeking to

rouse still more the divine justice and diminish the fruits

of the Redemption. The highest Lord in immense kind

ness resolved to meet this danger that threatened the

world. In order that He might be moved in this by so

much the greater equity and for the greater glory of his

name, He arranged that the most holy Mary should

oblige Him to give this help. She alone was worthy of

the privileges, gifts and prerogatives by which She was

to overcome the world ; and this most eminent Lady alone

was capable of such an enterprise as to draw toward Her

the heart of God by her holiness, purity, merits and

THE INCARNATION 293

prayers. For the greater exaltation of the divine power

He wished it to be known through all the eternities that

He had conquered Lucifer and all his followers through

means of a mere Creature and a Woman, just as the

devil had cast down the whole human race by another

woman, and that there was none other to whom this

salvation of the Church and whole world could be

worthily credited. On account of these and other rea

sons apparent to us in faith, the Almighty gave into the

hands of our victorious Chief tainess the sword for cut

ting off the head of the infernal dragon; a power never

to be diminished in Her, and with which She defends

and assists the militant Church according to the labors

and necessities of coming centuries.

366. While Lucifer with his infernal legions in visi

ble forms persisted in his unhappy attempts, the most

serene Mary never looked upon them nor paid any atten

tion to them, although by the permission of God She

heard the uproar. Since the hearing cannot be so easily

stopped as the sight, She took precaution, lest what She

heard should enter her imagination or interior faculties.

Nor did She deign to speak to them otherwise than to

command them to stop their blasphemies. And this com

mand was so powerful that it forced the demons to press

their mouths to the earth, while She in the meanwhile

sang great canticles of praise and glory in honor of the

Most High. This intercourse of her Majesty with God

and her profession of the divine truths, was likewise so

oppressive and painful to them that they began to attack

each other like ravenous wolves, or like rabid dogs ; every

action of the Empress Mary was for them a burning

shaft, and every one of her words a flame of fire more

dreadful than hell itself. This is not an exaggeration

for the dragon and his followers really strove to fly and

294 CITY OF GOD

escape from the presence of most holy Mary; while the

Lord, in order to enhance the triumph of his Mother and

Spouse and confound entirely the pride of Lucifer, de

tained them by a secret force. His Majesty permitted

and ordained that the demons themselves should hu

miliate themselves so far as to ask the heavenly Lady to

command them to go and be driven from her presence,

which they had sought. Accordingly She commanded

them to return to the infernal regions. There they lay

prostrate for a time, while the great Vanquisher Mary

remained absorbed in divine praise and thanksgiving.

367. When by the permission of the Lord Lucifer

rose from his defeat, he returned to the conflict, selecting

for his instrument some of the neighbors of the holy

spouses, and sowing among them and their wives the

hellish seed of discord concerning temporal interests.

For this purpose the demon took the shape of a woman

known to them all and telling them that they should not

disagree among themselves, since the source of all their

differences was none other than Mary, the wife of

Joseph. The woman, whose shape the demon took, held

the esteem and regard of all these persons, and there

fore her words were so much the more weighty. Al

though the Lord did not allow the good name of his

most holy Mother to suffer in any important point, yet

He permitted, that for her greater glory and merit, all

these deceived persons should give Her an opportunity

of exercising her patience on this occasion. They betook

themselves in a body to the house of saint Joseph and in

his presence they called forth most holy Mary and spoke

very harshly to Her, accusing Her of disturbing their

homes and their peace. This event was painful to the

most innocent Lady, on account of the worry occasioned

to saint Joseph, who had already noticed the increase of

THE INCARNATION 295

her virginal womb, and who, as She had perceived, was

already troubled by the thoughts beginning to arise in

his heart. Nevertheless, in her prudence and wisdom,

She sought to meet this disturbance with humility, and

overcome it by patience and lively faith. She did not

defend Herself, nor fall back on the faultlessness of her

conduct; on the contrary, She humiliated Herself and

begged Her ill-informed neighbors to pardon Her, if in

anything She had offended them. With sweet and wise

words She enlightened and pacified them, making them

understand that none of them had committed any offense

against the others. Satisfied by her explanations and

edified by the humility of her answer, they peacefully

withdrew to their houses, while the demon fled, not being

able to endure such great sanctity and heavenly wisdom.

368. Saint Joseph remained somewhat pensive and

sad, and he began to give way to conjecture, as I will

relate in the following chapters (Nos. 375 to 394). The

demon, although he was ignorant of the chief cause of

the troubled thoughts of saint Joseph, wished to profit by

the occasion (for he allows none to escape him), in order

to disquiet him still more. But doubting whether his dis

satisfaction did not arise from a certain disgust at his

poverty and his lowly habitation, the demon hesitated be

tween two different courses. On the one hand he sug

gested a feeling of restlessness to saint Joseph, irritating

and disgusting him against his poverty ; and on the other

hand he tried to persuade him that Mary, his Spouse,

devoted too much time to her meditations and prayers,

and led a too negligent and leisurely life, instead of ex

erting Herself to improve their poor circumstances. But

saint Joseph, upright and magnanimous of heart, readily

despised and rejected such considerations. The solici

tude with which he was secretly filled in regard to the

296 CITY OF GOD

pregnancy of his Spouse easily smothered all other anx

ieties. The Lord, leaving him in the beginning to these

anxious thoughts, freed him from the temptations of the

demon through the intercession of the most holy Mary.

For She was very attentive to all that passed within the

heart of her most faithful spouse. She therefore be

sought her most holy Son to relieve him of these as

saults, and to be satisfied with the service which he ren

dered to God in enduring the sorrow of seeing Her

pregnant.

369. The Most High ordained that the Princess of

heaven should still farther prolong this great battle with

L^ucifer. He permitted him and all his legions in one

general assault to strain all their forces and exert all

their malice, so that the demons might find themselves

entirely crushed and vanquished. The heavenly Lady

was to achieve the greatest triumph that ever was gained,

or could be gained, over hell by a mere creature. These

legions of wickedness arrived in all their hellish array

to present themselves before the heavenly Queen, and

with indescribable fury. Uniting all the scheming plots,

of which they had until now availed themselves sepa

rately, and adding what little they could, they advanced

to make a universal onslaught. But I will not detain

myself in describing it specially, as nearly all can be un

derstood from what has been described in the two pre

ceding chapters. She met them all and awaited their

fearful onslaught with the same tranquillity, high-minded-

ness and serenity, as if She had been in the position of

the highest choirs of the angels seated on their secure

and unassailable thrones. No strange or improper emo

tion could disturb the serenity of her heavenly interior,

although the menacing terrors, illusions and falsehoods

of all hell were poured forth in torrents by the dragon

THE INCARNATION 29/

against this strong and unconquered Woman, most holy

Mary.

370. While She thus in the midst of this conflict exer

cised heroic acts of all the virtues against her enemies,

She was made aware of the adorable decree of the Most

High, that She should humiliate and crush the pride of

the dragon by her great dignity as Mother of God.

Rising up in ardent and invincible valor, She turned

toward the demons and spoke to them: "Who is like

unto God, who dwells on high?" And repeating these

words, She added : "Prince of darkness, author of sin

and death, in the name of the Most High I command

thee to become mute, and with thy legions to cast thyself

into the infernal caverns, where thy place is appointed to

thee, and whence thou shalt not come forth until the

promised Messias shall vanquish thee and crush thee, or

until He otherwise permit." The heavenly Empress

shone forth in the light and splendor of heaven; and, as

the proud dragon made a pretence of resisting Her com

mand, She directed upon him the full force of her power.

His resistance drew upon him so much the greater pain,

humiliation and torment, since such he thereby merited

before all the other demons. Together they fell into

the abyss and remained fixed in its lowest caverns, as

had happened to them at the time of the Incarnation, and

as I will describe further on at the temptation and at the

death of Christ our Lord (No. 130, 999, 1421). And

when this dragon afterwards engaged in his last battle

with this Queen, which is described in the third part of

this history (Part III, 452 seq.), this heavenly Lady van

quished him so completely that through Her and her

most holy Son his head was entirely crushed. In that

final battle his strength was so weakened and ruined

that if human creatures do not deliver themselves into

298 CITY OF GOD

the hands of his malice they can very easily resist and

overcome him with the divine grace.

371. Then the Lord himself appeared to his most holy-

Mother, and in reward of her glorious victories He com

municated to Her new gifts and privileges ; Her thou

sand guardian angels visibly presented themselves with

innumerable hosts of others, and sang to Her new canti

cles of praise in honor of the Most High and of Herself.

And with celestial concord of sweet and audible voices

they sang of Her, that which the holy Church figura

tively sings of the triumph of Judith : "Thou art all

beautiful, Mary our Lady, and there is no stain of sin

in Thee; Thou art the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem;

Thou the honor of the people of God ; Thou art She, who

magnifiest his name, the Advocate of sinners, who de-

fendest them against their proud enemy! O Mary!

Thou are full of grace and of all perfection." The

heavenly Lady was filled with glad jubilee, praising the

Author of all good and acknowledging Him as the source

of all She possessed. Whereupon She began to pay

more particular attention to the well-being of her spouse,

as I shall relate in the following chapter of the fourth

book.

INSTRUCTION WHICH OUR QUEEN AND MISTRESS GAVE ME.

372. My daughter, the silence which the soul should

maintain when the invisible enemies advance with their

specious reasonings, should not prevent it from imposing

silence upon them in the name of the Most High, and

from commanding them to leave its presence in confu

sion. Therefore I desire this to be thy prudent behavior

when they assault thee; for there is no other defense so

powerful against the dragon than to be conscious of the

THE INCARNATION 299

power which we possess as children of God, and to use

the advantage which this confidence gives us by exercis

ing our dominion and superiority over the infernal

spirits (Matth. 6, 9). For the whole aim of Lucifer,

after he had fallen from heaven, consists in enticing souls

from their Creator and in sowing the seed of discord, by

which he hopes to separate from the heavenly Father his

adopted children, and the spouses of Christ from their

Bridegroom. Whenever he perceives that a soul is

united with his Creator and in living communion with

its head Christ, he tries to surpass himself in his furious

attempts at persecuting it; his envy arouses the utmost

exertion of his deceitfulness and malice for its destruc

tion. But as soon as he sees that he cannot succeed in

his attempts, because the soul takes refuge in the unfail

ing and unassailable protection of the Most High, he

weakens in his attempts and begins to writhe in exquisite

torments. If the soul, thus strengthened with the au

thority of God s truth, despises and casts him out, there

is no creeping worm or ant so weak as that giant of

iniquitous pride.

373. By this most true doctrine thou must comfort

and strengthen thyself, when, according to the decree of

the Almighty, thou meetest tribulations and art sur

rounded by the sorrows of death in temptations such as

I have suffered. For they afford thy Spouse the best

occasion of verifying thy fidelity by experience. There

fore love must not be satisfied merely with mere protes

tations of affection without looking for more valuable

fruit; for the desire which costs nothing is not a suffi

cient proof of love in a soul, nor of its proper esteem of

the good which it pretends to hold clear and love. If

thou wishest to give a satisfactory proof of thy love to

thy Spouse, show thyself invincible in thy trust in Him

300 CITY OF GOD

also then when thou findest thyself most afflicted and for

saken by human aid; confide in the Lord thy God, and

hope in Him, if necessary, against hope (Rom. 4, 18).

For He does not slumber, nor does He sleep, who calls

Himself the protection of Israel (Ps. 120, 4). In due

time He will command the waves and the wind, and

restore tranquillity (Matth. 8, 26).

374. Thou must be much more wary, my daughter, in

the beginning of the temptations; for there is then

greater danger lest the soul, yielding to the concupiscent

or the irascible passions, by which the light of reason

is obscured and darkened, allow itself to be thrown into

confusion. As soon as the demon notices such a state

of mind he will raise a whirlwind of dust in the faculties.

His fierceness is so immeasurable and implacable that it

will then increase in fury. He will add flame to flame,

thinking that the soul has no one to defend and rescue

it from his hands (Ps. 120, 11). With the force of his

temptations increases also the danger of failing in the

necessary resistance, since the soul has commenced to

yield in the very beginning. All this I make known to

thee, in order that thou mayest fear the danger of being

remiss in guarding against the first approaches of the

demon. Do not incur it in what is so important. Thou

shouldst continue in the even tenor of thy duties in every

temptation ; keeping up the sweet and devout union with

the Lord and preserving thy prudent and loving inter

course with thy neighbors, thou shouldst forestall by

prayer and by restraint of thy feelings the disorder which

the enemy seeks to bring about in thy soul.

BOOK TWO

BOOK IV, II OF II PART

Describing the Anxieties of Saint Joseph on Account of the Pregnancy of

Most Holy Mary, the Birth of Christ our Lord, His Circumcision, the

Adoration of the Kings, the Presentation of the Infant Jesus

In the Temple, the Fiight into Egypt, the Death of the

Holy Innocents, and the Return to Nazareth.

CHAPTER I.

SAINT JOSEPH BECOMES AWARE OF THE PREGNANCY OF

HIS SPOUSE, THE VIRGIN MARY, AND IS FILLED WITH

ANXIETY, AS HE KNOWS THAT HE HAD NO PART IN IT.

375. The divine pregnancy of the Princess of heaven

had advanced to its fifth month when the most chaste

Joseph, her husband, commenced to notice the condition

of the Virgin ; for on account of the natural elegance and

perfection of her virginal body, as I have already re

marked (No. 115), any change could not long remain

concealed and would so much the sooner be discovered.

One day, when saint Joseph was full of anxious doubts

and saw Her coming out of her oratory, he noticed more

particularly this evident change, without being able to

explain away what he saw so clearly with his eyes. The

man of God was wounded to his inmost heart by an

arrow of grief, unable to ward off the force of evidence,

which at the same time wounded his soul. The principal

cause of his grief was the most chaste, and therefore the

most intense love with which he cherished his most faith-

2-21 301

302 CITY OF GOD

ful Spouse, and in which he had from the beginning

given over to Her his whole heart. Moreover, her

charming graces and incomparable holiness had captured

and bound to Her his inmost soul. As She was so per

fect and accomplished in her modesty and humble

reticence, saint Joseph, besides his anxious solicitude to

serve Her, naturally entertained the loving desire of

meeting a response of his love from his Spouse. This

was so ordained by the Lord, in order that by the desire

for this interchange of affection he might be incited to

love and serve Her more faithfully.

376. Saint Joseph fulfilled triis obligation as a most

faithful spouse and as the guardian of the sacrament,

which as yet was concealed from him. In proportion as

he was solicitous in serving and venerating his Spouse,

and loving Her with a most pure, chaste, holy and just

love, in so far also increased his desire of finding a re

sponse to his affection and service. He never manifested

or spoke of this desire, as well on account of the rever

ence elicited by the humble majesty of his Spouse as also

because the more than angelic purity, conversation and

intercourse of the Virgin with him had given him no

apprehension in this regard. But when he found him

self thus unexpectedly in the face of this disclosure,

where the clear evidence of his senses allowed no denial,

his soul was torn asunder by sorrowful surprise. Yet,

though overwhelmed by the evidence of this change in

his Spouse, he gave his thoughts no greater liberty than

to admit what his eyes could not fail to perceive. For,

being a holy and just man (Matth. 1, 19), although he

saw the effect, he withheld his judgment as to the cause.

Without doubt, if the saint had believed that his Spouse

had any guilt in causing this condition, he would have

died of sorrow.

THE INCARNATION 303

377. Besides all this was the certainty of his not having

any part in this pregnancy, the effects of which were

before his eyes; and there was the inevitable dishonor

which would follow as soon as it would become public.

This thought caused so much the greater anxiety in him,

as he was of a most noble and honorable disposition, and

in his great foresight he knew how to weigh the dis

grace and shame of himself and his Spouse in each cir

cumstances. The third and most intimate cause of his

sorrow, and which gave him the deepest pain, was the

dread of being obliged to deliver over his Spouse to the

authorities to be stoned (Lev. 20, 10), for this was the

punishment of an adulteress convicted of the crime. The

heart of saint Joseph, filled with these painful consider

ations, found itself as it were exposed to the thrusts of

many sharp-edged swords, without any other refuge than

the full confidence which he had in his Spouse. But as

all outward signs confirmed the correctness of his ob

servations, there was no escape from these tormenting

thoughts, and as he did not dare to communicate about

his grievous affliction with anybody, he found himself

surrounded by the sorrows of death (Ps. 17, 5), and he

experienced in himself the saying of the Scriptures, that :

"Jealousy is hard as hell" (Cant. 8, 6).

378. When he attempted to follow out these thoughts

in solitude, grief suspended his faculties. If his thoughts

touched upon the wrong, which his senses led him to sus

pect, they melted away as the ice before the sun, or van

ished like the dust before the wind, as soon as he remem

bered the well-tried holiness of his modest and circum

spect Spouse. If he tried to suspend the workings of

his chaste love, he could not ; for She continued to present

Herself to his thoughts as the most worthy object of his

love, and the hidden truth of her fidelity had more power

304 CITY OF GOD

of attracting his love than the deceitful appearances of

infidelity to destroy it. The strong and sure bond which

truth, reason and justice had woven about her fidelity

could not be broken. He found no suitable occasion of

opening his mind to his heavenly Spouse, nor did her

serene and heavenly equanimity seem to invite him to

such an explanation. Although he could not but admit

the change in her shape, yet he could not conceive how

her purity and holiness could be compatible with any

failing such as this change might indicate. For it seemed

impossible to him to connect such a sin with One who

manifested such chastity, tranquillity and holy discretion,

and such united harmony of all graces and virtues in her

daily life.

379. In the midst of these tormenting anxieties the

holy Spouse Joseph appealed to the tribunal of the Lord

in prayer and placing himself in his presence, he said:

"Most high Lord and God, my desires and sighs are not

unknown to Thee. I find myself cast about by the vio

lent waves of sorrow (Ps. 31. 10) which through my

senses have come to afflict my heart. I have given my

self over with entire confidence to the Spouse whom thou

hast given me. I have confided entirely in her holiness;

and the signs of this unexpected change in Her are

giving rise to tormenting and fearful doubts lest my con

fidence be misplaced. Nothing have I until now seen

in Her which could give occasion for any doubt in her

modesty and her extraordinary virtue; yet at the same

time I cannot deny that She is pregnant. To think that

She has been unfaithful to me, and has offended Thee,

would be temerity in view of such rare purity and holi

ness : to deny what my own eyes perceive is impossible.

But it is not impossible that I die of grief, unless there

is some mystery hidden beneath it which I cannot yet

THE INCARNATION 305

fathom. Reason proclaims Her as blameless, while the

senses accuse Her. She conceals from me the cause of

her pregnancy, while I have it before my eyes. What

shall I do? We both have come to an agreement con

cerning our vows of chastity, and we have both prom

ised to keep them for thy glory; if it could be possible

that She has violated her fidelity toward Thee and toward

me, I would defend thy honor and would forget mine for

love of Thee. Yet how could She preserve such purity

and holiness in all other things if She had committed so

grave a crime in this? And on the other hand, why

does She, who is so holy and prudent, conceal this matter

from me? I withhold and defer my judgment. Not be

ing able to penetrate to the cause of what I see, I pour

out in thy presence my afflicted soul (Ps. 141, 3), God

of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Receive my tears as an

acceptable sacrifice; and if my sins merit thy indig

nation, let thy own clemency and kindness move Thee

not to despise my excruciating sorrow. I do not believe

that Mary has offended Thee; yet much less can I pre

sume that there is a mystery of which I, as her Spouse,

am not to be informed. Govern Thou my mind and

heart by thy divine light, in order that I may know and

fulfill that which is most pleasing to Thee."

380. Saint Joseph persevered in this kind of prayer,

adding many more affectionate petitions ; for even though

he conjectured that there must be some mystery in the

pregnancy of the most holy Mary hidden from him, he

could not find assurance therein. This thought had no

greater force to exculpate most holy Mary than the other

reasons founded upon her holiness ; and therefore the

idea that the most holy Queen might be the Mother of

the Messias did not come to his mind. If at times he

drove away his conjectures, they would return in greater

306 CITY OF GOD

number and with more urgent force of evidence. Thus

he was cast about on the turbulent waves of doubt.

From sheer exhaustion he would at times fall into a con

dition of mind wherein he could find neither an anchor

of certainty for his doubts, nor tranquillity for his heart,

nor any standard by which he could direct his course.

Yet his forebearance under this torment was so great

that it is an evident proof of his great discretion and

holiness, and that it made him worthy of the singular

blessing which awaited him.

381. All that passed in the heart of saint Joseph was

known to the Princess of heaven, who penetrated into its

interior by the light of her divine science. Although her

soul was full of tenderness and compassion for the suffer

ings of her spouse, She said not a word in the matter;

but She continued to serve him with all devotion and

solicitude. The man of God watched Her without out

ward demonstration, yet with a greater anxiety than that

of any man that ever lived. The pregnancy of most

holy Mary was not burdensome or painful to Her; but

as the great L-ady in serving him at table or any other

domestic occupations, necessarily disclosed her state more

and more openly, saint Joseph noticed all these actions

and movements and with deep affliction of soul verified

all his observations. Notwithstanding his being a holy

and just man, he permitted himself to be respected and

served by the most holy Virgin after their espousal,

claiming in all things the position of head and husband

of the family, though with rare humility and prudence.

As long as he was ignorant of the mystery of his Spouse

he judged it right, within befitting limits, to show his

authority in imitation of the ancient Fathers and Patri

archs. For he knew that they demanded subjection and

prompt obedience of their wives, and he did not wish to

THE INCARNATION 307

recede from their example. He would have been right

in this course if most holy Mary, our Lady, had been

no more than other women. Yet although there was

such a great difference, no woman ever existed or will

exist who was or will be so obedient, humble and de

voted to her husband as the most exalted Queen was

toward her spouse. She served him with incomparable

respect and promptitude ; although She knew his troubled

thoughts and observations concerning her pregnancy, She

omitted no service due to him, nor did She try to conceal

or palliate her state. For such evasion or duplicity would

not have consorted with the angelic truthfulness and

openness, nor with the nobility and magnanimity of her

generous heart.

382. The grer.t Lady could easily have asserted her

entire innocence and referred to the testimony of saint

Elisabeth and Zacharias ; for, if saint Joseph had any sus

picion of guilt in Her, he could naturally have supposed

it to have been incurred during her stay with them.

Hence, through them and by other references, She could

have justified Herself and quieted the anxieties of saint

Joseph without disclosing the mystery. The Mistress of

prudence and humility did nothing of the kind ; for these

virtues did not allow Her to think of Herself, nor to

trust the justification of her mysterious condition to her

own explanation. With great wisdom She resigned the

whole matter into the hands of divine Providence. Al

though her compassion for her spouse and her love for

him made Her anxious to console and comfort him, She

would not do it by clearing Herself or by concealing her

pregnancy, but rather by serving him with more devoted

demonstrations of love, and by trying to cheer him up,

asking him what She could do for him and lovingly show

ing her devoted and submissive affection. Many times

308 CITY OF GOD

She served him on her knees, and although this somewhat

consoled saint Joseph, yet on the other hand, it was also

a cause for new grief. For thus he only saw the motives

of love and esteem multiplied and still remained uncer

tain whether She had been untrue or not. The heavenly

Lady offered up continual prayers for him and besought

the Most High to look upon him and console him ; as for

the rest She submitted all to the will of his Majesty.

383. Saint Joseph could not entirely conceal his cruel

sorrow, and therefore he often appeared to be in doubt

and sad suspense. Sometimes, carried away by his grief,

he spoke to his heavenly Spouse with some degree of

severity, such as he had not shown before. This was

the natural effect of the affliction of his heart, not of

anger or vengeful feelings; for these never entered his

thoughts, as we shall see later. The most prudent Lady,

however, never lost the sweetness of her countenance, nor

showed any feeling; but merely redoubled her efforts to

relieve her husband. She served at table, offered him

a seat, administered food and drink, and if, after all these

services, which She performed with incomparable grace,

saint Joseph urged Her to sit down, he could convince

himself more and more of her pregnancy. There is no

doubt that all this was one of the greatest trials not only

of saint Joseph, but of the Princess of heaven, and that

it greatly manifested the most profound humility and

wisdom of her most holy soul. The Lord thereby gave

Her an opportunity of exercising and proving all Her

virtues; for He had not only not commanded Her to

conceal the sacrament of her pregnancy, but contrary to

his usual manner of proceeding, He had not even mani

fested to Her his pleasure in any way. It seemed as if

God had left this whole matter in her hands and en

trusted it all to the wisdom and virtue of his chosen

THE INCARNATION 309

Spouse, without giving Her special enlightenment of

help. The divine Providence afforded the most holy

Mary and her most faithful Spouse an opportunity to

exercise in a heroic manner the gifts and graces which

He had infused into them, and delighted, (according to

our way of speaking), in the faith, hope and love, in the

humility, patience, peace and tranquillity of these two

hearts in the midst of their grievous affliction. In order

to increase their glory and furnish to the world an ex

ample of holiness and prudence, and in order to hear the

sweet cries of his most holy Mother and of her most

chaste spouse, He became as it were deaf to their pro

longed invocations and delayed answering them until his

own opportune and fitting time.

[NSTRUCTION OF OUR MOST HOLY QUEEN AND I^ADY.

384. My dearest daughter, most exalted are the

thoughts and intentions of the Lord ; his Providence with

souls is sweet and powerful and He is admirable in the

government of them all, especially of his friends and

chosen ones. If mortals would strive to know the loving

care for their direction and advancement, as shown by this

Father of mercies (Matth. 6, 5), they would be relieved

and would not be involved in such irksome, useless and

dangerous anxieties, living in perpetual toils and vain

trust in the help of creatures. For they would resign them

selves without hesitation to the infinite wisdom and love,

which, with paternal sweetness and gentleness would

watch over all their thoughts, words and actions and all

things necessary for them. I do not wish thee to be

ignorant of this truth, but to understand how the Lord

from all eternity bears in his mind all the predestined of

310 CITY OF GOD

the different times and ages; and that by the invincible

force of his infinite wisdom and goodness He continually

disposes and prepares all the blessings useful to them, so

that the end desired for them may be attained.

385. Hence it is very important for the rational crea

ture to allow itself to be led by the hand of the Lord and

leave all to the divine disposition; for mortal men are

ignorant of their ways and of the goal to which they

lead. In their ignorance they should not presume to

chose, lest they make themselves guilty of great temerity

and incur the danger of damnation. But if they resign

themselves with all their heart to the divine Providence

of God, acknowledging him as their Father and them

selves as his children and creatures, his Majesty will con

stitute Himself as their Protector, Helper and Director;

and He will assume these offices with such love that He

wishes to call heaven and earth to witness how much He

considers it his affair to govern his own and direct those

who trust and resign themselves into his hands. If God

were capable of grief, or of jealousy like men, it would

be aroused in Him at seeing creatures claiming a part in

the providing for the welfare of souls and that souls

should seek to supply their necessities from other quar

ters independently of Him (Wis. 12, 13). Mortals

would not be so ignorant of this truth if they would study

what happens between a father and his children, a hus

band and his wife, one friend and another, a prince and

his well-loved and honored subject. All that these do is

nothing in comparison with the love which God had for

his children, and that which He can do and will do for

them.

386. Yet although men in general believe this truth,

no one can fully estimate the love of God and its effects

on those souls who resign themselves entirely to his will.

THE INCARNATION 311

Nor canst thou, my daughter, manifest what thou know-

est, nor shouldst thou ; but thou must not lose sight of it

in the Lord. His Majesty says, that not a hair of his

elect shall perish, because He keeps account of them

(Luke 21, 18). He directs their footsteps toward

eternal life and keeps them from death. He observes

their labors, lovingly corrects their defects, favors their

desires, forestalls their anxieties, defends them in anger,

rejoices them in peace, strengthens them in battle, assists

them in tribulation. His wisdom is at their service

against deceit, his goodness for their sanctification. As

He is infinite, whom none can hinder or resist, He exe

cutes what He wishes, and He wishes to be entirely at

the service of the just, who are in his grace and trust

themselves wholly to Him. Who could ever measure the

number and greatness of the blessings which He would

shower upon a heart prepared to receive them !

387. If thou, my dearest, wishest to attain to gain this

good fortune, imitate me with true solicitude and apply

thyself from now on to establish in thee a true resigna

tion in the divine Providence. If He sends thee tribula

tions, sorrows and labors, accept and embrace them with

tranquillity of soul, with patience, lively faith and hope

in the goodness of the Most High, who always provides

that which is the most secure and profitable for thy salva

tion. Chose nothing for thyself, since God knows thy

ways; trust thyself to the heavenly Father and Spouse,

who will shield and assist thee with most faithful love.

Study also My works, since they are known to thee ; and

remember that, excepting the labors of my most holy

Son, the greatest suffering of my life was to see the tribu

lations of my spouse saint Joseph, and his grief in the

matter which thou hast described.

CHAPTER II.

THE ANXIETIES OF SAINT JOSEPH INCREASE; HE RESOLVES

TO LEAVE HIS SPOUSE, AND HE BETAKES HIMSELF TO

PRAYER ON THIS ACCOUNT.

388. In his tormenting- doubts the most upright heart

of saint Joseph sometimes prudently tried to find relief

and ease for his sorrow by reasoning for himself and per

suading himself that the pregnancy of his Spouse was as

yet doubtful. But this self-deception vanished more and

more every day on account of the increasing evidence of

that state in the most holy Virgin. As this vain and

fleeting consolation failed him more and more and finally

changed into complete conviction as her pregnancy ad

vanced, the glorious saint found no haven of refuge in

his anxieties. In the meanwhile the heavenly Princess

grew in loveliness and in perfect freedom from all bodily

failings. Her charming beauty, healthfulness and grace

fulness visibly increased before his eyes. All this only

nourished the anxieties and the torments of his most

chaste love, so that his interior was involved by the turbu

lent waves of his loving sorrow in unutterable confusion

and he was finally stranded on the shores of a sea of grief

by the overpowering evidence of his senses in regard to

the pregnancy of Mary. Although his spirit was always

conformed to the will of God, yet his flesh in his weak

ness felt the excess of his interior trouble, which at last

reached such a point that he knew not any more which

way to turn. The strength of his body was broken and

vanished away, not by a definite disease, but in weakness

312

THE INCARNATION 313

and emaciation. These effects of his profound sorrow

and melancholy became openly visible in his countenance.

Moreover, as he suffered all this alone without seeking

relief or lessening his sorrow by communication with

others, as is customary with the afflicted, his suffering

grew to be so much the more serious and incurable.

389. In the meanwhile the sorrow which filled the

heart of the most holy Mary was equally great. Yet,

although her sorrow exceeded all bounds, the capacity of

her generous and magnanimous soul was much greater

and therefore She could conceal her grief more com

pletely, and occupy her faculties in the loving care of

saint Joseph, her spouse. Her sorrow therefore only in

cited Her to attend so much the more devotedly to his

health and comfort. Nevertheless, as the inviolable rule

of the actions of the most prudent Queen was to perform

all in the fullness of wisdom and perfection, She con

tinued to conceal the mystery about the disclosure of

which She had received no command. Though She

alone could relieve her spouse by an explanation, She

withheld it in reverence and faithfulness due to the sac

rament of the heavenly King (Tob. 12, 7). As far as

She herself was concerned, She exerted her utmost

powers; She spoke to him about his health, She asked

what She could do to serve him and afford him help in

the weakness which so mastered him. She urged him to

take some rest and recreation, since it was a duty to yield

to necessity and repair the weakened strength, in order

to be able to work for the Lord afterward. Saint

Joseph observed all the actions of his heavenly Spouse,

and, pondering over such virtue and discretion and feel

ing the effects of her intercourse and presence, he said:

"Is it possible that a Woman of such habits, and in whom

such graces of the Lord are manifest, can bring over

314 CITY OF GOD

me such affliction ? How can this prudence and holiness

agree with these open signs of her infidelity to God and

to me, who love Her so much? If I conclude to send

Her away, or to leave Her, I lose her most loving com

pany, all my comfort, my home and my tranquillity. What

blessing equal to Her can I find if I withdraw from Her?

What consolation, if this one fails? But all this weighs

less than the infamy connected with this sad misfortune,

and that I should come to be looked upon as her accom

plice in crime. That this event remain concealed is not

possible; since time will reveal all, even if I strive now

to hide it. To pass as the author of this pregnancy will

be a vile deceit and a blotch on my good name and con

science. I cannot recognize it as caused by me, nor can

I ascribe it to any other source known to me. Hence,

what am I to do in this dire stress? The least evil will

be to absent myself and leave my house before her de

livery comes upon Her; for then I would be still more

confused and afflicted. I would then be obliged to live

in my own house with a child not my own, without being

able to find any outlet or expedient."

390. The Princess of heaven, becoming aware of the

resolve of her spouse saint Joseph to leave Her and ab

sent himself, turned in great sorrow to her holy angels

and said to them : "Blessed spirits and ministers of the

highest King, who raised you to felicity which you enjoy,

and by his kind Providence accompany me as his faith

ful servants and as my guardians, I beseech you, my

friends, to present before God s clemency the afflictions

of my spouse Joseph. Beseech the Lord to look upon

him and console him as a true Father. And you also,

who so devotedly obey his words, hear likewise my

prayers ; in the name of Him who is infinite, and to whom

I am to give human shape in my womb, I pray, beseech

THE INCARNATION 315

and supplicate you, that without delay you assist and

relieve my most faithful spouse in the affliction of his

heart and drive from his mind and heart his resolve of

leaving 1 me." The angels which the Queen selected for

this purpose obeyed immediately and instilled into the

heart of saint Joseph many holy thoughts, persuading him

anew that his Spouse Mary was holy and most perfect,

and that he could not believe anything wrong of Her;

that God was incomprehensible in his works, and most

hidden in his judgments (Ps. 33, 19) ; that He was al

ways most faithful to those who confide in Him, and that

He would never despise or forsake them in tribulation.

391. By these and other holy inspirations the troubled

spirit of saint Joseph was somewhat quieted, although he

did not know whence they came ; but as the cause of his

sorrow was not removed, he soon relapsed, not finding

anything to assure and soothe his soul, and he returned

to his resolve of withdrawing and leaving his Spouse.

The heavenly Queen was aware of this and She con

cluded that it was necessary to avert this danger and to

insist in earnest prayer on a remedy. She addressed

Herself entirely to her most holy Son in her womb, and

with most ardent affection of her soul She prayed:

"Lord and God of my soul, with thy permission, although

I am but dust and ashes (Gen. 18, 27), I will speak in

thy kingly presence and manifest to Thee my sighs, that

cannot be hidden from Thee (Ps. 37, 10). It is my

duty not to be remiss in assisting the spouse whom I

have received from thy hand. I see him overwhelmed

by the tribulation, which Thou hast sent him, and it

would not be kind in me to forsake him therein. If I

have found grace in thy eyes, I beseech Thee, Lord and

eternal God, by the love which obliged Thee to enter

into the womb of thy servant for the salvation of man-

316 CITY OF GOD

kind, to be pleased to console thy servant Joseph and dis

pose him to assist me in the fulfillment of thy great works.

It would not be well that I, thy servant, be left without

a husband for a protection and guardian. Do not per

mit, my Lord and God, that he execute his resolve and

withdraw from me."

392. The Most High answered Her: "My dearest

Dove, I shall presently visit my servant Joseph with con

solation; and after I shall have manifested to him by

my angel the sacrament, which is unknown to him, thou

mayest speak openly about all that I have done with thee,

without the necessity of keeping silent thenceforward in

these matters. I will fill him with my spirit and make

him apt to perform his share in these mysteries. He will

assist Thee in them and aid Thee in all that will hap

pen." With this promise of the Lord, most holy Mary

was comforted and consoled, and She gave most fervent

thanks to the same Lord, who disposes all things in ad

mirable order, measure and weight. For besides the con

solation, which the relief from this anxiety afforded Her,

She also knew well how proper it was that the spirit of

saint Joseph be tried and dilated by this tribulation be

fore the great mysteries should be entrusted to his care.

393. In the meanwhile saint Joseph was anxiously de

bating within himself concerning the proper course of

action, for he had borne his tribulation already for two

months; and now, overcome by the greatness of it, he

argued with himself: I do not find a better way out of

these difficulties than to absent myself. I confess that

my Spouse is most perfect and exhibits nothing but what

shows Her a saint ; but after all She is pregnant and of

it I cannot fathom the mystery. I do not wish to injure

Her reputation of holiness by involving Her in the pun

ishment of the law ; yet at the same time I cannot stand

THE INCARNATION 317

by and witness the consequences of her pregnancy. I

will leave her now, and commit myself to the providence

of the Lord, who governs me." He then resolved to de

part during that night, and in order to prepare for his

journey he packed some clothes and other trifles into a

small bundle. Having also claimed some wages due to

him for his work, he retired to rest with the intention of

leaving at midnight. But on account of the strangeness

of his undertaking, and because he was in the habit of

commending his intentions to God in prayer, after he had

come to this resolve he spoke to the Lord: "Highest

and eternal God of our fathers Abraham, Isaac and

Jacob, Thou true and only refuge of the poor and

afflicted, the grief and tribulation of my heart are well

known to thy clemency. Thou knowest also, O Lord

(although I am unworthy), that I am innocent of that

which causes my sorrow, and Thou likewise art aware

of the infamy and danger consequent upon the condition

of my Spouse. I do not believe Her an adulteress, be

cause I see in Her great virtue and perfection ; yet I cer

tainly see Her pregnant I do not know by whom or

how it was caused ; and therefore I find no way to restore

my peace. In order to choose the least evil I will with

draw from Her and seek a place where no one knows

me and, resigning myself to thy Providence, I will pass

my life in a desert. Do not forsake me, my Lord and

eternal God, since I desire solely thy honor and service."

394. Saint Joseph prostrated himself on the ground

and made a vow to go to the temple of Jerusalem and

offer up a part of the small sum of money which he

had provided for his journey, in order that God might

help and protect Mary his Spouse from the calamities

of men and free Her from all misfortune ; for great was

the uprightness of that man of God, and the esteem in

2-22

318 CITY OF GOD

which he held the heavenly Lady. After this prayer he

composed himself for a short sleep with the intention of

departing 1 in secret and at midnight from his Spouse.

During this sleep, however, happened what I will relate

in the next chapter. The great Princess of heaven,

(assured by the divine promise), observed from her re

tirement all that saint Joseph was preparing to do ; for the

Almighty showed it to Her. And hearing the vow,

which he made for her welfare, and seeing the small

bundle and the poor provision he prepared for his jour

ney, She was rilled with tender compassion and prayed

anew for him, giving praise and thanks to the Lord for

his Providence in guiding the actions of men beyond all

human power of comprehension. His Majesty so or

dained events, that both most holy Mary and saint Jo

seph should be brought to the utmost reach of interior

sorrow. For besides the merits of this prolonged

martyrdom they would gain the admirable and precious

blessing of the divine consolation deserved thereby. Al

though the great Lady persevered in the belief and hope

of a seasonable intervention of the Lord, and therefore

remained silent in order not to reveal the sacrament, con

cerning the disclosure of which the King had given Her

no command; yet She was much afflicted by the resolve

of saint Joseph to leave Her ; because She reflected upon

the great inconvenience of being alone, without a com

panion and a protector, on whom She could rely for con

solation and support in the natural order; for She well

knew that She could not expect all to proceed according

to the supernatural and miraculous. Yet all her sighs

could not prevent Her from exercising the most exalted

virtues with a magnanimous spirit, such as patience in

bearing her afflictions and the suspicions of saint Joseph

and its results; prudence, in withholding the disclosure

THE INCARNATION 319

of the mystery on account of its greatness; silence, in

signalizing Herself as a woman who knew how to re

frain from speaking about that which so many human

reasons urged Her to make known ; forbearance and hu

mility, in silently submitting to the suspicions of saint

Joseph. Many other virtues did She exercise in this

trouble in a wonderful manner; by which She taught us

to hope in the Almighty for our deliverance in the

greatest tribulations.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

GAVE ME.

395. My daughter, the example of my silence, which

thou hast been writing about, should teach thee to use it

as a guide in thy treatment of the favors and sacraments

of the Lord, namely that thou keep them concealed

within thy heart. Although it might at times seem use

ful to reveal them for the consolation of some soul, thou

must not act upon this opinion without having first con

sulted God in prayer, and then thy superiors. For these

spiritual matters must not be made dependent upon

human feeling, which are so much subject to the passions

and inclinations of nature. There is always great dan

ger of considering that to be an advantage which is

harmful, and a service to God, what is injurious. It is

not given to eyes of the flesh and blood (I Cor. 2, 14) to

discern the interior movements, so as to decide which of

them are divine and caused by grace, or which are

human, engendered by the disorderly affections. Al

though there is great difference between these two kinds

of affections and their causes, nevertheless, if the creature

is not highly enlightened and dead to its passions, it can

not recognize this difference, nor separate the precious

320 CITY OF GOD

from the vile (Jer. 15, 19). This danger is greater

when some temporal or human motive is mixed up with

or underlies our actions ; for then our natural selflove is

wont to creep in and take away discretion and supervi

sion of heavenly and spiritual things, leading on to many

sudden and dangerous falls.

396. Let it therefore be to thee as a rule always to be

followed that thou reveal nothing to any one except to

thy spiritual guide, unless I command otherwise. Since

I have constituted myself thy Teacher, I will not fail to

give thee advice and direction in this and in all other

things, lest thou stray from the path appointed to thee by

the will of my most holy Son. Yet I admonish thee to

appreciate highly all the favors and revelations of the

Most High. Preserve them with a magnanimous heart ;

esteem them, give thanks for them, and put them to prac

tice in preference to anything else, especially in pref

erence to anything originating from thy own inclinations.

The reverential fear of God bound me to silence, having

(as was proper) such a high regard for the Treasure

deposited in me. Notwithstanding the natural feeling

of love and obligation toward my master and spouse

saint Joseph, and in disregard of the sorrow and compas

sion for his afflictions, of which I so desired to free him,

I hid the secret of my state in silence, preferring the

pleasure of the Lord to all these, and leaving to Him the

defense of my cause. Learn also from this never to de

fend thyself against accusations, no matter how innocent

thou mayest be. Oblige the Lord to do it by confiding in

his love. Charge thy reputation to his account; and in

the meanwhile overcome by patience and humility, by

sweet and kind words, those who have offended thee.

Above all things I admonish thee never to judge evil of

any one, even if thou seest with thy own eyes the out-

THE INCARNATION 321

ward warrants of thy judgment; for perfect and sincere

charity will teach thee to find a prudent evasion and ex

cuse for all faults of thy neighbor. God has placed my

spouse, saint Joseph, as a shining example for such a

course of action, since no one had more evident proofs

of evil, and no one was more discreet in deferring his

judgment. For in the law of discreet and holy charity

it must be held as prudence, not temerity, to suspect

higher causes, as yet unseen, rather than to judge and

condemn our neighbors for faults in which his guilt is

not clearly evident. I do not give thee special instruc

tions for those that are in the state of matrimony, since

they can derive them manifestly from the whole course

of my life. But from the above instruction all can profit,

although just now I have in view thy own advancement,

because I desire it with especial love. Hear me, daugh

ter, and fulfill my counsels and follow these my words of

eternal life.

CHAPTER III.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD SPEAKS TO SAINT JOSEPH IN

HIS SLEEP AND MAKES KNOWN TO HIM THE MYS

TERY OF THE INCARNATION HIS BEHAVIOR THERE

AFTER.

397. The sorrow of jealousy keeps such vigilant watch

in those that are beset by it, that very often it not only

awakens them from sleep, but drives away altogether the

refreshment of slumber. Nobody ever suffered this sor

row in the same degree as saint Joseph, although, if he

had known the truth, nobody ever had less occasion. He

was endowed with exalted light and knowledge, so that

he could penetrate to the abyss of the incalculable sanc

tity and perfection of his heavenly Spouse. As the rea

sons which urged him to resign the possession of such

great blessing were inexorable, it naturally followed that

the knowledge of what he was to lose should add to the

sorrow of parting therefrom. Hence, what saint Joseph

suffered in this regard exceeds all that ever was endured

by any man ; for no one ever equalled him in the loss, and

no one could so value and estimate it. Besides, there was

a great difference in the zeal and jealousy of this faithful

servant of God and the jealousies of others in like trou

bles. For jealousies create in the vehement and ardent

lover a great anxiety to preserve and prevent loss of the

loved object; and to this anxiety is naturally added the

pain caused by the fear lest the loved one be alienated by

others. This kind of feeling or sorrow is commonly

called jealousy. In those who have disorderly passions,

322

THE INCARNATION 323

and who, for want of prudence or other virtues, yield to

them, it usually causes the different feelings of wrath,

fury, envy toward the person loved, or against the rival

who impedes the return of love, be it a well-ordered love

or not. Then arise the storms of suspicion and conjec

ture in the imagination, engendered by these passions;

the tempests of alternate desire and abhorrence; of lov

ing affection and vain regret. Thus the irascible and

concupiscent faculties are in perpetual strife, without any

regard for the demands of reason or prudence; for this

kind of sorrow confounds the understanding, perverts

reason, and rejects prudence.

398. In saint Joseph this disorder was not infected

with all these faults, nor could they find room in him, on

account both of his own exalted holiness and that of his

Spouse; for in Her he could find no fault to exasperate

him, nor had he any suspicion that her love had been

captured by any one else, against whom or toward whom

his envy might be aroused in defense. The jealousy of

saint Joseph was founded entirely in his own great love

for Her, in a certain conditional doubt or suspicion lest

his Spouse had not entirely responded to his own love ;

for he found no such strong reasons against, as he did

for his mistrust. A greater uncertainty was not neces

sary in his case in order to cause such vehement sorrows ;

for in the possession of a spouse, no rival can be toler

ated. Hence, the chaste marital love of our saint, which

filled his whole heart, was sufficient to cause in him the

most vehement grief at the least appearance of infidelity,

or danger of losing this most perfect, most beautiful and

delightful object of all his desires and thoughts. For if

love is in possession of such just motives, strong and

unbreakable are the bonds and chains with which it cap

tivates the heart and most powerful is the dominion which

324 CITY OF GOD

it exercises ; especially when there are no imperfections to

weaken it. Our Queen exhibited nothing which either

in the spiritual or in the natural order was calculated to

diminish or moderate this love in her holy spouse, but

only what tended to blow it into greater flame on many

occasions and for many reasons.

399. Full of this sorrow, which had now become an

intolerable pain, saint Joseph, after saying the prayer

above mentioned, composed himself for a short sleep,

assured that he would wake up at the right time to leave

his home at midnight, and, as he thought, without the

knowledge of his Spouse. The heavenly Lady awaited

the intervention of God, asking it of Him in most humble

prayer. For She knew that the tribulation of her

troubled spouse had reached such a high point, that the

time of God s merciful assistance must have arrived.

The Most High sent his archangel Gabriel, in order to

reveal to him during his sleep the mystery of the Incarna

tion and Redemption in the words recorded in the gospel.

It might cause some wonder, (and such was caused in

me), why the archangel spoke to saint Joseph in his

sleep and not while awake; since the mystery was so

high, and so difficult to comprehend, especially in the

present afflicted and troubled state of his mind; while

this same mystery was made known to others, not while

they were asleep, but awake.

400. In these operations of course, the last reason is

always the divine will itself, just, holy and perfect.

However, as far as I have understood, I will partly men

tion some other reasons in explanation. The first reason

is, that saint Joseph was so prudent, filled with such

heavenly light, and had such high conception of our

most holy Lady, the blessed Mary, that it was not neces

sary to convince him by strong evidence, in order to

THE INCARNATION 325

assure him of her dignity and of the mysteries of the

Incarnation; for in hearts well-disposed the divine in

spirations find easy entrance. The second reason is,

because his trouble had its beginning in the senses, namely

in seeing with his eyes the pregnancy of his Spouse ; hence

it was a just retribution, that they, having given occa

sion for deception or suspicion, should as it were be dead

ened or repressed by the privation of the angelic vision.

The third reason is as it were a sequence of this last

one: saint Joseph, although he was guilty of no fault,

was under the influence of his affliction and his senses

were so to say deadened and incapacitated for the sensi

ble perception and intercourse of the angel. Therefore

it was befitting, that the angel deliver this message to

him at a time, when the senses, which had been scandal

ized, were inactive and suspended in their operations.

Thus the holy man might afterwards, regaining their full

use, purify and dispose himself by many acts of virtue

for entertaining the operation of the holy Spirit, which

had been entirely interrupted by his troubles.

401. Hence will be also understood, why God spoke

to the ancient Fathers oftener during sleep than happens

to the faithful ones of the evangelical law; for in the

new law revelation in sleep is less frequent than direct

intercourse with angels, which affords a more efficient

mode of communication. The explanation of this fact

is this: since according to the divine ordainment the

greatest impediment and obstacle of a more familiar in

tercourse and converse of the souls with God and his

angels is the commission of sins, even venial sins or even

only imperfections, it follows, that, after the divine Word

became man and conversed with mortals, the senses and

all our faculties are purified day by day by the sanctify

ing use of sensible Sacraments, by which men in some

326 CITY OF GOD

degree are spiritualized and elevated, their torpid facul

ties aroused and made apt for participation in the divine

influences. This blessing we owe in a greater degree to

the blood of Christ our Lord than the ancients; for by

its efficiency we are made partakers of his holiness

through the Sacraments, wherein we receive the effects

of special graces, and in some of them even a spiritual

character, which destines and prepares us for Most High

ends. But whenever the Lord in our times spoke or

speaks in sleep, He excludes the operations of the senses,

as being unfit and unprepared to enter into the spiritual

nuptials of his communications and divine influences.

402. It will also appear from this doctrine, that, in

order to receive the hidden favor of the Lord, men must

not only be free from guilt and possess merits and grace,

but that they be also in peace and tranquillity of spirit ;

for if the republic of the faculties is in disturbance (as

it was in saint Joseph), the soul is not in a fit condition

to receive such exalted and delicate influences as are im

plied by the visits and the caresses of the Lord. It is

not at all uncommon, that, no matter how much tribula

tions and afflictions increase the merits of the soul (as

were those of saint Joseph, the spouse of the Queen),

they nevertheless hinder the divine operations. For in

suffering them the soul is involved in a conflict with the

powers of darkness, while this kind of blessing consists

in the possession of light; and therefore the vision of

darkness, even if only in order to ward it off, is not in

harmony with the vision of God or the angels. But in

the midst of the conflict and the battle of temptations,

which may be compared to a dream in the night, the

voice of the Lord is nevertheless wont to be heard and

perceived through the ministry of the angels, just as it

happened to saint Joseph. He heard and understood all

THE INCARNATION 327

that saint Gabriel said: that he should not be afraid to

remain with his Spouse Mary (Matth. 1, 20, 21), because

what She bore in her womb, was the work of the holy

Spirit; that She would give birth to a Son, who should

be called Jesus and who was to be the Savior of his

people ; that in all this should be fulfilled the prophecy of

Isaias, who said (Is. 7, 14) : A Virgin shall conceive and

shall bring forth a Son, who was to be called Emmanuel,

God with us. Saint Joseph did not see the angel by

imaginary image, he heard only the interior voice and he

understood the mystery. The words of the angel imply,

that saint Joseph had in his mind already resolved to

sever his connection with most holy Mary; for he was

told to receive Her again without fear.

403. Saint Joseph awoke with the full consciousness,

that his Spouse was the true Mother of God. Full of

joy on account of his good fortune and of his inconceiva

ble happiness, and at the same time deeply moved by sud

den sorrow for what he had done, he prostrated himself

to the earth and with many other humble, reverential

and joyful tokens of his feelings, he performed heroic

acts of humiliation and of thanksgiving. He gave thanks

to the Lord for having revealed to him this mystery

and for having made him the husband of Her, whom God

had chosen for his Mother, notwithstanding that he was

not worthy to be even her slave. Amid these recogni

tions and these acts of virtue, the spirit of saint Joseph

remained tranquil and apt for the reception of new in

fluences of the holy Spirit. His doubts and anxieties of

the past few months had laid in him those deep founda

tions of humility, which were necessary for one who

should be entrusted with the highest mysteries of the

Lord; and the remembrance of his experiences was to

him a lesson which lasted all his life. The holy man

328 CITY OF GOD

began to blame himself alone for all that had happened

and broke forth in the following prayer: "O my

heavenly Spouse and meekest Dove, chosen by the Most

High for his dwelling-place and for his Mother: how

could thy unworthy slave have dared to doubt thy

fidelity? How could dust and ashes ever permit itself

to be served by Her, who is the Queen of heaven and

earth and the Mistress of the universe ? How is it, that

I have not kissed the ground which was touched by

thy feet? Why have I not made it my most solicitous

care to serve Thee on my knees? How will I ever raise

my eyes in thy presence and dare to remain in thy com

pany or open my lips to speak to Thee? O my Lord and

God, give me grace and strength to ask her forgiveness;

and move her heart to mercy, that She do not despise

her sorrowful servant according to his guilt. Ah woe

is me! since She is full of light and grace and She bears

within Herself the Author of light, all my thoughts were

open to her sight, also that I had in my mind actually to

leave Her ; hence it will be temerity on my part to appear

in her presence. I now recognize my rude behavior and

my gross error; since even with such great holiness be

fore my eyes I gave way to unworthy thoughts and

doubts concerning her fidelity, which I did not deserve.

And if in punishment thy justice had permitted me to

execute my presumptuous resolve, what would now be

my misfortune? Eternally be thanked, Most High Lord

for such great blessing ! Assist me, most powerful King,

to make some kind of reparation. I will go to my Spouse

and Lady, confiding in her sweetness and clemency;

prostrate at her feet I will ask her pardon, so that for

her sake, Thou, my eternal Lord and God, mayest look

upon me with the eyes of a Father and mayest pardon my

gross error."

THE INCARNATION 329

404. The holy spouse now left his little room, finding

himself so happily changed in sentiments since the time

he had composed himself for sleep. As the Queen of

heaven always had kept Herself in retirement, he did not

wish to disturb her sweet contemplation, until She her

self desired. In the meantime the man of God un

wrapped the small bundle, which he had prepared, shed

ding many tears with feelings quite different from those

with which he had made it up. Weeping, he began to

show his reverence for his heavenly Spouse, by setting

the rooms in order, scrubbing the floors, which were to

be touched by the sacred feet of most holy Mary. He

also performed other chores which he had been accus

tomed to leave to the heavenly Lady before he knew her

dignity. He resolved to change entirely his relation

toward Her, assume for himself the position of servant

and leave to Her the dignity of Mistress. From that

day on arose a wonderful contention between the two,

which of them should be allowed to show most eagerness

to serve and most humility. All that happened with

saint Joseph the Queen of heaven saw, and not a thought

or movement escaped her attention. When the time

arrived, the saint approached the oratory of her High

ness, and She awaited him with sweetest kindness and

mildness, as I will describe in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY LADY, MOST HOLY

MARY, GAVE ME.

405. My daughter, in what thou hast understood of

this chapter, thou hast a sweet motive for praising the

wonderful ways of God s wisdom in afflicting and again

consoling his servants and chosen ones; from both the

one and the other, He most wisely and kindly draws for

330 CITY OF GOD

them increase of merit and glory. Besides this doctrine,

I wish that thou receive another one, most important for

thy direction, and for the narrow pathway, which the

Most High has assigned to thee. It is this, that thou

strive with all thy might to preserve thyself in tran

quillity and interior peace, without allowing thyself to be

deprived of it by any troublesome event of this life what

ever, and by always keeping in mind the example and

instruction contained in this part of the life of my spouse

saint Joseph. The Most High does not wish to see the

creatures disturbed by afflictions, but that they gain

merit; not that they lose courage, but that they test

their own power when aided by grace. Although the

more violent temptations are wont to close the haven of

exalted peace and knowledge of God, and although they

ground the creature more firmly in the knowledge of its

own lowliness; yet if the soul loses its interior tran

quillity and equilibrium, it will make itself unfit for the

visit of the Lord, for hearing his voice, and for being

raised up to his embraces. The Majesty of God does not

come in a stormcloud (III. Reg. 19, 12), nor will the rays

of this supreme Sun of justice shine, when calm is not

reigning in the soul.

406. If then the want of this tranquillity so hinders the

pure intercourse of the Most High, it is clear that sins

are a still greater hindrance to this great blessing. I

desire that thou be very attentive to this doctrine and that

thou do not presume to allow any disregard of it in any

operation of thy faculties. Since thou hast so often

offended the Lord, call upon his mercy, weep and wash

thyself from thy sins with copious tears; remember that,

under pain of being condemned as unfaithful, thou art

obliged to watch over thy soul and preserve it for an

eternal resting-place of the Almighty, pure, clean and

THE INCARNATION 331

undisturbed; so that thy God may possess it and find

in it a worthy habitation (I Cor. 2, 16). The harmony

of thy faculties and feelings is to be like that of the

music of soft and delicate instruments ; in which the more

delicate the harmony, so much the greater is the danger

of discord and so much the greater must be the care to

preserve the instruments from all gross contact. For

even the atmosphere infected by earthly tendencies is

sufficient to disturb and spoil the powers of the soul thus

consecrated to God. Labor therefore to live a careful life

and to keep full command over thy faculties and opera

tions. If at any time thou art disturbed or disconcerted

in maintaining this order, strive to attend the divine

light, making use of it without fear or hesitation and

working with it whatever is most perfect and pure. In

this I point out to thee the example of my spouse saint

Joseph, who believed the angel without a moment s hesita

tion and immediately with prompt obedience executed his

commands ; and thereby he merited to be raised to great

reward and dignity. If he humiliated himself so deeply

after having had such great, though only apparent rea

sons for anxiety and without even having sinned in what

he did, how must thou, a mere worm of the earth,

acknowledge thy littleness and humble thyself to the dust,

weeping over thy negligences and sins, in order that the

Most High may look upon thee as a Father and as a

Spouse.

CHAPTER IV.

SAINT JOSEPH ASKS PARDON OF THE MOST HOLY MARY,

HIS SPOUSE, AND THE HEAVENLY LADY CONSOLES HIM

WITH GREAT PRUDENCE.

407. The husband of Mary, saint Joseph, now better

informed, waited until his most holy Spouse had finished

her contemplation, and at the hour known to him he

opened the door of the humble apartment which the

Mother of the heavenly King occupied. Immediately upon

entering the holy man threw himself on his knees, say

ing with the deepest reverence and veneration : "My

Mistress and Spouse, true Mother of the eternal Word,

here am I thy servant prostrate at the feet of thy

clemency. For the sake of thy God and Lord, whom

Thou bearest in thy virginal womb, I beseech Thee to

pardon my audacity. I am certain, O Lady, that none of

my thoughts is hidden to thy wisdom and to thy heavenly

insight. Great was my presumption in resolving to leave

Thee and not less great was my rudeness in treating

Thee until now as my inferior, instead of serving Thee

as the Mother of my Lord and God. But Thou also

knowest that I have done all in ignorance, because I knew

not the sacrament of the heavenly King and the great

ness of thy dignity, although I revered in Thee other

gifts of the Most High. Do not reflect, my Mistress,

upon the ignorance of such a lowly creature, who, now

better instructed, consecrates his heart and his whole life

to thy service and attendance. I will not rise from my

332

THE INCARNATION 333

knees, before being assured of thy favor, nor until I have

obtained thy pardon, thy good will and thy blessing."

408. The most holy Mary, hearing the humble words

of saint Joseph, experienced diverse feelings. For with

tender joy in the Lord She saw how apt he was to be

entrusted with the sacraments of the Lord, since he

acknowledged and venerated them with such deep faith

and humility. But She was somewhat troubled by his

resolve of treating Her henceforth with the respect and

self abasement alluded to in his words; for the humble

Lady feared by this innovation to lose the occasions of

obeying and humiliating Herself as a servant of her

spouse. Like one, who suddenly finds herself in danger

of being deprived of some jewel or treasure highly

valued, most holy Mary was saddened by the thought

that saint Joseph would no longer treat Her as an inferior

and as subject to him in all things, having now recog

nized in Her the Mother of the Lord. She raised her

holy spouse from his knees and threw Herself at his

feet (although he tried to hinder it), and said: "I my

self, my master and spouse, should ask thee to forgive me

and thou art the one who must pardon me the sorrows

and the bitterness, which I have caused thee ; and there

fore I ask this forgiveness of thee on my knees, and that

thou forget thy anxieties, since the Most High has looked

upon my desires and afflictions in divine pleasure."

409. It seemed good to the heavenly Lady to console

her spouse, and therefore, not in order to excuse Herself,

She added : "As much as I desired, I could not on my

own account give thee any information regarding the

sacrament hidden within me by the power of the

Almighty; since, as his slave, it was my duty to await

the manifestation of his holy and perfect will. Not be

cause I failed to esteem thee as my lord and spouse did

2-23

334 CITY OF GOD

I remain silent: for I was and always will be thy faith

ful servant, eager to correspond to thy holy wishes and

affection. From my inmost heart and in the name of the

Lord, whom I bear within me, I beseech thee not to

change the manner of thy conversation and intercourse

with me. The Lord has not made me his Mother in

order to be served and to command in this life, but in

order to be the servant of all and thy slave, obeying thy

will in all things. This is my duty, my master, and out

side of it I would lead a life without joy and full of

sorrow. It is just that thou afford me the opportunity

of fulfilling it, since so it was ordained by the Most High.

He has furnished me with thy protection and devoted

assistance, in order that I may live securely in the shade

of thy provident solicitude and with thy aid rear the

Fruit of my womb, my God and my Lord." With these

words and others most sweet and persuasive most holy

Mary consoled and quieted saint Joseph, and he raised

Her from her knees in order to confer with Her upon all

that would be necessary for this purpose. Since on this

occasion the heavenly Lady was full of the Holy Ghost

and moreover bore within Her, as his Mother, the divine

Word, who proceeds from the Father and the Holy

Ghost, saint Joseph received special enlightenment and

the plenitude of divine graces. Altogether renewed in

fervor of spirit he said :

410. "Blessed art Thou, Lady, among all women,

fortunate and preferred before all nations and genera

tions. May the Creator of heaven and earth be extolled

with eternal praise, since from his exalted kingly throne

He has looked upon Thee and chosen Thee for his dwell

ing-place and in Thee alone has fulfilled the ancient

promises made to the Patriarchs and Prophets. Let all

generations bless Him : for in no one has He magnified

THE INCARNATION 335

his name as He has done in thy humility; and me, the

most insignificant of the living, He has in his divine con

descension selected for thy servant." In these words of

praise and benediction saint Joseph was enlightened by

the Holy Ghost, in the same manner as saint Elisabeth,

when she responded to the salutation of our Queen and

Mistress. The light and inspiration, received by the most

holy spouse was wonderfully adapted to his dignity and

office. The heavenly Lady, upon hearing the words of

the holy man, answered in the words of the Magnificat,

as She had done on her visit to saint Elisabeth, and She

added other canticles. She was all aflame in ecstasy and

was raised from the earth in a globe of light, which sur

rounded Her and transfigured Her with the gifts of glory.

411. At this heavenly vision saint Joseph was filled

with admiration and unspeakable delight ; for never had

he seen his most blessed Spouse in such eminence of

glory and perfection. Now he beheld Her with a full

and clear understanding, since all the integrity and purity

of the Princess of heaven and mystery of her dignity

manifested themselves to him. He saw and recognized

in her virginal womb the humanity of the infant God and

the union of the two natures of the Word. With pro

found humility and reverence he adored Him and recog

nized Him as his Redeemer, offering himself to his

Majesty. The Lord looked upon him in benevolence and

kindness as upon no other man, for He accepted him as

his foster-father and conferred upon him that title. In

accordance with this dignity, He gifted him with that

plenitude of science and heavenly gifts which Christian

piety can and must acknowledge. I do not dilate upon

this vast excellence of saint Joseph made known to me,

because I would extend this history beyond the pre

scribed bounds.

336 CITY OF GOD

412. However, if it was a proof of the magnanimity

of the glorious saint Joseph and a clear evidence of his

great sanctity, that he did not wear away and die of the

grief sustained at the thought of the loss of his beloved

Spouse, it is yet more astonishing, that he was not over

whelmed by the unexpected joy of this revelation of the

true mystery connected with his Spouse. In the former

he proved his high sanctity; but in the latter he showed

himself worthy of gifts, such which, if the Lord had not

expanded his heart, he could neither have been capable of

receiving nor could he have outlived to bear in the joy

of his spirit. In all things he was renewed and elevated,

so as to be able to treat worthily Her, who was the

Mother of God himself and his Spouse, and to co-operate

with Her in the mystery of the Incarnation and in tak

ing care of the Word made man, as I shall relate farther

on. In order that he might be still more apt and so much

the more recognize his obligation to serve his heavenly

Spouse, it was also made known to him, that all the gifts

and blessings came to him because of Her: those before

his espousal, because he had been selected for her hus

band, and those afterward, because he had won and

merited this distinction. He also perceived with what

prudence the great Lady had acted toward him, not only

in serving him with such inviolate obedience and pro

found humility, but also in consoling him in his affliction,

soliciting for him the grace and assistance of the Holy

Ghost, hiding her feelings with such discretion, tran-

quilizing and soothing his sorrow, thus fittingly dispos

ing him for the influence of the divine Spirit. Just as the

Princess of heaven had been the instrument for the sanc-

tification of saint John the Baptist and his mother, so She

also was instrumental in procuring for saint Joseph the

plenitude of graces in still greater abundance. All this

THE INCARNATION 337

the most faithful and fortunate man understood and for

it, as a most faithful servant, was proportionately thank

ful.

413. These great sacraments and many others con

nected with our Queen and her spouse saint Joseph, the

sacred Evangelists passed over in silence, not only because

they wished to treasure them in their hearts, but also be

cause neither the humble Lady nor saint Joseph had

spoken of them to any one. Nor was it necessary to men

tion these wonders in the life of Christ our Lord, which

they wrote in order to establish our belief in the new

Church and the law of grace ; for such things might give

rise to many inconveniences among the heathens in their

first conversion. The admirable providence of God, in

his hidden and inscrutable judgments, reserved these

secrets for a more suitable time foreseen in divine wis

dom. He wished that, after the Church had been al

ready established and the Catholic faith well grounded,

the faithful, standing in need of the intercession, the as

sistance and protection of their great Queen and Lady,

should draw, from the knowledge of these mysteries,

new and old treasures of grace and consolation (Matth.

13, 52). Perceiving by new enlightenment what a lov

ing Mother and powerful Advocate they had in heaven

with her most holy Son, to whom the Father has given

the power to judge (John 5, 52), let them fly to Her

for help as to the only and sacred refuge of sinners. Let

the tribulations and the tears of the Church themselves

give witness, whether such times of affliction have not

come upon us in our days; for never were her trials

greater than now, when her own sons, reared at her

breast, afflict her, seek to destroy her, and dissipate the

treasures of the blood of her Spouse with a greater

cruelty than was done by her most embittered enemies.

338 CITY OF GOD

In this crying need, when the blood, shed by her chil

dren calls heavenward, and much more loudly, the

blood of our high Priest Christ (Heb. 12, 24) trodden

under foot and polluted under pretext of justice, re

sounds in anguish, what are the most faithful children

of the Church doing ? Why are they so speechless ? Why

do they not call upon most holy Mary? Why do they

not invoke her aid and urge Her to help ? What wonder

if help is delayed, since we postpone seeking Her and

acknowledging Her as the true Mother of God? I give

witness, that great mysteries are enclosed in this City

of God and that in lively faith we should confess and

extol them. They are so great, that the deeper insight

into them is reserved for the time after the general resur

rection, when all the saints will know them in the Most

High. But in the meanwhile let the pious and faithful

souls acknowledge the condescension of this their most

loving Queen and Lady in revealing some of the great

and hidden sacraments through me, a most unworthy

instrument; for I, in my weakness and insignificance,

could be induced to attempt this work only by the

repeated command and encouragement of the Mother of

piety, as was stated several times.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE HEAVENLY QUEEN AND

LADY.

414. My daughter, my object in revealing to thee in

this history so many sacraments and secrets, both those

which thou hast written and many others, which thou

art unable to manifest, is, that thou use them as a mirror

of my life and as an inviolable rule of action for thy own.

All of them should be engraven in the tablets of thy heart

and I recall to thy mind the teachings of eternal life,

THE INCARNATION 339

thereby complying with my duty as thy Teacher. Be

ready to obey and fulfill all commands as a willing and

careful pupil; let the humble care and watchfulness of

my spouse saint Joseph, his submission to divine direc

tion and his esteem for heavenly enlightenment, serve

thee as an example. For only because his heart had been

well disposed and prepared for the execution of the divine

will, was he entirely changed and remodeled by the pleni

tude of grace for the ministry assigned to him by the

Most High. Let therefore the consciousness of thy

faults serve thee as a motive to submit in all humility to

the work of God, not as a pretext to withdraw from the

performance of that which the Lord desires of thee.

415. However, I wish on this occasion to reveal to

thee the just reproach and indignation of the Most High

against mortals ; so that, comparing the conduct of other

men with the humility and meekness, which I exercised

toward my spouse saint Joseph, thou mayest understand

it better in divine enlightenment. The cause of this

reproach, which the Lord and I have to make against

men, is the inhuman perversity of men in persisting to

treat each other with so much want of humility and love.

In this they commit three faults, which displease the

Most High very much and which cause the Almighty

and me to withhold many mercies. The first is, that men,

knowing that they are all children of the same Father in

heaven (Is. 64, 8), works of his hands, formed of the

same nature, graciously nourished and kept alive by his

Providence, reared at the same table of divine mysteries

and Sacraments, especially of his own body and blood,

nevertheless forget and despise all these advantages, con

centrating all their interest upon earthly and trivial

affairs, exciting themselves without reason, swelling with

indignation, creating discords, quarrels, indulging in

340 CITY OF GOD

detractions and harsh words, sometimes rising up to most

wicked and inhuman vengeance or mortal hate of one

another. The second is, that, when through human

frailty and want of mortification, incited by the tempta

tion of the devil, they happen to fall into one of these

faults, they do not at once seek to rid themselves of it

nor strive to be again reconciled, as should be done by

brothers in the presence of a just judge. Thus they

deny Him as their merciful Father and force Him to

become the severe and rigid Judge of their sins; for no

faults excite Him sooner to exercise his severity than

the sins of revenge and hate. The third offense, which

causes his great indignation, is, that sometimes, when a

brother comes in order to be reconciled, he that deems

himself offended will not receive him and asks a greater

satisfaction than that which he knows would be accepted

by the Lord, and which he himself offers as satisfaction

to God s Majesty. For all of them wish that God, who

is most grievously offended, should receive and pardon

them, whenever they approach Him with humility and

contrition; while those that are but dust and ashes, ask

to be revenged upon their brothers and will not content

themselves with the satisfaction, which the Most High

himself readily accepts for their own sins.

416. Of all the sins, which the sons of the Church

commit, none is more horrible than these in the eyes of

the Most High. This thou wilt readily understand by

the divine light and in the vigor of God s law, which

commands men to pardon their brethren, although they

may have offended seventy times seven. And if a brother

offend many times every day, as soon as he says that

he is sorry for it, the Lord commands us to forgive the

offending brother as many times without counting the

number. And those that are not willing to forgive, He

THE INCARNATION 341

threatens with severest punishment on account of the

scandal, which they cause. This can be gathered from

the threatening words of God himself : Woe to him from

whom scandal comes and through whom scandal is

caused ! It were better for him, if he fell into the depths

of the sea with a heavy millstone around his neck. This

was said in order to indicate the danger of this sin and

the difficulty of obtaining deliverance therefrom, which

must be compared to that of a man dropping into the

sea with a grinding-stone around his neck. It also points

out that the punishment is the abyss of eternal pains

(Matth. 18, 9). Therefore the command of my most holy

Son is good advice to the faithful, that they rather per

mit their eyes to be torn out and their hands chopped off,

than allow themselves to fall into this crime of scandaliz

ing the little ones.

417. O my dearest daughter! How thou must bewail

the wickedness and evils of this sin with tears of blood!

That is the sin, which grieves the Holy Ghost (Eph. 4,

30), affords proud triumphs to the demons, makes mon

sters of rational creatures, and wipes out in them the

image of the eternal Father ! What thing more unbecom

ing, or hateful and monstrous, than to see creatures of

the earth, the food of worms and corruption, rise up

against one another in pride and arrogance? Thou wilt

not find words strong enough to describe this wicked

ness, in order to persuade mortals to fear it and guard

against the wrath of the Lord (Matt. 3, 7). But do

thou, dearest, preserve thy heart from this contagion,

stamp and engrave in it the most useful doctrine for thy

guidance. Never think for a moment, that in offending

thy neighbor or scandalizing him in this way, the guilt

can be small, for all these sins are weighty in the sight

of God. Place a damper on all thy faculties and feel-

342 CITY OF GOD

ings in order to observe most strictly the rules of charity

toward all creatures of the Most High. To me also

afford this pleasure, since I wish thee to be most per

fect in this virtue. I impose upon thee as my most

vigorous precept, that thou give offense neither in

thought, word or deed to any of thy neighbors ; and that

thou prevent any of thy subjects, and, as far as thou

canst, any other person in thy presence from injuring

their neighbor. Meditate well on this, as I ask it of thee,

my dearest; for it is a doctrine most divine and least

understood by mortals. Serve thyself with the only

remedy against these passions : namely, with the compell

ing example of my humility and meekness, the effect of

the sincere love not only toward my spouse, but toward

all the children of the heavenly Father; for I esteemed

them and looked upon them as redeemed and bought for

a great price (I Pet. 1, 18). With true fidelity and in

genious chanty watch over thy religious. The divine

Majesty is offended grievously by any one who does not

fulfill this command expressly inculcated and called a

new one by my Son (John 15, 12) ; but He is roused to

incomparably greater indignation against religious per

sons, who offend against it. Among these there are

many, who should distinguish themselves as perfect

children of the Father and Teacher of this virtue; never

theless they cast it aside and thereby become more odious

and detestable in his sight than worldly persons.

CHAPTER V.

SAINT JOSEPH RESOLVES TO DEVOTE HIMSELF ENTIRELY

TO THE SERVICE OF MOST HOLY MARY ; THE BEHAVIOR

OF HER MAJESTY, AND OTHER PARTICULARS OF THE

LIFE OF MARY AND JOSEPH.

418. The most faithful Joseph, after being informed

of the mystery and sacrament of the Incarnation, was

filled with such high and befitting sentiments concerning

his Spouse, that, although he had always been holy and

perfect, he was changed into a new man. He resolved to

act toward the heavenly Lady according to a new rule

and with much greater reverence, as I will relate farther

on. This was conformable to the wisdom of the saint

and due to the excellence of his Spouse ; for saint Joseph

by heavenly enlightenment saw well, that he was the

servant and She the Mistress of heaven and earth. In

order to satisfy his desire for honoring and reverencing

Her as the Mother of God, whenever he passed Her or

spoke to Her alone, he did it with great external venera

tion and on bended knees. He would not allow Her to

serve him, or wait upon him, or perform any other

humble services, such as cleaning the house or washing

the dishes and the like. All these things the most happy

spouse wished to do himself, in order not to derogate

from the dignity of the Queen.

419. But the heavenly Lady, who among the humble

was the most humble and whom no one could surpass in

humility, so managed all these things, that the palm of

victory in all these virtues always remained with Her.

343

344 CITY OF GOD

She besought saint Joseph not to bend the knees to Her,

for though this worship was due to the Lord whom She

carried in her womb, yet as long as He was within

unseen by any one no distinction was externally manifest

between his and her own person. The saint therefore

allowed himself to be persuaded and conformed to the

wishes of the Queen of heaven ; only at times, when She

was not looking, he continued to give this worship to the

Lord whom She bore in her womb, and also to Her as

his Mother, intending thereby to honor Both according

to the excellence of Each. In regard to the other works

and services, an humble contention arose between them.

For saint Joseph could not overcome his conviction as

to the impropriety of allowing the great Queen and Lady

to perform them, and therefore he sought to be before

hand with such household duties. His heavenly Spouse

was filled with the same eagerness to seize upon occasions

in advance of saint Joseph. As however he busied him

self in these duties during the time which She spent in

contemplation, he frustrated her continual desire of serv

ing him and of performing all the duties of the house

hold, which She considered as belonging to Her as a

servant. In her affliction on this account, the heavenly

Lady turned to the Lord with humble complaints, and

besought Him to oblige saint Joseph not to hinder Her

in the exercise of humility, as She desired. As this

virtue is so powerful before the divine tribunal and has

free access, no prayer accompanied by it is small.

Humility makes all prayers effective and inclines the im

mutable Being of God to clemency. He heard Her peti

tion and He ordered the angel guardian of the blessed

husband to instruct him as follows: "Do not frustrate

the humble desires of Her who is supreme over all the

creatures of heaven and earth. Exteriorly allow Her to

THE INCARNATION 345

serve thee and interiorly treat Her with highest rever

ence, and at all times and in all places worship the in

carnate Word. It is his will, equally with that of the

heavenly Mother, to serve and not to be served, in order

to teach the world the knowledge of life and the excel

lence of humility. In some of the work thou canst

assist Her, but always reverence in Her the Lord of all

creation."

420. Instructed by this command of the Most High,

saint Joseph permitted the heavenly Princess to exercise

her humility and so both of them were enabled to make

an offering of their will to God : most holy Mary, by

exercising the deepest humility and obedience toward her

spouse in all her acts of virtue which She performed

without failing in the least point of perfection ; and saint

Joseph by obeying the Almighty with a holy and prudent

embarrassment, which was occasioned by seeing himself

waited upon and served by Her, whom he had recognized

as his Mistress and that of the world, and as the Mother

of his God and Creator. In this manner the prudent

saint made up for the humility, which he could not prac

tice in the works now consigned to his Spouse. This

arrangement seemed to humiliate him more and filled

him with a greater reverential fear. In this fear he

observed most holy Mary, always bearing in mind the

Treasure of her virginal womb and adoring, magnifying

and praising the Lord. A few times, in reward of his

holiness and reverence, or for the increase of both, the

infant God manifested Himself to him in a wonderful

manner: he saw Him in the womb of his purest Mother

enclosed as it were in the clearest crystal. The sovereign

Queen conversed with the glorious saint concerning the

Incarnation ; because She did not need to be so reserved

in her heavenly words since he had been enlightened and

346 CITY OF GOD

instructed in the sublime sacraments of the hypostatic

union of the divine and human natures in the virginal

chamber of his Spouse.

421. No human tongue can reproduce the celestial

words and conversations of the most holy Mary and the

blessed Joseph. I will adduce some of them in the fol

lowing chapters, as far as I know how. Yet, who can

declare the effects wrought in the sweet and devout heart

of this saint in seeing himself not only constituted the

husband of Her who was the true Mother of his Creator,

but in rinding himself also served by Her as if She was

the humblest slave, while at the same time he beheld Her

raised in sanctity and dignity above the highest seraphim

and inferior only to God? If the divine right hand en

riched with blessings the house of Obededom for having

sheltered for a few mpnths the figurative ark of the old

Testament (I Par. 13, 14), what blessings did He not

shower upon saint Joseph, to whom He entrusted the

true ark and the Lawgiver himself enshrined in Her?

Incomparable was the good fortune and happiness of this

saint! Not only because he had with him in his house

the living and true ark of the new Testament, the altar,

the sacrifice, and the temple, all left in his charge ; but

also because he cared for them worthily and as a faithful

servant (Matth. 24, 45), constituted by the Lord himself

over his family to provide for all their necessities in the

right time as a most faithful dispenser (Os. 14, 20).

Let all generations and peoples acknowledge and bless

him, let them extol his merits; since the Most High has

favored none other in the same degree. I, an unworthy

and poor worm, in the light of such venerable sacraments,

exalt and magnify this Lord God, confessing Him as

holy, just, merciful, wise and admirable in the disposi

tion of all his great works.

THE INCARNATION 347

422. The humble but blessed house of Joseph con

tained three rooms, which occupied nearly all its space

and formed the exclusive dwelling place of the two

Spouses ; for they kept neither a man- nor a maid-servant.

In one of the rooms saint Joseph slept, in another he

worked and kept the tools of his trade of carpentering;

the third was ordinarily occupied by the Queen of heaven

and was also her sleeping room. It contained a couch

made by the hands of saint Joseph. This arrangement

they had observed since their espousal and from the day

on which they had come to this, their dwelling. Before

knowing the dignity of his Spouse and Lady, saint Joseph

rarely went to see Her; for while She kept her retire

ment he was engaged in his work, unless some affair

made it absolutely necessary to consult Her. But after

he was informed of his good fortune, the holy man was

more solicitous for her welfare, and in order to renew

the joy of his heart he began to come often to the retreat

of the sovereign Lady, visiting Her and receiving her

commands. But he always approached Her with extreme

humility and reverential fear, and before he spoke to

Her, he was careful to note in what She was engaged.

Many times he saw Her in ecstasy raised from the earth

and resplendent with most brilliant light; at other times

in the company of her angels holding celestial intercourse

with them; and at other times, he found Her prostrate

upon the earth in the form of a cross, speaking to the

Lord. Her most fortunate spouse was a participator in

these favors. But whenever he found the great Lady

in these occupations and postures, he would presume no

farther than to look upon Her with profound reverence ;

and thereby he merited sometimes to hear the sweetest

harmony of the celestial music, with which the angels

regaled their Queen, and perceived a wonderful fragrancy

348 CITY OF GOD

which comforted him and filled him entirely with jubila

tion and joy of spirit.

423. The two holy spouses lived alone in their house,

for as I have said, they had no servants of any kind, not

only on account of their humility, but in order more

fittingly to hide from any witnesses the wonders, which

passed between them and which were not to be communi

cated to outsiders. Likewise the Princess of heaven did

not leave her dwelling, except for very urgent causes in

the service of God or her fellow-men. Whenever any

thing was necessary She asked that fortunate neighbor,

who as I have said had served saint Joseph during the

absence of Mary in the house of Zacharias. This woman

received such a good return from Mary, that not only

she herself became most holy and perfect, but her whole

household and family was blessed by the help of the

Queen and Mistress of the world. She was visited by

most holy Mary in some of her sicknesses and with her

family was copiously enriched by the blessings of heaven.

424. Never did saint Joseph see his heavenly Spouse

asleep, nor did he of his own experience know whether

She ever slept, although he besought Her to take some

rest, especially during the time of her sacred pregnancy.

The resting-place of the Princess was the low couch,

which I said had been constructed by saint Joseph; and

on it were the coverings which served Her during her

brief and holy sleep. Her undergarment was a sort of

tunic made of cotton, but softer than the ordinary or

common cloth. This tunic She never changed from the

time since She left the temple, nor did it wear out or

grow old or soiled, and no person ever saw it, nor did

saint Joseph know that She wore that kind of a gar

ment; for he never saw any other part of her clothing

except the outside garments, which were open to the

THE INCARNATION 349

view of other persons. Those were of a gray color, as i

have said (Part I. No. 400), and these only and her

head-coverings were the garments, which the Queen

changed now and then ; not because they were soiled, but

because, being visible to all, She wished to avoid notice

by such strange sameness of outward appearance. Noth

ing that She wore upon her most pure and virginal body

became soiled or worn; for She neither perspired, nor

was She subject to the punishments, which are laid upon

the sin-impregnated bodies of the children of Adam. She

was in all respects most pure and the works of her hands

were like crystal ornaments; and with the same purity

She cared for the clothes and other necessities of saint

Joseph. The food of which She partook, was most

limited in kind and quantity; but She partook of some

every day and in company of her spouse; she never ate

meat, although he did, and She prepared it for him.

Her sustenance was fruit, fishes, and ordinarily bread and

cooked vegetables; but of all these She partook in exact

measure and weight, only so much as was necessary for

the nourishment of the body and the maintaining of the

natural warmth without any superfluities that could pass

over into excess of harmful corruption ; the same rule She

observed in regard to drink, although Her fervent acts of

love often caused a superabundance of preternatural

ardor. This rule, as to the quantity of her nourishment,

She followed during her whole life, although as to the

kind of food She adapted Herself to the various circum

stances demanding a change, as I shall relate further on.

425. In all things the most pure Mary exhibited con

summate perfection, without any fault or want of grace ;

and all her actions both in the natural and the super

natural order reached the pinnacle of excellence. But

words fail me in describing it: for I am never satisfied,

224

350 CITY OF GOD

seeing how far short these words fall of that which I

perceive and how much more excellence this sublime

Creature possesses than I can express. Continually I am

grieved by my insufficiency and dissatisfied with my

limited terms and descriptions, fearing lest I presume

more than I should in striving to do that which so far

exceeds my powers. But the force of obedience inspires

me with I do not know what sweet strength, which

dispels my hesitancy and impels my backwardness, en

couraging me to face the greatness of my undertaking

and the smallness of my ability. I work under obedience,

and through it I hope to make great gains. It will also

serve me as an excuse.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

HOLY MARY.

426. My daughter, in the school of humility, which

my whole life affords thee, I wish that thou be studious

and diligent; and this should be thy first and principal

care, if thou wishest to enjoy the sweet embraces of the

Lord, assure thyself of his favor and possess the treas

ures of light, which are hidden to the proud (Matth. 11,

25). For without the trusty foundation of humility such

treasures cannot be confided to any man. Let all thy

ambition be to humble thyself in. thy own estimation and

thought, so that in thy exterior actions thou mayest truly

exhibit this humility of thy interior. It must be a sub

ject of confusion and a spur of humility for thee and for

all the souls to have the Lord as their Father and Spouse,

to see, that the presumption and pride of worldly wisdom

is more powerful in its devotees, than humility and true

self-knowledge is in the children of light. Consider the

watchfulness, the untiring study and care of ambitious

THE INCARNATION 351

and aspiring men. Look upon their struggle to be

esteemed in the world, their strivings never at rest,

though so vain and worthless; how they conduct them

selves outwardly according to the false notions which

they have of themselves; how they pretend to be what

they are not, and how they exert themselves to obtain

through these false pretenses the treasures, which, though

only earthly, they do not deserve. Hence it should be a

cause of confusion and shame to the good, that deceit

should urge on the sons of perdition with greater force

than truth urges the elect ; that the number of those, who

in the world are anxious to strive in the service of their

God and Creator, should be so small in comparison with

the number of those who serve vanity; that there should

be so few of the elect, though all are called (Matth. 20,

16).

427. Seek therefore, my daughter, to make progress

in this science of humility and to gain for thyself the

palm of victory in this virtue in the midst of the children

of darkness; in opposition to their pride, study what I

did in order to overcome darkness in this world by the

pursuit of humility. In this the Lord and I desire thee

to be very wise and proficient. Never miss an occasion

of exercising humility and allow no one to deprive thee

of such works; and if occasions of humility fail thee

and are scarce, seek after them and ask God to send

them to you; for it pleases his Majesty to see such kind

of anxiety and ambition in what He desires so much.

For the sake of this divine complacency alone, thou, as a

daughter of his house, as his domestic and as his spouse,

shouldst be solicitous and anxious for acts of humility;

for in this, human ambition itself will teach thee not to

be negligent. Observe how a woman in her house and

family conducts herself in order to benefit and advance

352 CITY OF GOD

her family, and how she loses no chance of advancing it ;

nothing seems too much for her, and if anything, no

matter how small it is, goes to loss (Lucas. 15, 8) she

becomes much excited. All this is the effect of worldly

covetousness, and there is certainly no reason, that the

wisdom of heaven be less fruitful or less careful in the

gifts received. Therefore I desire thee to allow no care

lessness or forgetfulness concerning what so much con

cerns thee, and to lose no occasion of practicing humility

and laboring for the glory of the Lord ; but do thou seek

arid strive after his gifts and draw merits from them as

a faithful daughter and spouse. Then wilt thou find

grace in the eyes of the Lord and in mine, according to

thy desire.

CHAPTER VI.

SOME OF THE SAYINGS AND CONVERSATIONS OF MOST

HOIvY MARY AND JOSEPH REGARDING DIVINE THINGS;

OTHER WONDERFUL EVENTS.

428. Before saint Joseph had been instructed in the

mystery of the Incarnation, the Princess of heaven made

use of opportune occasions for reading to him some of

the passages of holy Scriptures, especially from the

Prophets and from the Psalms. As a most wise Teacher

She also explained them to him, and her holy spouse who

was indeed capable of the exalted truths contained therein,

asked Her many questions, wondering at and consoling

tiimself with the heavenly answers of his Spouse; and

thus both of them alternately praised and blessed the

Lord. But after he had himself become instructed in the

great sacrament, he conversed with our Queen, as with

one, who was Herself to be the Coadjutrix of the admira

ble works and mysteries of our Redemption. For now

they could more openly and clearly discuss the divine

prophecies and oracles concerning the conception of the

Word through a Virgin-Mother, of his birth, his bring

ing up, and his most holy life. All these things her

Highness discussed and explained, delineating beforehand

the course of action, which they were to pursue, when

the longed-for day of the birth of the Child should have

arrived, when She should hold Him in her arms, nourish

Him at her breast with virginal milk, and when the holy

spouse himself should share in this greatest of mortal

blessedness. Only of his Passion and Death, and of the

353

354 CITY OF GOD

sayings of Isaias and Jeremias, the most prudent Queen

spoke more rarely; for as her spouse was of a most kind

and tender heart, She thought it best not to dilate upon

or anticipate that which he himself remembered of the

sayings of the ancient writers concerning the coming and

the sufferings of the Messiah. The most prudent Virgin

also waited until the Lord should grant more particular

revelation of what was to happen, or until She herself

would know better the divine will in this respect.

429. Her most faithful and blessed husband was

wholly inflamed by her sweet words and conversations,

and with tears of joy he said to the heavenly Spouse :

"Is it possible, that in thy most chaste arms I shall see my

God and Redeemer? That I shall hear him speak, and

touch Him, and that my eyes shall look upon his divine

face, and that the sweat of my brow shall be so blessed

as to be poured out in his service and for his sustenance ?

That He shall live with us, and that we shall eat with

Him at the same table, and that we shall speak and con

verse with Him ? Whence comes to me this good fortune

which nobody can ever deserve? O how much do I

regret that I am so poor ! Would I possessed the richest

palaces for his entertainment and many treasures to offer

Him !" And the sovereign Queen answered : "My mas

ter and spouse, there is abundant reason that thy desires

extend to all things possible for the reception of thy

Creator; but this great God and Lord does not wish to

enter into the world in the pomp of ostentatious riches

and royal majesty. He has need of none of these (Ps.

15, 2), nor does He come from heaven for such vanities.

He comes to redeem the world and to guide men on the

path of eternal life (John 10, 10) ; and this is to be done

by means of humility and poverty; in these He wishes

to be born, live and die, in order to destroy in the hearts

THE INCARNATION 355

of men the fetters of covetousness and pride, which

keep them from blessedness. On this account He chose

our poor and humble house, and desired us not .to be

rich in apparent, deceitful and transitory goods, which

are but vanity of vanities and affliction of spirit (Eccles.

1, 24) and which oppress and obscure the understanding/

430. At other times the saint asked the most pure

Lady to teach him the nature and essence of virtues,

especially of the love of God, in order that he might

know how to behave toward the Most High become man

and in order that he might not be rejected as a useless

and incapable servant. The Queen and Teacher of vir

tues complied with these requests and explained to him

the nature of true virtues and the manner of exercising

them in all perfection. But in these discourses She pro

ceeded with so much humility and discretion that She

did not appear as the Teacher of her spouse, though such

She was; but She managed to give her information

under the guise of conversation or in addressing the

Lord, or at other times asking questions of saint Joseph,

which of themselves suggested the information. In all

circumstances She knew how to preserve her most pro

found humility, without permitting even the least gesture

not in accordance with it. These alternate discourses or

readings from the holy Scriptures they interrupted by

manual labor as occasion required. Not only was the

hard and tiresome labor of saint Joseph lightened by the

admirable words of sympathy of our Lady, but in her

rare discretion She also knew how to add instruction, so

that his manual labor became more an exercise of virtue

than a work of the hands. The mildest Dove, with the

prudence of a most wise virgin, administered her conso

lations by pointing out the most blessed fruits of labor.

In Her estimation She held Herself unworthy of being

356 CITY OF GOD

supported by her spouse, and She felt Herself in con

tinual debt to the sweat of saint Joseph, as one who is

receiving a great alms and most generous gift. All

these considerations caused in Her sentiments of deepest

obligation, as if She were the most useless creature on

earth. Therefore, though She could not assist the saint

in his trade, since that was above the strength of women

and unbecoming the modesty and retirement of the

heavenly Queen; yet in all that was befitting Her She

served Him as an humble handmaid, since her discreet

humility and thankfulness would not suffer any less re

turn for the faithful services of saint Joseph.

431. Among other wonderful happenings in connec

tion with his intercourse with most holy Mary during

these days of her pregnancy, saint Joseph one day saw

many birds flocking around Her in order to pay their

respect to the Queen and Mistress of all creatures. They

surrounded Her as if to form a choir and raised up their

voices in songs of sweet harmony not less wonderful than

their visit to the heavenly Lady. Saint Joseph had never

seen this wonder until that day and, full of admiration

and joy, he said to his sovereign Spouse: "Is it possible,

my Mistress, that these simple birds and irrational crea

tures should understand and fulfill their obligations better

than I? Surely it is reasonable, that if they recognize,

serve and reverence Thee according to their powers, that

Thou allow me to perform that which in duty I am bound

to do." The most pure Virgin answered him: "My

master, in the behavior of these little birds the Creator

offers us a powerful motive worthily to employ all our

strength and faculties in his praise, just as they recognize

and acknowledge their Creator in my womb. I, how

ever, am but a creature and therefore I deserve no vener

ation, nor is it right that I accept it; it is my duty to

THE INCARNATION 357

induce all creatures to praise the Most High, since He

has looked upon me, his handmaid, and has enriched me

with the treasures of the divinity" (Luke 1, 48).

432. It happened also not a few times that the heavenly

Lady and her spouse found themselves so poor and desti

tute of means that they were in want of the necessaries of

life ; for they were most liberal in their gifts to the poor,

and they were never anxious to store up beforehand food

or clothing, as is wont with the children of this world in

their faint-hearted covetousness (Matth. 6, 25). The Lord

so disposed things that the faith and patience of his most

holy Mother and of saint Joseph should not be vain, for

this indigence was a source of incomparable consolation

to our Lady, not only because of her love of poverty, but

also on account of her astonishing humility. She con

sidered Herself unworthy of the sustenance of life, and

that She above all others should suffer the want of it.

Therefore She blessed the Lord for this poverty as far

as it affected Her, while She asked the Most High to

supply the needs of saint Joseph, as being a just and holy

man and well worthy of this favor of the Almighty. The

Lord did not forget his poor entirely (Ps. 73, 19), for

while He permitted them to exercise virtues and gain

merits, He also gave them nourishment in opportune

time (Ps. 144, 15). This his Providence provided in

various ways. Sometimes He moved the hearts of their

neighbors and acquaintances to bring some gratuitous

gift or pay some debt. At other times, and more ordi

narily, saint Elisabeth sent them assistance from her

home ; for ever since She had harbored in her house the

Queen of heaven this devoted matron insisted on sending

them a gift from time to time, which the humble Princess

always acknowledged by sending in return some work of

her hands. On some occasions, for the greater glory of

358 CITY OF GOD

the Most High, the blessed Lady availed Herself of the

power given to Her as the Mistress of all creation; then

She would command the birds of the air to bring some

fishes from the sea, or fruits of the field, and they would

fulfill her commands to the point ; sometimes they would

bring also bread in their beaks, which the Lord had fur

nished them. Many times the most fortunate spouse

saint Joseph was a witness to all these happenings.

433. Also in other necessities they were on some occa

sions succored by the holy angels in an admirable manner.

In order properly to understand some of the great mira

cles which happened through the ministry of the angels

to most holy Mary and Joseph, it is necessary to take into

account the magnanimity and generous faith of the saint,

for these virtues were so great in him that not even the

shadow of covetousness, or greediness, could find en

trance into his soul. Although he labored for others, as

did also his heavenly Spouse, yet never did they ask for

any wages, or set a price on their work, asking payment

therefor ; they performed all their work not for gain, but

in obedience to a request or for charity, leaving the pay

ment of wages entirely in the hands of their employers

and accepting it not as a just return for their labors, but

as a freely given alms. This is the perfection of sanctity,

which saint Joseph learnt from the heavenly example

given to him in his house by the most holy Virgin. Owing

to this circumstance, that he was not paid for his work, it

happened sometimes that they were in total want of food

and sustenance until the Lord would provide for them.

One day it came to pass that the hour set for their meal

passed without their having anything in the house to eat.

They persevered in prayer until very late, giving thanks

to the Lord for this privation, and hoping that He would

open his all-powerful hand (Ps. 144, 16). In the mean-

THE INCARNATION 359

while the holy angels prepared the meal and placed upon

the table some fruit, and whitest bread and fishes, also

especially a sort of preserve or jelly of wonderful and

nourishing sweetness. Then some of the angels went to

call their Queen, and others called saint Joseph her spouse.

Each came forth from their separate retirement and, per

ceiving the regalement provided by heaven, they thanked

the Most High in tears of fervent gratitude and partook

of the food; and afterwards they broke out in exalted

songs of praise of the Almighty.

434. Many other similar events came to pass almost

daily in the house of most holy Mary and her spouse ; for

as they were alone and as there was no need of hiding

these wonders from witnesses, the Lord did not hesitate

to perform them for his beloved, who were entrusted

with co-operation in the most wonderful of all the works

of his powerful arm, I wish merely to remark, that when

I say Mary sang canticles of praise, either She by Her

self or in company with saint Joseph or the holy angels,

new songs are meant, such as saint Anne sang, the

mother of Samuel, or Moses, Ezechias and other

Prophets, when they were visited by great blessings of

the Lord. If all the canticles (Kings 2, 1 ; Deut. 32, 1,

etc.) which the Queen of heaven composed and sang

would have been recorded, there would be a large volume

of them, the contents of which would excite unheard of

wonder in this world.

TEACHING VOUCHSAFED ME BY THE SAME QUEEN AND

435. Much-beloved daughter, I wish that the science

of the Lord be many times renewed in thee, and that

thou acquire the knowledge of the voice (Wis. 1, 7), so

360 CITY OF GOD

that thou mayst know, (and let also mortals know), the

dangerous deceit and perverse estimation in which they,

as lovers of falsehood, hold the temporal and visible

goods (Ps. 4, 4). How many men are not fascinated by

their unbounded greed? All of them ordinarily stake

their hopes on gold and material riches; and in order to

increase them, they exert all the forces of their natural

being. Thus they spend all the time of their life, which

was given them in order to gain eternal rest and happi

ness, in these vanities. They lose themselves in these

dark labyrinths and mazes, as if they knew nothing of

God and of his Providence ; for they do not think of ask

ing Him for that which they desire, and do not moderate

their desires in such a way as will dispose them to ask

and hope for what they desire at his hands. Thus they

lose all, because they confide in the lying and deceitful

prospects of their own efforts. This blind greed is the

root of all evils (I Tim. 6, 20) ; for the Lord, incensed

at such great perversity, permits the mortals to be en

tangled in the vile slavery of avarice, in which their

understanding is darkened and their will hardened. Soon

the Most High, for greater punishment, withdraws his

kindly care as from creatures so detestable and denies

them his paternal protection, thus letting them fall into

what is the deepest misfortune that can befall man in this

life.

436. Although it is true that nothing can hide itself

from the eyes of the Lord (Ps. 138, 6), yet when the

transgressors and enemies of his law offend Him, they

forfeit the kind attention and care of his Providence and

are left to their own desires (Ps. 80, 13). They cease

to experience the paternal foresight shown toward those

who trust in the Lord. Those that confide in their own

efforts and in the gold, which they can touch and feel,

THE INCARNATION 361

will reap the fruit of their hopes. But just as far as the

divine Essence and Power is distant from the lowliness

and limitation of mortals, so far also the results of human

covetousness are distant from the help and protection of

eternal Providence shown to the humble who trust in

it (Ps. 17, 31). Upon these his Majesty looks with

kindest love, delights in them, nourishes them at his

breast, and attends to their wishes and wants. I and my

holy spouse Joseph were poor, and at times we suffered

great wants ; but none of them were powerful enough to

engender within our hearts the contagion of avarice. We

concerned ourselves entirely with the glory of the Most

High, relying wholly on his most faithful and tender care.

This was what pleased Him so much, as thou hast under

stood and written ; since He supplied our wants in various

manners, even commanding the angels to help us and pre

pare for us our nourishment.

437. I do not wish to say that the mortals should yield

to laziness and negligence ; on the contrary it is just that

all should labor (Ps. 48, 7), and doing nothing is also

a great and very reprehensible fault. Neither leisure nor

solicitude must be disorderly; nor should the creature

trust in his own strength; nor should he smother the

divine love in anxiety; nor seek more than is necessary

for a temperate life. Neither should he fear that the

divine Providence will fail to supply what is necessary,

nor should he be troubled or lose hope when the Creator

seems to delay his assistance. In the same way he that

is in abundance should not (Eccli. 31, 8) lay aside all

exertion and forget that he is a man subject to labor and

travail. Thus riches as well as poverty must be attributed

to God and made use of in a holy and legitimate way for

the glory of the Creator and Ruler of all things. If men

would observe this rule of action nobody would be with-

362 CITY OF GOD

out the assistance of the Lord, who is a true Father, and

neither would the poor be led into sin by poverty, nor the

rich by prosperity. Of thee, my daughter, I require the

practice of these rules, and through thee I wish to incul

cate them on other mortals. Thou must especially im

press this doctrine upon all thy subjects, telling them not

to be troubled or faint-hearted because of the wants they

suffer, nor inordinately solicitous about their eating or

clothing (Matth. 6, 25), but that they confide in the

Most High and in his Providence. For if they corre

spond to his love, I assure them that they shall never

suffer from the want of what is necessary. Exhort them

also to let their words and conversations continually turn

about holy and divine things, engaging in the praise and

exaltation of the Lord according to the teachings of the

Bible and holy writings. Let their conversations be in

heaven (Philip 3, 20) with the Most High, and with me,

who am their Mother and Superior, and let it be with

the angels, imitating them in holy love.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOST HOLY MARY PREPARES THE SWADDLING-

CLOTHES AND THE LINENS FOR THE DIVINE INFANT

WITH ARDENT LONGINGS TO SEE IT BORN.

438. The divine pregnancy of the Mother of the

eternal Word had already far advanced. Although She

knew that the necessary coverings and linens for the

time of her parturition must be provided, She wished

to proceed in all things with the fullness of heavenly

prudence. Therefore, fulfilling all requirements of an

obedient and faithful handmaid, She presumed to arrange

nothing without the permission and consent of the Lord

and of her holy spouse. Although She could have acted

for Herself in such matters as pertained to her office of

chosen Mother and of her most holy Son, She would not

undertake anything without speaking to saint Joseph.

Therefore She said to him: "My master, it is time

that we prepare the things necessary for the birth of

my most holy Son. Although his Majesty wishes to

be treated as one of the children of men, humiliating

Himself and suffering with them, yet it is just that we

acknowledge Him as our God and as our true King and

Lord by rendering Him our devoted service, and by

making careful provision for his wants as an infant. If

thou give me permission I will begin to prepare the cov

erings and linens for his protection and shelter. I have

already woven with my own hands a piece of linen

which may serve as his first swaddling-clothes; and do

thou, my master, seek to procure some woolen cloth of a

363

364 CITY OF GOD

soft texture and an humble color from which I may pre

pare other coverings; and later on I will weave a seam

less tunic appropriate for Him. In order to avoid any

mistake, let us offer special prayers asking his Highness

to govern and direct us in the right way, so that we may

know his will and fulfill his pleasure."

439. "My Spouse and Lady," answered saint Joseph,

"if it were possible to serve with my own heart-blood

my Lord and God and thus fulfill thy commands, I would

be willing to shed it amid most atrocious torments;

and as I cannot do this, would that I had great riches

to buy the most costly textures in order to offer them

to Thee on this occasion. Do Thou give thy orders as

Thou seest fit, for I will serve Thee as thy servant."

Both of them betook themselves to prayer, and each

separately heard the answer of the Lord, repeating what

the sovereign Queen had already heard many times, and,

which now was said in her hearing and that of saint

Joseph : "I have come from heaven to the earth in

order to exalt humility and discredit pride, to honor

poverty and contemn riches, to destroy vanity and estab

lish truth, and in order to enhance worthily the value of

labor. Therefore it is my will that exteriorly you treat

Me according to the humble position which I have as

sumed, as if I were the natural child of both of you,

and that interiorly you acknowledge Me as the Son of

my eternal Father, and bestow the reverence and love

due to Me as the Man-God."

440. Encouraged by this divine voice to seek the

wisest course in the rearing of the infant God, most holy

Mary and Joseph conferred with each other in what way

they might conceal the most noble and perfect worship

which was ever given to the true God by his creatures,

beneath the treatment which in the eyes of the world was

THE INCARNATION 365

due to a natural child of them both; for this was to be

the opinion of the world, and such a conduct the Lord

himself had enjoined upon them. Having therefore

come to an agreement they lived up to this command of

the Lord in such perfection that they were the admira

tion of all heaven ; and further on I will say more of this

(Nos. 506, 508, 536, 545). They both concluded that

according to the limited means allowed them by their

poverty they were to expend whatever they could afford

in the service of the infant God without going into

excess or failing in anything; for the sacrament of the

King was to be concealed in humble poverty, though at

the same time they wished to exercise their burning love

as far as was possible. Saint Joseph, in exchange for

some of his work, accepted two pieces of woolen cloth

such as his heavenly Spouse had described ; the one white,

the other mulberry-colored mixed with grey, both of

them of the best quality he could find. Of these the

heavenly Queen made the first little dresses of her most

holy Son, while She prepared the swathing clothes and

shirts from the piece of linen which She herself had

spun and woven. Being woven by such hands, it was

a most delicate piece of cloth. She had commenced work

upon it from the day of her entrance into their house at

Nazareth ; for She had intended it for the temple as a

present. Although it could now serve for another much

higher purpose, nevertheless, She offered whatever re

mained of it after She had completed the furnishings of

the infant God as a gift to the temple of Jerusalem, ac

cording to her original intention. All the articles and

coverings necessary for her divine Infant the great Lady

prepared with her own hands, and while She sewed and

trimmed them She shed tears of ineffable devotion

remaining continually on her knees. Saint Joseph gath-

2-26

366 CITY OF GOD

ered such flowers and herbs as he could find from which,

together with other aromatic materials, the zealous

Mother extracted fragrant essences. With these She

sprinkled the sacred vestments of the Victim of sacrifice

which She awaited ; then She folded and laid them away

in a chest, in which She afterwards took them along with

Her, as I shall relate farther on.

441. All these doings of the Princess of heaven are to

be thought of and estimated not as being without life,

nude and bare as I here represent them, but of incom

parable grace and loveliness, full of sanctity and ex

alted merit, of a greater perfection than human intel

lect can comprehend; because She performed all these

works as the Mother of wisdom, and as the Queen of all

virtues. In preparing for the appearance of the most

holy humanity of her Son in this world, She celebrated

the dedication of the living temple of God. The sov

ereign Queen understood better than all the rest of cre

ation the ineffable greatness of the mystery of the Incar

nation of a God and of his coming into the world. Not

in a spirit of doubt, but inflamed by love and veneration,

She repeated many times the words of Solomon when he

built the temple: "How is it possible that God should

dwell with men on earth? If all the heavens, and the

heaven of heavens cannot comprehend Thee, how can

this human body contain Thee, which is formed in my

womb?" But if the temple of Solomon, which served

only as a place in which God should hear the prayers

within it, was built and dedicated with such lavish ex

penditure of gold, silver, treasures and sacrifices, what

should not the Mother of the true Solomon do for the

building up and the dedication of the living temple

(Colos. 2, 9) where was to dwell the plenitude of the

true Divinity, the eternal and incomprehensible God?

THE INCARNATION 367

All these innumerable sacrifices and treasures of the

figurative temple, most holy Mary duplicated not in gold,

silver, or rich texture, since God sought no such riches

in the living temple, but in heroic virtues and in canticles

of praise, by which She fructified and extolled the graces

and gifts of the Most High. She offered up the sacrifice

of her burning love, and ransacked all the holy writings

for hymns, canticles and psalms to praise and magnify

this mystery, adding thereto the expression of her own

exalted sentiments. In a mystical and yet altogether

real manner She fulfilled the ancient figures and types by

her virtues and by her interior and her exterior acts. She

called upon and invited all the creatures to praise their

God, to give honor and glory to their Creator, and place

the hope of their santification in his coming into the

world. In many of these exercises the most fortunate

and blessed Joseph, her spouse, took part.

442. No human tongue can describe, and no created

understanding can reach the sublime height of merit

which the Princess of heaven attained, and the degree of

pleasure and complacency which they afforded the Most

High. If the least degree of grace, which any creature

merits by an act of virtue, is more valuable than all the

created universe, what treasures of grace did She not

gain, whose acts exceeded in value not only all the sacri

fices, offerings and holocausts of the old law and all the

merits of the human race, but far excelled also those of

the highest seraphim? The loving extremes of the

heavenly Lady in hoping to look upon her Son and true

God, to receive Him in her arms, nourish Him at her

breast, tend Him with her own hands, converse with Him

and serve Him, and adore Him made man from her own

flesh, reached such a pass that in the ardors of love She

would have breathed forth her spirit and have been con-

368 CITY OF GOD

sumed if She had not been preserved from dissolution,

assisted and strengthened by the miraculous intervention

of that same God. Yes, many times would She have lost

her life, if it had not been preserved by her most holy

Son ; for many times She saw Him in her virginal womb

and with divine clearness She saw his humanity united

to his Divinity, observed the interior acts of that most

holy Soul, the conditions and postures of his body, the

prayers offered up by Him for Her, for saint Joseph, for

all the human race and especially for the predestined.

All these and other mysteries were open to Her, and in

perceiving them She was altogether inflamed with the

desire of imitating and exalting Him, since She bore

within Her the devouring fires which illumine yet do

not consume (Exod. 3, 2).

443. Amidst this conflagration of divine love She

spoke sometimes to her most holy Son: "My sweetest

Love, Creator of the universe, when shall my eyes enjoy

the light of thy divine countenance? When shall my

arms be consecrated as the altar of the Victim, which is

awaited by the eternal Father? When shall I kiss the

earth trodden by thy divine feet, and when shall I as thy

Mother gain the coveted kiss of my Beloved (Cant. 1,1)

so that I may inhale thy own Spirit from the flow of thy

breath ? When shalt Thou, the inaccessible light, the true

God of the true God, Light of the Light (John 1, 9),

manifest Thyself to us mortals, after so many ages of

concealment from our view? When shall the children

of Adam, laden with the guilt of their sins, know their

Redeemer (Baruch 3, 38), see their salvation, welcome

in their midst their Teacher, their Brother and their true

Father? O Light of my soul, my strength, my Beloved,

for whom dying I live! Son of my womb, how can I

fulfill the office of a Mother, since I know not how to

THE INCARNATION 369

fulfill the duties, nor merit the name of even a slave?

How shall I be able to treat Thee worthily, who am a

vile and insignificant, poor worm ? How can I serve and

administer to Thee, since Thou art sanctity itself and

infinite goodness, and I only dust and ashes? How can

I dare to speak before Thee, or stand in Thy presence?

Do Thou, Master of my being, who hast chosen me, the

little one among the other daughters of Adam, govern

my conduct, direct my desires and inflame my affections,

in order that I may please Thee with all my powers !

And what shall I do, my only Delight, since Thou art to

issue from my womb into the world in order to suffer

affronts and death for the human race, if at the same time

I shall not be allowed to die with Thee and accompany

Thee in thy sacrifice? Since Thou art my life and my

being, let the same cause and motive that brings about

thy Death bring about also mine ; for they are united as

if they were one and the same. Less than thy Death will

suffice to save the world, yes thousands of worlds; let

me die instead of Thee, and let me suffer thy ignominies,

while Thou, by thy love and light, sanctify the world and

enlighten the darkness of mortals, and if it is not pos

sible to revoke the decree of the eternal Father, which

requires that Redemption be abundant (Ephes. 2, 4) and

thy excessive chanty be satisfied, look graciously upon

my desires and let me take part in all the labors of thy

life, since Thou art my Son and Lord."

444. The variety of these and other sweetest senti

ments of love uttered by the Queen made Her most beau

tiful in the eyes (Esth. 2, 9) of the Prince of the eterni

ties, who was enshrined in the virginal chamber of her

womb. All her interior movements were conformable to

the actions of that most sacred and deified Humanity;

for as a worthy Mother of such a Son She closely ob-

370 CITY OF GOD

served them as models for her imitation. Sometimes the

infant God would place Himself on his knees in order

to pray to the Father or assume the position of one cru

cified, as if in order to exercise Himself therein before

hand. From that retirement (as even now from the

highest throne in heaven) He looked upon and compre

hended, by the science of his most holy soul, all that He

knows even at this day, and no creatures of the present,

past, or future, with all their thoughts and actions, was

hidden from his view. To all things He attended as

the Lord and Redeemer. Since these mysteries were

manifest also to his heavenly Mother and since She was

also endowed with all the graces and gifts necessary for

acting in concert with Him, She brought forth such great

fruits of sanctity, that no human words can ever describe

them. But if we were not perverted in our judgments,

and if we were not hardened as stone, we would find it

impossible, at the sight and experience of these vast and

admirable works, to remain untouched by loving sorrow

and thankful acknowledgment.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY, THE MOST HOLY QUEEN,

GAVE ME.

445. The lesson of this chapter, my daughter, should

be, that thou bear in mind with what reverence thou must

handle all the things consecrated and devoted to the

divine service ; and at the same time estimate how repre

hensible is the irreverence with which the ministers of

the Lord offend in their disregard for the sacred objects.

They should not forget or slight the indignation of his

Majesty against them for the gross discourtesy and in

gratitude, which they ordinarily show by handling the

sacred ornaments and objects of worship without atten-

THE INCARNATION 371

tion and respect. And much greater is the anger of the

Lord against those who possess the incomes or stipends

of his most sacred blood, if they waste and squander them

in vile vanities and indecent profanities. They seek for

their sustenance and convenience what is most costly and

valuable, while for the honor and worship of the Lord

they are satisfied with what is most cheap, common and

ordinary. When this happens, especially in regard to

the linens, which touch the body and blood of my most

holy Son, such as corporals and purificators, I wish thee

to understand that the holy angels, that assist at the most

exalted and sublime sacrifice, are as it were struck with

horror and cover their eyes at the sight, full of astonish

ment that the Most High bears with them and suffers

such boldness and presumption. Although not all offend

in this, yet there are many; and few distinguish them

selves in outward respect and care at the divine cult, or

treat the sacred objects with due reverence; they are the

smaller number and even they do not all have the pure

intention, not observing this due respect out of reverence,

but out of vanity and for other human ends. Thus they

who adore and worship their Creator in the spirit of truth

and with a pure and upright intention have become very

scarce.

446. Consider, my dearest, what should be our senti

ments when, on the one hand, we reflect on the incom

prehensible being of God, who in his goodness has cre

ated us for his honor and worship, establishing this as

the very law of our nature and of all the created universe,

and when, on the other hand, we see with what ingrati

tude men correspond to the gifts of the most liberal

Creator by withholding from his service the very things

intended for it, reserving for their own vanities the most

costly and valuable and applying for their Creator only

372 CITY OF GOD

the most valueless and despicable of this world. This

fault is little thought of and recognized, and therefore I

wish not only that thou deplore it with true sorrow, but

also that thou make reparation for it as far as possible

during the time in which thou art superioress. Give to

the Lord of the best, and instruct thy religious that they

attend with a sincere and devout heart to the keeping-

in order and the cleaning of the sacred articles ; and this

not only for their own convent, but also by seeking to

furnish other poor churches with the corporals and vest

ments of which they stand in need. Let them be con

vinced that the Lord will repay their holy zeal for his

worship, and that He will relieve their poverty and the

necessities of their convent like a Father, and that thereby

it will never become poorer. This is the most appro

priate occupation and- legitimate business of the spouses

of Christ, and in this they ought to consume their time

which may remain after fulfilling the obligations of the

choir and other duties of obedience. If all the religious

would busy themselves purposely in these honorable,

praiseworthy and agreeable occupations they would never

suffer any want and they would maintain an angelic ex

istence in this life. Because they do not attend to this

service of the Lord, many of them, forsaken by the hand

of the God, turn toward the dangerous levities and dis

tractions, which on account of their vileness, I do not wish

thee to describe or consider except to deplore them from

thy heart and to avert such displeasure and offense against

God.

447. But because I have especial reason to look with

favor upon the inmates of thy convent, I wish that, in my

name and by my authority, thou admonish and lovingly

urge them always to live retired and dead to the world,

with unbroken forgetfulness of all that passes within it;

THE INCARNATION 373

that among themselves their conversation be of heaven,

and that above all they preserve intact the mutual peace

and love, to which I have exhorted thee so often

(Philip 3, 20). If they obey me in this I offer them my

protection, and I will constitute myself their Mother, their

help and defense in the same way as I am thine, and I

will also promise them my continual and efficacious inter

cession with my most holy Son, if they do not displease

me. For this purpose thou shouldst exhort them to con

tinual love and devotion toward me, engrafting it in their

hearts ; in being thus faithful they will attain all that thou

wishest for them, and much more, for I will obtain it for

them. In order that they may occupy themselves with

joy and alacrity in preparing things for the divine wor

ship, and gladly undertake all that pertains to it, remind

them of all that I did in the service of my most holy Son

and of the temple. I desire thee to understand that the

holy angels were full of admiration at the zeal, careful

attention and neatness with which I took charge of all

that belonged to the service of my Son and Lord. This

loving and reverent anxiety caused me to prepare all that

was necessary for his rearing up beforehand, so that I

was never in want of anything necessary for clothing

Him and administering to his comfort (as some have

thought) ; for my prudence and love would not permit

any negligence or inadvertence in this regard.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE EDICT OF C^SAR AUGUSTUS is PUBLISHED, COM

MANDING ALL SUBJECTS OF THE EMPIRE TO REGIS-

TRATE; AND WHAT SAINT JOSEPH DID WHEN HE

HEARD OF IT.

448. It had been decreed by the immutable will of

Providence that the Onlybegotten of the Father should

be born in the town of Bethlehem (Mich. 5, 2), and ac

cordingly it had been foretold by the Saints and Prophets

of foregone ages (Jerem. 10, 9) ; for the decrees of the

absolute will of God are infallible, and since nothing can

resist them (Esther 13, 9), sooner would heaven and

earth pass away than that they fail of accomplishment

(Matth. 24, 35). The fulfillment of this immutable de

cree the Lord secured by means of an edict of Caesar

Augustus for the whole Roman empire, ordering the

registration or enumeration of all the world, as saint

Luke says (Luke 2, 1). The Roman empire at that time

embraced the greater part of what was then known of

the earth and therefore they called themselves masters of

the world, ignoring all the other nations. The object

of this census was to make all the inhabitants acknowl

edge themselves as vassals of the emperor, and to pay a

certain tax to their temporal lord; for this registration

every one was to go to his native city in order to be

inscribed. This edict was also proclaimed in Nazareth

and came to the hearing of saint Joseph while he was on

some errand. He returned to his house in sorrowful

consternation and informed his heavenly Spouse of the

374

THE INCARNATION 375

news which had spread about concerning the edict. The

most prudent Virgin answered: "Let not this edict of

our temporal ruler cause thee any concern, my master and

spouse, for all that happens to us is ordained by the Lord

and King of heaven and earth; and in all events his

Providence will assist and direct us (Eccli. 22, 28). Let

us resign ourselves into his hands and we shall not be

disappointed."

449. Most holy Mary was capable of being entrusted

with all the mysteries of her most holy Son and She

knew of the prophecies and their fulfillment ; hence, also,

that the Onlybegotten of the Father and her own was to

be born in Bethlehem, a Stranger and an Unknown.

But She said nothing of this to saint Joseph; for without

being commissioned by the Lord She would reveal none

of his secrets. All that She was not commanded to re

veal She concealed with admirable prudence, notwith

standing her desire of consoling her most faithful and

holy spouse. She wished to entrust Herself to his direc

tion and arrangement without acting the part of those

who are wise in their own conceit, as Wisdom warns us

(Prov. 3, 7). They therefore conferred with each other

about the course to be pursued ; for already the pregnancy

of the heavenly Lady was far advanced and her parturi

tion was approaching. Saint Joseph said: "Queen of

heaven and earth and my Mistress, if Thou hast no order

to the contrary from the Almighty, it seems to me nec

essary that I go alone. Yet, although this order refers

only to the heads of families, I dare not leave Thee with

out assistance, nor could I live without Thee, nor would

I have a moment s peace away from Thee ; for my heart

could not come to any rest without seeing Thee. Thy

heavenly delivery is too imminent to ask Thee to go with

me to Bethlehem, whither this edict calls us; and I fear

376 CITY OF GOD

to place Thee in any risk, as well on account of thy con

dition as also on account of my poverty. If thy delivery

should happen on the way, amid inconveniences, which I

could not alleviate, I would be heartbroken. These are

the anxious thoughts which trouble me. I pray Thee,

Lady, present them before the Most High and beseech

Him to grant me my desire of not being separated from

Thee."

450. His humble Spouse obeyed saint Joseph and

although She was not ignorant of the divine will, yet

She would not omit this act of obedience as a most sub

missive Spouse. She presented to the Lord the fervent

wishes of saint Joseph and received the following answer :

"My dearest Dove, yield to the wishes of my servant

Joseph in what he proposes. Accompany him on the

journey. I shall be with Thee and I shall assist Thee

with paternal love in the tribulations which Thou shalt

suffer for my sake; although they shall be very great,

my powerful arms will make Thee come forth glorious

from all of them. Thy footsteps will be beautiful in my

sight (Cant. 7, 1), do not fear, since this is my will."

Then the Lord gave to the holy guardian angels, in the

presence of the heavenly Mary, a new and special com

mand and precept, that they serve Her during this jour

ney with particular care and solicitude, as befitted the

magnificent mysteries that should be transacted. Beside

the thousand angels which served ordinarily as her guard,

the Lord commanded other nine thousand to attend on

their Queen and Mistress, and serve as a guard of honor

ten thousand strong from the first day of her journey.

This they did as most faithful servants of the Lord, as

I shall say later on (Nos. 456, 489, 616, 622, 631, 634).

The great Queen was renewed and strengthened with

new enlightenment for the troubles and tribulations

THE INCARNATION 377

which would be occasioned by the persecution of Herod

and other happenings at the birth of the infant God

(Matth. 2, 16). Her invincible heart being thus pre

pared, She offered Herself to the Lord without any dis

quietude and gave thanks for all that He should choose

to do and arrange in regard to these future events.

451. She returned from this heavenly interview to

saint Joseph, and announced to him the will of the Most

High, that She accede to his wishes and accompany him

on his journey to Bethlehem. Joseph was filled with

new consolation and delight; acknowledging the great

favor conferred upon him by the right hand of the Most

High, he gave thanks with fervent acts of gratitude and

humility; and, addressing the heavenly Spouse, he an

swered: "My Lady, source of my happiness and good

fortune, the only cause of grief in this journey will now

be the hardships which Thou must undergo because I

have no riches to procure Thee the conveniences which I

would like to furnish for thy pilgrimage. But we shall

find relations, acquaintances and friends of our family in

Bethlehem; I hope they will receive us hospitably, and

there thou canst rest from the exertions of the journey,

if the Lord will dispose as I thy servant would wish."

Thus the holy spouse saint Joseph lovingly planned ; but

the Lord had already pre-arranged all things in a way

unknown to him; and therefore he experienced so much

the greater bitterness of disappointment when all his

loving expectations failed, as we shall see. Most holy

Mary said nothing to saint Joseph of what She knew

the Lord had decreed concerning the heavenly Birth,

although She well knew that it would be different from

what he expected. She rather encouraged him, saying:

"My spouse and my master, I accompany thee with much

pleasure, and we will make this journey as poor people

378 CITY OF GOD

in the name of the Lord: for the Most High will not

despise poverty, which He came to seek with so much

love. Relying on his protection and assistance in our

necessities and labors, we will proceed with confidence.

Do thou, my master, place to his account all thy difficul

ties."

452. They at the same time resolved upon the day of

their departure, and Joseph diligently searched in the

town of Nazareth for some beast of burden to bear the

Mistress of the world. He could not easily find one

because so many people were going to different towns

in order to fulfill the requirements of the edict of the

emperor. But after much anxious inquiry saint Joseph

found an unpretentious little beast which, if we can call

such creatures fortunate, was the most fortunate of all

the irrational animals; since it was privileged not only

to bear the Queen of all creation and the blessed fruit

of her womb, the King of kings and the Lord of lords,

but afterwards to be present at his Birth (Isaias 1, 3) ;

and since it gave to its Creator the homage denied to Him

by men, as I shall relate (No. 485). They provided the

articles for the journey, which would last five days. The

outfit of the heavenly travelers was the same as that

which they had provided for their previous journey to

the house of Zacharias on their visit to Elisabeth. They

carried with them bread, fruit and some fishes, which

ordinarily composed their nourishment. As the most

prudent Virgin was enlightened regarding their pro

tracted absence, She made use of prudent concealment

in taking along the linens and clothes necessary for her

heavenly delivery, for She wished to dispose all things

according to the exalted intents of the Lord and in prepa

ration for the events which She expected. Their house

THE INCARNATION 379

they left in charge of some neighbor until they should

return.

453. The day and hour for their departure for Beth

lehem arrived and, because of the reverence with which

the most faithful and fortunate Joseph had begun to treat

his sovereign Spouse, he diligently and anxiously sought

to do all in his power to please Her; he besought Her

with great affection to make known to him all her wishes

and to call his attention to all that he might forget in

regard to her pleasure, convenience and comfort, or that

might please the Lord whom She bore in her womb.

The humble Queen thanked him for his loving attention,

and referring it to all the glory and service of her most

holy Son, She consoled and animated him to meet cour

ageously the hardships of the journey, assuring him anew

that the Almighty was pleased with his affectionate solici

tude. She also informed him of the will of his Majesty

that they meet with patience and joy of heart the hard

ships of poverty on their way. In order to begin her

journey the Empress of heaven knelt at the feet of saint

Joseph and asked him for his blessing. Although the man

of God shrunk from such a request and strenuously ob

jected on account of the dignity of his Spouse, She never

theless remained victorious in her humility and prevailed

upon him to give Her his benediction. Saint Joseph

complied with great timidity and reverence, and imme

diately cast himself at her feet in a flood of tears, asking

Her to present him anew to her most holy Son, and obtain

for him divine pardon and grace. Thus prepared they

started from Nazareth for Bethlehem in midwinter, which

made the journey more painful and difficult. But the

Mother of God, who bore eternal Life within Her, at

tended solely to the divine activities and colloquies of the

Lord, observing Him in the virginal chamber of her

380 CITY OF GOD

womb, imitating Him in his works, and giving Him more

delight and honor than all the rest of creatures taken

together.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MOST HOLY MARY, THE QUEEN

VOUCHSAFED ME.

454. My daughter, in all thy discourse on my life, and

in each of the chapters and mysteries so far rehearsed,

thou wilt find the admirable providence of the Most High

and his fatherly love toward me, his humble servant.

Although human capacity cannot fully penetrate and

estimate the admirable works of such high wisdom, yet

it must venerate it with all its powers, and must seek to

participate in the favors which the Lord showed me, by

striving to imitate me. For mortals must not think that

only for my sake and in me God wished to show Him

self as holy, powerful and infinitely good. It is certain

that if any or all of the souls would entrust themselves

to the direction and government of this Lord they would

soon experience that same fidelity, punctuality and most

sweet efficacy with which his Majesty arranged all things

that touched upon his honor and service in my life. They

would likewise taste those delightful and divine emotions

which I felt in relying upon his most holy will; nor would

they fail to receive the abundance of his gifts, which are

enclosed as in an infinite ocean within his Divinity. And

just as the waters of the ocean rush forth wherever they

find a suitable opening, so the graces and blessings of

the Lord overflow upon rational creatures, when they are

well-disposed and do not hinder their course. This truth

is hidden to mortals because they do not stop to ponder

and consider the works of the Almighty.

455. I desire thee to study this truth, to write it within

THE INCARNATION 381

thy heart, and to learn from my own actions the secret

workings of thy own interior so that thou understand

what goes on within thee; also that thou practice ready

obedience and subjection to others, always preferring the

good counsels of others to thy own insight and judg

ment. Thou must carry this to such a point that, in

order to obey thy superiors and thy spiritual directors,

thou take no notice of what thou foreseest will happen

contrary to their expectations; just as I, when I knew

that what my holy spouse Joseph expected would not

happen on our journey to Bethlehem. And even when

some equal or inferior command thee such things, be

silent and hide thy better foreknowledge ; perform all that

is no sin or imperfection. Listen to all with attention

and silence so that thou mayest learn ; in speaking be very

slow and reserved, for in this consist prudent and care

ful intercourse. Always bear in mind that thou ask the

blessing of the Lord for all that thou wishest to under

take, in order that thou mayest not wander from what

is pleasing to Him. Whenever thou hast an opportunity,

ask also the permission and blessing of thy spiritual

father and director, so that thou mayest not fall short of

the greatest merits and perfections in thy works, and in

order that thou mayest also give me the pleasure, which I

desire of thee.

2-26

CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNEY OF MOST HOLY MARY FROM NAZARETH

TO BETHLEHEM IN THE COMPANY OF THE HOLY

SPOUSE JOSEPH AND OF THE HOLY GUARDIAN ANGELS.

456. The most pure Mary and the glorious saint

Joseph departed from Nazareth for 1 Bethlehem alone,

poor and humble in the eyes of the world. None of the

mortals thought more of them than what was warranted

by their poverty and humility. But O the wonderful

sacraments of the Most High, hidden to the proud, and

unpenetrated by the wisdom of the flesh ! They did not

walk alone, poor or despised, but prosperous, rich and in

magnificence. They were most worthy of the immense

love of the eternal Father and most estimable in his eyes.

They carried with them the Treasure of heaven, the Deity

itself. The whole court of the celestial ministers ven

erated them. All the inanimate beings recognized the

living and true Ark of the Testament ( Josue 3, 16) more

readily than the waters of the Jordan recognized its

type and shadow, when they courteously laid open and

free the path for its passage and for those that followed

it. They were accompanied by the ten thousand angels,

which as mentioned (No. 450), were appointed by God

himself as the servants of her Majesty during that whole

journey. These heavenly squadrons marched along as

their retinue in human forms visible to the heavenly Lady,

more refulgent than so many suns. She herself walked

in their midst better guarded and defended than the bed

of Solomon, surrounded by the sixty valiant ones of

382

THE INCARNATION 383

Israel, girded with their swords (Cant. 3, 7). Besides

these ten thousand angels there were many others, who

descended from heaven as messengers of the eternal

Father to his Onlybegotten made man in his most holy

Mother, and who ascended from earth as their ambassa

dors with messages and treaties from them to the heavenly

Father.

457. In the midst of this royal retinue, hidden from

the gaze of men, most holy Mary and Joseph proceeded

on their way secure that their feet would not be bruised

by the stone of tribulation (Ps. 40, 12), since the Lord

had commanded his angels to be their defense and watch

fulness. This command the most faithful ministers, as

vassals of their great Queen, fulfilled with wonder and

delight, seeing centered in a mere Creature such great

sacraments, such perfections, and immense treasures of

the Divinity, and seeing in Her all this distinction united

to dignity and grace far exceeding their own angelic

capacity. They composed new songs in honor of the

Lord, whom they saw reclining as the highest King of

glory, on his throne of gold (Cant. 3, 9) ; and in honor

of the heavenly Mother, who was like his living and

incorruptible chariot, or like the fertile ear of corn of the

promised land, enclosing the living grain (Lev. 23, 10) ;

or like the rich merchant ship, which brings the grain to

the house of bread, in order that dying in the earth it

might be multiplied for heaven (John 12, 24). Their

journey lasted five days, for on account of the pregnancy

of his Spouse, saint Joseph shortened each day s journey.

The sovereign Queen experienced no darkness of night

on the way ; for a few times, when their travel extended

beyond nightfall the holy angels spread about such

effulgence as not all the lights of heaven in their noontide

splendor would have thrown forth in the clearest heavens.

384 CITY OF GOD

This light and vision of the angels also saint Joseph

enjoyed at those times; then all of them together would

form celestial choirs, in which they and the two holy

travelers alternated in singing wonderful hymns and

canticles of praise, converting the fields into new heavens.

During this whole journey the Queen was rejoiced by

the sight of her resplendent ministers and vassals and by

the sweet interior conversation held with them.

458. With these wonderful favors and delights, how

ever, the Liord joined some hardships and inconveniences,

which the divine Mother encountered on the way. For

the concourse of people in the taverns, occasioned by the

imperial edict, was very disagreeable and annoying to the

modest and retiring Virgin-Mother and her spouse. On

account of their poverty and timid retirement they were

treated with less hospitality and consideration than others,

especially the well-to-do ; for the world judges and usually

confers its favors according to outward appearance and

according to personal influence. Our holy pilgrims were

obliged repeatedly to listen to sharp reprimands in the

taverns, at which they arrived tired out by their journey,

and in some of them they were refused admittance as

worthless and despicable people. Several times they as

signed to the Mistress of heaven and earth some corner

of the hallway ; while at others She did not fare even so

well, being obliged to retire with her husband to places

still more humble and unbecoming in the estimation of

the world. But in whatever places She tarried, how con

temptible soever it might be considered, the courtiers of

heaven established their court around their supreme King

and sovereign Queen. Immediately they surrounded and

enclosed them like an impenetrable wall, securing the

bridal chamber of Solomon against the terrors of the

night. Her most faithful spouse Joseph, seeing the

THE INCARNATION 385

Mistress of heaven so well guarded by the angelic hosts,

betook himself to rest and sleep; for to this She urged

him on account of the hardships of travel. She, how

ever, continued her celestial colloquies with the ten

thousand angels of her retinue.

459. Solomon, in the Canticles, describes in diverse

metaphors and similitudes many great mysteries of the

Queen of heaven, but in the third chapter he refers more

particularly to what happened to the heavenly Mother in

her pregnancy and during this journey. During this

time was fulfilled to the letter all that is said of the couch

of Solomon (Cant. 3, 7), of his chariot and of his golden

bed, of the guard, which was stationed around it enjoying

the divine vision; also all the other sayings, which are

contained in those prophecies. What I have pointed out

will suffice to make them understood, and they should

excite our admiration of the wonderful sacraments of

God s activity for the good of man. Who is there among

mortals whose heart is not softened? Or who is so

proud as not to be abashed ? Or so careless as not to be

filled with wonder at such miraculous extremes? The

infinite and true God hidden and concealed in the virginal

womb of a tender Maiden, full of grace and beauty, inno

cent, pure, sweet, pleasing and amiable in the eyes of God

and of men, surpassing all that the Lord God has ever

or shall ever create ! To see this great Lady, bearing the

treasure of the Divinity, despised, persecuted, neglected,

and cast out by the blind ignorance and pride of the

world ! And on the other hand, while She is thus pushed

aside into the last places, to see Her loved and esteemed

by the triune God, regaled by his caresses, served by

his angels, revered, defended and assisted with the greatest

anxiety and watchfulness ! O children of men, slow and

386 CITY OF GOD

hard of hearts ! ( Ps. 4, 3 ) . How deceitful are your ways

and how erroneous is your judgment in esteeming the rich

and despising the poor (James 2, 2), exalting the proud

and humiliating the lowly, applauding the braggarts and

casting out the just! Blind is your choice and full of

error your judgment, and you will find yourselves frus

trated in all your desires. Ambitiously you seek riches

and treasures, and you find yourself in poverty beating

the air; if you had received the true ark of God, you

would have been blessed by the hand of the Almighty,

like Obededom (II Kings, 6, 11) ; but because you have

treated it unworthily, many of you have experienced the

punishment of Oza.

460. The heavenly Lady observed and knew the

secrets of the different souls of those She met, penetrating

into the very thoughts and conditions of each, whether

of grace or of guilt in their different degrees. Concern

ing many souls She also knew whether they were pre

destined or reprobate, whether they would persevere, fall,

or again rise up. All this variety of insight moved Her

to the exercise of heroic virtues as well in regard to the

ones as to the others. For many of them She obtained

the grace of perseverance, for others efficacious help to

rise from their sin to grace ; for others again She prayed

to the Lord with affectionate tears, feeling intensest

sorrow for the reprobate, though She did not pray as

efficaciously for them. Many times, worn out by these

sorrows, much more than by the hardships of travel, the

strength of her body gave way; on such occasions the

holy angels, full of refulgent light and beauty, bore Her

up in their arms, in order that She might rest and

recuperate. The sick, afflicted and indigent whom She

met on the way, She consoled and assisted by asking her

THE INCARNATION 387

most holy Son to come to their aid in their necessities

and adversities. She kept Herself silently aloof from the

multitude, preoccupied with the Fruit of her divine preg

nancy, which was already evident to all. Such was the

return which the Mother of mercy made for the inhos-

pitality of mortals.

461. For the greater reproach of human ingratitude, it

happened also that once during these wintry days they

reached a stopping-place in the midst of a cold rain and

snow storm (for the Lord did not spare them this in

convenience), and they were obliged to take shelter in

the stables of the animals, because the owners would not

furnish better accommodation. The irrational beasts

showed them the courtesy and kindness which was re

fused by their human fellow-beings; for they retreated

in reverence at the entrance of their Maker and of his

Mother, who carried Him in her virginal womb. It is

true the Queen of creation could command the winds, the

frost and the snow not to inconvenience Her; but She

would not give such a command in order not to deprive

Herself of suffering in imitation of her most holy Son,

even before He came forth into the world. Therefore

the inclemencies of the weather affected Her to a certain

extent. The faithful saint Joseph, however, did his

utmost to shield Her; and still more did the holy angels

seek to protect Her, especially the holy prince Michael,

who remained at the right side of his Queen without

leaving Her even for a moment ; several times, when She

became tired, He led Her by the arm along the way.

Whenever the Lord permitted, he also shielded Her

against the weather and performed many other services

for the heavenly Queen and the blessed Fruit of her

womb, Jesus.

388 CITY OF GOD

462. Thus variously and wonderfully assisted, our

travelers arrived at the town of Bethlehem at four o clock

of the fifth day, a Saturday. As it was at the time of

the winter solstice, the sun was already sinking and the

night was falling. They entered the town, and wandered

through many streets in search of a lodging-house or inn

for staying over night. They knocked at the doors of

their acquaintances and nearer family relations ; but they

were admitted nowhere and in many places they met with

harsh words and insults. The most modest Queen fol

lowed her spouse through the crowds of people, while he

went from house to house and from door to door. Al

though She knew that the hearts and the houses of men

were to be closed to them, and although to expose her

state at her age to the public gaze was more painful to

her modesty than their failure to procure a night-

lodging, She nevertheless wished to obey saint Joseph

and suffer this indignity and unmerited shame. While

wandering through the streets they passed the office of

the public registry and they inscribed their names and

paid the fiscal tribute in order to comply with the edict

and not be obliged to return. They continued their

search, betaking themselves to other houses. But having

already applied at more than fifty different places, they

found themselves rejected and sent away from them all.

The heavenly spirits were filled with astonishment at

these exalted mysteries of the Most High, which mani

fested the patience and meekness of his Virgin Mother

and the unfeeling hardness of men. At the same time

they blessed the Almighty in his works and hidden sacra

ments, since from that day on He began to exalt and

honor poverty and humility among men.

463. It was nine o clock at night when the most

THE INCARNATION 389

faithful Joseph, full of bitter and heartrending sorrow,

returned to his most prudent Spouse and said: "My

sweetest Lady, my heart is broken with sorrow at the

thought of not only not being able to shelter Thee as

Thou deservest and as I desire, but in not being able to

offer Thee even any kind of protection from the weather,

or a place of rest, a thing rarely or never denied to the

most poor and despised in the world. No doubt heaven,

in thus allowing the hearts of men to be so unmoved as

to refuse us a night-lodging, conceals some mystery. I

now remember, Lady, that outside the city walls there is

a cave, which serves as a shelter for shepherds and their

flocks. Let us seek it out ; perhaps it is unoccupied, and

we may there expect some assistance from heaven, since

we receive none from men on earth." The most prudent

Virgin answered: "My spouse and rny master, let not

thy kindest heart be afflicted because the ardent wishes

which the love of thy Lord excites in thee cannot be ful

filled. Since I bear Him in my womb, let us, I beseech

thee, give thanks for having disposed events in this way.

The place of which thou speakest shall be most satisfac

tory to me. Let thy tears of sorrow be turned into tears

of joy, and let us lovingly embrace poverty, which is the

inestimable and precious treasure of my most holy Son.

He came from heaven in order to seek it, let us then

afford Him an occasion to practice it in the joy of our

souls; certainly I cannot be better delighted than to see

thee procure it for me. Let us go gladly wherever the

Lord shall guide us." The holy angels accompanied the

heavenly pair, brilliantly lighting up the way, and when

they arrived at the city gate they saw that the cave was

forsaken and unoccupied. Full of heavenly consolation,

they thanked the Lord for this favor, and then happened

what I shall relate in the following chapter.

390 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY, THE

QUEEN OF HEAVEN, GAVE ME.

464. My dearest daughter, if thou art of a meek and

docile heart, these mysteries which thou hast written

about and hast understood, will stir within thee sweet

sentiments of love and affection toward the Author of

such great wonders. I wish that, bearing them in mind,

thou from this day on embrace with new and great esteem

the contempt and neglect of the world. And tell me,

dearest, if, in exchange for this forgetfulness and scorn

of the world, God look upon thee with eyes of sweetest

love, why shouldst thou not buy so cheaply what is worth

an infinite price? What can the world give thee, even

when it esteems thee and exalts thee most? And what

dost thou lose, if thou despise it? Is its favor not all

vanity and deceit (Ps. 4, 3) ? Is it not all a fleeting and

momentary shadow, which eludes the grasp of those that

haste after it? Hence, if thou hadst all worldly advan

tage in thy possession, what great feat would it be to

despise it as of no value? Consider how little thou dost

in rejecting all of it for the love of God, for mine and that

of the holy angels. And if the world does not neglect

thee as much as thou shouldst desire, do thou on thy own

behalf despise it, in order to remain free and unhampered

to enjoy to the full extent the highest Good with the

plenitude of his most delightful love and intercourse.

465. My most holy Son is such a faithful Lover of

souls that He hast set me as the teacher and living

example of the love of humility and true contempt of

worldly vanity and pride. He ordained also for his own

glory as well as for my sake that I, his Servant and

Mother, should be left without shelter and be turned

away by mortals, in order that afterwards his beloved

THE INCARNATION 391

souls might be so much the more readily induced to offer

Him a welcome, thus obliging Him, by an artifice of love,

to come and remain with them. He also sought destitu

tion and poverty, not because He had any need of them

for bringing the practice of virtues to the highest per

fection, but in order to teach mortals the shortest and

surest way for reaching the heights of divine love and

union with God,

466. Thou knowest well, my dearest, that thou hast

been incessantly instructed and exhorted by divine en

lightenment to forget the terrestrial and visible and to

gird thyself with fortitude (Prov. 31, 17), to raise thy

self to the imitation of me, copying in thyself, according

to thy capacity, the works and virtues manifested to thee

in my life. This is the very first purpose of the knowl

edge which thou receivest in writing this history; for

thou hast in me a perfect model, and by it thou canst

arrange the converse and conduct of thy life in the same

manner as I arranged mine in imitation of my sweetest

Son. The dread with which this command to imitate

me has inspired thee as a being above thy strength, thou

must moderate and thou must encourage thyself by the

words of my most holy Son in the Gospel of saint Mat

thew : "Be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect"

(Matth. 5, 48). This command of the Most High im

posed upon his holy Church is not impossible of fulfill

ment, and, if his faithful children on their part dispose

themselves properly, He will deny to none of them the

grace of attaining this resemblance to the heavenly

Father. All this my most holy Son has merited for them.

But the degrading forgetfulness and neglect of men hin

der them from maturing within themselves the fruits of

his Redemption.

467. Of thee particularly I expect this perfection, and

392 CITY OF GOD

I invite thee to it by the sweet law of love which accom

panies my instruction. Ponder and scrutinize, by the

divine light, the obligation under which I place thee, and

labor to correspond with it like a faithful and anxious

child. Let no difficulty or hardship disturb thee, nor

deter thee from any virtuous exercise, no matter how

hard it may be. Nor be content with striving after the

love of God and salvation of thyself alone; if thou

wouldst be perfect in imitating me and fulfilling all that

the Gospel teaches, thou must work for the salvation of

other souls and the exaltation of the holy name of my

Son, making thyself an instrument in his powerful hands

for the accomplishment of mighty works to advance his

pleasure and glory.

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR IS BORN OF THE VIRGIN MARY IN

BETHLEHEM, JUDA,

468. The palace which the supreme King of kings

and the Lord of lords had chosen for entertaining his

eternal and incarnate Son in this world was a most poor

and insignificant hut or cave, to which most holy Mary

and Joseph betook themselves after they had been denied

all hospitality and the most ordinary kindness by their

fellow-men, as I have described in the foregoing chapter.

This place was held in such contempt that though the

town of Bethlehem was full of strangers in want of night-

shelter, none would demean or degrade himself so far

as to make use of it for a lodging; for there was none

who deemed it suitable or desirable for such a purpose,

except the Teachers of humility and poverty, Christ our

Savior and his purest Mother. On this account the wis

dom of the eternal Father had reserved it for Them, con

secrating it in all its bareness, loneliness and poverty as

the first temple of light (Malachy 4, 2, Ps. Ill, 4) and

as the house of the true Sun of justice, which was to

arise for the upright of heart from the resplendent Aurora

Mary, turning the night of sin into the daylight of grace.

469. Most holy Mary and saint Joseph entered the

lodging thus provided for them and by the effulgence of

the ten thousand angels of their guard they could easily

ascertain its poverty and loneliness, which they esteemed

as favors and welcomed with tears of consolation and

joy. Without delay the two holy travelers fell on their

393

394 CITY OF GOD

knees and praised the Lord, giving Him thanks for his

benefit, which they knew had been provided by his wis

dom for his own hidden designs. Of this mystery the

heavenly Princess Mary had a better insight ; for as soon

as She sanctified the interior of the cave by her sacred

footsteps She felt a fullness of joy which entirely elevated

and vivified Her. She besought the Lord to bless with

a liberal hand all the inhabitants of the neighboring city,

because by rejecting Her they had given occasion to the

vast favors, which She awaited in this neglected cavern.

It was formed entirely of the bare and coarse rocks, with

out any natural beauty or artificial adornment; a place

intended merely for the shelter of animals ; yet the eternal

Father had selected it for the shelter and dwelling-place

of his own Son.

470. The angelic spirits, who like a celestial militia

guarded their Queen and Mistress, formed themselves

into cohorts in the manner of court guards in a royal

palace. They showed themselves in their visible forms

also to saint Joseph ; for on this occasion it was befitting

that he should enjoy such a favor, on the one hand in

order to assuage his sorrow by allowing him to behold

this poor lodging thus beautified and adorned by their

celestial presence, and on the other, in order to enliven

and encourage him for the events which the Lord in

tended to bring about during that night, and in this for

saken place. The great Queen and Empress, who was

already informed of the mystery to be transacted here,

set about cleaning with her own hands the cave, which

was so soon to serve as a royal throne and sacred mercy-

seat; for neither did She want to miss this occasion for

exercising her humility, nor would She deprive her only-

begotten Son of the worship and reverence implied by

this preparation and cleansing of his temple.

THE INCARNATION 395

471. Saint Joseph, mindful of the majesty of his

heavenly Spouse (which, it seemed to him, She was for

getting in her ardent longing for humiliation), besought

Her not to deprive Him of this work, which he con

sidered as his alone ; and he hastened to set about cleaning

the floor and the corners of the cave, although the hum

ble Queen continued to assist him therein. As the holy

angels were then present in visible forms, they were

(according to our mode of speaking) abashed at such

eagerness for humiliation, and they speedily emulated

with each other to join in this work; or rather, in order

to say it more succinctly, in the shortest time possible

they had cleansed and set in order that cave, filling it with

holy fragrance. Saint Joseph started a fire with the

material which he had brought for that purpose. As it

was very cold, they sat at the fire in order to get warm.

They partook of the food which they had brought, and

they ate this, their frugal supper, with incomparable joy

of their souls. The Queen of heaven was so absorbed

and taken up with the thought of the impending mystery

of her divine delivery, that She would not have partaken

of food if She had not been urged thereto by obedience

to her spouse.

472. After their supper they gave thanks to the Lord

as was their custom. Having spent a short time in this

prayer and conferring about the mysteries of the incar

nate Word, the most prudent Virgin felt the approach

of the most blessed Birth. She requested her spouse

saint Joseph to betake himself to rest and sleep as the

night was already far advanced. The man of God

yielded to the request of his Spouse and urged Her to

do the same; and for this purpose he arranged and pre

pared a sort of couch with the articles of wear in their

possession, making use of a crib or manger, that had been

396 CITY OF GOD

left by the shepherds for their animals. Leaving most

holy Mary in the portion of the cave thus furnished, saint

Joseph retired to a corner of the entrance, where he

began to pray. He was immediately visited by the

divine Spirit and felt a most sweet and extraordinary

influence, by which he was wrapt and elevated into an

ecstasy. In it was shown him all that passed during that

night in this blessed cave; for he did not return to con

sciousness until his heavenly Spouse called him. Such

was the sleep which saint Joseph enjoyed in that night,

more exalted and blessed than that of Adam in paradise

(Gen. 21, 2).

473. The Queen of all creatures was called from her

resting-place by a loud voice of the Most High, which

strongly and sweetly raised Her above all created things

and caused Her to feel new effects of divine power; for

this was one of the most singular and admirable ecstasies

of her most holy life. Immediately also She was filled

with new enlightenment and divine influences, such as I

have described in other places, until She reached the clear

vision of the Divinity. The veil fell and She saw intui

tively the Godhead itself in such glory and plenitude of

insight, as all the capacity of men and angels could not

describe or fully understand. All the knowledge of the

Divinity and humanity of her most holy Son, which She

had ever received in- former visions was renewed and,

moreover, other secrets of the inexhaustible archives of

the bosom of God were revealed to Her. I have not

ideas or words sufficient and adequate for expressing

what I have been allowed to see of these sacraments by

the divine light ; and their abundance and multiplicity con

vince me of the poverty and want of proper expression in

created language.

474. The Most High announced to his Virgin Mother,

THE INCARNATION 397

that the time of his coming into the world had arrived

and what would be the manner in which this was now tp

be fulfilled and executed. The most prudent Lady per

ceived in this vision the purpose and exalted scope of

these wonderful mysteries and sacraments, as well in so

far as related to the Lord himself as also in so far as

they concerned creatures, for whose benefit they had been

primarily decreed. She prostrated Herself before the

throne of his Divinity and gave Him glory, magnificence,

thanks and praise for Herself and for all creatures, such

as was befitting the ineffable mercy and condescension of

his divine love. At the same time She asked of the divine

Majesty new light and grace in order to be able worthily

to undertake the service and worship and the rearing up

of the Word made flesh, whom She was to bear in Her

arms and nourish with her virginal milk. This petition

the heavenly Mother brought forward with the pro-

foundest humility, as one who understood the greatness

of this new sacrament. She held Herself unworthy of

the office of rearing up and conversing as a Mother with

a God incarnate of which even the highest seraphim are

incapable. Prudently and humbly did the Mother of

wisdom ponder and weigh this matter. And because She

humbled Herself to the dust and acknowledged her noth

ingness in the presence of the Almighty, therefore his

Majesty raised Her up and confirmed anew upon Her the

title of Mother of God. He commanded Her to exercise

this office and ministry of a legitimate and true Mother

of Himself ; that She should treat Him as the Son of the

eternal Father and at the same time the Son of her womb.

All this could be easily entrusted to such a Mother, in

whom was contained an excellence that words cannot

express.

475. The most holy Mary remained in this ecstasy and

2-27

398 CITY OF GOD

beatific vision for over an hour immediately preceding

her divine delivery. At the moment when She issued

from it and regained the use of her senses She felt and

saw that the body of the infant God began to move in

her virginal womb; how, releasing and freeing Himself

from the place which in the course of nature He had

occupied for nine months, He now prepared to issue forth

from that sacred bridal chamber. This movement not

only did not cause any pain or hardship, as happens with

the other daughters of Adam and Eve in their child-

births; but filled Her with incomparable joy and delight,

causing in her soul and in her virginal body such exalted

and divine effects that they exceed all thoughts of men.

Her body became so spiritualized with the beauty of

heaven that She seemed no more a human and earthly

creature. Her countenance emitted rays of light, like a

sun incarnadined, and shone in indescribable earnestness

and majesty, all inflamed with fervent love. She was

kneeling in the manger, her eyes raised to heaven, her

hands joined and folded at her breat, her soul wrapped

in the Divinity and She herself was entirely deified. In

this position, and at the end of the heavenly rapture, the

most exalted Lady gave to the world the Onlybegotten

of the Father and her own, our Savior Jesus, true God

and man, at the hour of midnight, on a Sunday, in the

year of the creation of the world five thousand one hun

dred and ninety-nine (5199), which is the date given in

the Roman Church, and which date has been manifested

to me as the true and certain one.

476. There are other wonderful circumstances and par

ticulars, which all the faithful assume to have miracu

lously accompanied this most divine Birth; but as the

only witnesses were the Queen of heaven and her cour

tiers, they cannot all be certified, except only those which

THE INCARNATION 399

the Lord himself manifests in his holy Church to all or

to some particular souls in diverse ways. As I think there

is some divergence of opinion in this matter, which is

most sublime and venerable, as soon as I had manifested

to my superiors and directors what had been made known

to me, they commanded me under obedience to consult

anew the divine oracle and ask the Empress of heaven,

my Mother and Teacher, and the holy angels that attend

on me, for information on some particulars necessary for

a clearer statement of the most sacred parturition of

Mary, the Mother of Jesus, our Redeemer. In order to

comply with this command I returned for a better under

standing of these same happenings and it was then ex

pounded to me in the following manner:

477. At the end of the beatific rapture and vision of

the Mother ever Virgin, which I have described above

(No. 473), was born the Sun of Justice, the Onlybegotten

of the eternal Father and of Mary most pure, beautiful,

refulgent and immaculate, leaving Her untouched in her

virginal integrity and purity and making Her more god

like and forever sacred ; for He did not divide, but pene

trated the virginal chamber as the rays of the sun pene

trate the crystal shrine, lighting it up in prismatic beauty.

Before I describe the miraculous manner in which this

took place, I wish to say that the divine Child was born

pure and disengaged, without the protecting shield called

secundina, surrounded by which other children are com

monly born, and in which they are enveloped in the wombs

of their mothers. I will not detain myself in explaining

the cause and origin of the error, which is contrary to

this statement. It it enough to know and suppose that

in the generation and birth of the incarnate Word the

arm of the Almighty selected and made use of all that

substantially and unavoidably belonged to natural human

400 CITY OF GOD

generation, so that the Word could truly call Himself

conceived and engendered as a true man and born of the

substance of his Mother ever Virgin. In regard to the

other circumstances, which are not essential but acci

dental to generation and nativity, we must disconnect our

ideas of Christ our Lord and of the most holy Mary not

only from all that are in any way related or consequent

upon any sin, original or actual; but also from many

others which are not necessary for the essential reality of

the generation or birth and which imply some impurity

or superfluity, that could in any way lessen or impair the

dignity of Mary as the Queen of heaven and as true

Mother of Christ our Lord. For many such imperfec

tions of sin or nature were not necessary either for the

true humanity of Christ, or for his office of Redeemer or

Teacher ; and whatever was not necessary for these three

ends, and whatever by its absence would redound to the

greater dignity of Christ and his Mother, must be denied

of Both. Nor must we be niggardly in presuming won

derful intervention of the Author of nature and grace

in favor of Her who was his worthy Mother, prepared,

adorned and made increasingly beautiful for this pur

pose : for the divine right hand enriched Her at all times

with gifts and graces and reached the utmost limits of his

Omnipotence possible in regard to a mere creature.

478. In accordance with this truth her true motherhood

was not impaired by her remaining a Virgin in his con

ception and birth through operation of the Holy Ghost.

Although She could have lost her virginity in a natural

manner without incurring any fault, yet in that case the

Mother of God would also be without this singular pre

rogative of virginity. Therefore we must say, in order

that She might not be without it, the divine power of her

most holy Son preserved it for Her. Likewise the divine

THE INCARNATION 401

Child could have been born with this covering or cuticle

in which others are born; yet this was not necessary in

order to be born a natural Son of the blessed Mother;

hence He could chose not to take it forth with Him from

the virginal and maternal womb, just as He chose not to

pay to nature other penal tributes of impurity, which

other human beings do pay at their coming into the light.

It was not just that the incarnate Word should be sub

ject to all the laws of the sons of Adam; but it was conse

quent upon his miraculous Birth that He be exempt and

free from all that could be caused by the corruption or

uncleanness of matter. Thus also this covering, or

secundina, was not to fall a prey to corruption outside

of the virginal womb, because it had been so closely con

nected and attached to his most holy body and because

it was composed of the blood and substance of his

Mother; in like manner it was not advisable to keep and

preserve it outside of Her, nor was it becoming to give

it the same privileges and importance as to his divine

body in coming forth from the body of his most holy

Mother, as I will yet explain. The wonder which would

have to be wrought to dispose of that sacred covering out

side of the womb could be wrought much more appro

priately within.

479. The infant God therefore was brought forth from

the virginal chamber unencumbered by any corporeal or

material substance foreign to Himself. But He came

forth glorious and transfigured for the divine and

infinite wisdom decreed and ordained that the glory of

his most holy soul should in his Birth overflow and

communicate itself to his body, participating in the

gifts of glory in the same way as happened afterwards

his Transfiguration on mount Tabor in the pres-

of the Apostles (Matth. 17, 2). This miracle was

LIBRARY! 7 1

402 CITY OF GOD

not necessary in order to penetrate the virginal en

closure and to leave unimpaired the virginal integrity;

for without this Transfiguration God could have brought

this about by other miracles. Thus say the holy doc

tors, who see no other miracle in this Birth than that

the Child was born without impairing the virginity of the

Mother. It was the will of God that the most blessed

Virgin should look upon the body of her Son, the God-

man, for this first time in a glorified state for two reasons.

The one was in order that by this divine vision the most

prudent Mother should conceive the highest reverence for

the Majesty of Him whom She was to treat as her Son,

the true God-man. Although She was already informed

of his two-fold nature, the Lord nevertheless ordained

that by ocular demonstration ghe be filled with new

graces, corresponding to the greatness of her most holy

Son, which was thus manifested to Her in a visible man

ner. The second reason was to reward by this wonder

the fidelity and holiness of the divine Mother; for her

most pure and chaste eyes, that had turned away from all

earthly things for love of her most holy Son, were to see

Him at his very Birth in this glory and thus be rejoiced

and rewarded for her loyalty and beautiful love.

480. The sacred evangelist Luke tells us that the

Mother Virgin, having brought forth her firstbegotten

Son, wrapped Him in swathing clothes and placed Him

in a manger. He does not say that She received Him

in her arms from her virginal womb; for this did not

pertain to the purpose of his narrative. But the two

sovereign princes, saint Michael and saint Gabriel, were

the assistants of the Virgin on this occasion. They stood

by at proper distance in human corporeal forms at the

moment when the incarnate Word, penetrating the vir

ginal chamber by divine power, issued forth to the light,

THE INCARNATION 403

and they received Him in their hands with ineffable rev

erence. In the same manner as a priest exhibits the

sacred host to the people for adoration, so these two

celestial ministers presented to the divine Mother her

glorious and refulgent Son. All this happened in a short

space of time. In the same moment in which the holy

angels thus presented the divine Child to his Mother,

both Son and Mother looked upon each other, and in this

look, She wounded with love the sweet Infant and was

at the same time exalted and transformed in Him. From

the arms of the holy princes the Prince of all the heavens

spoke to his holy Mother: "Mother, become like unto

Me, since on this day, for the human existence, which

thou hast today given Me, I will give thee another more

exalted existence in grace, assimilating thy existence as

a mere creature to the likeness of Me, who am God and

Man." The most prudent Mother answered : "Trahe

me post Te, curremus in odorem unguentorum tuorum"

(Cant. 1, 3). Raise me, elevate me, Lord, and I will

run after Thee in the odor of thy ointments. In the same

way many of the hidden mysteries of the Canticles were

fulfilled; and other sayings which passed between the

infant God and the Virgin Mother had been recorded

in that book of songs, as for instance : "My Beloved to

me, and I to Him, and his desire is toward me"

(Cant. 2, 16). "Behold thou art beautiful, my friend,

and thy eyes are dove s eyes. Behold, my beloved, for

thou art beautiful"; and many other sacramental words

which to mention would unduly prolong this chapter.

481. The words, which most holy Mary heard from

the mouth of her most holy Son, served to make Her

understand at the same time the interior acts of his

holiest soul united with the Divinity; in order that by

imitating them She might become like unto Him. This

404 CITY OF GOD

was one of the greatest blessings, which the most faithful

and fortunate Mother received at the hands of her Son,

the true God and man, not only because it was continued

from that day on through all her life, but because it fur

nished Her the means of copying his own divine life as

faithfully as was possible to a mere creature. At the

same time the heavenly Lady perceived and felt the

presence of the most holy Trinity, and She heard the voice

of the eternal Father saying : "This is my beloved Son,

in whom I am greatly pleased and delighted" (Matth.

17, 5). The most prudent Mother made entirely god

like in the overflow of so many sacraments, answered:

"Eternal Father and exalted God, Lord and Creator of

the universe, give me anew thy permission and benedic

tion to receive in my arms the Desired of nations

(Agg. 2, 8) ; and teach me to fulfill as thy unworthy

Mother and lowly slave, thy holy will." Immediately

She heard a voice, which said: "Receive thy Onlybe-

gotten Son, imitate Him and rear Him; and remember,

that thou must sacrifice Him when I shall demand it of

thee." The divine Mother answered : "Behold the crea

ture of thy hands, adorn me with thy grace so that thy

Son and my God receive me for his slave; and if Thou

wilt come to my aid with thy Omnipotence, I shall be

faithful in his service ; and do Thou count it no presump

tion in thy insignificant creature, that she bear in her arms

and nourish at her breast her own Lord and Creator."

482. After this interchange of words, so full of mys

teries, the divine Child suspended the miracle of his

transfiguration, or rather He inaugurated the other

miracle, that of suspending the effects of glory in his

most holy body, confining them solely to his soul; and

He now assumed the appearance of one capable of suf

fering. In this form the most pure Mother now saw

THE INCARNATION 405

Him and, still remaining in a kneeling position and ador

ing Him with profound humility and reverence, She re

ceived Him in her arms from the hands of the holy angels.

And when She saw Him in her arms, She spoke to Him

and said : "My sweetest Love and light of my eyes and

being of my soul, Thou hast arrived in good hour into

this world as the Sun of justice (Malach. 4, 2), in order

to disperse the darkness of sin and death ! True God of

the true God, save thy servants and let all flesh see Him,

who shall draw upon it salvation (Is. 9, 2). Receive me

thy servant as thy slave and supply my deficiency, in order

that I may properly serve Thee. Make me, my Son, such

as Thou desirest me to be in thy service." Then the

most prudent Mother turned toward the eternal Father

to offer up to Him his Onlybegotten, saying: "Exalted

Creator of all the Universe, here is the altar and the sac

rifice acceptable in thy eyes (Malachy 3, 4). From this

hour on, O Lord, look upon the human race with mercy ;

and inasmuch as we have deserved thy anger, it is now

time that Thou be appeased in thy Son and mine. Let

thy justice now come to rest, and let thy mercy be ex

alted ; for on this account the Word has clothed itself in

the semblance of sinful flesh (Rom. 8, 3), and became

a Brother of mortals and sinners (Philip 2, 7). In this

title I recognize them as brothers and I intercede for them

from my inmost soul. Thou, Lord, hast made me the

Mother of thy Onlybegotten without my merit, since this

dignity is above all merit of a creature ; but I partly owe

to men the occasion of this incomparable good fortune;

since it is on their account that I am the Mother of the

Word made man and Redeemer of them all. I will not

deny them my love, or remit my care and watchfulness

for their salvation. Receive, eternal God, my wishes

406 CITY OF GOD

and petitions for that which is according to thy pleasure

and good will."

483. The Mother of mercy turned also toward all

mortals and addressed them, saying: "Be consoled ye

afflicted and rejoice ye disconsolate, be raised up ye fallen,

come to rest ye uneasy. Let the just be gladdened

and the saints be rejoiced; let the heavenly spirits break

out in new jubilee, let the Prophets and Patriarchs of

limbo draw new hope, and let all the generations praise

and magnify the Lord, who renews his wonders. Come,

come ye poor; approach ye little ones, without fear, for

in my arms I bear the Lion made a lamb, the Almighty,

become weak, the Invincible subdued. Come to draw

life, hasten to obtain salvation, approach to gain eternal

rest, since I have all this for all, and it will be given to

you freely and communicated to you without envy. Do

not be slow and heavy of heart, ye sons of men; and

Thou, O sweetest joy of my soul, give me permission to

receive from Thee that kiss desired by all creatures."

Therewith the most blessed Mother applied her most

chaste and heavenly lips in order to receive the loving

caresses of the divine Child, who on his part, as her

true Son, had desired them from Her.

484. Holding Him in Her arms She thus served as the

altar and the sanctuary, where the ten thousand angels

adored in visible human forms their Creator incarnate.

And as the most blessed Trinity assisted in an especial

manner at the birth of the Word, heaven was as it were

emptied of its inhabitants, for the whole heavenly court

had betaken itself to that blessed cave of Bethlehem and

was adoring the Creator in his garb and habit of a pilgrim

(Phil. 2, 7). And in their concert of praise the holy

angels intoned the new canticle : "Gloria in excelsis Deo,

et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis" (Luke 2,

THE INCARNATION 407

14). In sweetest and sonorous harmony they repeated it,

transfixed in wonder at the new miracles then being

fulfilled and at the unspeakable prudence, grace, humility

and beauty of that tender Maiden of fifteen years, who

had become the worthy Trustee and Minister of such vast

and magnificent sacraments.

485. It was now time to call saint Joseph, the faithful

spouse of the most discreet and attentive Lady. As I have

said above ( No. 472 ) he was wrapped in ecstasy, in which

he was informed by divine revelation of all the mysteries

of this sacred Birth during this night. But it was be

coming that he should see, and, before all other mortals,

should in his corporeal faculties and senses be present

and experience, adore and reverence the Word made

flesh; for he of all others had been chosen to act as the

faithful warden of this great sacrament. At the desire

of his heavenly Spouse he issued from his ecstasy and,

on being restored to consciousness, the first sight of his

eyes was the divine Child in the arms of the Virgin

Mother reclining against her sacred countenance and

breast. There he adored Him in profoundest humility

and in tears of joy. He kissed his feet in great joy and

admiration, which no doubt would have taken away and

destroyed life in him, if divine power had not preserved

it; and he certainly would have lost all the use of his

senses, if the occasion had permitted. When saint Joseph

had begun to adore the Child, the most prudent Mother

asked leave of her Son to arise (for until then She had

remained on her knees) and, while saint Joseph handed

Her the wrappings and swaddling-clothes, which She had

brought, She clothed Him with incomparable reverence,

devotion and tenderness. Having thus swathed and

clothed Him, his Mother, with heavenly wisdom, laid Him

in the crib, as related by saint Luke (Luke 2, 7). For

408 CITY OF GOD

this purpose She had arranged some straw and hay upon

a stone in order to prepare for the God-Man his first

resting-place upon earth next to that which He had found

in her arms. According to divine ordainment an ox from

the neighboring fields ran up in great haste and, entering

the cave, joined the beast of burden brought by the

Queen. The blessed Mother commanded them, with

what show of reverence was possible to them to acknowl

edge and adore their Creator. The humble animals

obeyed their Mistress and prostrated themselves before

the Child, warming Him with their breath and render

ing Him the service refused by men. And thus the God

made man was placed between two animals, wrapped in

swaddling-clothes and wonderfully fulfilling the proph

ecy, that "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his

master s crib; but Israel hath not known me, and my

people hath not understood."

TEACHING OF THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

486. My daughter, if men would keep their heart dis

engaged and if they would rightly and worthily consider

this great sacrament of the kindness of the Most High

towards men, it would be a powerful means of conduct

ing them in the pathway of life and subjecting them to

the love of their Creator and Redeemer. For as men

are capable of reasoning, if they would only make use of

their freedom to treat this sacrament with the reverence

due to its greatness, who would be so hardened as not to

be moved to tenderness at the sight of their God become

man, humiliated in poverty, despised, unknown, enter

ing the world in a cave, lying in a manger surrounded

by brute animals, protected only by a poverty-stricken

Mother, and cast off by the foolish arrogance of the

THE INCARNATION 409

world? Who will dare to love the vanity and pride,

which was openly abhorred and condemned by the Crea

tor of heaven and earth in his conduct? No one can

despise the humility, poverty and indigence, which the

Lord loved and chose for Himself as the very means of

teaching the way of eternal life. Few there are, who stop

to consider this truth and example: and on account of

this vile ingratitude only the few will reap the fruit of

these great sacraments.

487. But if the condescension of my most holy Son

was so great as to bestow so liberally upon thee his light

and knowledge concerning these vast blessings, ponder

well how much thou art bound to co-operate with this

light. In order that thou mayest correspond to this ob

ligation, I remind and exhort thee to forget all that is

of earth and lose it out of thy sight; that thou seek

nothing, or engage thyself with nothing except what can

help thee to withdraw and detach thee from the world

and its inhabitants; so that, with a heart freed from all

terrestrial affection, thou dispose thyself to celebrate in

it the mysteries of the poverty, humility and divine love

of the incarnate God. Learn from my example the rev

erence, fear and respect, with which thou must treat Him,

remembering how I acted, when I held Him in my arms ;

follow my example, whenever thou receivest Him in thy

heart in the venerable sacrament of the holy Eucharist,

wherein is contained the same God-Man, who was born

of my womb. In this holy Sacrament thou receivest Him

and possessest Him just as really, and He remains in thee

just as actually, as I possessed Him and conversed with

Him, although in another manner.

488. I desire that thou go even to extremes in this

holy reverence and fear ; and I wish that thou take notice

and be convinced, that in entering into thy heart in the

410 CITY OF GOD

holy Sacrament, thy God exhorts thee in the same words,

which thou hast recorded as spoken to me : become like

unto Me. His coming down from heaven onto the earth,

his being born in humility and poverty, his living and

dying in it, giving such rare example of the contempt of

the world and its deceits; the knowledge, which thou

hast received concerning his conduct and which thou hast

penetrated so deeply by divine intelligence : all these things

should be for thee like living voices, which thou must

heed and inscribe into the interior of thy heart. These

privileges have all been granted to thee in order that thou

discreetly use the common blessings to their fullest ex

tent, and in order that thou mayest understand, how

thankful thou must be to my most holy Son and Lord,

and how thou shouldst strive to make as great a return

for his goodness, as if He had come from heaven to re

deem thee alone and as if He had instituted all his won

ders and doctrines in the holy Church for none else than

thee (Gal. 7, 20).

CHAPTER XL

THE HOLY ANGELS ANNOUNCE THE BIRTH OF OUR LORD

IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE WORLD, AND THE SHEP

HERDS COME TO ADORE HIM.

489. After the courtiers of heaven had thus celebrated

the birth of God made man near the portals of Bethlehem,

some of them were immediately dispatched to different

places, in order to announce the happy news to those, who

according to the divine will were properly disposed to

hear it. The holy prince Michael betook himself to the

holy Patriarchs in limbo and announced to them, how the

Onlybegotten of the eternal Father was already born

into the world and was resting, humble and meek, as

they had prophesied, in a manger between two beasts.

He addressed also in a special manner holy Joachim and

Anne in the name of the blessed Mother, who had en

joined this upon him; he congratulated them, that their

Daughter now held in her arms the Desired of nations

and Him, who had been foretold by all the Patriarchs

and Prophets (Is. 7, 14; 9, 7, etc.). It was the most

consoling and joyful day, which this great gathering of

the just and the saints had yet had during their long ban

ishment. All of them acknowledged this new Godman

as the true Author of eternal salvation, and they com

posed and sang new songs of adoration and worship

in his praise. Saint Joachim and Anne enjoined the

messenger of heaven, saint Michael, to ask Mary their

Daughter to worship in their name the divine Child, the

blessed Fruit of her womb ; and this the great Queen of

411

412 CITY OF GOD

the world immediately did for them, listening with great

jubilee to all that the holy prince reported concerning

the Patriarchs of limbo.

490. Another of the holy angels that attended and

guarded the heavenly Mother was sent to saint Elisabeth

and her son John. On hearing this news of the birth

of the Redeemer, the prudent matron and her son, al

though he was yet of so tender an age, prostrated them

selves upon the earth and adored their God made man

in spirit and in truth (John 4, 23). The child which had

been consecrated as his Precursor, was renewed interiorly

with a spirit more inflamed than that of Elias, causing

new admiration and jubilation in the angels themselves.

Saint John and his mother requested our Queen through

the angels, that She in the name of them both, adore her

most holy Son and offer Him their services ; all of which

the heavenly Queen immediately fulfilled.

491. Having thus been informed of what had hap

pened, saint Elisabeth hastened to send one of her domes

tics to Bethlehem with presents for the blessed Mother

and the infant God. They consisted in some money, some

linen and other things for the comfort of the newly born

and of his poor Mother and her spouse. The servant

betook himself on the way with no other instruction than

that he visit the blessed Virgin and saint Joseph and take

notice of what comfort or want was theirs, so that he

might bring back certain information of their circum

stances and well-being. He had no other knowledge of

the sacrament, except what he himself could perceive

with his own eyes; but renewed and touched by an in

terior and divine force he came back and in wonderful

jubilee described to saint Elisabeth the poverty and the

charming grace of her Cousin, of the Child and of saint

Joseph, and what feelings were excited in him on behold-

THE INCARNATION 413

ing them. Admirable were the sentiments roused in the

godly matron by his ingenuous narration. If it had not

been for the will of God, that the secret and privacy of

this high sacrament should be preserved, she could not

have restrained herself from visiting the Virgin Mother

and the newborn God. Of the things sent by her, the

Queen appropriated some for relieving their extreme

poverty, while She distributed the rest of them to the

poor; for She did not wish to be deprived of the com

pany of the poor during the days in which She would

have to remain in the portal or cave of the Nativity.

492. Other angels were delegated to bring the news to

Zachary, Simeon and Anne, the prophetess, and to some

other just and holy people, who were worthy to be trusted

with this new mystery of our Redemption; for as the

Lord found them prepared to receive this news with

gratitude and with benefit to themselves, He considered

it a just due to their virtue not to hide from them the

blessing conferred upon the human race. Although not

all the just upon earth were informed at that time of this

sacrament; yet in all of them were wrought certain

divine effects in the hour in which the Savior of the

world was born. For all the just felt in their hearts a

new and supernatural joy, though they were ignorant of

its cause. There were not only movements of joy in the

angels and in the just, but also wonderful movements

in the insensible creatures; for all the influences of the

planets were renovated and enlivened. The sun much

accelerated its course; the stars shone in greater bright

ness ; and for the Magi kings was formed that wonderful

star, which showed them the way to Bethlehem (Matth.

2,2). Many trees began to bloom and others to produce

fruit. Some temples of the idols were overthrown; and

in others the idols were hurled down and their demons

2-28

414 CITY OF GOD

put to flight. These wonders and other happenings in

the world on that day men accounted for in different

ways, but far from the truth. Only among the just there

were many, who by divine impulse suspected or believed

that God had come into the world; yet no one knew it

with certainty, except those to whom it was revealed.

Among these were the three Magi, to each of whom in

their separate Oriental kingdoms angels of the Queen s

guard were sent to inform them by interior and intellect

ual enlightenment that the Redeemer of the human race

had been born in poverty and humility. At the same

time they were inspired with the sudden desire of seek

ing Him and adoring Him and immediately they saw the

star as a guide to Bethlehem, as I will relate farther on.

493. Amongst all these, the shepherds of that region,

who were watching their flocks at the time of the birth

of Christ, were especially blessed (Luke 2, 8) ; not only

because they accepted the labor and inconvenience of

their calling with resignation from the hand of God ; but

also because, being poor and humble, and despised by the

world, they belonged in sincerity and uprightness of

heart to those Israelites, who fervently hoped and longed

for the coming of the Messias, speaking and discoursing

of Him among themselves many times. They resembled

the Author of life, as they were removed from the riches,

vanity and ostentation of the world and far from its dia

bolical cunning (John 10, 14). They exhibited in the

circumstances of their calling the office, which the good

Shepherd had come to fulfill in knowing his Sheep and

being known to them. Hence they merited to be called

and invited, as the first fruits of the saints by the Savior

himself, to be the very first ones, to whom the eternal

and incarnate Word manifested Himself and by whom

He wished to be praised, served and adored. Hence the

THE INCARNATION 415

archangel Gabriel was sent to them as they watched on

the field, appearing to them in human form and with

great splendor.

494. The shepherds found themselves suddenly en

veloped and bathed in the celestial radiance of the angel,

and at his sight, being little versed in such visions, they

were filled with great fear. The holy prince reassured

them and said: "Ye upright men, be not afraid: for I

announce to you tidings of great joy, which is, that for

you is born today the Redeemer Christ, our Lord, in

the city of David. And as a sign of this truth, I announce

to you, that you shall find the Infant wrapped in swad

dling-clothes and placed in a manger" (Luke 2, 10, 12).

At these words of the angel, suddenly appeared a great

multitude of the celestial army, who in voices of sweet

harmony sang to the Most High these words : "Glory to

God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good

will." Rehearsing this divine canticle, so new to the

world, the holy angels disappeared. All this happened

in the fourth watch of the night. By this angelic vision

the humble and fortunate shepherds were filled with

divine enlightenment and were unanimously impelled by

a fervent longing to make certain of this blessing and to

witness with their own eyes the most high mystery of

which they had been informed.

495. The signs which the holy angels had indicated

to them did not seem appropriate or proportioned for

attesting the greatness of the Newborn to eyes of the

flesh. For to lie in a manger and to be wrapped in

swaddling-clothes, would not have been convincing proof

of the majesty of a king, if these shepherds had not been

illumined by divine light and been enabled to penetrate

the mystery. As they were free from the arrogant wis

dom of the world, they were easily made proficient in

416 CITY OF GOD

the divine wisdom. Conferring among themselves the

thoughts excited by this message, they resolved to hasten

in all speed to Bethlehem and see the wonder made known

to them by the Lord. They departed without delay and

entering the cave or portal, they found, as saint Luke

tells us, Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in a

manger. Seeing all this they recognized the truth of what

they had heard of the Child. Upon this followed an in

terior enlightenment consequent upon seeing the Word

made flesh; for when the shepherds looked upon Him,

He also glanced at them, emitting from his countenance

a great effulgence, which wounded with love the sincere

heart of each of these poor yet fortunate men ; with divine

efficiency it changed them and renewed them, constituting

them in a new state of grace and holiness and filling them

with an exalted knowledge of the divine mysteries of the

Incarnation and the Redemption of the human race.

496. Prostrating themselves on the earth they adored

the Word made flesh. Not any more as ignorant rustics,

but as wise and prudent men they adored Him, acknowl

edged and magnified Him as true God and man, as Re

storer and Redeemer of the human race. The heavenly

Lady and Mother of the Child took notice of all that they

did interiorly and exteriorly; for She saw into their in

most hearts. In highest wisdom and prudence She pre

served the memory of all these happenings and pondered

them in her soul, (Luke 2, 19), comparing them with

the other mysteries therein contained and with the holy

prophecies and sayings of the Scriptures. As She was

then the organ of the holy Spirit and the representative

of the Infant, She spoke to the shepherds, instructing

and exhorting them to persevere in divine love and in the

service of the Most High. They also conversed with Her

on their part and showed by their answers that they un-

THE INCARNATION 417

derstood many of the mysteries. They remained in the

cave from the beginning of dawn until mid-day, when,

having given them something to eat, our great Queen

sent them off full of heavenly grace and consolation.

497. During the days in which most holy Mary, the

Child and saint Joseph remained in the gates of Bethle

hem, these holy shepherds returned a few times and

brought such presents as in their poverty they could spare.

What saint Luke says about those that wondered at what

the shepherds said concerning the holy Family, happened

later, after the Queen, the Child and saint Joseph had de

parted and fled from the neighborhood of Bethlehem;

for divine Providence so arranged things, that the

shepherds were unable to spread about these news before

that time. Not all of those that heard them speaking about

this matter believed them, for they held them to be uncul

tured and ignorant people. These shepherds however

were saints and were filled with divine knowledge until

they died. Among those who believed them was Herod,

although not because of any laudable faith or piety, but

on account of his worldly and wicked fear of losing his

kingdom. Among the children, who merited to be sacri

ficed by him, there were also some belonging to these holy

men. Their parents consented joyfully to the martyr

dom, which the children themselves desired and offering

themselves up to the Lord, whom they were made to

know beforehand.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY.

498. My daughter, forgetfulness and inattention re

garding the works of the Redeemer are as reprehensible

as they are common and frequent among mortals. Yet

these works are most mysterious, loving, merciful and in-

418 CITY OF GOD

structive. Thou hast been called and chosen to receive

knowledge and enlightenment for avoiding such dan

gerous and gross torpidity; therefore I wish, that in the

mysteries thou hast just written, thou take notice of and

ponder over the burning love of my most holy Son in com

municating Himself to men as soon as He was born, in

order to make them immediate partakers of the joyful

fruit of his coming. Men do not know of this obliga

tion, because few of them penetrate to the significance

of this great blessing, just as there were few who saw

the Word at his Birth and thanked Him for his arrival.

They are not aware of the cause of their evil state and

of their blindness, which neither was nor is to be ascribed

to the Lord nor to any fault in his love, but to the sins

and the bad dispositions of men. If their own bad dis

positions would not impede or make them unworthy of

this favor, the same light, which was given to the just,

to the shepherds and to the kings, would have been

vouchsafed to all or to many. That there should be so

few, will make thee understand in what an unhappy

condition the world was at the time of the coming of the

incarnate Word ; and also the unhappiness of the present

times, when these mysteries have become so evident and

when grateful memory of them is become so scarce.

499. Consider the wicked disposition of mortals in

the present age, in which the light of the Gospel has been

spread out and confirmed by so many miracles wrought

by God in his Church. In spite of all this there are so

few, who are perfect and who seek to dispose themselves

for greater participation in the fruits and benefits of the

Redemption. Although the number of fools is so great

and the vices are become so measureless, there are those

who think, that also the perfect are numerous, because,

forsooth, men do not so openly dare to act in opposition

THE INCARNATION 419

to God : there are fewer than one thinks, and many less

than there should be, seeing that God is so much offended

by the infidels and continually desires to communicate

the treasures of grace in his Church according to the

merits of his Onlybegotten made man. Be mindful,

dearest, of the obligation imposed upon thee by thy clear

knowledge of these truths. Live cautiously, with great

attention and watchfulness correspond to his graces, los

ing no time, occasion or circumstance for acting in the

most holy and perfect manner known to thee; for thou

canst not fulfill thy duty otherwise. Remember what

I tell thee, command and urge upon thee, that thou re

ceive not such great favor in vain (II Cor. 6, 1) ; do

not allow thy grace and light to be without profit, but

make use of them in the perfection of thankfulness.

CHAPTER XII.

WHAT WAS CONCEALED FROM THE DEMON CONCERNING

THE MYSTERY OF THE BIRTH OF THE INCARNATE

WORD, AND OF OTHER HAPPENINGS UNTIL THE CIR

CUMCISION.

500. As far as depended upon the Lord the coming

of the eternal Word as man was most fortunate and

blessed for all the mortals ; for He came in order to give

light and life to all those that were in darkness and in

the shadows of death (Luke 1, 79). If the foreknown

and incredulous stumbled and hurt themselves on this

cornerstone (Rom. 9, 33), seeking ruin where they could

and should have found resurrection to an eternal life,

that was not the fault of the stone, but of those that

made of it an occasion of scandal and of harm to them

selves. Only for hell the birth of the infant God was

terrible, since He was the strong and invincible One,

who came to despoil that armed enemy of his tyrannous

rule, founded in lies (Psalm 23, 8), who had held his

fortification in unjust yet peaceful possession for a long

time. In order to depose this prince of the world and

of darkness, it was befitting, that the sacrament of the

coming of the Word should be hidden from him. Be

cause of his malice he was not only unworthy to be

informed of the mysteries of the divine wisdom (Wisd.

2, 21, 24) ; but it was just that by divine Providence the

malice of this enemy should be blinded and confused ; in

his malice he had brought into the world the deceit and

420

THE INCARNATION 421

blindness of sin and cast down the whole human race

by the fall of Adam.

501. Accordingly Lucifer and his ministers were left

in ignorance of many things, which they could naturally

have known concerning the incarnation of the Word and

other events in the course of his most holy life, a fact

which it is necessary to take notice of in this history (Nos.

326, Vol. Ill, 217, 226, 284). For if he had known for

certain, that Christ was the true God, he evidently would

not have procured his death (I Cor. 2, 8), but he would

have sought to prevent it, as will be said in its proper

place (Vol. Ill, -494, 540, 613). Concerning the mystery

of the Nativity he knew only that most holy Mary had

given birth to a Son in poverty and in a forsaken cave,

and that She had not found even lodging and shelter;

also that the Child was circumcised and otherwise treated

as mere man : all of which was calculated rather to mis

lead his pride than to enlighten it. But he was ignorant

of the manner of his Birth, and of the virginity of the

blessed Mother before and after the Birth; likewise of

the message of the angels to the just, and to the

shepherds; of their conversations, and of their adora

tion of the infant God. Nor did he see the star,

nor did he know the purpose of the kings in coming

to Bethlehem, although he saw them make the journey

and attributed it to some worldly enterprise. The de

mons were also unable to account for the changes in

the elements, the stars and planets; though they well

perceived these changes and wonderful effects. They

misjudged the words of the Magi in the presence of

Herod, their arrival at the stable and the adoration, and

the gifts offered. Notwithstanding, that they perceived

the fury of Herod against the children and abetted it;

yet they did not understand his object and they stirred

422 CITY OF GOD

up his cruelty. Although Lucifer suspected, that Herod

was seeking to kill the Messias, he considered him de

mented and treated him with derision. For in his pride

he obstinately held fast to the opinion, that the Word,

upon entering into the world in order to set up his

dominion, would not come humbly and in a hidden

manner, but with ostentatious power and majesty, while

in reality the infant God chose a far different way, being

born of a Mother poor and despised by men.

502. Thus misled, Lucifer, having noticed some of

the strange events connected with the Nativity, called

together his helpers in hell, and said to them : "I do not

find any occasion for fear in the events, which we have

noticed in the world. It is true, the Woman whom we

persecuted so much, has given birth to a Son, but in

such poverty and neglect, that She could not even pro

cure a lodging-place in order to be delivered. We know

all this to be far from the power and greatness of God.

If He is to advance against us as weak as we have seen

this Child and as we have assured ourselves concerning

It, He certainly can make no headway against our power.

We need not fear that He is the Messias, since there

is even a plot to kill Him as being mortal like the rest

of men. This does not seem to point to the salvation

of the world, since He himself seems to stand in need

of atoning for his fault by death. All these signs con

flict with the purpose of the Messias in coming into the

world and therefore it seems to me, that we can rest

assured, that He has not yet come." The ministers of

evil approved of the decision of their damned chief and

they were all satisfied, that the Messias had not yet

come, for they were all accomplices in the malice and

pride which blinded him (Wis. 2, 21). It never occurred

to satan in his vanity and indomitable pride, that the

THE INCARNATION 423

majesty and greatness of God should humiliate itself;

because he himself sought after applause, ostentation,

reverence and exaltation, wishing if possible to appro

priate all honor to himself. Since all honor was attain

able by God, it never entered his mind, that He would

consent to the contrary and subject Himself to humilia

tion, so much abhorred by the spirits of evil.

503. O sons of vanity! What examples are not here

given to you for your enlightenment! Great is the

lesson, which the humility of Christ, our Teacher and

our highest Good, teaches and urges upon us : but if

this does not move us, let the pride of Lucifer at least

deter and frighten us. O vice, O sin, dreadful beyond

human imagination ! since it confused an angel of such

high intellect so much, that he could judge of the in

finite bounty by no other standard than that by which

he judged himself and of his own malicious disposi

tion! How far then does not man proceed in malice,

if to his ignorance he joins guilt and pride? O un

happy and most foolish Lucifer! How far didst thou

go astray in judging of so reasonable and commendable

a proceeding! What is more beautiful than humility

and meekness joined with majesty and power? Why

dost thou fail to see, insignificant creature, that not to

know how to humiliate thyself is only weakness of mind

and comes from a base heart? The magnanimous and

truly great do not seek payment in vanity, nor do they

seek after what is low, nor can they be satisfied with what

is false and apparent. It is evident, O Lucifer, that thou

art shut out from truth and but an ignorant guide for

the blind (Matth. 15, 14) ; since thou didst fail to un

derstand, that the greatness of the bounty and love of

God (Rom. 5, 8) manifested and magnified itself in

424 CITY OF GOD

humility and obedience even to the death of the Cross

(Phil 2, 8).

504. All these errors and insanities of Lucifer and his

ministers were known to the Mother of wisdom and

our Mistress; and with a just appreciation of such high

mysteries She magnified and blessed the Lord, because

He had concealed them from the proud and arrogant and

revealed them to the poor and humble, thus beginning to

overcome the tyranny of the demons (Matth. 11, 25).

The kind Mother offered up fervent prayers for all the

mortals, who on account of their faults were unworthy

of seeing the light, which for their salvation had ap

peared in the world ; of all this She reminded her most

sweet Son with incomparable compassion and love for

sinners. In these affections She spent most of the time

of her stay in the cave of the Nativity. But as this

place was bare of all comfort and much exposed to the

inclemencies of the weather, the great Lady was most

solicitous for the shelter of her tender and sweet Child.

As a most prudent Mother She had brought along a

mantle, with which She covered Him in addition to the

ordinary swaddling-clothes. Moreover She held Him con

tinually in the embrace of her sacred arms, except at

times, when, in order to make saint Joseph happy, She

asked him to hold his incarnate God in his arms and

serve him as a father.

505. When for the first time She placed the infant

God in his arms, the most holy Mary said to him : "My

husband and my helper, receive in thy arms the Creator

of heaven and earth and enjoy his amiable and sweet

company, in order that my Lord and my God may be

delighted and recompensed by thy faithful services

(Prov. 8, 31). Take to thyself the Treasure of the

eternal Father and participate in this blessing of the hu-

THE INCARNATION 425

man race." And speaking interiorly to the divine In

fant, She said : "Sweetest Love of my soul and Light of

my eyes, rest in the arms of Joseph, my friend and

spouse : do thou hold sweet intercourse with him and

pardon me my shortcomings. Much do I feel the loss

of Thee even for one instant, but I wish to communicate

without envy the good I have received, to all that are

worthy" (Wis. 7, 13). Her most faithful husband,

acknowledging this new blessing, humbled himself to

the earth and answered: "Lady and Sovereign of the

world, my Spouse, how can I, being so unworthy, pre

sume to hold in my arms God himself, in whose presence

tremble the pillars of heaven? (Job 26, 11). How can

this vile wormlet have courage to accept such an exalted

favor? I am but dust and ashes, but do Thou, Lady,

assist me in my lowliness and ask his Majesty to look

upon me with clemency and make me worthy through his

grace."

506. His desire of holding the infant God and his

reverential fear of Him caused in saint Joseph heroic

acts of love, of faith, of humility and profoundest rev

erence. Trembling with discreet fear He fell on his

knees to receive Him from the hands of his most holy

Mother, while sweetest tears of joy and delight copiously

flowed from his eyes at a happiness so extraordinary.

The divine Infant looked at him caressingly and at the

same time renewed his inmost soul with such divine ef

ficacy as no words will suffice to explain. He broke out

in new canticles of praise at seeing himself thus en

riched with such magnificent blessings and favors. After

having for some time enjoyed in spirit the sweetest ef

fects of holding in his arms the Lord, who contains

heaven and earth (Is. 40, 12), He replaced Him into the

arms of his fortunate Mother, both of them being on

426 CITY OF GOD

their knees in receiving and giving Him. Similar rev

erence the most prudent Mother observed every time

She took Him up or relinquished Him, in which also

saint Joseph imitated Her, as often as it was his happy

lot to hold the incarnate Word. When they approached

his Majesty, they also made three genuflections, kissing

the earth and exciting heroic acts of humility, worship

and reverence. Thus both the great Queen and the

blessed Joseph observed all propriety in receiving or giv

ing the Child from and to one another.

507. When the heavenly Mother judged it time to

nourish Him at her breast, She reverently asked permis

sion of her Son; for although She knew, that She was

to nourish Him as her true and human Child, She never

theless bore in mind, that He was at the same time the

true God and Lord and that a great distance intervened

between the infinite Being and a mere creature such as

She was. As this consciousness was unfailing in the

most prudent Virgin, her reverence remained faultless

and undiminished and permitted not the least forgetful-

ness in Her. She was always filled with a comprehensive

insight and She always reached perfection in all her acts.

Therefore She nourished, served and tended her Child,

not with an uneasy haste, but with unremitting care, rev

erence and discretion, causing ever new admiration in

the angels, whose celestial understanding reached not

so far as to comprehend such heroic acts of a tender

Maiden. As they were always corporally present during

the time which She spent at the gates of Bethlehem, they

administered to Her in all things demanded by the service

of the infant God and of Her. All these mysteries are

so wonderful and admirable, and so worthy of our atten

tion and remembrance, that we cannot deny our negli

gence in forgetting them, and we cannot acknowledge

THE INCARNATION 427

sufficiently, what harm we are doing ourselves in ceas

ing to think of them, nor do we sufficiently understand

the divine effect, which the memory of them produces in

the faithful and grateful children of the Church.

508. From what has been revealed to me of the rev

erence, with which most holy Mary and the glorious

saint Joseph as well as the angelic hosts treated the In

carnate God, I could easily extend my discourse on the

subject. Though I refrain, I yet wish to confess the

want of reverence, with which I have until now auda

ciously behaved toward God, and how many faults, of

which I have been guilty toward Him in this respect,

have become known to me. As I said, and will relate

further on, in order to assist the Queen, all the angels

of her guard remained present in visible forms from the

time of the Birth until the flight of the Child into Egypt.

The solicitude of the humble and loving Mother for

her divine Infant was so unremitting, that She would

not part with Him to place Him in the arms of saint

Joseph or into those of the holy princes Michael or

Gabriel, except on rare occasions when She was obliged

to take some nourishment; for these two archangels had

besought Her, to consign the Child to their care during

meals or when saint Joseph was at his work. Thus He

was placed into the hands of the angels, in admirable

fulfillment of the words of David : "In their hands they

shall bear Thee up," etc. (Ps. 90, 12). The most watch

ful Mother would not take any sleep in her solicitude for

her most holy Son, except when his Majesty commanded

Her to do so. In reward for her diligence He provided

for Her a new and more miraculous kind of sleep than

that which She had until then enjoyed; for while She

slept, her heart was awake, continuing or rather not in

terrupting the divine intelligence and contemplation of

428 CITY OF GOD

the Divinity (Cant. 5, 2). But from this day on the

Lord added still another miracle, namely, during the

sleep, which was necessary, She retained in her arms

the power of holding and embracing the Child in the

same way as if She were awake; and She gazed upon

Him with the eyes of her intellect, as if She were look

ing upon Him with her bodily eyes, understanding all

that She herself and her Child did exteriorly in the mean

while. Thus was miraculously fulfilled, what is said in

the Canticles : "I sleep, but my heart is awake."

509. The canticles of praise and exaltation of the Lord,

which our celestial Queen composed in honor of the

Child, alternately singing them with the holy angels and

also with her spouse Joseph, I cannot express by my

limited terms of speech. Of them alone there would be

much to write, for they were uninterrupted; but the

knowledge of them is reserved for the special enjoyment

of the elect. Among all mortals the most faithful Joseph

was privileged and blessed in this respect, for in many

of them he himself participated and many of them he

understood. Beside this he enjoyed another favor, of

singular benefit and consolation to his soul and procured

for him by the most prudent Virgin : namely, many

times, in conversing with him of the Child, She spoke

of Him as of "our Son" (Luke 2, 48) ; not that He

was the natural Son of saint Joseph, since in the super

natural order He was the Son of the eternal Father and

in the natural order, the Son of his Virgin Mother;

but because in the opinion of men He was reputed to be

the son of Joseph. This favor and privilege was of in

estimable value to the saint and caused him immeasur

able delight; on this account his heavenly Spouse de

lighted in using this appellation when conversing about

her Son.

THE INCARNATION 429

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN AND LADY OF HEAVEN

GAVE ME.

510. My daughter, I see thee full of devout emulation

of the happiness, which the intercourse with my Son af

forded me, my spouse and the holy angels, since we be

held Him present to our bodily eyes as thou desirest for

thyself, if it were possible. I wish to console thee and

guide thy affections toward that which thou thyself canst

and shouldst do according to thy condition in order to

attain the same happiness which thou covetest in us. For

this purpose, beloved, recall what thou hast already suf

ficiently understood concerning the ways of God in rais

ing up those souls, whom He seeks with paternal love

and affection. Thou hast attained this knowledge by be

ing favored with so many particular calls and enlighten

ments of the Lord, wherein He continually waits at the

portals of thy heart, and urges thee onward expecting

thy conversion (Wis. 6, 15). Thou hast seen Him draw

ing thee to Himself by repeated favors and by most

exalted doctrines, selecting thee for the narrow bands

of his loving intercourse (Coloss. 3, 14) ; and the great

purity due to this concession.

511. Faith likewise teaches thee, that God is present

in all places by his essence and by the power of his

Divinity; and that to Him are open all thy thoughts,

thy desires and sighs without exception. If thou co

operate with this truth so as to preserve the graces,

which thou receivest through the sacraments and other

channels divinely instituted, the Lord will remain with

thee also by divine and special assistance; and in it He

will regale thee with his love as his chosen spouse. Now

since thou knowest and understandest all these truths,

tell me, what more canst thou envy or desire, when thou

2-29

430 CITY OF GOD

already possesses! all that thou so anxiously sighest

after? What I require of thee, and all that remains for

thee to do, is, that thou exert thyself in holy emulation

to imitate this intercourse and reproduce in thyself the

disposition of the angels, the purity of my husband, and

to copy in thyself my life, as far as possible, in order to be

a fit dwelling-place of the Most High (I Cor. 3, 17).

Thou must direct all those endeavors, all those desires

and exertions, with which thou wouldst have wished thy

self to be animated if thou hadst seen and adored my

most holy Son in his birth and infancy, toward the ful

fillment of this doctrine; for if thou imitatest me, thou

mayest rest secure, that thou hast me as a Teacher and

the Lord for an assured possession of thy soul. In this

assurance thou canst speak to Him, embrace Him and

delight thyself with Him, as with One who is present;

for in order to communicate these delights to the pure

and untainted souls He has assumed human flesh and

become a Child. But always look upon Him as the great

God, though a Child, in order that thy caresses may be

guarded by reverence and thy love accompanied by holy

fear; for the one is due to Him as God, and the other

befits his immense bounty and merciful magnificence.

512. In this manner of intercourse thou must continue

without intervals of lukewarmness, lest thou disgust Him.

Thy legitimate and chosen occupation should be none

other than the love and the praise of the infinite God.

All the rest thou must enter into only sparingly, in such

a way as if visible and earthly things scarcely concerned

thee and cannot detain thee even for a moment. Thou

must maintain thyself in this soaring height, so that thou

seem not to have anything earnestly to attend to, except

to seek the highest and true God. Me thou shouldst

imitate and for God alone thou shouldst live ; all the rest

THE INCARNATION 431

should not exist for thee, nor shouldst thou exist for it.

But the gifts and blessings, which thou receivest I wish

thou dispense and communicate for the good of thy fellow-

men, observing the perfect order of holy charity; thus

thy gifts will not evaporate, but be still more increased

(I Cor. 13, 8). In all this thou must keep the regula

tions, which befit thy condition and state, as I have already

shown and instructed thee in other places at other times.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOST HOLY MARY IS INFORMED OF THE WILL OF THE

LORD, THAT HIS ONLYBEGOTTEN SON BE CIRCUMCISED,

AND SHE CONFERS ABOUT IT WITH SAINT JOSEPH I

THE MOST HOLY NAME OF JESUS IS BROUGHT FROM

HEAVEN.

513. From the moment the most prudent Virgin found

Herself chosen as the Mother of the divine Word, She be

gan to ponder upon the labors and sufferings in store for

her sweetest Son. As her knowledge of Scripture was

so profound, She understood all the mysteries contained

therein and She began to foresee and prepare with in

comparable compassion for all that He was to suffer

for the Redemption of Man. This sorrow, foreseen and

expected with such a full knowledge of details, was a

prolonged martyrdom for the most meek Mother of the

sacrificial Lamb of God (Jer. 11, 19). But in regard

to the Circumcision, which was to take place after the

birth of the Child, the heavenly Lady had received no

command or intimation of the will of the eternal Father.

This uncertainty excited the loving solicitude and sweet

plaints of the tender and affectionate Mother. Her pru

dent foresight enabled Her to conjecture, that, as her

most holy Son had come to honor and confirm his law

by fulfilling it and as He had moreover come in order

to suffer for men, He would be constrained by his burning 1

love and by other motives to undergo the pains of cir

cumcision.

514. On the other hand her maternal love and com-

432

THE INCARNATION 433

passion longed to exempt her sweet Child if possible,

from this suffering; moreover She knew, that circum

cision was a rite instituted for cleansing the newborn

children from original sin, whereas the divine Infant

was entirely free from this guilt, not having contracted

it in Adam. In this hesitation between love of her divine

Son and obedience to the eternal Father, the most pru

dent Virgin practiced many heroic acts of virtue, un

speakably pleasing to his Majesty. Although She could

have easily escaped this uncertainty by directly asking the

Lord what was to be done; yet, being as humble as She

was prudent, She refrained. Neither would She ask her

angels; for with admirable wisdom, She awaited the

opportune time and occasion, assigned by divine Provi

dence for all things, and She would not presume curiously

to search or pry into his decrees by consulting supernat

ural sources of information, especially in order to rid

Herself of any suffering. When any grave and doubt

ful affair arose, in which there was danger of offending

God, or some urgent undertaking for the good of crea

tures, in which it would be necessary to know the divine

will, She first asked permission to submit her petition for

enlightenment regarding the divine pleasure.

515. This does not conflict with what I said in book

second, chapter tenth, namely, that the most holy Mary

undertook nothing without asking permission and coun

sel of God, for this consultation concerning the divine

pleasure was not coupled with the desire of special revela

tion. In this as I have said, She was most discreet and

diffident, rarely asking for such extraordinary interven

tion. Without aspiring to new revelation She was in

the habit of consulting the habitual and supernatural aid

of the Holy Ghost, who governed and guided Her in all

her actions. In directing Her faculties by this interior

434 CITY OF GOD

light, She perceived the greater perfection and sanctity

open to Her in the affairs and transactions of every-day

life. Although it is true, that the Queen of heaven

possessed special claims and rights to be informed of the

will of God in different ways ; yet, as She was the model

of all sanctity and discretion, She would not avail Her

self of this supernatural order and direction, except in

such cases as were appropriate. As for the rest She

guided Herself by fulfilling to the letter the words of

David: "As the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands

of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God,

until He have mercy on us" (Ps. 122, 2). But this nat

ural and ordinary light in the Mistress of the world was

greater than that of all the mortals together; and in it

She sought the fiat of the divine will.

516. The mystery of the Circumcision required a

special and particular dispensation; it demanded a sep

arate enlightenment of the Lord, and for this the pru

dent Mother was waiting. In the meanwhile, addressing

in these words the law that required it, She said : "O

law, made for all, thou art just and holy; but thou dost

afflict my heart by thy hardness, if thou art to wound

Him, who is thy life and thy Author ! That thou shouldst

inflict thy sufferings upon those, who must be cleansed

of guilt, is just; but that thou shouldst visit with thy

severity the Innocent, who is without fault (Heb. 7, 26),

seems the excess of rigor unless his own love concedes

this right to thee. O would that it might please my

Beloved to exempt Himself from this punishment! But

how shall He refuse to undergo it, since He came to seek

pain, to embrace the Cross, to fulfill and accomplish the

law? (Matth. 5, 27). O cruel knife! Would thou

couldst direct thy attacks upon my own life, and not

upon the Lord, who gave it to me! O my Son, sweet

THE INCARNATION 435

Love and Light of my soul, is it possible, that Thou so

soon shalt shed thy blood, which is more precious than

heaven and earth? My loving compassion inclines me

to hold Thee exempt from the common law, from which

Thou art excluded as its Author. But the desire to ful

fill it urges me to comply with it, leaving Thee a prey

to its rigor, unless Thou, my sweet Life, art willing to

change the decree and punish me instead. The human

nature, which Thou hast from Adam, my Lord, I have

given Thee, but without its fault or guilt; since in thy

Omnipotence Thou hast preserved it among all the rest

from original stain. Since Thou art the Son of the

eternal Father and the figure of his substance (Heb. 1,

3 ) , and since thy generation is eternal, Thou art infinitely

removed from sin. Why then, my Lord, shouldst Thou

subject thyself to the remedy provided for sin by the

law ? Yet am I aware, my Son, that Thou art the Teacher

and Redeemer of men and that Thou must confirm thy

precepts by the example: Thou wilt not yield the least

point in this matter. O eternal Father, let the knife now

lose its sharpness and the flesh its sensitiveness! Let

pain descend rather upon me, insignificant wormlet; let

thy Onlybegotten Son fulfill the law, but let me alone feel

the punishment. O inhuman and cruel sin, which so soon

profferest the gall to Him, who cannot be guilty of thee !

O sons of Adam, abhor and fear sin, which, for a remedy,

demands bloody punishment of the Lord and God him

self."

517. Such grief the sorrowful Mother mixed with the

joy of seeing the Onlybegotten of the Father born of

Her and resting in her arms, and thus She passed the

days which remained before the Circumcision, being

faithfully attended by her most chaste spouse Joseph.

To him alone She spoke of the Circumcision ; yet only in

436 CITY OF GOD

few words and mixed with the tears of compassion of

them both. Before the eight days after the Birth were

completed, the most prudent Queen placed Herself on

her knees in the presence of the Lord and thus addressed

Him: "Highest King, Father of my Lord (Eph. 5, 2),

behold here thy slave with the true Sacrifice and Victim

in her arms. My sighs and their cause are not unknown

to thy wisdom (Ps. 37, 10). I know, my Lord, what

according to the law is thy pleasure and what should be

done with thy Son. If by suffering much more rigorous

pains I can rescue my Son and God, my heart is prepared.

But I am likewise ready to see Him submit to circum

cision, if that is thy will."

518. The Most High answered Her, saying: "My

Daughter and my Dove, do not let thy heart be afflicted

because thy Son is to be subjected to the knife and to

the pains of circumcision. I have sent Him into the

world as an example, that He put an end to the law of

Moses by entirely fulfilling it (Matth. 5, 17). Though

it is true that the habitation of his humanity, which thou

hast given Him as his natural Mother, is to be violated,

and his flesh wounded together with thy soul, yet re

member: He is my natural Son by an eternal genera

tion (Ps. 2, 7), the image of my substance (Heb. 1, 3),

equal to Me in essence, majesty and glory, and by thus

subjecting Himself to the sacramental law freeing from

sin (John 10, 30), without letting man know that He

is exempt therefrom, He suffers also in his honor

(II Cor. 2, 21). Thou knowest beforehand, my Daugh

ter, that thou must reserve thy Onlybegotten and Mine

for this and other greater sufferings. Resign thyself,

then, to the shedding of his blood and willingly yield

to Me the first fruits of the eternal salvation of men."

519. To this decree of the eternal Father the heavenly

THE INCARNATION 437

Lady, as the Co-operatrix of our salvation, conformed

Herself with such a plenitude of all sanctity as is far

beyond human understanding. With complete and most

loving obedience She offered up her Onlybegotten, say

ing: "Supreme Lord and God, I offer to Thee this

Victim and Host of acceptable sacrifice with all my

heart, although I am full of compassion and sorrow that

men have offended thy immense Goodness in such a way

as to force a God to make amends. Eternally shall I

praise Thee for looking with such infinite love upon thy

creatures and for preferring to refuse pardon to thy own

Son rather than hinder the salvation of man (Eph. 5, 2).

I, who by thy condescension am his Mother, must before

all other mortals subject myself to thy pleasure and

therefore I offer to Thee the most meek Lamb, which

is to take away the sins of the world by his innocence

(John 1, 29). But if it is possible to mitigate the pains

caused by this knife at the expense of suffering in me,

thy arm is mighty to effect this exchange."

520. Most holy Mary issued from her prayer and re

quested saint Joseph to take the necessary steps for the

Circumcision of the divine Infant. With rarest prudence

She avoided telling Him anything of what She had been

told in answer to her prayer. She spoke as if She wished

to consult Him or ask his opinion in regard to the Cir

cumcision, saying that the time appointed by law for thc v

Circumcision of the Child had arrived and since they

had not received any orders to the contrary, it seemed

necessary to comply with it. They themselves, She said,

were more bound to please the Most High, to obey more

punctually his precepts, and to be more zealous in the

love and care of his most holy Son than all the rest of

creatures, seeking to fufill in all things the divine pleasure

in return for his incomparable favors. To these words

438 CITY OF GOD

saint Joseph answered with the greatest modesty and

discretion, saying, that, as no command to the contrary

had been given concerning the Child he wished in all

things to conform himself to the divine will manifested

in the common law; that, although as God the incarnate

Word was not subject to the law, yet He was now clothed

with our humanity, and, as a most perfect Teacher and

Savior, no doubt wished to conform with other men

in its fulfillment. Then he asked his heavenly Spouse

how the Circumcision was to take place.

521. The most holy Mary answered, that the Circum

cision should be performed substantially in the same way

as it was performed on other children : but that She need

not hand Him over or consign Him to any other person,

but that She would herself hold Him in her arms. And

because the delicacy and tenderness of the Infant would

make this ceremony more painful to Him than to other

children, they should have at hand the soothing medi

cine, which was ordinarily applied at circumcision.

Moreover, She requested saint Joseph to procure a crystal

or glass vessel for preserving the sacred relic of the Cir

cumcision of the divine Infant. In the meanwhile the

cautious Mother prepared some linen cloths to catch the

sacred blood, which was now for the first time to be shed

for our rescue, so that not one drop of it might be lost

or fall upon the ground. After these preparations the

heavenly Lady asked saint Joseph to inform the priest

and request him to come to the cave where, without the

necessity of bringing the Child to any other place, he

might, as a fit and worthy minister of so hidden and great

a sacrament, with his priestly hands perform the rite of

the Circumcision.

522. Then most holy Mary and Joseph took counsel

concerning the name to be given to the divine Infant in

THE INCARNATION 439

the Circumcision, and the holy spouse said : "My Lady,

when the holy angel of the Most High informed me of

this great sacrament, he also told me that thy most

sacred Son should be called JESUS." The Virgin

Mother answered : "This same name was revealed to

me when He assumed flesh in my womb; and thus re

ceiving 1 this name from the Most High through the

mouth of his holy angels, his ministers, it is befitting

that we conform in humble reverence with the hidden and

inscrutable judgments of his infinite wisdom in confer

ring it on my Son and Lord, and that we call Him

JESUS. This name we will propose to the priest, for

inscription in the register of the other circumcised

children."

523. While the great Mistress of heaven and saint

Joseph thus conversed with each other, innumerable

angels descended in human forms from on high, clothed

in shining white garments, on which were woven red

embroideries of wonderful beauty. They had palms in

their hands and crowns upon their heads and emitted a

greater splendor than many suns. In comparison with

the beauty of these holy princes all the loveliness seen

in this world appeared repulsive. But pre-eminent in

splendor were the devices or escutcheons on their breasts,

on each of which the sweet name of Jesus was engraved

or embossed. The effulgence which each of these es

cutcheons emitted exceeded that of all the angels together,

and the variety of the beauty thus exhibited in this great

multitude was so rare and exquisite as neither human

tongue can express nor human imagination ever compass.

The holy angels divided into two choirs in the cave,

keeping their gaze fixed upon the King and Lord in the

arms of his virginal Mother. The chiefs of these

heavenly cohorts were the two princes, saint Michael

440 CITY OF GOD

and saint Gabriel, shining in greater splendor than the

rest and bearing in their hands, as a special distinction,

the most holy name of JESUS, written in larger letters

on something like cards of incomparable beauty and

splendor.

524. The two princes presented themselves apart from

the rest before their Queen and said: "Lady, this is

the name of thy Son (Matth. 1, 21), which was written

in the mind of God from all eternity and which the

blessed Trinity has given to thy Onlybegotten Son and

our Lord as the signal of salvation for the whole human

race; establishing Him at the same time on the throne

of David. He shall reign upon it, chastise his enemies

and triumph over them, making them his footstool and

passing judgment upon them; He shall raise his friends

to the glory of his right hand. But all this is to happen

at the cost of suffering and blood; and even now He is

to shed it in receiving this name, since it is that of the

Savior and Redeemer; it shall be the beginning of his

sufferings in obedience to the will of his eternal Father.

We all are come as ministering spirits of the Most High,

appointed and sent by the holy Trinity in order to serve

the Onlybegotten of the Father and thy own in all the

mysteries and sacraments of the law of grace. We are

to accompany Him and minister to Him until He shall

ascend triumphantly to the celestial Jerusalem and open

the portals of heaven; afterwards we shall enjoy an

especial accidental glory beyond that of the other blessed,

to whom no such commission has been given." All this

was witnessed by the most fortunate spouse Joseph con

jointly with the Queen of heaven; but his understanding

of these happenings was not so deep as hers, for the

Mother of wisdom understood and comprehended the

highest mysteries of the Redemption. Although saint

THE INCARNATION 441

Joseph understood many more mysteries than other

mortals, yet he did not penetrate them in the same way

as his heavenly Spouse. Both of them, however, were

full of heavenly joy and admiration, and extolled the

Lord in new canticles of glory. All that they experi

enced in these various and wonderful events surpasses

human language, and certainly my own powers, and I

cannot find adequate words for expressing my con

ceptions.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY, OUR MOST HOLY LADY,

GAVE ME.

525. My daughter, I wish to renovate in thee the

enlightened teaching which thou hast received in order

that thou mayst treat with thy Spouse in the highest

reverence; for humility and reverential fear should in

crease in the soul in the same measure in which especial

and extraordinary favors are conferred upon it. On

account of not being mindful of this truth, many souls

either make themselves unworthy or incapable of great

blessings, or, if they receive them, grow into a dangerous

rudeness and torpidity, which offends the Lord very

much. The loving sweetness with which the Lord often

treats them engenders in them a certain presumption and

disrespectful forwardness, causing them to deal with his

infinite Majesty in an irreverent manner, and with a vain

desire of searching and inquiring into those hidden ways

of God which are far above their comprehension and

capacity. They fall into this presumption because they

judge of the familiar intercourse with God according to

the imperfect insight of mortals, presuming to regulate

it after the friendly intercourse of human creatures with

one another.

442 CITY OF GOD

526. But in this way of judging the soul is much

deceived, measuring the reverence and respect due to the

infinite Majesty by the familiarity and equality caused

by the human love of mortals to one another. The

rational creatures are by nature equal to each other,

although the conditions and circumstances of each may

be different; and the familiarity of human love and

friendship may disregard the accidental differences in

yielding to the human feelings. But the love of God

must ever be mindful of the immeasurable excellence of

the infinite Being, since its object is as well the infinite

goodness as the infinite majesty of God: for just because

the goodness and majesty in God are inseparable, there

fore also reverence must not be separated from love of

God in the creature. The light of divine faith must

always go before, manifesting to the one that loves the

greatness of the Object loved, awakening and fomenting

reverential fear, restraining the exuberance of blind affec

tions, and bridling them by the memory of the excellence

and superiority of the Beloved.

527. If the creature is noble-hearted, practiced in and

accustomed to holy and reverential fear, it is not in such

danger of forgetting the respect due to the Most High,

no matter how great the favors it receives; for it does

not give itself up unguardedly to the spiritual delights

and does not lose, on account of them, the discreet con

sciousness of the supreme Majesty; but it respects and

reverences Him in proportion to the greatness of his

divine love and enlightenment. With such souls the

Lord converses as one friend with another (Exod. 33,

11). Let it therefore, my daughter, be to thee an invio

lable rule that the closer the embraces, and the greater

the delights with which the Most High visits thee, so

much the more unremitting shall be the consciousness

THE INCARNATION 443

of his immutable and infinite Majesty, extolling and

loving 1 Him at one and the same time. In this wise

consciousness thou wilt learn to know and estimate more

becomingly the greatness of his favors. Thou wilt avoid

the dangerous presumption of those who lightly inquire

into the secrets of the Lord at each trivial or even im

portant event, imagining that his most wise Providence

should pay attention to or regard the vain curiosity

excited by some passion or disorder, or some human and

reprehensible affection far removed from holy zeal and

love.

528. Take notice of the cautiousness with which I

proceeded in my duties; since, as regards finding grace

in the eyes of the Lord, a vast difference always remains

between the efforts of other creatures and my own.

Nevertheless, though I held in my arms God himself as

his true Mother, I never presumed to ask Him to explain

to me anything whatever by extraordinary revelation,

neither for the sake of knowing it or for the sake of

ridding myself of suffering, nor for any other merely

human reason ; for all this would have been human weak

ness, vain and vicious curiosity, which could find no room

in me. Whenever necessity urged it upon me for the

glory of his Majesty, or some circumstances made it

unavoidable, I asked permission to propose my wishes.

Although I always found Him most propitious, ready to

answer me with kindness and mercifully urging me to

declare my wishes, I nevertheless humiliated myself to

the dust and merely asked Him to inform me of what was

most pleasing and acceptable in his eyes.

529. Write this doctrine in thy heart, my daughter,

and guard thyself against the disorderly and curious

desire of searching into or knowing anything above the

powers of the human intellect. For besides the fact that

444 CITY OF GOD

the Lord makes no response to such foolish inquiry,

because it displeases Him very much, remember that the

demon is the real author of this fault in those who are

in pursuit of a spiritual life. As he is ordinarily the

author of such blameworthy inquiries, astutely promot

ing them in the soul, he also satisfies its curiosity by

answering them himself at the same time assuming the

appearance of an angel of light and thus deceiving the

imperfect and the unwary (II Cor. 12, 14). When such

inquisitiveness arises from one s own natural inclination,

one must be equally careful not to follow or attend to it.

For in what concerns such high matters as familiar inter

course with the Lord, one s own reason and judgment is

not a safe guide, it being hampered by evil inclinations

and passions. Our depraved and infected nature has

been thrown into great disorder by sin, and is subject

to much confusion and excess, making it unfit for guid

ance and direction in the high things of God. Equally

wrong is it for the soul to rely on divine revelations in

order to free itself from suffering and labor; for the

spouses of Christ and his true servants must not seek

his favors for the purpose of avoiding the cross, but in

order to seek and bear it with the Lord (Matth. 16, 24),

patiently enduring the sufferings which his divine Provi

dence chooses to send. This course of action I desire

thee to maintain in humble fear, and rather to go to

extremes in this regard so as to avoid so much the more

securely the opposite fault. From now on I wish that

thou perfect all thy motives and thy undertakings by

divine love (Phil. 1, 9), as being the great end of all

thy undertakings. In this thou needst not observe degree

or measure ; on the contrary I wish thee to create in thee

an excess of love, accompanied by so much of holy fear

as will suffice to keep thee from transgressing the law

THE INCARNATION 445

of the Most High, and to perform all thy exterior and

interior acts in rectitude. Be careful and diligent therein,

even if it cost thee much exertion and pain; for I have

endured the same in the Circumcision of my most holy

Son, and for no other reason than because in his holy

law this was manifested and intimated to me as the will

of the Lord, whom we must in all things fully obey.

3 30

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DIVINE INFANT IS CIRCUMCISED AND RECEIVES THE

NAME JESUS.

530. Like other towns of Israel, the city of Bethlehem

had its own synagogue, where the people came together

to pray (wherefore it was also called the house of

prayer), and to hear the law of Moses. This was read

and explained by a priest from the pulpit in a loud voice,

in order that the people might understand its precepts.

But in these synagogues no sacrifices were offered; this

was reserved for the temple of Jerusalem, except when

the Lord commanded otherwise. It was not left to the

choice of the people, in order to avoid the danger of

idolatry, as is mentioned in Deuteronomy (12, 6). But

the priest, who was the teacher or minister of the law in

those places, was usually also charged with administering

the circumcision ; not that this was a binding law, for not

only priests but any one could perform the circumcision ;

but because the pious mothers firmly believed that the

infants would run less danger in being circumcised by

the hands of a priest. Our great Queen, not on account

of any apprehension of danger, but because of the dignity

of the Child, also wished a priest to administer this rite

to Him; and therefore She sent her most fortunate

spouse to Bethlehem to call the priest of that town.

531. The priest came to the gates or cave of the

Nativity, where the incarnate Word, resting in the arms

of his Virgin Mother, awaited him. With the priest

came also two other officials, who were to render such

446

THE INCARNATION 447

assistance as was customary at the performance of the

rite. The rudeness of the dwelling at first astonished

and somewhat disconcerted the priest. But the most

prudent Queen spoke to him and welcomed him with

such modesty and grace that his constraint soon changed

into devotion and into admiration at the composure and

noblest majesty of the Mother; and without knowing the

cause he was moved to reverence and esteem for such an

unusual personage. When the priest looked upon the face

of Mary and of the Child in her arms he was filled with

great devotion and tenderness, wondering at the contrast

exhibited amid such poverty and in a place so lowly and

despised. And when he proceeded to touch the divine

flesh of the Infant, he was renovated by a secret influence

which sanctified and perfected him; it gave him a new

existence in grace, and raised him up to a state of holi

ness very pleasing to the most high Lord.

532. In order to show as much exterior reverence for

the sacred rite of circumcision as was possible in that

place, saint Joseph lighted two wax candles. The priest

requested the Virgin Mother to consign the Child to the

arms of the two assistants and withdraw for a little

while in order not to be obliged to witness the sacrifice.

This command caused some hesitation in the great Lady ;

for her humility and spirit of obedience inclined Her to

obey the priest, while on the other hand She was withheld

by the love and reverence for her Onlybegotten. In

order not to fail against either of these virtues, She

humbly requested to be allowed to remain, saying that

She desired to be present at the performance of this rite,

since She held it in great esteem, and that She would

have courage to hold her Son in her arms, as She wished

not to leave Him alone on such an occasion. All that

She would ask would be that the circumcision be per-

448 CITY OF GOD

formed with as much tenderness as possible on account

of the delicacy of the Child. The priest promised to

fulfill her request, and permitted the Child to be held in

the arms of his Mother for fulfilling the mystery. Thus

She became the sacred altar on which the truths typified

in the ancient sacrifice became a reality (Heb. 9, 6) ; and

She herself offered up this new morning s sacrifice on

her own arms in order that it might be acceptable to the

eternal Father in all particulars.

533. The divine Mother then unwound the swaddling-

clothes in which her most holy Son was wrapped and

drew from her bosom a towel or linen cloth, which She

had previously placed there for the purpose of warming

it; for the weather was very cold on that day. While

holding the Child in her hands She so placed this towel

that the relics and the blood of the Circumcision would

fall upon it. The priest thereupon proceeded to his duty

and circumcised the Child, the true God and man. At

the same time the Son of God, with immeasurable love,

offered up to the eternal Father three sacrifices of so

great value that each one would have been sufficient for

the Redemption of a thousand worlds. The first was

that He, being innocent and the Son of the true God,

assumed the condition of a sinner (Phil. 2, 7) by sub

jecting Himself to a rite instituted as a remedy for

original sin, and to a law not binding on Him (II Cor. 5,

21). The second was his willingness to suffer the pains

of circumcision, which He felt as a true and perfect man.

The third was the most ardent love with which He began

to shed his blood for the human race, giving thanks to

the eternal Father for having given Him a human nature

capable of suffering for his exaltation and glory.

534. This prayerful sacrifice of JESUS our Savior the

Father accepted, and, according to our way of speaking,

THE INCARNATION 449

He began to declare Himself satisfied and paid for the

indebtedness of humanity. The incarnate Word offered

these first fruits of his blood as pledges that He would

give it all in order to consummate the Redemption and

extinguish the debt of the sons of Adam. All these in

terior acts and movements of the Onlybegotten his most

holy Mother perceived, and in her heavenly wisdom She

penetrated the mystery of this sacrament, acting as his

Mother and in concert with Her Son and Lord in all

that He was doing and suffering. True to his human

nature, the divine Infant shed tears as other children.

Although the pains caused by the wounding were most

severe, as well on account of the delicacy of his body

as on account of the coarseness of the knife, which was

made of flint, yet his tears were caused not so much by

the sensible pain as by the supernatural sorrow caused

by his knowledge of the hard-heartedness of mortals.

For this was. more rude and unyielding than the flint,

resisting his sweetest love and the divine fire He had

come to enkindle in the world and in the hearts of the

faithful (Luke 12, 49). Also the tender and affectionate

Mother wept, like the guileless sheep, which raises its

voice in unison with the innocent lamb. In reciprocal

love and compassion the Child clung to his Mother,

while She sweetly caressed Him at her virginal breast

and caught the sacred relics and the falling blood in the

towel. These She entrusted to saint Joseph, in order

to tend to the divine Infant and wrap Him once more

in the swaddling-clothes. The priest was somewhat sur

prised at the tears of the Mother; yet, not understanding

the mystery, he conjectured that the beauty of the Child

might well cause such deep and loving sorrow in Her

who had given Him birth.

535. In all these proceedings the Queen of heaven was

450 CITY OF GOD

so prudent, circumspect and magnanimous, that She

caused admiration in the angelic choirs and highest de

light to her Creator. She gave forth the effulgence of

the divine wisdom, which filled Her, performing each of

her actions as perfectly as if She had that alone to per

form. She was unyielding in her desire of holding the

Child in her arms during the Circumcision, most careful

in preserving the relics, most compassionate in her afflic

tion and tears, feeling Herself his pains, most loving in

her caresses, most diligent in procuring his comfort,

fervent in imitating Him in his works, always careful to

treat Him with the highest reverence, without ever fail

ing or intermitting her acts of virtue, and without ever

letting the perfection of one disturb that of the other.

Wonderful spectacle exhibited by a Maiden of fifteen

years, and affording even the angels a sort of new lesson

and cause of admiration! In the meanwhile the priest

asked the parents what name they wished to give to the

Child in Circumcision; the great Lady, always attentive

to honor her spouse, asked saint Joseph to mention the

name. Saint Joseph turned toward Her in like reverence

and gave Her to understand that He thought it proper

this sweet name should first flow from her mouth.

Therefore, by divine interference, both Mary and Joseph

said at the same time: "JESUS is his name." The

priest answered : "The parents are unanimously agreed,

and great is the name which they give to the Child" ; and

thereupon he inscribed it in the tablet or register of

names of the rest of the children. While writing it the

priest felt great interior movements, so that he shed

copious tears; and wondering at what he felt yet not

being able to account for, he said : "I am convinced that

this Child is to be a great Prophet of the Lord. Have

great care in raising Him, and tell me in what I can

THE INCARNATION 451

relieve your needs." Most holy Mary and Joseph an

swered the priest with humble gratitude and dismissed

him after offering him the gift of some candles and other

articles.

536. Being again left alone with the Child, most holy

Mary and Joseph celebrated anew the mystery of the

Circumcision, commenting on the holy name of JESUS

amid sweet canticles and tears of joy, the fuller knowl

edge of which (as also of other mysteries which I have

mentioned) is reserved as an additional accidental glory

to the saints in heaven. The most prudent Mother ap

plied to the wound caused by the knife such medicines

as were wont to be used on such occasions for other

children, and during the time while the pain and the

healing lasted She would not for a moment part with

Him, holding Him in her arms day and night. The

tender love of the heavenly Mother is beyond all compre

hension or understanding of man; for her natural love

was greater than any other mother was capable of, and

her supernatural love exceeded that of all the angels and

saints together. Her reverence and worship cannot be

compared with that of any other created being. These

were the delights of the incarnate Word (Prov. 8, 31),

which He desired and longed for among the children of

men; and this was the recompense, which his loving

heart drew from the exceeding sanctity of the Virgin

Mother for the sorrows occasioned Him by their be

havior. Although He pleased Himself in Her alone

above all the mortals and in Her found full satisfaction

of his love, yet the humble Queen sought to alleviate

his bodily pains by all the means within her power.

Therefore She besought the holy angels to assist Her

and produce sweet harmony for their incarnate God, and

452 CITY OF GOD

her suffering Child. The ministers of the Most High

obeyed their Queen and Lady and in audible voices they

rehearsed the canticles which She herself had composed

with her spouse in praise of the new and sweet name

of JESUS.

537. With this music, so sweet that in comparison to it

all human music seemed but irksome discord, the heavenly

Lady entertained her most holy Son; and sweeter yet

was the harmony of her heroic virtues, which in her soul

formed "choirs as of serried armies/ as the Lord and

Spouse himself says in the Canticles. Hard are human

hearts, and more than slow and dull in recognizing and

thankfully acknowledging such venerable sacraments, in

stituted for their eternal salvation by the immense love

of the Creator and Redeemer. O sweetest Good of my

soul and of my life! What wicked return do we make

for the exquisite artifices of thy eternal love! O meas

ureless charity, which is not extinguished by the over

whelming waters of our gross and faithless ingratitude!

Truly the essential Bounty and Holiness could not go to

a greater length of condescension for love of us, nor

exercise more exquisite love than to assume the form of

a sinner (Phil. 2, 7), drawing upon his own innocence

the punishment of the sin, which otherwise could never

approach Him. If men despise such an example and

forget such a benefit, how can they be said to retain the

use of their reason? How can they presume upon and

glory in their wisdom, prudence or judgment? It would

be prudence, ungrateful man, if thou wouldst afflict thy

self and weep over thy notorious dullness and darkness

of mind in not being moved by such great works of thy

God ; since not even the divine love can melt the iciness

of thy heart.

THE INCARNATION 453

INSTRUCTION WHICH OUR MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY

GAVE ME.

538. My daughter, I wish thee to consider attentively

the blessed favor conferred upon thee by being informed

of the solicitous care and attention which I lavished upon

my most holy and sweetest Son in the mysteries just

now described. The Most High does not give thee this

special light in order only to be regaled by the knowledge

of these mysteries ; but in order to imitate me in all these

things as a faithful handmaid and in order to distinguish

thyself in rendering thanks for his works in the same

measure as thou art distinguished in knowing them more

fully. Ponder, then, dearest, upon the small return given

for the love of my Son and Lord by mortals, and how

forgetful of thanks even his faithful continue to be.

Assume it as thy task, as far as thy weak powers allow,

to render satisfaction for this grievous offense: loving

Him, thanking Him and serving Him with all thy powers,

for all the other men who fail to do so. Therefore thou

must be an angel in promptitude, most fervent and

punctual on all occasions; thou must die to all earthly

things, eliminating and crushing all human inclinations

and rising upon the wings of love to the heights of love

designed for thee by the Lord.

539. Thou art not ignorant of the sweet efficacy con

tained in the memory of the works performed by my

most holy Son : and although thou canst so copiously

avail thyself of the light given thee to be thankful : yet,

in order that thou mayest fear so much the more the

danger of forgetfulness, I particularly inform thee that

the saints in heaven, comprehending by the divine light

these mysteries, are astonished at themselves for not

having paid more attention to them during their life.

454 CITY OF GOD

And if they were capable of pain, they would be deeply

grieved for their tardiness and carelessness in not having

set proper value upon the works for the Redemption, and

for failing in the imitation of Christ. All the angels

and saints, by an insight hidden to mortals, wonder at

the cruelty of human hearts against themselves and

against Christ their Redeemer. Men have compassion

neither for the sufferings of the Lord, nor for the suffer

ings they themselves stand in danger of incurring. When

the foreknown, in unending bitterness shall recognize

their dreadful forgetfulness and their indifference to the

works of Christ their Savior, their confusion and despair

will be an intolerable punishment, and it alone will be

a chastisement beyond all imagination ; for they will then

see the copiousness of the Redemption, which they have

despised ( Ps. 44, 11). Hear me, my daughter, and bend

thy ears to these counsels and doctrines of eternal life.

Cast out from thy faculties every image and affection

toward human creatures and turn all the powers of thy

heart and soul toward the mysteries and blessings of the

Redemption. Occupy thyself wholly with them, ponder

and weigh them, give thanks for them as if thou alone

wert in existence, as if they had been wrought solely for

thee, and singly for each human being in particular

(Gal. 2, 20). Thus thou wilt find life and the way of

life, proceeding thus thou canst not err; but thou shalt

find therein the light of thy eyes and true peace.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MOST HOLY MARY REMAINS IN THE PORTAL OF THE

NATIVITY UNTIL THE COMING OF THE MAGI KINGS.

540. By the infused knowledge of holy Scriptures and

her high supernatural enlightenment, our great Queen

knew that the Magi Kings of the Orient would come to

acknowledge and adore her most holy Son as their true

God. She was aware of it also more particularly be

cause an angel had been sent to them to announce the

birth of the incarnate Word, as mentioned in chapter

second (No. 492), and the Virgin Mother was not

ignorant of this message. Saint Joseph had no fore

knowledge of these mysteries ; because they had not been

revealed to him, nor had his most prudent Spouse in

formed him of this secret. In all things She was most

wise and discreet, awaiting the sweet and timely dispo

sitions of the divine Providence (Wis. 8, 1). After the

Circumcision, the holy spouse suggested to the Mistress

of heaven that they leave their poor and forsaken habita

tion on account of the insufficient shelter which it

afforded the divine Infant and to Her ; for it would now

be possible to find a lodging in Bethlehem, where they

could remain until after presenting the Child in the

temple of Jerusalem. This proposal of the most faithful

spouse arose from his solicitude and anxiety lest the Child

and the Mother should want even that comfort and

convenience which it was possible for their poverty to

procure ; but he left it all to the disposition of his heavenly

Spouse.

455

456 CITY OF GOD

541. Without revealing the mystery, the humble Queen

answered: "My spouse and master, I resign myself to

thy will, and wherever thou wishest to go I will follow

with great pleasure: arrange it as thou pleasest." The

heavenly Lady had an affection for the cave on account

of its humbleness and poverty, and because the incarnate

Word had consecrated it by the mysteries of his Nativity

and Circumcision, and was to hallow it by the mystery

of the Magi s visit, although She did not know at what

time that would happen. This was a most pious affec

tion, full of devotion and reverence ; yet She preferred to

give an example of the highest perfection in all things.

She considered it more important to resign and submit

to saint Joseph, letting her spouse decide what was to be

done. While they were thus conferring with each other,

the Lord himself informed them through the two celes

tial princes Michael and Gabriel, who were attending in

corporeal forms to the service of their Lord and God

and of their great Queen. They spoke to Mary and

Joseph, saying: "Divine Providence has ordained that

three kings of the earth, coming from the Orient in

search of the King of heaven, should adore the divine

Word in this very place (Ps. 71, 6). They are already

ten days on the way ; for at the hour of the birth of Jesus

they were informed of it, and they immediately set out

on their journey. Therefore they will shortly arrive,

fulfilling all that the Prophets had from very ancient

times foreknown and foretold."

542. By this announcement saint Joseph was instructed

on his part concerning the will of the Lord, and Mary

his most holy Spouse said to him: "My master, this

place, chosen by the Most High for such magnificent

mysteries, although it is poor and ill-furnished in the

eyes of the world, in the sight of eternal Wisdom is

THE INCARNATION 457

rich, precious, the most estimable and preferable on this

earth, since the Lord of heaven is satisfied with it and

has consecrated it by his presence. He who is the true

land of promise can favor us with his vision in this

place. And if it is his pleasure, He will afford us some

protection and shelter against the inclemencies of the

weather during the few days in which we are to stay

here." Saint Joseph was much consoled and encour

aged by these words of the most prudent Queen. He

answered Her, that, since the divine Child was to fulfill

the law, which required Him to be presented in the

temple, just as He had subjected Himself to the law of

Circumcision, they could remain in this sacred place until

that day should arrive, without first undertaking the dis

tant and wearisome journey to Nazareth during the in

clement weather. If, perhaps, the severity of the season

would compel them to seek shelter in the city, they could

easily do so; since from Bethlehem to Jerusalem there

was only a distance of two hours.

543. In all these matters the most holy Mary con

formed Herself to the will of her watchful spouse; for

She knew his solicitude for the sacred tabernacle which

was confided to his care, and which was more holy and

venerable than the Holy of Holies in the temple. Await

ing the time when her Onlybegotten should be presented

in the temple, She was unremitting in her care of Him,

lest She forget anything necessary to protect Him

against the cold and the roughness of the weather. She

also prepared the cave for the arrival of the Kings,

cleaning it once more and arranging it anew as far as

the rudeness and destitution of the place allowed. But

her greatest attention and care was always reserved for

the Child itself, bearing It in her arms continually unless

absolute necessity demanded otherwise. Besides all this

458 CITY OF GOD

She made use of her power as Queen of all creation

whenever the rigors of winter rose to excess; for She

commanded the frost and the winds, the snow and the

ice not to incommode their Creator, and to spend their

elemental fury and asperity upon her person alone. The

heavenly Queen gave her commands as follows : "Re

strain your wrath before your Creator, Author, Lord

and Preserver, who has called you into existence and

given you strength and activity. Be mindful, creatures

of my Beloved, that you are furnished with rigor on

account of sin for the chastisement of the disobedience

of the first Adam and his progeny. But with the second

Adam, who comes to repair this fall and cannot have

any part therein, you must be courteous, reverencing and

not offending Him, to whom you owe worship and sub

jection. And therefore I command you in his name to

cause no inconvenience or displeasure to Him."

544. It is worthy of our admiration and imitation to

notice the ready obedience of the irrational creatures to

the divine will, intimated to them by the Mother of God :

for upon her command, the snow and rain approached

no nearer than ten yards, the winds stopped short and

the surrounding air retained a mild temperature. To

this miracle was added another one : at the same time in

which the divine Infant in her arms received this homage

of the elements and was protected from their asperity,

the Virgin Mother felt and suffered the cold and in

clemency of the weather as if it were exerting all its

natural influences in that place. In this they obeyed the

Loving Mother and sovereign Mistress of creatures to

the letter, as She wished not to exempt Herself from

their asperity while She prevented her tender Child and

her God from suffering under it. Saint Joseph enjoyed

the same privilege as the sweet Infant; he noticed the

THE INCARNATION 459

favorable change of the temperature, without knowing

that it was due to the commands of his heavenly Spouse

and- an effect of her power; for She had not manifested

to him this privilege, because She had no command to

that effect from the Most High.

545. As to the order and manner in which the great

Queen nourished her Child JESUS, it is to be remarked

that She offered Him her virginal milk three times a day,

and always with such reverence that She asked his per

mission beforehand and his pardon for the indignity,

considering Herself and acknowledging Herself un

worthy of such a privilege. Many times, while holding

Him in her arms, She was on her knees adoring Him;

and if at any time it was necessary to seat Herself She

always asked his permission. With the same tokens of

reverence She handed Him to saint Joseph and received

Him from his arms, as I have said above. Many times

She kissed his feet, and when She wished to kiss his

face She interiorly asked his benevolent consent. The

sweetest Child returned these caresses of his Mother not

only by the expression of pleasure in his countenance,

which was at the same time full of majesty, but also

by other actions usual in children. In Him, however,

they were accompanied by a serene deliberation. The

most ordinary token of his love was to recline sweetly

upon the breast of the most pure Mother, or upon her

shoulder, encircling her neck with his divine arms.

These caresses the Empress Mary met with so much

attention and discretion that She neither petulantly sought

them as other mothers, nor too timidly withdrew from

them. In all these things She behaved most perfectly

and prudently, without defect or excess of any kind : the

more openly and affectionately her most holy Son mani

fested his love toward Her, so much the more deeply did

460 CITY OF GOD

She humiliate Herself, and so much the greater was her

reverence; in the same manner She gaged also the

tokens of her affection and lent new glory to her mag

nanimity.

546. There was an interchange of caresses of anothei

kind between the Infant and his Mother: for besides

understanding by divine enlightenment all the interior

acts of the most holy soul of her Only begotten, as I have

already stated (481, 534), it often happened that, hold

ing Him in her arms, She was privileged to see through

his humanity as through a crystal casement, thus per

ceiving the hypostatic union of the Son of God with his

human nature, and witnessing the activity of his soul in

interceding with the eternal Father for the human race.

These operations and intercessions the heavenly Lady

faithfully imitated, being entirely absorbed and trans

formed in her divine Son. His Majesty on his part

looked upon Her with new accidental joy and delight,

regaling Himself in the purity of this Creature, rejoicing

that He had created Her, and that his becoming man had

resulted in such a living image of his Divinity and

humanity. In regard to this mystery the words of the

soldiers of Holof ernes when they beheld the beauty of

Judith in the camp of Bethulia, occurred to me : "Who

can despise the people of the Hebrews, who have such

beautiful women? Shall we not think it worth our

while for their sakes to fight against them?" This say

ing seemed to be mysteriously realized in the incarnate

Word, since He, with greater cause, could address them

to his eternal Father and to all the rest of the creatures :

"Who shall fail to see, that my coming from heaven and

assuming flesh is fully justified, since by coming upon the

earth and dethroning the demon, the world and the flesh,

and by conquering and vanquishing them, such a Woman

THE INCARNATION 461

is called into existence as is my Mother among the chil

dren of Adam ?" O sweetest love, essence of my virtue,

life of my soul, most loving Jesus, behold and see that

most holy Mary by Herself possesses such immense

beauty as exceeds that of all the human race! She is

the only and chosen One (Cant. 6, 8), so perfectly pleas

ing to Thee, my Lord and my God, that She not only

equals but far surpasses all the rest of thy people; and

that She alone compensates God for all the wickedness

of the race of Adam.

547. So powerful were the effects of this delightful

intercourse with her Son and true God, that She was

more and more spiritualized and made Godlike. Many

times in these flights of her soul the force of her burning

love would have torn asunder the ligaments of her mem

bers and destroyed the union of her soul and body, if

She had not been miraculously comforted and preserved.

She spoke to her most holy Son secret words so exalted

and full of weight that they cannot come within the

range of our expression. All that I can reproduce can

never be anything more than a mere shadow of that

which was manifested to me. She said to Him: "O

my Love, sweet Life of my soul, who art Thou, and

who am I? What dost Thou wish to make of me by

thus becoming man of man, lowering thy greatness and

magnificence in favor of such useless dust? O what

shall thy slave do to pay the debt of love which she owes

to Thee ? What return shall I make for the great things

which thou hast done to me (Ps. 115, 12) ? My being,

my life, my faculties, my feelings, my desires and long

ings, all is for Thee. Comfort thy servant and thy

Mother, in order that She may not fail in thy service

at the sight of her own insignificance, and in order that

she may not die for love of Thee. O how limited is

2-81

462 CITY OF GOD

the power of man! How circumscribed his capacity!

How insufficient is human affection, as it cannot suffi

ciently render a just return for thy love! But the vic

tory of mercy and magnificence must always be thine,

and to Thee belong the triumphal songs of love; while

we must on the contrary always consider ourselves over

come and vanquished by thy power. Let us be humili

ated and let us grovel in the dust, while thy greatness is

magnified and exalted in all the eternities." The heav

enly Lady, partaking of the science of her most holy Son,

sometimes beheld the souls which in the course of the

new law of grace were to distinguish themselves in divine

love, the works which they were to perform, the martyr

dom which they were to suffer in imitation of the Lord;

in this knowledge She became so inflamed with love that

her longings of love caused in Her a greater martyrdom

than those actually suffered by the saints. To her

happened what the Spouse in the Canticles mentions

(Cant. 8, 6), that the emulations of love are strong as

death and hard as hell. To these agonies of the loving

Mother, caused by the mortal wounds of divine affection,

her most holy Son answered in the words there used :

"Place Me as a sign or seal in thy heart and upon thy

arm," causing in Her at the same time the full under

standing of these words as well as their actual fulfill

ment. By this divine suffering most holy Mary was a

Martyr above all other martyrs. Among such beds of

lilies the meekest Lamb, Jesus, wandered, while the day

of grace began to break and the shades of the ancient

Law receded.

548. The divine Qr ld ate nothing during the time in

which He was nourished at the virginal breast of his

most holy Mother, for this milk was his only sustenance.

This was most sweet and substantial, since it originated

THE INCARNATION 463

in a body so pure, perfect and refined, and one built up

in exquisite harmony without any disorder or inequality.

No other body was equal to it in healthf ulness ; and the

sacred milk, even if it would have been preserved a long

time, would have remained free from corruption; by an

especial privilege it never changed or soured, though the

milk of other women immediately degenerates and be

comes corrupt, as experience teaches.

549. The most fortunate Joseph not only witnessed

the favors and caresses which passed between the Child

and its Mother; but he himself shared in others, which

Jesus deigned to confer upon him. Many times his

heavenly Spouse placed him in his arms. This hap

pened whenever She had to do some work during which

She could not hold Him herself; as for instance, when

She prepared the meals, or arranged the clothes of the

Infant or cleaned the house. On these occasions saint

Joseph held Him in his arms and he always felt divine

effects in his soul. The Child Jesus showed exterior

signs of affection by his pleased looks, by reclining upon

his breast, and by other tokens of affection usual with

children in regard to their fathers, but in Him these

tokens were always tempered with kingly majesty. Yet

all this was not so frequent in his dealings with saint

Joseph, nor with such endearment, as with his true Virgin

Mother. Whenever She left Jesus in his care, She

received from saint Joseph the relic of the Circumcision,

which the latter ordinarily bore about with him for

his consolation. Thus both the two Spouses were con

tinually enriched : She by holding her most holy Son,

he by his sacred blood and deified flesh. They pre

served it in a crystal vase, which saint Joseph had pur

chased with the money sent to them by saint Elisa

beth. In this they had enclosed the particle of flesh and

464 CITY OF GOD

the sacred blood shed at the Circumcision, which had

been caught up in pieces of linen. The opening of the

vase was encased in silver, which the mighty Queen, in

order to preserve the sacred relics more securely, had

sealed by her mere command. Thus the silver opening

was more firmly sealed than if it had been soldered by

the artisan, who had made the vessel. In this vase the

prudent Mother treasured the relics during her whole

life and afterwards She entrusted it to the Apostles,

leaving it as an inheritance to the holy Church. In this

immense sea of mysteries I find myself so annihilated

and dumbfounded by my ignorance as a woman, and so

narrowed in my powers of expression, that I must leave

much of it to be fathomed by the faith and piety of the

Christians.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY

GAVE ME.

550. My daughter, in the foregoing chapter, thou hast

been instructed not to seek information from the Lord

by supernatural means, neither in order to relieve any

suffering, nor in order to satisfy a natural hankering of

curiosity. Now I exhort thee likewise not to yield, for

any of these reasons, to the desire of performing any

exterior action according to the promptings of nature.

For in all the activity of thy exterior faculties and senses

thou must seek to moderate and subject thy inclinations,

not yielding to them in their demands, although they may

have the color of virtue or piety. I was in no danger

of going to excess in these affections on account of my

sinlessness; nor was there a want of piety in my desire

of remaining in the cave, where my most holy Son had

been born and had been circumcised. Yet I did not wish

THE INCARNATION 465

to express my desire, even when asked about it by my

spouse; for I preferred obedience to this pious inclina

tion, and I knew that it is more secure for the souls and

more according to the pleasure of the Lord to seek his

will in the counsel and decision coming from other,

rather than in their own inclination. In me this course

of action was advisable only on account of the greater

perfection contained therein, but in thee and in other

souls, who are subject to error in their judgment, this

rule must be observed most rigorously, so as to prevent

and avoid mistakes diligently and discreetly. For in

their ignorance and pusillanimity men are easily carried

away by their feelings and inclinations toward insignifi

cant things, and very often they occupy themselves with

trifles as if they were important matters, and with vani

ties, as if they were realities. All such activity weakens

the soul and deprives it of great spiritual blessings, of

grace, enlightenment and merit.

551. This doctrine shalt thou write in thy heart to

gether with all the others which I am to give thee. Seek

to use it as a reminder of all that I did, so that as thou

hast come to know it thou mayest also understand and

execute it in thy life. Take notice of the reverence, love

and solicitude, the holy and discreet fear, with which I

conversed with my most holy Son. I always lived in

this kind of watchfulness ; and even after I had conceived

Him in my womb, I never lost it out of sight, nor did

the gr^at love which He showed me dimmish it in me.

In this ardent desire to please Him my heart found no

rest until it was entirely united and absorbed in the en

joyment of this my highest Good and ultimate End.

Excepting at certain times, during which I rested in

his love as in my sole joy, I invariably carried about with

me this continual solicitude, like one who restlessly pur-

466 CITY OF GOD

sues his way, and who permits himself not to be delayed

by anything that is useless or hinders the attainment of

his desired object. So far was my heart from attaching

itself to any earthly thing, or from following the incli

nation of the senses, that I lived as if I had not been

composed of earthly substance. If other creatures are

not free from passions, or do not overcome them as much

as possible, let them not blame nature, but their own will :

on the contrary, they justly incur the reproaches of weak

nature; because, instead of governing and directing

nature by the sovereign power of the will, they make no

use of that power. They allow the natural inclinations to

involve them in disorders, abetting it by the free will and

using their understanding to find still more dangerous

occupations and occasions of ruin. On account of these

pitfalls presenting themselves in mortal life, I warn thee,

my dearest, not to hanker after or seek any of the visible

things, although they may appear to thee necessary and

most appropriate for the circumstances. Use all things,

thy cell, thy garments, thy sustenance, and whatever else

of this life, only in obedience and with the full consent

of thy superiors ; because the Lord requires this of thee ;

and it is also my pleasure to see thee apply all things

for the service of the Omnipotent. According to these

great rules which I have given thee thou must regulate

all thy activity.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE THREE KINGS OF THE ORIENT COME TO ADORE THE

WORD MADE MAN IN BETHLEHEM.

552. The three Magi Kings, who came to find the

divine Infant after his birth, were natives of Persia,

Arabia and Sabba (Ps. 71, 10), countries to the east

of Palestine. Their coming was prophesied especially

by David, and before him, by Balaam, who, having been

hired by Balaac, king of the Moabites, to curse the Israel

ites, blessed them instead (Numb. 24, 17). In this

blessing Balaam said, that he would see the King Christ,

although not at once, and that he would behold Him,

although not present; for he did not see Him with his

own eyes, but through the Magi, his descendants many

centuries after. He said, also, that a star would arise

unto Jacob, which was Christ, who arose to reign for

ever in the house of Jacob (Luke 1, 32).

553. These three Kings were well versed in the natural

sciences, and well read in the Scriptures of the people of

God; and on account of their learning they were called

Magi. By their knowledge of Scripture, and by con

ferring with some of the Jews, they were imbued with

a belief in the coming of the Messias expected by that

people. They were, moreover, upright men, truthful

and very just in the government of their countries.

Since their dominions were not so extended as those of

our times, they governed them easily, and personally

administered justice as wise and prudent sovereigns.

This is the true office of kings, and therefore the Holy

467

468 CITY OF GOD

Ghost says, that He holds their hearts in his hands in

order to direct them like irrigated waters to the fulfill

ment of his holy will (Prov. 21, 1). They were also of

noble and magnanimous disposition, free from avarice

and covetousness, which so oppresses, degrades and be

littles the spirits of princes. Because these Magi gov

erned adjoining countries and lived not far from each

other, they were mutual friends and shared with each

other the virtues and the knowledge which they had ac

quired, consulting each other in the more important

events of their reigns. In all things they communicated

with each other as most faithful friends.

554. I have already mentioned in the eleventh chapter

(No. 492) that in the same night in which the incarnate

Word was born, they were informed of his Birth by the

ministry of the holy angels. It happened in the follow

ing manner: one of the guardian angels of our Queen,

of a higher order than that of the guardian angels of the

three kings, was sent from the cave of the Nativity. By

his superior faculties he enlightened the three guardian

angels of the Kings informing them at the same time of

the will and command of the Lord, that each of them

should manifest to his charge the mystery of the Incar

nation and of the birth of Christ our Redeemer. Imme

diately and in the same hour each of the three angels

spoke in dreams to the wise man under his care. This

is the usual course of angelic revelations when the Lord

communicates with souls through the angels. This en

lightenment of the Kings concerning the mysteries of the

Incarnation was very copious and clear. They were in

formed that the King of the Jews was born as true God

and man ; that He was the Messias and Savior who was

expected ; that it was the One who was promised in the

Scriptures and prophecies (Gen. 3, 10) ; and that they

THE INCARNATION 469

themselves, the three Kings, were singled out by the Lord

to seek the star, which Balaam had foretold. Each one

of the three Kings also was made aware that the same

revelation was being made to the other two in the same

way ; and that it was not a favor or miracle which should

remain unused, but that they were expected to co-operate

with the divine light and execute what it pointed out.

They were inspired and inflamed with a great love and

with a desire to know the God made man, to adore Him

as their Creator and Redeemer, and serve Him with most

perfect devotion. In all this they were greatly assisted

by their distinguished moral virtues, which they had ac

quired; for on account of them they were excellently

disposed for the operation of the divine enlightenment.

555. After receiving these heavenly revelations in

their sleep, the three Kings awoke at the same hour of

the night, and prostrating themselves on the ground

and humiliating themselves to the dust, they adored in

spirit the immutable being of God. They exalted his

infinite mercy and goodness for having sent the divine

Word to assume flesh of a Virgin (Is. 7, 14) in order

to redeem the world and give eternal salvation to men.

Then all three of them, governed by an impulse of the

same Spirit, resolved to depart without delay for Judea

in search of the divine Child in order to adore Him.

The three Kings prepared gifts of gold, incense and

myrrh in equal quantities, being guided by the same mys

terious impulse ; and without having conferred with each

other concerning their undertaking, the three of them

arrived at the same resolve and the same plan of exe

cuting it. In order to set out immediately, they procured

on the same day the necessary camels and provisions

together with a number of servants for the journey.

Without heeding the commotion caused among their peo-

470 CITY OF GOD

pie, or considering 1 that they were to travel in foreign

regions, or caring for any outward show of authority,

without ascertaining particulars of the place whither they

were to go, or gathering information for identifying the

Child, they at once resolved with fervent zeal and ardent

love to depart in order to seek the newborn King.

556. At the same time the holy angel, who had brought

the news from Bethlehem to the kings, formed of the

material air a most resplendent star, although not so large

as those of the firmament ; for it was not to ascend higher

than was necessary for the purpose of its formation. It

took its course through the atmospheric regions in order

to guide and direct the holy Kings to the cave, where the

Child awaited them. Its splendor was of a different

kind from that of the sun and the other stars; with its

most beautiful light it illumined the night like a brilliant

torch, and it mingled its own most active brilliancy with

that of the sun by day. On coming out of their palaces

each one of the kings saw this new star (Matth. 2, 2)

although each from a different standpoint, because it was

only one star and it was placed in such distance and

height that it could be seen by each one at the same time.

As the three of them followed the guidance of this

miraculous star, they soon met. Thereupon it imme

diately approached them much more closely, descending

through many shifts of the aerial space and rejoicing

them by shedding its refulgence over them at closer

range. They began to confer among themselves about

the revelation they had received and about their plans,

finding that they were identical. They were more and

more inflamed with devotion and with the pious desire

of adoring the newborn God, and broke out in praise and

admiration at the inscrutable works and mysteries of the

Almighty.

THE INCARNATION 471

557. The Magi pursued their journey under the guid

ance of the star without losing sight of it until they

arrived at Jerusalem. As well on this account as also

because this city was the capital and metropolis of the

Jews, they suspected that this was the birthplace of their

legitimate and true King. They entered into the city

and openly inquired after Him, saying (Matth. 2, 8) :

Where is the king of the Jews, who is born? For we

have seen his star in the East, announcing to us his

Birth and we have come to see Him and adore Him.

Their inquiry came to the ears of Herod, who at that

time unjustly reigned in Judea and lived in Jerusalem.

The wicked king, panic-stricken at the thought that a

more legitimate claimant to the throne should have been

born, felt much disturbed and outraged by this report.

With him the whole city was aroused, some of the peo

ple, out of flattery to the king, others on account of the

fear of disturbance. Immediately, as saint Matthew

relates, Herod called together a meeting of the principal

priests and scribes in order to ask them where Christ was

to be born according to the prophecies and holy Scrip

tures. They answered that, according to the words of

one of the Prophets, Micheas (Mich. 5, 2), He was to

be born in Bethlehem; since it was written by him that

thence the Ruler of Israel was to arise.

558. Thus informed of the birthplace of the new King

of Israel, and insidiously plotting from that very moment

to destroy Him, Herod dismissed the priests. Then he

secretly called the Magi in order to learn of them at what

time they had seen the star as harbinger of his Birth

(Matth. 2, 7). They ingenuously informed him, and

he sent them away to Bethlehem, saying to them in covert

malice : "Go and inquire after the Infant, and when you

have found Him, announce it to me, in order that I, too,

472 CITY OF GOD

may go to recognize and adore Him." The Magi de

parted, leaving the hypocritical king ill at ease and in

great consternation at such indisputable signs of the com

ing of the legitimate King of Israel into the world. Al

though he could have eased his mind in regard to his

sovereignty by the thought that a recently born infant

could not be enthroned so very soon, yet human pros

perity is so unstable and deceitful that it can be over

thrown even by an infant, or by the mere threat of far-

off danger. Thus can even an imagined uncertainty

destroy all the enjoyment and happiness so deceitfully

offered to its possessors.

559. On leaving Jerusalem the Magi again found the

star, which at their entrance they had lost from view.

By its light they were conducted to Bethlehem and to the

cave of the Nativity. Diminishing in size it hovered

over the head of the infant Jesus and bathed Him in its

light; whereupon the matter of which it had been com

posed dissolved and disappeared. Our great Queen had

already been prepared by the Lord for the coming of the

Kings, and when She understood that they were ap

proaching the cave, She requested saint Joseph not to

leave it, but to stay at her side. This he did, although

the sacred text does not mention it. Like many other

things passed over in the Gospels, this was not neces

sary for establishing the truth of the mystery. Never

theless it is certain that saint Joseph was present when

the Kings adored the infant Jesus. The precaution of

sending him away was not necessary ; for the Magi had

already been instructed that the Mother of the Newborn

was a Virgin, and that He was the true God and not a

son of saint Joseph. Nor would God have permitted

them to be led to the cave ignorant of such an important

circumstance as his origin, allowing them to adore the

THE INCARNATION 473

Child as the son of Joseph and of a Mother not a Virgin.

They were fully instructed as to all these things, and

they were deeply impressed by the sacramental character

of all these exalted and complicated mysteries.

560. The heavenly Mother awaited the pious and de

vout kings, standing with the Child in her arms. Amid

the humble and poor surroundings of the cave, in incom

parable modesty and beauty, she exhibited at the same

time a majesty more than human, the light of heaven

shining in her countenance. Still more visible was this

light in the Child, shedding through the cavern effulgent

splendor, which made it like a heaven. The three kings

of the East entered and at the first sight of the Son and

Mother they were for a considerable space of time over

whelmed with wonder. They prostrated themselves upon

the earth, and in this position they worshiped and adored

the Infant, acknowledging Him as the true God and

man, and as the Savior of the human race. By the

divine power, which the sight of Him and his presence

exerted in their souls, they were filled with new enlight

enment. They perceived the multitude of angelic spirits,

who as servants and ministers of the King of kings and

Lord of lords attended upon Him in reverential fear

(Heb. 1, 4). Arising, they congratulated their and our

Queen as Mother of the Son of the eternal Father; and

they approached to reverence Her on their knees. They

sought her hand in order to kiss it, as they were accus

tomed to do to their queens in their countries. But the

most prudent Lady withdrew her hand, and offered in

stead that of the Redeemer of the world, saying: "My

spirit rejoices in the Lord and my soul blesses and extols

Him; because among all the nations He has called and

selected you to look upon and behold that which many

kings and prophets have in vain desired to see, namely,

474 CITY OF GOD

Him who is the eternal Word incarnate (Luke 10, 24).

Let us extol and praise his name on account of the sacra

ments and mysteries wrought among his people; let us

kiss the earth which He sanctifies by his real presence."

561. At these words of most holy Mary the three

kings humiliated themselves anew, adoring the infant

Jesus ; they acknowledged the great blessings of living in

the time when the Sun of justice was arising in order to

illumine the darkness (Malachy 4, 2). Thereupon they

spoke to saint Joseph, congratulating him and extolling

his good fortune in being chosen as the spouse of the

Mother of God; and they expressed wonder and com

passion at the great poverty, beneath which were hidden

the greatest mysteries of heaven and earth. In this in

tercourse they consumed three hours, and then the kings

asked permission of most holy Mary to go to the city in

order to seek a lodging, as they could find no room for

themselves in the cave. Some people had accompanied

them; but the Magi alone participated in the light and

the grace of this visit. The others took notice merely of

what passed exteriorly, and witnessed only the destitute

and neglected condition of the Mother and her husband.

Though wondering at the strange event, they perceived

nothing of its mystery. The Magi took leave and de

parted, while most holy Mary and Joseph, being again

alone with their Child, glorified his Majesty with new

songs of praise, because his name was beginning to be

known and adored among the Gentiles (Ps. 85, 9).

What else the three wise men did will be related in the

following chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

562. My daughter, the events recorded in this chapter

contain much for the instruction of kings and princes

THE INCARNATION 475

and for the other faithful; as for instance, the prompt

obedience and humility of the Magi, which men should

imitate, and the obdurate wickedness of Herod, which

they are to fear and abhor; for each reaped the fruit of

his actions. The kings reaped the fruit of justice and

other virtues, which they practiced; while Herod reaped

those of ambition and pride by which he had usurped the

government, and of other vices into which he cast him

self without restriction or moderation. But let this re

mark, together with the other teachings of the holy

church, suffice for those that live in the world. To thy

self must thou apply the doctrine contained in what thou

hast written ; always remembering that all the perfection

of a Christian life must be founded upon the Catholic

truths, and in the constant and firm acknowledgment of

them, as they are taught by holy faith. In order to im

press them upon thy heart, thou must profit of all that

thou readest or hearest of the divine Writings, and of

what is contained in the other devout and instructive

books concerning the virtues. Thy faith thou must ac

company by the practice and abundance of all good works,

hoping ever in the visitation and coming of the Most

High (Tit. 2, 13).

563. By such a disposition thy soul will be prepared

in the manner I require of thee. For I desire that the

Almighty find in thee the sweet readiness to adopt what

ever is manifested to thee, and to put in practice what

ever may be enjoined without any human respect. I

promise, that if thou follow my counsel as thou shouldst,

I will be thy star and guide on the ways of the Lord, so

that thou wilt quickly arrive at the vision and enjoyment

of thy God and of thy highest good in Sion (Ps. 83, 8).

In this doctrine, and in what happened to the devout

kings of the Orient, there is contained a most effective

476 CITY OF GOD

means for the salvation of souls ; yet this is known to few

and heeded by a still smaller number of men. It is this :

that the inspirations and enlightenments are usually sent

by God to creatures in a certain order. At first some

are sent to incite the soul to practice some of the virtues ;

if the soul corresponds, the Most High sends other and

greater ones in order to move the soul to greater perfec

tion in virtue; and thus, profiting from previous graces,

the soul is disposed for still others, receiving ever greater

helps and securing an increase of the favors of the Lord

according as it corresponds to them. Thou wilt there

fore understand two things : first, how great a damage it

is to neglect the exercise of any virtue and not to prac

tice perfection according to the dictates of the divine in

spirations; secondly, how often God would give great

assistance to the souls, if they would begin to correspond

to the smaller ones ; since He is as it were in expectation

and hope that they will prepare for his greater ones

(Apoc. 6, 20). For He wishes to deal with the soul

according to his just judgments. But because they over

look this orderly manner of proceeding in his invitations,

He suspends the flow of his divine gifts and He refuses

to the souls, what was intended for them if they had not

placed an obstacle, allowing them to fall from one abyss

to the other (Ps. 41, 8).

564. The Magi and Herod pursued opposite courses :

the Magi met the first inspirations and graces by the

practice of the good works; thus they disposed them

selves by many virtues for being called and drawn by

divine revelation to the knowledge of the mysteries of

the Incarnation, the birth of the divine Word and the

Redemption of the human race; and through this to the

happiness and perfection of the way of life. But Herod,

on the other hand, by his hard-heartedness and neglect

THE INCARNATION 477

of the helps, which God offered him for the practice of

virtue, was drawn into the abyss of his measureless

pride and ambition. These vices hurled him into such

vast precipices of cruelty as to be the first one among

men to seek the life of the Redeemer of the world under

the cloak of simulated devotion and piety. In giving

vent to his furious rage, he took away the life of the

innocent children and attempted by so foul a measure to

advance his damned and perverse undertaking.

2-5

CHAPTER XVII.

MAGI KINGS RETURN ONCE MORE TO SEE AND ADORE

THE INFANT JESUS: THEY OFFER THEIR GIFTS ON

TAKING LEAVE, AND RETURN BY A DIFFERENT ROUTE

TO THEIR HOMES.

565. From the grotto of the Nativity, into which the

three Kings had entered directly on their way to Jerusa

lem, they betook themselves to a lodging inside of the

town of Bethlehem. They retired to a room where, in

an abundance of affectionate tears and aspirations, they

spent the greater part of the night, speaking of what they

had seen, of the feelings and affections aroused in each,

and of what each had noticed for himself in the divine

Child and his Mother. During this conference they

were more and more inflamed with divine love, amazed

at the majesty and divine effulgence of the Infant Jesus;

at the prudence, modesty and reserve of his Mother; at

the holiness of her spouse Joseph, and the poverty of all

three; at the humbleness of the place, where the Lord

of heaven and earth had wished to be born. The devout

kings felt a divine fire, which flamed up in their hearts,

and, not being able to restrain themselves, they broke out

into exclamations of sweet affection and acts of great

reverence and love. "What is this that we feel?" they

said. "What influence of this great King is it that

moves us to such desires and affections? After this, how

shall we converse with men? What can we do, who

have been instructed in such new, hidden and super

natural mysteries? O greatness of his Omnipotence un-

478

THE INCARNATION 479

known to men and concealed beneath so much poverty!

O humility unimaginable for mortals! Would that all

be drawn to it, in order that they may not be deprived

of such happiness !"

566. During these divine colloquies the Magi remem

bered the dire destitution of Jesus, Mary and Joseph in

their cave, and they resolved immediately to send them

some gifts in order to show their affection and to satisfy

their desire of serving them, since they could not do any

thing else for them. They sent through their servants

many of the presents, which they had already set aside

for them, and others which they could procure. Most

holy Mary and Joseph received these gifts with humble

acknowledgment and they made a return not of empty-

worded thanks, as other men are apt to make, but many

efficacious blessings for the spiritual consolation of the

three Kings. These gifts enabled our great Queen to

prepare for her ordinary guests, the poor, an abundant

repast; for the needy ones were accustomed to receive

alms from Her, and, attracted still more by her sweet

words, were wont to come and visit Her. The Kings

went to rest full of incomparable joy in the Lord; and

in their sleep the angels advised them as to their journey

homeward.

567. On the following day at dawn they returned to

the cave of the Nativity in order to offer to the heavenly

King the special gifts which they had provided. Ar

riving they prostrated themselves anew in profound

humility; and opening their treasures, as Scripture re

lates, they offered Him gold, incense and myrrh (Matth.

2, 11). They consulted the heavenly Mother in regard

to many mysteries and practices of faith, and concerning

matters pertaining to their consciences and to the gov

ernment of their countries; for they wished to return

480 CITY OF GOD

well instructed and capable of directing themselves to

holiness and perfection in their daily life. The great

Lady heard them with exceeding pleasure and She con

ferred interiorly with the divine Infant concerning all

that they had asked, in order to answer and properly to

instruct these sons of the new Law. As a Teacher and

an instrument of divine wisdom She answered all their

questions, giving them such high precepts of sanctity

that they could scarcely part from Her on account of the

sweetness and attraction of her words. However, an

angel of the Lord appeared to them, reminding them of

the necessity and of the will of the Lord that they should

return to their country. No wonder that her words

should so deeply affect these Kings; for all her words

were inspired by the holy Spirit and full of infused

science regarding all that they had inquired and many

other matters.

568. The heavenly Mother received the gifts of the

Kings and in their name offered them to the Infant Jesus.

His Majesty showed by signs of highest pleasure, that

He accepted their gifts: they themselves became aware

of the exalted and heavenly blessings with which He

repaid them more than a hundredfold (Matth. 19, 29).

According to the custom of their country they also offered

to the heavenly Princess some gems of great value; but

because these gifts had no mysterious signification and

referred not to Jesus, She returned them to the Kings,

reserving only the gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. In

order to send them away more rejoiced, She gave them

some of the clothes in which She had wrapped the infant

God; for She neither had nor could have had any

greater visible pledges of esteem with which to enrich

them at their departure. The three Kings received these

relics with such reverence and esteem that they encased

THE INCARNATION 481

them in gold and precious stones in order to keep them

ever after. As a proof of their value these relics spread

about such a copious fragrance that they revealed their

presence a league in circumference. However, only those

who believed in the coming of God into the world were

able to perceive it ; while the incredulous perceived none of

the fragrance emitted by the relics. In their own coun

tries the Magi performed great miracles with these relics.

569. The holy Kings also offered their property and

possession to the Mother of the sweetest Jesus, or, if She

did not wish to accept of them and preferred to live in

this place, where her most holy Son had been born, they

would build Her a house, wherein She could live more

comfortably. The most prudent Mother thanked them

for their offers without accepting them. On taking leave

of Her, the three Kings besought Her from their inmost

hearts not to forget them, which She promised and ful

filled ; in the same way they spoke to saint Joseph. With

the blessing of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, they departed,

so moved by tenderest affection that it seemed to them

they had left their hearts all melted into sighs and tears

in that place. They chose another way for their return

journey, in order not to meet Herod in Jerusalem; for

thus they had been instructed by the angel on the pre

ceding 1 night. On their departure from Bethlehem the

same or a similar star appeared in order to guide them

home, conducting them on their new route to the place

where they had first met, whence each one separated to

reach his own country.

570. For the rest of their lives these most fortunate

Kings lived up to their divine vocation as true disciples

of the Mistress of holiness, governing both their souls

and the people of their states according to her teaching.

By the example of their lives and the knowledge of the

482 CITY OF GOD

Messias, which they spread about, they converted a great

number of souls to the belief in the true God and to the

way of salvation. Finally, full of days and merits, they

closed their careers in sanctity and justice, having been

favored both in life and in death by the Mother of mercy.

After dismissing the Kings, the heavenly Queen and saint

Joseph spent their time in new canticles of praise of the

wonders of the Most High, conferring them with the

sayings of the Scriptures and the prophecies of the Pa

triarchs, which they saw fulfilled one after another in

the Infant Jesus. But the most prudent Mother, who

profoundly penetrated into the deepest meaning of these

high sacraments, remembered them all and treasured

them up in her bosom (Luke 2, 19). The holy angels,

who were witnesses of these holy mysteries, congratu

lated their Queen, that her most holy Son had been mani

fested and that his Majesty had been adored by men;

and they sang to Him new canticles, magnifying his

mercies wrought upon mankind.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

571. My daughter, great were the gifts which the

Kings offered to my most holy Son ; but greater still was

the affection with which they offered them and the mys

tery concealed beneath them. On account of all this

they were most acceptable to his Majesty. I wish that

thou also offer up similar gifts, thanking Him for hav

ing made thee poor in condition and profession. For I

assure thee, my dearest, there is no more acceptable gift

to the Most High than voluntary poverty. There are

very few in the world in our days who use well the

temporal riches and offer them to their God and Lord

with the generosity and love of these holy Kings. The

THE INCARNATION 483

poor of the Lord, so numerous in our day, experience

and give witness how cruel and avaricious human nature

has become; since in their great necessities they are so

little succored by the rich. This gross uncharitableness

of men offends the holy angels and grieves the Holy

Ghost, since they are bound to witness the nobility of

the souls so degraded and abased in the service of vile

greed of gold with all its evil powers (Eccles. 10, 20).

As if all things had been created for the individual use

of the rich, they appropriate them to themselves and de

prive the poor, their brothers springing from the same

nature and flesh; and denying them even to God, who

created and preserves all things, and who can give or

take at will. It is most lamentable that while the rich

might purchase eternal life with their possessions, they

abuse them to draw upon themselves damnation as sense

less and foolish creatures (Luke 16, 9).

572. This evil is common among the children of

Adam; and therefore voluntary poverty is so excellent

and safe a remedy. By it, making man willing to part

joyfully with his possessions for the sake of the poor, a

great sacrifice is offered to the Lord. Thou also canst

make such an offering of the things necessary for suste

nance, giving a part of it to the poor and desiring, if it

were possible by thy labor and sweat, to help all of them.

Thy ceaseless offer, however, must be love, which is the

gold; continual prayer, which is the incense; and the

patient acceptance of labors and true mortifications,

which is the myrrh. All that thou dost for the Lord,

thou should offer up to Him with fervent affection and

promptitude, without negligence or fear; for negligent

works, and those not enlivened by love, are not an ac

ceptable sacrifice in the eyes of his Majesty. In order

to make those incessant offerings, it is necessary that

484 CITY OF GOD

divine faith and light continually inflame thy heart, hav

ing before thy eyes the great object of thy praise and ex

altation, and the stimulus of love, by which thou art

bound to the right hand of the Most High. Thus

shouldst thou continue incessantly in this sweet exercise

of love, so proper to the spouses of his Majesty; for their

name implies such a continual payment of the debt of

love and affection.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MOST HOLY MARY AND JOSEPH DISTRIBUTE THE GIFTS

RECEIVED FROM THE MAGI; AND THEY REMAIN IN

BETHLEHEM UNTIL THEIR DEPARTURE FOR THE

PRESENTATION OF THE INFANT JESUS IN THE

TEMPLE.

573. After the departure of the three Kings and after

the due celebration of the great mystery of the adoration

of the Infant Jesus, there was really nothing to wait for

in that poor yet sacred place, and they were free to

leave it. The most prudent Mother then said to saint

Joseph: "My master and spouse, the offerings which

the Kings have made to our God and Child must not

remain here idle; but they must be applied in the service

of his Majesty and should be used according to his will

and pleasure. I deserve nothing, even of temporal

goods ; dispose of all these gifts as belonging to my Son

and to thee." The most faithful of husbands answered,

with his accustomed humility and courtesy, that he would

leave all to Her and would be pleased to see Her dispose

of them. But her Majesty insisted anew and -said:

"Since thou makest an excuse of humility, my master,

do it then for love of the poor, who are waiting for their

share ; they have a right to the things which their heav

enly Father has created for their sustenance." They

therefore immediately concluded to divide the gifts into

three parts : one destined for the temple of Jerusalem,

namely the incense and myrrh, as well as part of the

gold ; another part as offering to the priest, who had cir-

485

486 CITY OF GOD

cumcised the Child, in order that he might use it for him

self and for the synagogue or oratory in Bethlehem, and

the third part for distribution among the poor. This

resolve they executed with generous and fervent affection.

574. The Almighty made use of a poor but honorable

and pious woman to be the occasion of their leaving the

cave. She had come a few times to visit our Queen;

for the house in which She lived was built up against

the wall of the city, not far from the cave. Some time

later this devout woman, not being aware of what had

happened, but having heard the rumor of the Kings

coming, held a conversation with most holy Mary and

asked Her whether She had heard that some wise men,

who were said to be kings, had come from far seeking

the Messias ? The heavenly Princess, aware of the good

disposition of this woman, took occasion to instruct her

and catechize her in the common belief, without reveal

ing to her the hidden sacrament connected with Herself

and the sweetest Child whom She held in her arms

(Tob. 12, 7). In order to relieve her poverty She gave

her some of the gold destined for the poor. Thereby

the condition of this fortunate woman was much im

proved and she became attached with heart and soul

to her Teacher and Benefactress. She invited the holy

Family to live in her house; and as it was a poor one,

it was so much the more accommodated to the Founders

and Builders of holy poverty. The poor woman pleaded

with great persistence, as she saw the great inconvenience

to which the most holy Mary and Joseph with the Child

were subject in the cave. The Queen did not refuse her

offer and answered, that She would let her know of her

decision. Mary and saint Joseph conferred with each

other and they resolved to leave the cave and lodge in

the house of this woman, awaiting there the time of the

THE INCARNATION 487

purification and the presentation in the temple. They

did it so much the more willingly as it afforded them a

chance to remain near the cave of the Nativity; and also

because many people began to frequent the cave on ac

count of the rumor of the visit of the Kings, which had

been spread about.

575. On account of these and other considerations

most holy Mary, with saint Joseph and the sacred Child

took leave of the cave although with tenderest regret.

They accepted the hospitality of that fortunate woman,

who received them with the greatest charity and assigned

to them the larger portion of her dwelling. The holy

angels and ministers of the Most High accompanied them

in human forms, which they had always retained. When

ever the heavenly Mother and saint Joseph her spouse

piously revisited the memorable spots of this sanctuary,

they came and went with them as numerous courtiers

delegated to their service. Moreover, when the Child

and his Mother took leave of the cave, God appointed

an angel as its keeper and watcher, as He had done with

the garden of Paradise (Gen. 3, 24). And this guard

remained and does remain to this day sword in hand

at the opening of the cave; and never since then has an

animal entered there. That this holy angel does not

hinder the entrance of hostile infidels, in whose posses

sion this and the other holy places are, is because of the

judgments of the Most High, who allows men to execute

the designs of his wisdom and justice. This permission

would not be necessary, if Christian princes were filled

with fervent zeal for the honor and glory of Christ and

would seek the restoration of these holy places, con

secrated by the blood and the labors of the Lord and of

his most holy Mother, and by the works of our Redemp

tion. And even if this would not be possible, there is no

488 CITY OF GOD

excuse for not attending with faithful diligence to the

decent keeping of the mysterious places; since nothing is

impossible to the believer, who can overcome the moun

tains (Matth. 17, 19). I was given to understand, that

the pious devotion and veneration for the Holy Land

is one of the most powerful and efficacious means for

establishing and confirming Catholic monarchies ; and no

one can deny, that many of their excessive and unneces

sary expenses could be avoided by employing their re

sources in such a pious enterprise, which would be pleas

ing both to God and to men; for in making such an

honest use of their incomes there is no need of outward

justification.

576. The most pure Mary and her spouse, having with

her divine Child moved to the dwelling in the vicinity

of the cave, remained there until, according to the re

quirements of the law, She was to be present Herself

with her First-born for purification in the temple. For this

mystery the most holy of creatures resolved to dispose

Herself worthily by a fervent desire of carrying the infant

Jesus as an offering to the eternal Father in his temple ;

by imitating her Son and by seeking the adornment and

beauty of great virtues as a worthy offering and victim

for the Most High. With this intention the heavenly

Lady, during the days which still remained until her

purification, performed such heroic acts of love and of

all other virtues, that neither the tongue of angels nor

of men can explain them. How much less can this then

be done by a useless and entirely ignorant woman? By

sincere piety and devotion, the Christians who dispose

themselves by reverent contemplation, will merit to feel

these mysteries. Judging of the more intelligible favors

received by the Virgin Mother, they can surmise and

THE INCARNATION 489

imagine the others, which do not fall within the scope

of human words.

577. From his very Birth the infant Jesus spoke to

his sweetest Mother in audible words; for immediately

after his Birth (as mentioned in chapter the tenth), He

said to Her : "Imitate Me, my Spouse, make thyself like

unto Me/ This was when They were alone, and al

though He always spoke to Her most plainly, saint

Joseph never heard his words until the Child was one

year of age, when He also spoke to him. Nor did the

heavenly Lady reveal this secret, for She understood,

that it was only for Her. The conversations of the in

fant God were such as were worthy of the greatness of

his majesty and his infinite power; such as were befitting

the most pure and holy, the most wise and prudent of

all creatures next to Himself, and One who was his true

Mother. Sometimes He said: "My Dove, my chosen

One, my dearest Mother." (Cant. 2, 10). In such

caressing words as were contained in the Canticles and

other continual interior intercourse the most holy Son

and Mother passed their time ; and in these the heavenly

Princess received favors, and was delighted by caresses

so sweet and loving, as exceed those of the Canticles

of Solomon; and greater ones than all the just and holy

souls enjoyed from the beginning to the end of the world.

Many times, during these mysteries of his love, the In

fant Jesus repeated these words already mentioned :

"Make thyself like unto Me, my Mother and my Dove."

As they were words of life and infinite power, and as

most holy Mary at the same time was furnished with the

infused knowledge of all the interior operations of the

soul of her Onlybegotten, no tongue can declare nor

thought can comprehend the effects wrought in the most

490 CITY OF GOD

candid and inflamed heart of this Mother of the God-

man.

578. Among the more rare and excellent privileges of

most pure Mary, the chief one is, that She is Mother of

God, which is the foundation of all the rest. The second

is, that She was conceived without sin. The third, that

She enjoyed many times the beatific vision in this mortal

life, and the fourth is that She continually saw clearly

the most holy soul of her Son and all its operations for

her imitation. She had it present to her eyes, as a most

clear and pure mirror, in which She could behold Her

self again and again in order to adorn Herself with most

precious gems of virtue, made in imitation of those seen

in that most holy Soul. There She saw it united with

the divine Word and She exercised her humility in see

ing how much her own human nature was inferior to

that of Christ. She perceived with the clearest insight

the acts of gratitude and praise, with which the soul of

Christ praised the Almighty for having been created

out of nothing as the rest of the souls, and for the graces

and gifts, with which it was endowed above others as

a creature; and especially, for having been elevated and

made godlike by the union of the human nature with the

Divinity. She pondered over his petitions, prayers and

supplications to his eternal Father for the human race;

and how in all his other activity He prepared Himself

for its Redemption and instruction, as the sole Redeemer

and Teacher of man for eternal life.

579. All these works of the most holy humanity of

Christ, our supreme Good, his most pure Mother con

tinually sought to imitate. There is much to say con

cerning this great mystery of her imitation in this his

tory; for She had this example and model incessantly

before her eyes, and according to it She regulated her

THE INCARNATION 491

own activity and behavior during the Incarnation and

Nativity of her Son. Like a busy bee She continually

built up the sweetest honeycomb of delights for the in

carnate Word. His Majesty, having come from heaven

as our Redeemer and Teacher, wished that his most holy

Mother, of whom He had formed his human existence,

should participate in a most exalted and singular manner

in the fruits of the common Redemption and that She

should be the chosen and selected Disciple, in whom his

teaching should be vividly stamped and whom He wished

to make as similar to Himself as possible. In the light

of these intentions and blessed purposes of the incarnate

Word we must judge of the greatness of Mary s deeds,

and of the delights, which He enjoyed while resting upon

her arms and reclining upon her breast; for it was in

deed the bridal-chamber and the couch of this the true

Spouse (Cant. 1, 15).

580. During the days in which the most holy Queen

tarried near Bethlehem before the purification, some of

the people came to see and speak with Her; but almost

all of them were of the poorest class. Some of them

came because of the alms which She distributed, others,

because they had heard of the Kings, who had visited

the cave. All of them spoke of this visit and of the

coming of the Redeemer; for in those days, (not with

out divine predisposal), the belief, that the birth of the

Messias was at hand, was very widespread among the

Jews, and the talk about it was very frequent. This gave

the most prudent Mother repeated occasion to exercise

Herself in magnanimous works, not only by guarding

the secret of her bosom and by conferring within Her

self about all that She saw and heard, but also by direct

ing many souls toward the knowledge of God, by con

firming them in the faith, instructing them in the practice

492 CITY OF GOD

of virtues, enlightening them in the mysteries of the

Messias whom they were expecting, and dispelling the

ignorance, in which they were cast as a low-minded peo

ple, little versed in the things of God. Sometimes their

talk about these matters was so full of error and woman

ish prattle, that the simple saint Joseph smiled in secret.

He wondered at the heavenly wisdom and force of the

answers, with which the great Lady met their gossip

and instructed them; at her patience and gentleness in

leading them to the truth and to the perception of the

light; at her profound humility and yet patient reserve,

with which She knew how to dismiss all of them con

soled, rejoiced and furnished with all that was good for

them to know. She spoke to them words of eternal

life, which penetrated, inflamed and strengthened their

hearts (John 6, 69).

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY OUR QUEEN

GAVE ME.

581. My daughter, by the divine light I knew, better

than all other creatures, at what a low value the Most

High esteems earthly blessings and riches. Therefore,

in my holy liberty of spirit, I felt myself troubled and

inconvenienced by the possession of the treasures of the

Kings offered to my most holy Son. As in all my deeds

I was to shine in humility and obedience, I did not wish

to appropriate them to myself, nor dispose of them ac

cording to my own will, but according to the wishes of

my spouse Joseph. In this resignation I managed to act

as if 1 were his handmaid and as if none of these gifts

concerned me in any way ; for it is debasing, and for you

weak creatures, very dangerous to appropriate or attrib

ute any of the goods of the earth, be they of material

THE INCARNATION 493

possessions or goods of honor ; for all this cannot be done

without covetousness, ambition and vain ostentation.

582. I wished to tell thee all this, my dearest, in order

that thou mayest know how to refuse riches or honor as

due to thee, and not appropriate to thyself any of them ;

especially not if thou receive them from persons of in

fluence and exalted station. Preserve thy interior liberty

and make no show of a thing which is worth nothing and

which cannot justify thee before God. If anything is

brought to thee, never say: "This is given to me, or is

presented to me;" but "This the Lord sends to our con

vent; pray to God for those, whom his Majesty has sent

as the instruments of his mercies." And mention the

name of the giver, in order that they may pray partic

ularly for him and that he may not be disappointed in

the purpose of his gift. Also do not receive it personally,

lest you raise a suspicion of covetousness, but let those

appointed for this duty receive it. And, if in thy office

as superior, thou must make distribution of things within

the convent, let it be with detachment and without any

show of personal rights of possession in them; yet at

the same time, as one who knows that she does not

deserve any favors, do not forget to thank the Most

High and the giver. That which is brought to the

other religious thou must acknowledge thankfully as the

superior and immediately see that thou apply it for the

community, without reserving any part of it for thy own

use. Do not inquire curiously about the incomes of the

convent, in order that thou mayest not take a sensible

pleasure therein and that thou mayest not seek delight

in the reception of such favors ; for frail and passionate

nature incurs many defects in such a transaction and of

few of the defects does it render much account to itself.

Nothing can be trusted to infected human nature; for it

2-38

494 CITY OF GOD

always seeks after more than it possesses, and it never

says enough, and the more it receives the greater thirst it

has for more.

583. But it is to the intimate and frequent intercourse

with the Lord by unceasing love, praise and reverence,

that I wish thee to attend most of all. In this I wish,

my daughter, that thou work with all thy strength, and

that thou apply thy faculties and powers incessantly with

great watchfulness and care; for without this the in

ferior parts will inevitably weigh down thy soul, derange

and upset it, divert and cast it down, causing it to lose

the vision of the highest Good (Wis. 9, 15). This lov

ing intercourse of the Lord is so delicate, that even by

listening or attending to the deceits of the enemy, the

soul loses it. On this account the enemy makes great

efforts to draw thy attention toward himself, knowing

that the punishment of listening to him will be the con

cealment of the object of its love from the soul (Cant. 5,

6). As soon as it carelessly ignores the beauty of the

Lord, it enters upon the byways of neglect and is de

prived of the divine sweetness (Cant. 1, 7). When after

wards the soul, having with sorrow experienced the evils

of such inadvertence wishes to return to seek Him, it

does not always find or recover Him (Cant. 3, 1, 2).

As the demon, who deceived it, then presents other de

lights so vile and unlike those to which the soul has been

accustomed interiorly, new cause of sadness, disturbance,

dejection, lukewarmness and dissatisfaction arises and

its whole interior is filled with dangerous confusion.

584. Of this truth, my dearest, thou thyself hast some

experience, wherein thou couldst notice the effects of

neglect and tardiness in believing the favors of the Lord.

It is time that thou be prudent in thy sincerity and con

stant in keeping up the fire of the sanctuary (Lev. 6,

THE INCARNATION 495

12), without ever losing sight for a moment of that same

Object, which I attended to with all the powers of my

soul and all my faculties. Although the distance between

thy conduct, that of a mere wormlet, and that which I

propose for thy imitation is great, and although thou

canst not enjoy the supreme Good so unreservedly as I,

nor live in the same condition as I ; yet, since I instruct

thee and show thee what I did to assimilate myself to my

most holy Son, thou canst imitate me according to thy

strength using my doings as a mirror. I saw Him in

the mirror of his humanity, thou in my soul and person.

If the Almighty calls and invites all men to the highest

perfection by following Him, consider what thou art

obliged to do, since thou hast been drawn toward the

Most High by such a generous and powerful influence

of his right hand (Matth. 11, 28; Cant 1, 3).

CHAPTER XIX.

MOST HOLY MARY AND JOSEPH DEPART WITH THE) IN

FANT JESUS, IN ORDER TO FULFILL THE LAW, BY

PRESENTING HIM IN THE TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM.

585. Already the forty days after the birth of a son,

during which a woman, according to the law, was con

sidered unclean and during which she was obliged to con

tinue her purification for her re-admittance into the tem

ple, were coming to a close (Lev. 22, 4). In order to

comply with this law and satisfy another obligation con

tained in Exodus, chapter thirteenth, which demanded the

sanctification and presentation to the Lord of all the first

born sons, the Mother of all purity prepared to go to

Jerusalem, where She was to appear in the temple with

her Son as the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father and

purify Herself according to the custom of other women.

She had no doubts about complying with that part of

the law, which applied to Herself in common with other

mothers. Not that She was ignorant of her innocence

and purity; for, ever since the incarnation of the Word,

She knew of her exemption from actual sin and from the

stain of original sin. Nor was She ignorant of the fact

that She had conceived by the Holy Ghost, and brought

forth without labor, remaining a virgin more pure than

the sun (Luke 1, 15). Yet She hesitated not to subject

Herself to the common law; on the contrary, in the ar

dent longing of her heart after humiliation and annihila

tion to the dust, She desired to do this of her own free

will.

496

THE INCARNATION 497

586. In regard to the presentation of her most holy

Son there was some occasion for the same doubt as in

regard to the Circumcision, for She knew Him to be the

true God, superior to the laws, which He himself had

made. But She was informed of the will of the Lord

by divine light and by the interior acts of the most holy

soul of the incarnate Word; for She saw his desire of

sacrificing Himself and offering Himself as a living Vic

tim (Eph. 5, 2) to the eternal Father, in thanksgiving

for having formed his most pure body and created his

most holy soul ; for having destined Him as an acceptable

sacrifice for the human race and for the welfare of mor

tals. These acts of the most sacred humanity of the

Word were continual, conforming Himself to the divine

will not only in so far as He was already beatified, but

also in so far as He was still a wayfarer upon earth

and our Redeemer. Yet, in addition to these interior

acts and in obedience to the law, He wished to be offered

to the eternal Father in the temple where all adored and

magnified Him, as in a house of prayer, expiation and

sacrifice (Deut. 12, 5).

587. The great Lady conferred about the journey with

her husband, and, having resolved to be in Jerusalem

on the very day appointed by the law and having made

the necessary preparations, they took leave of the good

woman, who had so devotedly entertained them. Although

this woman was left in ignorance of the divine mysteries

connected with her Guests, she was filled with the bless

ings of heaven, which brought her abundant fruit. Mary

and Joseph betook themselves to the cave of the Nativity,

not wishing to begin their journey without once more ven

erating that sanctuary so humble and yet so rich in hap

piness, though at that time this was yet unknown to the

world. The Mother handed the Child Jesus to saint

498 CITY OF GOD

Joseph in order to prostrate Herself and worship the earth

which had been witness to such venerable mysteries. Hav

ing done this with incomparable devotion and tenderness,

She said to her husband : "My master, give me thy bene

diction for this journey, as thou art wont to do at depart

ing from home. I beseech thee also to allow me to per

form this journey on foot and unshod; since I am to bear

in my arms the Victim, which is to be offered to the

eternal Father. This is a mysterious work and as far

as it is possible, I should wish to perform it with due rev

erence and ceremony." Our Queen was accustomed, for

the sake of modesty, to wear shoes, which covered her

feet and served as a sort of stocking. They were made

of a certain plant used by the poor and something like

hemp or mallow, dried and woven into a coarse and strong

texture, which, though poor, was yet cleanly and ap

propriate.

588. Saint Joseph told Her to arise, for She was

kneeling before him, and said : "May the Most High Son

of the eternal Father, whom I hold in my arms, give

Thee his blessing. As for the rest it is well and good,

that Thou journey afoot in bringing Him to Jerusalem.

But Thou must not go barefoot, because the weather

does not permit it; and thy desire will be accepted by

the Lord instead of the deed." Thus saint Joseph, in

order not to deprive most holy Mary of the joy of

humiliation and obedience, made use of his authority

as husband, although with great reverence. And as

saint Joseph only obeyed Her and humiliated and mor

tified himself in commanding Her, it happened that both

of them exercised humility and obedience reciprocally.

That he refused Her permission to go barefoot to Jeru

salem was occasioned by his apprehensions, lest the cold

should injure her health; for he did not know the won-

THE INCARNATION 499

derful qualities and composition of her virginal and per

fect body, nor the other privileges, conferred upon Her

by the divine right hand. The obedient Queen made no

reply to the orders of her husband and obeyed his wish

not to go unshod. In order to again receive in her arms

the Infant Jesus She prostrated Herself on the earth,

thanking Him and adoring Him for the blessings, which

He had wrought for them and for the whole human race

in that cave. She besought his Majesty, that this sanc

tuary be held in esteem and reverence by the Catholics

and that it remain in their possession; and She again

placed it in charge of the holy angel, who had been set

as its guardian. She covered Herself with a cloak for the

journey and, receiving in Her arms Jesus, the Treasure

of heaven, She pressed Him to her breast, tenderly shield

ing Him from the inclemency of the wintry weather.

589. They departed from the cave, asking the blessing

of the infant God, which his Majesty gave them in a visi

ble manner. Saint Joseph placed upon the ass the chest

containing the clothes of the Infant and the gifts of the

Kings destined for their temple-offering. Thus began

the most solemn procession, which was ever held from

Bethlehem to the temple in Jerusalem; for in company

with the Prince of the eternities, Jesus, the Queen, his

Mother, and saint Joseph, her spouse, journeyed the ten

thousand angels, that had assisted at these mysteries,

and the other legions, that had brought from heaven

the sweet and holy name of Jesus at the Circumcision

(No. 523). All these heavenly courtiers passed along

in visible human forms, so beautiful and shining, that in

comparison with them, all that is delightful or precious in

the world, is less than dirt or mud compared to the finest

and purest gold; and in their splendor they obliterated

the sun in its brightest light and would have turned

500 CITY OF GOD

night into the brightest day. The heavenly Queen and

saint Joseph rejoiced in their effulgence, while all of them

together exalted these mysteries by new canticles of praise

in honor of the divine Child about to be presented in

the temple. In this fashion they journeyed the two

leagues from Bethlehem to Jerusalem.

590. On this occasion, not without divine dispensation,

the weather was unusually severe, so that, without regard

for the tender Child, its Creator, the cold and sleety

blasts pierced to his shivering limbs and caused the divine

Infant to weep as it rested in the arms of his loving

Mother, being however moved thereto more by his com

passion and love for men than by the effects of the in

clemency of the weather upon his body. The mighty

Empress turned to the winds and elements and as Mis

tress of creation reprehended them with indignation, that

they should thus persecute their Maker. She commanded

them to moderate their rigor toward the Child but not

toward Her. The elements obeyed the commands of

their true and rightful Mistress: the cold blasts were

changed into a soft and balmy air for the Infant, without

diminishing their inclemency toward the Mother; thus

She herself felt it, but not her Infant, as on other occa

sions already mentioned and yet to be mentioned. She

addressed also sin, which She had not contracted, and

said : "O sin, how most disorderly and inhuman art thou,

since, in order to satisfy for thee, the Creator of all

things is afflicted by the very creatures, which He has

made and preserves in being! Thou art a terrible and

horrible monster, offensive to God and destructive of

creatures; thou turnest them into abominations and de-

privest them of their greatest happiness, that of being

friends of God. O children of men, how long will you

be so heavy-hearted as to love vanity and deceit? Be

THE INCARNATION 501

not so ungrateful toward the Most High and so cruel

to yourselves. Open your eyes and recognize your dan

gers. Do not despise the precepts of your eternal Father,

and do not forget the teachings of your Mother, who has

brought you forth by charity; for since the Onlybegot-

ten of the Father has assumed flesh in my womb, He

has made me the Mother of all creation. As such I love

you and if it were possible and according to the will of

the Most High, that I suffer all the punishments visited

upon you from the time of Adam until now, I would

accept them with pleasure."

591. During the journey of our Lady with the infant

God, it happened in Jerusalem that Simeon, the high-

priest, was enlightened by the Holy Ghost concerning

the coming of the incarnate Word and his presentation

in the temple on the arms of his Mother. The same

revelation was given to the holy widow Anne, and she

was also informed of the poverty and suffering of saint

Joseph and the most pure Lady on their way to Jeru

salem. These two holy persons, immediately conferring

with each other about their revelations and enlighten

ments, called the chief procurator of the temporal affairs

of the temple, and, describing to him the signs, whereby

he should recognize the holy Travelers, they ordered him

to proceed to the gate leading out to Bethlehem and re

ceive them into his house with all benevolence and hos

pitality. This the procurator did and thus the Queen

and her spouse were much relieved, since they had been

anxious about finding a proper lodging for the divine

Infant. Leaving Them well provided in his house, the

fortunate host returned in order to report to the high-

priest.

592. On that evening, before they retired, most holy

Mary and Joseph conferred with each other about what

502 CITY OF GOD

they were to do. The most prudent Lady reminded

him that it was better to bring the gifts of the Kings

on that same evening to the temple in order to be able

to make the offering in silence and without noisy demon

stration, as was proper with all donations and sacrifices,

and that on the way he might procure the two turtle

doves, which on the next day were to be the public offer

ing for the Infant Jesus. Saint Joseph complied with her

request. As a stranger and one little known he gave the

myrrh, incense and gold to the one who usually received

such gifts for the temple, but saint Joseph took care not

to reveal himself to any one as the donor of these great

presents. Although he could have bought the lamb,

which the rich usually offered for their first-born, he

chose not to do so ; because the humble and poor apparel

of the Mother and the Child as well as of the husband,

would not have agreed with a public offering as valuable

as that of the rich (Matth. 8, 20). In no particular did

the Mother of wisdom deem it befitting to depart from

poverty and humility, even under the cover of a pious

and honorable intention. For in all things was She the

Teacher of perfection, and her most holy Son, that of

holy poverty, in which He was born, lived and died.

593. Simeon, as saint Luke tells us, was a just and

god-fearing man and was hoping in the consolation of

Israel (Luke 2, 24) ; the Holy Ghost, who dwelt in him,

had revealed to him, that he should not taste death until

he had seen the Christ, the Lord. Moved by the holy

Spirit he came to the temple; for in that night, besides

the revelations he had already received, he was again

divinely enlightened and made to understand more clearly

the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption of man,

the fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaias, that a Virgin

should conceive and bear a Son and that from the root

THE INCARNATION 503

of Jesse a flower should blossom, namely Christ (Is. 7,

14) ; likewise all the rest contained in these and other

prophecies. He received a clear understanding of the

hypostatic union of the two natures in the person of

the Word, and of the mysteries of the passion and death

of the Redeemer. Thus instructed in these two high

things, saint Simeon was lifted up and inflamed with

the desire of seeing the Redeemer of the world. On the

following day then, as soon as he had received notice

that Christ was coming to present Himself in the temple

to the Father, he was carried in spirit to the temple, for

so great is the force of divine enlightenment. Whereupon

succeeded that, which I shall relate in the following chap

ter. Also the holy matron Anne was favored with a

revelation during the same night concerning many of

these mysteries and great was the joy of her spirit on

that account; for, as I have said in the first part of this

history, she had been the teacher of our Queen, during

her stay in the temple. The Evangelist tells us that She

never left the temple-grounds serving in it day and night

in prayer and fasting (Luke 1, 27) ; that she was a

prophetess, daughter of Samuel, of the tribe of Aser.

She had lived seven years with her husband and was

now eighty years old. As will be seen, she spoke pro

phetically of the Child s future.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

594. My daughter, one of the misfortunes, which de

prive souls of happiness, or at least diminish it, is that

they content themselves with performing good works

negligently or without fervor, as if they were engaged

in things unimportant or merely accidental. On account

of this ignorance and meanness of heart few of them

504 CITY OF GOD

arrive at an intimate friendship of God, which they can

attain only by fervent love. This is called fervent pre

cisely because of its similarity to boiling water. For just

as water is made to boil and foam by the fire, so the

soul, by the sweet violence of the divine conflagra

tion of love, is raised above itself and above all created

things as well as above its own doings. In loving, it is

more and more inflamed, and from this very love springs

an unquenchable affection, which makes the soul despise

and forget all earthly things while at the same time it

becomes dissatisfied with all temporal goodness. And

as the human heart, when it does not attain what it

dearly loves (if that attainment is possible) is inflamed

with ever greater desire of reaching it by other means;

therefore, the loving soul, finds ever new things to strive

after for the sake of the Beloved and all service will seem

to it but little. Thus it will pass from good will to a

perfect will, and from this to what will please the Lord

still more, until it arrives at the most intimate union

with Him and at a perfect conformation with the will of

God.

595. Hence thou wilt understand, my dearest, why I

desired to go barefooted to the temple, carrying at the

same time my most holy Son in order to present Him

there; and why I also wished to comply with the law

of the purification ; for, urged on by my love, which in

cessantly demanded what was most perfect and agree

able to the Lord, I sought the fullness of perfection in all

my doings and it was precisely this anxiety, which

created in me such a desire of excellence in all my

works. Labor to imitate me with all diligence in all

that I did ; for I assure thee, my dear, that it is this exer

cise of thy love, which the Most High is desiring and ex

pecting of thee, and, as is mentioned by the spouse in the

THE INCARNATION

505

Canticles (Cant. 2, 9), He is watching thee so close at

hand, that not more than a slight screen intervenes be

tween the soul and its vision of the Lord. Enamoured

and drawn onward He approaches closely to those souls,

who thus love and serve Him in all things, while He

withdraws from the lukewarm and negligent ones, or

deals with them only according to the general rules of his

divine Providence. Do thou aspire continually to the

most pure and perfect in the practice of virtues and study

and invent new schemes and projects of love; so that all

the forces of thy interior and exterior faculties continue

to be zealously occupied in what is most exalted and ex

cellent in the service of the Lord. At the same time

mention all these affections to thy spiritual father and

subject them to the obedience and advice of thy counselor,

following his instructions : for this will always be the most

preferable and secure way.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE INFANT JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

AND WHAT HAPPENED ON THAT OCCASION.

596. The sacred humanity of Christ belonged to the

eternal Father not only because it was created like other

beings, but it was his special property by virtue of the

hypostatic union with the person of the Word, for this

person of the Word, being his Onlybegotten Son,

was engendered of his substance, true God of true God.

Nevertheless the eternal Father had decreed, that his

Son should be presented to Him in the temple in mys

terious compliance with the law, of which Christ our

Lord was the end (Rom. 10, 4). It was established

for no other purpose than that the just men of the

old Testament should perpetually sanctify and offer to

the Lord their first-born sons, in the hope that one

thus presented might prove to be the Son of God

and a Child of the Mother of the expected Messias (Exod.

13, 2). According to our way of thinking his Majesty

acted like men, who are apt to repeat and enjoy over and

over again a thing which has caused them enjoyment.

For although the Father understood and knew all things

in his infinite wisdom, He sought pleasure in the offer

ing of the incarnate Word, which by so many titles al

ready belonged to Him.

597. This will of the eternal Father, which was con

formable to that of his Son in so far as He was God, was

known to the Mother of life and of the human nature

of the Word; for She saw that all his interior actions

506

THE INCARNATION 507

were in unison with the will of his eternal Father. Full

of this holy science the great Princess passed the night

before his presentation in the temple in divine colloquies.

Speaking to the Father She said: "My Lord and God

most high, Father of my Lord, a festive day for heaven

and earth will be that, in which I shall bring and offer

to Thee in thy holy temple the living Host, which is

at the same time the Treasure of thy Divinity. Rich, O

my Lord and God, is this oblation; and Thou canst well

pour forth, in return for it, thy mercies upon the human

race: pardoning the sinners, that have turned from the

straight path, consoling the afflicted, helping the needy,

enriching the poor, succoring the weak, enlightening the

blind, and meeting those who have strayed away. This

is, my Lord, what I ask of thee in offering to Thee thy

Onlybegotten, who, by thy merciful condescension is also

my Son. If Thou hast given Him to me as a God, I re

turn Him to Thee as God and man ; his value is infinite,

and what I ask of Thee is much less. In opulence do I

return to thy holy temple, from which I departed poor;

and my soul shall magnify Thee forever, because thy

divine right hand has shown itself toward me so liberal

and powerful."

598. On the next morning, the Sun of heaven being

now ready to issue from its purest dawning, the Virgin

Mary, on whose arms He reclined, and being about to rise

up in full view of the world, the heavenly Lady, hav

ing provided the turtle-dove and two candles, wrapped

Him in swaddling-clothes and betook Herself with saint

Joseph from their lodging to the temple. The holy angels,

who had come with them from Bethlehem, again formed

in procession in corporeal and most beautiful forms, just

as has been said concerning the journey of the preced

ing day. On this occasion however the holy spirits added

508 CITY OF GOD

many other hymns of the sweetest and most entrancing-

harmony in honor of the infant God, which were heard

only by the most pure Mary. Besides the ten thousand,

who had formed the procession on the previous day, in

numerable others descended from heaven, who, accom

panied by those that bore the shields of the holy name

of Jesus, formed the guard of honor of the incarnate

Word on the occasion of his presentation. These how

ever were not in corporeal shapes and only the heavenly

Princess perceived their presence. Having arrived at the

temple-gate, the most blessed Mother was filled with new

and exalted sentiments of devotion. Joining the other

women, She bowed and knelt to adore the Lord in spirit

and in truth in his holy temple and She presented Her

self before the exalted Majesty of God with his Son

upon her arms (John 4, 23). Immediately She was

immersed in an intellectual vision of the most holy

Trinity and She heard a voice issuing from the eternal

Father, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I

am well pleased" (Matth. 27, 20). Saint Joseph, the

most fortunate of men, felt at the same time a new

sweetness of the Holy Ghost, which filled him with joy

and divine light.

599. The holy high-priest Simeon, moved by the Holy

Ghost as explained in the preceding chapter, also entered

the temple at that time (Luke 2, 27). Approaching the

place where the Queen stood with the Infant Jesus in

her arms, he saw both Mother and Child enveloped in

splendor and glory. The prophetess Anne, who, as the

Evangelist says, had come at the same hour, also saw

Mary and her Infant surrounded by this wonderful light.

In the joy of their spirit both of them approached the

Queen of heaven, and the priest received the Infant Jesus

from her arms upon his hands. Raising up his eyes to

THE INCARNATION 509

heaven he offered Him up to the eternal Father, pro

nouncing at the same time these words so full of mys

teries: "Now dost thou dismiss thy servant, O Lord, ac

cording to thy Word in peace. Because my eyes have

seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the

face of all peoples : a light for the revelation of the gen

tiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2, 29).

It was as if He had said : "Now, Lord, thou wilt release

me from the bondage of this mortal body and let me go

free and in peace; for until now have I been detained in

it by the hope of seeing thy promises fulfilled and by the

desire of seeing thy Onlybegotten made man. Now that

my eyes have seen thy salvation, the Onlybegotten made

man, joined to our nature in order to give it eternal wel

fare according to the intention and eternal decree of thy

infinite wisdom and mercy, I shall enjoy true and secure

peace. Now, O Lord, Thou hast prepared and placed

before all mortals thy divine light that it may shine upon

the world and that all who wish may enjoy it through

out the universe and derive therefrom guidance and sal

vation. For this is the light which is revealed to the

gentiles for the glory of thy chosen people of Israel"

(John I, 9, 32).

600. Most holy Mary and saint Joseph heard this can

ticle of Simeon, wondering at the exalted revelation it

contained. The Evangelist calls them in this place the

parents of the divine Infant, for such they were in the

estimation of the people who were present at this event.

Simeon, addressing himself to the most holy Mother of

the Infant Jesus, then added : "Behold this Child is set

for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel,

and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own

soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts

may be revealed." Thus saint Simeon ; and being a priest

2-34

510 CITY OF GOD

he gave his blessing to the happy parents of the Child.

Then also the prophetess Anne acknowledged the incar

nate Word, and full of the Holy Ghost, she spoke of the

mysteries of the Messias to many, who were expecting

the redemption of Israel. By these two holy old people

public testimony of the coming of the Redeemer was

given to the world.

601. At the moment when the priest Simeon men

tioned the sword and the sign of contradiction, which

were prophetical of the passion and death of the Lord,

the Child bowed its head. Thereby, and by many in

terior acts of obedience, Jesus ratified the prophecy of

the priest and accepted it as the sentence of the eternal

Father pronounced by his minister. All this the loving

Mother noticed and understood; She presently began to

feel the sorrow predicted by Simeon and thus in ad

vance was She wounded by the sword, of which She

had thus been warned. As in a mirror her spirit was

made to see all the mysteries included in this prophecy;

how her most holy Son was to be the stone of stumbling,

the perdition of the unbelievers, and the salvation of the

faithful ; the fall of the synagogue and the establishment

of the Church among the heathens; She foresaw the

triumph to be gained over the devils and over death, but

also that a great price was to be paid for it, namely the

frightful agony and death of the Cross (Colos. 2, 15).

She foresaw the boundless opposition and contradiction,

which the Lord Jesus was to sustain both personally

and in his Church (John 15, 20). At the same time

She also saw the glory and excellence of the predestined

souls. Most holy Mary knew it all and in the joy and sor

row of her most pure soul, excited by the prophecies of

Simeon and these hidden mysteries, She performed heroic

acts of virtue. All these sayings and happenings were

THE INCARNATION 511

indelibly impressed upon her memory, and, of all that

She understood and experienced, She forgot not the least

iota. At all times She looked upon her most holy Son

with such a living sorrow, as we, mere human creatures

with hearts so full of ingratitude, shall never be able to

feel. The holy spouse saint Joseph was by these prophe

cies also made to see many of the mysteries of the Re

demption and of the labors and sufferings of Jesus. But

the Lord did not reveal them to him so copiously and

openly as they were perceived and understood by his

heavenly spouse; for in him these revelations were to

serve a different purpose, and besides, saint Joseph was

not to be an eye-witness of them during his mortal life.

602. The ceremony of the presentation thus being over,

the great Lady kissed the hand of the priest and again

asked his blessing. The same She did also to Anne, her

former teacher; for her dignity as Mother of God, the

highest possible to angels or men, did not prevent Her

from these acts of deepest humility. Then, in the com

pany of saint Joseph, her spouse, and of the fourteen

thousand angels in procession, She returned with the

divine Infant to her lodging. They remained, as I shall

relate farther on, for some days in Jerusalem, in order

to satisfy their devotion and during that time She spoke

a few times with the priest about the mysteries of the

Redemption and of the prophecies above mentioned. Al

though the words of the most prudent Virgin Mother

were few, measured and reserved, they were also so

weighty and full of wisdom, that they filled the priest

with wonder and excited in him the most exalted and the

sweetest sentiments of joy in his soul. The same hap

pened also to the prophetess Anne. Both of them died

in the Lord shortly afterwards. The holy Family

lodged at the expense of Simeon. During these days

512 CITY OF GOD

the Queen frequented the temple and in it She was visited

with many favors and consolations in recompense for

the sorrow caused by the prophecies of the priest. In

order to heighten their sweetness her most holy Son

spoke to Her on one of these days saying: "My dearest

Mother and my Dove, dry up thy tears and let thy purest

heart be expanded ; since it is the will of my Father, that

I accept the death of the Cross. I desire that Thou be

my companion in my labors and sufferings; I long to

undergo them for the souls, who are the works of my

hands (Ephes. 2, 10), made according to my image and

likeness, in order to make them partakers of my reign

and of eternal life in triumph over my enemies (Coloss.

2, 15). This is what Thou thyself dost wish in union

with Me." The Mother answered : "O my sweetest Love

and Son of my womb, if my accompanying Thee shall

include not only the privilege of witnessing and pitying

thy sufferings, but also of dying with Thee, so much the

greater will be my relief ; for it will be a greater suffering

for me to live, while seeing Thee die." In these exer

cises of love and compassion She passed some days,

until saint Joseph was advised to fly into Egypt, as I

shall relate in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY QUEEN MARY

GAVE ME.

603. My daughter, the doctrine and example contained

in the foregoing chapter will teach thee to strive after

the constancy and expansion of heart, by which thou

mayest prepare thyself to accept blessings and adversity,

the sweet and the bitter with equanimity. O dearest

soul! How narrow and unwilling is the human heart

toward that which is contrary and distasteful to its earthly

THE INCARNATION 513

inclinations ! How it chafes in labors ! How impatiently

it meets them! How insufferable it deems all that is

contrary to its desires ! How persistently it forgets, that

its Teacher and Master has first accepted sufferings, and

has honored and sanctified them in his own Person! It

is a great shame, yea a great boldness, on the part of the

faithful, that they should abhor suffering, even after my

most holy Son did suffer for them and when so many of

the just before his Death were led to embrace the cross

solely by the hope that Christ would once suffer upon

it, although they would never live to see it. And if this

want of correspondence is so base in others, consider well,

my dearest, how vile it would be in thee, who art so

anxious to obtain the grace and the friendship of the

Most High; who desirest to merit the name of a spouse

and friend of God, who wishest to belong entirely to Him

and that He belong entirely to thee, who wishest to be

my disciple and that I be thy Teacher, who aspirest to

follow and imitate me, as a faithful daughter her mother

(Matth. 7, 21). All this must not result in mere senti

ment and in empty words, or oft-repeated exclamations

of: Lord, Lord; and, when the occasion of tasting the

chalice and the cross of suffering is at hand, thou must not

turn away in sorrow and affliction from the sufferings, by

which the sincerity of a loving and affectionate heart

is to be tried.

604. All this would be denying in your actions, what

you profess in your words, and it would be a swerving

from the path of eternal life : for thou canst not follow

Christ, if thou refusest to embrace the cross and re

joice in it, nor shalt thou find me by any other way

(Matth. 8, 34). If creatures fail thee, if temptation or

trouble assail thee, if the sorrows of death encompass

thee (Ps. 17, 5), thou must in no wise be disturbed or

514 CITY OF GOD

disheartened; since nothing displeases my most holy Son

or me more than placing a hindrance or misapplying the

grace given by Him for thy defense. By misusing it and

receiving it in vain, thou yieldest great victory to the

demon, who glories much in having disturbed or subjected

any soul that calls itself a disciple of Christ and of me;

and having once brought thee to default in small things,

he will soon oppress thee in greater ones. Confide then

in the protection of the Most High and press onward

trusting in me. Full of this trust, whenever tribulation

comes over thee, fervently exclaim: "The Lord is my

light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? (Psalm 26,

1). He is my Helper, why should I hesitate? I have a

Mother, a Queen and Mistress, who will assist me and

take care of me in my affliction."

605. In this security seek to preserve interior peace and

keep forever in thy view my works and my footsteps

for thy imitation. Remember the sorrow, which pierced

my heart at the prophecies of Simeon, and how I re

mained in peace and tranquillity, without any sign of

disturbance, although my heart and soul were trans

fixed by a sword of pain. In every event I sought mo

tives for glorifying and adoring his admirable wisdom.

If the transitory labors and sufferings are accepted with

joy and with serenity of heart, they spiritualize the crea

ture, they elevate it and furnish it with a divine insight ;

by which the soul begins to esteem affliction at its proper

value and soon finds consolation and the blessings of

mortification and of freedom from disorderly passions.

This is the teaching of the school of the Redeemer,

hidden from those living in Babylon and from those who

love vanity (Matth. 11, 25). I wish also that thou imitate

me in respecting the priests and ministers of the Lord,

who in the new law hold a much higher dignity than in

THE INCARNATION 515

the old, since the divine Word has now united Itself with

human nature and become the eternal High-Priest ac

cording to the order of Melchisedech (Ps. 109, 4). Listen

to their words and instructions, as God requires, whose

place they take. Consider the power and authority given

them in the Gospels, where it is said: "Who hears you,

hears Me; who obeys you obeys Me" (Luke 10, 16).

Strive after the perfection they teach thee. Ponder and

meditate without intermission upon that, which my most

holy Son suffered, so that thy soul be a participant in his

sorrows. Let the pious memory of his sufferings en

gender in thee such a disgust and abhorrence of all earthly

pleasures that thou despise and forget all that is visible,

and instead, follow the Author of eternal life.

CHAPTER XXL

THE LORD PREPARES THE MOST HOLY MARY FOR THE

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT; THE ANGEL SPEAKS TO SAINT

JOSEPH; AND OTHER MATTERS CONNECTED THERE

WITH.

606. When the most holy Mary and glorious saint

Joseph returned from the presentation of the Infant

Jesus in the temple, they concluded to stay in Jerusalem

for nine days in order to be able each day to visit the

temple and repeat the offering of the sacred Victim, their

divine Son, thus rendering fitting thanks for the im

mense blessing for which they had been singled out from

among all men. The heavenly Lady had a special venera

tion for this number in memory of the nine days, during

which She had been prepared and adorned by God for the

incarnation of the Word, as I have related in the first

ten chapters of this second part; also in memory of the

nine months, during which She had borne Jesus in her

virginal womb. In honor of these events She wished

to make this novena with her divine Child, presenting

Him that many times to the eternal Father as an ac

ceptable offering for her lofty purposes. They began

the devotions of the novena every day before the third

hour, praying in the temple until nightfall. They chose

the most obscure and retired place, meriting thereby the

invitation of the master of the banquet in the Gospel :

"Friend, go up higher" (Luke 14, 10). This invitation

was given to Her, on one of those days, when She was

516

THE INCARNATION 517

pouring out her spirit in the presence of the eternal

Father in the following words:

607. "Highest King, Lord and Creator of all that has

being, here in thy presence lies the useless dust and ashes,

which thy ineffable condescension has favored with grace

such as it neither knew, nor ever could know, how to

merit. I find myself, O Lord, forced onward by the

impetuous flood of thy blessings to give Thee thanks.

But what return can she offer, who, being nothing, has

received her existence and her life from Thee, and who

over and above was overwhelmed by such incomparable

mercies and blessings of thy Divinity ? What thanks can

she render in acknowledgment of thy immense bounty?

What reverence worthy of thy Majesty? What gift to

thy infinite Deity, since She is only a creature ? My soul,

my being, and my faculties, all have I received and con

tinue to receive from thy hands. A thousand times do

I offer it in sacrifice to thy glory. I acknowledge my

indebtedness, not only for having given me all this, but

for the love with which Thou hast given it, and because

among all creatures, thy infinite bounty has preserved me

from the contagion of sin and has chosen me to give hu

man form to thy Onlybegotten Son, to bear Him in my

womb and at my breast, though I am only a daughter

of Adam and made of lowly and earthly matter. I per

ceive thy ineffable condescension toward me, O Lord, and

in gratitude for it my heart fails and my life is spent in

affections of divine love, having nothing else to repay all

the favors of thy right hand conferred upon thy hand

maid. But now my heart is revived and rejoices in pos

sessing a gift worthy of thy greatness, since I can offer

Thee Him, who is one in substance with Thee, equal in

majesty, and perfection of attributes, the Onlybegotten

of thy intellect, the image of thy being, the fullness of

518 CITY OF GOD

thy own pleasure, thy only and most beloved Son. This,

eternal Father and Most High God, is the gift, which

I offer, the Victim which I bring Thee, and this I am sure

Thou wilt receive. Having received Him as God, I re

turn Him to Thee God and man. Neither I nor any

other creature, O Lord, can ever offer Thee a greater

gift, nor can thy Majesty ever demand one more precious.

It is so valuable, that it will suffice to repay Thee for

what I have received. In his name and in mine I offer

and present Him to Thee. I am the Mother of thy Only-

begotten, having given Him human flesh, I have made

Him the Brother of mortals, and as He wishes to be their

Redeemer and Teacher, it behooves me to be their ad

vocate, to assume their cause and claim assistance for

them. Therefore, Father of my Onlybegotten, God of

mercies, I offer Him to Thee from all my heart; with

Him and because of Him I beg Thee to pardon sinners,

to pour out upon the human race thy mercies of old and

to open new fountains for the renewal of thy wonders

(Eccli. 38, 6). This is the Lion of Juda become a Lamb,

which takes away the sins of the world (Apoc. 5, 5). He

is the treasure of thy Divinity."

608. Such prayers and petitions the Mother of piety

offered up in the first days of her novena in the temple.

To all of them the eternal Father responded, accepting

the offering of his Onlybegotten as a pleasing sacrifice,

being more and more enamored with the purity of his

only and chosen Daughter and looking upon her sanctity

with benign pleasure. As an answer to her petitions He

conceded to Her new and great privileges, among which

was also this one, that, as long as the world should last,

She should obtain all that She would ever ask for her

clients; that the greatest sinners, if they availed them

selves of her intercession, should find salvation; that in

THE INCARNATION 519

the new Church and law of the Gospel She should be the

Cooperatrix and Teacher of salvation with Christ her

most holy Son. This was to be her privilege especially

after his Ascension into heaven, when She should re

main, as Queen of the universe, as the representative and

instrument of the divine power on earth. This I will

show more particularly in the third part of this history.

Many other favors and mysteries the Most High con

firmed upon the heavenly Mother in answer to her pray

ers. They, however, are beyond the reach of spoken

language, and cannot be described by my short and

limited terms.

609. In the course of these manifestations, on the fifth

day of the novena after the presentation and purifica

tion, while the heavenly Lady was in the temple with the

Infant on her arms, the Deity revealed Itself to Her,

although not intuitively, and She was wholly raised and

filled by the Spirit. It is true, that this had been done to

Her before ; but as God s power and treasures are infinite,

He never gives so much as not to be able to give still

more to the creatures. In this abstractive vision the

Most High visited anew his only Spouse, wishing to

prepare Her for the labors, that were awaiting Her.

Speaking to Her, He comforted Her saying : "My Spouse

and my Dove, thy wishes and intentions are pleasing

in my eyes and I delight in them always. But Thou

canst not finish the nine days devotion, which Thou hast

begun, for I have in store for Thee other exercises of

Thy love. In order to save the life of thy Son and raise

Him up, Thou must leave thy home and thy country,

fly with Him and thy spouse Joseph into Egypt, where

Thou art to remain until I shall ordain otherwise: for

Herod is seeking the life of the Child. The journey is

long, most laborious and most fatiguing; do thou suffer

520 CITY OF GOD

it all for my sake; for I am, and always will be, with

Thee."

610. Any other faith and virtue might have been dis

turbed (as the incredulous really have been) to see the

powerful God flying from a miserable earthly being, and

that He should do so in order to save his life, as if He,

being both God and man, could be affected by the fear

of death. But the most prudent and obedient Mother

advanced no objection or doubt : She was not in the

least disturbed or moved by this unlocked for order.

Answering, She said: "My Lord and Master, behold

thy servant with a heart prepared to die for thy love if

necessary. Dispose of me according to thy will. This

only do I ask of thy immense goodness, that, overlooking

my want of merit and gratitude, Thou permit not my

Son and Lord to suffer, and that Thou turn all pains and

labor upon me, who am obliged to suffer them." The

Lord referred Her to saint Joseph, bidding Her to fol

low his directions in all things concerning the journey.

Therewith She issued from her vision, which She had

enjoyed without losing the use of her exterior senses and

while holding in her arms the Infant Jesus. She had

been raised up in this vision only as to the superior part

of her soul; but from it flowed other gifts, which spirit

ualized her senses and testified to Her that her soul was

living more in its love than in the earthly habitation of

her body.

611. On account of the incomparable love, which the

Queen bore toward her most holy Son, her maternal

and compassionate heart was somewhat harrowed at the

thought of the labors which She foresaw in the vision

impending upon the infant God. Shedding many tears,

She left the temple to go to her lodging-place, without

manifesting to her spouse the cause of her sorrow. Saint

THE INCARNATION 521

Joseph therefore thought that She grieved on account of

the prophecy of Simeon. As the most faithful Joseph

loved Her so much, and as he was of a kind and solicitous

disposition, he was troubled to see his Spouse so tearful

and afflicted, and that She sho uld not manifest to him

the cause of this new affliction. This disturbance of his

soul was one of the reasons why the holy angels spoke

to him in sleep, as I have related above, when speaking

of the pregnancy of the Queen. For in the same night,

while saint Joseph was asleep, the angel of the Lord

appeared to him, and spoke to him as recorded by saint

Matthew: "Arise, take the Child and its Mother and

fly into Egypt; there shalt thou remain until I shall

return to give thee other advice; for Herod is seeking

after the Child in order to take away its life." Imme

diately the holy spouse arose full of solicitude and sor

row, foreseeing also that of his most loving Spouse.

Entering upon her retirement, he said : "My Lady, God

wills that we should be afflicted; for his holy angel has

announced to me the pleasure and the decree of the

Almighty, that we arise and fly with the Child into Egypt,

because Herod is seeking to take away its life. Encour

age thyself, my Lady, to bear the labors of this journey

and tell me what I can do for thy comfort, since I hold

my life and being at the service of thy Child and of

Thee."

612. "My husband and my master," answered the

Queen, "if we have received from the hands of the Most

High such great blessings of grace, it is meet that

we joyfully accept temporal afflictions (Job 2, 13). We

bear with us the Creator of heaven and earth ; if He has

placed us so near to Him, what arms shall be able to

harm us, even if it be the arm of Herod? Wherever we

carry with us all our Good, the highest treasure of heaven,

522 CITY OF GOD

our Lord, our guide and true light, there can be no desert ;

but He is our rest, our portion, and our country. All

these goods we possess in having his company; let us

proceed to fulfill his will." Then most holy Mary and

Joseph approached the crib where the Infant Jesus lay;

and where He, not by chance, slept at that time. The

heavenly Mother uncovered Him without awakening

Him; for He awaited those tender and sorrowful words

of his Beloved : "Fly away, O my Beloved, and be like the

roe and the young hart upon the mountains of aromatical

spices. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field,

let us ride in the villages" (Cant. 8, 14; 7, 11). And the

tender Mother added : "Sweetest Love, meekest Lamb,

thy power is not limited by that of earthly kings; but

Thou wishest, in thy exalted wisdom, to hide it for love

of men. Who among mortals can think of taking away

thy life, O my God? Is it not in thy power to anni

hilate all life? Since Thou givest life to all, why should

men take away thine? (John 10, 10). Since Thou

visited them in order to give them eternal life, why should

they wish to give Thee death? But who shall compre

hend the secrets of thy Providence? (Rom. 11, 34).

Allow me, then, O Lord and light of my soul, to awaken

Thee ; for when thou sleepest thy heart is awake."

613. Some such sentiments were also expressed by

saint Joseph. Then the heavenly Mother, falling upon

her knees, awakened the sweetest Infant, and took Him

in her arms. Jesus, in order to move Her to greater

tenderness and in order to show Himself as true man,

wept a little (O wonders of the Most High in things

according to our judgments so small) ! Yet He was

soon again quieted ; and when the most holy Mother and

saint Joseph asked his blessing He gave it them in visible

manner. Gathering their poor clothing into the casket

THE INCARNATION 523

and loading it on the beast of burden which they had

brought from Nazareth, they departed shortly after mid

night, and hastened without delay on their journey to

Egypt, as I will relate in the following chapter.

614. I will here add what I have been made to under

stand as to the concordance of the two Gospels of saint

Matthew and saint Luke in regard to this event. For,

since all of them wrote under guidance and light of the

Holy Ghost, each of them knew what the other three

had written, and what they had omitted to say in their

Gospels. Hence it happened that according to divine pre

disposition some of the happenings of the life of Christ

and of the Gospel were described by all four of the

Evangelists, while again some other things mentioned by

one were omitted by the others. Saint Matthew de

scribes the adoration of the Kings and the flight into

Egypt, while these events were not mentioned by saint

Luke. He again describes the Circumcision, Presenta

tion and Purification, which are omitted by saint Mat

thew. Thus saint Matthew, after referring to the de

parture of the Magi, immediately, without speaking of

the Presentation, relates that the angel appeared to saint

Joseph commanding him to fly into Egypt; but it does

not follow therefrom that the Child had not been pre

sented before that time in the temple, for it is certain

that this was done after the departure of the Kings and

before the flight into Egypt, as is narrated by saint Luke.

Thus, likewise, although saint Luke, after describing the

Presentation and Purification, immediately mentions that

the holy Family lived in Nazareth, we must not conclude

that they had not before that time lived in Egypt: he

writes nothing of this flight into Egypt either before or

after, because it had already been recorded by saint Mat

thew. And this flight took place immediately after the

524 CITY OF GOD

Presentation before most holy Mary and Joseph returned

to Nazareth. As saint Luke had received no commis

sion to write about this journey it was natural that, in

continuing his history, he should mention the return to

Nazareth immediately after the Presentation. To say

that, having fulfilled what the law commanded, they re

turned to Galilee, was not to deny the flight into Egypt,

but it was merely continuing the narrative without men

tioning the flight from Herod. Even the very text of

saint Luke intimates that the return to Nazareth hap

pened after their sojourn in Egypt; for he says that the

Child grew and increased in wisdom, and that grace was

manifested in Him ; which could not have been before He

had passed the years of infancy. Hence it must have

been after his return from Egypt, and at an age when

the use of reason usually begins to show itself in children.

615. I was also given to understand how foolish it is

in the infidels or incredulous to stumble against this cor

nerstone of Christ even in his infancy and to take offense

at seeing Him fly to Egypt in order to defend Himself

against Herod ; as if this were on account of his weakness

and not a mystery, and as if it had happened for no

higher purpose than to defend his life against the cruelty

of a wicked man. For the well-disposed souls the words

of the Evangelist are amply sufficient: since he says it

happened in order that the prophecy of Osea might

be fulfilled, who prophesies in the name of the

eternal Father: "And I called my Son out of Egypt"

(Osee 11, 1). The ends which He had in view in send

ing Him there and in calling Him thence are most ex

alted and mysterious : of these I will say something anon.

If not all of the doings of the incarnate Word are equally

admirable and sacramental, yet no one with sane judg

ment can dispute or ignore the sweet providence of God

THE INCARNATION 525

in directing the secondary causes, while allowing- full

liberty to the human will (Eccli. 15, 14). For this rea

son, and not for want of power, He permits so many

idolatries, heresies and other sins, which are not any

smaller than that of Herod ; for this reason He permitted

the crime of Judas and all those which followed in the

sufferings and crucifixion of Christ. Certainly He could

have prevented all these sins and yet would not ; not only

because He wished to work our Redemption, but also in

order that He might secure to man freedom of his will

in all his actions. He was ready to give to men the

helps and graces according to his divine Providence,

whereby they could accomplish the good, if they would

only use their free will to attain it in the same degree as

they were using it to follow evil.

616. In this sweetness of his Providence He gives sin

ners time, hoping for their conversions, as in the case of

Herod. If He would use his absolute power and per

form great miracles for preventing the course of sec

ondary causes, the order of nature would be confounded,

and to a certain extent He would contradict Himself in

his double role as Author of grace and as Author of

nature. Therefore, miracles must happen but rarely, and

on special occasions for particular reasons, or when some

end is to be served. Therefore, God reserves them for

the manifestations of his power at certain times. He

makes Himself known as the Author of his works by

bringing them into existence and preserving them inde

pendently of creatures. Neither must we wonder that

He should consent to the death of the innocent children

which Herod murdered ; for it would not have been to

their benefit to save them through a miracle, since by

their death they were to gain eternal life together with

an abundant reward, which vastly recompensed them for

2-35

526 CITY OF GOD

the loss of their temporal life. If they had been allowed

to escape the sword and die a natural death, all would

eventually not have been saved. The works of the Lord

are just and holy in all particulars, although we do not

always see the reasons why they are so ; but we shall come

to know them in the Lord when we shall see him face

to face.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

617. My daughter, what thou must especially learn

from this chapter is, that thou accustom thyself to humble

thanksgiving for the benefits which thou receivest, since

thou, among many generations, art so specially signalized

by the riches of grace with which my Son and I visit

thee without any merit of thine. I was wont to repeat

many times this verse of David : "What shall I render

to the Lord for all the things that he hath rendered to

me?" (Ps. 115, 12). In such sentiments I humiliated

myself to the dust, esteeming myself altogether useless

among creatures. Therefore, if thou knowest what I did

as Mother of God, consider what then is thy obligation,

since thou must with so much truth confess thyself un

worthy and undeserving of all thou receivest, and so

poorly furnished for giving thanks and for making pay

ment. Thou must supply thy insufficiency and thy

misery by offering up to the eternal Father the living

host of his onlybegotten Son, especially when thou re

ceivest Him in the holy Sacrament and possessest Him

within thee : for in this thou shouldst also imitate David,

who, after asking the Lord what return he should make

for all his benefits, answers : "I will take the chalice of

salvation; and I will call upon the name of the Lord"

THE INCARNATION 527

(Ps. 115, 13). Thou must accept the salvation offered

to thee and bring forth its fruits by the perfection of thy

works, calling upon the name of the Lord, offering up his

Onlybegotten. For He it is who gave the virtue of

salvation, who merited it, who alone can be an adequate

return for the blessings conferred upon the human race

and upon thee especially. I have given Him human

form in order that He might converse with men and

become the property of each one. He conceals Himself

under the appearances of bread and wine in order to ac

commodate Himself to the needs of each one, and that

each one might consider Him as his personal property

fit to offer to the eternal Father. In this way He fur

nishes to each one an oblation which no one could other

wise offer, and the Most High rests satisfied with it,

since there is not anything more acceptable nor anything

more precious in the possession of creatures.

618. In addition to this offering is the resignation with

which souls embrace and bear with equanimity and

patience the labors and difficulties of mortal life. My

most holy Son and I were eminent Masters in the prac

tice of this doctrine. My Son began to teach it from

the moment in which He was conceived in my womb.

For already then He began to suffer, and as soon as He

was born into the world He and I were banished by

Herod into a desert, and his sufferings continued until

He died on the Cross. I also labored to the end of my

life, as thou wilt be informed more and more in the

writing of this history. Since, therefore, We suffered

so much for creatures and for their salvation, I desire

thee to imitate Us in this conformity to the divine will

as being his spouse and my daughter. Suffer with a

magnanimous heart, and labor to increase the possessions

of thy Lord and Master, namely, souls, which are so

528 CITY OF GOD

precious in his sight and which He has purchased with

his life-blood. Never shouldst thou fly from labors, diffi

culties, bitterness and sorrows, if by any of them thou

canst gain a soul for the Lord, or if thou canst thereby

induce it to leave the path of sin and enter the path of

life. Let not the thought that thou art so useless and

poor, or that thy desires and labor avail but little, dis

courage thee; since thou canst not know how the Lord

will accept of them and in how far He shall consider

Himself served thereby. At least thou shouldst wish to

labor assiduously and eat no unearned bread in his house

(Prov. 31, 27).

CHAPTER XXII.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH BEGIN THE JOURNEY TO EGYPT ;

ACCOMPANIED BY THE ANGEUC SPIRITS, THEY ARRIVE

AT THE CITY OF GAZA.

619. Our heavenly Pilgrims left Jerusalem and entered

upon their banishment while yet the silence and obscurity

of night held sway. They were full of solicitude for the

Pledge of heaven, which they carried with them into a

strange and unknown land. Although faith and hope

strengthened them (for in no other beings could these

virtues be more firmly and securely established than in

our Queen and her most faithful spouse), nevertheless

the Lord afforded them occasion for anxiety. Their love

for the Infant Jesus would naturally excite in them

anxiety and suffering on an occasion like this. They

knew not what would happen during such a long journey,

nor when it should end, nor how they would fare in

Egypt, where they would be entire strangers, nor what

comfort or convenience they would find there for raising;

the Child, nor even how they would be able to ward off

great sufferings from Him on the way to Egypt There

fore the hearts of these holy Parents were filled with

many misgivings and anxious thoughts when they parted

with so much haste from their lodging-place; but their

sorrow was much relieved when the ten thousand heav

enly courtiers above mentioned again appeared to them

in human forms and in their former splendor and beauty,

and when they again changed the night into the brightest

day for the holy Pilgrims. As they set forth from the

529

530 CITY OF GOD

portals of the city the holy angels humiliated themselves

and adored the incarnate Word in the arms of the Virgin

Mother. They also encouraged Her by again offering

their homage and service, stating that it was the will of

the Lord that they guide and accompany Her on the

journey.

620. To the afflicted heart the least consolation seems

precious; hence this one, being in itself a great relief,

comforted our Queen and her spouse Joseph very much.

They therefore entered upon their journey with good

heart, choosing the way which led through the city gate

in the direction of Nazareth. The heavenly Mother

longed to visit again the place of the Nativity, in order

to venerate the sacred cave and the crib, which had offered

shelter and hospitality to her most holy Son at his en

trance into the world. But the holy angels, knowing of

her unspoken desires, said to Her: "Our Queen and

Lady, Mother of our Creator, it behooves us to hasten on

our journey without any delay; for on account of the

escape of the magi Kings and their failure to return to

Jerusalem, and on account of the words spoken by the

priest Simeon, and by Anne, the people have been roused

to attention. Some of them have begun to say that Thou

art the Mother of the Messias ; others that Thou knowest

of Him; and others say that thy Son is a Prophet.

Various rumors are also spread about concerning the

visit of the Kings in Bethlehem, and of all these things

Herod is informed. He has commanded that You be

sought after very carefully and consequently a most dili

gent search is being made to find You. On this account

the Most High has commanded You to fly at night and

with so much haste."

621. The Queen of heaven yielded to the will of the

Almighty thus made known to Her by the holy angels.

THE INCARNATION 531

She therefore reverenced from afar the sacred place of

the birth of her Onlybegotten, renewing the memory of

the mysteries there wrought and the favors there re

ceived. The holy angel who stood as guard of the sacred

cave approached Them on their way in visible form and

adored the incarnate Word in the arms of his Mother.

As She was thus allowed to see this angel and speak to

him, the heavenly Lady was rejoiced and comforted still

more. She would have also preferred to travel by way

of Hebron; since it was only a short distance from the

one they were now traveling, and Elisabeth was just at

that time in that city with her son John. But the anxiety

of saint Joseph, who was more timid, prevented also this

diversion and delay ; for he said to his heavenly Spouse :

"My Lady, I think it is extremely important that we do

not delay our journey even for one instant; and that we

hasten as much as possible to flee from the place of dan

ger. Therefore it will not be prudent to go to Hebron,

where they will find us more easily than in any other parts

of the country." "Let it be according to thy pleasure,"

answered the humble Queen, "yet I wish thou give me

permission to send one of these celestial spirits to Elisa

beth, in order to inform my cousin of the cause of our

flight, so that she herself may protect her son; for the

wrath of Herod is so roused that it will extend to them."

622. The Queen of heaven knew of the design to mur

der the children ; but She did not tell saint Joseph of it

at that time. Here I must marvel at the obedience and

humility of most holy Mary, which was so exquisite and

rare: for She obeyed saint Joseph not only in that which

he commanded, but also in that which concerned Herself

alone, namely in the matter of sending an angel to saint

Elisabeth. Although She could have sent the angel by

a mere wish, without even expressing it in words, She

532 CITY OF GOD

nevertheless preferred not to do so without permission

and in obedience to her spouse. I must confess my shame

and my negligence ; since having before my eyes the most

pure fountain of waters, I do not satiate my thirst, nor

profit by the light and the example before me, though it

is so vivid, so sweet, so powerful and so attractive in

teaching us all to abjure our own reprehensible wills.

With the permission of saint Joseph, then most holy Mary

despatched one of the principal angels of her guard, in

order to notify saint Elisabeth of what was passing. As

the Sovereign of the angelic spirits She instructed her

messenger on this occasion what he was to say to the

holy matron and to the child John.

623. The angel, according to the order and pleasure of

the Queen, proceeded to inform the fortunate and blessed

Elisabeth of all these events as far as was proper. He

told her that the Mother of God was fleeing before the

wrath of Herod into Egypt, as this tyrant was now

searching for the Child in order to kill It. He warned

her to see to the safety of saint John by hiding him in

some place of refuge. He also manifested to her other

mysteries of the incarnate Word according to the com

mand of the heavenly Mother. The holy Elisabeth was

filled with joy and wonder at this message, and she ex

pressed her desire to meet and adore the Infant Jesus,

and to see his Mother; asking him whether they could

be reached. The holy angel answered that his King and

Lord was passing with his Mother at a distance from

Hebron and could not wait for her visit ; saint Elisabeth

therefore gave up her project. Overflowing with tender

and tearful affection, she asked the angel to bring affec

tionate greetings to the Son and Mother. The angel

then returned with his message to the Queen. Saint

Elisabeth immediately despatched a servant with some

THE INCARNATION 533

gifts consisting in provisions, money and material for

clothing the Infant. She foresaw their needs in a strange

country and instructed the servant to overtake them with

all haste. He met them in Gaza, which lies a little less

than twenty hours from Jerusalem, on the river Besor,

and on the road from Palestine to Egypt, not far from

the Mediterranean sea.

624. In this town they remained two days, for saint

Joseph and the beast of burden which carried the Queen

were worn out by the fatigue of the journey. From

that place they sent back the servant of saint Elisabeth,

taking care to caution him not to tell any one of their

whereabouts. But God provided still more effectually

against this danger; for He took away from this man

all remembrance of what saint Joseph had charged him to

conceal, so that he retained only his message to saint

Elisabeth. Most holy Mary expended the presents sent

by Elisabeth in entertaining the poor; for She, who was

Mother of the poor, could not bear to pass them by

unassisted. Of the clothes sent to Her She made a cloak

for the divine Infant, and one for saint Joseph, to shelter

Them from the discomforts of the season and of the

journey. She also used other things in their possession

for the comfort of her Child and of saint Joseph. The

most prudent Virgin would not rely on miraculous as

sistance whenever She could provide for the daily needs

by her own diligence and labor ; for in these matters She

desired to subject Herself to the natural order and depend

upon her own efforts. During the two days which they

spent in that city the most pure Mary, in order to enrich

it with great blessings, performed some wonderful deeds.

She freed two sick persons from the danger of death

and cured their ailments. She restored to another person,

a crippled woman, the use of her limbs. In the souls of

534 CITY OF GOD

many, who met Her and conversed with Her, She caused

divine effects of the knowledge of God and of a change

of life. All of them felt themselves moved to praise

their Creator. But neither Mary nor Joseph spoke a

word about their native country, nor of the destination

or object of their journey; for if this information had

been added to the public notice caused by their wonderful

actions, the attention of Herod s agents might have been

drawn toward them, and they might have found sufficient

inducement to follow them after their departure.

625. Words fail me to describe what I have been made

to understand concerning the happenings during this

journey of Jesus and Mary; moreover, I fall short of

the sentiments of reverence and piety which such admir

able mysteries would require. The arms of the most

pure Mary continually served as a delightful couch for

the new and real King Solomon (Cant. 3, 7). As She

penetrated in spirit into the secret of the most holy

humanity of Christ, it happened sometimes that the Son

and Mother interchanged sweet colloquies and canticles

of praise in honor especially of the infinite essence of God

and of all his attributes and perfections. On these occa

sions the Son of God favored his sovereign Mother with

new visions of intellectual clearness, in which She per

ceived the unity of Essence in the three persons of God,

the operations ad intra, in the generation of the Word,

and in the procession of the Holy Spirit. She perceived

how the Three are from eternity, and how the Word is

generated by the operation of the eternal Intellect, and

the Holy Ghost is breathed forth in the operation of the

Will; how there is no need of any succession of before

or after, but how all is from eternity; and how it hap

pens that we conceive these operations with the idea of

duration or succession of time. She also perceived how

THE INCARNATION 535

these three Persons comprehend each other by one and

the same act of understanding, and how this comprehen

sion includes the Divinity of the incarnate Word united

to the humanity, forming one Person, and what effects

this union produces in the humanity.

626. Filled with this exalted knowledge, the great

Lady allowed her thoughts to descend from the Divinity

to the humanity and composed new canticles of praise

and thanksgiving for the creation of this sacred humanity,

most perfect in soul and body : the soul, in its plenitude

and all possible abundance of wisdom, gifts and graces

of the Holy Ghost; the body, most pure, and in the

highest possible degree well composed and complexioned.

Then again She contemplated the exalted and heroic

activity of all his faculties, and, having in her soul

imitated Him therein. She passed on to bless and give

Him thanks for having made Her his Mother, caused

Her to be conceived without sin, chosen Her out of thou

sands, enriched Her with all the favors and gifts of his

powerful right hand as far as was possible in a mere

creature. In the exaltation and glory of these and other

mysteries, the Child spoke to his Mother and She re

sponded in words which are beyond the tongue of angels

and beyond the conception of any other created being.

To all this the heavenly Lady attended without neglect

ing the care and comfort of her Child, giving Him nour

ishment at her breast three times a day, tenderly caressing

Him as a Mother more attentive and loving than all other

Mothers combined could be toward their children.

627. At other times She said to Him : "My sweetest

and most beloved Son, permit me to speak to Thee and

to manifest to Thee my desires, although Thou, my Lord,

already knowest them ; permit me to be delighted in the

sound of thy voice. Tell me, life of my soul and light

536 CITY OF GOD

of my eyes, whether the labors of this journey are

fatiguing Thee, whether the rigors of the season and of

the weather cause Thee affliction, and what I can do for

thy service and for thy relief." And the divine Infant

answered: "All the labors, O Mother, and all fatigue

are most light and sweet to Me, since I undergo them for

the honor of my eternal Father and for the instruction

and Redemption of men, especially in thy company."

The Child wept a few times, yet in great serenity and

in the manner of a grown-up and perfect man; and

immediately the loving Mother sought the interior cause

of these tears, finding it in his soul. She understood

that they were tears of love and compassion for the salva

tion of men and caused by their ingratitude ; in this sor

row and weeping the sweetest Mother imitated Him.

She was wont to answer his tearful plaints like a com

passionate turtledove lovingly caressing and soothing Him

as his affectionate Mother, and kissing Him with match

less reverence. The fortunate Joseph often witnessed these

divine mysteries; and shared in some of the enlighten

ments, thus consoling himself for the hardships of the

journey. At other times he would converse with his

Spouse as they journeyed along, asking Her frequently

whether She desired any service for Herself or for the

Child ; or he would approach and adore the Infant, kiss

ing his feet and asking his blessing, and sometimes taking

Him in his arms. By these little offices of kindness the

great Patriarch sweetened his labors, being at the same

time consoled and encouraged by his, heavenly Spouse.

To all things She attended with a magnanimous heart,

being hindered neither by her interior prayer, nor by her

exalted and fervent contemplation, from attending to the

corporal affairs; for in all things She was most perfect.

THE INCARNATION 537

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY MY HEAVENLY MOTHER AND

MISTRESS.

628. My dearest daughter, for thy instruction and

imitation I wish, in what thou hast written, that thou

take as an example the affectionate wonder which the

divine light caused in my soul at seeing my most holy

Son subject Himself to the inhuman fury of wicked men,

such as was shown by Herod in this occasion of our

flight from his wrath and afterwards by the perverse

servants of the high priests and magistrates. In all the

works of the Most High his greatness, goodness and

infinite wisdom shine forth. But, since my understand

ing, by means of the most exalted inspiration, penetrated

so deeply into the very essence of God in the person of

the Word united to the Divinity, and since I knew that

my most holy Son was the eternal, all-powerful, infinite

Creator and Preserver of all things, and that this iniqui

tous king depended for his life and existence entirely

upon this very beneficence, I was particularly struck with

wonder to see the most sacred humanity pray and beseech

his eternal Father to confer upon Herod, at this very

time, enlightenment, help and blessing; to see my Son,

who had it so much in his power to punish him, by his

prayers prevent the full measure of chastisement which

he deserved. Although Herod s purpose was frustrated,

yet this obstinate reprobate was visited with less chas

tisement than would have been given to him if my holy

Son had not prayed for him. All this, and whatever

else is contained in this matchless mercy and kindness of

Jesus, I sought to imitate; for as a Teacher He taught

me thus early what He afterwards inculcated by his

actions, words and example concerning the love of

enemies (Matth. 5, 44). When I perceive how he con-

538 CITY OF GOD

cealed and disguised his infinite power, and how, being

the invincible Lion, He became a meek and humble Lamb

(Is. 5, 29), amidst the fury of ravenous wolves, my

heart was overwhelmed and my faculties failed me in the

ardent desire of loving Him, imitating and following

Him in his love, charity, patience and meekness.

629. This example I place before thee for thy con

stant imitation, so that thou mayest understand to what

extremes thou must be willing to bear and suffer, forgive

and love all who offend thee ; for neither thou nor other

creatures are innocent and without fault, and many are

burdened with numerous and oft-repeated sins, by which

they have merited all offenses and insults. Now, if per

secutions afford thee the advantage of imitating Him,

why shouldst thou not esteem them as a great blessing?

Why shouldst thou not love those who give thee occasion

to practice this highest perfection, why not thank them

for this benefit, and hold them not as enemies but as

benefactors, who afford thee a chance to obtain what is

of so much importance for thy welfare ? On account of

the object-lesson contained in this history, thou wilt not

be without guilt if thou fall short in this matter; for the

divine light, and all that thou perceivest and under-

standest through it, is as it were before thy eyes, as in a

living example.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH PURSUE THEIR JOURNEY FROM

THE CITY OF GAZA TO HEUOPOUS IN EGYPT.

630. On the third day after our Pilgrims had touched

Gaza, they departed from that city for Egypt. Soon

leaving the inhabited parts of Palestine, they entered the

sandy deserts of Bersabe, which they were obliged to

traverse for sixty leagues in order to arrive and take their

abode in Heliopolis, the present Cairo in Egypt. This

journey through the desert consumed a number of days,

for the distance they could travel each day was but short,

not only on account of the laborious progress over the

deep sand, but also on account of the hardships occa

sioned by the want of shelter. There were many inci

dents on their way through this solitude ; I will mention

some of them, from which others can be conjectured;

for it is not necessary to relate all of them. In order

to understand how much Mary and Joseph and also the

Infant Jesus suffered on their pilgrimage, it must be

remembered that the Almighty permitted his Onlybe-

gotten, with his most holy Mother and saint Joseph, to

suffer the inconveniences and hardships naturally con

nected with travel through this desert. And although

the heavenly Lady made no complaints, yet She was

much afflicted, which was also true of her most faithful

husband. For both of them suffered many personal in

conveniences and discomforts, while the Mother, in addi

tion thereto, was afflicted still more on account of the

sufferings of her Son and of saint Joseph ; and the latter

539

540 CITY OF GOD

was deeply grieved not to be able by his diligence and

care to ease the hardships of the Child and his Spouse.

631. During all this journey of sixty leagues through

the desert they had no other night-shelter than the sky

and open air ; moreover, it was in the time of winter, for

this journey took place in the month of February, only

six days after the Purification, as was indicated in the

last chapter. In the first night on these sandy plains

they rested at the foot of a small hill, this being the only

protection they could find. The Queen of heaven with

the Child in her arms seated Herself on the earth, and

with her husband She ate of the victuals brought with

them from Gaza. The Empress of heaven also nursed

the Infant Jesus at her breast and He on his part re

joiced his Mother and her husband by his contentment.

In order to furnish them with some kind of shelter

against the open air, however narrow and humble it

might be, saint Joseph formed a sort of tent for the divine

Word and most holy Mary by means of his cloak and

some sticks. During that night the ten thousand angels

who, full of marvel, assisted these earthly Pilgrims in

visible human shapes, formed a guard around their King

and Queen. The great Lady perceived that her divine

Son offered up to the eternal Father the hardships and

labors both of Himself and of Mary and Joseph. In

these prayers and in the other acts of his deified Soul, the

Queen joined him for the greater part of the night. The

divine Infant slept for a short time in her arms, while

She continued wakeful and engaged in heavenly col

loquies with the Most High and his angels. Saint Joseph

slept upon the ground, resting his head upon the chest,

which contained the clothing and other articles of their

baggage.

632. On the next day they pursued their journey and

THE INCARNATION 541

their little store of fruit and bread was soon exhausted,

so that they began to suffer great want and to feel the

hunger. Although Joseph was more deeply concerned,

yet both of them felt this privation very much. On one

of the first days of their journey they partook of no

sustenance until nine o clock at night, not having any

more even of the coarse and poor food which until then

had sustained them in their hardships and labor. As

nature demanded some refreshment after the exertion

and weariness of travel, and as there was no way of

supplying their want by natural means, the heavenly Lady

addressed Herself to the Most High in these words:

"Eternal, great and powerful God, I give Thee thanks

and bless Thee for thy magnificent bounty ; and also that,

without my merits, only on account of thy merciful con

descension, Thou gavest me life and being and preservest

me in it, though I am but dust and a useless creature. I

have not made a proper return for all these benefits;

therefore how can I ask for myself what I cannot repay?

But, my Lord and Father, look upon thy Onlybegotten

and grant me what is necessary to sustain my natural

life and also that of my spouse, so that I may serve thy

Majesty and thy Word made flesh for the salvation of

men."

633. In order that the clamors of the sweetest Mother

might proceed from yet greater tribulation, the Most

High permitted the elements to afflict them more than

at other times and in addition to the sufferings caused

by their fatigue, destitution and hunger. For there

arose a storm of wind and rain, which harassed and

blinded them by its fury. This hardship grieved still

more the tender-hearted and loving Mother on account

of the delicate Child, which was not yet fifty days old.

Although She tried to cover and protect Him as much

2-36

542 CITY OF GOD

as possible, yet She could not prevent Him from feeling

the inclemency of the weather, so that He shed tears and

shivered from the cold in the same manner as other

children are wont to do. Then the anxious Mother,

making use of her power as Queen and Mistress of crea

tures, commanded the elements not to afflict their Cre

ator, but to afford Him shelter and refreshment, and

wreak their vengeance upon Her alone. And, as related

once before, at the occasion of the birth of Christ and

of the journey to Jerusalem, again the wind immediately

moderated and the storm abated, not daring to approach

the Mother and Child. In return for this loving fore

thought, the Infant Jesus commanded his angels to assist

his kindest Mother and to serve Her as a shield against

the inclemency of the weather. They immediately com

plied and constructed a resplendent and beautiful globe

round about and over their incarnate God, his Mother

and her spouse. In this they were protected and de

fended more effectually than all the wealthy and power

ful of the world in their palaces and rich garments. The

same they did several times during the journey through

the desert.

634. Nevertheless, they were in want of food, and

they were destitute of other things unprovidable by their

own mere human effort. But the Lord allowed them

to fall into this need in order that, listening to the ac

ceptable prayers of his Spouse, He might make provi

sion also for this by the hands of the angels. They

brought them delicious bread and well-seasoned fruits,

and moreover a most delicious drink; all of which they

administered and served with their own hands. Then

all of them together sang hymns of praise and thanks

giving to the Lord, who gives food to all creatures at

opportune times, in order that the poor may eat and be

THE INCARNATION 543

filled (Ps. 135, 25) whose eyes and hopes are fixed upon

his kingly providence and bounty. Of such a kind was

the delicate feast, with which the Lord regaled his three

exiled Wanderers in the desert of Bersabe (III Kings

19, 3), for it was the same desert in which Elias, fleeing

from Jezabel, was comforted by the hearth cake, brought

to him by the angel in order that he might travel to

Horeb mount. Yet neither this bread, nor the bread and

meat, which once before the ravens had miraculously

brought him every morning and evening at the torrent of

Carith, nor the manna which fell from heaven for the

Israelites, although it was called the bread of angels and

dropped from heaven, nor the quails, which were carried

to them by the African winds ; nor the cloud-tent, which

overshadowed them ; none of all these could be compared

to the succor and relief which the Lord afforded to his

Onlybegotten and to his Mother and saint Joseph. For

these favors were not to be conferred upon a prophet, or

upon an ungrateful and unthinking people ; but they were

intended for the nourishment and protection of a God

incarnate, for his true Mother: they were intended for

the preservation of the natural life of Christ, on which

depended the eternal life of the whole human race. But

if this food was worthy of the excellence of those who

were invited, so was also the thanksgiving and gratitude

worthy of the blessings conferred. In order that all this

might be so much the more opportune, the Lord per

mitted the necessity to become extreme and thus naturally

call into play the assistance of heaven.

635. Let the poor rejoice in this example, let the

hungry confide, let the destitute take new courage, let

none complain of divine Providence, no matter how

afflicted and needy they may find themselves to be. When

has the Lord ever failed him who hoped in his assistance ?

544 CITY OF GOD

(Ps. 17, 31). When has He ever turned away his coun

tenance from his afflicted and needy children? We are

brothers of his only Son incarnate, children and heirs

of his blessings, and also children of his kindest Mother.

Why, then, ye children of God and of this most holy

Mother, do you continue to distrust such Parents in your

poverty? Why do you deprive them of this honor, and

yourselves of the privilege of being assisted and sustained

by Them? Come, come to Them with humble confi

dence, so that They may look upon you with the eyes of

Parents and listen to your crying needs. The arms of

this Lady are stretched out toward the poor and her

hands opened for the needy. And you, ye rich of this

world, why will you confide so much in your uncertain

riches, at the imminent danger of losing your faith, of

piling up for yourselves heaviest cares and sorrows as

mentioned by the Apostle? By your avarice you fail to

conduct yourselves as children of God or of his Mother;

by your actions you make of yourselves spurious off

springs; for legitimate children confide in the care and

love of their parents, and abhor trusting in others, who

are not only strangers but enemies. These truths are

manifest to me by the divine light and charity compels

me thus to speak.

636. The most high Father not only provided nourish

ment for our Pilgrims, but also visible relief against the

tediousnees of this journey and continued solitude. It

happened a few times, when the heavenly Lady rested on

the ground from her fatigue, that, as on other occasions,

a great multitude of birds came flying towards Her from

the mountains. By the sweetness of their warbling and

the variety of their plumage they sought to entertain and

delight Her, perching on her shoulders and hands with

signs of great joy. The most prudent Queen gently

THE INCARNATION 545

received them and invited them to acknowledge their

Creator by their songs and to be thankful for his having

created them so beautiful and arrayed them in their

gorgeous plumage, given them the air and the earth

for their enjoyment, and provided them with daily food

and sustenance. The birds responded to her exhorta

tions with joyous movements and sweet warblings, while

the loving Mother joined them with still more sweet and

melodious songs for the Infant Jesus, extolling and bless

ing Him, and acknowledging Him as her God and her

Son, and as the Author of all these wonders. Also the

holy angels took part in these colloquies so full of sweet

ness, and alternated their offerings of praise with that of

the great Lady and of these simple birds. All this pro

duced a harmony more perceptible by the spirit than by

the senses, and of admirable concord for the rational

soul.

637. At other times the heavenly Princess conversed

with the Child and said : "My love and light of my

soul, how can I diminish thy labor ? How can I relieve

Thee of thy hardships? What can I do to lighten the

sufferings of this journey? O would that I could carry

Thee, not in my arms, but in my bosom and make for

Thee a soft couch in my heart, in order that Thou mayest

rest there without fatigue !" And the sweetest Jesus

replied : "My beloved Mother, very easily do I rest in

thy arms while making this journey, and reclining on

thy breast, I am delighted by thy affection, and enter

tained by thy words." Sometimes the Son and Mother

conversed with each other interiorly; and these conver

sations were so exalted and divine that our words can

not express them. Saint Joseph shared in many of these

mysteries and consolations; and thus he eased his jour

ney, forgot his hardships, feeling within himself the

546 CITY OF GOD

delight and sweetness of such companionship. Yet he

did not hear or perceive what the Child said audibly to

his Mother; for at that time of the life of Jesus this

favor was reserved for Her alone, as I have already

remarked above. In this manner our Exiles proceeded

on their way to Egypt.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY TH MOST HOLY MARY,

OUR IvADY.

638. My daughter, just as those who know the Lord

also know how to trust in Him, so those who do not

hope in his goodness and immense love have no perfect

knowledge of the Majesty of God. On account of the

want of faith and hope, this love also is deficient; for we

readily place our love in whom we have confidence and

whom we esteem. In this error lies the source of all the

damage done to mortals ; for they have such a low con

ception of the infinite bounty, which gave them being and

which preserves them, that they fail to place full confi

dence in their God. Failing in this, they also fail in the

love due to Him and they divert it toward the creatures.

They esteem in them what they are seeking, namely

power, riches, vain honor and ostentation. Although the

faithful can remedy these injurious influences by faith

and hope, yet they allow these virtues to remain dead,

and unused, and debase themselves to the level of worth

less creatures. Those who have riches, trust in them, and

those who have none, greedily haste after them; some

procure them by very reprehensible ways and means;

some confide in influential persons, praising and flattering

them. And thus it happens that very few seek the Lord

in such a way as to deserve his providential care; very

few trust in God and acknowledge Him as their Father,

THE INCARNATION 547

who is willing\* to provide for his children, who will nour

ish and sustain them without fail in all necessities.

639. This deceitful error has filled the earth with lovers

of the world ; has filled it with avarice and concupiscence

against the law of the Creator; has made men insane in

their desires; for all of them commonly strive after riches

and earthly possessions; claiming thereby merely to

satisfy their needs, which is only a pretext for hiding

their want of interest in higher things. In reality they

lie to themselves abominously, since they are seeking the

superfluous ; not what is really necessary, but what min

isters to worldly pride. If men would confine their de

sires to what is really necessary, it would be unreasonable

to put any confidence in creatures instead of placing it

in God alone, who ineffably provides even for the young

ravens with no less solicitude than if their Growings were

prayers sent up to their Creator for help (Prov. 28, 8).

Secure in this confidence, I was not alarmed in my exile

and prolonged journey. Since I trusted in the Lord,

He provided for me in the time of my need. Thou also,

my daughter, who art aware of this exalted Providence,

shouldst not afflict thyself in the time of need, nor neglect

thy duties in order to make provision for them, nor con

fide in human efforts, nor in creatures. After having

done what is required of thee, the most efficacious means

is to confide in the Lord, without being disturbed or con

fused; hope patiently, even when help is somewhat de

layed. It will always be at hand at a time when it will

do most good, and when the paternal love of the Lord

can manifest itself most conveniently and openly. Thus it

happened with me and my spouse in the time of our

destitution and necessity.

640. Those that do not bear with adversity and do

not put up with privations, who turn toward dried up

548 CITY OF GOD

cisterns (Jer. 2, 5), trusting in deceit and in the powerful

of this world; those that are not moderate in their

desires and greedily covet what is unnecessary for the

sustenance of life; those that anxiously cling to what they

possess, fearing that it may be diminished and withhold

ing the alms due to the poor ; all of them have reasons to

dread lest divine Providence, showing Itself just as nig

gardly in caring for them as they are in their confidence

and in their charities to the poor, deprive them of what

they could otherwise easily expect to receive at its hands.

But the Father in heaven, who lets the sun rise over the

just and the unjust (Matth. 5, 45), and lets the rain fall

on the good and the bad, nevertheless helps all, giving

them life and nourishment. However, just as his bless

ings are distributed to the good and to the bad, so also

it cannot be a rule with God to give greater temporal

goods to the good and less to the bad. On the contrary

He prefers that the chosen and predestined ones be poor

(James 2, 5), both because they thus gain more merit

and reward, and because there are few who know how

to use wealth properly and who can retain it without

inordinate greed. Although my most holy Son and I

had nothing to fear from this danger, yet He wished to

furnish this example to men and to teach them this

science, through which eternal life comes to them.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE HOLY TRAVELERS, JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH,

ARRIVE IN EGYPT, AND AFTER SOME WANDERINGS THEY

COME TO HEUOPOUS, WHERE GREAT MIRACLES ARE

WROUGHT.

641. I have already mentioned that the flight of the

incarnate Word contained other mysteries and aimed at

more exalted ends than to evade Herod and his perse

cution. The flight into Egypt was to afford the infant

Savior an occasion of visiting that country and perform

ing the miracles spoken of by the ancient Prophets. Isaias

more expressly prophesies of them, when he says: that

the Lord shall ascend upon a swift cloud and enter into

Egypt; that the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his

presence and that the heart of the Egyptians shall melt

in the midst thereof (Is. 19, 1). These and other things

contained in this prophecy happened at the time of the

birth of Christ our Lord. Yet, passing over what does

not pertain to my purpose, I wish to say that, continuing

their pilgrimage in the manner already described, Jesus,

Mary and Joseph arrived in the populated districts of

Egypt. Before They came to the place of their abode

in Heliopolis, They were conducted by the angels, accord

ing to the ordainment of the Most High, in a round

about way, so that They might pass through many

places, where God wished his miracles and blessings to

be wrought for the good of the Egyptians. Thus it came

that They consumed in this journey more than fifty

days; and the distance of their journey from Bethlehem

549

550 CITY OF GOD

or Jerusalem amounted to more than two hundred

leagues, while by a direct route such long-protracted

travel would not have been necessary.

642. Egypt was much given to idolatry and its con

comitant superstition. Even the small villages of this

country were full of idols. In many of these places

temples had been built, where the demons dwelt; and

the inhabitants, instructed by these devils, gathered in

them to offer services and sacrifices in their honor, while

the demons answered their prayers by oracles, thus

obtaining full control of this foolish and superstitious

nation. Steeped in these deceits, they lived on in such

error and subjection to the demons, that only the strong

arm of the Lord (which is the incarnate Word) could res

cue these forsaken people and deliver them from the op

pression of Lucifer. It was a harder and more dangerous

slavery than that in which the Egyptians had held the

people of Israel (Exod. 1, 11). In order to obtain this

deliverance and enlighten those that were living in the

region and the shadows of death (Luke 1, 79), and in

order that they might see the great light spoken of by

Isaias (Is. 9, 2), the Most High ordained that the

Sun of justice, Christ (Mai. 4, 2), shortly after his birth,

should appear in Egypt in the arms of his most fortunate

Mother, and that He should journey and pass through

this country, illumining it everywhere by the power of

his divine light.

643. So then the Infant Jesus, with his Mother and

saint Joseph, reached the inhabited country of Egypt.

On entering the towns the divine Infant, in the arms of

his Mother, raised his eyes and his hands to the Father

asking for the salvation of these inhabitants held captive

by satan. And immediately He made use of his sover

eign and divine power and drove the demons from the

THE INCARNATION 551

idols and hurled them to the infernal abyss. Like light

ning flashed from the clouds they darted forth and de

scended to the lowermost caverns of hell and darkness

(Luke 10, 4). At the same instant the idols crashed to

the ground, the altars fell to pieces, and the temples

crumbled to ruins. The cause of these marvelous

effects were known to the heavenly Lady, for She united

her prayers with those of her most holy Son as Co-opera-

trix of his salvation. Saint Joseph also knew this to be

the work of the incarnate Word; and He praised and

extolled Him in holy admiration. But the demons,

although they felt the divine power, knew not whence

this power proceeded.

644. The Egyptian people were astounded at these

inexplicable happenings; although among the more

learned, ever since the sojourn of Jeremias in Egypt, an

ancient tradition was current that a King of the Jews

would come and that the temples of the idols would be

destroyed. Yet of this prophecy the common people had

no knowledge, nor did the learned know how it was

to be fulfilled : and therefore the terror and confusion

was spread among all of them, as was prophesied by

Isaias (Is. 9, 1). In this disturbance and fear, some,

reflecting on these events, came to our great Lady and

saint Joseph ; and, in their curiosity at seeing these

strangers in their midst, they also spoke to them about

the ruin of their temples and their idols. Making use

of this occasion the Mother of wisdom began to undeceive

these people, speaking to them of the true God and teach

ing them that He is the one and only Creator of heaven

and earth, who is alone to be adored, and acknowledged

as God; that all others are but false and deceitful gods,

nothing more than the wood, or clay, or metal of which

they are made, having neither eyes, nor ears, nor any

552 CITY OF GOD

power; that the same artisans that made them, and any

other man, could destroy them at pleasure; since any

man is more noble and powerful than they; that the

oracles which they gave forth were answers of the lying

and deceitful demons within them; and that the latter

had no power, since there is but one true God.

645. The heavenly Lady was so sweet and kind in

her words, and at the same time so full of life and

force; her appearance was so charming, and all her in

tercourse was accompanied by such salutary effects, that

the rumor of the arrival of these strange Pilgrims quickly

spread about in the different towns, and many people

gathered to see and hear Them. Moreover, the power

ful prayers of the incarnate Word wrought a change of

hearts, and the crumbling of the idols caused an incred

ible commotion among these people, instilling into their

minds knowledge of the true God and sorrow for their

sins without their knowing whence or through whom

these blessings came to them. Jesus, Mary and Joseph

pursued their way through many towns of Egypt, per

forming these and many other miracles, driving out the

demons not only from the idols, but out of many bodies

possessed by them, curing many that were grievously and

dangerously ill, enlightening the hearts by the doctrines

of truth and eternal life. By these temporal benefits and

others, so effectual in moving the ignorant, earthly-

minded people, many were drawn to listen to the instruc

tions of Mary and Joseph concerning a good and salutary

life.

646. They arrived at Hermopolis, which lies in the

direction of the Thebaid, and is called by some the city

of Mercury. In it there were many idols infested by

powerful demons. One of them .dwelt in a tree at the

entrance of the city ; for the neighboring inhabitants had

THE INCARNATION 553

begun to venerate this tree on account of its size and

beauty, whence the demon had taken occasion to erect his

seat in it. When the incarnate Word came within sight

of this tree, not only was the demon hurled from his seat

and cast into hell, but the tree bowed down to the ground,

as if rejoiced by its good fortune ; for even the senseless

creatures testified how tyrannical is the dominion of the

devil. This miraculous reverence of the trees happened

at other times during this journey of Christ, although

these incidents are not all recorded. But the memory of

this event remained for centuries, for the leaves and

fruits of this tree cured many sicknesses. Of this miracle

some authors make mention, as well as of others in other

cities visited by the incarnate Word and his Mother

(Nicephor 1, 10, c. 31; Sozomen 1, 5, c. 20; Brocard

II, c. 4). There is to this day a traditional fountain near

Cairo from which the heavenly Lady drew water for Her

self and the Child, and for washing his clothes; all this

rests on truth and the veneration for these wonders and

these places still lives, not only among the faithful who

visit the holy places, but also among the infidels, who

there occasionally obtain temporal benefits from the hands

of the Lord. For also the infidels sometimes obtain cer

tain favors, in order that the Lord may be justified be

fore them, or in order that the memory of his wonders

may be preserved. But it is not necessary to speak of

them especially just now ; since the principal wonders

during the stay of our Lord in Egypt were wrought in

Heliopolis, which, not without mysterious import, was

called city of the sun, and is now called Cairo, the grand.

647. In writing of these wonders, I asked the great

Queen in astonishment how She could have traveled with

the Child through so many strange provinces and cities?

For it appeared to me that She thereby prolonged exceed-

554 CITY OF GOD

ingly the labors and hardships of their journey. And

our Lady replied: "Do not wonder that my most holy

Son and I journeyed so far in order to gain souls. For

the sake of even one soul, if possible, and if there would

be no other way, We would willingly traverse the whole

world." If what Jesus and Mary did for the salvation

of us men does seem great to us, it is because we do not

understand the immensity of their love, and because we

understand just as little how to make a proper return for

such love.

648. On account of these strange happenings when so

many of the demons were driven by a new and unwonted

power to populate hell, Lucifer was highly disturbed.

Furiously enraged, He issued forth into the world in

order to investigate the cause of such unlocked for events.

He roamed about through all Egypt, where so many

temples and altars of his idols had been overthrown; and

reaching Heliopolis, the largest of the cities and the scene

of the greatest destruction in his dominions, he sought

to ascertain with the utmost anxiety what kind of people

dwelt therein. He found nothing new, except that most

holy Mary had arrived in the city. Of the Infant Jesus

he made no account, deeming Him a child just like all

the rest of that age, for he knew nothing particular about

Him. But as he had been so often vanquished by the

virtues and holiness of the Virgin Mother, he was seized

with new consternation ; although he considered a woman

far too insignificant for such great works, yet he resolved

anew to persecute Her and to stir up against Her his

associates in wickedness.

649. He therefore returned immediately to hell and,

calling a meeting of the princes of darkness, told them

of the destruction of the temples and idols in Egypt. For

these demons had been hurled by the divine power from

THE INCARNATION 555

their habitations with such suddenness, confusion and

torment that at their departure they were unable to ascer

tain the fate of the idols and temples which they were

forced to leave. Lucifer, informing them of all that had

happened, and that he feared the destruction of his reign

in Egypt, told them that he could not ascertain or under

stand what was the cause of this ruin, since he had found

there only that Woman, his enemy (for so the dragon

called most holy Mary) ; and though he knew that her

power was extraordinary, yet he did not presume it to

be so great as to account for such portents. Neverthe

less, he wished them to begin a new war against Her, and

that all should prepare themselves for it. The satellites

of Lucifer proclaimed their readiness to obey, trying to

console him in his desperate fury and promising him vic

tory, as if their forces were as great as their arrogance

(Is. 16, 6).

650. Many legions of devils accordingly sallied forth

from hell and betook themselves to the place where the

Queen of heaven was at that time. As they suspected

that God had used the most holy Mary as his instrument

in causing all their losses in that unfortunate country,

they thought they could make up for their defeat and

restore their dominion if they succeeded in overcoming 1

Her. But they were astonished to find that when they

attempted to approach Her in order to begin their dia

bolical temptations, they could not come nearer to Her

than a distance of two thousand paces; for they were

restrained by the divine power, which they perceived is

suing forth from the heavenly Lady herself. Although

Lucifer and the hostile bands struggled violently, they

were paralyzed and as if bound in strong and tormenting

shackles, without being able to reach the most unconquer

able Queen ; while She witnessed their struggles, holding

556 CITY OF GOD

in her arms the omnipotence of God himself. As Luci

fer persevered in his attempts, he was suddenly hurled

into the abyss of hell with all his squadrons and wicked

spirits. This defeat and ruin filled the dragon with vast

torment and anxiety, and as the like had overtaken him

repeatedly since the Incarnation, he began to have new

misgivings, whether the Messias had not come into the

world. But since he knew nothing of the mystery, and

expected the Messias to come in great splendor and re

nown, he remained in uncertainty and doubt, full of tor

menting fury and wrath. He was consumed with the

desire to find out the cause of his sufferings, and the more

he inquired the more was he involved in darkness and

so much the less did he ascertain of the true cause.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

651. My daughter, great and above all else to be es

teemed, is the consolation of the faithful friends of my

most holy Son, when they with lively faith and assurance

are permitted to serve the Lord of lords and the God of

gods, who alone holds power and dominion over all cre

ation and who triumphs and reigns over his enemies. In

this feeling of assurance the intellect is delighted, the

memory is recreated, the will is rejoiced and all the

powers of the devout soul enjoy the sweetness of the

most exalted activity. For they are entirely taken up

with this supreme Goodness, Holiness and infinite Power,

which has need of none outside Itself and whose will

governs all created things (II Mach. 14, 35, Apoc. 4, 11).

O how many thousandfold blessings do those creatures

lose who, forgetful of their true happiness, employ all

the time of their life and all their powers in attending

THE INCARNATION 557

upon visible things, pursuing the momentary pleasures

and seeking the apparent and deceitful goods of this

world! In the knowledge and light vouchsafed to thee

I would wish, my daughter, that thou withdraw thyself

from this danger, and that thy intellect and memory

occupy themselves continually with the reality of the ex

istence of thy God. In this endless sea, engulf and anni

hilate thyself, repeating without cessation : "Who is like

to God our Lord, that dwells on high and looks upon the

humble in heaven and on earth?" (Ps. 112, 5). Who

is like to Him, that is almighty and depends upon no one ?

that humbles the proud, and casts down those whom the

blind world calls powerful, that triumphs over the demon

and hurls him to the abyss?

652. In order that thy heart may dilate so much the

more upon these truths and attain a greater power over

the enemies of the Most High and of thyself, I wish that,

as far as is possible, thou imitate me, glorying in the

victories and triumphs of his mighty arm and seeking

thyself to have a share in those which he gains over this

cruel dragon. No created tongue, not that of the sera

phim, can describe what my soul felt when I beheld my

most holy Son working such wonders against his enemies

for the benefit of the souls blinded and terrorized by

their errors and for the exaltation and honor of the Most

High. In this jubilation I magnified the Lord; and in

company with my Son I composed new hymns of praise

as his Mother and as Spouse of the Holy Ghost. Thou

art a daughter of the holy Church and a spouse of my

most blessed Son, favored by his grace : it is therefore

just that thou be zealous in acquiring this glory and

honor for Him, striving against his enemies and battling

for the triumphs of thy Spouse.

2-37

CHAPTER XXV.

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DIVINE WILL, JESUS, MARY

AND JOSEPH SETTLE DOWN TO DWELL NEAR THE CITY

OF HELIOPOLIS AND THEY REGULATE THEIR DAILY

LIFE DURING THEIR BANISHMENT.

653. The traditions, which in many parts of Egypt

kept alive the remembrance of wonders wrought by the

incarnate Word, gave rise to differences of opinion among

the sacred and other writers in regard to the city, in

which our Exiles lived during their stay in Egypt. Some

of them assert that they dwelt in this city, some in an

other. But all of them may be right and in accordance

with facts, since each one may be speaking of a different

period of the sojourn of our Pilgrims in Memphis, or

Babylon of Egypt, or in Matarieh; for they visited not

only these cities, but many others. I for my part have

been informed that they passed through these and then

reached Heliopolis, where they took up their abode.

Their holy guardian angels instructed the heavenly Queen

and saint Joseph, that They were to settle in this city.

For, besides the ruin of the temples and idols, which,

just as in other places, took place at their arrival here,

the Lord had resolved to perform still other miracles for

his glory and for the rescue of souls ; and the inhabitants

of this city, (according to the good fortune already prog

nosticated in its name as "City of the Sun"), were to

see the Sun of justice and grace arise over them and shine

upon them. Following these orders, saint Joseph sought

to purchase for a suitable price some dwelling in the

558

THE INCARNATION 559

neighborhood ; and the Lord ordained that he should find

a poor and humble, yet serviceable house, at small dis

tance from the city, just such as the Queen of heaven

desired.

654. Having therefore found this dwelling near Heli-

opolis, they took their abode therein. At the first en

trance of the heavenly Lady with her divine Son and

saint Joseph, She prostrated Herself to the ground, kiss

ing it in profound humility and lovingly thanking the

Most High for having secured them this place of rest

after their prolonged and laborious journeyings. She

thanked also the earth and the elements for bearing with

Her, since in her matchless humility She persisted in

esteeming Herself unworthy of all favors. She adored

the immutable being of God in this prostration, dedicat

ing all that She was to do in this place to his honor and

worship. Interiorly She made a sacrifice of all her

powers and faculties, offering to assume readily and with

joy all the labors by which the Almighty could be served

during her exile ; for in her prudence She foresaw and

affectionately embraced them all. By means of her

divine knowledge She set a great value on sufferings ;

understanding how highly they are esteemed at the divine

tribunal, and how her most holy Son looked upon them

as a rich treasure and inheritance. Having performed

these exalted acts of devotion, She set about humbly to

clean and arrange the poor little house, borrowing the

instruments for this purpose. Although our heavenly

strangers were thus sufficiently provided with the shelter

of bare walls, they were in want of all else pertaining to

the sustenance and comfort of daily life. As they now

lived in an inhabited country, the miraculous assistance,

which they had enjoyed in the desert through the min

istry of the angels, failed them; and the Lord left them

560 CITY OF GOD

to the last resource of the poor, namely, the begging of

alms. Having come to these straits of suffering hunger,

saint Joseph went forth to seek this kind of assistance

for the love of God; giving thereby an example to the

poor not to complain of their affliction and, all other

means failing, not to be ashamed to have recourse to this

expedient For so early the Lord of all creation allowed

Himself to fall into this extreme of being obliged to beg

for his sustenance, in order that He might have an

occasion to return the alms a hundredfold.

655. During the first three days of their arrival in

Heliopolis, just as in other places of Egypt, the Queen

had for Herself and for her Onlybegotten no other suste

nance than what was begged by his foster father saint

Joseph. When he began to earn some wages by his

work, he made an humble couch for the Mother and a

cradle for her Son; while he himself had as a resting-

place only the bare ground ; for the house was without

any furniture until by his own labor he succeeded in

making some of the most indispensable pieces for the

convenience of all three. In this connection I must not

pass over in silence the fact that in their extreme poverty

and need most holy Mary and Joseph regretted not their

house in Nazareth, nor thought of the aid of their rela

tions and friends, nor of the gifts of the kings, which

they had given away and which, if they had saved them,

would now be useful. All of these regrets were far from

their minds, nor did they complain of the great privation

and destitution, thinking of the past or worrying about

their future. But they bore all with incomparable

equanimity, joy and tranquillity, resigning themselves to

the divine Providence in their extreme need and poverty.

O smallness of our unfaithful hearts! In what excruci

ating anxieties we are apt to be cast at finding ourselves

THE INCARNATION 561

threatened with poverty or privation! Immediately we

begin to rail at occasions lost, at having missed or neg

lected this or that advantage, or at not having done this

or that, by which we would have evaded our misfortunes.

All these complaints are vain and most foolish, since they

can bring no relief. Although it would have been good

if we had not committed the sins by which we are thus

punished, yet very often we are sorry for them only on

account of the temporal disadvantages, and not for the

guilt connected with sin. Slow and stupid of heart are

we to perceive the spiritual things conducive to our justi

fication and growth in grace (Luke 24, 25) ; while on the

other hand we are full of fleshly and earthly rashness in

entering upon temporal affairs and anxieties. The ex

ample of our Exiles is indeed a severe reprimand for our

low-minded earthliness.

656. The most prudent Lady and her spouse, forsaken

and destitute of all temporal help, accommodated them

selves joyfully to the poverty of their little dwelling. Of

the three rooms, which it contained, they assigned one

to be the sanctuary or temple of the Infant Jesus under

the tender care of the most pure Mother; there they

placed the cradle and her bare couch, until, after some

days, by the labor of the holy spouse, and through the

kindness of some pious women, they could obtain where

with to cover it. Another room was set aside for the

sleeping place and oratory of saint Joseph. The third

served as a workshop for plying his trade. In view of

their great poverty, and of the great difficulty of sufficient

employment as a carpenter, the great Lady resolved to

assist him by the work of her hands to earn a livelihood.

She immediately executed her resolve by seeking to obtain

needlework through the intervention of the pious women,

who, attracted by her modesty and sweetness, were be-

37

562 CITY OF GOD

ginning to have intercourse with Her. As all that She

attended to or busied Herself with was so perfect, the

reputation of her skill soon spread about, so that She

never was in want of employment whereby to eke out

the slender means of livelihood for her Son, the true God

and man.

657. In order to obtain the indispensable victuals and

clothing, furnish the house ever so moderately, and pay

the necessary expenses, it seemed to our Queen that She

must employ all day in work and consume the night in

attending to her spiritual exercises. This She resolved

upon, not for any motives of gain, or because She did

not continue in her contemplations during the day; for

this was her incessant occupation in the presence of the

infant God, as I have so often said and shall repeat here

after. But some of the hours, which She was wont to

spend in special exercises, She wished to transfer to the

night-time in order to be able to extend the hours of

manual labor, not being minded to ask or expect God s

miraculous assistance for anything which She could at

tain by greater diligence and additional labor on her own

part. In all such cases we ask for miraculous help more

for our own convenience than on account of necessity.

The most prudent Queen asked the eternal Father to

provide sustenance for her divine Son; but at the same

time She continued to labor. Like one who does not

trust in herself, or in her own efforts, She united prayer

with her labors, in order to obtain the necessities of life

like other men.

658. The Infant Jesus was much pleased with the pru

dence of his Mother, and with her resignation in the midst

of her dire poverty, and in return for her fidelity He

wished to lessen the labors She had undertaken. One

day He spoke to Her from the cradle and said: "My

THE INCARNATION 563

Mother, I wish to set up a rule for thy daily life and

labors." Immediately the heavenly Mother knelt before

Him and answered: "My sweetest Love, and Lord of

all my being, I praise and magnify Thee because Thou

hast condescended to meet my secret thoughts and de

sires ; may it please Thee to direct my footsteps according

to thy holy will, to regulate all my labors according to

thy wishes, and to order all my occupations in each hour

of the day according to thy divine pleasure. And since

thy Deity became incarnate and thy Majesty condescended

to take heed of my longings, speak, Light of my eyes, for

thy servant hears." The Lord replied: "My dearest

Mother, from the time of nightfall" (that is, from the

hour called by us nine o clock) "thou shalt take some

sleep and rest. And from midnight until the break of

day thou mayest occupy thyself in contemplation with

Me, and We will praise the eternal Father. Thereupon

prepare the necessary food for thyself and Joseph; and

afterwards give Me nourishment and hold Me in thy

arms until the third hour, when thou shalt place Me in

the arms of thy husband, in order to afford him some

refreshment in his labors. Then retire until it is time

to prepare his meal and return to thy work. Since thou

hast not with thee the sacred Scriptures, which were wont

to console thee, thou canst, by my holy science, enter into

the doctrines of eternal life, in order that thou mayest

follow Me in perfect imitation. And continually pray to

the eternal Father for the sinners."

659. By this rule of life the most holy Mary governed

her doings during her stay in Egypt. Every day three

times She nursed the infant God at her breast; for when

He pointed out to Her the hour in which She was to

nurse Him in the morning, He did not forbid Her to

afford Him nourishment at other times, as She had been

564 CITY OF GOD

accustomed to do since his Nativity. Whenever the

heavenly Mother was engaged in any work, She always

performed it in his presence and upon her knees; and it

was very usual, during their colloquies and conferences,

that the King from his cradle and the Mother at her

work, broke out in mysterious canticles of praise. If

they were all written, they would outnumber all the

psalms and the hymns used by the Church, and all that

are written ; for there can be no doubt that God conversed

with the source of his humanity, his most blessed Mother,

in a more exalted and wonderful manner than with David,

Moses, Mary, Anne and all the Prophets. By these

hymns the heavenly Mother was continually filled with

new influences of the Divinity, and new longings to be

united to his unchangeable being; for She alone was the

Phenix which could be renewed in this conflagration, and

the royal Eagle which could penetrate into the ineffable

light and soar from height to heights, whither no other

created being could venture to wing its flight. She ful

filled the end for which the divine Word had assumed

flesh in her virginal womb, namely, to draw on and ele

vate the rational creatures to the Divinity. As She was

the only Creature which did not present the hindrance of

sin and its effects, nor from disordered passions and

appetites, but was free of the downward tendency of our

earthly nature, She flew upward to her Beloved and to

his exalted habitation, not resting until She reached her

Center, which was the Divinity. Moreover She had

always in view the way and the light (John 16, 6), the

incarnate Word, and all her desires and affections met

in the immutable being of the Most High ; and therefore

She hastened on in burning fervor, embracing Her goal

rather than flying towards it, and living more in her love

than in her life.

THE INCARNATION 565

660. Sometimes, also, the infant God slept under the

watchful care of his happy and fortunate Mother; in

order that also this saying might become true : "I sleep,

but my heart is awake" (Cant. 5, 2). And as this most

holy body of her Son was for Her a most clear mirror,

in which She saw and penetrated the secrets of his deified

Soul and its operations (Wis. 7, 16), She beheld Herself

therein again and again. Especially consoling to the

heavenly Lady was it to see the most holy Soul of her

Son revealed to Her in all its heroic operations as a Pil

grim and yet a Comprehensor, while at the same time his

bodily faculties were lost in the tranquil and beauteous

sleep of childhood, his whole humanity being hypostatic-

ally united to the Divinity. Our language is incapable

of describing the sweet affections and flights of love, and

the heroic acts of the Queen of heaven on these occasions,

and falls far short of the reality; but where words fail,

let faith and love supply the deficiency.

661. Whenever She wished to afford saint Joseph the

consolation of holding the Infant Jesus, the Mother of

God said : "My Son and Lord, look upon thy faithful

servant Joseph with the love of a son and father, and

delight Thyself in the purity of his affectionate soul, so

acceptable in thy eyes." And to saint Joseph She said :

"My Spouse, receive in thy arms the Lord, who holds

in his hands all the orbs of heaven and earth, and who

has given them existence out of his mere bounty. Re

fresh thyself from thy labors in Him who is the glory

of all creation." For these favors saint Joseph returned

most humble thanks; and he was wont to ask his Spouse

whether he could dare to caress the Child. Encouraged

by Her, he would do so; and this privilege made him

forget all the hardships of his labor, and made them easy

and sweet in his eyes. Whenever Mary and Joseph were

566 CITY OF GOD

at their meals they had with them the Infant; in serving

the meals, the heavenly Queen held Him in her arms,

partaking of the food with great modesty and, in holding

Him, She at the same time afforded her most pure soul

a sweeter and more nourishing food than to the body,

adoring and loving Him as the eternal God, and caressing

Him with the tenderness of a Mother. It is impossible

to conceive the attention which She paid to this double

duty; on the one hand, to fulfill all obligation that was

due to Him as from a creature to its Creator, looking

upon Him in his Divinity, as Son of the eternal Father,

as King of kings, and Lord of lords, as the Maker and

Preserver of all the universe ; and on the other hand, to

give to Him all the. attention that He deserved as an

Infant, serving Him and nursing Him. Betwixt these

two extremes She was entirely inflamed with love, and

her whole being consumed in heroic acts of admiration,

praise and affection. Of all the rest which the two

Spouses did it can only be said that they were the wonder

of the angels, and that they attained the summit of

holiness and of divine pleasure.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

662. My daughter, I came into Egypt, where I knew

no relations or friends, in a land of foreign religion,

where I could offer no home or protection or assistance

to my Son, whom I loved so much. It can easily be

understood, then, what tribulations and hardships we suf

fered, since the Lord permitted them to come over Us.

Thou canst not understand with what patience and for

bearance We accepted them ; and even the angels cannot

estimate the reward I merited from the Most High by

THE INCARNATION 567

the love and resignation with which I bore them, and

which were greater than if I had been in the greatest

prosperity. It is true, I grieved much to see my hus

band in such necessity and want ; but at the same time I

blessed the Lord to be able to suffer them. In this most

noble patience and joy of spirit I wish that thou imitate

me whenever the Lord offers thee an occasion; and that

thou learn to act with prudence interiorly and exteriorly,

ordering well thy actions and thy thoughts, without

hindrance to either of them.

663. When the necessaries of life are wanting to those

under thy charge, exert thyself properly to obtain them.

If sometimes thou must sacrifice thy own tranquillity in

fulfilling this obligation, thou needst not on that account

lose thy peace of mind; especially if thou art mindful

of what I have so often told thee : not to lose sight of

the presence of the Lord; for by his divine light and

grace, if thou art careful and preservest thy peace, thou

canst do all things. Whatever can duly be procured by

human exertion, is not to be expected by a miracle, nor

must one try to exempt himself from labor in the hope

of a supernatural interference on the part of God; for

the Lord sweetly concurs with the ordinary and natural

course of created things. The labor of the body is serv

iceable to the soul as a sacrifice and as an increase of

the merits due to that kind of activity. While at work

the rational creature can praise God and adore Him in

spirit and in truth (John 4, 23). In order to fulfill this

duty, direct thy activity according to his pleasure, con

sult his will in regard to them, weighing them with the

scales of the sanctuary and riveting thy attention upon

the divine light which the Almighty infuses in thy soul.

CHAPTER XXVI.

OF THE WONDERS WHICH THE INFANT JESUS, MOST HOLY

MARY AND JOSEPH WROUGHT AT HEUOPOUS IN

EGYPT.

664. Isaias says that the Lord shall enter Egypt upon

a light cloud in order to work miracles for that country.

Isaias, in calling the most holy Mary, or, as others think,

the humanity derived from Her, a cloud, no doubt

wishes to indicate that the Lord was to fertilize and

water the barren land of the hearts of its inhabitants, in

order that henceforth they might produce the fruits of

sanctity and of divine knowledge. And so it really hap

pened after that heavenly cloud had overshadowed this

land. For immediately the belief in the true God began

to spread, and idolatry to be destroyed; the paths of

eternal life began to be opened, which until then had been

held closed by the demons. To such an extent was all

this true that there was scarcely any province in that land

in which the true God remained unknown, as soon as the

incarnate Word had arrived therein. Although some of

the people came to this knowledge through intercourse

with the Hebrews, which existed between these two

nations at that time (Kings IV, 17, 24) ; yet a great

many errors, superstitions and worship of the demons

were mixed up with it; just as was the case with the

Babylonians, who at another time came to live in Sa

maria. But after the Sun of justice began to illumine

Egypt, and Mary most holy, the taintless cloud, began

to overshadow that land, it became so fertile in holiness

568

THE INCARNATION 569

and grace that it gave forth abundant fruit for many

centuries. This is witnessed by the many saints that

lived in it afterwards, and by the thousands of hermits

that made its mountains gather up and distil such sweet

honey of sanctity and Christian perfection.

665. As I said, in order to secure these blessings to

the Egyptians, the Lord took his dwelling in the city of

Heliopolis. As it was so full of idols, temples and altars

of the demons, which at his entrance all fell to the dust

with great crashing and noise, the whole city was set in

commotion and confusion by the suddenness of this ruin

(Is. 19, 1). People rushed about astonished and as if

crazed in mind; curiosity brought to the newly arrived

strangers numbers of men and women, who sought to

speak to the great Queen and saint Joseph. The heavenly

Mother, who was aware of the mysterious designs of

God, spoke to their inmost hearts with great wisdom,

prudence and sweetness. They were filled with wonder

at her incomparable gentleness and her exalted teachings,

which undeceived them of their errors ; and as She imme

diately cured some of their sick, She quieted and en

couraged them so much the sooner. These miracles were

so rapidly noised abroad that in a short time an immense

concourse of people gathered to see the heavenly Stran

gers; and the most prudent Lady was forced to consult

her most holy Son as to her further conduct toward this

great multitude. The infant God told Her to instruct

them in the knowledge of God, teach them his true wor

ship, and exhort them to desist from sinful life.

666. In this office of preaching to the Egyptians, and

of teaching them, our heavenly Princess served as the

instrument of her most holy Son, who lent power to her

words. The effect of it was so great that many books

would be required to describe the wonders and the con-

570 CITY OF GOD

versions of souls that took place during the seven years

of their stay in this province; for in her ministry She

was filled with the benedictions of sweetness (Ps. 20, 4).

Whenever the heavenly Lady listened to and answered

those that came to Her, She held in her arms the Infant

Jesus, as the One who was the Author of all the graces

to be dispensed to sinners. She spoke to each one in

the manner suitable to his capacity and serviceable for

teaching him the doctrine of eternal life. She enlight

ened them concerning the Divinity and made them under

stand that there cannot be more than one God. She ex

plained to them the several articles of truth pertaining

to the Creation and Redemption of the world. She im

pressed upon their minds the commandments of the deca

logue, founded upon the natural law ; and She showed

them the manner of adoring and worshipping God, and

how they were to expect the regeneration of the human

race.

667. Concerning the demons, She explained how they

were enemies of God and men; how deeply they kept

men in error by their idol-worship and the false answers

of their oracles; how they induced men to commit the

vilest abominations and afterwards secretly tempted them

by exciting the disorderly passions. Although the Queen

of heaven was so pure and free from all that is imperfect,

nevertheless, for the glory of the Most High, She did

not deem it beneath Her to speak to them of those vile

and impure excesses in which all Egypt was sunk. She

also declared to them that the Repairer of so many ills,

who was to overcome the demons as it was written of

Him, was already come into the world, although She did

not say that She held Him in her arms. In order that

her teachings might be accepted so much the more readily,

and the truth might be more apparent, She confirmed her

THE INCARNATION 571

words by great miracles, curing all sorts of people who

were sick or possessed by the devil and who came from

all parts of the country. A few times the Queen went to

the infirmaries and conferred admirable blessings upon

the sick. Everywhere She consoled the sorrowful and

brought relief to the afflicted and the unfortunate, win

ning all by loving kindness and beneficence and admon

ishing them with sweet earnestness.

668. In regard to the cure of the sick and wounded

the heavenly Lady hesitated between two different senti

ments : the one of charity, which drew Her to nurse the

wounded with her own hand, and the other of modesty,

which forbade Her to touch anyone. In order that all

propriety might be observed, her most holy Son empow

ered Her to cure the men by her mere word and exhorta

tions; while She might cure the women by the touch

of her hands and cleansing their wounds. This course

of action She maintained thenceforward, taking upon

Herself as well the office of a mother as of a sick-nurse,

respectively. But, as I will narrate, after they had lived

two years in that place, saint Joseph also began to cure

the sick, while the matchless charity of the Queen busied

itself more particularly with the cure of the women.

Though She was Herself endowed with such unsullied

purity, free from all infirmities and sufferings, yet She

hesitated not to tend their festering ulcers and apply with

her own hands the coverings and bandages required. All

this She did with such tender compassion, as if She her

self were afflicted with their misfortunes. Sometimes it

happened that, in order to relieve and cure the poor, She

asked permission of her divine Son to place Him in the

cradle; thus permitting the Lord of the poor to witness

in another way the loving charity of this humble Lady.

But in all these occupations and cures (O wonderful to

572 CITY OF GOD

relate!) this most modest Mistress never looked upon

the face of either man or woman. Even when the wound

was in the face, her modesty was so exquisite that She

would not have been able to recognize any of her patients

by their features if She had not known all men by another

interior kind of vision.

669. On account of the excessive heat prevailing in

Egypt, and on account of many disorders rampant among

the people, the distempers of the Egyptians were wide

spread and grievous. During the years of the stay of

the Infant Jesus and his most holy Mother, pestilence

devastated Heliopolis and other places. On this account,

and on account of the report of their wonderful deeds,

multitudes of people came to them from all parts of the

country and returned home cured in body and soul. In

order that the grace of the Lord might flow more abun

dantly, and in order that his kindest Mother might have

assistance in her works of mercy, God, at the instance

of the heavenly Mistress, ordained saint Joseph as her

helper in the teaching and healing of the infirm. For

this purpose he was endowed with new light and power

of healing. The holy Mary began to make use of his

assistance in the third year of their stay in Egypt; so

that now he ordinarily taught and cured the men, while

the blessed Lady attended to the women. Incredible was

the fruit resulting from their labors in the souls of men ;

for her uninterrupted beneficence and the gracious efficacy

of her words drew all toward our Queen, and her modesty

and holiness filled them with devoted love. They offered

Her many presents and large possessions, anxious to see

Her make use of them : but never did She receive any

thing for Herself, or reserve it for her own use; for they

continued to provide for their wants by the labor of her

hands and the earnings of saint Joseph. When at times

THE INCARNATION 573

the blessed Lady was offered some gift that seemed serv

iceable and proper for helping the needy and the poor,

She would accept it for that purpose. Only with this

understanding would She ever yield to the pious and

affectionate importunities of devout persons; and even

then She often made them a present in return of things

made by her own hands. From what I have related we

can form some idea how great and how numerous were

the miracles wrought by the holy Family during their

seven years stay in Egypt and Heliopolis; for it would

be impossible to enumerate and describe all of them.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY.

670. My daughter, thou art full of wonder at the

works of mercy which I exercised in Egypt, curing the

sick of their infirmities and helping the poor in their

necessities, in order to relieve them in body and soul.

Thou wilt be able to understand how all this comported

with my love of modesty and retirement, when thou

takest into consideration the immense love that urged

my most holy Son to hasten immediately after his birth

to the assistance of these people and pour out over them

his immense love in his longings for their salvation.

This love He communicated to me, and thus made me

an instrument of his power, or I should not have dared

to enter upon such a great enterprise. For though I

always preferred to abstain from speaking or communi

cating with others, yet the will of my Son and Lord gov

erned me in all things. Of thee, my friend, I desire, that

in imitation of me, thou work for the benefit and salva

tion of thy neighbors, seeking to follow me in the per

fection and quality of my works. Thou needst not seek

574 CITY OF GOD

occasions, for the Lord will send them. In some extraor

dinary circumstances, however, thou mayst find it ad

visable to offer thy services. But seek to exert thy

influence upon all, teach and exhort them according to

thy light; not presuming to take upon thyself the office

of a teacher, but of one that seeks to console, and one

that pities the hardships of her brothers ; as one who with

much reserve and humility and with great charity seeks

to exhort them to patience.

671. As for those under thy charge, exhort and reprove

them, govern and direct them to greater and greater per

fection of virtue and to fulfill the divine pleasure. For

next to seeking thy own perfection, God wills that thou

encourage and teach those under thy charge according

to power and graces given to thee. Pray without ceasing

for those to whom thou canst not speak; thus extend

ing thy charity towards all men. Since thou canst not

go outside to tend the sick, make up for it by taking care

of those living with thee, zealously serving them per

sonally in whatever pertains to their comfort and wants.

Do not consider thyself above this service because thou

art their superioress ; for on this very account thou must

act as their mother and show thy loving care as such

toward all, while in other things thou must interiorly

esteem thyself below them. Since the world ordinarily

leaves the care of the sick to the most poor and despised,

simply because it does not know the high value of this

service ; therefore I, too, assign to thee as to one who is

poor and the least of all, this office of tending the sick, in

order that thou mayest follow me in the performance of it.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HEROD RESOLVES TO MURDER THE INNOCENTS : MOST

HOLY MARY IS AWARE OF THIS. SAINT JOHN IS CON

CEALED BY HIS RELATIVES.

672. We will now leave the Infant Jesus, most holy

Mary and Joseph in the work of sanctifying Egypt by

their beneficent presence, and return to Judea, which was

unworthy of it. Thus we will understand the course of

the devilish cunning and hypocrisy of Herod. That

wicked king was waiting for the message of the Magi

concerning the newly born King of the Jews, ready to

devote Him to an inhuman death. He trusted for a

while to his own cunning, until his anxiety caused him

to inquire. But when he was informed of their stay in

Bethlehem, their departure, their escape from Palestine

on a different route, and of other happenings in the

temple, he awoke to the fact that he had been foiled in

his purpose. He consulted anew some of the experts of

the Law; and as their interpretation of the Scriptures

concerning Bethlehem and the happenings at Bethlehem

coincided with his suspicions, he ordered a strict search

to be made for our Queen, her Child and the glorious

saint Joseph. But the Lord, who had commanded their

flight from Jerusalem in the night, also concealed them

on their journey, so that there was none that knew any

thing of it, or that could discover a trace of their flight.

Not being able to find Them, and no one having any

knowledge of Them, the henchmen of Herod brought

575

576 CITY OF GOD

back the answer that no such man, woman or child could

be found in the whole country.

673. This inflamed the fury of Herod (Matth. 2, 16)

and increased his anxiety ; in vain he sought some means

to prevent the evil threatening Him from a rival King.

But the devil, who knew him to be ready for any wick

edness, stirred up in his heart the enormous thought of

using his royal power to murder all the children under

two years of age around Bethlehem. For in that way

the King of the Jews, recently born there, would in

evitably be murdered among them. The tyrant was highly

satisfied with this scheme, which never yet had been

thought of by any even the greatest barbarian; and he

set about its execution without any of the aversion of

horror that it was apt to excite in other rational beings.

Having studied out his wrathful plans to his satisfaction,

he ordered some troops to be gathered in that region and

privately instructed some of the more intimate of his

officers under severe penalties to kill all the children

under two years in Bethlehem and its vicinity. The com

mand of Herod was executed and the whole country was

filled with confusion and wailing, and with the tears of

the parents and of the other relations of the innocent

victims, who were thus doomed without any possibility

of resistance or prevention.

674. This command of Herod was issued six months

after the birth of the Savior. When it began to be exe

cuted the great Queen happened to hold her divine Son

in her arms, lost in contemplation of his most holy Soul.

Looking into it as into a clear mirror, She saw all that

passed in Bethlehem more clearly than if She herself

had been present to hear the wailing of the children and

the parents. She saw also how her Son prayed to his

eternal Father for the parents of these innocents; that

THE INCARNATION 577

He offered up the murdered children as the first fruits

of his own Death ; asking Him also that they receive the

use of reason, in order that they might be a willing sac

rifice for their Redeemer and accept their death for his

glory. Thus He would be able to reward them with the

crowns of martyrdom for what they suffered. All this

the eternal Father granted, and as it was made known

to the Queen in her Onlybegotten Son, She joined Him

in his prayers and sacrifices. She also pitied the parents

of the martyred infants in their heartrending tears and

sorrows for their sons. She, indeed, was the first and

true Rachel weeping for the children in Bethlehem

(Jer. 31, 15) ; and there was no mother who sorrowed

for them as She did, since no one could be such a Mother

as She was to them.

675. She did not know at the time what saint Elisabeth

had done in order to safeguard her son John pursuant to

the warning of the angel sent to her by the Queen Her

self, as narrated in the twenty-second chapter. Although

She had no doubt as to the fulfillment of all the mysteries

known to Her concerning the Precursor by divine en

lightenment, yet She was uncertain of the troubles and

anxieties caused to saint Elisabeth and her son, and of

the manner in which they had forestalled the cruelty of

Herod. The sweetest Mother did not presume to ask

her divine Son concerning this event, on account of the

prudence and reverence always observed by Her in regard

to such revelations ; for in her humility and patience She

counted Herself as unworthy and as dust in the sight of

the Lord. But the Almighty took notice of her pious

and compassionate desires and informed Her that

Zachary, the father of saint John, had died four months

after her virginal parturition and about three months

after She had left Jerusalem. The widowed saint Elisa-

578 CITY OF GOD

beth now had no other company than that of her son John,

with whom she was passing the days of her widowhood

in a retired and secluded place. For on account of the

warning of the angel, and knowing of the cruel dispo

sition of Herod, she had resolved to flee to the desert

with her child and live there in the company of wild

beasts rather than within the dangerous reach of Herod.

This resolve she had taken with the approbation of the

Most High and, guided by his impulse, She was now

hidden in a cave or cleft of the rock where, with great

hardship and difficulty, she obtained sustenance for her

self and her son.

676. The heavenly Lady also knew that saint Elisa

beth, after three years of this solitary life, died in the

Lord ; that saint John remained in the desert, commencing

to live an angelic life, and that he was not to leave his

solitude until he should be commanded by the Almighty to

preach penance as his Precursor. These sacraments and

mysteries the Infant Jesus manifested to his most holy

Mother with many other hidden and profound blessings

conferred upon saint Elisabeth and her son in that desert.

All this She perceived in the same way as She now per

ceived the death of the innocent children. It filled Her

with joy and compassion; the one because She saw saint

John and his mother in safety, the other, on account of

the hardships to which they were exposed in the desert.

She immediately asked of her most holy Son permission

to take care thenceforward of Elisabeth and her son.

From that time on She frequently sent her holy angels

to visit them with the consent of the Lord ; and through

them also She sent them provisions, which afforded them

better sustenance than they could find in the wild abode.

Through these angelic messengers the holy Lady kept up

a continual intercourse with her relatives during her stay

THE INCARNATION 579

in Egypt. When the last hour of Elisabeth arrived, Mary

sent her a great number of angels to assist her and her

child, who was then four years old. These angels also

helped saint John to bury his mother in the desert.

Thereupon the Queen sent to him every day his suste

nance, until he was of sufficient age to provide for his

living by his own labors and exertions in gathering herbs,

roots and woodland honey (Mark 1, 6) ; of these thence

forward he lived in admirable abstinence, as I shall relate

farther on.

677. Neither the tongue of creatures can describe, nor

intellect comprehend, the vast merits and increase of

sanctity accumulating in the most holy Mary through

these continued and wonderful works; for in all things

She acted with a prudence more than angelic. What

moved Her to the greatest admiration, love and praise of

the Almighty was to see how, at the intercession of Her

self and her Son for the holy Innocents, his providence

showed itself so liberal toward them. She knew as if

She were present the great number of children that were

killed and that all of them, though some were only eight

days, two or six months old, and none of them over two

years, had the use of their reason; that they all received

a high knowledge of the being of God, perfect love, faith

and hope, in which they performed heroic acts of

faith, worship, and love of God, reverence and compas

sion for their parents. They prayed for their parents

and, in reward for their sufferings, obtained for them

light and grace for advance in spiritual things. They

willingly submitted to martyrdom, in spite of the tender

ness of their age, which made their sufferings so much

the greater and consequently augmented their merits. A

multitude of angels assisted them and bore them to limbo

or to the bosom of Abraham. By their arrival they

580 CITY OF GOD

rejoiced the holy ancients and confirmed them in the hope

of speedy liberation. All these were effects of the prayers

of the divine Child and his Mother. Aware of all these

wonders, She was inflamed with ardor and exclaimed:

"Praise the Lord, ye children" ; and joined with them in

the praise of the Author of these magnificent works, so

worthy of his Goodness and Omnipotence. Mary alone

knew of them and appreciated them properly. And She,

so closely allied to God himself, perfectly reached the

degree of humility required for such appreciation; for

though She was the Mother of innocence, purity and

sanctity, She humiliated Herself more than all creatures

with all their faults will ever know how to humiliate

themselves. Among all creatures most holy Mary reached

a degree of humility peculiar to Herself, which fully

equalled the high blessings and gifts received by all other

creatures ; for She alone comprehended fully how insuf

ficient is the return the creature can make for all the

blessings flowing from the boundless love of God.

Knowing that without this humility no act of a creature

can be worthy of a God, She reached the height of all

perfection by making all her acts serve as a grateful

return for benefits received.

678. At the end of this chapter I wish to draw atten

tion to the fact that in many things which I am describing,

a great diversity of opinion exists among the holy fathers

and writers ; as, for instance, in regard to the time of the

slaughter of the innocent children, or whether also the

new-born children or those that were only a few days

old were included in the slaughter, or concerning other

doubtful points, about which I will not speak, since they

are not necessary to my purpose. I write only what is

being shown or dictated to me, or about which obedience

forces me to ask, in order that this history may be more

THE INCARNATION 581

clear. It will not do to start a dispute concerning what

I write; for from the beginning I said, that the Lord

wishes this whole work to be free from mere opinion and

to contain nothing but what is taught me by the divine

light. To decide whether that which I write is in har

mony with the truth of holy Scriptures, or befits the

majesty and grandeur of my subject, or whether the

events narrated bear the necessary sequence or connec

tion : all this I leave to the learning of my teachers and

superiors and to the judgment of the wise and pious.

Variety of opinion is as it were inevitable among the

writers on these subjects, since they are guided by dif

ferent authors, and are each following those of the

ancient authors that satisfy them best ; yet- more than a

few of the old authors (if we except the events related

in the canonical writings) relied only on conjecture or

on doubtful sources. I, as an ignorant woman, cannot

enter upon such discussions.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

679. My daughter, in what thou hast written I wish

that thou learn a lesson from the very sorrow and appre

hension with which thou hast performed this task. Well-

founded is thy sorrow to see how such a noble creature

as man, made according to the likeness and image of the

Lord, endowed with such divine qualities, and gifted with

the power of knowing, loving, seeing, and enjoying God

eternally, should allow himself to be degraded and defiled

by such brutal and abominable passions as to shed the

innocent blood of those who can do no harm to any one.

This should induce thee to weep over the ruin of so

many souls; especially in the times in which thou livest,

38

582 CITY OF GOD

when that same ambition which incited Herod, has

kindled such great hatred and enmity among the children

of the Church, occasioning the ruin of countless souls and

causing the waste and loss of the blood of my most holy

Son, poured out for the salvation of men. Do thou

bitterly deplore this loss.

680. But likewise be warned by what thou hast seen

in others ; ponder the effects of passions admitted into the

heart ; for if once they have mastered the heart, they will

either smother it in lust when it finds success, or consume

it with wrath at meeting any opposition. Fear thou, my

daughter, this danger, not only on account of the results

thou seest of ambition in Herod, but also on account of

what thou seest going on every hour in other persons.

Be very careful not to allow thyself to be mastered by

anything, be it ever so small ; for in order to start a great

conflagration the smallest spark is sufficient. I have

often repeated to thee this same warning, and I shall

continue to do so more often in the future; for the

greatest difficulty in practicing virtue consists in dying

to all that is pleasurable to the senses. Thou canst not

be a fit instrument in the hands of the Lord, such as He

desires thee to be, if thou dost not cleanse thy faculties

even of the images of all creatures, so that they do not

find entrance into thy desires. I wish it to be to thee

an inexorable law that all things, except God, his angels

and saints, be to thee as if they did not exist. These

should be thy sole possession ; on this account the Lord

has opened to thee his secrets, honors thee with his

familiarity and intimacy, and for this purpose also do I

honor thee with mine, that thou neither live nor wish to

live without the Lord.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT THE AGE OF ONE YEAR THE INFANT JESUS SPEAKS

TO SAINT JOSEPH AND REQUESTS HIS MOTHER TO

CLOTHE HIM AND ALLOW HIM TO WALK. HE COM

MENCES TO CELEBRATE THE DAY OF HIS INCARNA

TION AND OF HIS BIRTH.

681. During one of the conversations of Mary with

Joseph concerning the mysteries of the Lord, the Infant

Jesus, having reached the age of one year, resolved to

break the silence and speak in plain words to Joseph,

who so faithfully fulfilled the duties of a foster-father.

As I have already mentioned in chapter the tenth, He

had thus conversed with his heavenly Mother from the

time of his Birth. The two holy Spouses were speaking

of the infinite being of God, of his goodness and ex

cessive love, which induced Him to send his Onlybegotten

Son as the Teacher and Savior of men, clothing Him in

human form in order that He might converse with them

and suffer the punishments of their depraved natures.

Saint Joseph was lost in wonder at the works of the Lord

and inflamed by affectionate gratitude and exaltation of

the Lord. Seizing upon this occasion the infant God,

resting upon the arms of his Mother as upon the seat

of wisdom, began to speak to saint Joseph in an intel

ligible voice, Saying: "My father, I came from heaven

upon this earth in order to be the light of the world, and

in order to rescue it from darkness of sin ; in order to

seek and know my sheep as a good Shepherd, to give

them nourishment of eternal life, teach them the way of

583

584 CITY OF GOD

heaven, open its gates, which had been closed by their

sins. I desire that you both be children of the Light,

which you have so close at hand."

682. These words of the Infant Jesus, being full of

divine life, rilled the heart of the patriarch saint Joseph

with new love, reverence and joy. He fell on his knees

before the infant God with the profoundest humility and

thanked Him for having called Him "father" by the very

first word spoken to him. He besought the Lord with

many tears to enlighten him and enable him to fulfill

entirely his most holy will, to teach him to be thankful

for the incomparable benefits flowing from his generous

hands. Parents who love their children very much are

touched with consolation and pride to see their children

show great signs of wisdom and virtue; and even when

this is not the case, they are naturally inclined to extol and

make much of their childish pranks and sayings; for all

this is the result of their tender affection for their young

offspring. Although saint Joseph was not the natural,

but the foster-father of Jesus, his love for Him exceeded

by far all the love of parents for their children, since in

him grace, or even natural love, was more powerful than

in others, yea than in all the parents together. Hence

the joy of his soul is to be measured by this love and

appreciation of saint Joseph as being the foster-father of

the Infant Jesus. For he at the same time heard himself

called the father of the Son of the eternal .Father, and

saw Him so beautiful in grace, while listening to such

exalted wisdom and knowledge in the Child.

683. During the whole of this first year his sweetest

Mother had wrapped the infant God in clothes and cover

ings usual with other children; for He did not wish to

be distinguished in this from others, and He wished to

THE INCARNATION 585

bear witness to his true humanity and to his love for

mortals, enduring this inconvenience otherwise not re

quired of Him. The most prudent Mother, judging that

now the time had come to free Him from swaddling-

clothes and place Him on his feet, knelt down before the

Child in its cradle and said : "My Son and sweetest Love

of my soul, my Lord, I desire, as thy slave, to be punctual

in fulfilling thy wishes. O, Light of my eyes, Thou hast

been for a long time oppressed by the swaddling-clothes

and thereby gone to the extreme of thy love for men ; it

is time Thou change this manner. Tell me, my Master,

what shall I do to place Thee on thy feet ?"

684. "My Mother," answered the Infant Jesus, "on

account of the love which I bear toward man, whom I

have created and come to redeem, the swathings of my

childhood have not seemed irksome to Me, since when I

shall be grown up I shall be bound and delivered over

to my enemies unto death (Matth. 20, 18). If this

prospect is sweet to Me for the love of my Father

(Heb. 10, 71) all the rest is certainly easy to Me. I

wish to possess only one garment during all my life, for

I seek nothing more than what is sufficient to cover Me.

Although all created things are mine because I have given

them being, I turn them all over to men in order that they

may owe Me so much the more and in order that I may

teach them, according to my example and for my love,

to repudiate and despise all that is superfluous for natural

life. Clothe Me, my Mother, in a tunic of a lowly and

ordinary color. This alone will I wear, and it shall grow

with Me. Over this garment shall they cast lots at my

death (Ps. 21, 19) ; for even this shall not be left at my

disposal, but at the disposal of others ; so that men shall

see that I was born and wish to live poor and destitute

586 CITY OF GOD

t

of visible things, which being earthly, oppress and darken

the heart of man. At the very moment of my concep

tion in thy virginal womb I made this renunciation and

abdication of all that is contained in the world, though all

is mine on account of the union of my human nature with

the divine. I shall not have anything to do with visible

things except to offer them up to the eternal Father, re

nouncing them for his love, and making use of only so

much as is sufficient to sustain my natural life, which I

will afterwards yield up for man s sake. By this example

I wish to impress upon the world the doctrine that it must

love poverty and not despise it ; for I, who am the Lord

of the whole world, entirely repudiated and rejected its

possessions. Those who know Me by faith should be

filled with confusion at seeing themselves desire what I

taught them to despise."

685. The words of the divine Child produced in the

heart of the heavenly Mother diverse wonderful effects.

The allusion to the seizure and death of her most holy

Son transfixed her pure and compassionate heart, and

the doctrine and example of such extreme poverty and

destitution excited her admiration and urged Her to its

imitation. His boundless love for mortals inflamed Her

with loving gratitude toward the Lord and produced in

Her heroic acts of many virtues. Seeing that the Child

Jesus desired no footgear and only one garment, She

said to Him: "My Son and my Lord, thy Mother has

not the heart to allow Thee to go barefoot upon the

ground at thy tender age; permit me, my Love, to pro

vide some kind of covering to protect them. I also fear

that the rough garment, which Thou askest of me, will

wound thy tender body, if thou permit no linen to be

worn beneath." "My Mother, I will permit a slight and

THE INCARNATION 587

ordinary covering- for my feet until the time of my public

preaching shall come, for this I must do barefooted.

But I do not wish to wear linen, because it foments carnal

pleasures, and is the cause of many vices in men. I wish

to teach many by my example to renounce it for love and

imitation of Me."

686. Immediately the great Queen set diligently about

fulfilling the will of her most holy Son. Procuring some

wool in its natural and uncolored state, She spun it very

finely with her own hands and of it She wove a garment

of one piece and without any seam, similar to knitted

stuff, or rather like twilled cloth ; for it was woven of

twisted cords, not like smooth-woven goods. She wove

it upon a small loom, by meshes, crocheting it of one

seamless piece in a mysterious manner (John 19, 23).

Two things were wonderful about it : that it was entirely

even and uniform, without any seams, and that, at her

request, the natural color was changed to a more suitable

one, which was a mixture of brown and a most exquisite

silver-gray, so that it could not be called either, appearing

to be neither altogether brown, nor silvery, nor gray, but

having a mixture of them all. She also wove a pair of

sandals of strong thread, like hempen shoes, with which

She covered the feet of the infant God. Besides these

She made a half tunic of linen, which was to serve as

an undergarment. In the next chapter I shall tell what

happened when She clothed the Infant Jesus.

687. At this time occurred the anniversary of the In

carnation and of the Nativity of the divine Word, both

of them when they had already settled in Egypt. The

celestial Queen celebrated these feasts, so joyous for the

Mother of God, commencing a custom observed by Her

during all the rest of her life, as will be seen in the third

588 CITY OF GOD

part, which treats about the mysteries happening later on.

She began to prepare for the feast of the Incarnation

nine days before, in accordance with the nine days of

preparation, in which She had been visited with such

admirable and magnificent graces. At the anniversary

of the Incarnation or Annunciation She invited all the

angels of heaven, together with those of her guard, to as

sist Her in the celebration of those great mysteries and to

help Her to acknowledge and give worthy thanks to the

Almighty. Prostrate before the Infant in the form of

a cross, She besought Him to praise in her stead the

eternal Father and thank Him for the favors of his right

hand towards Her, and for the gift of his Onlybegotten

Son to the human race (John 3, 16). The same petition

She made on the anniversary of her divine parturition.

On these days the heavenly Lady was regaled with many

graces and joys by the Most High; because He renewed

the unbroken remembrance and understanding of these

exalted sacraments. As She had received intelligence

how much the eternal Father was pleased and obliged by

this outward manifestation of sorrow exhibited in her

prostration in the form of a cross, and by her mindful-

ness of the crucifixion of the Lamb of God, She prac

ticed this devotion on all the festivals, seeking to appease

the divine justice and soliciting mercy for the sinners.

Inflamed with charity, She rose up and ended her cele

bration with wonderful hymns, singing them alternately

with the angels ; they formed a choir of celestial harmony,

the holy angels intoning their songs, and the blessed Lady

answering them on her part in hymns more sweet to the

ears of God, and more acceptable than those of the most

exalted seraphim and all the heavenly choirs. For these

were the echoes of his infinite virtues piercing to the very

throne and judgment seat of the eternal God.

THE INCARNATION 589

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY THE MISTRESS AND QUEEN OF

HEAVEN.

688. My daughter, neither thyself nor all creatures

together can ever comprehend the spirit of poverty of my

most holy Son, and what He has taught me concerning

it. But from what I have told thee thou canst under

stand much of the excellence of this virtue, which its

Author and Teacher loved so much, and of the horror

in which He holds the vice of covetousness. The Cre

ator cannot hate the beings which He has created; but

He knows in his wisdom the boundless damage caused

in mortals by avarice and covetousness of visible things ;

and that this insane love would pervert the greater part of

the human nature. His horror of this vice was in pro

portion to the number of sinners and foredoomed ones,

who are lost by the vice of avarice and cupidity.

689. In order to meet this evil and provide some

remedy against it, my most holy Son chose poverty, and

taught it by word and by example of his admirable abne

gation. Thus would the Physician justify his cause be

fore men if they, for whom He prepared this means of

safety and restoration, would neglect to take advantage

of it. This same doctrine I taught and practiced during

all my life, and upon it the Apostles founded the Church.

Such was also the teaching and practice of the Patriarchs

and Saints, who rejuvenated and confirmed religion in

the Church; for all of them have loved poverty, as the

only and most efficacious means of holiness. They have

abhorred riches as the incentive to evil and the root of

all vices (I Tim. 6, 10). This poverty I wish thee to

love and seek after with all diligence ; for it is the adorn

ment of the spouses of my most holy Son, without which

I assure thee, my dearest, He will disavow and repudiate

590 CITY OF GOD

them as unworthy and far removed from Him. For it

is preposterous to see a bride overflowing in riches and

bedecked with jewels at the side of a poor and destitute

bridegroom ; nor can true love exist with such inequality.

690. It is clear that though thou wish to imitate me

as a legitimate daughter, I, being myself poor, shall not

recognize thee as my daughter if thou art not one in

reality, nor shall I ever permit that in thee which I ab

horred for myself. I remind thee also not to forget the

blessings of the Most High, which thou hast received in

such abundance; for if thou art not very attentive and

solicitous in this duty, thou wilt be drawn into forgetful-

ness and gross rudeness by the bluntness and sluggishness

inherent in the human nature. Renew many times a day

the memory of his blessings, always giving thanks to the

Lord with humble and loving affection. Especially mem

orable among his benefits are that He has called thee,

waited for thee, dissembled and excused thy faults, and

added thereto such oft repeated favors. This remem

brance will cause in thee sweet and strong movements of

love; and thou wilt find new grace and favor before the

Lord, since He is so much pleased by a faithful and

thankful heart. On the other hand, He is much offended

if his kindnesses and blessings are not esteemed and

appreciated; for, as He confers them in the fullness of

his love, He desires a dutiful, loyal and loving return on

the part of his creatures.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE MOST HOLY MOTHER CLOTHES THE INFANT JESUS

IN THE SEAMLESS TUNIC; SHE PUTS SHOES ON HIS

FEET. THE DOINGS AND OBSERVANCES OF THE LORD.

691. In order to clothe the divine Infant in the small

tunic and put on his feet the sandals made by Her, the

most prudent Lady cast Herself on her knees before her

sweetest Son and addressed Him in the following words :

"Most high Lord, and Creator of heaven and earth, I

would wish to clothe Thee, if possible, in such a way

as thy Divinity deserves, and I would gladly have made

these garments, which are to cover Thee, from my heart-

blood; but I know that the poor and insignificant cover

ings I now offer Thee are according to thy desires.

Pardon me, my Lord and Master, my faults and accept

the loving affection of her, who is but dust and ashes :

allow me to clothe Thee." The Infant Jesus was pleased

with the loving service of his purest Mother ; and there

upon She clothed and shod Him, setting Him upon his

feet. The tunic fitted Him perfectly, covering his feet

without hindering them in walking, and the sleeves ex

tended to the middle of his hands, although She had taken

no measure beforehand. The collar was cut out round,

without being open in front, and was somewhat raised

around the neck adjusting itself to the throat. Through

this opening the heavenly Mother passed it over the head

of the Infant; for the garment gracefully adjusted it

self according to her wishes. He never divested Him

self of this tunic, until the executioners themselves tore

591

592 CITY OF GOD

it off to scourge and afterwards to crucify Him; for this

garment continually grew with Him, adjusting itself

to his body. The same happened also with the sandals

and with the undergarment, which the solicitous Mother

made for Him. None of all these articles of clothing

wore away or became old in the thirty-two years, nor

did the tunic lose its color or its newness, but remained

just as it had left the hands of the great Lady; nor did

any of them become soiled or filthy, but they preserved

their first cleanliness. The garment which the Redeemer

of the world laid aside in order to wash the feet of his

Apostles, was a mantle or cape, which He wore over

his shoulders ; and this also had been made by the Virgin

after they had returned to Nazareth. Like the other

clothing it grew with the Lord, was of the same color,

only a little darker and was woven in the same way.

692. Thus the infant Lord of the eternities was placed

on his feet, after having since his birth been wrapped

in swaddling-clothes and held for most of the time in

the arms of his most holy Mother (John 13, 4). He

was the most beautiful among the sons of men. The

angels were astounded at the humble and poor raiment

chosen by Him who clothes the heavens in light and

the fields with beauty. He walked freely on his feet in

the presence of his parents; but before strangers this

wonder remained for a time concealed, since the Queen

took Him in her arms when outsiders approached or when

ever they went abroad. Indescribable was the joy of the

heavenly Lady and of saint Joseph as they saw the In

fant walking about and exhibit such rare beauty. He

received nourishment at the breast of his purest Mother

until He was a year and a half old and no longer. His

meals thereupon were most frugal as well in quantity

as in quality. At first they consisted in broths mixed with

THE INCARNATION 593

oil, and some fruits or fishes. While He was still in

process of growth She gave Him to eat three times a

day, as often as She had formerly given Him her milk;

in the morning, afternoon and at night. The divine Child

never asked for food ; but the loving Mother with thought

ful anxiety provided Him his meals at the proper time

until later on, when He was already grown up and would

not consent to eat oftener or at other hours than the

heavenly Spouses themselves. This was his rule until

He reached adult age, of which I will speak later on.

Whenever He took his meals with his parents they al

ways waited until He should pronounce the blessing at

the beginning and give thanks at the end.

693. From the time the Child Jesus was on his feet

He commenced to retire and spent certain hours of the

day in the oratory of his Mother. As the most prudent

Mother was anxious to know his wishes in regard to her

intercourse with Him, the Lord responded to her mute

appeal, saying: "My Mother, enter and remain with Me

always in order that thou mayest imitate Me in my works ;

for I wish that in thee be modeled and exhibited the high

perfection which I desire to see accomplished in the souls.

For if they had not resisted my first intentions (I Tim.

2, 4), they would have been endowed with my most

abundant and copious gifts; but since the human race

has hindered this, I have chosen thee as the vessel of all

perfection and of the treasures of my right hand, which

the rest of the creatures have abused and lost. Observe

me therefore in all my actions for the purpose of imitat

ing Me."

694. Thus the heavenly Lady was installed anew as

the Disciple of her most holy Son. Thenceforward passed

such great and hidden mysteries between these Two, that

not until the day of eternity will they be known. Many

594 CITY OF GOD

times the divine Child prostrated Himself on the ground,

at others He was raised from the ground in the form

of a cross, earnestly praying to the eternal Father for

the salvation of mortals. In all this his most loving

Mother imitated Him. For to Her were manifest the

interior operations of his most holy soul, just as well

as the exterior movements of his body. Of this knowl

edge of most pure Mary I have spoken in other parts

of this history and it is necessary to point it out often,

because this was the source of the light which guided

Her in her holy life. It was such a singular blessing,

that all creatures together will not be able to understand

or describe it by their united powers. The great Lady

did not always enjoy visions of the Divinity; but always

the sight of the most holy humanity and soul of her Son

with all their activities. In a special manner She was

witness of the effects of the hypostatic and beatific union

of the humanity with the Divinity. Although She did

not always see this glory and this union substantially;

yet She perceived the interior acts by which his humanity

reverenced, loved and magnified the Divinity to which

it was united; and this privilege was reserved solely to

most holy Mary.

695. On these occasions it often happened that the

Child Jesus in the presence of his most holy Mother

wept and perspired blood, for this happened many times

before his agony in the garden. Then the blessed Lady

would wipe his face interiorly perceiving and knowing

the cause of this agony, namely the loss of the fore

known and of those who would be ungrateful for the

benefits of their Creator and Redeemer and in whom the

works of the infinite power and goodness of the Lord

would be wasted. At other times the blessed Mother

would find Him refulgent with heavenly light and sur-

THE INCARNATION 595

rounded by angels that sang sweet hymns of praise;

and She was made aware, that the heavenly Father was

pleased in his beloved and onlybegotten Son (Matth.

17, 5). All these wonders commenced from the time

when at the age of one year He began to walk, wit

nessed only by his most holy Mother, whose heart was

to be the treasure-house of his wonders. The works of

love, praise and worshipful gratitude, his petitions for

the human race, all exceed my ability to describe. I must

refer the understanding of it to the faith and piety of the

Christians.

696. The Child Jesus grew in the admiration and es

teem of all that came to know Him. Having reached

the age of six years He began now and then to visit the

sick in the hospitals, seeking out the stricken ones and

mysteriously comforting and consoling them in their

afflictions. Many of the inhabitants of Heliopolis began

to know Him; the secret attractions of his Divinity and

sanctity drew toward Him the hearts of all, and many

offered Him gifts. These, according to the promptings

of his interior knowledge, He refused or accepted for

distribution among the poor. The admiration caused by

his wise counsels and his modest and considerate be

havior, caused many to extol and congratulate the parents

on such a Son. Although all of them were ignorant of

the mysteries and of the dignity of the Son and the

Mother ; yet the Lord of creation, being desirous of honor

ing his Mother, permitted them to reverence Her as far

as was possible under the circumstances, without their

learning the special reason for doing so.

697. Many of the children of Heliopolis gathered

around the Child Jesus, as it is natural with children of

similar age and condition. Since they were free from

great malice and were not given to inquire, whether He

596 CITY OF GOD

was more than man, but freely admitted the heavenly

light, the Master of truth welcomed them as far as

was befitting. He instilled into them the knowledge of

God and of the virtues; He taught and catechised them

in the way of eternal life, even more abundantly than the

adults. As his words were full of life and strength, He

won their hearts and impressed his truths so deeply upon

them, that all those, who had this good fortune, after

wards became great and saintly men ; for in the course of

time they ripened in themselves the fruit of this heavenly

seed sown so early into their souls.

698. The blessed Mother was well-informed of all

these happenings. Whenever her most holy Son re

turned from these errands, in which He had fulfilled the

will of his eternal Father by looking after his flock, the

Queen and the angels prostrated themselves before her

divine Son and gave Him thanks for the benefits done to

those innocents, who did not yet know Him for their true

God, and She kissed his feet as those of the High-

priest of heaven and earth (Heb. 4, 1). This She also

did whenever the Child was about to go forth; on such

occasions He would raise Her up from the earth in filial

reverence and love. The Mother also asked for his bless

ing upon all her undertakings; and She never lost an

occasion for practicing virtue with all the intensity of

her love and divine grace. Never was any grace in Her

without its fruit, but it operated in all its plenitude and

increased in operation. The great Lady sought new

means and ways of humiliating Herself, adoring the in

carnate Word by her genuflections and prostrations and

other most loving and profound ceremonies as outward

tokens of her prudence and holiness. This She attended

to with such wisdom, that She excited the admiration of

THE INCARNATION 597

the angels themselves, who, interchanging among them

selves the praises of the Divinity, said to each other :

"Who is that pure Creature, so full of delight to our

Creator and her Son? (Cant. 1,2). Who is this One,

that so wisely and attentively honors and reverences the

Most High, far exceeding us all in her loving alertness

and attention?"

699. In his intercourse and conversation with his

parents, this most wonderful and beautiful Child, after

He had begun to walk and grow larger, showed more

gravity than when He was younger. The tender caresses,

which always had been tempered and measured, were now

withheld, for in his countenance shone forth such majesty

as a reflection of his hidden Deity, that, if He had not

mixed it with a certain sweetness and affability, reveren

tial fear would have prevented all intercourse with Him,

The heavenly Mother and saint Joseph felt the effects

of a divine power and efficacy, as well as the kindness and

devotedness of a loving Father, proceeding from his

countenance. Joined with this majesty and magnificence

was his filial affection toward his heavenly Mother, while

on the other hand He treated saint Joseph as one, who

had as well the name as the duties of a father toward

Him; and therefore He obeyed them both as a most de

voted Son obeys his parents. In his whole behavior

the incarnate Word practiced the virtues of obedience,

humility and human kindness with such an admirable

mixture of majesty and gravity, that his divine wisdom

shone forth in all his actions and that none of his

grandeur was impaired by triviality or smallness. The

heavenly Queen was most attentive to all these mys

teries and She alone, as far as a mere creature could,

comprehended befittingly the work of her most holy

Son and understood the ways of his infinite wisdom. I

39

598 CITY OF GOD

would attempt the impossible to try to describe in human

words the effects of all his doings on her most pure and

prudent soul, or how closely She imitated his ineffable

sanctity. The souls which were converted and saved in

Heliopolis and in all Egypt, the sick that were cured,

and the wonders wrought during their seven years stay

in that country, cannot be enumerated : such a blessed

crime did the cruelty of Herod turn out to be for Egypt.

The goodness and wisdom of God draws from the very

wickedness and evils of sin the greatest good. If in one

direction men cast away his mercies and shut them out,

He Calls upon them in other directions to open their hearts

and admit his blessings (Job 34, 24). His ardent desires

to benefit the human race cannot be quenched by the floods

of our sins and ingratitudes.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOIvY MARY.

700. My daughter, from the very beginning of this

history of my life thou wast made to understand, that

among other purposes, the Lord wished to call the at

tention of mortals to the debt contracted by their un

feeling forgetfulness of his divine love and of mine to

ward them. It is true that all his love is included and

made manifest in his having died on the Cross for them,

for this was the extremity of his immense charity (John

3, 16). But many ungrateful men are loath to remem

ber even this blessing. For such and for all others the

knowledge of what He did for them during the thirty-

three years should be a new incentive and spur of love ;

since each of his acts was worth an infinite price and

merited our eternal gratitude. The Almighty set me as

a witness to all of them: and I assure thee, that from

THE INCARNATION 599

the first instant of his conception in my womb, He ceased

not to clamor to the Father for the salvation of men.

From that moment He began to embrace the Cross (Heb.

10, 5), not only in desire, but also as far as was pos

sible in effect, placing Himself in the position of one

crucified from his infancy and continuing these exercises

during his whole life. I also imitated Him in this, join

ing Him in his prayers and labors for mankind and in the

very first acts of his most sacred humanity by which He

rendered thanks for the salvation of men.

701. Let therefore mortals beware, lest I, who was a

Witness and Co-operatrix of this salvation, be not also a

Witness and Co-operatrix in the day of judgment, pro

claiming how well justified is the cause of God with men.

If on that day I most justly refuse my intercession to

those, who have foolishly despised and forgotten so many

and so great favors and blessings, the results of the divine

love of my Son and my own : what answer, what excuse

or evasion shall those then bring forward, who have been

so well informed, so much admonished and enlightened

by the truth? How can these ungrateful and pertina

cious mortals expect mercy of the most just and righteous

God, when He has given them sufficient and opportune

time, invited them so often, called them, waited and

worked for them, and conferred upon them immense

blessings, while they abused and wasted all of them in

the pursuit of vanity ? Fear, my daughter, this, the great

est of all blindnesses. Refresh ever the memory of the

most holy works of my Son and of me, and imitate them

with all thy fervor. Continue the exercises of the cross

under the guidance of obedience, in order to keep thy

self mindful of what thou must imitate and give thanks

for. Take notice at the same time, that my Son and

Lord could have redeemed the human race without suf-

600 CITY OF GOD

fering so much and that He wished to increase his suf

ferings only on account of the immensity of his love

for souls. The return for such condescension should be,

that the creature content not itself with little, as is or

dinarily the case with ignorant men. Add thou virtue to

virtue and seek thereby evermore to meet all thy obliga

tions, imitating the Lord and me in our labors for the

salvation of the world. All thy merits offer up for

souls, uniting them with his merits in the presence of

the eternal Father.

CHAPTER XXX.

JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH RETURN TO NAZARETH AT THE

COMMAND OF THE LORD.

702. The Child Jesus reached the end of his seventh

year while in Egypt, which was also the term set by the

eternal Wisdom for his mysterious sojourn in that land.

In order that the prophecies might be fulfilled, it was

necessary that He return to Nazareth. This decree the

eternal Father intimated to his most holy Son on a cer

tain day in the presence of his holy Mother and while

She was with Him in prayer. She saw it mirrored in

his deified soul and She saw how He submitted to it in

obedience to the Father. Therein the great Lady joined

Him, although they had already become better acquainted

and habituated to their present abode than to their own

native city of Nazareth. Neither the Mother nor the

Son made known to saint Joseph this new decree of

heaven. But in that very night the angel of the Lord

spoke to him in his sleep, as Matthew relates (Matth.

2, 19), and bade him take the Child and its Mother

and return to the land of Israel; for Herod and those

who with him had sought the life of the Child, were

dead. So much value does the Almighty set on the

proper order in created things, that, though Jesus was

the true God and his Mother so highly exalted above saint

Joseph in sanctity, He did not permit the arrangements

of this journey to proceed from his Son nor from his

Mother, but from saint Joseph, who was the head of this

Family. God intended to teach all mortals, that He wishes

601

602 CITY OF GOD

all things to be governed by the natural order set up by

his Providence; and that the inferiors and subjects of

the mystical body of the Church, even though they may

excel in virtue and in certain other respects, must obey

and submit to their superiors and prelates in the visible

order.

703. Saint Joseph immediately notified the Child Jesus

and his Mother of the command of the Lord; and both

of them answered, that the will of the heavenly Father

must be done. Thereupon they resolved upon their

journey without delay, immediately distributing among

the poor the little furniture contained in their dwelling.

This was done by the hands of the divine Child; for the

heavenly Mother often consigned into his hands what

She had destined as alms to the poor, knowing that the

Child, as the God of mercy, loved to exercise it with his

own hands (Matth. 25, 40). When She gave Him these

alms the most holy Mother falling on her knees, said:

"Take, my Son and Lord, whatever Thou desirest, in

order to share it with the poor, our friends and brothers."

The blessed dwelling, which had been sanctified and con

secrated for seven years by the presence of the High-

priest Jesus, was left in the possession of certain of the

most devout and pious persons in Heliopolis. Their vir

tue and holiness had gained them a favor which they

could not now fully estimate; although, on account of

what they had seen and experienced, they counted them

selves indeed fortunate to occupy the same house, in which

these Strangers had lived for seven years. This affec

tionate devotion was rewarded by abundant light and

grace for their eternal salvation.

704. They departed for Palestine in the company of

angels as on their way thence. The great Queen sat on

the ass with the divine Child on her lap and saint

THE INCARNATION 603

Joseph walked afoot, closely following the Son and

Mother. On account of the loss of such great Benefactors

their acquaintances and friends were very sorrowful at

the news of their departure ; with incredible weeping and

sighing they saw Them leave, knowing and loudly com

plaining, that they were now losing all their consolation

and refuge in their necessities. If the divine power had

not interfered, the holy Family would have found great

difficulty in leaving Heliopolis ; for its inhabitants began

to feel the night of their miseries secretly setting upon

their hearts at the parting of the Sun, which had dis

persed and brightened its darkness (John 1, 9). In

traversing the inhabited country they passed through

some towns of Egypt, where They scattered their graces

and blessings. The news of their passage spreading

about, all the sick, the afflicted and disconsolate gathered

to seek Them out, and they found themselves relieved in

body and soul. Many of the sick were cured, many de

mons were expelled without their knowing who it was

that thus hurled them back to hell. Yet they felt the

divine power, which compelled them and wrought such

blessings among men.

705. I will not tarry to relate the particular events of

this journey of the Child Jesus and his most blessed

Mother out of Egypt; for it is not necessary, nor could

it be done without extending this history too much. It

will suffice to say that all who came to Them with greater

or less devotion, left their presence enlightened with

truth, assisted by grace and wounded with the love of

God. They felt a secret force, which urged and com

pelled them to the pursuit of virtue and, while withdraw

ing them from the paths of death, showed them the way

of eternal life. They came to the Son, drawn to Him

by the Father, and they turned to the Father, sent there

604 CITY OF GOD

by the divine light of Christ s truth, which enkindled their

souls with the knowledge of the true God (John 6, 44).

Nevertheless He concealed Himself, since it was not yet

time to reveal Himself openly. But the fire, which He

had come to enkindle and spread in this world, secretly

and incessantly produced its divine effects among men.

706. Having thus fulfilled the mysteries decreed by the

divine will and issuing from the inhabited regions of this

country, which They had signalized by their miracles,

our heavenly Pilgrims entered the desert through which

They had come. In it They again suffered labors and

difficulties similar to those of their flight from Palestine ;

for the Lord continued to permit hardships and tribula

tion in order to afford Them occasion of merit and pro

vide a proper relief. He administered to these neces

sities by the hands of the angels as in the first journey,

or sometimes the Child Jesus himself commanded them

to provide sustenance. Very often saint Joseph, in order

that he might become more sensible of the divine favor,

was permitted to hear these commands and saw how

these spirits obeyed and readily procured what was

wanted. This greatly encouraged and consoled the holy

Patriarch in his sorrow and anxiety for the King and

Queen of heaven. At other times the divine Child made

use of his Omnipotence and created all that was necessary

to supply their wants out of a crumb of bread. The

rest of the journey was similar to the journey described

before in chapter the twenty-second; therefore I do not

think it necessary to repeat the description. When, how

ever, They arrived at the confines of Palestine the anxious

husband was informed, that Archelaus had succeeded

Herod his father in the government of Judea (Matth.

2, 22). Fearing that with the sovereignty he had in

herited also his cruelty, saint Joseph turned from his

THE INCARNATION 605

route without going to Jerusalem or entering Judea and

passed through the land of the tribe of Dan and Issachar

below Galilee, following the coast of the Mediterranean

sea and passing Jerusalem to his right.

707. They reached Nazareth, their home, for the Child

was to be called a Nazarene. They found their former

humble house in charge of the devout cousin of saint

Joseph, who, as I have mentioned in the twelfth chapter

of the third book, had offered to serve him while our

Queen was absent in the house of Elisabeth. Before

They had left Judea for Egypt, saint Joseph had written

to this woman, asking her to take care of the house and

what it contained. They found it all in good condition

and his cousin received Them with great joy on account

of her love for the great Queen, though at the same time

she did not know of her dignity. The heavenly Lady

entered with her Son and saint Joseph, and immediately

She prostrated Herself in adoration of the Lord and in

thanksgiving for having led Them, safe from the cruelty

of Herod, to this retreat, and preserved Them in the

dangers of their banishment and their long and arduous

journeys. Above all did She render thanks for having

returned in company with her Son, now grown both in

years and in grace and virtue (Luke 2, 40).

708. Taking counsel with her divine Child She pro

ceeded to set up a rule of life and regulate her pious

practices; not that She had failed to observe a rule of

life on her journey; for the most prudent Lady, in imita

tion of her Son, had always observed the most perfect

order according to circumstances. But being now peace

fully settled in her home She wished to include many

exercises, which on the journey were impossible. Her

greatest solicitude was always to co-operate with her most

holy Son for the salvation of souls which was the work

606 CITY OF GOD

most urgently enjoined upon Her by the eternal Father.

Toward this most high end our Queen directed all her

practices in union with the Redeemer, and this was their

constant occupation, as we shall see in the course of this

second part. The holy Joseph also ordered his occupa

tions and his work so as most worthily to earn sus

tenance for the divine Child and his Mother as well as

for himself. That which in other sons of Adam is con

sidered a punishment and a hardship was to this holy

Patriarch a great happiness. For while others were con

demned to sustain their natural life by the labor of their

hands in the sweat of their brows, saint Joseph was

blessed and consoled beyond measure to know, that he

had been chosen by his labor and sweat to support God

himself and his Mother, to whom belonged heaven and

earth and all that they contain (Esther 13, 10).

709. The Queen of the angels herself undertook to pay

the debt of gratitude due to saint Joseph for his labors

and solicitude. Accordingly She provided his meals and

attended to his comforts with incredible care and most

loving gratitude. She was obedient to him in all things

and humbled Herself before him as if She were his

handmaid and not his spouse, or, what is more, not the

Mother of the Creator and Lord of all. She accounted

Herself unworthy of existence and of being suffered to

walk upon the earth; for She thought it just, that She

should be in want of all things. In the consciousness

of having been created out of nothing and therefore un

able to make any return for either this benefit or, accord

ing to her estimation, for any of the others, She estab

lished in Herself such a rare humility, that She thought

Herself less than the dust and unworthy to mingle with

it. For the least favor She gave admirable thanks to the

Lord, as to the first cause and origin of them all, and to

THE INCARNATION 607

creatures as to the instruments of his bounty. To som\*

She gave thanks because they conferred favors upon

Her, to others because they had denied them; and to

others again because they bore with Her in patience.

She acknowledged Herself as indebted to all of them,

though She filled them with the blessings of sweetness

and placed Herself at the feet of all, seeking ingenious

means and artifices to let no instant and no occasion pass

for practicing the most perfect and exalted virtues to the

admiration of the angels and the pleasure and the delight

of the Most High.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

710. My daughter, while journeying at the command

of the Lord from one country to another and during the

works enjoined upon me, my heart was never troubled

nor my spirit cast down; for I always held myself pre

pared to fulfill entirely the will of God. Although the

Lord made known to Me his high ends, yet this was not

always done at the beginning, thus permitting me to en

dure so much the greater sufferings; for in obeying the

Lord no further reason is necessary than that the Lord

Creator so commands and disposes. The souls must

accustom themselves to look for this motive alone and to

learn solely to please the Lord, without distinguishing

between fortunate or unfortunate events and without look

ing to their own inclinations. In this kind of wisdom I

wish that thou advance. In imitation of me and to satisfy

thy obligations toward my most holy Son, do thou re

ceive prosperity or adversity in this mortal life with

unmoved countenance and with equanimity and peace of

mind. Let not the one grieve, nor the other vainly re-

608 CITY OF GOD

joice thee; but attend only to all that which the Almighty

ordains according to his pleasure.

711. Human life is interwoven thus variously with

both kinds of events ; some of them according, others con

trary to the likings of mortals; some which they abhor,

others which they desire. As the human heart is limited

and narrow it immoderately inclines to extremes, bound

lessly desiring what it loves and likes, and, on the other

hand, grieving and sorrowing at what it abhors and dis

likes. These changeful moods and fluctuations create

danger for all or many virtues. The disorderly love for

one creature which it cannot attain, moves the soul pres

ently to desire another, expecting a balm for its dis

appointment in the former. And if it is successful, the

soul becomes involved and flurried in the desire of re

taining what it possesses, thus casting itself by these

velleities into still greater disorders and passions. Attend,

therefore, dearest, to this danger and attack it at the root

by preserving thy heart independent and riveted only on

the divine Providence, without ever allowing it to incline

toward what it desires or longs for, or to abhor what

is painful to it. Let the will of the Lord be thy only

delight and joy. Let neither thy desires draw thee on,

nor thy fears dishearten thee. Let not thy exterior occu

pations, and much less thy regard or attention to crea

tures, ever impede thee or divert thee from thy holy

exercises, attending always to my example. Seek thou

lovingly and diligently to follow in my footsteps.

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@ Volume 3 @@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

MYSTICAL

CITY OF GOD

THE MIRACLE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE

AND THE ABYSS OF HIS GRACE

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN

MOTHER OF GOD

OUR QUEEN AND OUR LADY, MOST HOLY MARY

EXPIATRIX OF THE FAULT OF EVE

AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Manifested in these later ages by that Lady to her handmaid

SISTER MARY OF JESUS

Superioress of the convent of the Immaculate Conception of the town

of Agreda, of the province of Burgos in Spain, under

obedience to the regular observance

of the seraphic father

SAINT FRANCIS

For new enlightenment of the world, for rejoicing

of the Catholic Church, and encouragement of men.

Translation from the Original Authorised Spanish Edition

BY

FISCAR MARISON

Begun on the Feast of the Assumption

1902

/1PD 97

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE

CHAPTER I. PAGE

THE LORD STILL FARTHER TRIES THE MOST HOLY MARY BY ACTING

TOWARD HER WITH A CERTAIN DISTANCE AND SEVERITY; THE

REASONS FOR THIS BEHAVIOR ARE EXPLAINED 3

CHAPTER II.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE SOUL OF HER MOST HOLY SON AND ALL

THAT HAD BEEN HIDDEN TO HER AGAIN BECOMES VISIBLE TO

MOST HOLY MARY; SHE is INSTRUCTED IN THE LAW OF GRACE 15

CHAPTER III.

MOST HOLY MARY AND JOSEPH GO TO JERUSALEM EVERY YEAR

ACCORDING TO THE REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW, AND THEY

TAKE WITH THEM THE CHILD JESUS 26

CHAPTER IV.

AT TWELVE YEARS OF AGE THE CHILD JESUS GOES WITH HIS

PARENTS TO JERUSALEM AND HE CONCEALS HIMSELF FROM

THEM IN THE TEMPLE 35

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THREE DAYS MOST HOLY MARY AND SAINT JOSEPH FIND

THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE DISPUTING WITH THE

TEACHERS 46

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING A VISION WHICH WAS GRANTED TO MOST HOLY MARY

WHEN THE CHILD JESUS WAS TWELVE YEARS OLD, AND WHICH

WAS TO ASSIST IN PRODUCING WITHIN HER THE PERFECT COPY

AND IMAGE OF THE EVANGELICAL LAW 61

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXALTED PURPOSES OF THE INSTRUCTION OF MOST HOLY MARY

ARE EXPLAINED MORE AT LARGE; AND HOW SHE PUT THESE

INSTRUCTIONS INTO PRACTICE 69

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW OUR GREAT QUEEN PRACTICED THE TEACHINGS OF THE GOSPEL

AS TAUGHT HER BY HER MOST HOLY SON 78

vii

viii CONTENTS

CHAPTER IX. PAGE

HOW THE MOST HOLY MARY WAS INSTRUCTED IN THE ARTICLES OF

FAITH AND WHAT USE SHE MADE OF THIS KNOWLEDGE 88

CHAPTER X.

HOW MOST HOLY MARY RECEIVED ENLIGHTENMENT ON THE TEN

COMMANDMENTS, AND HOW SHE APPLIED IT 98

CHAPTER XL

THE DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE MOST HOLY MARY CONCERNING THE

SEVEN SACRAMENTS WHICH WERE TO BE INSTITUTED BY

CHRIST THE LORD, AND CONCERNING THE FIVE PRECEPTS OF

THE CHURCH 110

CHAPTER XII.

THE INCESSANT PRAYERS AND PETITIONS OF CHRIST, THE REDEEMER,

FOR OUR WELFARE | AND HOW OUR MOST HOLY MOTHER JOINED

HIM THEREIN AND RECEIVED MANY NEW ENLIGHTENMENTS.. 123

CHAPTER XIII.

MOST HOLY MARY PASSES HER THIRTY-THIRD YEAR, EVER AFTER

REMAINING UNCHANGED AS TO HER VIRGINAL BODY; SHE

PLANS TO SUPPORT HER MOST HOLY SON AND SAINT JOSEPH

BY THE LABOR OF HER HANDS 131

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SUFFERINGS AND INFIRMITIES OF SAINT JOSEPH IN THE LAST

YEARS OF HIS LIFE AND HOW THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, HIS

SPOUSE, NURSED HIM DURING THAT TIME 141

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE HAPPY DEATH OF SAINT JOSEPH AND WHAT FOLLOWED

UPON IT: HOW JESUS, OUR REDEEMER, AND BLESSED MARY, OUR

LADY, ASSISTED AT HIS PASSING AWAY 150

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AGE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN AT THE DEATH OF SAINT

JOSEPH, AND SOME OF THE PRIVILEGES OF HER HOLY SPOUSE 161

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DOINGS OF MOST HOLY MARY AFTER THE DEATH OF SAINT

JOSEPH AND SOME OF HER DEALINGS WITH THE HOLY ANGELS 169

CHAPTER XVIII.

OTHER MYSTERIES AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE GREAT QUEEN AND

LADY AND HER MOST HOLY SON, WHILE THEY LIVED ALONE

TOGETHER . 182

CONTENTS ix

CHAPTER XIX. PAGE

CHRIST OUR LORD BEGINS TO PREPARE FOR HIS PUBLIC PREACHING

BY ANNOUNCING TO SOME THE PRESENCE OF THE REDEEMER

IN THE WORLD; HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER ASSISTS HIM

THEREIN AND THE POWERS OF HELL BEGIN TO GET UNEASY.. 192

CHAPTER XX.

LUCIFER CALLS A MEETING IN HELL IN ORDER TO HINDER THE

WORKS OF CHRIST OUR REDEEMER AND OF HIS MOST HOLY

MOTHER 203

CHAPTER XXI.

SAINT JOHN, HAVING OBTAINED GREAT FAVORS FROM THE MOST

HOLY MARY, IS ORDERED BY THE HOLY GHOST TO GO FORTH ON

HIS PUBLIC PREACHING. HE FIRST SENDS TO THE HEAVENLY

LADY HIS CROSS 213

CHAPTER XXII.

MOST HOLY MARY OFFERS HER ONLYBEGOTTEN SON FOR THE RE

DEMPTION OF THE HUMAN RACE TO THE ETERNAL FATHER; IN

RETURN FOR THIS SACRIFICE HE GRANTS HER A CLEAR VISION

OF THE DIVINITY; SHE TAKES LEAVE OF HER SON AS HE

DEPARTS FOR THE DESERT 222

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER DURING THE ABSENCE OF

HER MOST HOLY SON AND HER INTERCOURSE WITH HER

GUARDIAN ANGELS 236

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR SAVIOR JESUS GOES TO THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN, WHERE

HE IS BAPTIZED BY SAINT JOHN. SAINT JOHN HIMSELF THEN

ASKS TO BE BAPTIZED BY THE SAVIOR 245

CHAPTER XXV.

OUR REDEEMER, AFTER HIS BAPTISM, WALKS TO THE DESERT WHERE,

BY THE PRACTICE OF HEROIC VIRTUES, HE GAINS GREAT VIC

TORIES OVER OUR VICES } HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER KNOWS OF

ALL HIS DOINGS AND IMITATES HIM MOST PERFECTLY 255

CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER HIS FAST THE LORD ALLOWS HIMSELF TO BE TEMPTED BY

LUCIFER; CHRIST VANQUISHES HIM, AND HIS MOST HOLY

MOTHER IS KEPT INFORMED OF ALL THAT HAPPENS 264

x CONTENTS

CHAPTER XXVII. PAGE

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER LEAVES THE DESERT AND RETURNS TO THE

PLACE WHERE SAINT JOHN WAS BAPTIZING. HIS OCCUPATION

UNTIL HE CALLS THE FIRST DISCIPLES. THE BLESSED VIRGIN

KNOWS OF ALL HIS DOINGS AND IMITATES THEM 278

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHRIST, OUR REDEEMER, BEGINS TO CALL AND SELECT HIS DISCIPLES

IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BAPTIST, AND COMMENCES TO PREACH.

THE MOST HIGH COMMANDS HIS BLESSED MOTHER TO FOLLOW

HIM 286

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHRIST RETURNS WITH THE FIVE FIRST DISCIPLES TO NAZARETH;

HE BAPTIZES HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER; OTHER INCIDENTS

DURING THIS TIME 295

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I.

AT THE REQUEST OF HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER, CHRIST, OUR

SAVIOR, BEGINS TO MANIFEST HIMSELF TO THE WORLD BY HIS

FIRST MIRACLE 303

CHAPTER II.

MOST HOLY MARY ACCOMPANIES THE SAVIOR IN HIS PREACHING

TOURS ; SHE BEARS MANY HARDSHIPS AND TAKES CARE OF

THE WOMEN THAT FOLLOW HIM, CONDUCTING HERSELF IN ALL

THINGS WITH THE HIGHEST PERFECTION 314

CHAPTER III.

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED MARY NOTWITHSTANDING THE

MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE LORD; THE INSTRUCTION ON HU

MILITY WHICH SHE GAVE TO THE APOSTLES IN REGARD TO THE

WONDERS WHICH THEY THEMSELVES WERE TO PERFORM ; OTHER

REFLECTIONS 325

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEVIL IS MUCH DISTURBED AND DISCONCERTED ON ACCOUNT OF

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST AND OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST.

HEROD SEIZES AND BEHEADS SAINT JOHNJ SOME PARTICULARS

OF HIS DEATH 339

CHAPTER V.

THE FAVORS BESTOWED UPON THE APOSTLES BY CHRIST, THE SAVIOR,

ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR DEVOTION TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER,

AND THE SAD PERDITION OF JUDAS ON ACCOUNT OF NEGLECT

OF THIS DEVOTION 352

CONTENTS xi

CHAPTER VI. PAGE

CHRIST IS TRANSFIGURED ON MOUNT TABOR IN THE PRESENCE OF

HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER; THEY GO FROM GALILEE TO JERU

SALEM PREPARATORY TO THE PASSION ; AND THE SAVIOR IS

ANOINTED BY MAGDALEN IN BETHANY 372

CHAPTER VII.

THE SACRAMENTAL MYSTERY PRECEDING THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF

CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM J HOW HE ENTERED INTO THE CITY

AND HOW HE WAS RECEIVED BY ITS INHABITANTS 390

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEMONS MEET IN HELL TO DISCUSS THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

OUR LORD IN JERUSALEM ; THE RESULTS OF THIS CONFERENCE,

AND MEASURES RESOLVED UPON BY THE PRIESTS AND PHARISEES

OF JERUSALEM 405

CHAPTER IX.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR PARTS FROM HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER IN

BETHANY IN ORDER TO ENTER UPON HIS SUFFERINGS ON THE

THURSDAY OF HIS LAST SUPPER ; THE GREAT LADY ASKS TO

PARTAKE OF HOLY COMMUNION WITH THE REST, AND AFTER

WARDS FOLLOWS WITH MAGDALEN AND OTHER HOLY WOMEN 417

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR CELEBRATES THE LAST SUPPER WITH HIS DIS

CIPLES ACCORDING TO THE LAW AND HE WASHES THEIR FEET J

HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER OBTAINS A FULL KNOWLEDGE AND

UNDERSTANDING OF ALL THESE MYSTERIES 430

CHAPTER XI.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR CELEBRATES THE SACRAMENTAL SUPPER, CONSE

CRATING HIS TRUE AND SACRED BODY AND BLOOD IN THE

HOLY EUCHARIST; HIS PRAYERS AND PETITIONS; THE COM

MUNION OF HIS BLESSED MOTHER AND OTHER MYSTERIES OF

THIS OCCASION 450

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN AND ITS MYSTERIES.

WHAT HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER KNEW OF IT 472

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR SAVIOR IS DELIVERED INTO THE HANDS OF HIS ENEMIES BY

THE TREASON OF JUDAS AND IS TAKEN PRISONER ; THE BE

HAVIOR OF THE MOST HOLY MARY ON THIS OCCASION AND

SOME OF THE MYSTERIES OF THIS EVENT. . , . 491

xii CONTENTS

CHAPTER XIV. PAGE

THE FLIGHT AND DISPERSION OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THE CAPTURE

OF THEIR MASTER; HOW HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER WAS

AWAKE OF ALL THAT HAPPENED AND HOW SHE ACTED IN

CONSEQUENCE; THE PERDITION OF JUDAS AND THE WORRY OF

THE DEMONS OVER WHAT THEY WERE OBLIGED TO EXPERIENCE. 508

CHAPTER XV.

JESUS THE SAVIOR, BOUND AS A PRISONER, IS DRAGGED TO THE

HOUSE OF ANNAS; WHAT HAPPENED IN CONNECTION THERE

WITH AND WHAT THE MOST BLESSED MOTHER SUFFERED DURING

THAT TIME 526

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST IS DRAGGED TO THE HOUSE OF THE PRIEST CAIPHAS, WHERE

HE IS FALSELY ACCUSED AND ASKED WHETHER HE IS THE SON

OF GOD; SAINT PETER DENIES HIM FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD

TIME ; WHAT MOST HOLY MARY DID ON THIS OCCASION, AND

OTHER MYSTERIES 538

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST AFTER THE DENIAL

OF SAINT PETER UNTIL MORNING; AND THE GREAT SORROW OF

HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER 553

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE COUNCIL CONVENES ON THE FRIDAY MORNING TO SUBSTAN

TIATE THE CHARGES AGAINST THE SAVIOR JESUS ; THEY SEND

HIM TO PILATE; MOST HOLY MARY, WITH SAINT JOHN AND

THE THREE MARYS, GOES FORTH TO MEET JESUS 565

CHAPTER XIX.

PILATE SENDS THE JEWS WITH JESUS AND THEIR ACCUSATIONS TO

HEROD, WHERE THEY ADVANCE THEIR CHARGES ,\* HEROD TREATS

JESUS WITH CONTEMPT AND SENDS HIM BACK TO PILATE;

MARY FOLLOWS THE SAVIOR; OTHER HAPPENINGS IN CON

NECTION 583

CHAPTER XX.

OUR SAVIOR, BY ORDER OF PILATE, IS SCOURGED, CROWNED WITH

THORNS AND MOCKED. THE BEHAVIOR OF THE MOST HOLY

MARY DURING THIS TIME 603

CHAPTER XXI.

PILATE PRONOUNCES THE SENTENCE OF DEATH AGAINST THE

AUTHOR OF LIFE; THE LORD TAKES UP THE CROSS ON WHICH

HE IS TO DIE; HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER FOLLOWS HIM ; WHAT

SHE DID ON THIS OCCASION TO RESTRAIN THE DEVIL, AND

OTHER HAPPENINGS 620

CONTENTS xiii

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW OUR SAVIOR JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED ON MOUNT CALVARY; THE

SEVEN WORDS SPOKEN BY HIM ON THE CROSS AND THE AT

TENDANCE OF HIS SORROWFUL MOTHER AT HIS SUFFERINGS ... 642

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR OVER THE DEMON ON THE

CROSS; HIS DEATH AND THE PROPHECY OF HABBACUC; THE

COUNCIL OF THE DEMONS IN HELL 677

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SIDE OF CHRIST IS OPENED WITH A LANCE, AS HIS BODY HANGS

ON THE CROSS , HE IS TAKEN DOWN AND BURIED. THE BOINOS

OF THE BLESSED MOTHER ON THIS OCCASION, AND UNTIL SHE

RETURNED TO THE CENACLE 699

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN CONSOLED SAINT PETER AND THE OTHER

APOSTLES J HOW PRUDENTLY SHE ACTED AFTER THE BURIAL OF

HER SON; HOW SHE SAW HIS DIVINE SOUL DESCEND TO THE

LIMBO OF THE HOLY PATRIARCHS 714

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR AND HIS APPARITION TO

HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER IN COMPANY WITH THE HOLY

FATHERS OF LIMBO 727

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOME APPARITIONS OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR TO THE MARYS AND TO

THE APPOSTLES ; THE PRUDENCE OF THE QUEEN IN LISTENING

TO THEIR REPORTS CONCERNING THESE APPARITIONS OF THE LORD 7-8

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOME HIDDEN AND DIVINE MYSTERIES IN THE LIFE OF MARY DURING

THE DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD; SHE RE

CEIVES THE TITLE OF MOTHER AND QUEEN OF THE CHURCH ;

THE APPARITION OF CHRIST BEFORE AND IN PREPARATION FOR

THE ASCENSION 756

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN FOLLOWED BY ALL

THE SAINTS IN HIS COMPANY; HE ASSUMES WITH HIM HIS

MOST HOLY MOTHER AND PUTS HER IN POSSESSION OF GLORY 770

A REBUKE LONG OVERDUE

CERTAIN cyclopaedias, and a few writers, who

presumed, on very superficial examination and

under pretense of cautiousness, to pass judgment

upon the CITY OF GOD, have taken special care to

emphasize the intrigues of Jansenists and Gallicans

against City of God in Paris and at Rome.

In comparison with the good spoken and written

about Ciudad, the very few criticisms of ill-affected

persons are like one drop in a sea. The principal accu

sation against Ciudad is that it was not written by

Mary of Agreda.

What is to be thought of such criticisms becomes

clear from the official action taken by a number of

Popes, all indirectly approving of the work and pro

moting its publication. Pope Innocent XI in a letter

sent Nov. 9, 1681, to Charles II of Spain, and Pope

Alexander VIII in 1690, orally (viva vocis oraculo) ex

pressly declared, that CITY OF GOD may be read by

all the faithful. Pope Clement XI and Benedict XIV,

the former in two decrees, of June 5, 1705, and of Sep

tember 26, 1713, the latter in a decree of March 21, 1729,

gave a like decision. Moreover Pope Benedict XIV and

Clement XIV, approving of a decree of the Congrega

tion of Rites of May 8, 1757, and of May 11, 1771, offi

cially declares that the CITY OF GOD was not only

originally written but also composed exclusively by the

Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Agreda. As these

two documents infallibly establish the authorship of that

work, we insert them here verbally, so as to silence the

xv

xvi A REBUKE LONG OVERDUE

misleading insinuations and cavils found in cyclopaedic

and other superficial reviews of the CITY OF GOD.

1. Tirasonen. Beatificationis et Canonizationis

Ven. Servae Dei Mariae a Jesu, Abbatissse Monasterii

Conceptionis Oppidi de Agreda, Ordinis S. Francisci.

Cum pervenerit in Urbem assertum Autographum

Operis Mysticae Civitatis Dei Ven. Servae Dei Sororis

Maries a Jesu de Agreda, ex Monasterio Agredano

Tirasonen. Dioecesis extractum, et ad Ss. D. N. trans-

missum una cum aliis indubiis exemplaribus characteris

Servae Dei, nee non processus super ejusdem characteris

identitate, a Reverendiss. Episcopo Tirason. confectus

juxta ea, quae Ss. Dominus Noster Benedictus XIV pro

ea, qua praeditus est sapientia et doctrina, praescripserat in

Epistola ad P. Raphaelem a Lugagnano tune Ministrum

Generalem Ordinis Minorum die 16. Januarii 1748,

habita est Congregatio particularis Sacror. Rituum de

mandate Ss., in qua interfuerunt Eminentissimi et Rever

endiss. Patres Cardinales Portocarrero, Cavalchini,

Tamburini et Galli, nee non R. P. D. Benedictus Veterani

Promotor fidei, et Ego Secretarius, in eaque, omnibus

mature perpensis examinatisque non minus Peritis in

Hispania accurate confectis, quam aliis tribus Peritis in

Urbe, praevia instructione dicti R. P. D. Promotoris fidei

peractis, omnes f uerunt in sensu : Constare Ven. Servam

Dei Sor. Mariam a Jesu de Agreda scripsisse Hispano

idiomate Opus, de quo agitur, in octo tonios distributum

sub titulo: La Mystica Ciudad de Dios. Nee non si Ss.

placuerit, restitui posse Autographum memorati Operis,

cum ejus Apographum, accuratissime compulsatum,

exsistat in Processu informative, asservato in Actis

Sacrae Congregationis. Die 7. Maji 1757.

Facta deinde per me Secretarium de praedictis

relatione Sanctissimo, Sanctitas Sua benigne approbavit

A REBUKE LONG OVERDUE xvii

resolutionem Sacrce Congregationis, nee non restitui,

mandavit Eminentissimo D. Cardinali Portocarrero Auto-

graphum dicti Operis Mysticse Civitatis Dei, in Hispanias

remittendum. Hac die 8. Maji 1757.

Loco % Sigilli.

D. F. Card. Tamburinus Praef.

M. Marefuscus S. R. C. Secret.

2. Tirasonen. Beatificationis et Canonizationis

Ven. Servse Dei Marias a Jesu etc.

Optimo providoque consilio aeternae memoriae Ponti-

fex Benedictus Papa XIV., pro ea qua pollebat sapientia,

die 16. Janvarii 1748 datis litteris ad P. Raphaelem a

Lugagnano Ordinis Minorum de Observantia S. Francisci

Ministrum Generalem declaravit in judicio operum Ser-

vorum Dei, quod fit ex more Congregationis Sacr. Rituum,

primum examinis subjectum esse, ut constituatur, quisnam

propositi operis scriptor exstiterit, proindeque examen

libri non esse instituendum, nisi manifeste constiterit,

illius auctorem esse Dei Servum, cujus nomine inscrip-

tum perhibetur; quamobrem ad rectum judicium efform-

andum de Opere cui titulus : La mystica Ciudad de Dios,

quod iterate impressum constanterque vulgatum fuit sub

nomine Venerdbilis Serves Dei Sororis Maria a Jesu ab

Agreda, constituit, quod cum alia exsistant scripta certo

Ancillae Dei charactere exarata, advocatis Peritis, qui

compararent codicem de quo agitur, cum eisdem scriptis,

primum de identitate characteris juxta artis regulas

judicium institueretur; ac tandem cum novum profecto

non sit, quod quis propria manu Opus aliquod describat,

quod vel ab alio integre compositum fuerit, vel ejus magna

pars aliena constet inventione ac doctrina, ad hoc etiam

dubium e medio tollendum, cum praeter mysticam Civita-

tem Dei tot alia exstent Opera, quse ab eadem Dei Serva

xviii A REBUKE LONG OVERDUE

procul dubio confecta fuere, quumque ex artis criticae

regulis validissimum argumentum pro dignoscendis

librorum auctoribus in comparatione styli, ej usque simili-

tudine aut difformitate constituatur, easdem adhibendas

opportunas diligentias praecepit ad comprobandum unifor-

mitatem styli mysticae Civitatis Dei cum aliis Operibus ab

eadem Dei Famula indubitanter conscriptis.

Hac igitur de causa die 7. Maji 1757 in peculiari Sac.

Rituum Congregatione omnibus mature perpensis, et

Peritorum sententia exacta indagatione discussa, fuit

primum declaratum: Constare Venerabilem Servam Dei

Sororem Mariam a Jesu de Agreda scripsisse Hispano

idiomate Opus, de quo agitur, in octo tomos distributum

sub titulo : La mystica Ciudad de Dios.

Deindeque ex benigno Ssmi. Domini Nostri Clemen-

tis Papa XIV. rescripto altera habenda peculiaris Congre-

gatio, in qua Rmi Cardinales Carolus Albertus Guido-

bonus Cavalchini Episcop. Ostien., Joannes Franciscus

Albani Episcopus Sabinen., causae relator Marius Mare-

fuscus et Flavius Chisius Sacr. Rituum Congregationi

Praefectus, audito R. P. Dominico de Sancto Petro Fidei

Promotore, meque infrascripto Secretario, viderent, quid

de stylo ejusdem operis mysticae Civitatis Dei esset sen-

tiendum. Hac in Congregatione die 9. Martii 1771,

postquam Rmi Patres Cardinales diligenti trutina exami-

narunt judicium trium Peritorum, quibus Reverendissi-

mus Cardinalis Episcopus Sabinen. dederat in mandatis,

ut praevia instructione R. P. Promotoris Fidei compara-

rent stylum mysticae Civitatis Dei cum stylo aliorum

ejusdem Servae Dei Operum, quae eisdem tradita fuerant

consideranda, responsum fuit : Constare de uniformitate

styli Operis Mystics Civitatis Dei cum aliis Operibus, quce

a Serva Dei Maria a Jesu de Agreda confecta perhibentur

A REBUKE LONG OVERDUE xix

ideoque inferri posse Opus prafatum vere a Servo, Dei

fuisse compositum.

Cujus peculiar is Congregationis responsi facta postea

per me infrascriptum Secretarium Ss. Dno. Nostro rela-

tione, Sanctitas Sua audito prius R. P. Dominico de S.

Petro Fidei Promotore, eidem robur firmitatis attribuit.

Die 11. Martii 1771.

A. Card. Chisius Praef.

M. Gallo S. R. Cong. Secret.

APPROBATIONS

THE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad

de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3,

1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks

and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne,

known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting the

publication and reading of the "Ciudad de Dios." Similar

decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII,

Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were

followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites,

approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which

the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and writ

ten by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is

officially established. The great pope Benedict XIII,

when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revela

tions as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed

Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy,

objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was

peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his

objections as interfering with the decree of pope

Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was

promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men

of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has re

sulted so far in securing her the title of Venerabilis, thus

clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us

hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many

pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

xxi

xxii APPROBATIONS

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles

wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German

translation in 1885, which was approved and highly

recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the follow

ing terms:

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approba

tion to the annotated translation of the Spanish original

"Ciudad de Dios" of Mary of Jesus and recommend this

book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occa

sion of great spiritual blessings."

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

%\* IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-

Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Ger

many, etc.

"According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and

Clement XI the book known as Ciudad de Dies written

by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may

be read by all the faithful."

"A number of episcopal approbations, the recommen

dations of four renowned universities, namely, of Tou

louse, Salamanca, Alcala and Louvain, and of prominent

members of different orders, coincide in extolling the

above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal

D Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty

years of his previous life as of small consequence in com

parison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in

all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the

Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Ven

erable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbe Emery,

adds : "Only since I read the revelations of Mary of

Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother."

APPROBATIONS xxiii

"We therefore do not hesitate in granting our epis

copal approbation to "Ciudad de bios" and wish to

recommend it to the faithful and especially to our

clergy."

^i FRANZ ALBERT,

Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.

September 12, 1885.

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios"

is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edi

tion of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God

and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Admin

istrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo,

chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immacu

late Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to

compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for

the printing of the new edition of the "City of God"

now about to be published by the religious of the above-

named convent, with the authenticated autograph

manuscript of that work there preserved, and hav

ing ascertained by a personal revision of a great part

of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently

and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him

by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition

of Ciudad de Dios/ with the exception of a few mere

orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to

the autograph of that work as composed and written

by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal] ^ JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

xxiv APPROBATIONS

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right

Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this

English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English

translation of the work entitled Ciudad de Dios. Wish

ing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at

variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and se

cure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the

newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridg

ment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I

contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part

III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publi

cation of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these

divisions as follow :

THE CONCEPTION, Books 1 and 2.

THE INCARNATION, Books 3 and 4.

THE TRANSFIXION, Books 5 and 6.

THE CORONATION, Books 7 and 8.

f)e Sacramental ;jmptenc of tfje Hife of

of 4BotJ from tfte Return out of

up to &er bibinc

into

BOOK ONE

BOOK V, III OF II PART

Concerning the Perfection with which the most Holy Mary copied and

imitated the Activity of the Soul of Christ; how the Incarnate Word

instructed Her in the Laws of grace, the Articles of Faith, the

Sacraments, the Ten Commandments; and with what

Alacrity and Noble Promptitude She Corresponded.

Also concerning the Death of Saint Joseph, the

Preaching of Saint John, the Fasting and the

Baptism of our Redeemer, the call of the

First Disciples and the Baptism

of the Virgin Mary, our

Blessed Lady

CHAPTER I.

THE LORD STILL FARTHER TRIES THE MOST HOLY MARY

BY ACTING TOWARD HER WITH A CERTAIN DISTANCE

AND SEVERITY; THE REASONS FOR THIS BEHAVIOR

ARE EXPLAINED.

1.\* Already Jesus, Mary and Joseph had settled in

Nazareth and thus changed their poor and humble dwell

ing into a heaven. In order to describe the mysteries and

sacraments which passed between the divine Child and

his purest Mother before his twelfth year and later on,

until his public preaching, many chapters and many

books would be required; and in them all, I would be

able to relate but the smallest part in view of the vast-

ness of the subject and the insignificance of such an

ignorant woman as I am. Even with the light given

me by this great Lady I can speak of only a few inci

dents and must leave the greater part unsaid. It is not

possible or befitting to us mortals to comprehend all

these mysteries in this life, since they are reserved for

the future life.

\*To find corresponding paragraphs in the new Spanish edition add 711 to each

of the paragraph numbers of this volume.

4 CITY OF GOD

2. Shortly after, their return from Egypt to Nazareth

the Lord resolved to try his most holy Mother in the

same manner as He had tried Her in her childhood and

as was mentioned in the second book of the first part,

chapter twenty-seventh. Although She was now vastly

grown in the exercise of her love and wisdom, yet as

the power of God and the object of divine charity is

infinite, and as moreover the capacity of the Queen

exceeded that of all creatures, the Lord wished to raise

Her to a higher level of holiness and merit. Moreover,

being a true Educator of the spirit, He wished to form

of Her a disciple of such exalted knowledge, that She

would truly be for us a consummate Teacher and a

living example of his own doctrines. For such was to

be her office after the ascension of her Son and Re

deemer, as I will relate in the third part. It was also

befitting and necessary for the honor of Christ, our

Redeemer, that the teaching of the Gospel, by which

and on which He was to found the law of grace, holy,

immaculate and without a wrinkle, should give full evi

dence of its efficacy and power in a mere creature, and

that all its adequate and supereminent effects should be

exhibited in some one, who could be a standard for all

men. It is clear, that this creature could be none else

than the most blessed Mary, who, as his Mother, stood

so close to the Master and Teacher of all holiness.

3. The Most High therefore resolved that the heavenly

Lady should be the first disciple of his school and the

first-born Daughter of the new Law of grace, the most

perfect copy of his ideals and the most pliant material,

upon which, as on liquid wax, should be set the seal of

his doctrine of holiness, so that the Son and the Mother

might be the two true tablets of the new law of the

world (Exod. 31, 18). For this purpose of the infinite

THE TRANSFIXION 5

wisdom He manifested to Her all the mysteries of the

evangelical law and of his doctrine; and this was the

subject of his instructions from the time of their return

from Egypt until his public preaching, as we shall see

in the course of this history. In these hidden sacraments

the incarnate Word and his holy Mother occupied them

selves during the twenty-three years of their stay in

Nazareth. As all this concerned the heavenly Mother

alone (whose life the holy Evangelists did not profess

to narrate), the writers of the Gospel made no mention

of it, excepting that which was related of the Child

Jesus, when, in his twelfth year, He was lost in Jeru

salem. During all those years Mary alone was the dis

ciple of Christ. In addition therefore to the ineffable

gifts of grace and holiness, which He had conferred upon

Her until their arrival in Nazareth, He infused into Her

new light and made Her a participant in his divine

knowledge, depositing and engraving into her heart the

whole law and doctrine of grace, which to the end of

the world was to be dispensed by his holy Church. This

was moreover effected in such an exalted manner that no

human thought or words can express it; and the great

Lady was thereby filled with such wisdom and knowl

edge, that it would suffice to enlighten many worlds, if

there were more than one.

4. In order to rear in the heart of the purest Virgin

this edifice of holiness to a height beyond all that is not

God, the Lord laid its foundations accordingly, trying

the strength of her love and of all her other virtues. For

this purpose the Lord withdrew Himself, causing Her

to lose Him from her sight, which until then had caused

Her to revel in continual joy and delight. I do not wish

to say, that the Lord left Her bodily; but, still remaining

with Her and in Her by an ineffable presence and grace,

6 CITY OF GOD

He hid Himself from her interior sight and suspended

the tokens of his most sweet affection. The heavenly

Lady in the meanwhile knew not the inward cause of

this behavior, as the Lord gave Her no explanation.

Moreover her divine Son, without any forewarning

showed Himself very reserved and withdrew from her

society. Many times He retired and spoke but few

words to Her, and even these with great earnestness and

majesty. But what was apt to afflict Her most, was the

eclipse of the light by which She was wont to see re

flected as in a crystal the human operations of his most

pure soul. This light was suddenly dimmed so much,

that She could not thenceforth distinguish them as a

living copy for her own actions.

5. This unannounced and unexpected change was

the crucible in which the purest gold of the love of our

Queen was cleansed and assayed. Surprised at what was

happening, She immediately took refuge in the humble

opinion She had of Herself, deeming Herself unworthy

of the vision of the Lord, who now had hidden Himself.

She attributed it all to her want of correspondence and

to her ingratitude for the blessings She had obtained

from the most generous and exalted Father of mercies.

The most prudent Queen did not feel so much the pri

vation of his delightful caresses, as the dread of having

displeased Him and of having fallen short in his service.

This was the arrow that pierced her heart with grief.

One filled with such true and noble love could not feel

less; for all delight of love is founded in the pleasure

and satisfaction given by the lover to the one beloved,

and therefore He cannot rest, when he suspects that the

beloved is not contented or pleased. The loving sighs

of his Mother were highly pleasing to her most holy

Son. He was enamored with Her anew and the tender

THE TRANSFIXION 7

affection of his only and chosen One wounded his heart

(Cant. 4, 9). But whenever the sweet Mother sought

Him out in order to hold converse with Him He con

tinued to show exterior reserve. Just as the flame of

a forge or a conflagration is intensified by the applica

tion of insufficient water, so the flame of love in the

heart of the sweetest Mother was fanned to an intenser

blaze by this adversity.

6. The single-hearted Dove exercised Herself in

heroic acts of all the virtues. She humbled Herself

below the dust; She reverenced Her Son in deepest ado

ration; She blessed the Father, thanking Him for his

admirable works and blessings and conforming Herself

to his wishes and pleasure; She sought to know his will

in order to fulfill it in all things ; She unceasingly renewed

her acts of faith, hope and burning love; and in all her

actions and in all circumstances this most fragrant spike

nard gave forth the odor of sweetness for Him, the

King of kings, who rested in her heart as in his flowery

and perfumed couch (Cant. 1, 11). She persevered in

her tearful prayers, with continual sighing and longing

from her inmost heart ; She poured forth her prayers in

the presence of the Lord and recounted her tribulation

before the throne of the God (Ps. 141, 3). And many

times She broke out in words of ineffable sweetness and

loving sorrow, such as these:

7. "Creator of all the universe," She would say,

"eternal and almighty God, infinite is thy wisdom and

goodness, incomprehensible in essence and perfection:

well do I know that my sighs are not hidden to Thee

and that Thou knowest of the wound that pierces my

heart. If as a useless handmaid I have fallen short in

thy service and in pleasing Thee, why, O Life of my

soul, dost Thou not afflict me and chastise me with all

8 CITY OF GOD

the pains and sufferings of this my mortal life, so that

I may not be obliged to endure the turning away of thy

eyes, though I have deserved this treatment through my

default? All punishments would be less than this; for

my heart cannot bear thy displeasure; Thou alone, O

Lord, art my life, my happiness, my glory, and my

treasure. My soul counts for nothing all that Thou hast

created and their image lives not in my soul, except in

order to magnify thy greatness and to acknowledge

Thee as Creator and Lord of all. What shall I then

do, if Thou, my blessed Lord, the light of my eyes,

the goal of my desires, the northstar of my pilgrimage,

the life of my being and the essence of my life, fail me?

Who will give fountains to my eyes to bewail my want

of correspondence to all the blessings I have received

and my ingratitude for my benefits? My Lord, my

light, my guide and teacher on the way, who by thy

most exalted and perfect operations directest my fragile

and lukewarm undertakings, how can I regulate my life,

if Thou fail me as my model? Who will guide me

securely through this desert? What shall I do and

whither shall I turn, if Thou deprivest me of thy

assistance ?"

8. Nor did this wounded Deer rest satisfied there

with, but, thirsting after the purest fountains of grace,

She addressed Herself also to the holy angels and held

long conferences and colloquies with them, saying:

"Sovereign princes and intimate friends of the highest

King, my guardians, by your felicitous vision of his

divine countenance (Matth. 18, 10) and the ineffable

light (I Tim. 6, 16), I conjure you to tell me the cause

of his displeasure, if such He has conceived against me.

Intercede for me in his real presence, that through your

prayers He may pardon me, if I have offended Him.

THE TRANSFIXION 9

Remind Him, my friends, that I am but dust (Job 10, 9),

although I am formed by his hands and have upon me

the seal of his image; beseech Him not to forget his

needy one to the end, so that she may confess and mag

nify his name (Ps. 73, 19). Ask Him to give back to

me the breath of life which fails me at the dread of

having lost his love. Tell me, how and by what means

I can please Him and regain the joy of his countenance?"

The holy angels answered : "Our Queen and Sovereign,

dilated is thy heart so that Thou canst not be vanquished

by tribulation ; and none is so able as Thou to understand

how near the Lord is to the afflicted, who call upon Him

(Ps. 40, 15). Without doubt He recognizes thy affec

tion and does not despise thy loving sighs (Ps. 37, 10).

Even shalt Thou find Him a kind Father and his Only-

begotten a most affectionate Son, looking upon thy afflic

tion." The lovelorn Mother replied: "Will it perhaps

be presumption to appear before Him and prostrate my

self before Him, asking his pardon for any fault He

might find in me? What shall I do? What relief can

I find in my anxieties ?" And the holy princes answered :

"An humble heart does not displease our King (50, 9) ;

upon it He fixes his loving regard and He is never dis

pleased by the clamors of those who act in love."

9. These colloquies and answers of the holy angels

somewhat gladdened and consolated their Queen and

Mistress, since they confirmed Her in her own interior

conviction, that these sweetest sighs would excite the

special love and delight of the Most High. They would

not speak more openly, because the Lord on his own

account wished to prolong these delights (Prov. 8, 31).

Although her most holy Son, on account of his natural

love toward his Mother (a Mother only, not having any

father), was often deeply touched with compassion at

10 CITY OF GOD

seeing Her so afflicted ; yet He would not show any signs

thereof, hiding his compassion under a severe counte

nance. Sometimes, when the most loving Mother called

Him to his meals, He would delay; at other times He

would partake of them without looking at Her or speak

ing to Her. But although the great Lady at such times

shed many tears and lovingly sighed in her heart, She

always put upon Herself such restraint and weighed all

her actions so wisely, that, if it were possible for God

to give way to wonder (which certainly He cannot), He

would have yielded to such a feeling in the presence of

such plenitude of holiness and perfection in this mere

Creature. In as far as He was man, the Child Jesus

delighted especially in seeing his divine love and grace

bring forth such abundant fruits in his Virgin Mother.

The holy angels sang to Him new hymns of praise for

this admirable and unheard-of prodigy of virtues.

10. Upon the request of the loving Mother saint

Joseph had made a couch, which She covered with a

single blanket and upon which the Child Jesus rested

and took his sleep; for from the time in which He had

left the cradle, when they were yet in Egypt, He would

not accept of any other bed or of more covering. Al

though He did not stretch Himself out on this couch,

nor even always made use of it, He sometimes reclined

in a sitting posture upon it, resting upon a poor pillow

made of wool by the same Lady. When She spoke of

preparing for Him a better resting-place, her most holy

Son answered, that the only couch upon which He was

to be stretched out, was that of his Cross, in order to

teach men by his example (I Pet. 2, 21), that no one

can enter eternal rest by things beloved of Babylon and

that to suffer is our true relief in mortal life. Thence

forward the heavenly Lady imitated Him in this manner

THE TRANSFIXION 11

of taking rest with new earnestness and attention. When

at night the time for repose had come the Mistress of

humility had been accustomed to prostrate Herself before

her Son as He reclined on his couch, asking his pardon

for not having fulfilled all her duty in serving Him and

for not having been sufficiently grateful for the blessings

of the day. She poured out her thanks anew and with

many tears acknowledged Him as true God and Re

deemer of the world; and She would not rise from the

ground until her Son commanded Her and gave Her

his blessing. This same behavior She observed also in

the morning, requesting her divine Teacher and Master

to impose upon Her all that She was to do during the

day in his service; which Jesus did with tokens of great

love.

11. But now He changed his bearing and manner to

ward Her. When the most innocent Mother approached

to reverence and adore Him as She was wont, although

her tears and sighs issued ever more abundantly from

her inmost heart, He would not answer Her a word, but

listened to Her unmoved, commanding Her to betake

Herself away. To see her Son, the true God and Man,

so different in his behavior and so distant in his action,

so sparing of words, and, in all his exterior bearing, so

changed, ineffably affected the purest and dove-like heart

of the loving Mother. The heavenly Lady examined

her interior, searched all the conditions, circumstances

and sequence of her actions and racked her memory in

her inquiry into the celestial workings of her soul and

faculties. Although She could find no shadow of dark

ness, where all was light, holiness, purity and grace ; yet,

since She knew, as Job says, that neither the heavens nor

the stars are pure in the eyes of God (Job 15, 15), and

since He finds fault even in the angelic spirits (Job 25,

12 CITY OF GOD

5), the great Queen feared lest She should have over

looked some defect, which was known to the Lord. In

this anxiety She, though filled with supreme wisdom,

suffered agonies of love. For her love, being strong as

death (Cant. 8, 6), caused in Her an emulation enkindled

by an unquenchable fire of suffering and tribulation.

This trial of our Queen lasted many days, during which

her most holy Son looked upon Her with incomparable

pleasure, by which He raised Her to the position of a

Teacher of all the creatures. He rewarded her loyalty

and exquisite love with abundant graces in addition to

those which She already possessed. Then happened what

I shall relate in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED BY MARY, THE MOST

HOLY QUEEN OF HEAVEN

12. My daughter, I see that thou art desirous of

being a disciple of my most holy Son, since now thou

hast understood and described my own behavior in this

regard. For thy consolation take notice, that He has

exercised this office of Teacher not only once and not

only at the time, when He taught his holy doctrine

while yet in mortal flesh, as is related in the Gospels

(Matth. 28, 20) ; but that He continues to be the Teacher

of souls to the end of the world. He admonishes,

instructs, and inspires them, urging them to put in prac

tice whatever is most perfect and most holy. Thus He

acts toward all without exception, although according

to his divine ordainment, and according to the disposi

tion and attentiveness of each soul, every one receives

more or less of the benefits (Matth. 11, 5). If thou

hadst always applied this truth, thou wouldst have

known by abundant experience, that the Lord does not

THE TRANSFIXION 13

refuse to act as the Teacher of the poor, of the de

spised and of the sinners, if they wish to listen to his

secret doctrines. As thou now desirest to know what

disposition He requires of thee in order to have Him

teach Thee to thy heart s content, I shall in his name

inform thee of it. I assure thee, that if He shall find

thee well disposed He will, as a true and wise Teacher,

communicate to thee the plenitude of his wisdom and

enlightenment.

13. First of all thou must keep thy conscience pure,

undented, serene and quiet, keeping a constant watch

against falling into any sin or imperfection throughout

all the events of this life. At the same time thou must

withdraw thyself and disentangle thyself from all that is

earthly, so much so that (as I have already formerly

admonished thee) thou do not retain any image or mem

ory of human or visible things, but maintain the utmost

sincerity, purity and serenity of heart. When thou thus

hast cleared thy interior from the images and shadows

of earthly things, then thou wilt pay attention to the

voice of thy God like a beloved daughter, forgetting the

voice of Babylon, the house of her father Adam and

all the aftertastes of sin. I assure thee, that He will

speak to thee words of eternal life (John 6, 69). It

will be thy duty to listen to Him with reverence and

humble gratitude; to appreciate his teachings, and to

follow them in practice with all diligence and punctu

ality. Nothing can be hid from this great Master and

Teacher (Heb. 4, 13), and He withdraws in disgust

from those who are ungrateful and disobedient. No

one must think that these withdrawals of the Most High

always happen in the same way as they happened to me.

For the Lord withdrew from me, not on account of any

fault of mine, but out of exceeding love. He is accus-

3-3

14 CITY OF GOD

tomed to withdraw from other creatures in order to visit

them with merited punishment for their many sins, out

rages, ingratitudes and negligences.

14. Therefore, my daughter, in gaging thy reverence

and esteem for the teaching and enlightenment of thy

divine Master and for my own exhortations, thou must

take into account thy omissions and faults. Moderate

thy inordinate fears and do not any more doubt that it

is the Lord, who speaks to thee and teaches thee, since

his doctrine of itself gives testimony of its own truth

and assures thee, that God is its Author; for thou seest

that it is holy, pure, perfect and without error. It

inculcates whatever is best and reprehends thy least

fault, and it is moreover approved by thy instructors and

spiritual directors. As I am thy Teacher, I wish that

thou also, in imitation of me, come every morning and

night humbly and sorrowfully to confess thy faults, in

order that I may intercede for thee and as thy Mother

obtain for thee the pardon of the Lord. As soon as

thou commitest any imperfection, acknowledge it with

out delay and ask the Lord pardon, promising to amend.

If thou attend to these things, which I here tell thee, thou

wilt be a disciple of the Most High and of me as thou

desirest to be. Purity of soul and the divine grace is

the most exquisite and adequate preparation for par

taking of the influences of divine light and science, and

the Redeemer of the world communicates it to his true

disciples.

CHAPTER II.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE SOUL OF HER MOST HOLY SON

AND ALL THAT HAD BEEN HIDDEN TO HER AGAIN

BECOMES VISIBLE TO MOST HOLY MARY/ SHE IS IN

STRUCTED IN THE LAW OF GRACE.

15. Human ingenuity has made long and copious in

quisitions into the nature and properties of love and into

its cause and effects. In order to explain the holy and

divine love of our blessed Mother I was compelled to add

much to all that has been written and said concerning

love; for, with the exception of the love existing in the

soul of Christ our Redeemer, there was none in all the

human creatures, which was equal to that possessed by

that heavenly Lady, who merited the name of beautiful

love (Eccli. 24, 24). The object and end of holy love

is the same in all, namely God in Himself and all the

other creatures for his sake; but the subject in which

it exists, the source from which it flows, the effects which

it produces, are widely different. Now in our great

Queen all these elements of love attained their highest

perfection. Purity of heart, faith, hope, filial and holy

fear, knowledge and wisdom, remembrance and gratitude

for the greatest benefits, and all the other sources of a

most exalted love were hers in boundless affluence and

proportion. The flame of her love was not enkindled

or enflamed by the foolishness of the senses, which are

without the guide and control of reason. Her holy and

pure love entered by way of her most exalted under

standing of the infinite goodness and ineffable sweetness

15

16 CITY OF GOD

of God; for since God is wisdom and goodness, He

wishes to be loved not only with sweetness, but also with

wisdom and knowledge of the one that loves.

16. These loving affections are more alike to them

selves in their effects than in their causes; for if they

once take possession and subject to themselves the heart,

they are hard to expel. From this fact arises the suffer

ing of the human heart in seeing itself forsaken and

unnoticed by the one beloved; for this want of proper

correspondence implies the obligation of rooting out its

own love. As this love has taken such entire possession

of the heart, that it dreads a dispossession, although on

the other hand reason urges it, such a violent strife is

caused, as will resemble the agony of death. In the

blind and worldly love this agony is but frenzy and

madness. But in divine love this agony is highest wis

dom; for, since no reason can be found for expelling

love, it is the height of prudence to search after means

of loving more ardently and seeking to please the Be

loved more zealously. As also the will therein acts with

fullest liberty, it happens, that the more freely it loves

the highest Good, so much the more does it lose the

power of not loving Him. In this glorious strife, the

will, being the master and sovereign of the soul, becomes

happily the slave of its love; it neither seeks, nor is it

able to deny itself this free servitude. On account of

this free violence, if the soul finds avoidance or with

drawal of the highest Good which it loves, it suffers the

pains and agonies of death, in the same manner as if its

life were ebbing away. The soul s whole life is in its

love and in the knowledge that it is loved.

17. Hence one can understand a little of the suffer

ings of the most ardent and pure heart of our Queen

in the absence of the Lord and in the eclipse of the

THE TRANSFIXION 17

light of his love: it caused in Her agonies of doubt,

whether perhaps She had not displeased Him. For as

She was so to say a vast abyss of humility and love and

as She knew not whence the austerity and reserve of

her Beloved originated, She suffered a martyrdom so

entrancing and yet so severe, as no human or angelic

powers will ever be able to fathom. Mary who is the

Mother of the most holy love (Eccli. 24, 24) and who

reached the pinnacle of created perfection, alone knew

how and was able to bear this martyrdom, and in it She

exceeded all the sufferings of all the martyrs and the

penances of all the confessors added together. In Her

was fulfilled, what is said in the Canticles: "If a man

should give all the substance of his house for love, he

shall despise it as nothing" (Cant. 8, 7). For in it She

forgot all the visible and created things and her own life,

accounting it all for nought, until She again found the

grace and love of her most holy and divine Son, whom

She feared to have lost although She continued to pos

sess Him. No words can equal her care and solicitude,

her watchfulness and diligence in trying to please her

sweetest Son and the eternal Father.

18. Thirty days passed in this conflict; and they

equalled many ages in the estimation of Her, who deemed

it impossible to live even one moment without the love

and without the Beloved of her soul. After such delay

(according to our way of speaking), the heart of the

Child Jesus could no longer contain itself or resist fur

ther the immense force of his love for his sweetest

Mother; for also the Lord suffered a delightful and won

derful violence in thus holding Her in such a suspense

and affliction. It happened that the humble and sover

eign Queen one day approached her Son Jesus, and,

throwing Herself at his feet, with tears and sighs coming

18 CITY OF GOD

from her inmost heart, spoke to Him as follows: "My

sweetest Love and highest Good, of what account am I,

the insignificant dust and ashes, before thy vast power?

What is the misery of a creature in comparison with

thy endless affluence? In all things Thou excellest our

lowliness and thy immense sea of mercy overwhelms our

imperfections and defects. If I have not been zealous in

serving Thee, as I am constrained to confess, do Thou

chastise my negligence and pardon it. But let me, my

Son and Lord, see the gladness of thy countenance,

which is my salvation and the wished-for light of my

life and being. Here at thy feet I lay my poverty, min

gling it with the dust, and I shall not rise from it until

I can again look into the mirror, which reflects my

soul."

19. These and other pleadings, full of wisdom and

most ardent love, the great Queen poured humbly forth

before her most holy Son. And as his longings to

restore Her to his delights were even greater than those

of the blessed Lady, He pronounced with great sweet

ness these few words: "My Mother, arise." As these

words were pronounced by Him, who is Himself the

Word of the eternal Father, it had such an effect, that

the heavenly Mother was instantly transformed and ele

vated into a most exalted ecstasy, in which She saw the

Divinity by an abstractive vision. In it the Lord received

Her with sweetest welcome and embraces of a Father

and Spouse, changing her tears into rejoicing, her suf

ferings into delight and her bitterness into highest

sweetness. The Lord manifested to Her great secrets

of the scope of his new evangelical law. Wishing to

write it entirely into her purest heart, the most holy

Trinity appointed and destined Her as his first-born

Daughter and the first disciple of the incarnate Word

THE TRANSFIXION 19

and set Her up as the model and pattern for all the holy

Apostles, Martyrs, Doctors, Confessors, Virgins and

other just of the new Church and of the law of grace,

which the incarnate Word was to establish for the Re

demption of man.

20. To this mystery must be referred all that the

heavenly Lady says of Herself and which the holy

Church applies to Her in the twenty-fourth chapter of

Ecclesiasticus under the figure of divine wisdom. I will

not detain myself in explaining it, as by proceeding to

describe this mysterious event, I shall make plain, what

the holy Spirit says in this chapter of our great Queen.

It is sufficient to quote some of the sayings therein con

tained, so that all may understand something of this

admirable mystery. "I came out of the mouth of the

Most High" says this Lady, "the firstborn before all

creatures; I made that in the heavens there should arise

light that never faileth, and as a cloud I covered all the

earth; I dwelt in the highest places and my throne is in

a pillar of cloud. I alone have compassed the circuit of

heaven, and have penetrated into the bottom of the deep,

and have walked in the waves of the sea, and have stood

in all the earth : and in every people, and in every nation

I have had the chief rule : and by my power I have trod

den under my feet the hearts of all the high and low:

and in all these I sought rest, and I shall abide in the

inheritance of the Lord. Then the Creator of all things

commanded, and said to me: and He that made me,

rested in my tabernacle, and He said to me: Let thy

dwelling be in Jacob, and they inheritance in Israel, and

take root in my elect. From the beginning (ab initio),

and before the world, was I created, and unto the world

to come I shall not cease to be, and in the holy dwelling-

place I have ministered before Him. And so was I

20 CITY OF GOD

established in Sion, and in the holy city likewise I rested,

and my power was in Jerusalem. And I took root in an

honorable people, and in the portion of my God his

inheritance, and my abode is in the full assembly of his

saints" (Ecdi. 24, 5-16).

21. A little farther on Ecclesiasticus continues to enum

erate the excellences of Mary, saying: "I have stretched

out my branches as the turpentine tree, and my branches

are of honor and of grace. As the vine I have brought

forth a pleasant odor : and my flowers are the fruit of

honor and riches. I am the mother of fair love, and

of fear, and of knowledge and of holy hope. In me is

all the grace on the way and the truth, in me is all hope

of life and of virtue. Come over to me, all ye that desire

me and be rilled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet

above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the

honeycomb. My memory is unto everlasting generations.

They that eat me shall yet hunger, and they that drink

me shall yet thirst. He that harkened to me, shall not

be confounded: and they that work by me, shall not

sin. They that shall explain me shall have life ever

lasting" (Eccli. 24, 22-31). Let these words of Scrip

ture suffice for pious souls; for in them they will imme

diately recognize such a pregnancy of mysteries and

sacraments referring to most holy Mary, that their hearts

will at once be lifted up and they will understand and

feel to what an inexplicable greatness and excellence the

teaching and instruction of her Son have exalted the

sovereign Mother. By the decree of the most holy

Trinity this Princess of heaven was made the true Ark

of the covenant in the new Testament (Apoc. 11, 19);

and from the abundance of her wisdom and grace, as

from an immense ocean, all sorts of blessings, which

were received and shall be received by the other saints

until the end of the world, have overflowed.

THE TRANSFIXION 21

22. The heavenly Mother came out of her trance and

again adored her most holy Son, asking his forgiveness

for any negligence that She might have been guilty of

in his service. The Child Jesus, raising Her up from the

ground where She lay prostrate, said to Her: "My

Mother, I am much pleased with the affection of thy

heart and I wish thee to dilate it and prepare it for

new tokens of my love. I will fulfill the will of my Father,

record in thy bosom the evangelical law, which I came

to teach in this world. And thou, Mother, shalt put it

in practice, with the perfection desired by Me." The

most pure Queen responded: "My Son and Lord, may

I find grace in thy eyes ; and do Thou govern my facul

ties in the ways of thy rectitude and pleasure. Speak,

my Lord, for thy servant hears, and will follow Thee

unto death" (Kings III 3, 10). During this conference

of the divine Child and his holy Mother, the great Lady

began again to see the most holy soul of Christ and its

interior operations; and from that day on this blessing

increased as well subjectively as objectively; for She

continued to receive more clear and more exalted light

and in her most holy Son She saw mirrored the whole

of the new law of the Gospel, with all its mysteries,

sacraments and doctrines, according as the divine Archi

tect of the Church had conceived it and as He had, in his

quality of Redeemer and Teacher, predisposed it for the

benefit of men. In addition to this clear vision of this

law, which was reserved to Mary alone, He added an

other kind of instruction; for also in his own living

words He taught and instructed Her in the hidden things

of his wisdom (Ps. 50, 8), such as all men and angels

could never comprehend. This wisdom of which Mary

partook without deceit, She also communicated without

envy, both before and still more after the ascension of

Christ our Lord.

22 CITY OF GOD

23. I well know that it belongs to this history to

manifest the most hidden mysteries, which passed be

tween Christ our Lord and his Mother during the years

of his boyhood and youth until his preaching; for all

these years were spent in teaching his heavenly Mother :

but I must confess again, as I have done above that

I, as well as all other creatures, are incapable of such

exalted discourse. In order to do justice to these

mysteries and secrets it would be necessary to ex

plain all the mysteries of the holy Scriptures, the whole

Christian doctrine, all the virtues, all the traditions of

the holy Church, all the arguments against errors and

sects, the decrees of all the holy councils, all that upholds

the Church and preserves her to the end of the world,

and also the great mysteries of the glorious lives of the

saints. For all this was written in the purest heart of

our great Queen and it would be necessary to add thereto

all the works of the Redeemer and Teacher in

multiplying the blessings and instructions of the

Church; also all that the holy Evangelists, Apostles,

Prophets and ancient Fathers have recorded, and that

which afterwards was practiced by the saints; the light

vouchsafed to the doctors ; the sufferings of the martyrs

and virgins; and all the graces which they received for

bearing their sufferings and accomplishing their works

of holiness. All this, and much more that cannot be

enumerated here, most holy Mary knew and personally

comprehended and witnessed; She it was that gave

proper thanks for it and corresponded with it in her

actions as much as is possible for a mere creature, co

operating with the eternal Father as the Author of it

all and with Her his onlybegotten Son as the head of the

Church. These things I will explain farther on, in so

far as it will be possible.

THE TRANSFIXION 23

24. Nor, in attending to the instructions of her Son

and Teacher and in fulfilling all her works with the

highest perfection, did She ever fail in what concerned

the outward service and the bodily wants of her Son and

saint Joseph; but to all her duties She applied Herself

without failing or neglect, providing for their food and

their comforts, always prostrate on her knees before her

most holy Son with ineffable reverence. She also sought

to procure for saint Joseph the consoling intercourse

of the Child Jesus as if he had been his natural father.

In this the divine Child obeyed his Mother, many times

bearing saint Joseph company in the hard labor, which

the saint pursued with tireless diligence in order to sup

port with the sweat of his brow the Son of the eternal

Father and his Mother. When the divine Child grew

larger He sometimes helped saint Joseph as far as his

strength would permit; at other times, as his doings

were always kept a secret in the family, He would per

form miracles, disregarding the natural forces in order

to ease and comfort him in his labors.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN

OF HEAVEN.

25. My daughter, I call thee anew to be, from this day

on, my disciple and my companion in the practice of the

celestial doctrine, which my divine Son teaches his

Church by means of the holy Gospels and other Scrip

tures. I desire of thee to prepare thy heart with new

diligence and attention, so that like a chosen soil, it

may receive the living and holy seed of the word of the

Lord producing fruits a hundred-fold (Luke 8, 8). Make

thy heart attentive to my words; and at the same time,

let thy reading of the Holy Gospels be continual; medi

tate and ponder within thyself the doctrines and mys-

24 CITY OF GOD

teries which thou perceives! therein. Hear the voice

of thy Spouse and Master. He calls all men and invites

them to the feast of his words of eternal life (John

6, 69). But so great is the dangerous deception of this

mortal life, that only very few souls wish to hear and

understand the way of light (Matth. 7, 14). Many

follow the delights presented to them by the prince of

darkness; and those that follow them know not whither

they are led (John 12, 35). But thou art called by

the Most High to the paths of true light ; follow them by

imitating me, and thou wilt have thy longings fulfilled.

Deny thyself to all that is earthly and visible; ignore it

and refuse to look upon it; have no desire for it and pay

no attention to it; avoid being known, and let no crea

tures have any part in thee; guard thou thy secret (Is.

24, 16), and thy treasure (Matth. 13, 44) from the fasci

nation of men and from the devil. In all this wilt thou

have success, if, as a disciple of my most holy Son and

of me, thou puttest in perfect practice the evangelical

doctrine inculcated by Us. In order to compel thyself

to such an exalted undertaking always be mindful of

the blessing of being called by divine Providence to the

imitation of my life and virtues and to the following of

my footsteps through my instruction. From this state

of a novice, thou must pass on to a more exalted state

and to the full profession of the Catholic faith, conform

ing thyself to the evangelical law and to the example

of thy Redeemer, running after the odor of his oint

ments and by his truth in the paths of rectitude. By

first being my disciple thou shouldst prepare thyself for

becoming a disciple of my Son; and both these states

should lead thee to the perfect union with the immutable

being of God. These three stages are favors of peer

less value, which place thee in a position to become more

THE TRANSFIXION 25

perfect than the exalted seraphim. The divine right

hand has conceded them to thee in order to dispose, pre

pare and enable thee to receive proper light and intelli

gence for recording the works, virtues, mysteries and

sacraments of my life. Freely and without thy merit

the Lord has shown thee this great mercy, yielding to

my petitions and intercessions. I have procured thee

this favor, because thou didst subject thyself in fear

and trembling to the will of the Lord in obedience to

thy superiors, who continued to give thee express com

mands for the writing of this history. Thy greatest

reward is that thou hast learnt of the three stages or

ways, which are so mysterious, hidden and exalted above

carnal prudence and so pleasing to thy divine Master

(Is. 24, 16). They contain most abundant instruction

as thou thyself hast learnt and experienced for the at

tainment of still higher ends. Do thou record them

separately in a treatise for itself, according to the will

of my most holy Son. Let its title be the same as what

thou hast already mentioned in the introduction to this

history : "Laws of the Spouse, crumbs of his chaste love,

and fruits collected from the tree of life in this history/

CHAPTER III.

MOST HOLY MARY AND JOSEPH GO TO JERUSALEM EVERY

YEAR ACCORDING TO THE REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW,

AND THEY TAKE WITH THEM THE CHILD JESUS.

26. Some days after our Queen and Lady with her

most holy Son and saint Joseph had settled in Nazareth,

the time of the year in which the Jews were obliged

to present themselves before the Lord in the temple of

Jerusalem, was at hand. This commandment obliged

the Jews to this duty three times each year, as can be

seen in Exodus and Deuteronomy. But it obliged only

the men, not the women (Exod. 23, 17) ; therefore the

women could go or not, according to their devotion;

for it was neither commanded nor prohibited to them.

The heavenly Lady and her spouse conferred with each

other as to what they should do in this regard. The

holy husband much desired the company of the great

Queen, his wife, and of her most holy Son; for he

wished to offer Him anew to the eternal Father in the

temple. The most pure Mother also was drawn by her

piety to worship the Lord in the temple ; but as in things

of that kind She did not permit Herself to decide with

out the counsel and direction of the incarnate Word, her

Teacher, She asked his advice upon this matter. They

finally arranged, that two times a year saint Joseph

was to go to Jerusalem by himself, while on the third

occasion They would go together. The Israelites visited

26

THE TRANSFIXION 27

the temple on the feast of the Tabernacles (Deut. 16,

13), the feast of the Weeks, or Pentecost, and the feast

of the unleavened Breads or the Pasch of the prepara

tion. To this latter the sweetest Jesus, most pure Mary,

and Joseph went up together. It lasted seven days and

during that time happened what I shall relate in the

next chapter. For the other solemnities saint Joseph

went alone, leaving the Child and the Mother at home.

27. The holy spouse Joseph made these pilgrimages

for himself and his Spouse in the name of the incarnate

Word. Instructed by Him and furnished with his graces

the saint journeyed to the temple, offering there to the

eternal Father the gifts always reserved for this occasion.

Being the substitute of the Son and Mother, who re

mained at home praying for him, he offered up the mys

terious sacrifices of his prayers and as he therein repre

sented Jesus and Mary, his offering was more accept

able to the eternal Father than the offerings of the whole

Jewish people. But whenever he was accompanied by

the incarnate Word and the Virgin Mother at the feast

of the Pasch, the journey was a most wonderful one to

him and to the heavenly courtiers, who, as I have already

recorded of similar occasions, formed for them a most

solemn procession. The ten thousand angels accom

panied the three pilgrims, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in

human forms, refulgent in their beauty and full of

profoundest reverence, serving their Creator and their

Queen. The distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem

was in the neighborhood of thirty leagues and the holy

angels, according to the command and disposition of the

incarnate Word, observed the same mode of accom

paniment both in going and returning.

28 CITY OF GOD

28. They consumed more time in these journeys than

in previous ones; for after they had come back from

Egypt the Child Jesus desired that they journey on foot;

and therefore all three, the son and the parents made

the pilgrimage afoot. And it was necessary to proceed

slowly; for already the Child Jesus began to assume

hardships in the service of his eternal Father and for

our advantage. He refused to make use of his immense

power for lessening the difficulties of the journey, but

undertook it as a man subject to suffering and allowed

all the natural causes to produce their effects. One of

these effects was the fatigue and exhaustion caused by

travel.

Although in his first journey the heavenly Mother

and saint Joseph eased his fatigue by sometimes carry

ing Him in their arms ; yet this was but a slight allevia

tion and later on He always made the whole journey

on foot. The sweetest Mother did not interfere, since

She knew his desire of suffering; but ordinarily She

led Him by the hand, and sometimes this was also done

by saint Joseph. Many times, when the Child was

fatigued and overheated, the loving and prudent Mother

was moved to tenderest and tearful compassion. She

inquired about his sufferings and fatigue and wiped his

divine countenance, which was more beautiful than the

heavens and all its stars. She was wont to do this on her

knees and with ineffable reverence. The divine Child

would respond with much pleasure and speak of the de

light with which He accepted these hardships for the

glory of the eternal Father and for the good of men.

With these conversations and conferences, varied by

canticles of divine praise, they shortened much of their

journey, as I have already mentioned in other places.

THE TRANSFIXION 29

29. At other times, when the great Queen and Lady

beheld on the one hand the interior activity of the soul

of Christ and on the other hand the perfection of his

deified humanity, the beauty and activity of which mani

fested itself in the operations of divine grace and in his

growth as true man, and when She pondered upon all

this in her heart (Luke 2, 19), She exercised Herself

in heroic acts of all the virtues and was inflamed with

divine love. She beheld also the Child as the Son of

the eternal Father and as the true God; without ever

failing in the love of a true and natural Mother, She

showed Him all the reverence due to Him as her God and

Creator. All this flowed naturally from her spotless and

pure heart. Very often the wind would flutter through

the hair of the Child Jesus as He walked along. His

hair grew to no greater length than was necessary and

He lost none of it, except what the executioners tore out

later on. Such little incidents were noticed by the sweet

est Mother and they afforded Her subjects for affec

tionate and sweet meditation. In all her interior and

exterior conduct, She was wonderful to the angels and

pleasing to her most holy Son and Creator.

30. During these journeys of the holy Family Jesus

and Mary performed heroic works of charity for the

benefit of souls ; They converted many to the knowledge

of the Lord, freed them from their sins and justified

them, leading them on the way of life eternal. But as

it was not yet time for the Teacher of virtue to mani

fest Himself, all these works were done in secret (John

12, 49). As the heavenly Lady knew that such activity

was enjoined upon her Son by the eternal Father, and

that for the present it was to remain hidden, She con-

3-4

30 CITY OF GOD

curred therein as the instrument of the Redeemer s will,

though in a covered and hidden manner. In order to

govern Herself according to the dictates of the highest

wisdom, the most prudent Lady always consulted the

divine Child concerning all her doings on the way and

concerning their stopping-places and their lodging-houses

on their journey. The heavenly Princess well knew that

her Son pre-arranged the occasions for his admirable

works, which He foresaw and fore-ordered in his

wisdom.

31. Hence they passed their nights sometimes in lodg

ing-places, sometimes on the open fields; but the divine

Child and his purest Mother never separated. At all

times the great Lady attended upon her Son and Master,

watching his actions in order to imitate and follow them

closely. The same She did in the temple, where She

joined in the prayers and petitions of the incarnate Word

to his eternal Father and was witness to the humble and

profound reverence, by which his humanity acknowl

edged the gifts flowing from the Divinity. A few times

the most blessed Mother heard the voice of the Father

saying: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well

pleased" (Matth. 17, 5). At other times She perceived

and witnessed, how her most holy Son prayed for Her

to the eternal Father and how He offered Her to Him

as his true Mother : and this knowledge was inexpressi

bly joyful to Her. She perceived also how He prayed

for the whole human race and how He offered up all

his works and labors for all these ends. In these peti

tions and offerings She accompanied, imitated and fol

lowed Him at all times.

32. It happened also at other times that the holy

THE TRANSFIXION 31

angels intoned hymns of sweetest harmony in honor of

the incarnate Word, as well when they entered the tem

ple as on their journey. The most fortunate Mother

saw them and listened to them, understanding all the

mysteries and being filled thereby with new light and

wisdom. Her purest heart was inflamed and blazed up

in divine love. The Most High showered upon Her new

gifts and blessings, such as my inadequate tongue can

not clothe in words. But by them He prepared Her for

the adversities, which She was to suffer. For, many

times after these consolations, She beheld as in a pano

rama all the affronts, ignominies, and sufferings await

ing her most holy Son in that same city of Jerusalem.

In order that She might, already at that time, see all

this with so much the more vivid sorrow, He was

wont to enter upon his prayers in the presence of his

sweetest Mother; and, as She was filled with the light

of divine wisdom and with a divine love for God and

her Son, She was pierced with the sword of sorrow men

tioned by Simeon (Luke 2, 35); She shed many tears

in anticipation of the injuries to be borne by her sweetest

Son and at the thought of the sufferings and the igno

minious Death to which He was destined (Is. 53, 3).

Her soul was filled with anguish, when She remembered,

that the beauty of the Son of God, greater than that

of all men, was to be disfigured worse than with leprosy

(Wis. 2, 20; Ps. 44, 3) ; and that She herself was to

see all this with her own eyes. In order to lessen her sor

rows the divine Child was wont to turn toward Her, tell

ing Her to dilate her heart with charity for the human

race and together with Him offer to the eternal Father

all these sufferings for the salvation of men. Thus both

32 CITY OF GOD

Son and Mother made delightful offerings to the holy

Trinity, applying them for the benefit of the faithful,

and especially for the predestined who would profit by

their merits and by the Redemption through the incar

nate Word. Principally in these occupations the sweet

est Jesus and his Mother spent the days of their visits

to the temple of Jerusalem.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED ME BY MARY, THE

MOST HOLY QUEEN.

33. My daughter, if thou wilt deeply and attentively

weigh thy obligations, thou wilt find very easy and sweet

all the labors enjoined upon thee by the commands and

precepts of the holy law of the Lord. This must be the

first step of thy pilgrimage, as the beginning and foun

dation of all Christian perfection. But I have already

many times reminded thee, that the fulfillment of the

precepts of the Lord must not be cold and lukewarm,

but most fervent and devoted. For this favor will pre

vent thee from being satisfied with common virtue, and

excite thee to undertake works of purest love beyond

that which God imposes upon thee by command. For

this is one of the artifices of His wisdom, that He seeks

to be obliged by his true servants and friends, in order

that He may reward them, and this is what I desire of

thee. Remember, dearest, that the journey from the

mortal to the eternal life is long, painful and dangerous

(Matth. 7, 14) : long, because it takes up the whole life,

painful, on account of the hardships, dangerous, on ac

count of human frailty and the astuteness of the ene

mies. In addition to this the time is short (I Cor. 7, 29),

the end uncertain (Eccli. 9, 2), being either very happy,

THE TRANSFIXION 33

or most unfortunate (Matth. 25, 31), while the one as

well as the other termination is irrevocable (Eccli. 11,

3). Since the sin of Adam the animal and earthly

life of man is burdensome for all those that subject

themselves to it (Job 7, 29), the chains of the passions

are strong, the war against the lower nature continual;

sensible pleasures are always present and easily fasci

nate the faculties of man, while that which is noble, as

well as its immediate consequences, is often hidden from

the gaze. All this fills the pilgrimage of life with haz

ardous dangers and difficulties.

34. Among all these dangers and difficulties not the

least are those of the flesh; for its human weakness,

always present and always active, withdraws many from

grace. The shortest and the most secure course to fol

low, both for thee and for all men, is to welcome bitter

ness and sorrow and put aside ease and pleasure of the

senses, and inviolably to resolve not to allow them to

become dissipated or enjoy greater freedom than the

strict rule of reason permits. In addition to this thou

must continually seek after the greater pleasure of the

Lord and aspire to the great last end of all thy longings.

For this purpose thou must always be solicitous to imi

tate me, for to this I call and invite thee, desiring that

thou arrive at the summit of virtue and holiness. Con

sider the punctuality and fervor with which I achieved

so many and so great results; not because the Lord

urged me on by his commands, but because I wished to

please Him more. Do thou also multiply thy deeds of

fervor, thy devotions, thy spiritual exercises and in all

things increase thy prayers and sacrifices to the eternal

Father for the benefit of mortals. Help them also by

34 CITY OF GOD

the example and thy exhortations wherever thou canst.

Console the sorrowful, encourage the weak, help the

fallen to arise; and for all of them offer, if necessary,

thy own life-blood. Above all strive to please my most

holy Son, who suffers so kindly the ingratitude of men,

preserving them in existence and continuing to shower

his favors upon them. Consider his invincible love

toward them and how I imitated Him, and even now

show toward them the same love. I desire of thee, that

thou follow thy sweet Spouse in his exalted charity, and

also me, who am thy Teacher.

CHAPTER IV.

AT TWELVE YEARS OF AGE THE CHILD JESUS GOES WITH

HIS PARENTS TO JERUSALEM AND HE CONCEALS HIM

SELF FROM THEM IN THE TEMPLE.

35. As I have said, Mary and Joseph repeated their

visit to the temple at the feast of the unleavened Bread

every year. Also when the divine Child was twelve

years old and when it was time to allow the splendors

of his inaccessible and divine light to shine forth, They

went to the temple for this feast (Luke 2, 42). This

festival of the unleavened Bread lasted seven days, ac

cording to the command of the divine law; and the more

solemn days were the first and the last. On this account

our heavenly Pilgrims remained in Jerusalem during the

whole week, spending their time in acts of worship and

devotion as the rest of the Jews, although on account

of the sacraments connected with each of Them their

worship and devotion was entirely different and greatly

exalted above that of the others. The blessed Mother

and holy Joseph received during these days favors and

blessings beyond the conception of the human mind.

36. Having thus spent all the seven days of the feast

They betook themselves on their way home to Nazareth.

When his parents departed from Jerusalem and were

pursuing their way homeward, the Child Jesus withdrew

from them without their knowledge. For this purpose

the Lord availed Himself of the separation of the men

and women, which had become customary among the

pilgrims for reasons of decency as well as for greater

35

36 CITY OF GOD

recollection during their return homeward. The chil

dren which accompanied their parents were taken in

charge promiscuously either by the men or the women,

since their company with either was a matter of indif

ference. Thus it happened that saint Joseph could easily

suppose that the Child Jesus had remained with his most

holy Mother, with whom He generally remained. The

thought that She would go without Him was far from

his mind, since the heavenly Queen loved and delighted

in Him more than any other creature human or angelic.

The great Lady did not have so many reasons for sup

posing that her most holy Son was in the company of

saint Joseph: but the Lord himself so diverted her

thoughts by holy and divine contemplations, that She

did not notice his absence at first. When afterwards

She became aware of her not being accompanied by her

sweetest and beloved Son, She supposed that the blessed

Joseph had taken Him along and that the Lord accom

panied his foster-father for his consolation.

37. Thus assured, holy Mary and Joseph pursued

their home journey for an entire day, as saint Luke

tells us. As the pilgrims proceeded onwards they gradu

ally thinned out, each taking his own direction and join

ing again with his wife or family. The most holy Mary

and saint Joseph found themselves at length in the place

where they had agreed to meet on the first evening after

leaving Jerusalem. When the great Lady saw that the

Child was not with saint Joseph and when the holy

Patriarch found that He was not with his Mother, the

two were struck dumb with amazement and surprise for

quite a while. Both, governed in their judgment by

their most profound humility, felt overwhelmed with

self-reproach at their remissness in watching over their

most holy Son and thus blamed themselves for his ab-

THE TRANSFIXION 37

sence; for neither of them had any suspicion of the mys

terious manner in which He had been able to elude their

vigilance. After a time they recovered somewhat from

their astonishment and with deepest sorrow took counsel

with each other as to what was to be done (Luke 2, 45).

The loving Mother said to saint Joseph : "My spouse

and my master, my heart cannot rest, unless we return

with all haste to Jerusalem in order to seek my most

holy Son." This they proceeded to do, beginning their

search among their relations and friends, of whom, how

ever, none could give them any information or any com

fort in their sorrow ; on the contrary their answers only

increased their anxiety, since none of them had so much

as seen their Son since their departure from Jerusalem.

38. The afflicted Mother turned to her holy angels.

Those that carried the escutcheons inscribed with the

most holy name of Jesus (of which I spoke at the Cir

cumcision), had accompanied the Lord, while the other

angels still remained with the purest Mother; this was

the order maintained whenever the Son separated from

the Mother. These, who numbered ten thousand, She

asked, saying: "My friends and companions, you well

know the cause of my sorrow: in this bitter affliction

be my consolation and give me some information con

cerning my Beloved, so that I may seek and find Him

(Cant. 3, 2). Give some relief to my wounded heart,

which, torn from its happiness and life, bounds from

its place in search of Him." The holy angels, who,

though they never lost sight of the Creator and Re

deemer, were aware that the Lord wished to furnish

his Mother this occasion of great merit, and that it was

not yet time to reveal the secret to Her, answered by

speaking to her words of consolation without manifest

ing to Her the whereabouts and the doings of their Lord.

38 CITY OF GOD

This evasive answer raised new doubts in the most pru

dent Lady. Her anxiety of heart caused Her to break

out in tears and sighs of inmost grief, and urged Her

onward in search, not of the lost drachm, like the woman

in the Gospel, but of the whole treasure of heaven and

earth (Luke 15, 8).

39. The Mother of wisdom then began to discuss

within her heart the different possibilities. The first

thought which presented itself to Her, was the fear lest

Archelaus, imitating the cruelty of his father Herod,

should have obtained notice of the presence of Jesus and

have taken Him prisoner. Although She knew from the

holy Scriptures and revelations, and by her conversa

tions with her most holy Son and Teacher, that the time

for his Passion and Death had not yet come and that

the king would not take away his life, yet She was filled

with dread at the thought, that they should have taken

Him prisoner and might illtreat Him. In her pro-

foundest humility She also had misgivings, lest per

chance She had in any way displeased Him by her con

duct and therefore deserved that He should leave Her

and take up his abode in the desert with his precursor

saint John. At other times, addressing her absent Love,

She exclaimed: "Sweet Love and Delight of my soul!

Thou art impelled by thy desire of suffering for men

and by thy immense charity to avoid no labor or pain;

but on the contrary, I fear, O Lord and Master, that

Thou seekest it on purpose (Is. 53, 7). Whither shall

I go and whither shall I find Thee, Light of my eyes?

(Tob. 10, 4). Dost Thou wish to deprive me of life

by the sword of severance from thy presence? But I

do not wonder, O my highest Good: Thou chastisest

by thy absence her who did not know how to profit by

thy company. Why, O my Lord, hast Thou enriched

THE TRANSFIXION 39

me with the delights of thy infancy, if I am so soon to

lose the assistance of thy loving instruction? But, woe

is me! since, not being worthy to retain and enjoy Thee

as my Son, I must confess, that I am obliged to thank

Thee even for the favor of condescending to accept

me as thy slave ! If the privilege of being thy unworthy

Mother can be of any avail in finding Thee, my God

and my highest Good, do Thou, O Lord, permit it, and

make me worthy of again finding Thee, so that I may

go with Thee in the desert, to sufferings, labors, tribula

tions, or whatever Thou wilt. My Lord, my soul desires

to merit at least in part to share thy sorrows and tor

ments, to die, if I do not find Thee, or to live in thy

service and presence. When thy Divinity hid Itself from

my gaze, thy amiable humanity at least remained; and,

although Thou wast austere and less kind to me than

Thou hadst been, I could throw myself at thy feet; but

now this happiness is taken away from me and I have

lost sight entirely of the Sun which enlightens me, left

only to groans and sighs. Ah Love of my soul! What

sighs from the inmost of my heart can I send Thee as

messengers? But I am not worthy of thy clemency,

since my eyes find no traces of Thee."

40. Thus this sincerest Dove persevered in her tears

and groans without cessation or rest, without sleeping

or eating anything for three whole days. Although the

ten thousand angels accompanied Her in corporeal forms

and witnessed her affliction and sorrow, yet they gave

Her no clue to find her lost Child. On the third day

the great Queen resolved to seek Him in the desert

where saint John was ; for since She saw no indications

that Archelaus had taken Him prisoner, She began to

believe more firmly, that her most holy Son was with

saint John. When She was about to execute her resolve

40 CITY OF GOD

and was on the point of departing for the desert, the

holy angels detained Her, urging Her not to undertake

the journey, since the divine Word was not there. She

wanted also to go to Bethlehem, in the hope of finding

Him in the cave of the Nativity ; but this the holy angels

likewise prevented, telling Her that He was not so far

off. Although the blessed Mother heard these answers

and well perceived that the holy angels knew the where

abouts of the Child Jesus, She was so considerate and

reserved in her humility and prudence, that She gave

no response, nor asked where She could find Him; for

She understood that they withheld this information by

command of the Lord. With such magnanimous rev

erence did the Queen of the angels treat the sacraments

of the Most High and of his ministers and ambassadors

(II Mach. 2, 9). This was one of the occasions in

which the greatness of her queenly and magnanimous

heart was made manifest.

41. Not all the sorrows suffered by all the martyrs

ever reached the height of the sorrows of most holy

Mary in this trial ; nor will the patience, resignation and

tolerance of this Lady ever be equalled, nor can they;

for the loss of Jesus was greater to Her than the loss

of anything created, while her love and appreciation of

Him exceeded all that can be conceived by any other

creature. Since She did not know the cause of the loss,

her anxiety was beyond all measure, as I have already

said. Moreover, during these three days the Lord left

Her to her natural resources of nature and of grace,

deprived of special privileges and favors; for, with the

exception of the company and intercourse of the angels,

He suspended all the other consolations and blessings

so constantly vouchsafed to her most holy soul. From

all this we can surmise what sorrow filled the loving heart

THE TRANSFIXION 41

of the heavenly Mother. But, O prodigy of holiness,

prudence, fortitude and perfection! in such unheard of

affliction and sorrow She was not disturbed, nor lost her

interior or exterior peace, nor did She entertain a

thought of anger or indignation, nor allowed Herself

any improper movement or expression, nor fell into any

excess of grief or annoyance, as is so common in great

affliction with other children of Adam, who allow all

their passions and faculties to be disarranged, yea even

in small difficulties! The Mistress of all virtue held all

her powers in heavenly order and harmony; though her

sorrow was without comparison great and had pierced

her inmost heart, She failed not in reverence and in the

praise of the Lord, nor ceased in her prayers and peti

tions for the human race, and for the finding of her

most holy Son.

42. With this heavenly wisdom and with greatest dili

gence She sought Him for three successive days, roam

ing through the streets of the city, asking different per

sons and describing to the daughters of Jerusalem the

marks of her Beloved, searching the byways and the

open squares of the city and thereby fulfilling what

was recorded in the Canticles of Solomon (Cant. 5, 10).

Some of the women asked Her what were the distinctive

marks of her lost and only Son; and She answered in

the words of the Spouse: "My Beloved is white and

ruddy, chosen out of thousands." One of the women,

hearing Her thus describing Him, said: "This Child,

with those same marks, came yesterday to my door

to ask for alms, and I gave some to Him ; and his grace

and beauty have ravished my heart. And when I gave

Him alms, I felt myself overcome by compassion to see

a Child so gracious in poverty and want." These were

the first news the sorrowful Mother heard of her Only-

42 CITY OF GOD

begotten in Jerusalem. A little respited in her sorrow,

She pursued her quest and met other persons, who spoke

of Him in like manner. Guided by this information

She directed her steps to the hospital of the city, think

ing that among the afflicted She would find the Spouse

and the Originator of patient poverty among his own le

gitimate brethren and friends (Matth. 5, 40). Inquiring

at that place, She was informed that a Child of that

description had paid his visits to the inmates, leaving

some alms and speaking words of much consolation to

the afflicted.

43. The report of these doings of her Beloved caused

sentiments of sweetest and most tender affection in the

heart of the heavenly Lady, which She sent forth from

her inmost heart as messengers to her lost and absent

Son. Then the thought struck Her, that, since He was

not with the poor, He no doubt tarried in the temple, as

in the house of God and of prayer. The holy angels

encouraged Her and said: "Our Queen and Lady, the

hour of thy consolation is at hand: soon wilt Thou see

the Light of thy eyes; hasten thy footsteps and go to

the temple." The glorious patriarch saint Joseph at

this moment again met his Spouse, for, in order to in

crease their chance of finding the divine Child, they had

separated in different directions. By another angel he

had now been likewise ordered to proceed to the temple.

During all these three days he had suffered unspeakable

sorrow and affliction, hastening from one place to an

other, sometimes without his heavenly Spouse, some

times with Her. He was in serious danger of losing his

life during this time, if the hand of the Lord had not

strengthened him and if the most prudent Lady had not

consoled him and forced him to take some food and

rest. His sincere and exquisite love for the divine Child

THE TRANSFIXION 43

made him so anxious and solicitous to find Him, that

he would have allowed himself no time or care to take

nourishment for the support of nature. Following the

advice of the holy princes, the most pure Mary and

Joseph betook themselves to the temple, where hap

pened what I will relate in the next chapter.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY.

44. My daughter, by oft-repeated experience mortals

know, that they do not lose without sorrow what once

they have possessed with delight. This truth, so well

established, should convince men what little love they

have for their God and Creator; since among the many

who lose Him, there are so few who heartily grieve at

this loss, and thereby show, that they have never pos

sessed or loved Him with a love flowing from grace.

Just as they fail to grieve at losing the highest Good,

which they do not hold in loving possession, so they also

fail to seek after their God when they have lost Him.

But there is a great difference in the manner in which

men lose sight of their highest Good; for it is not the

same to lose sight of God for the purpose of being tried

in virtue and love and to lose sight of Him in punish

ment for sins committed. The first is a contrivance

of divine love and a means of communicating itself more

abundantly to the one that longs for it and merits it.

The second is a just punishment for outrages committed

against the Divinity. In the first kind of absence the

Lord humiliates the soul by holy fear and filial love

leaving it uncertain, whether it has not given cause for

his withdrawal (Prov. 28, 13). Although its conscience

does not reprehend it, the loving and ingenuous heart

knows its danger, feels the loss and thus, as the wise man

44 CITY OF GOD

says, is blessed (Eccli. 9, 1); for it then lives in con

stant fear and dread of such a loss, knowing that man,

until the end of this life, is uncertain, whether he de

serves love or hate in the sight of God. During their

mortal existence the just man and the sinner commonly

share the same good and evil lot without much

distinction.

45. This is the great evil which the wise man mentions

as among the happenings under the sun ; that the impious

and the wicked harden their hearts in their malice and

false security, seeing that the same mishaps befall both

themselves and others, and that no one can tell with cer

tainty who are the chosen or the reprobate, the friends

or enemies, of God, the just or the sinners; who are

worthy of love and who of hatred. But if men would

dispassionately and without deceit appeal to their con

science, it would answer each one truthfully what he

should know (Luke 12, 58) ; for when it cries out

against sins committed, they would be foolish not to

attribute the evils and adversities to themselves, or to

fail to see themselves forsaken by grace and deprived of

the highest Good. If their reason were unbiased, the

greatest source of misgiving would be, to be unmoved by

the loss or by the cessation of the spiritual joys of grace.

For the want of this misgiving in a soul created and

destined for eternal happiness is a strong indication

that the soul neither desires nor loves this happiness,

and therefore it is a sign, that it does not seek it in

earnest, so as to enjoy a well-founded prospect of once

possessing the highest Good. For thou must remember,

that this well-founded assurance, of not having forfeited

it in this mortal life, can be attained by all faithful souls.

46. I was deprived of the bodily presence of my most

holy Son; but, although I was in hope of again rinding

THE TRANSFIXION 45

Him, yet, in my great love, the uncertainty as to the

cause of his withdrawal gave me no rest until I found

Him. In this I wish that thou, my dearest, imitate me,

whether thou lose Him through thy own fault or by the

disposition of his own will. So great should be thy

dread of losing Him through thy fault, that neither trib

ulation, nor trouble, nor necessity, nor danger, nor per

secution, nor the sword, neither height nor depth should

ever withhold thee from seeking after thy God (Rom.

8, 35) ; for if thou art faithful as thou shouldst be, and

if thou dost not wish to lose Him, neither the angels,

nor the principalities, nor the powers, nor any other

creature can ever deprive thee of Him. So strong are

the bonds of his love and its chains, that no one can burst

them, except thy own free will.

3-5

CHAPTER V.

AFTER THREE DAYS MOST HOLY MARY AND SAINT JOSEPH

FIND THE CHILD JESUS IN THE TEMPLE DISPUTING

WITH THE TEACHERS.

47. In the foregoing chapter a partial answer might

be found to the question raised by some, as to how the

heavenly Queen, who was so diligent and solicitous in

attending upon and serving her most holy Son, could

ever so far lose Him out of sight as to leave Him in

Jerusalem. Although it would be a sufficient answer to

say that the Lord himself brought it about, yet I will

now explain more fully how it could have happened

without any voluntary negligence or oversight of the

loving Mother. It is certain, that besides availing Him

self of the great concourse of people, our Lord was

obliged to use also supernatural means to elude the atten

tion of his solicitous Mother; for without it She could

no more have lost sight of Him than of the sun, that

lighted Her on the way. Therefore, at the parting

of the men and the women which I mentioned, the al

mighty Lord visited his heavenly Mother with an ab

stractive vision of the Divinity, which with divine power

centered and withdrew all her faculties toward her in

terior. She thus remained so abstracted, inflamed and

deprived of her senses, that She could make use of them

only in so far as was necessary to pursue her way. As

to all the rest, She was entirely lost in the sweetness and

consolation of the divine vision. Saint Joseph was

46

THE TRANSFIXION 47

guided in his behavior by the circumstances already men

tioned; although he also was wrapped in a most exalted

contemplation, which made more easy and mysterious

his error in regard to the whereabouts of the Child.

Thus Jesus withdrew Himself from both of them, re

maining in Jerusalem. When after a considerable while

the Queen came to Herself and found Herself without

the company of her most holy Son, She supposed Him

to be with his reputed father.

48. It was very near to the gate of the city, that the

divine Child turned and hastened back through the

streets. Foreseeing in his divine fore-knowledge all that

was to happen, He offered it up to his eternal Father

for the benefit of souls. He asked for alms during these

three days in order to ennoble from that time on humble

mendicity as the first-born of holy poverty. He visited

the hospitals of the poor, consoling them and giving

them the alms which He had received; secretly He re

stored bodily health to some and spiritual health to many,

by enlightening them interiorly and leading them back

to the way of salvation. On some of the benefactors,

who gave Him alms, He performed these wonders with

a greater abundance of grace and light; thus fulfilling

from that time on the promise, which He was after

wards to make to his Church ; that he who gives to the

just and to the prophet in the name of a prophet, shall

receive the reward of the just (Matth. 10, 41).

49. Having thus busied Himself with these and other

works of his Father, He betook Himself to the temple.

On the day which the Evangelist mentions it happened

that also the rabbis, who were the learned and the teach

ers of the temple, met in a certain part of the buildings

in order to confer among themselves concerning some

doubtful points of holy Scriptures. On this occasion the

48 CITY OF GOD

coming of the Messias was discussed; for on account of

the report of the wonderful events, which had spread

about since the birth of the Baptist and the visit of the

Kings of the east, the rumor of the coming of the Re

deemer and of his being already in the world, though

yet unknown, had gained ground among the Jews. They

were all seated in their places filled with the sense of

authority customary to those who are teachers and con

sidered as learned. The Child Jesus came to the meet

ing of these distinguished men; and He that was the

King of kings, and Lord of lords (Apoc. 19, 16), the

infinite Wisdom itself (I Cor. 1, 24), and who corrects

the wise (Wis. 7, 15), presented Himself before the

teachers of this world as an humble disciple, giving them

to understand that He had come to hear the discussion

and inform Himself on the question treated of, namely :

whether the Messias was already come, or, if not, con

cerning the time in which He should come into the world.

50. The opinions of the scribes were much at variance

on this question, some of them answering in the affirma

tive, others in the negative. Those in the negative quoted

some testimonies of holy Scriptures and prophecies with

the coarse interpretation reprehended by the Apostle:

namely, killing the spirit by the letter (II Cor. 3, 6).

They maintained that the Messias was to come with

kingly magnificence and display in order to secure the

liberty of his people by the exercise of great power,

rescuing them in a temporal manner from the slavery of

the gentiles; yet, that there were no indications of this

power and freedom in the present state of the Hebrews

and no possibility of throwing off the yoke of the

Romans. This outward circumstance was an argument

of great force among this carnal and blinded people ; for

they presumed, that the coming greatness and majesty

THE TRANSFIXION 49

of the promised Messias and the Redemption was

intended for themselves only ; and they believed this Re

demption to be temporal and earthly, just as even now

the Jews, in the obscurity which envelops their hearts

(Is. 6, 10), continue to believe. For to the present day

they have not yet come to realize, that the glory, the

majesty, and the power of the Redeemer, and the liberty

which He is to bring to the world, is not of an earthly,

temporal and perishable kind, but heavenly, spiritual and

eternal; and that it is not intended alone for the Jews,

although offered to them before all other nations, but

indiscriminately for the whole human race descended

from Adam (I Cor. 3, 15).

51. The teacher of truth, Jesus, foresaw that the dis

cussion would end with the confirmation of this error;

for although some of the learned men inclined to the

contrary opinion, they were but few; and they had now

been silenced by the authority and specious arguments

of the others. As the Lord had come into the world in

order to give testimony of the truth (John 18, 37),

which was He Himself, He would not on this occasion,

when it was so important to manifest the truth, allow

that the deceit and error opposed to it should be con

firmed and established by the authority of the learned.

His measureless charity could not pass by unnoticed this

ignorance of his works and high purposes in these men,

who were set as teachers of the people in matters con

cerning eternal life and its Author, our Redeemer.

Therefore the divine Child presented Himself to the dis

putants, manifesting the grace poured out over his lips

(Ps. 44, 3). He stepped into their midst with exceeding

majesty and grace, as one who would propose some

doubt or solution. By his pleasing appearance He

awakened in the hearts of these learned men a desire

to hear Him attentively.

50 CITY OF GOD

52. The divine Child spoke to them as follows : "The

question concerning the coming of the Messias and the

answer given to it, I have heard and understood com

pletely. In order to propose my difficulty in regard to

its solution, I presuppose what the Prophets say, that

his coming shall be in great power and majesty, which

has also been confirmed by the testimonies brought for

ward. For Isaias says, that He shall be our Law-giver

and King, who shall save his people (Is. 30, 27), and

David, that He shall crush all his enemies (Ps. 94, 3),

Daniel, that all tribes and nations shall serve Him (Dan.

7, 14), Ecclesiasticus, that He shall come with a great

multitude of the saints (Eclus. 24, 3). All the Prophets

and Scriptures are full of similar promises, manifesting

his characteristics clearly and decisively enough for all

those that study them with enlightened attention. But

the doubt arises from the comparison of these with other

passages in the Prophets, since all of them must be

equally true, though on account of their brevity they may

appear to contradict each other. Therefore they must

agree with each other in another sense, which can and

must be found equally applicable in all the passages.

How then shall we understand what this same Isaias says

of Him, that He shall come from the land of the living,

and when He asks: who shall declare his generation?

(Is. 53, 8), that He shall be satiated with reproach; that

He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and that He

shall not open his mouth? Jeremias states that the ene

mies of the Messias shall join hands to persecute Him

and mix poison with his bread, and they shall wipe out

his name from the earth, although they shall not prevail

in their attempt (Jer. 11, 19). David says that He shall

be the reproach of the people and of men, and shall be

trodden under foot and shall be despised as a worm

THE TRANSFIXION 51

(Ps. 21, 78) ; Zachary, that He shall come meek and

humble seated upon an insignificant beast (Zach. 9, 9).

All the Prophets say the same concerning the signs of the

promised Messias."

53. "Hence," added the divine Child, "how will it be

possible to reconcile these prophecies, if we suppose that

the Messias is to come with the power and majesty of

arms in order to conquer all the kings and monarchs

by violence and foreign bloodshed ? We cannot fail to see

that He is to come twice ; once to redeem the world and a

second time to judge it; the prophecies must be applied

to both these comings, giving to each one its right expla

nation. As the purposes of these comings are different

so must also the conditions be different; for He is not

to exercise the same office in both, but widely divergent

and opposite offices. In the first advent He is to over

throw the demon, hurling him from his sovereignty over

souls obtained through the first sin. And therefore He

must first render satisfaction to God for the whole

human race; then also teach men by his word and ex

ample the way of eternal life, how they are to overcome

their enemies, serve and adore their God and Redeemer;

how they must correspond to the gifts and use well the

blessings of his right hand. All these requirements the

Messias must fulfill in the first coming. The second com

ing is for the purpose of exacting an account from all men

in the general judgment, of giving to each one the return

for his works, good or bad, chastising his enemies in his

wrath and indignation. This is what the Prophets say

of his second coming."

54. "Accordingly, when we wish to understand how

his first coming shall be in power and majesty, or as

David says, that He shall reign from sea to sea, that

in his advent He shall be glorious, as said by the other

52 CITY OF GOD

Prophets: all this cannot be interpreted as referring to

visible and terrestrial sovereignty, with all its outward

show of pomp and majesty; but of a spiritual reign in

a new Church, which would be extended over all the

earth with sovereign power arid riches of grace and vir

tue in opposition to the demon. By this interpretation

the whole Scripture becomes clear, while in another sense

its different parts cannot be made to harmonize. That

the people of the Jews are under dominion of the

Romans and are in no condition to restore their sover

eignty, not only cannot be held as a proof of his not

having come, but on the contrary, it is an infallible sign

that He is already come into the world. For our patri

arch Jacob has pointed out this very sign for the guid

ance of his posterity, commanding them to expect the

Messias as soon as they should see the tribe of Juda

deprived of the sceptre and sovereignty of Israel (Gen.

49, 10) ; and you must confess that neither Juda nor any

other tribe of Israel can hope to recover or hold it. The

same is also proved by the weeks of Daniel (Dan. 9,

25) ; which must certainly be now complete. Those who

wish can also remember, that a few years ago a light

was seen in Bethlehem at midnight and that some poor

shepherds heard the message of the new-born Redeemer ;

and soon after some Kings of the East came guided by

a star, seeking the King of the Jews in order to adore

Him. All this had been prophesied. Herod, the father

of Archelaus, believing it an established fact, took away

the life of so many children, hoping thereby to destroy

the new-born King, whom he feared as his rival in the

government of Israel."

55. Other arguments did the Child Jesus add, and

while seeming to ask questions He taught with a divine

efficacy. The scribes and learned men who heard Him

THE TRANSFIXION 53

were all dumbfounded. Convinced by his arguments

they looked at each other and in great astonishment

asked: "What miracle is this? and what prodigy of a

boy ! Whence has He come and who is the Child ?" But

though thus astonished, they did not recognize or sus

pect who it was, that thus taught and enlightened them

concerning such an important truth. During this time

and before Jesus had finished his argument, his most

holy Mother and saint Joseph her most chaste spouse

arrived, just in time to hear him advance his last argu

ments. When He had finished, all the teachers of the

law arose with stupendous amazement. The heavenly

Lady, absorbed in joy, approached her most loving Son

and in the presence of the whole assembly, spoke to Him

the words recorded by saint Luke : "Son, why hast Thou

done so to us? Behold thy father and I have sought

Thee sorrowing \* (Luke 4, 48). This loving complaint

the heavenly Mother uttered with equal reverence and

affection, adoring Him as God and manifesting her

maternal affliction. The Lord answered: "Why is it

that you sought Me ? Did you not know that I must be

about my Father s business?"

56. The Evangelist says that they did not understand

the mystery of these words (Luke 2, 50) ; for it was

hidden at the time to most holy Mary and saint Joseph.

And for two reasons; on the one hand, the interior joy

of now reaping what they had sown in so much sorrow,

and the visible presence of their precious Treasure, en

tirely filled the faculties of their souls; and on the other

hand, the time for the full comprehension of what had just

been treated of in this discussion had not yet arrived

for them. Moreover, for the most solicitous Queen there

was another hindrance just at that time, and it was, that

the veil, concealing the interior of her most holy Son

54 CITY OF GOD

had again intervened and was not removed until some

time later. The learned men departed, commenting in

their amazement upon the wonderful event, by which

they had been privileged to hear the teaching of eternal

Wisdom, though they did not recognize it. Being thus

left almost alone, the blessed Mother, embracing Him

with maternal affection, said to Him: "Permit my long

ing heart, my son, to give expression to its sorrow and

pain ; so that it may not die of grief as long as it can be

of use to Thee. Do not cast me off from thy sight; but

accept me as thy slave. If it was my negligence, which

deprived me of thy presence, pardon me and make me

worthy of thy company, and do not punish me with

thy absence." The divine Child received Her with signs

of pleasure and offered Himself as her Teacher and

Companion until the proper time should arrive. Thus

was the dove-like and affectionate heart of the great

Lady appeased, and They departed for Nazareth.

57. But at some distance from Jerusalem, when They

were alone upon the road, the most prudent Lady fell

on her knees before her Son and adored Him, asking

his benediction; for She had not thus reverenced Him

openly in presence of the people in the temple, being

always anxious to conduct Herself with the perfection of

holiness. With loving tenderness the Child Jesus raised

Her from the ground and spoke to Her words of sweet

est comfort. Immediately the veil fell, revealing anew

his most holy soul with greater depth and clearness than

ever before. Then the heavenly Mother read and per

ceived in the interior of her most holy Son all the mys

teries of his doings during those three days in Jerusalem.

She understood also all that had passed in the dispute

with the doctors, what Jesus had said and why He did

not manifest Himself more clearly as the true Messias.

THE TRANSFIXION 55

Many other sacramental secrets He revealed to his Virgin

Mother, depositing them with Her as in an archive of

all the treasures of the incarnate Word, in order that

thence He might receive for all of them the return of

honor and praise due to Him as Author of such great

wonders. And She, the Virgin Mother, fulfilled all the

expectations of the Lord. Then She asked Him to rest

a while in the field and partake of some nourishment,

and He accepted it from the hands of the great Lady,

the attentive Mother of divine Wisdom (Eccli. 24, 24).

58. During the rest of the journey the heavenly

Mother discoursed with her sweetest Son on the mys

teries, interiorly manifested to Her concerning the dis

cussion with the teachers. He repeated by word of

mouth, what He had shown Her interiorly. In particu

lar He told Her, that these doctors had not recognized

Him as the Messias because they were inflated and arro

gant in their own knowledge. Their understanding was

obscured by the darkness of their pride, so that they

could not perceive the divine light shining forth in such

profusion from Him ; while, if they had had the humble

and loving desire of seeing the truth, his reasoning would

have sufficiently convinced them. On account of these

obstacles they saw it not, though it was open before

their eyes. Our Redeemer converted many souls to the

way of salvation on this journey and, as his most holy

Mother was with Him, He used Her as an instrument

of his wonderful works. By means of her most prudent

words and holy admonitions He enlightened the hearts

of all to whom She spoke. They restored health to

many of the sick; They consoled the afflicted and sor

rowful; and everywhere They scattered grace and mercy

without ever losing an occasion for doing good. Since

I have described more particularly some of the wonders

56 CITY OF GOD

performed during other of their journeys, I do not stop

to describe any more here; for many chapters and much

time would be necessary to relate them all and there are

other things more to the point to be related in this

history.

59. They arrived at Nazareth, where they occupied

themselves in what I shall record later on. The evan

gelist Luke compendiously mentions all the mysteries in

few words, saying the Child Jesus was subject to his

parents, namely most holy Mary and saint Joseph, and

that his heavenly Mother noted and preserved within

her heart all these events; and that Jesus advanced in

wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men (Luke

2, 52), of which, as far as my understanding goes, I

will speak later on. Just now I wish only to mention,

that the humility and obedience of our God and Master

toward his parents were the admiration of the angels.

But so was also the dignity and excellence of his most

blessed Mother, who thus merited that the incarnate God

should subject Himself and resign Himself to her care ; so

much so, that She, with the assistance of saint Joseph,

governed Him and disposed of Him as her own. Al

though his subjection and obedience was to a certain

extent a natural result of her motherhood; ye,t, m order

to make proper use of this maternal right and superior

ity, a different grace was necessary than the one by which

She conceived and gave birth to Him. The graces nec

essary for such ministry and office were given to most

holy Mary in such abundance, that they overflowed into

the soul of saint Joseph, making Him worthy of being

the reputed father of Jesus and the head of this family.

60. To the obedience and subjection of her most holy

Son the great Lady on her part responded by heroic

works. Among her other excellences She conceived as

THE TRANSFIXION 57

it were an incomprehensible humility and a most heart

felt gratitude for having regained the companionship of

her Son. This blessing, of which the heavenly Queen

deemed Herself unworthy, vastly increased in her most

pure heart her love and her anxiety to serve her divine

Son. And She was so constant in showing her gratitude,

so punctual and solicitous to serve Him, kneeling before

Him and lowering Herself to the dust, that it excited

the admiration of the highest seraphim. Moreover, She

sought with the closest attention to imitate Him in all

his actions as they became known to Her and exerted

Herself most anxiously to copy them and reproduce

them in her own life. The plenitude of her perfection

wounded the heart of our Christ and Lord, and, accord

ing to our way of speaking, held him bound to Her with

chains of invincible love. (Osee 11, 4). His being thus

bound as God and as Son to this heavenly Princess,

gave rise to such an interchange and divine reciprocity of

intense love, as surpasses all created understanding. For

into the ocean of Mary s soul entered all the vast floods

of the graces and blessings of the incarnate Word; and

this ocean did not overflow (Eccles. 1, 7), because it

contained the depth and expanse necessary to receive

them. But these currents turned back to their source like

ebbs and tides of the Divinity held between two shores,

the Son of God and his Mother. This explains the many

repetitions of the humble acknowledgment of the Spouse :

"My beloved to me, and I to him, who feedeth among the

lilies, till the day break and shadows retire." (Cant. 2,

16). And elsewhere: "I to my beloved, and my beloved

to me" (Cant. 6, 2) ; "I to my beloved, and his turning

is to me" (Cant. 7, 10).

61. The fire of divine love, which burned in the heart

of our Redeemer and which He came to spread upon the

58 CITY OF GOD

earth, finding material so prepared and ready at hand

as was that of the pure heart of Mary, produced such

effects, as only the Lord Himself, who was the Author

of them, could properly estimate. There is but one thing,

which I wish to record, having received an understanding

thereof, that in the outward demonstration of his love

for his most holy Mother, He guided Himself not by

the natural affections and inclinations of a Son, but by

her capability of meriting as a pilgrim in mortal life;

for He well knew that, if in these demonstrations He

would allow his filial love for such a Mother to have

full sway, He would impede her merits by forcing upon

Her the continual enjoyment of the delights of her Be

loved. On this account the Lord restrained to a certain

extent the human activity of his love and permitted his

Mother, though She had reached the pinnacle of sanc

tity, to engage in meritorious labor and suffering by

stopping now and then the flow of visible favors from

his divine humanity. In his daily intercourse the divine

Child therefore maintained a certain reserve and modera

tion. Hence, though the most assiduous Lady was so

solicitous in serving and ministering to Him in all his

wants, her most holy Son indulged in no such outward

tokens of his filial love as would have been an adequate

return for her loving service.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE MOST HOLY

MARY, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

62. My daughter, all the works of my most holy Son

and my own actions are full of mysterious instruction

and doctrine for the mortals who contemplate them dili

gently and reverently. The Lord absented Himself from

me in order that, seeking Him in sorrow and tears, I

might find Him again in joy and with abundant fruits for

THE TRANSFIXION 59

my soul. I desire that thou imitate me in this mystery

and seek Him with such earnestness, as to be consumed

with a continual longing without ever in thy whole life

coming to any rest until thou holdst Him and canst lose

Him no more (Cant. 5, 4). In order that thou mayest

understand better this sacrament of the Lord, remember,

that the infinite Wisdom made men capable of his eternal

felicity and placed them on the way to this happiness, but

left them in doubt of its attainment, as long as they have

not yet acquired it, and thus filled them with joyful hope

and sorrowful fear of its final acquisition. This anxiety

engenders in men a lifelong fear and abhorrence of sin,

by which alone they can be deprived of beatitude, and

thus prevent them from being ensnared and misled by the

corporeal and visible things of this earth. This anxiety

the Creator assists by adding to the natural reasoning

powers, faith and hope, which are the spurs of their love

toward seeking and finding their last end. Besides these

virtues and others infused at Baptism, He sends his inspi

rations and helps to keep awake the soul in the absence of

its Lord and to prevent forgetfulness of Him and of

itself while deprived of his amiable presence. Thus it

pursues the right course until it finds the great goal,

where all its inclinations and longing shall be satiated.

63. Hence thou canst estimate the listless ignorance of

mortals and how few stop to consider the mysterious

order of the creation and justification and all the works

of the Almighty tending toward this exalted end. From

this forgetfulness flow so many evils endured by men

while they appropriate so many earthly goods and

deceitful delights, as if they could ever find in them

their ultimate end. The height of perversity opposed to

the order of the Creator, is that mortals in this transitory

and short life rejoice in visible things as if they were

60 CITY OF GOD

their last end, while they ought, on the contrary, to make

use of creatures to gain, not to lose, the highest Good.

Do thou, therefore, my dearest, be mindful of this dan

gerous human folly. Consider all delights and joys of the

world as insanity, its laughing as sorrow, sensible enjoy

ment as self deceit, as the source of foolishness, which

intoxicates the heart and hinders and destroys all true

wisdom. Live in constant and holy fear of losing eternal

life and rejoice in nothing except in the Lord until thou

obtainest full possession of Him. Fly from conversation

with men and dread its dangers. If sometimes God

places thee in the way of human intercourse for his glory

and by obedience, although thou must trust in his pro

tection, yet never be remiss or careless in guarding thy

self from contamination. Do not trust thy natural dis

position when there is question of friendship and close

intercourse with others ; in this consists for thee a greater

danger ; for the Lord has given thee a pleasing and mild

disposition, so that thou mayest naturally incline toward

Him, resist none of his intentions and make a proper

return for the blessings bestowed upon thee. But as

soon as thou givest entrance to creatures into thy heart

thou wilt certainly be carried away and alienated by

them from the highest Good, and thou wilt pervert

the intentions and operations of his infinite wisdom in

thy behalf. It would certainly be most unworthy of

thee to divert that which is most noble in thy nature

toward an unseemly end. Raise thyself above all

created things, and above thyself (Thren. 3, 28). Per

fect the operations of thy faculties and set before them

the exalted perfections of thy God, of my beloved Son

and thy Spouse, who is beautiful among the sons of men

(Ps. 44, 3). Love Him with all the powers of thy

heart and soul.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCERNING A VISION WHICH WAS GRANTED TO MOST

HOLY MARY WHEN THE CHILD JESUS WAS TWELVE

YEARS OLD, AND WHICH WAS TO ASSIST IN PRODUCING

WITHIN HER THE PERFECT COPY AND IMAGE OF THE

EVANGELICAL LAW.

64. In the first and second chapters of this book I

began what I must now complete in the following chap

ters : but I do it not without misgivings as to my halting

and inadequate powers of expression and with much more

hesitation on account of the lukewarmness of my heart,

all of which make me unfit to speak of the hidden inter

course of the incarnate Word with his most blessed

Mother. And especially do they make me unworthy of

treating about that heavenly intercourse of the Son and

the Mother at Nazareth during the eighteen years inter

vening between his dispute with the doctors at Jerusalem

and the beginning of his public preaching in his thirtieth

year. On the shores of this vast ocean of mysteries I

stand full of confusion and doubt, asking the most high

Lord from the bottom of my soul, to transfer my pen to

the hands of an angel, in order that no injustice may be

done to the subject of the discourse; or that He himself,

the most powerful and wise God, speak for me, enlighten

my faculties, so that governed by his divine light, they

may be fit instruments of his will and truth and be free

from the human frailty of an ignorant woman.

65. I have already said in former chapters, that our

great Lady was the first and specially privileged Disciple

61

62 CITY OF GOD

of her most holy Son, chosen among all creatures as the

model of the new evangelical law and its Author, accord

ing to which He was to mould all the saints of the new

law and judge of all the results of the Redemption. In

regard to Her the incarnate Word proceeded like a most

skillful artist, who understands the art of painting and

all that pertains to it most thoroughly ; who, throwing all

his powers into one chosen work, seeks to gain from it

alone renown and fame as from the full exposition of his

art. It is certain that all the holiness and glory of the

saints was the result of the love and merits of Christ:

(Eph. 2, 3) but in comparison with the excellence of

Mary, they seem insignificant and as it were only rough

sketches; for in all the saints are found defects (I John 1,

8). But this living image of the Onlybegotten was free

from all imperfections ; and the first strokes of his pencil

in Her were of greater beauty than the last touches in the

highest angels and saints. She is the model for all the

perfection of holiness and virtues of all his elect, and the

utmost limit to which the love of Christ can proceed in

mere creatures. No one received any grace or glory that

most holy Mary could not receive, and She received all

that others were incapable of receiving; and her most

blessed Son gave to Her all that She could receive and

that He could communicate.

66. The multitude and variety of the saints silently

enhance the Artificer of their great sanctity, and the great

ness of the highest is made more conspicuous by the

beauty of the lowest: but all of them together are a

glorification of most holy Mary. For by her incom

parable holiness they are all surpassed and they all par

take of so much the greater felicity as they imitate Her,

whose holiness redounds over all. If the most pure Mary

has reached the highest pinnacle in the ranks of the just,

THE TRANSFIXION 63

She may also on this very account be considered as the

instrument or the motive power through which the saints

themselves have reached their station. As we must judge

of her excellence (even if only from afar), by the labor

which Christ the Lord applied for her formation, let us

consider what labor He spent upon Her and how much

upon the whole Church. To establish and to enrich his

Church He deemed it sufficient to spend only three years

in preaching, selecting the Apostles, teaching the people,

and inculcating the evangelical law by his public life;

and this was amply sufficient to accomplish the work en

joined upon Him by the eternal Father and to justify and

sanctify all the true believers. But in order to stamp

upon his most holy Mother the image of his holiness, He

consumed not three years, but ten times three years,

engaging in this work with all the power of his divine

love, without ever ceasing hour after hour to add grace

to grace, gifts to gifts, blessings to blessings, and holiness

to holiness. And at the end of all this He still left Her

in a state, in which He could continue to add excellence

after his Ascension to his eternal Father as I will describe

in the third part. Our reason is unbalanced, our words

fail at the greatness of this incomparable Lady; for She

is elect as the sun (Cant. 6, 9) ; and her effulgence cannot

be borne by terrestrial eyes, nor comprehended by any

earthly creatures.

67. Christ our Redeemer began to manifest his designs

in regard to his heavenly Mother after they had come back

from Egypt to Nazareth, as I have already mentioned;

and from that time on He continued to follow up his

purpose in his quality as Teacher and as the divine En-

lightener in all the mysteries of the Incarnation and

Redemption. After they returned from Jerusalem in his

twelfth year, the great Queen had a vision of the Divinity,

64 CITY OF GOD

not an intuitive vision, but one consisting of intellectual

images; one very exalted and full of the new influences

of the Divinity and of the secrets of the Most High. She

was especially enlightened in regard to the decrees of the

divine Will concerning the law of grace, which was now

to be established by the incarnate Word, and concerning

the power, which was given to Him in the consistory of

the most blessed Trinity. At the same time She saw

how for this purpose the eternal Father consigned to His

Son the seven-sealed book, of which saint John speaks

(Apoc. 5, 1), and how none could be found either in

heaven or on earth, who could unseal and open it, until

the Lamb broke its seals by his Passion and Death and by

his doctrines and merits. For in this figure God wished

to intimate, that the secret of this book was nothing else

than the new law of the Gospel and the Church founded

upon it in this world.

68. Then the heavenly Queen saw in spirit, that, by

the decree of the most blessed Trinity, She was to be

the first one to read and understand this book; that her

Onlybegotten was to open it for Her and manifest it all

to Her, while She was to put it perfectly into practice;

that She was the first one, who was to accompany the

Word, and who was to occupy the first place next to Him

on the way to heaven, which He had opened up for

mortals and traced out in this book. In Her, as his true

Mother, was to be deposited this new Testament. She

saw how the Son of the eternal Father and of Herself

accepted this decree with great pleasure; and how his

sacred humanity obeyed it with ineffable joy on her ac

count. Then the eternal Father turned to the most pure

Lady and said:

69. "My Spouse and my Dove, prepare thy heart for

the plenitude of knowledge and for receiving the new

THE TRANSFIXION 65

Testament and Law of my Onlybegotten in thy soul.

Excite thy desires and apply thy mind to the knowledge

and practice of our teachings and precepts. Receive

from Us the gifts of our liberality and of our love for

thee. In order that thou mayest give Us fitting thanks,

consider, that by the disposition of our infinite wisdom,

We have resolved to make thee, a mere creature, the

closest image and likeness of my Onlybegotten, and thus

produce in thee effects and fruits worthy of his merits.

Therein shall his most holy name be magnified and

honored in a fitting degree. Be mindful, therefore, my

beloved and chosen Daughter, that a great preparation

is required of thee."

70. And the most humble Lady answered: "Eternal

Lord and immense God, in thy real and divine presence

I lie prostrate, acknowledging at the sight of thy infinite

Being my own insignificance, which is mere nothingness.

I perceive thy greatness and my littleness. I know that

I am unworthy to be thy slave ; and for the kindness with

which Thou hast looked upon me, I offer to Thee the

fruit of my womb and thy Onlybegotten and I beseech

Him to answer for his unworthy Mother and his hand

maid. My heart is prepared and it is overwhelmed with

gratitude for thy mercies and consumed with affection,

as long as it cannot satisfy its vehement longings. But

if I shall find grace in thy eyes, I will speak, O my Lord

and Master, in thy presence, asking only this, that Thou

do with thy slave whatever Thou wishest and com-

mandest; for no one is able to execute it unless Thou

thyself assist him, O Lord and most high King. If

Thou desirest from me a heart free and devoted, I now

offer it to Thee, ready to obey Thee and suffer for Thee

until death." Immediately the heavenly Princess felt

new influences of the Divinity, being enlightened, purified

66 CITY OF GOD

and spiritualized with such plenitude of the Holy Ghost

as to exceed all that had happened to Her until that day ;

for this blessing was one of the most memorable ones for

the peerless and sovereign Lady. Although all of them

were exalted and without equal in any of the rest of

creatures, reaching the highest perfection; yet in the

participation of the divine perfections there is no meas

ure, as long as the capacity of the creature to receive

them does not fail. As this power of participation was

so vast in this Queen and increased with each participa

tion, the great gifts merely disposed Her for still greater

,ones. The divine power, therefore, not rinding in Her

any obstacle, set all its treasures in motion and laid

them up in the secure and most faithful depository of the

most holy Mary our Queen.

71. She issued from this ecstatic vision and betook

Herself to her most holy Son, prostrating Herself at his

feet and saying : "My Lord, my Light and my Teacher,

behold thy unworthy Mother prepared for the fulfillment

of thy wishes; admit me anew as thy disciple and

servant and make use of me as the instrument of

thy wisdom and power. Execute in me thy pleas

ure and that of thy eternal Father." Her most holy

Son received Her with the majesty and authority

of a divine Teacher and instructed Her in most exalted

mysteries. In most persuasive and powerful words He

explained to Her the profoundest meanings of the works

enjoined upon Him by the eternal Father in regard to

the Redemption of man, the founding of the Church and

the establishment of the new evangelical law. He de

clared and reaffirmed, that in the execution of these high

and hidden mysteries She was to be his Companion and

Coadjutrix, receiving and enjoying the first-fruits of

grace ; and that therefore She, the most pure Lady, was

THE TRANSFIXION 67

to follow Him in his labors until his death on the Cross

with a magnanimous and well prepared heart in invincible

and unhesitating constancy. He added heavenly instruc

tion such as enabled Her to prepare for the reception of

the whole evangelical Law, the understanding and prac

tice of all its precepts and counsels in their highest per

fection. Other sacramental secrets concerning his works

in this world the Child Jesus manifested to his most

blessed Mother on this occasion. And the heavenly Lady

met all his words and intentions with profound humility,

obedience, reverence, thanksgiving and most ardent love.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY LADY GAVE) ME

72. My daughter, many times in the course of thy

life, and especially while thou art writing this history of

my own life, I have called upon thee and invited thee to

follow me by the closest imitation possible to thee. I

now renew this invitation and demand, for now thou hast

by the condescension of the Most High received light and

intelligence in this sacrament of his powerful arm in my

heart : how He wrote therein the whole law of grace and

all the doctrine of the Gospel, what effects this favor

wrought in me, and how I corresponded by the closest

and most perfect imitation of my most holy Son and

Teacher. The knowledge of all this thou must consider

as one of the greatest favors ever bestowed upon thee by

the Lord. For in it thou wilt find the sum total and

essence of the most exalted sanctity and perfection, re

flected as in the clearest mirror. The paths of divine

light will therein be revealed to thee, whereon thou canst

walk secure from the darkness of ignorance enveloping

other mortals.

73. Come then, my daughter, come and follow me.

And in order that thou mayest imitate me as I desire and

68 CITY OF GOD

that thy understanding may be properly enlightened, thy

spirit sufficiently ennobled and prepared, and thy will

inflamed, separate thyself from all earthly things as thy

Spouse wishes; withdraw thyself from what is visible,

forsake all the creatures, deny thyself, close thy senses

to the deceits and fabulations of the world (Ps. 39, 5).

And in thy temptations I exhort thee not to be troubled

or afflicted very much; for if they cause thee to halt in

thy course, they will already have gained a great ad

vantage over thee and they will prevent thee from becom

ing strong in the practice of perfection. Listen therefore

to the Lord alone, who is desirous of the beauty of thy

soul (Ps. 44, 12) ; who is liberal in bestowing his gifts

upon it, powerful to deposit therein the treasures of his

wisdom, and anxious to see thee prepare thyself to re

ceive them. Allow Him to write into thy heart the

evangelical Law. Let that be thy continual study, thy

meditation day and night, the sweet nourishment of thy

memory, the life of thy soul and the sweet nectar for thy

spiritual taste. Thus wilt thou obtain what the Most

High and I require of thee, and what thou thyself

desirest.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXACTED PURPOSE OF THE INSTRUCTION OF MOST

HOLY MARY ARE EXPLAINED MORE AT LARGE; AND

HOW SHE PUT THESE INSTRUCTIONS INTO PRACTICE.

74. All free and voluntary causes must have some rea

sonable end or purpose, which move them to act, and

having 1 obtained a clear view of this end, they proceed

to choose the means for obtaining it. This is certainly

true of the works of God, who is the first and primary

Cause, and who is infinite Wisdom itself, disposing and

executing all things and reaching from end to end in

sweetness and power, as the wise man says. Nor does

He seek the destruction and annihilation of any creature,

but all of them He has made in order that they may

enjoy life and existence (Wis. 8, 1). The more won

derful and excellent the works of the Most High, so

much the more admirable and exalted are the ends to

which they tend. Although the ultimate end of all

things is the manifestation of his own glory; yet all are

ordained according to infinite knowledge and are con

nected one with each other like the links of a chain. Thus

all creatures succeed each other from the lowest to the

highest and nearest to God, the Author of all.

75. All the excellence and sanctity of our great Lady

is included in her having been moulded by God as the

image or living stamp of his own Son; being so well

adjusted and refined in grace that She seemed another

Christ by communication and privilege (Gal. 4, 4). Thus

was established a singular and divine intercourse between

69

70 CITY OF GOD

Her and her Son. She had given Him the form and

existence of man, while the Lord gave Her that other

highest spiritual existence of grace, so that there was a

mutual correspondence and similarity of gifts. The ends

which the Most High had in view, were proportionate

to this rare wonder and to this, the greatest of all his

operations in mere creatures. In the second and sixth

chapter I have said something concerning the honor of

Christ and its being bound up with the efficacy of his

doctrines and merits : that his honor required their power

to be made known in his most holy Mother, and that all

the effects of the evangelical Law and the fruits of his

Redemption should redound to his glory by being ex

hibited in Her. More than in all the rest of his holy

Church and in all the predestined, was this to be found

in the sovereign Lady, his Mother.

76. The second end, which the Lord had in view in

this work, concerned likewise the ministry of the Re

deemer; for the work of our Redemption was to cor

respond with those of the Creation of the world, and

the remedy of sin was to be correlative with its entrance

among men. Therefore, it was befitting that, just as

the first Adam had as a companion in sin our mother

Eve, and was moved and abetted therein by her, causing

the loss of the whole human race, so also, in the repara

tion of this great ruin, the second and heavenly Adam,

Christ our Lord, was to have as a companion and helper

his most pure Mother. She was to concur and co-operate

in the Redemption ; although in Christ alone, who is our

Head, existed the full power and adequate cause of the

general Redemption. In order that this mystery might

not want the proper dignity and correspondence, it was

necessary that what was said by the Most High in the

first formation of man, be also fulfilled in regard to Christ

THE TRANSFIXION 71

and his Mother: "It is not good for man to be alone:

let us make him a help like unto himself" (Gen 2, 18).

This the Lord in his Omnipotence did, so that, speaking

of the second Adam, Christ, He could say: "This now

is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall

be called Woman because She was taken out of man"

(Gen. 2, 23). I shall not detain myself in further ex

planation of this sacrament; for it is clearly seen by

reason enlightened by divine faith, and the resemblance

between Christ and his most holy Mother is clearly mani

fest.

77. Another motive for this mystery, though here men

tioned in the third place, is first in regard to the inten

tion; for it concerns the eternal predestination of Christ

our Lord, which I have described in the first part of this

history. The primary intention of the eternal Word in

assuming flesh and becoming the Teacher of men, cor

respond with the greatness of that very work, which was

to be performed. This was the greatest of all his works

and it was really the end for which all the rest were to

be executed. Hence the divine wisdom so arranged mat

ters, that among mere creatures there should be One,

which fully met his desire of being our Teacher and

adopting us as his children by his grace. If the Creator

had not thus formed the most holy Mary and furnished

Her with a degree of sanctity like to that of his divine

Son (according to our coarse way of speaking), the

adequate motive for his Incarnation, so far as it is mani

fest to us, would have been wanting. Compare with this

what is said of Moses, when he received the tablets of the

Law written by the finger of God : he broke them as soon

as he saw the people in their idolatry, judging them too

faithless to be worthy of such great benefit. Afterwards

the Law was written on other tablets made by the hands

72 CITY OF GOD

of man, and these were preserved in the world. The

first tablets, made by the hands of God and having\* writ

ten upon them Law of the Lord, were broken by the first

sin; and we would not have had any evangelical Law, if

there had not been other tablets, Christ and Mary, formed

in another way ; She in the ordinary and natural way, He

by the consent and of the substance of Mary. If this

great Lady had not concurred and co-operated as a worthy

instrument, we other mortals would be now without this

evangelical Law.

78. In the plenitude of this divine science and grace

Christ our Lord attained all these sublime ends by teach

ing the most blessed Mother the mysteries of the evan

gelical Law. In order that She might be proficient in

all of them and at the same time understand them in

their different aspects ; in order that She might afterwards

be Herself the consummate Teacher and Mother of wis

dom, the Lord used different means of enlightening Her.

Sometimes by abstractive visions of the Divinity, with

which during this part of her life She was more fre

quently favored; at other times by intellectual visions,

which were more habitual though less clear. In the one

as well as in the other She saw the whole militant Church,

with all its history from the beginning of the world until

the Incarnation; and what was to be its lot afterwards

until the end of the world, and later on in eternal

beatitude. This knowledge was so clear, distinct and

comprehensive, that She knew all the just and the saints,

and those who were to distinguish themselves afterwards

in the Church: the Apostles, Martyrs, Patriarchs of the

religious orders, the Doctors, Confessors and Virgins.

All these our Queen knew in particular with all their

merits and graces and the rewards apportioned to them.

79. She was acquainted also with the Sacraments,

THE TRANSFIXION 73

which her divine Son was to establish in the Church;

their efficacy, the results in those that receive them, vary

ing according to the different dispositions of the recip

ients, and all their strength flowing from the sanctity and

merits of her most holy Son, our Redeemer. She was

also furnished with a clear understanding of all the doc

trines, which He was to preach and teach; of the new

and old Testament, and of all mysteries hidden under its

four different ways of interpreting them, the literal, moral,

allegoric and anagogic; and all that the interpreters of

the Scriptures were to write in explanation. But her

understanding of all these was much more extensive and

profound than theirs. She was aware that all this knowl

edge was given to Her in order that She might be the

Teacher of the whole Church; for this was her office in

the absence of her most holy Son, after his Ascension

into heaven. In Her the new children of the Church

and the faithful engendered by grace were to have a

loving Mother, who carefully nourished them at the

breasts of her doctrines as with sweetest milk, the proper

food of infant children. Thus the most blessed Lady

during these eighteen years of her hidden intercourse with

her most holy Son fed upon and digested the substance of

the evangelical doctrines, receiving them from their

Author, Christ, the Redeemer. Having tasted and well

understood the scope and efficacy of this law, She drew

forth from it sweet nourishment for the primitive Church,

whose members were yet in their tender years and unfit

for the solid and strong food of the Scriptures and the

perfect imitation of their Master and Redeemer. But

since I am to speak of this part of her history in its

proper place, I do not expatiate farther upon this matter.

80. Besides these visions and instructions concerning

her divine Son and his human nature, the great Lady

74 CITY OF GOD

had also two other sources of information which I have

already mentioned. The one was the reflection of his

most holy Soul and its interior operation, which She saw

as in a mirror and in which was included at the same

time a reflex image of all his knowledge of things created ;

so that She was informed of all the counsels of the Re

deemer and Artificer of sanctity and also of all the works,

which He intended to undertake and execute either by

Himself or by his ministers. The other source of infor

mation was his own spoken word ; for the Lord conversed

with his most worthy Mother about all things concerning

his Church, from the greatest to smallest, including also

all the happenings contemporary with and bearing upon

the different phases of the history of the Church. On

this account the heavenly Disciple and our Instructress

was so imbued with his doctrine and so proficient in the

most perfect practice of it, that the perfection of her

works corresponded with her immense wisdom and

science. Her knowledge was so clear and deep, that it

comprehended everything and was never equaled by any

creature, nor can it be conceived in its full extent either

in thought or words. Neither was there anything want

ing that is necessary, nor was there anything added that

was superfluous, nor did She ever mistake one thing

for another, nor was She in need of discourse or inquiry

in order to be able to explain the most hidden mysteries

of the Scriptures, whenever such explanation was neces

sary in the primitive Church.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE HEAVENLY MOTHER,

OUR LADY.

81. The Most High, who in sheer goodness and bounty

has given existence to all creatures and denies his provi

dential care to none, faithfully supplies all souls with

THE TRANSFIXION 75

light, by which they can enter into the knowledge of Him

and of eternal life, provided they do not of their own free

will prevent and obscure this light by sin or give up the

quest of the kingdom of heaven. To the souls, whom,

according to his secret judgments, He calls to his Church,

He shows himself still more liberal. For with the grace

of Baptism He infuses into them not only those virtues,

which are called essentially infused and which the crea

ture cannot merit by its own efforts ; but also those, which

are accidentally infused and which it can merit by its

own labors and efforts. These the Lord gives freely

beforehand, in order that the soul may be more prepared

and zealous in the observance of his holy Law. In other

souls, in addition to the common light of faith, the Lord

in his clemency grants supernatural gifts of knowledge

and virtue for the better understanding of the evangelical

mysteries and for the more zealous practice of good

works. In this kind of gifts He has been more liberal

with thee than with many generations; obliging thee

thereby to distinguish thyself in loving correspondence

due to Him and to humble thyself before Him to the

very dust.

82. In order that thou mayest be well instructed and

informed, I wish to warn thee as a solicitous and loving

Mother, of the cunning of satan for the destruction of

these works of the Lord. From the very moment in

which mortals begin to have the use of their reason, each

one of them is followed by many watchful and relentless

demons. For as soon as the souls are in a position to

raise their thoughts to the knowledge of their God and

commence the practice of the virtues infused by Baptism,

these demons, with incredible fury and astuteness, seek

to root out the divine seed; and if they cannot succeed

in this, they try to hinder its growth, and prevent it from

76 CITY OF GOD

bringing forth fruit by engaging men in vicious, useless,

or trifling things. Thus they divert their thoughts from

faith and hope, and from the pursuit of other virtues,

leading them to forget that they are Christians and divert

ing their attention from the knowledge of God and from

the mysteries of the Redemption and of life eternal.

Moreover the same enemy instils into the parents a base

neglectfulness and carnal love for their offspring; and

he incites the teachers to carelessness, so that the children

find no support against evil in their education, but be

come depraved and spoiled by many bad habits, losing

sight of virtue and of their good inclinations and going

the way of perdition.

83. But the most kind Lord does not forget them in

this danger and He renews in them his holy inspirations

and special helps. He supplies them with the holy teach

ings of the Church by his preachers and ministers. He

holds out to them the aid of the Sacraments and many

other inducements to keep them on the path of life. That

those who walk in the way of salvation are the smaller

number, is due to the vice and depraved habits imbibed in

youth and nourished in childhood. For that saying of

Deuteronomy is very true : "As the days of thy youth, so

also shall thy old age be" (Deut. 33, 25). Hence the

demons gain courage and increase their tyrannical in-

fluence over souls in the early years of man s life, hoping

that they will be able to induce men to commit so much

the greater and the more frequent sins in later years,

the more they have succedeed in drawing them into small

and insignificant faults in their childhood. By these they

draw them on to a state of blind presumption ; for with

each sin the soul loses more and more the power of

resistance, subjects itself to the demon, and falls under

the sway of its tyrannical enemies. The miserable yoke

THE TRANSFIXION 77

of wickedness is more and more firmly fastened upon it;

the same is trodden underfoot by its own iniquity and

urged onward under the sway of the devil from one preci

pice to another, from abyss to abyss (Ps. 41, 8) : a chas

tisement merited by all those, that allow themselves to be

overcome by evil-doing in the beginning. By these

means Lucifer has hurled into hell so great a number of

souls and continues so to hurl them every day, rising

up in his pride against the Almighty. In this manner

has he been able to introduce into the world his tyrannical

power, spreading among men forgetfulness of death,

judgment, heaven and hell, and casting so many nations

from abyss to abyss of darkness and bestial errors, such

as are contained in the heresies and false sects of the

infidels. Do thou therefore beware of this terrible dan

ger, my daughter, and let not the memory of the law of

thy God, his precepts and commands, and the truths of

the Catholic Church and the doctrines of the Gospels ever

fail in thy mind. Let not a day pass in which thou dost

not spend much time in meditating upon all these ; and

exhort thy religious and all those who listen to thee

to do the same. For thy enemy and adversary is labor

ing with ceaseless vigilance to obscure thy understanding

in forgetfulness of the divine law, seeking to withdraw thy

will, which is a blind faculty, from the practice of justi

fication. This, thou knowest, consists in acts of living

faith, trustful hope, ardent love, all coming from a con

trite and humble heart (Ps. 50, 19).

3-7

CHAPTER VIII

HOW OUR GREAT QUEEN PRACTICED THE TEACHINGS OF

THE GOSPEL AS TAUGHT HER BY HER MOST HOLY SON.

84. Our Redeemer advanced in age and divine activity,

leaving behind Him the years of his boyhood and fulfill

ing the task imposed upon Him by his eternal Father

for the benefit of mankind. He did not engage in the

work of preaching, nor did He perform at that time such

open miracles as afterwards in Galilee, or before, in

Egypt. But under cover of secrecy He produced great

effects in the souls and bodies of men. He visited the

poor and infirm; He consoled the afflicted and sorrow

ful. By special enlightenment and holy inspirations He

led many souls to the way of salvation, inducing them to

turn to their Creator and to withdraw from the devil and

the works of death. These labors were continuous and

He was frequently absent from the house of the blessed

Virgin. Although the persons thus assisted were aware,

that they were moved and converted by the words and

the presence of Jesus, yet, as they were left in ignorance

of the mystery of his assistance and could ascribe it only

to the agency of God himself, they did not speak about

it. The great Lady learned of these wonders by seeing

them reflected in the most holy soul of her Son and by

other means ; and She adored Him and gave Him thanks

for them prostrate at his feet.

85. The rest of the time her most holy Son passed

with his Mother, instructing Her and engaging with

Her in prayer. He spoke to Her of his solicitude for his

78

THE TRANSFIXION 79

cherished flock, of the merits which He wished to ac

cumulate for the benefit of souls, and of the means to be

applied for their salvation. The most prudent Mother

listened to all his words and co-operated with his divine

love and wisdom, assisting Him in his office of Father,

Brother, Friend, Teacher, Advocate, Protector and Re

deemer of the human race. These conferences They held

either by conversation or by interior communications, for

in both ways the Son and the Mother could hold con

verse with each other. Her most holy Son would say:

"My Mother, the fruit of my works and the foundation

upon which I wish to build the Church, is to be a doctrine

founded in holy science, which if believed and followed,

shall be the life and salvation of men : an efficacious and

holy law, which shall be capable of destroying the deathly

poison of Lucifer, instilled by the first sin. I wish that

men, by means of my precepts and counsels, become spirit

ualized and exalted to a participation and likeness of My

self, and that they, in their mortal flesh, become deposi

taries of my riches and afterwards participators of my

eternal glory. I wish to give them the law of Moses,

so renewed and improved, that it shall contain also the

precepts and counsels."

86. All these intentions of the Master of life his

heavenly Mother understood with profoundest insight and

accepted with ardent love, reverencing and thanking Him

in the name of all the human race. And as the Lord

proceeded in all his instructions, She understood more

and more fully the efficacy of all these sacraments, the

powerful influence of the evangelical Law and doctrine

in obedient souls, and the rewards attached to it : and

She labored in its practical fulfillment as if She were the

representative of each one of the creatures. She knew all

the four Gospels word for word as they were to be writ-

80 CITY OF GOD

ten, and all the mysteries, which were to be contained

therein. She of Herself understood all the teachings of

the Gospels; for her knowledge was greater than that

of its authors. She could have explained them without

having seen the text. She knew also that her knowledge

was to be copied from that of Christ, engraved on her

soul as was the Law of the old Testament on the tablets

in the ark. Her knowledge was to serve as the original,

legitimate and veracious manuscript of the new Law of

grace for the guidance of the saints and the just ; for all

of them were to copy the virtues and the holiness con

tained in this archive of grace, most holy Mary.

87. Her divine Teacher also instructed Her in her

obligation of practicing this holy doctrine in its entirety,

so that the high purposes, which He had in view in mak

ing Her partake in such exalted blessings and favors,

might be attained. If we were to relate here, how fully

and exquisitely the great- Queen corresponded with his

designs, it would be necessary to describe her whole life

in this chapter; for it was a complete summary of the

Gospel, copied from her own Son and Teacher. All that

this holy doctrine has effected in the Apostles, Martyrs,

Confessors, Virgins and in all the just and the saints,

which have lived and shall live to the end of the world,

could not be described, much less understood, except by

the Lord himself. Yet we must consider, that all the

saints and the just were conceived in sin and all of

them placed some hindrance to grace; all of them could

have attained higher grace and holiness and fell short

in their correspondence with grace. But our heavenly

Lady had no such defects or failings; She alone was

material adequately disposed and adapted for the power

ful activity of God and his blessings. She was the one

who, without embarrassment and without opposition, re-

THE TRANSFIXION 81

ceived the impetuous torrent of the Divinity communi

cated to Her by her own Son and God. From all this

we may understand, that only in the beatific vision and

in eternal felicity we shall be able to estimate, how much

was due to this wonder of his Omnipotence.

88. Whenever I wish to explain some of the more

important things manifested to me in this matter, I am at

a loss what terms to use. For our great Queen and Lady

observed the precept and doctrines of the Gospel accord

ing to the measure of her profound understanding of them

and no creature is capable of reaching the limits of the

science and intelligence of the Mother of wisdom in these

teachings of Christ. Moreover, that which is under

stood of it exceeds the capacity of human words and

speech. Let us take for an example the doctrine of that

first sermon, which the Teacher of life gave on the moun

tain to his disciples, and which is recorded by saint

Matthew (Matth. 5, 1). In it is contained the sum of

Christian perfection, on which the Church is founded and

which makes those blessed that observe them.

89. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," says our Lord and

Teacher, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This

was the first and solid foundation of all evangelical life.

Although the Apostles and our holy Father saint Francis

understood it in a most exalted manner, yet Mary alone

penetrated and fully weighed the greatness of this poverty

in spirit; and just as She understood it, so She practiced

it to its last limits. Into her heart the image of temporal

riches found no entrance, nor did She feel the inclination

toward them; but, while loving created things as the.

handiwork of the Lord, She at the same time detested

them in so far as they were a hindrance or a burden to

the love of God. She made use of them in moderation

and only in so far as they were useful toward divine

82 CITY OF GOD

love. This admirable and most perfect poverty entitled

Her to possess all things as Queen of heaven and earth.

What I have said here in regard to poverty, though strictly

true, is but little in comparison to what our great Lady

really understood and practiced in regard to this poverty

of spirit, the first beatitude.

90. The second beatitude is: "Blessed are the meek,

for they shall possess the earth/ By her sweetest meek

ness the most holy Mary excelled in the practice of this

beatitude not only over all mortals, just as Moses excelled

all men of his time, but She surpassed the angels and

seraphim themselves ; for this sincerest Dove, being yet

in mortal flesh, was interiorly and exteriorly no more

exposed to disturbance and excitement of her faculties,

than these pure spirits, who are not endowed with senses.

In such an unlimited degree was She Mistress of all her

bodily faculties and powers, as well as of the hearts of

all with whom She had intercourse, that She possessed

the earth in every day and reduced it to peaceful sub

jection. The third beatitude is: "Blessed are they that

mourn, for they shall be comforted." The most holy

Mary understood, more than any tongue can explain,

the value and excellence of tears, and at the same time

the foolishness and danger of laughter and human en

joyment. For, while all the children of Adam, though

they are conceived in original sin and afterwards incur

many other actual sins, give themselves over to laughter

and gaiety, this heavenly Mother, being without sin at

her Conception and ever after, was aware, that this mor

tal life should be consumed in weeping over the absence

of the supreme Good and over the sins, which have been

and are committed against God. For the sake of all men

She wept over their sins, and merited by her most inno

cent tears the great consolations and favors of the Lord.

THE TRANSFIXION 83

Her most pure heart was in continual distress at the sight

of the offenses committed against her Beloved and her

God; her eyes distilled incessant tears (Jer. 9, 1), and

her bread day and night was to weep over the ingratitude

of sinners toward their Creator and Redeemer (Ps. 41,

4). No creatures, not all of them together, wept more

than the Queen of angels, though for men, on account

of their sins, there is abundant cause of wailing and

weeping, while in Her there was cause only for joy and

delight on account of her treasures of grace.

91. The fourth beatitude, "Blessed are they that hunger

and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill,"

helped our heavenly Lady to enter into the understanding

of this mysterious hunger and thirst. In Her this hunger

and thirst for justice was greater than all the disgust

ever entertained against it by the enemies of God. Hav

ing arrived at the pinnacle of justice and sanctity, her

desire for it increased in proportion; while the plenitude

of graces, poured out upon Her in a continual stream

from the treasury of the Divinity, satiated her longing

desires. As for the fifth beatitude: "Blessed are the

merciful for they shall obtain mercy," She possessed it in

such a high degree, that She alone deserved to be called

the Mother of mercy, just as the Lord alone is called

the Father of mercies (II Cor. 1, 3). She, who was

most innocent and without any fault in the eyes of God,

exercised mercy in its highest degree for the benefit and

for the salvation of the human race. As She knew by

her exalted science the excellence of this virtue, She never

denied and never will deny mercy to any one, whoever

may ask ; nor will She ever cease to seek out and hasten

to the relief of the poor and needy, in order to offer

them her assistance.

92. Without compeer was She also in the exercise of

84 CITY OF GOD

the sixth beatitude : "Blessed are the clean of heart, for

they shall see God." For She was elect as the sun (Cant.

6, 9), a true imitation of the real Sun of justice and an

image of our material sun, which is not defiled by things

beneath it. Into the heart and mind of our most pure

Princess no touch of defilement has ever found entrance ;

on the contrary, defilement was made impossible in Her

on account of the exquisite purity of her thoughts and

because, from the first moment of her existence and

many times afterwards, She was favored with the vision

of the Divinity, although, being yet in a state of pilgrim

age, these visions were not continual. The seventh

beatitude : "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall

be called the children of God," was conferred upon Her

in admirable measure. She stood in need of this blessing

in order to preserve the peace of her heart and of her

faculties in the trials and tribulations of her life and in

the passion and death of her most holy Son. Never was

She inordinately disturbed, and She knew how to accept

the greatest sufferings with supreme peace of mind, being

in all things a perfect Daughter of the heavenly Father.

Yea, it was especially by the exercise of this beatitude,

that She deserved to be called the Daughter of the eternal

Father. In the eighth beatitude : "Blessed are they that

suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the king

dom of heaven," Mary reached the pinnacle of perfec

tion. For She alone besides God was capable of bearing

with equanimity the sacrifice of the life and honor of

Christ our Lord, and the atrociousness with which it

was consummated. For we must remember that She was

the true Mother, as God was the true Father of his Only-

begotten. This Lady alone imitated the Lord in his Pas

sion and understood fully, that to such extremes must

be executed the law of her divine Teacher in the Gospels.

THE TRANSFIXION 85

93. In this manner I am able to explain part of what

I have understood of the knowledge of the Gospel pos

sessed and put into practice by this great Lady. In the

same way She comprehended the evangelical precepts,

counsels and parables of the Gospel; as for instance, the

precepts of loving enemies, pardoning injuries, doing

good works in secret and without vainglory, avoiding

hypocrisy; the counsels of perfection and the teachings

contained in the parables of the recovered treasures, the

lost pearl, the virgins, the seed scattered on the ground,

the talents and all other parables of the four Gospels.

All of them She understood, together with the doctrines

which they inculcate, and the high ends which the Master

had in view. She knew all things in the most holy and

perfect manner, and thus She also accomplished them to

the last point Of this Lady we can say what Christ said

of Himself : that She came not to abrogate the law, but

to fulfill it.

INSTRUCTION VOUCHSAFED ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY.

94. My daughter, it was proper that the Teacher of

virtue should make known to us what He did, and that

He should fulfill what He taught. For both word and

action belong to the office of teaching. The words should

instruct, while the example should move and give wit

ness to the teaching, in order that it may be accepted

and practiced. All this was fulfilled by my most holy

Son, and by me in imitation of Him (Matth. 5, 9). As

neither He nor I was to remain always upon this earth,

He wished to leave behind Him the holy Gospels as a

summary of his life and of mine, in order that the chil

dren of the light, by believing and practicing its teach

ings, might regulate their lives in imitation of his. For

86 CITY OF GOD

in it the practical results of the teachings of Christ are

exhibited, such as they brought forth in me by imitating

Him. Of great value are the sacred Gospels, and for this

reason thou must look upon them with utmost veneration.

I call thy attention to the fact, that my most holy Son and

I are much honored and pleased to see the divine sayings

and the doings of his life properly esteemed and respected

among men. On the other hand, the Lord considers the

forgetting and the neglecting of the doctrines contained

in the Gospels a great injury done to Him by the chil

dren of the Church in our times. For there are many

who do not listen or attend to them, who give no thanks

for this blessing, and who make no more of them than if

they were pagan writings, or as if they did not contain

in them the light of faith.

95. Thy debt is great in this regard; for thou hast

received insight into the veneration and esteem in which

I held the evangelical doctrines, and thou wast made

aware, how I labored in order to put them into practice.

Thou hast not been able to learn all of what I practiced

and understood, as thy capacity is too limited; yet re

member at least, that with no entire nation have I been

so condescending as with thee alone in lavishing this

blessing. Therefore, be very careful how thou corre

spond with it, lest thou render fruitless the love which

has been instilled into thee for the divine Scriptures, and

particularly for the Gospels and their exalted doctrines.

They are to serve thee as a shining beaconlight, and

my life should be thy model for forming thy own. Take

heed how important and necessary it is for thy welfare to

attend to this with all diligence ; how much pleasure thou

canst thereby give to my Son and Lord, and how I shall

consider myself obliged anew to treat with thee as a

Mother and as a Teacher. Fear the danger of not attend-

THE TRANSFIXION 87

ing to the divine calls, for that is the cause of the loss of

innumerable souls. Since thou receivest so many and so

wonderful calls from thy merciful and omnipotent God,

how reprehensible will be thy rudeness, how abominable

thou wilt make thyself to the Lord, to me and the saints,

if thou fail to correspond with them!

CHAPTER IX.

HOW THE MOST HOLY MARY WAS INSTRUCTED IN THE

ARTICLES OF FAITH AND WHAT USE SHE MADE OF

THIS KNOWLEDGE.

96. The unshakable foundation of our justification, and

the beginning of all holiness in men, is the belief in the

truths, which have been revealed by God in his holy

Church. Like a most skillful architect, the Lord has

built his Church on a firm rock, in order that the storms

and floods of her earthly course of existence might find

Her altogether immovable (Luke 6, 48). Thus wisely

provided with a firm foundation in her articles of faith,

the evangelical Church is invincibly established as the

only true one, the Roman Catholic Church. She is one in

the unity of faith, hope and charity, to be found only in

Her; one without the division or contradiction which

reigns in the synagogues of satan. The sects and heresies

are full of darkness and errors and are at war not only

with each other and with right reason, but each one is

at war with itself by maintaining contradictory and erro

neous doctrines at the same or different times. Against

all these our holy faith shall ever remain victorious and

the portals of hell shall never prevail against it in the

least of its points (Matth 16, 18) ; though, according

to the prophecy of the Master of Life, the powers of hell

incessantly winnow and sift it like wheat, as has happened

to saint Peter and his successors.

97. In order that our Queen and Lady, this wonderful

ocean of grace and knowledge, might receive adequate

information concerning the evangelical law, it was neces

sary that She come into possession also of all the truths

88

THE TRANSFIXION 89

of the Catholic faith, which would in all times be believed

by the faithful. She must be especially well instructed

in the first principles of all Christian belief. For all

truths, down to the very dogmas, which were to be defined

and believed concerning her own Self, were within the

capacity of most holy Mary and could be entrusted to her

admirable wisdom. Hence, as I shall describe after

wards, She was informed of all tenets of the Catholic

faith together with the circumstances of time, place and

manner of their publication as they became opportune and

necessary in the course of the history of the Church. In

order to instruct the blessed Virgin especially in these

articles, the Lord sent upon Her an abstractive vision of

the Divinity, such as I have described on other occasions.

In this vision were manifested to her most hidden mys

teries of his inscrutable Judgment and Providence. She

became aware of the infinite bounty, whereby He estab

lished the blessing of infused faith and enabled man

deprived of the vision of the Divinity, easily and quickly

to come to the knowledge of God, without hesitation and

without waiting or searching for this knowledge by

limited and short-sighted investigation of natural science.

For from the first dawn of reason, our Catholic faith

raises us immediately to the certain knowledge, not only

of the Divinity in three Persons, but of the humanity of

Christ our Lord and of the means of gaining eternal life.

All this is not attained by the fruitless and sterile human

science, unless the mind is impregnated with the force and

virtue of divine faith.

98. In this vision then, our great Queen clearly per

ceived all these mysteries and all that is contained in

them. She saw how the holy Church propounded four

teen special articles of Catholic belief from the very begin

ning, and how She afterwards, in diverse times, defined

90 CITY OF GOD

many truths and dogmas, which are contained in them

and in the holy Scriptures as in roots ready to be cul

tivated and to bring forth fruit. After seeing all this in

her vision, She saw it reflected also in the most holy soul

of Christ, where the whole fabric of divine teachings

originated. Thereupon the celestial Princess entered into

conference with her Lord concerning the practical applica

tion of these articles of faith to her life. He informed

Her, that She was to be the first One, who should, in a

singular and most perfect manner, believe and practically

exhibit each of the articles of divine faith. In regard

to the first of those seven articles that pertain to the

Divinity, She understood that there is but one true God,

independent, necessary, infinite, immense in his attributes

and perfections, unchangeable and eternal. She under

stood also how just and necessary it is for creatures to

believe and confess this truth. She gave thanks for the

revelation of this first article and begged her most holy

Son to continue to favor the human race by conferring

upon men the grace of believing and accepting this truth.

By this infallible, though obscure, light, She saw the

wickedness of idolatry and wept with indescribable sorrow

and bitterness over such aberration. In reparation She

ardently exercised Herself in faith and worship of God,

and performed many other acts inspired by her intimate

sense of this obligation.

99. Then proceeding to the second article, that God is

the Father, She learned how it was to lead on men to

the belief of the Trinity and other doctrines, which ex

plain the three persons in one God, and how men are to

come to the full knowledge of their last end, its proper

attainment and enjoyment. She understood how the

person of the Father could not be born or proceed from

the Others, and how He is, as it were, the origin of all

THE TRANSFIXION 91

else ; hence She clearly saw how He created heaven and

earth and all creatures and how He is without beginning

and at the same time the beginning of all things. For

this truth our heavenly Lady gave thanks and in the

name of the whole human race, began to shape her

actions in correspondence with this new knowledge. The

third article, that there is a Son, the Mother of grace

believed with particular clearness of comprehension,

especially as regards the processions of the Deity ad intra.

The first and most important of these acts ad intra is none

other than the eternal generation of the Son. This takes

place from all eternity by the operation of the divine in

tellect through which the Son is engendered of the

Father, being not inferior, but equal in Divinity, eternity,

and infinite attributes. She believed and comprehended

also in the fourth article, that there is a Holy Ghost, the

third Person, proceeding from the Father and the Son

as from one principle, by an act of the will, equal to the

other Persons in all things and having only these per

sonal distinctions, which result from the emanations

and processions of the infinite intellect and will. Al

though, concerning these mysteries, most holy Mary

possessed the knowledge, which She had already attained

in her former visions, it was supplemented in this vision

by the knowledge of the circumstances and qualifications

attached to these truths and articles of the Catholic faith,

and by the discernment of the heresies, which Lucifer

concocted and sowed in opposition to these articles ever

since he fell from heaven and knew of the Incarnation

of the Word. In satisfaction for all these errors the

most blessed Lady excited acts of supreme faith, in the

manner already described.

100. Also the fifth article, that the Lord is the Creator,

most holy Mary believed and understood. She perceived

92 CITY OF GOD

that the creation of all things, though it is attributed to

the Father, is common to the three Persons, in as far as

they are one only God, infinite, omnipotent and the

first cause of the existence and preservation of all crea

tures; that no other being has the power to create or

produce out of nothing any other being, even if there

were question of an angel creating the lowest worm.

For only He, who is independent of any inferior or

superior cause can create. She understood the neces

sity of this article of the holy faith for counteracting

the errors of Lucifer, in order that God might be known

and acknowledged as the Author of all things. In the

sixth article She understood anew all the mysteries of

predestination, vocation and final justification; how the

reprobate, because they did not profit by the means of

fered to them by divine mercy, lose eternal happiness. The

most faithful Lady perceived also how the work of sal

vation is common to the three persons; and how it per

tains especially to the Word in as far as He is man;

because He was to be the price of the rescue, which

would be accepted by God in satisfaction for original

and actual sins. The great Queen took notice of all the

Sacraments and mysteries accepted and believed by the

holy Church; and She accompanied the understanding of

each of them with heroic acts of many virtues. In the

seventh article which contains the doctrine of God s

activity in bringing about the eternal happiness of man,

She understood all that pertains to the eternal felicity

of mortal creatures in the fruition of the beatific vision;

how important it is for them to believe in this truth in

order to attain eternal happiness and how they should

consider themselves not a progeny of this earth, but

citizens of heaven, who are only making a pilgrimage

and ought, therefore, be much consoled in this faith and

hope of heaven.

THE TRANSFIXION 93

101. Of the seven articles which pertain to the divine

humanity, our great Queen had a similar knowledge, yet

accompanied by new affections of her purest and hum

blest heart. That He was conceived as man by the opera

tion of the Holy Ghost She had experienced in Herself

and She knew that this would be an article of the holy

faith. Indescribable were the effects which this knowl

edge wrought in the most prudent Lady. She humbled

Herself below the most insignificant of creatures and

to the very dust of the earth. She was profoundly pene

trated by the consciousness of having been created out

of nothing. She completed the deep trenches and built

the strong foundations of humility, upon which the

Almighty was to erect the high and exquisite edifice of

infused science and exalted perfection. She extolled

the Almighty and gave thanks to Him for Herself and

for the whole human race, because He had chosen such

an excellent way of drawing toward Him the hearts of

men by his human presence and by the intimate relations

established with them by the Christian faith. The same

effects were produced in Her by the second of these

articles, that Christ our Lord was born of Mary, a

Virgin. She had full understanding of the mysteries

contained in this dogma : that She was the One chosen by

God to retain intact her Virginity and yet be also selected

among all creatures as the Mother of the Lord ; that as

well the Almighty as She herself should share in the

dignity and excellence of such divine handiwork; and

that the holy Church should believe and hold such a

doctrine as one of her certain tenets. Enraptured by

the consideration of these and many other truths, the

heavenly Lady excited within Herself such acts of

exalted virtue as cannot be expressed by any human

terms. She spent Herself in returning a full measure

3-8

94 CITY OF GOD

of praise, worship, and thankful acknowledgment for

each of them, humbling Herself in proportion as She

was exalted and annihilating Herself to the dust.

102. The third of these articles is, that Christ our

Lord underwent suffering and death; the fourth, that

He descended into hell and freed the souls of the just,

who were in limbo awaiting his coming; the fifth, that

He rose from the dead; the sixth, that He ascended

into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the

eternal Father; the seventh, that thence He is to come

to judge the living and the dead in the general judgment

in order to give to each according to his works. These

truths, just as the others, the most holy Mary believed

and understood profoundly as well in themselves as in

regard to the order, sequence and necessity with which

they are to be held and believed by mortals. She alone

made up for the faults of those who have not or will

not believe in these truths and for the deficiencies caused

by our slowness in believing them and by our want of

proper esteem, veneration and thankfulness due to these

divine teachings. The whole Church calls our Queen

most fortunate and blessed, not only because She gave

belief to the messenger of heaven (Luke 1, 45), but

because She unswervingly trusted in the fulfillment of

the mysteries wrought and accomplished in her virginal

womb; and She believed them both for Herself and for

all the children of Adam. She was the Champion of the

divine faith, who, in the sight of the heavenly court,

unfurled the banner of holy faith to all the faithful on

earth. She was the first Queen of the Catholic faith

in this world and was to have no equal. In Her all

Catholics have a true Mother ; and on this account, those

that call upon Her, are especially her children ; for with

out a doubt this kind Mother and Commandress of the

THE TRANSFIXION 95

Catholic faith looks with an especial love upon those

who follow Her in this great virtue of faith and who

exert themselves in its spread and defense.

103. My discourse would be too prolix, if I were to

say all that I have learned of the faith of our great Lady,

of all her penetration into the circumstances and secrets

of these articles of faith, and into all the truths con

nected with these Catholic doctrines. Certainly I have

not words enough to rehearse the mysteries revealed to

Her in her conferences with her divine Teacher, Jesus,

in her humble and prudent inquiries, in the answers of

her most sweet Son, in the profound secrets laid bare

before her eyes, and in the sacraments manifest only to

Mother and Son. Moreover, I was informed that it is

not proper to reveal all of them to men in this mortal

life. But in most holy Mary the whole of this new and

divine Testament was deposited and She alone pre

served it most faithfully, in order that She might in

proper time dispense whatever the necessities of the holy

Church might demand. O most fortunate and happy

Mother! For if a wise son is the delight of his father

(Prov. 10, 1), who can describe the joy of this great

Queen, when She saw the glory resulting to the Eternal

Father through the work \*, of his Onlybegotten, who was

also her Son, and when She fully penetrated the vast

mysteries contained in the doctrines of the holy Catho

lic faith?

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN ME BY THE HEAVENLY

LADY, MOST HOLY MARY.

104. My daughter, mortal mind is not capable of com

prehending what I was made to feel through the infused

knowledge and faith of the articles established by my

most holy Son as those of the holy Church, and what

96 CITY OF GOD

were the effects wrought thereby upon my faculties.

Necessarily, therefore, thy words fail thee in seeking to

declare what thou hast understood concerning them;

for all the concepts of the mind fall short of compre

hending and expressing these mysteries. But what I

desire and command, is this ; that thou preserve with all

reverence and solicitude the precious knowledge and

understanding of these venerable sacraments. For as

Mother I remind and warn thee of the cruel and cunning

efforts of thy enemies to rob thee of them. Be thou ever

on thy guard, that they may find thee full of strength,

and that thy domestics, which are the faculties of thy

body and mind, be clothed with the double vestments of

interior and exterior watchfulness in order to be able

to resist the onslaught of their temptation (Prov. 31,

17). The powerful arms for battling against those who

make war on thee, must be the doctrines of the Catholic

faith (Rom. 1, 17), for the firm belief in them and the

continual exercise of them, the incessant meditation and

remembrance of them, illumine the souls, drives

away errors, disclose the deceits of satan and disperse his

falsehoods just as the rays of the sun dispel the dark

clouds. Moreover, all these exercises serve as substan

tial nourishment of the spirit to strengthen the soul for

the battles of the Lord.

105. If the faithful do not feel these and even more

wonderful effects of faith, it is not because faith has

not the strength and efficacy to produce them, but it is

because some of the faithful are so forgetting and negli

gent, while others give themselves up so much to a carnal

and bestial life and thereby counteract the blessing of

faith. They think so rarely of it, that they might as

well not have received it at all. As they live like the

infidels who have never enjoyed its advantages and as

THE TRANSFIXION 97

they gradually become conscious of their unhappy infi

delity, they fall into greater wickedness than the unbe

lievers. For such is the result of their abominable ingrati

tude and contempt for this exalted and sovereign gift.

I ask of thee, my dearest daughter, that thou give thanks

for the blessings of holy faith with profound humility

and fervent love; that thou practice it with unceasing

and heroic acts; that thou continually meditate on its

mysteries. Thus shalt thou enjoy without hindrance its

sweet and godlike effects. The more vivid and penetrat

ing thy knowledge of the mysteries of faith, so much

the greater and more powerful will be its effects upon

thee. If thou concurrest with proper diligence, thou

wilt grow in the understanding of the exalted and won

derful mysteries and sacraments pertaining to the essence

of the triune God, to the hypostatical union of the divine

and human nature, to the life, death and resurrection of

my most holy Son, and to the other activities of the

God-man. Thus wilt thou taste of his sweetness and

gather plentiful fruits of peace and of eternal life.

CHAPTER X.

HOW MOST HOLY MARY RECEIVED ENLIGHTENMENT ON

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, AND HOW SHE APPLIED IT.

106. Just as the doctrines of the Catholic faith pertain

to the activity of the intellect, so the commandments per

tain to the activity of the will. Although all free acts, as

well those required by the practice of the infused, as

those of the acquired virtues, depend upon the activity of

the will-power, yet they do not all depend upon it in

the same way; for the acts of faith proceed immedi

ately from the intellect, and depend upon the will only

in so far as they are embraced by it with a sincere, pious

and reverential affection. The obscure acts and truths

of faith do not force their acceptance upon the intellect

without co-operation of the will, and therefore the

intellect waits upon the decision of the will. But in the

exercise of virtues founded upon faith, the will acts for

itself and relies upon the intellect only for guidance

toward the accomplishment of that which was resolved

upon. The will is so free and independent that it per

mits no commands of the intellect, nor any kind of vio

lence. This is the order established by the Lord, so that

no one might be forced to serve Him unwillingly,

through necessity, by compulsion or violence; but that,

according to the Apostle, each one may serve God with

unrestricted liberty and joy fulness.

107. After the blessed Virgin had been so divinely

instructed in the articles and dogmas of our holy faith,

She was favored by another vision of the Divinity, simi-

98

THE TRANSFIXION 99

lar to that mentioned in the last chapter. It was vouch

safed to Her for the purpose of renewing in Her the

understanding of the ten commandments of the Deca

logue. In it were manifested to Her, with great clear

ness and fulness, all the mysteries of the Commandments

as they were propounded by the divine clemency for the

guidance of men to eternal life and as they had been

given to Moses on the two tablets. On the first of these

tablets were written the three precepts concerning the

honor and worship of God, on the second, the seven

pertaining to our intercourse with our neighbors. The

Redeemer of the world, her most holy Son, was to

rewrite all of them in the hearts of men (I Pet. 1, 4),

while our Queen and Lady was to commence the practice

of all that each one contained. She also understood their

relation to each other, and how necessary they were to

men in order to attain to the participation of the Divin

ity. She had a clear comprehension of the equity, justice

and wisdom with which they were established by the

divine will; and that they were a holy, immaculate,

sweet, lightsome, pure, unerring and convenient law for

the creatures. She saw how well-adjusted and conform

able they were to human nature, how well they can and

ought to be embraced with joy and appreciation, and

how their Author proffered the help of his grace for

their observance. Our great Queen perceived in this

vision many other exalted mysteries and secrets concern

ing the holy Church, concerning those who, in it, would

observe the divine commands, and those who would

despise and transgress them.

108. The blessed Lady issued from this vision trans

formed by an ardent and zealous love for the divine

law. Immediately She betook Herself to her most holy

Son, in whose soul She saw the divine laws clearly

100 CITY OF GOD

mirrored, to reproduce them in her own self according

to the order of grace. At the same time, by abundant

enlightenment, She was made aware how it pleased the

Lord to make Her a living model of the observance of

all these commandments. It is true, as I have said

several times, that our great Lady possessed a habitual

infused knowledge of all these mysteries for her contin

ual guidance; yet this habitual knowledge was renewed

and intensified day by day. As the extent and depth

of mysteries was so to say infinite, there always remained

a measureless field of new secrets open for her interior

vision. On this occasion many new points were

explained to Her by the divine Teacher, and He pro

pounded to Her the new law and precepts in their bear

ing upon each other and in the sequence, which they were

to hold in the militant Church of his Gospel. Also

concerning each one of them separately, She obtained

new and special enlightenments. Although our limited

capacity and understanding cannot comprehend such high

and sovereign sacraments, none of them were concealed

from the heavenly Lady. For we must not measure

her profound knowledge with the capacity of our short

sighted understanding.

109. With a most humble and ready heart She sub

jected Herself to the observance of all his command

ments, and petitioned God to instruct Her and grant

Her this divine grace to execute all that He had com

manded. The Lord answered Her as follows: "My

Mother, thou art the one whom I have eternally chosen

and predestined for the greater pleasure of my Father,

one in Divinity with Me. Our eternal love, which urges

Us to communicate the blessings of our Divinity to

creatures and thus raise them to the participation of

our glory and felicity, has established this holy and pure

THE TRANSFIXION 101

law, by which mortals may attain the end for which they

were created. This our wish shall be fulfilled perfectly

in thee, my beloved Dove, for in thy heart our divine

law shall be written so clearly and deeply, that from the

very beginning of thy existence to all eternity it shall not

be effaced; and in no wise shall it remain unfulfilled or

ineffectual in thee, as is the case with other children of

Adam. Take notice, dearest Sulamite, that this law is

entirely pure and immaculate; and that therefore, We

wish to deposit it in thee, who art also pure and immacu

late and in whom all our intentions and operations are

glorified."

110. These words, which were realized in the heavenly

Mother without any hindrance, enriched and deified Her

with the full understanding and acceptance of the ten

Commandments and the mysteries contained therein.

Directing her intellect by the celestial light and conform

ing her will to that of the divine Teacher, She entered

into the meaning of the first and most noble of all the

commandments : "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with

thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy

whole mind" (Matth. 22, 37), for in these words it was

given afterwards by the Evangelists and long before

by Moses in Deuteronomy. Her mind grasped it with

all the qualifications added thereto by the Lord : that men

should preserve it in their hearts, that the fathers should

teach it to their children, and that they should meditate

upon it in their houses and outside of them, on their

journeys, during sleep and in their watching, and that

they should incessantly have it before the eyes of their

soul. Just as deep as was her understanding of this

commandment, so great was her zeal in fulfilling all that

the Lord wished to command thereby. Though no other

child of Adam has succeeded in fulfilling it perfectly

102 CITY OF GOD

during mortal life, yet most holy Mary succeeded, and

more completely than the highest and most ardent Sera

phim, than all the saints and the blessed of heaven. I

will not tarry in explaining this more fully, for in the

first part of this history, when speaking of her virtues, I

have sufficiently discoursed upon the love of the blessed

Virgin. On this occasion particularly She shed the most

bitter tears because of the sins which were to be com

mitted against this great Commandment; and She took

it upon Herself to satisfy by her love for the defects and

faults of mortals.

111. Upon the first precept follow the two others;

not to dishonor the name of God by false and vain

swearing, and to honor Him by observing and sancti

fying his feasts. These Commandments the Mother of

wisdom understood and penetrated, engraving them in

her pious and humble heart and resolving to render

supreme veneration and worship to the Deity. Deeply

she pondered on the injuries committed by creatures

against the immutable being of God and his infinite good

ness by false and vain oaths, or by blasphemies against

God and against his saints. In her sorrow on account

of the presumptuous transgression of these command

ments by the rational creatures She conjured her attend

ing angels in her name to charge the guardian spirits of

all men to prevent the comtnittance of this outrage against

God; to restrain men, by holy inspirations and by the

fear of God, from perjuring or blaspheming his holy

name. Moreover, She besought the Almighty to shower

his benedictions of sweetness on those, who abstained

from vain oaths and who reverenced his holy name.

112. In regard to the keeping of the holidays, which

is the third Commandment the great Queen was made

acquainted by her guardian angel with all the feasts,

THE TRANSFIXION 103

which were to be instituted by the Church, and with the

manner of their celebration and observance. As I have

mentioned in its place, She had commenced to celebrate

those which commemorate the already consummated

mysteries of her life, such as that of the most holy

Trinity, and those pertaining to her most holy Son and

the angels. To celebrate these and other mysteries,

afterwards solemnized by the Church, She invited the

heavenly court, and, in union with them, She sang hymns

of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. The days

which are especially assigned for the worship of God,

She spent entirely therein ; not that her exterior activity

ever interfered with her interior attention, or hindered

the flights of her soul, but because She wished to sanc

tify the feasts of the Lord in such a manner as was

required by the new law of grace; and all this as the

first disciple of the Redeemer of the world, She eagerly

strove to fulfill.

113. The same understanding and knowledge most

holy Mary possessed in regard to the seven Command

ments, which concern our duties toward our neighbor.

Regarding the fourth Commandment, to honor father

and mother, She understood well who were to be included

under the name of parents; how, after the honor due to

God, that due to parents comes next; and how children

are to render them this honor in all reverence ; also what

are the obligations of parents toward their children. She

saw the justice of the fifth commandment,, forbidding

murder, since the Lord is the Master of life and being

of man, and withheld power over it even from its owner,

and therefore much more from any of his fellow beings.

As life is the very first of the natural goods and the

foundation of grace, She gave thanks to the Lord for

having by his Commandment so bountifully protected

104 CITY OF GOD

it. She looked upon all men as creatures of his hand,

capable of his grace and glory, and purchased by the

blood of her Son; and therefore She earnestly prayed

for the faithful observance of this commandment in

the Church of God. Our most pure Lady understood

the nature of the sixth Commandment in the same

manner as the blessed, who need no precaution against

human passions and can look upon it without being

touched by it. The most blessed Lady, altogether pre

served from the taint of sin, understood the nature of

this Commandment even from a higher standpoint of

grace than the saints. Such were the sentiments awak

ened in this great Paragon of chastity while She excited

love for it and sorrow for the impurities committed by

men, that She wounded anew the heart of the Almighty

(Cant. 4, 9) ; and, according to our way of speaking, con

soled her divine Son for the offenses of mankind against

this precept. Since She knew that in the new law of the

Gospel the observance of this Commandment was to be

carried so far as to make possible congregations of

virgins and men, who would promise inviolate chastity

by vow, She besought the Lord to guarantee them his

unbroken blessings. The Lord granted this request of

his purest Mother and He assured Her that, as a reward

of virginal purity, its devotees should have the privilege

of being the followers of Her, who was the Virgin Mother

of the Lamb (Ps. 44, 15). With incomparable joy She

gave thanks to the Lord for thus extending the practice

of virginity, which She herself had inaugurated in the

new law. I will not stop to descant upon the priceless

value of this virtue, since I have already spoken of it in

the first part and in other places.

114. Equally remarkable was Mary s understanding

of the other Commandments, of the seventh: "Thou

THE TRANSFIXION 105

shalt not steal"; of the eighth, "Thou shalt not give

false testimony"; of the ninth, "Thou shalt not covet

thy neighbor s wife"; of the tenth, "Thou shalt not

covet thy neighbor s goods and possessions." In regard

to each of them She excited great acts of interior com

pliance with them and for each of them She praised

and thanked the Lord, that He should have provided

for men such wise and effectual means of attaining their

eternal happiness through these beneficent and well

adapted laws. For She saw, that by their observance,

men would not only secure eternal reward due to them,

but could also enjoy true peace and tranquillity adapted

to each one s state and circumstances. For if all rational

creatures would submit to the just requirements of God s

law, and would resolve to follow and observe his Com

mandments, they would enjoy that most delightful and

exquisite happiness, which is produced by the testimony

of a good conscience. All the human delight cannot be

compared to the consolation of having been faithful to

the divine law in all things, great and small (Matth. 25,

21). This blessing we owe mostly to Christ, our

Redeemer, who confirmed us in doing good and thus

secures for us sweet rest, and peace, and consolation,

and many other blessings in this life. If all of us do not

attain them, it is because we do not observe his Com

mandments. The labors, misfortunes, and unhappiness

of the people are the inseparable effects of the trans

gressions of mortals, and, though each one contributes

his share in causing our misfortunes, yet we are so sense

less, that as soon as we are overtaken by any adversity,

we begin to lay the blame on others, while we should lay

it only on ourselves.

115. Who can estimate the evils of this life springing

from dishonest dealings, forbidden by the seventh com-

106 CITY OF GOD

mandment, or from the want of contentment with one s

own lot in reliance on the help of the Lord, who forgets

not the birds of the air, or the smallest worm of the

earth? What miseries and afflictions do not Christian

nations suffer merely because their rulers are not satis

fied with the territories given into their charge by the

highest King? Seeking to extend their sway and influ

ence they have left in the world neither peace, nor quiet

possession, nor any souls for the service of their Crea

tor. No less evil and discord is caused by false testimony

and lies, which offend the infinite truth and hinder human

intercourse, sowing the seed of strife, destroying peace

and tranquillity in the human hearts. Both the one as

well as the other prevent the Creator to dwell in them as

is his wish. Coveting another s wife and adultery vio

late the holy law of matrimony, confirmed and sanctified

by the Sacrament, and how many hidden and open evils

have they not caused, and do they not cause, among

Catholics? If we consider how many transgressions are

manifest to the eyes of the world, and how many more

remain hidden to men, while they are not hidden to God,

the exact and just judge, who punishes them even now,

shall we not be convinced that He will be so much the

severer in his punishments, the more He has overlooked

our sins at present and the longer He has patiently

allowed the Christian commonwealths to continue in

existence ?

116. All these truths our great Queen perceived in

the Lord. Although She was aware of the wickedness

of men in thus lightly throwing aside the respect and

reverence due to their God after He had so kindly pro

vided for them such necessary laws and precepts; yet

the most prudent Lady was neither scandalized at human

frailty, nor did She wonder at man s ingratitude; but

THE TRANSFIXION 107

like a kind Mother, She pitied the mortals, and with most

ardent love She thanked the Almighty for his benefits

trying to satisfy for the transgressions against the evan

gelical law and asking for the grace to observe them per

fectly. The summary of all these Commandments:

to love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves,

the most holy Mary comprehended perfectly; also the

truth, that the proper understanding and practice of these

two Commandments is the perfection of true virtue.

He that practices them is not far from the kingdom of

God, and the observance of them is to be preferred to the

offering of holocausts, as the Lord himself teaches us

in the Gospel (Mark 12, 34, 33). In the proportion as

our Queen understood these precepts, so She put them

into practice, fulfilling them as they are contained in the

Gospel, without the omission of the least of its precepts

or counsels. This heavenly Princess put the teachings of

the Redeemer more perfectly into practice than all the

saints and faithful of the holy Church.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY LADY AND

QUEEN GAVE ME.

117. My daughter, when the Word of the eternal

Father issued forth from his bosom and assumed human

ity in my womb, He came to enlighten those that walk in

the darkness and in the shadow of death (Luke 1, 79),

and to restore them to their lost happiness. Hence, in

order to be their light, their way, their truth and their

life, it was necessary that He should give them a law so

holy, that it would justify them; so clear that it would

enlighten them ; so secure, that it would encourage them ;

so powerful, that it would move them ; so efficacious, that

it would help them; so truthful, that it would bring joy

and delight to all that would observe it. The immaculate

108 CITY OF GOD

law of the Gospel has in it the power to produce all

these and other more wonderful effects; and God has

created and constituted rational creatures in such a way,

that all their happiness, corporal and spiritual, temporal

and eternal, depends entirely upon observing this law.

Hence thou canst judge of the blind ignorance with

which their deadly enemies have fascinated mortals (Gal.

3,1), since all men, in the inordinate desire and pursuit

of happiness, neglect the divine law, where alone it can be

found ; and hence few really attain happiness.

118. Knowing this, prepare thy heart so that the Lord

may write in it his holy law. Forget and put away from

thee all that is visible and earthly, so that all thy facul

ties may be free and unencumbered of any images except

of those which are fixed there by the finger of God and

are contained in the doctrine and precepts of the gospel

truths. In order that thy desires may not be frustrated

beseech the Lord day and night, to make thee worthy

of the blessings and promises of my most holy Son.

Remember that the negligence is more abominable in thee

than in all the other mortals; for no one else has his

divine love so urgently called, or assisted with the like

blessings and helps. In the days of abundance as well

as in the days of affliction and temptation remember thy

debt to the Lord and his jealous zeal, so that neither

favors may exalt thee nor sufferings and pain oppress

thee. If in the one as in the other state do thou turn to

the divine law written in thy heart, observing it inviol

ably and incessantly with all attention and perfection. In

regard to the love of the neighbors apply always the first

law of doing unto others as thou wishest done to thyself,

which is the standard of all intercourse with men. If

thou desirest them to think and act well toward thee,

thou thyself must do the same with thy brethren. If

THE TRANSFIXION 109

thou feel that they offend thee in little things, avoid

thou giving them any such offense. If thou see others

doing what seems evil and disagreeable to their neighbor,

avoid it thyself; for thou knowest how much it offends

against the law established by the Most High. Weep

over thy faults and those of thy fellow-men; because

they are against the law of God; this is true charity

toward the Lord and toward thy neighbor. Sorrow over

the afflictions of others as over thy own, for thus wilt

thou imitate me.

3-9

CHAPTER XL

THE DEEP KNOWLEDGE OF THE MOST HOLY MARY CON

CERNING THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS WHICH WERE TO

BE INSTITUTED BY CHRIST THE LORD, AND CONCERN

ING THE FIVE PRECEPTS OF THE CHURCH.

119. In order to complete the beauty and the riches

of the holy Church, it was proper that her Founder,

Christ our Redeemer, should institute the seven sacra

ments, which were to serve as the common treasury of

all his merits. Yea, the Creator of all these blessings

himself was to remain really present in one of them as

the nourishment and consolation of the faithful and as

a pledge of their enjoying Him eternally face to face.

For the perfection of the knowledge and grace of the

most holy Mary it was necessary that the fulness of

these sacramental blessings be transplanted into her

dilated and ardent soul, in order that to its full extent

and in the same manner as it existed in the heart of her

holiest Son, the law of grace might be written and

recorded in the tablets of her mind. In his absence She

was to be the Teacher of the Church and She was to

instruct the primitive Christians to venerate and enjoy

these Sacraments with all the perfection possible.

120. By a new enlightenment, each of these mysteries

in particular were accordingly made manifest to the

blessed Mother in the interior of her most holy Son. In

regard to the first of these Sacraments She saw, that the

ancient law of circumcision was to be honorably laid

aside and to be replaced by the admirable and sweet

110

THE TRANSFIXION 111

sacrament of Baptism. She was informed that the

matter of this Sacrament was to be pure natural water

and that its form was to contain the names of the three

Persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, thus

implicitly including faith in the most holy Trinity. She

understood how Christ, its Author, was to impart to this

Sacrament the power of taking away all sins and of

perfectly sanctifying its recipient She saw the admir

able effects it was to cause in men, regenerating them

so as to constitute them adoptive sons of God and heirs

of heaven; infusing into them the virtues of faith, hope

and charity with many other virtues, and impressing

upon their souls the character of children of the holy

Church. This and all other effects of this holy Sacra

ment were made manifest to most holy Mary. There

upon She sought her divine Son with burning desire

to be allowed to receive it in proper time; which He

promised Her, and as I shall describe later on, after

wards really fulfilled.

121. A like understanding the great Lady also

received concerning the second Sacrament, that of Con

firmation. This is given in the second place, because

Baptism is intended to engender the children of the

Church, while Confirmation is to make them strong and

courageous in confessing the faith received in Baptism,

augmenting the first graces and adding thereto the graces

suited to each one s state. She understood the form,

matter, minister and effects of this Sacrament, and the

character it impresses upon the soul; and how, by the

holy oil and chrism, which form the matter of this Sacra

ment, is typified the odor of the good works of Christ in

which the faithful participate by faith, while the same

only in a different way, is also indicated by the form of

the Sacrament, namely, by the words used in its admin-

112 CITY OF GOD

istration. Corresponding with these enlightenments, our

great Queen elicited heroic acts of praise, thanksgiving

and fervent petition, desiring that all men draw from

these fountains of the Lord and enjoy these incomparable

treasures, while acknowledging and confessing Him

as the true God and Redeemer. She wept bitterly over

the lamentable loss of so many, who, in spite of the

preaching of the Gospel, feel not its healing powers.

122. In regard to the third Sacrament, that of Pen

ance, the heavenly Lady saw the usefulness and necessity

of this means of restoring souls to the grace and friend

ship of God, since by their frailty they lose it so often.

She understood its requirements and the power of its

ministers and the ease with which the faithful can secure

to themselves its blessings. As the true Mother of mercy

She gave special thanks to the Almighty for providing

such a powerful medicine against the repeated and daily

faults of her children. She prostrated Herself upon

the ground and, in the name of the holy Church, She

reverently acknowledged the sacred tribunal of Con

fession, where the Lord, with ineffable kindness, relieved

and solved all doubts of the souls in regard to their justi

fication or condemnation, leaving it to the judgment of

the priests, whether they should grant or deny absolu

tion.

123. Especially deep was the intelligence of the most

prudent Lady in regard to the sovereign sacramental

mystery of the most holy Eucharist. Her penetration of

its secrets surpassed that of the most exalted seraphim.

For to Her was manifested the supernatural manner of

the presence of the humanity and Divinity of her Son

under the appearances of bread and wine, the power of

the words of consecration, by which the substance of

the bread and wine is changed into the substance of his

THE TRANSFIXION 113

body and blood, while the appearances remained; how

He could be present at the same time in so many diverse

parts; how the sacred mystery of the Mass was to be

instituted, in order that He may be consecrated and

offered to the eternal Father to the end of times; how

He should be reverenced and adored in the holy Sacra

ment in so many temples of the Catholic Church through

out the world; what effects of grace He would produce

in those, who were to receive Him more or less well

prepared, and what punishments would come to those

who receive Him unworthily. She was informed also of

the faith of the believers and the errors of the heretics

in regard to this mystery, and especially of the immense

love of her Son in thus resolving to give Himself as food

and nourishment of eternal life to each one of the

mortals.

124. By these and other enlightenments concerning

the most holy Eucharist, her most chaste bosom was

visited with new conflagrations of love beyond the con

ception of human intellect. Although She had invented

new canticles of praise and worship at the enlighten

ments, which She had received concerning each article

of faith and each mystery; yet in considering this great

Sacrament her heart expanded more than ever before,

and, prostrate on the ground, She spent Herself in new

demonstrations of love; worship, praise, thanksgiving

and humility; in sentiments of deepest sorrow for those,

who were to abuse it for their own damnation. She

burned with the desire of seeing this Sacrament

instituted, and if She had not been sustained by the

power of the Almighty, the force of her affection would

have bereft Her of natural life. Moreover the presence

of her most holy Son was also calculated to moderate the

excess of her longings and enabled Her to abide the time

114 CITY OF GOD

of its institution. Even from that time on She wished

to prepare Herself for its reception, and asked Her Son

to be allowed to receive Him in the holy Sacrament as

soon as it should be instituted. She said to Him :

" Supreme Lord and life of my soul, shall I, who am

such an insignificant worm and the most despicable

among men, be allowed to receive Thee? Shall I be so

fortunate as to bear Thee once more within my body

and soul? Shall my heart be thy dwelling and taber

nacle, where Thou shalt take thy rest and shall I thus

delight in thy close embrace and Thou, my Beloved, in

mine?"

125. The divine Master answered: "My beloved

Mother, many times shalt thou receive Me in the holy

Sacrament, and after my Death and Ascension into

heaven that shall be thy consolation; for I shall choose

thy most sincere and loving heart as my most delightful

and pleasant resting-place." At this promise of the

Lord the great Queen humbled Herself anew and, pros

trate in the dust, She gave Him thanks, exciting the

admiration of heaven itself. From that hour She began

to dispose all her thoughts and actions with the object of

preparing Herself for the time when She would be

allowed to receive her most holy Son in the holy Sacra

ment; and during all the years She never forgot, or

interrupted these acts of her will. Her memory, as I

have already said, was more tenacious and constant than

that of an angel, and her intelligence was greater than

that of all the angels; therefore, as She always bore in

mind this and other mysteries, her actions corresponded

to her great knowledge. From that time on also, She

continually and fervently besought the Lord, that He give

light to mortals in order that they might know and revere

this, the greatest of all the Sacraments, and that they

THE TRANSFIXION 115

might receive it worthily. Whenever we receive this

holy Sacrament in proper disposition (and so it should

be always), we owe it, next to the influence of the

Redeemer, to the tears and prayers of this heavenly

Mother, who merited this grace for us. If any one of us

audaciously receives it in the state of sin, let him know

that, besides the sacrilegious insult offered to his Lord

and God, he also offends the most holy Mother; since

he despises and abuses her love, her pious desires, her

prayers, tears and sighs. Let us exert ourselves to avoid

such horrible crimes.

126. In regard to the fifth Sacrament, that of Extreme

Unction, most holy Mary understood the object for

which it was instituted, its matter and form and the part

borne by its minister. She saw that its matter must be

the blessed oil of olives, serving as a symbol of mercy;

that its form should be the words of supplication, spoken

while the senses, with which we have sinned are anointed,

and that none other than a priest could be its minister.

She knew its object and results, which are the help

afforded to the faithful in the danger of death, and

strengthening them against the temptations and assaults

of the devil, so frequent and terrible in the last hour.

Thus he that receives this sacrament worthily recovers

the strength of soul, which has been lost by the sins pre

viously committed, and also, if it is useful, health of the

body. At the same time the sick are moved to sentiments

of devotion and to a desire of seeing God, while venial

sins are forgiven together with some of the effects of

mortal sin; it stamps upon the body the seal of heaven

(though not an indelible one), so that the demon dares

not approach where, by grace and by his Sacraments,

the Lord has taken up his habitation. By the power of

this Sacrament Lucifer loses the authority and right

116 CITY OF GOD

acquired over man through original and actual sin, so

that the body of the just, which is to rise and, with the

soul, is to enjoy its God, may be properly marked for

its union with its soul. All this the most faithful Mother

and Lady knew and for it She gave thanks in the name

of the faithful.

127. Concerning the sixth Sacrament, Holy Orders,

She understood how her most blessed Son, the provi

dent Founder of grace and of the Church, thereby con

stituted apt ministers of his Sacraments for the sancti-

fication of his mystical body and for the consecration

of his body and blood ; giving them a dignity above that

of all men and of the angels themselves. This caused in

Her such an extreme reverence for the dignity of priests,

that She began from that moment to revere and honor

them. She asked the Almighty to make them worthy

and efficient ministers of his graces and to inspire the

faithful with a high veneration for the priesthood. She

wept over the faults as well of the priests as of the people

in regard to their duties toward each other. But since

I have already spoken of the great respect due to the

priests, I will not now expatiate upon this subject. All

the rest which pertains to this Sacrament, its matter and

form, its effects and ministry, was likewise made known

to the most blessed Mother.

128. She was also instructed in the great object of

Matrimony, the seventh and last of the Sacraments;

namely, to sanctify and bless the propagation of the

faithful in the evangelical law and to typify the mystery

of the spiritual marriage and close union of Christ with

his Church (Ephes. 5, 32). She understood how this

Sacrament was to be perpetuated, what is its matter and

form ; what great benefits resulted from it for the faith

ful children of the Church, and all the other mysteries

THE TRANSFIXION 117

concerning its effects, necessity and power. For all this

She composed hymns of praise and thanksgiving in the

name of the faithful, who were to share in its blessings.

At the same time She was informed of the rites and

ceremonies to be instituted by the Church in future

times for the ministration of the Sacraments and for the

well ordering of divine worship among the faithful : also

of the laws of the holy Church for the government of

the faithful, especially of the five precepts of the Church :

namely, to hear Mass on feast days ; to confess and par

take of the most sacred body of Christ at stated times;

to fast on the appointed days; to give tithes and first-

fruits of our earthly goods to the Lord.

129. In all these precepts of the Church the most

blessed Lady perceived the mysteries of our justification,

the object of their establishment, the effects caused by

them in the faithful, and the necessity of their existence

in the new Church of God. She saw how necessary for

the faithful was the first of these commandments, estab

lishing days consecrated to the Lord, that men might

seek their God, assist at the sacred and mysterious sacri

fice of the Mass, which was to be offered for the living

and the dead; that they might renew the profession of

faith and the memory of the divine Passion and Death,

by which we were redeemed ; that they might, as much as

possible, co-operate in the offering of this great sacrifice

and partake of the blessings and fruits gained by the

Church in the most sacred mystery of the Mass. She

saw also the necessity of stirring up our loyalty and

fervor by sacramental Confession and holy Communion,

in order to restore to us the friendship and love of the

Almighty. For besides the danger incurred by for

getting or neglecting the use of these two Sacraments,

men commit another injury by frustrating the loving

118 CITY OF GOD

desires of their God in establishing such Sacraments for

our benefit; since such neglect cannot exist without great

contempt of the divine goodness, either tacit or

expressed, it is a very serious insult to God in the

guilty ones.

130. She had the same understanding of the last two

precepts : to fast and to pay tithes. She saw how neces

sary it was for men to vanquish their enemies by

restraint and mortification of the passions, which cause

so many unhappy and negligent Christians to lose eter

nal happiness. It is the disorder of the flesh, which

foments these passions, and the flesh is subdued by

fasting. Herein the Teacher of life himself has given

us an example, although He had no need to conquer

the disorders of sin. The paying of tithes most holy

Mary recognized as specially ordained by the Lord, in

order that thereby the faithful might acknowledge Him

as the supreme Creator and Lord of all, paying tribute to

Him of their temporal goods and thanking Him for the

gifts of his Providence in the preservation of life. He

wished also that these offerings be appropriated for the

sustenance and comfort of his priests. For, seeing that

their sustenance is secured by the sweat of the people,

they were to be thankful to the Lord for so abundantly

supplying their needs and mindful of their obligation to

seek the spiritual welfare of souls and to devote their

whole life to the worship of God and the advance of his

holy Church.

131. I have tried to be very succinct in my explana

tions of these great mysteries, which secretly transpired

in the inflamed and magnanimous heart of the Queen

of heaven, when She was instructed by the Almighty in

the laws and precepts of the new Church of the Gospel.

The fear of being too prolix, and much more that of

THE TRANSFIXION 119

committing an error, has prevented me from manifesting

all that has interiorly been made known to me and all

that I have understood in this matter; the light of our

holy faith, assisted by Christian piety and prudence, will

teach Catholics the greatest venerations for these high

mysteries; it will lead them to contemplate with lively

faith the wonderful harmony of the Sacraments, laws,

doctrines and mysteries contained in the Catholic Church,

and how she has governed herself steadily from the

beginning and will govern herself to the end

of the world. All this was treasured up admirably in the

soul of the blessed Lady and Queen; in Her, according

to our way of speaking, Christ brought his Church to

the highest purity and perfection; in Her He deposited

all the riches of the new law in order that She might be

the first to enjoy them to their full extent and that She

might fructify, love, increase them and render thanks

for them in the name of all the other mortals. She was

also to weep over their sins, in order that the flood of

mercy for the human race might not be impeded. The

soul of Mary was to serve as the public record of -all

that God was to do for the Redemption of man, and

the document, which was to bind Him to complete his

Redemption. She was to be both the Coadjutrix and

the everlasting memorial of all the wonders He intended

to work among us.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

GAVE ME.

132. My daughter, many times I have reminded thee

how injurious to the Almighty and how dangerous to

mortals is the forgetfulness and the neglect of the

mysterious and wonderful works of his divine

clemency toward men. My maternal solicitude

120 CITY OF GOD

urges me to renew in thee the memory and the sorrow

for this lamentable tendency. Where is the judgment

and good sense of men, that they should forget their

eternal welfare and the glory of their Redeemer and

Creator ? The gates of grace and of glory are open ; and

yet they not only do not enter, but they fly from

light and life, and they shut them out from hearts dark

ened by the shadows of death. O more than inhuman

cruelty of the sinner toward himself ! Overtaken by the

most dangerous and deathly sickness, He does not wish

to accept the remedy so graciously offered to him ! Who

would not willingly be snatched from death and restored

to life? What sick person would not be grateful to the

physician for curing him of his sickness? If men know

how to be thankful for the restoration of health, which

is so soon to be again taken from them by death and

only serves them to endure new labors and dangers, why

are they so foolish and hard of heart as not to be thank

ful for or even recognize the blessings of Him, who

gives them eternal life and happiness, who rescues them

from pains without end and inconceivably great?

133. O my dearest daughter, how can I receive as

children and be a Mother to those who thus despise my

dearest Son and Lord and all his clemency? The angels

and saints of heaven understand his kindness, and they

are astounded at the gross and dangerous ingratitude of

mortals, and they see how the rectitude of divine judg

ments shall become manifest before the whole world.

Already in previous parts of this history I have declared

to thee many of these secrets; and now I have made

known to thee still more, in order that thou mayest

imitate me so much the more closely and weep with me

over this unhappy state of mortals, by which God has

been, and is, so greatly offended. Weep thou over their

THE TRANSFIXION 121

sins and at the same time try to make up for them. I

wish that thou let no day pass without having given

most humble thanks to his greatness; since He had

instituted the great Sacraments and receives only abuse

in return. Do thou receive them with profound rever

ence, faith and firm hope. Especially must thou be

filled with highest esteem for the sacrament of Penance

and try to excite in thee the dispositions and fulfill the

requirements, which the holy Church and its teachers

point out as necessary for its worthy reception.

Approach it with an humble and thankful heart day after

day; and whenever thou art conscious of any fault, do

not postpone the remedy afforded by this Sacrament.

Wash and cleanse thy soul ; for it is the most abominable

carelessness to know oneself stained with sin, and to

remain in such disgrace for a long time, yea even for

one instant

134. Particularly do I wish thee to understand the

wrath of the Almighty against those who dare to receive

the Sacraments unworthily, especially the august Sacra

ment of the Altar. O soul! How dreadful is this sin

in the eyes of the Lord and his saints ! Yea, not only the

receiving of Him unworthily, but the irreverences

committed in his real presence on the altar! How can

they be called children of the Church, who, claiming to

believe and respect this mystery, not only neglect to

visit Him in the many places where He is sacramentally

present, but also dare to indulge in such disrespect

toward Him as even the heathens are not guilty of

against their false idols? This is a matter which could

not be deplored sufficiently in many discourses ; and I tell

thee, my daughter, that the men of the present age have

so outraged the justice of the Lord, that I cannot even

manifest to them, what in my kindness I desire as a

122 CITY OF GOD

remedy of this evil. But let them know at present that

his sentence shall be dreadful and without mercy, ren

dered against those wicked and faithless servants who are

condemned by the words of their own mouth (Luke 19,

22). This thou canst announce to all that will hear thee;

and counsel them to come at least once a day to the

churches in which their God is sacramentally present,

in order to adore and worship Him ; and let them assist

at the sacrifice of the Mass, for men do not know how

much they lose by their negligence in this regard.

CHAPTER XII.

THE INCESSANT PRAYERS AND PETITIONS OF CHRIST, THE

REDEEMER, FOR OUR WELFARE/ AND HOW OUR MOST

HOLY MOTHER JOINED HIM THEREIN AND RECEIVED

MANY NEW ENLIGHTENMENTS.

135. The more our limited discourse seeks to make

clear and extol the mysterious works of Christ, our

Redeemer, and of his most holy Mother, the more evi

dent it becomes, that mere human words are far from

being able to compass the greatness of these sacraments ;

for, as Ecclesiasticus says, they surpass all our words of

praise (Ecclus. 43, 33). Nor can we ever fathom or

compass them, and there will always remain many

greater secrets than those we have sought to explain.

For those which we do explain are very insignificant,

and we do not deserve to comprehend, nor to speak about

the few, which we attempt to fathom. Inadequate is the

intellect of the highest seraphim to weigh and pierce the

secrets that passed between Jesus and Mary during the

years in which They lived together. Especially is this true

of the years, of which I am now speaking, during which

the Teacher of life instructed Her in everything that

was to happen in the law of grace; namely, how much

this new law was to accomplish in this the sixth age of

the world, which includes these sixteen hundred and fifty-

seven years and all the unknown future until the end of

the World. In all this the most blessed Lady was

instructed in the school of her divine Son; for He fore

told Her all by word of mouth, pointing out the time

123

124 CITY OF GOD

and place of each event, the kingdoms and provinces of

their history during the existence of the Church. This

was shown Her so dearly that if She had lived through

our centuries in mortal flesh, She would have known all

the individual members of the holy Church with their

features and names. This happened in regard to the

persons, whom She afterwards saw and conversed with

during her life; for when they came into her presence

for the first time, She already knew them by her interior

faculties and merely began to know them by the experi

ence of the senses.

136. Still, while the most holy Mother of wisdom

so clearly understood these mysteries in the soul of her

Son and in the operations of his faculties, She did not

penetrate so deeply into these secrets as the most holy

Soul of Christ, which was beatifically united to the

Divinity; for the heavenly Lady was a creature and as

yet did not continually enjoy the beatific vision. Nor

did She always comprehend the image conceived in the

beatific vision of this divine Soul of Christ, for this

happened only when She herself was enjoying the intui

tive vision of the Divinity. But She beheld the imagin

ary species of the interior faculties of Christ concerning

the mysteries of the militant Church, and She understood

also how they depended upon his most holy will : that

He decreed and controlled all its developments according

to their proper time, place and occasion. She was made

aware in like manner, how the human will of the

Redeemer conformed itself to the divine, and was

governed by it in all its decrees and dispositions. The

divine harmony overflowed in the will and faculties of

the blessed Lady, leading Her to co-operate with the will

of her Son, and through it, with the divine. Hence there

existed an ineffable similarity between Christ and holy

THE TRANSFIXION 125

Mary and She was the helpmate of Christ in the building

up of the new Law.

137. All these hidden sacraments ordinarily transpired

in that humble oratory of the Queen, where the greatest

of all mysteries, the Incarnation of the divine Word in

her virginal womb, had taken place. Though it was such

a narrow and poorly furnished room, consisting merely

of the bare and rude walls, yet it enclosed the grandeur

of Him who is immense and shed forth all the majesty

and sacredness, which since then is attached to the rich

temples and innumerable sanctuaries of the world. In

this holy of holies the Highpriest of the new Law ordi

narily performed his prayers, which always concluded

with fervent intercessions for men. At these times also

He spoke to his Virgin Mother about all the works of

the Redemption and communicated to Her the rich gifts

and treasures of grace, which He had come to shower

upon the children of light in the new Testament and in

his holy Church. Many times did He beseech his eternal

Father not to allow the sins and the ingratitude of men

to hinder their Redemption. As Christ in his fore

knowledge was always conscious of the sins of the human

race and of the damnation of so many thankless souls,

the thought of dying for them caused Him to sweat

blood many times on these occasions. Although the

Evangelists, because they never intended to relate all the

events of his life, mention this sweating of blood but once

before his Passion, it is certain that this happened many

times and in the presence of his most holy Mother; and

this has been intimated to me several times.

138. During prayer our blessed Master sometimes

assumed a kneeling posture, sometimes He was pros

trate in the form of a cross or at other times raised in

the air in this same position which He loved so much.

2-10

126 CITY OF GOD

In the presence of his Mother He was wont to pray:

"O most blessed Cross! When shall thy arms receive

mine, when shall I rest on thee and when shall my arms,

nailed to thine, be spread to welcome all sinners? (Matth.

9, 13). But as I came from heaven for no other purpose

than to invite them to imitate Me and associate with Me,

they are even now and forever open to embrace and

enrich all men. Come then, all ye that are blind, to the

light. Come ye poor, to the treasures of my grace.

Come, ye little ones, to the caresses and delights of your

true Father. Come, ye afflicted and worn out ones, for

I will relieve and refresh you (Matth. 11, 28). Come,

ye just, since you are my possession and inheritance.

Come all ye children of Adam, for I call upon you all.

I am the way, the truth and the life (13, 6), and I will

deny nothing that you desire to receive. My eternal

Father, they are the works of thy hands, do not despise

them ; for I will offer Myself as a sacrifice on the Cross,

in order to restore them to justice and freedom. If they

be but willing I will lead them back to the bosom of thy

elect and to their heavenly kingdom, where thy name

shall be glorified."

139. At all these prayers the beloved Mother was

present, and in her purest soul, as in the purest crystal,

the light of the Onlybegotten was reflected. His inte

rior and exterior prayers re-echoed in Her, causing Her

to imitate his petitions and prayers in the same postures.

When the great Lady for the first time saw Him sweat

blood, her maternal heart was transfixed with sorrow

and filled with astonishment at the effects caused in

Christ, our Lord, by the sins and ingratitudes committed

by men, foreseen by the Lord and known to Her. In the

anguish of her heart She turned to her fellow mortals

and exclaimed : "O children of men ! Little do ye under-

THE TRANSFIXION 127

stand how highly the Lord esteems his image and like

ness in you! For, as the price of your salvation, He

offers his own blood and deems it little to shed all of it

for you. O could I but unite your wills with mine, in

order that I might bring you to love and obey Him!

Blessed by his right hand be the grateful and the just

among men, who will be faithful children of their

Father! Let those be filled with light and with the

treasures of grace, who will respond to the ardent desires

of my Lord in regard to their salvation. Would that

I could be the insignificant slave of the children of Adam

and thereby induce and assist them to put an end to their

sins and their own damnation ! Lord and Master ! Life

and light of my soul ! Who can be so hard of heart

and so hostile to himself, that he should not feel himself

urged on by thy blessings? Who can be so ungrateful

and so unheedful, as to ignore thy most burning love?

How can my heart bear with men, who, being so favored

by thy bounty, are so coarse and rebellious ? O children

of Adam ! Turn your inhuman cruelty upon me. Afflict

and insult me as much as you will, only pay my beloved

Lord the reverence and love which you owe to his endear

ments. Thou, my Son and Lord, art Light of light, Son

of the eternal Father, figure of his substance (Heb. 1, 3),

as everlasting, as immense, as infinite as He, equal to

Him in essence and attributes, being with Him one God

and one supreme Majesty (John 10, 30). Thou art

chosen among thousands (Cant. 5, 10), beautiful above

all the sons of men, holy, innocent and without defect

of any kind. How then, eternal God, can mortals ignore

the object of their most noble love? the Principle,

which gives them existence"? the End wherein consists

their eternal true happiness? O that I could give my

life in order that all might escape their error!"

128 CITY OF GOD

140. Many other sentiments of burning love, far

beyond the powers of my heart and tongue, this heavenly

Lady uttered in her dove-like sincerity; and in this love,

and in profoundest reverence, She wiped the sweat from

the face of her sweetest Son. At other times She found

Him in quite a different condition, shining with glory

and transfigured as afterwards on mount Tabor (Matth.

17, 2), in the midst of a great multitude of angels, who

adored Him and in the sweet harmony of their voices

gave praise and thanksgiving to the Onlybegotten of the

Father made man. These celestial voices our blessed

Lady heard and She joined hers with them. At other

times this happened while He was not transfigured; for

the divine will ordained that the sensitive part of the

divine humanity of the Word should sometimes have

this solace, while at other times it should enjoy also the

transfiguring overflow of the glory of the soul into the

body : yet this only at great intervals. But whenever the

heavenly Mother found Him in this state and beheld his

glorified body, or when She heard the hymns of the

angels, She participated in these delights to such an

extent, that, if her spirit had not been so strong, and

if her Lord and Son had not fortified Her, She would

have lost all her natural powers; and even as it was, the

holy angels had to support the failing strength of her

body on those occasions.

141. Many times, when her divine Son was in one of

these states of suffering or joy, and was praying to the

eternal Father or, as it were, conferring with Him con

cerning the highest mysteries of the Redemption, the

Person of the Father approved or conceded his petitions

for the relief of men, or showed to the most holy human

ity of Christ the secret decrees of predestination, repro

bation or condemnation of some souls. All this our

THE TRANSFIXION 129

blessed Lady heard, humbling Herself to the dust With

unequaled reverence and fear She adored the Omnip

otent, and accompanied her Son in his prayers, petitions

and thanksgivings, offered up to the eternal Father for

mankind in praise of all his inscrutable judgments. Such

secrets and mysteries the most prudent Virgin conferred

in her heart, and stored them up in her memory, con

verting them into the material and nourishment of her

fiery love. None of these blessings and secret favors

were in her unprofitable or fruitless. To all of them

She corresponded according to the inmost desires of her

Lord. In all of them She fulfilled the highest intentions

of the Almighty, and all his works found due response

from Her as far as was possible from a mere creature.

INSTRUCTIONS WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MARY, GAVE ME.

142. My daughter, one of the reasons why men should

call me Mother of mercy, is the knowledge of my loving

desire, that all be satiated with the flood of grace and

taste the sweetness of the Lord as I myself. I call

and invite all to come with me to the fountain of the

Divinity. Let the most poor and afflicted approach, for

if they respond and follow me, I will offer them my

protection and help, and I will intercede for them with

my Son and obtain for them the hidden manna, which

will give to them nourishment and life (Apoc. 2, 17).

Deny thyself and put off all the works of human weak

ness, and, by the true light, which thou hast received

concerning the works of my Son and my own, contem

plate and study thyself in this mirror, in order to arrive

at that beauty, which the highest King seeks in thee.

143. Since this is the most powerful means for per

fection in thy works, I wish that thou write this

130 CITY OF GOD

advice into thy heart. Whenever thou must perform

any interior or exterior work, consider beforehand

whether what thou art going to say or do corresponds

with the doings of thy Lord, and whether thou hast the

intention thereby to honor thy Lord and benefit thy

neighbor. As soon as thou art sure that this is thy

motive, execute thy undertaking in union with Him and

in imitation of Him; but if thou findest not this motive

let the undertaking rest. This was my invariable course

in pursuing the imitation of my Lord and Teacher;

though in me there was no reluctance toward the good,

but only the desire of imitating Him perfectly. In this

imitation consists the fruit of his holy teaching, in which

He urges us to do, what is most pleasing and acceptable

to the eternal God. Moreover from this day on be

mindful not to undertake any work, not to speak or even

think any of anything, without first asking my permission

and consulting with me as thy Mother and Teacher.

And as soon as I answer thee give thanks to the Lord;

if I do not answer after continued inquiry, I promise

and assure thee on the part of the Lord, that He will,

nevertheless, give thee light as to what will be according

to his most perfect will. In all things, however, subject

thyself to the guidance of thy spiritual director, and

never forget this practice!

CHAPTER XIII.

MOST HOLY MARY PASSES HER THIRTY-THIRD YEAR, EVER

AFTER REMAINING UNCHANGED AS TO HER VIRGINAL

BODY; SHE PLANS TO SUPPORT HER MOST HOLY SON

AND SAINT JOSEPH BY THE LABOR OF HER HANDS.

144. After Jesus had reached his twelfth year our

great Queen and Lady occupied Herself particularly in

the exercises and the mysteries, which I have pointed out

but could not fully describe in the foregoing chapters.

In the course of time our Savior passed the period of his

adolescence at eighteen and his blessed Mother (accord

ing to the dates given in Vol. II P. 138 and 475),

reached her perfect growth in her thirty-third year. I

call it that, because according to the division of man s

life commonly accepted, the age of thirty-three years is

that of full bodily growth and perfection, being the end

of youthful vigor, or, as others would have it, the begin

ning of it. Whatever opinion is accepted, that is the end

of natural perfection of the body and it lasts only a

short time; for immediately corrupted nature, never

remaining in the same state, begins to decline. Like the

moon, which begins to lessen as soon as it has reached

fullness, it never remains in the same state. From that

time on the body does not grow in length, nor can the

increase in bulk be called a perfection, being rather a

defect of nature. On this account our Lord Christ died

at the completion of his thirty-third year; for his most

ardent love induced Him to wait only until his body

131

132 CITY OF GOD

should have attained its perfect growth and vigor and

was in all respects most capable of bringing the perfect

gifts of nature and grace to this sacrifice. Not because

divine grace was in need of any growth in Him, but in

order that his human nature might correspond with the

perfection of grace and that nothing might be wanting

even exteriorly to the completeness of his sacrifice for

mankind. In accordance with this it is said, that the

Almighty created Adam and Eve in the condition of a

man and woman at the age of thirty-three years. It is

true, of course, that in the first and second age of the

world the life of man was much longer and, by dividing

the periods of human life at that time, many more years

would have to be counted for each period before the time

of David than after that time, when old age begins at

seventy years.

145. When therefore the Queen of heaven arrived

at her thirty-third year, her virginal body had attained

full natural growth, so well proportioned and beautiful,

that She was the admiration not only of human beings,

but of the angelic spirits themselves. She had grown in

size and stature to the most perfect proportion in all the

parts of her body and most strikingly resembled her

divine Son in features and complexion, when later on

He arrived at that age; always, of course, taking into

account, that Christ was the most perfect Man, while his

Mother was the most perfect Woman. Other mortals,

on account of the decline of the natural humors and

temperature, ordinarily begin to deteriorate and gradu

ally approach decay as far as their body is concerned ; the

exquisite balance of bodily humors is disturbed and the

earthly ones begin to predominate more and more; the

hair begins to whiten, the countenance to wrinkle, the

blood to cool, some of the strength to weaken; and the

THE TRANSFIXION 133

whole human frame, in spite of the greatest care, com

mences to decline toward old age and corruption. But

in the most holy Mary it was not so; for the wonderful

beauty and strength, which She had attained at the age

of thirty-three years, remained unchanged; and when

She had reached her seventieth year, as I shall relate

later on, She still retained the same beauty and entirety

of her virginal body as at the age of thirty- three.

146. The blessed Lady was well aware of this special

privilege conceded to Her by the Most High and She

rendered Him most humble thanks. She understood

also that it was granted to Her in order that the like

ness of her most holy Son might always be preserved

in Her, though with the differences consequent upon

her different nature and longer life; for the Lord

attained full bodily growth at thirty-three years, while

She retained it during her much longer life. Saint

Joseph, although he was not so very old at the

time when our blessed Lady reached her thirty-third

year, was much broken and worn out as far as his body

was concerned; for his continual cares, his journeys and

his incessant labors for the sustenance of his Spouse

and of the Lord had weakened him much more than

his years. This was so ordained by the Lord, who, wish

ing to lead him on to the practice of patience and of

other virtues, permitted him to suffer sickness and pain

(as I will relate in the following chapter). His most

prudent Spouse, knowing that he was much weakened

and always haying loved and served him better than any

wife ever did her husband, spoke to him and said : "My

spouse and my master, I am deeply obliged to you for

the faithful labors, watchfulness and care thou hast

bestowed on my welfare. For in the sweat of thy

brow thou hast until now supported me, thy servant, and

134 CITY OF GOD

my most holy Son, the true God, and in this thy solici

tude, thou hast spent thy strength and the best part of

thy health and of thy life in protecting me and attend

ing upon my welfare. From the hands of the Almighty

thou shalt receive the reward of thy works and the bless

ings of sweetness which thou deservest (Ps. 20, 4).

But now I beseech thee, my master, rest henceforth from

thy labors since thy impaired strength is not any more

equal to them. I wish from now on to show my grati

tude by laboring in thy service and provide for such

sustenance as the Lord wishes us to have."

147. The saint listened to the words of his sweetest

Spouse with abundant tears of humblest acknowledg

ment and consolation. Although he at first earnestly

entreated Her to be allowed to continue forever in his

labors, yet at last he yielded to her request and obeyed

his Spouse, the Mistress of the world. From that time

on he rested from the hard labor of his hands, by which

he had earned a livelihood for all three. They gave

away the carpenter tools as an alms, not wishing to have

anything superfluous or useless in their house and

family. Being thus at leisure, saint Joseph occupied

himself entirely in the contemplation of the mysteries of

which he was the guardian and in the exercise of vir

tues. As He had the happiness and good fortune of con

tinually enjoying the sight and the intercourse of the

divine Wisdom incarnate, and of Her, who was the

Mother of It, this man of God reached such a height of

sanctity, that, his heavenly Spouse excepted, no one ever

surpassed Him and he far outstripped all other creatures.

The blessed Lady, and also her most holy Son, attended

upon him and nursed him in his sickness, consoling and

sustaining him with the greatest assiduity; and hence

there are no words sufficiently expressive of the humility,

THE TRANSFIXION 135

reverence and love which all this caused in the simple

and grateful heart of this man of God. He thus became

the admiration and joy of the angels and the pleasure

and delight of the Most High.

148. Thenceforth the Mistress of the world took upon

Herself the task of supporting by her work her most

holy Son and her husband, for such was the will of the

eternal Wisdom in order to raise Mary to the very pin

nacle of all virtues and perfections and in order to fur

nish an example for the confusion of the daughters and

the sons of Adam and Eve. The Lord set up for us

as a model this strong Woman, clothed with beauty and

fortitude. For at this age of thirty-three years She was

to show Herself girded with strength and ready to

extend her hands to the poor, purchasing the field and

cultivating the vineyard by her own labor to bring forth

its fruits. The heart of her husband confided in Her,

and not only that of her husband, Saint Joseph, but also

that of her Son, the true Godman, the Teacher of the

poor and the Poor of the poor: and they were not

deceived (Prov. 31, 10). The great Queen began to

busy Herself much more in spinning and weaving linen

and wool, thus mysteriously fulfilling all that Solomon

says about Her in the Proverbs. But as I have explained

this chapter of Scripture at the end of the first part, I

shall not repeat it here, although much of what I said

then pertains to this period of her life when both inte

riorly and exteriorly She executed it in action.

149. The Lord was not wanting in ability to provide

for his bodily living, that of his blessed Mother and of

saint Joseph; for not in bread alone does man live and

is sustained (Matth. 4, 4) ; He could have created it by

his mere word, as He himself assures us. He could

have each day created the necessary food; but then the

136 CITY OF GOD

world would have been deprived of this spectacle of his

holy Mother, Lady of the whole world, laboring for their

sustenance; and the Virgin herself would have been

deprived of the reward due to these meritorious works.

All was arranged by the Teacher of our salvation with

admirable providence for the glory of our Queen and

for our instruction. Her diligence and care in these

employments cannot be expressed in words. She

labored much: and because She always lived in retire

ment, She was assisted by that most fortunate woman,

of whom I have spoken before (Vol. II 227, 423). This

woman assumed some of the labor of the great Queen

and performed the necessary errands. But Mary never

used any command when in want of her assistance, but

spoke to her in humble request and with the utmost con

sideration, always seeking to find out her wishes by

asking her whether she would not like to do this or that.

Her blessed Son, like his heavenly Mother, ate no meat;

their nourishment was only fish, fruit and herbs, and

these only in the greatest moderation. For saint Joseph

She procured fleshmeat, and, although their poverty and

want was apparent also in this, yet it was seasoned by

the good will and loving kindness with which She served

it to her spouse. The blessed Lady slept but little, and

often She spent the greater part of the night in work;

for the Lord now permitted her to spend more time in

such employment than in Egypt. Sometimes it happened

that with all her diligence and labor She could not earn

what was necessary; for saint Joseph now had need of

more expensive nourishment and clothes than formerly.

At such times Christ our Lord made use of his almighty

power in multiplying what was in their possession, or

in commanding the angels to bring the necessaries from

elsewhere. But more frequently He miraculously

THE TRANSFIXION 137

enabled his most holy Mother to accomplish much in a

short time by the labor of her hands and thus multiply

its results.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MARY, GAVE ME.

150. My daughter, in what thou hast written of my

labors, thou shouldst have received a most exalted doc

trine for thy imitation and direction; but in order that

thou mayest not forget I will now give thee a summary

of it. I wish that thou imitate me in three virtues which

thou wilt find in what thou hast written: they are the

virtues of prudence, charity and justice, so little taken

notice of by mortals. Prudence should teach thee to

provide for the wants of thy neighbor as far as possible

in thy state. Charity should make thee diligent and zeal

ous in coming to their assistance. Justice should oblige

thee to fulfill the obligations of charity, as necessity and

love itself point them out to thee. Thou shouldst be an

eye to the blind, an ear to the deaf, and thy hands

should labor for those that are maimed (Job 29, 15).

Although, on account of thy state of life, thou must

practice this doctrine principally and continually in a

spiritual way, yet I desire that thou take it to the heart

also as far as the temporal and bodily wants of thy

neighbor demand, always striving to be most faithful

in imitating me. For I also provided for the necessities

of my spouse, and held Myself ready to serve and sup

port him, deeming myself obliged thereto; and I ful

filled this obligation with ardent charity until he died.

Although the Lord had given him to me for my sup

port, I faithfully provided for him by my labors as long

as he was unable to perform this task himself. I

judged it to be my duty thus to use the strength given to

138 CITY OF GOD

me by the Lord and would have considered it a great

fault not to do so with great assiduity.

151. The children of the Church pay no attention to

this example and therefore they have fallen into a per-

verseness which greatly exasperates the just Judge. For,

though all mortals, not only since the first sin by which

all incurred work as a punishment, but also from the very

first beginning, were created in order to work (Gen. 2,

15), nevertheless, work is not evenly distributed among

men. The powerful and the rich and those whom the

world calls lords and nobles all try to exempt themselves

from this common law and try to throw this burden

upon the humble and the poor of human society. The

rich keep up their pride and ostentation by the labor and

sweat of the poor, and the powerful draw their strength

from the weakness and helplessness of the lowly. In

many of the proud, by their haughtiness, this perversity

reaches such extremes that they begin to think all this is

due to them and they despise, oppress and trod under foot

the poor (James 2, 6). They falsely suppose that others

are created only in order that they themselves might

enjoy leisure and delight and all the world s goods ; and

in addition to this, they do not even pay the small

wages for these services. In this matter of not paying

proper wages to the poor and to the servants and in

matters of like sort thou wilt find great crimes against

the order and will of the Almighty. But let it be known

that just as the rich pervert justice and reason and refuse

to take their share in human labor, so also will mercy be

inverted for them, and be showered upon the despised

and lowly (Wis. 6, 7). Those who in their pride gave

themselves up to contemptible idleness, shall be chastised

by the demons whom they have imitated.

152. Thou, dearest, take heed against such deception;

THE TRANSFIXION 139

let the advantages of earnest labor be always before thy

eyes according to my example; separate thyself from

the children of Belial, who so idly seek vain applause,

and thus labor for naught. Do not deem thyself above

others, because thou art a superior, but deem thyself

more lowly and humble, a slave of all the rest; diligently

serving them all without distinction. If necessary, be

ready to labor for their sustenance and be convinced that

this is incumbent upon thee not only as their superior,

but also because the religious are thy sisters, daughters

of the heavenly Father and creatures of the Lord thy

Spouse. Since thou hast received more than all the

rest at his liberal hand, thou art also obliged to labor

more than they. The weak and ailing relieve of bodily

labor and do their work thyself. I wish that thou not

only avoid charging others with work which thou

canst perform thyself and which belongs to thee, but

that thou assume, as much as possible, that of all the

rest, deeming thyself their inferior and their servant as

I wish thee always to consider thyself. Since thou canst

not do all thyself, and since it is necessary that thou dis

tribute bodily labor among thy subjects, I exhort thee to

observe good order and equity, not putting more labor

upon those who are too humble or weak to object; but

I wish that thou humiliate those who are of a haughty

and proud spirit and are unwilling to occupy themselves

in hard work. However, this must be done without

exasperating them and with a gentle firmness, helping

them to suppress their lukewarmness and want of sub

jection by placing upon them the yoke of holy obedience

in accordance with their profession. In doing this thou

conferrest upon them the greatest blessing and thou only

fulfillest thy own obligation; therefore, thou shouldst

see to it that they understand thee in that way. All this

140 CITY OF GOD

thou wilt attain if thou make no personal distinctions

and assign to each one the work which she can do, and

what is appropriate to her ; obliging and compelling each-

one with equity and justice to abhor idleness and laxity,

and let them see thee engaged in the hardest and most

difficult work. Thereby thou wilt gain an humble liberty

of commanding them; but what thou canst do thyself,

command no one, in order that thou mayest enjoy the

fruit and the reward of labor in imitation of me and in

obeying all that I advise and remind thee of.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SUFFERINGS AND INFIRMITIES OF SAINT JOSEPH IN

THE LAST YEARS OF HIS LIFE AND HOW THE QUEEN

OF HEAVEN, HIS SPOUSE, NURSED HIM DURING THAT

TIME.

153. A common defect in all of us that are called to

the light and to the profession of holy faith in the school

of Christ, our Lord, is that of looking upon Him too

much as our Redeemer and not sufficiently as our

Teacher in our sufferings (Luke 24, 26). We all desire

to reap the fruit of salvation and enter the portals of

grace and glory; but we do not with like zeal seek to

follow Him on the way of the Cross by which He entered

and upon which He invites us to attain eternal glory

(Matth. 16, 24). Although, as Catholics, we do not

fall into such insane errors as the heretics ; for we know

and profess that without exertion and labor there can be

no reward or crown (II Tim. 2, 5) ; and that it is a sac-

religious blasphemy to avail oneself of the salvation of

Christ in order to sin without remorse or restraint.

Nevertheless, as far as really practicing the works incul

cated by faith, some of the children of the Church differ

little from the children of darkness; for they look upon

difficult and painful works as unnecessary for the follow

ing of Christ and for participation in his glory.

154. Let us throw off this error in our practice and

let us understand well that suffering was not only for

Christ, our Lord, but also for us; that if He suffered

labors and death as the Redeemer of the World, He

141

142 CITY OF GOD

suffered them also as our Teacher, thereby inviting us

as his friends to enter upon the way of his Cross; so

much so, that his nearest friends receive the greatest

share of suffering, and no one can merit heaven without

the price of personal exertions. In imitation of his most

holy Mother, the Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and

Virgins and all his followers have won their crown by

labors and those that have been most prepared for suf

fering have obtained so much the more abundant

reward and the higher crown. It might be objected that

our Lord was at the same time God and man, and that if

He has given us the most conspicuous and wonderful

example of suffering, He did it more in order to be

admired than to be imitated. But this is only a bold and

daring pretense on our part; for He can meet this objec

tion with the example of his Mother, our most pure

and innocent Queen, with that of her blessed spouse, and

of so many men and women, weak and deficient as we

ourselves, who were less guilty, but who have imitated

Him and followed Him on the way of the Cross. The

Lord did not suffer only in order to excite our admira

tion, but in order that we imitate his example, and He

did not let even his Divinity stand in the way of labor

and suffering, but allowed sorrow and suffering to over

whelm Him in proportion to his innocence and sinless-

ness.

155. Along this royal highway of the Cross the Lord

led the spouse of his blessed Mother, saint Joseph, whom

He loved above all the sons of men. In order to increase

his merits and crown before the time of his meriting

should come to an end, He visited him in the last years

of his life with certain sicknesses, such as fever, violent

headaches and very painful rheumatisms, which greatly

afflicted and weakened him. In the midst of these infirm-

THE TRANSFIXION 143

ities, he was suffering from another source, more

sweet, but extremely painful, namely, from the fire of

his ardent love which was so vehement, that the flights

and ecstasies of his most pure soul would often have

burst the bounds of his body if the Lord, who vouch

safed them, had not strengthened and comforted him

against these agonies of love. In these sweet excesses

the Lord allowed him to suffer until his death and on

account of the natural weakness of his extenuated body,

this exercise was the source of ineffable merits for the

fortunate saint, not only because of the sufferings

occasioned, but because of the love by which

these sufferings were brought about.

156. Our great Queen, his Spouse, was a witness to

all these mysteries; and, as I have already stated (Vol. II

368, 381, 394, 404), She knew the whole interior of the

soul of saint Joseph, being thus rejoiced by the knowl

edge of having for her spouse a man so holy and so

beloved of the Lord. She beheld and comprehended the

sincerity and purity of his soul; his burning love; his

exalted and heavenly thoughts; his dove-like patience

and meekness in his grievous ailments and exquisite suf

ferings. She knew that he never complained either of

these nor of any of the other trials, nor ever asked for

any relief in his wants and necessities; for he bore all

with incomparable equanimity and greatness of soul. As

his most prudent Spouse contemplated and weighed all

these heroic virtues of saint Joseph, She grew to look

upon him with such a veneration as cannot ever be

properly estimated by any one. She labored with

incredible joy for his support and comfort; and the

greatest of his comforts was that She should prepare

and administer his victuals with her own virginal hands.

But as all her service seemed little in the eyes of the

144 CITY OF GOD

heavenly Lady compared to the necessities of her spouse,

She sometimes, in her love for him, made use of her

power as Queen and Mistress of all creation and com

manded that the food which She administered to him

impart special strength and supply new life to this holy

and just man of God.

157. This command of the great Lady, whom all

creatures obeyed, was fulfilled; and when saint Joseph

tasted of the victuals, which bore these blessings of

sweetness, and when he perceived their effects, he was

wont to say to the Queen : "My Lady and Spouse, what

celestial food is this which vivifies me, rejoices my

senses, restores my strength and fills my soul and spirit

with new delight?" The Empress of heaven served him

his meals on bended knees; and when he was much dis

abled and suffering, She took off his shoes in the same

posture. At other times She supported him in her arms.

Although the humble saint sought to rouse himself in

order to forestall some of these ministrations of his

Spouse, he could not altogether prevent them, for She was

intimately aware of all his sufferings and weaknesses and

of the circumstances and occasions when he needed her

assistance. At such times the heavenly Nurse always

hastened to assist him in his wants. Often also, as the

Mistress of wisdom and of virtue, She comforted him

by words of sweetest consolation. In the last three years

of his life, when his infirmities increased, our Queen

attended upon him day and night and her only other

employment was the service and ministration due to her

most holy Son. Jesus sometimes joined and assisted

Her in the care of her holy spouse whenever he was not

engaged in other necessary works. There was never a

sick person, nor will there ever be one, who was so well

nursed and comforted. Great was the happiness and

THE TRANSFIXION 145

worth of this man of God, saint Joseph, for he alone

deserved to have for his Spouse Her, who was the

Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

158. But the heavenly Lady was not satisfied with

these proofs of her devotion toward holy Joseph: She

made use of other means for his relief and comfort.

Several times She asked the Lord in her ardent charity

to impose upon Her the pains suffered by her spouse

and release him therefrom. To gain her point, She, the

Mother and Mistress of all sanctity, pleaded before the

Most High, alleging that her debt was greater than that

of all the earthborn and that since She had not given

the proper return, She was inferior to them, deserving

all their sufferings and offered her heart for all manner

of pain and suffering. She pleaded also the sanctity of

saint Joseph, his purity, innocence, and the delight of

the Lord in this heart made according to that of his

Son. She asked for many blessings for him and gave

most heartfelt thanks for having created a man so

worthy of his favors, so full of justice and holiness. She

invited the holy angels to give thanks to God for him;

and in contemplating the glory and wisdom of the Lord

as shown in this man, She sang new hymns of praise. For

on the one hand She saw the pains and sufferings of her

beloved spouse, which excited her pity and condolence,

and on the other hand She was aware of his merits and

the delight of the Lord in this man, and how the saint

pleased and glorified his God by his patience. The

heavenly Lady exercised different virtues suitable to

the occasion, and of so exalted a degree, that She

excited the admiration of the angelic spirits. Yet greater

should be the admiration of us ignorant men to see that

a mere Creature so perfectly fulfilled so many different

duties and that in Her the anxiety of Martha should

146 CITY OF GOD

not interfere with the contemplation of Mary. She imi

tated in this the activity of the supernal spirits, who

guard and assist us without losing sight of the Most

High (Matth. 18, 10). But Mary far excelled them in

her attention to God, while engaged in bodily labor,

of which they were incapable. Though She was a child

of Adam, She lived like a heavenly spirit, occupying

the superior part of her being in the exalted exercises

of her divine love and employing her inferior faculties

in works of charity toward her spouse.

159. Sometimes, when the merciful Queen perceived

the bitterness and severity of the sufferings of saint

Joseph, She was moved to tender pity; and then She

would humbly ask permission of her most holy Son to

be allowed to command the natural sources and occa

sions of these pains to disappear and thus put a stop to

the sufferings of this just and beloved man of God. As

all creatures obeyed the command of their great Mistress,

her holy spouse was then immediately relieved and rested

from his pains, sometimes for a day, sometimes longer,

until his ailments, according to the decree of the

Almighty, again assumed sway for the increase of his

merits. At other times She ordered the holy angels, as

their Queen (though not in the form of a command, but

of a request), to console saint Joseph and comfort him

in his sorrows and labors, as the frail condition of his

body demanded. Thereupon the angelic spirits would

appear to saint Joseph in human forms, most beautiful

and shining, and begin to speak to him of the Divinity

and its infinite perfections. Then they would raise their

voices in sweetest harmony of celestial music, singing

hymns of divine canticles, by which they restored his

drooping strength and inflamed the love of his purest

soul. To rejoice him the more he was specially informed,

THE TRANSFIXION 147

not only of the source of these blessings and divine

favors, but of the great holiness of his virginal Spouse,

of her singular love and charity in conversing with him

and serving him, and of many other excellences and

privileges of the great Mistress of the world. All this

together caused such effects in saint Joseph, and so

raised his merits before God, as no tongue can express,

nor any human understanding in this life can compre

hend.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY.

160. My daughter, one of the virtuous works most

pleasing to the Lord and most fruitful for souls, is the

loving care of the sick. By it is fulfilled to a great

extent that natural law which requires us to do to our

neighbors what we wish them to do to us. In the Gospel

this is adduced as one of the works for which the Lord

shall give eternal reward to the just (Matth. 25, 34) ;

and the failure to exercise this duty is alleged as one of

the causes of the eternal damnation of the wicked. In

the same place the justice of this retribution is also

explained ; namely, as men are the children of the eternal

Father, the Lord accounts any good or ill done to

our neighbor as done to his own children, whose part

He takes; for so it is customary among human parents.

With regard to thyself thou must moreover consider

that thou art the mother of thy religious and that they,

just as thou thyself, are the spouses of my blessed Son.

The fact that they have received of Him less blessings

should so much the more oblige thee to serve and nurse

them in their sickness. On this account I have on

another occasion told thee that thou must consider thy-

148 CITY OF GOD

self the infirmarian of all of them, as being inferior

to them because of thy great obligations. I assign

to thee thereby an office which is great in the house of

the Lord. In order to fulfill its obligations do not charge

others with the work which thou canst do thyself in

the service of the sick; and whatever, on account of the

duties of thy office thou canst not compass, be thou care

ful in commending to the special care of those who are

appointed to discharge these duties by obedience.

Besides common charity, there are other reasons why the

religious should be attended to in their ailments with the

greatest care and solicitude; namely, in order that their

afflictions and necessities may not cause them to long

for return to their parental homes and to the world. Be

sure, that in this way much harm enters the cloister;

for human nature is so adverse to suffering, that, rather

than feel the want of necessities, it will again face the

greatest dangers of the soul.

161. In order to stir thee on toward proficiency in

the exercise of this doctrine, the charity which I showed

toward my spouse, Joseph, in his ailments should serve

thee as a spur and encouragement. Very tardy is that

charity (and even the politeness), which waits until the

needy one asks for help. I did not wait, but hastened

to assist before I was asked. My charity and attention

anticipated the requests of my spouse and thus I con

soled him not only by my services but by my loving

solicitude and attention. I shared his sufferings and

hardships with heartfelt compassion; but at the same

time I praised the Most High and thanked Him for the

blessings of affliction conferred on his servant. If some

times I sought to relieve his pains, it was not in order to

deprive him of the occasion of meriting, but that he

might by this aid excite himself to glorify so much the

:

THE TRANSFIXION 149

more the Author of all goodness and holiness; and to

these virtues I exhorted and encouraged him. With

similar perfection shouldst thou exercise this noble vir

tue, providing for the needs of the sick and weak, com

forting them by thy compassion and words of advice,

doing them all kinds of good service, without wishing

them to lose the reward of suffering. Let not thy carnal

love disturb thee when thy sisters fall sick, although

they be those thou lovest or needest most; for thereby

many souls, both in the world and in religion, lose the

merit of their labors. The sorrow occasioned by the

sight of sickness or danger in their friends, disturbs

their equanimity and under the pretense of compassion,

they begin to complain and refuse to submit themselves

to the dispositions of divine Providence. In all these

things I have given thee an example and I demand of

thee to imitate it perfectly by following my footsteps.

CHAPTER XV.

OF THE HAPPY DEATH OF SAINT JOSEPH AND WHAT

FOLLOWED UPON IT : HOW JESUS, OUR REDEEMER, AND

BLESSED MARY, OUR LADY, ASSISTED AT HIS PASSING

AWAY.

162. Already eight years saint Joseph had been exer

cised by his infirmities and sufferings, and his noble

soul had been purified more and more each day in the

crucible of affliction and of divine love. As the time

passed his bodily strength gradually diminished and he

approached the unavoidable end, in which the stipend of

death is paid by all of us children of Adam (Heb. 9,

27). In like manner also increased the care and solici

tude of his heavenly Spouse, our Queen, assisting and

serving him with unbroken punctuality. Perceiving, in

her exalted wisdom, that the day and hour for his depart

ure from this cumbrous earth was very near, the loving

Lady betook Herself to her blessed Son and said to Him :

"Lord God Most High, Son of the eternal Father and

Savior of the world, by thy divine light I see the hour

approaching which thou hast decreed for the death of

thy servant Joseph. I beseech Thee, by thy ancient

mercies and by thy infinite bounty, to assist him in that

hour by thy almighty power. Let his death be as

precious in thy eyes, as the uprightness of his life was

pleasing to Thee, so that he may depart in peace and in

the certain hope of the eternal reward to be given to

him on the day in which Thou shalt open the gates of

heaven for all the faithful. Be mindful, my Son, of the

humility and love of thy servant; of his exceeding great

150

THE TRANSFIXION 151

merits and virtues; of the fidelity and solicitude by

which this just man has supported Thee and me, thy

humble handmaid, in the sweat of his brow."

163. Our Savior answered: "My Mother, thy request

is pleasing to me, and the merits of Joseph are acceptable

in my eyes. I will now assist him and will assign him a

place among the princes of my people (Ps. 115, 15), so

high that he will be the admiration of the angels and will

cause them and all men to break forth in highest praise.

With none of the human born shall I do as with thy

spouse." The great Lady gave thanks to her sweetest Son

for this promise ; and, for nine days and nights before the

death of saint Joseph he uninterruptedly enjoyed the

company and attendance of Mary or hier divine Son. By

command of the Lord the holy angels, three times on

each of the nine days, furnished celestial music, mixing

their hymns of praise with the benedictions of the sick

man. Moreover, their humble but most precious dwell

ing was rilled with the sweetest fragrance and odors so

wonderful that they comforted not only saint Joseph,

but invigorated all the numerous persons who happened

to come near the house.

164. One day before he died, being wholly inflamed

with divine love on account of these blessings, he was

wrapped in an ecstasy which lasted twenty-four hours.

The Lord himself supplied strength for this miraculous

intercourse. In this ecstasy he saw clearly the divine Es

sence, and, manifested therein, all that he had believed by

faith : the incomprehensible Divinity, the mystery of the

Incarnation and Redemption, the militant Church with all

its Sacraments and mysteries. The blessed Trinity com

missioned and assigned him as the messenger of our

Savior to the holy Patriarchs and Prophets of limbo;

and commanded him to prepare them for their issuing

152 CITY OF GOD

forth from this bosom of Abraham to eternal rest and

happiness. All this most holy Mary saw reflected in the

soul of her divine Son together with all the other mys

teries, just as they had been made known to her beloved

spouse, and She offered her sincerest thanks for all this

to her Lord.

165. When saint Joseph issued from this ecstasy his

face shone with wonderful splendor and his soul was

entirely transformed by his vision of the essence of

God. He asked his blessed Spouse to give him her

benediction; but She requested her divine Son to bless

him in her stead, which He did. Then the great Queen

of humility, falling on her knees, besought saint Joseph

to bless Her, as being her husband and head. Not with

out divine impulse the man of God fulfilled this request

for the consolation of his most prudent Spouse. She

kissed the hand with which he blessed Her and asked him

to salute the just ones of limbo in her name. The most

humble Joseph, sealing his life with an act of self-abase

ment, asked pardon of his heavenly Spouse for all his

deficiencies in her service and love and begged Her to

grant him her assistance and intercession in this hour of

his passing away. The holy man also rendered humblest

thanks to her Son for all the blessings of his life and

especially for those received during this sickness. The

last words which saint Joseph spoke to his Spouse were :

" Blessed art Thou among all women and elect of all the

creatures. Let angels and men praise Thee; let all the

generations know, praise and exalt thy dignity ; and may

in Thee be known, adored and exalted the name of the

Most High through all the coming ages; may He be

eternally praised for having created Thee so pleasing in

his eyes and in the sight of all the blessed spirits. I hope

to enjoy thy sight in the heavenly fatherland."

THE TRANSFIXION 153

166. Then this man of God, turning toward Christ,

our Lord, in profoundest reverence, wished to kneel

before Him. But the sweetest Jesus, coming near,

received him in his arms, where, reclining his head upon

them, Joseph said : My highest Lord and God, Son of

the eternal Father, Creator and Redeemer of the World,

give thy blessing to thy servant and the work of thy

hand; pardon, O most merciful King, the faults which

I have committed in thy service and intercourse. I

extol and magnify Thee and render eternal and heartfelt

thanks to Thee for having, in thy ineffable condescension,

chosen me to be the spouse of thy true Mother; let thy

greatness and glory be my thanksgiving for all eternity."

The Redeemer of the world gave him his benediction,

saying: "My father, rest in peace and in the grace of

my eternal Father and mine; and to the Prophets and

Saints, who await thee in limbo, bring the joyful news

of the approach of their redemption." At these words of

Jesus, and reclining in his arms, the most fortunate saint

Joseph expired and the Lord himself closed his eyes. At

the same time the multitude of the angels, who attended

upon their King and Queen, intoned hymns of praise in

loud and harmonious voices. By command of the Lord

they carried his most holy soul to the gathering-place

of the Patriarchs and Prophets, where it was immedi

ately recognized by all as clothed in the splendors of

incomparable grace, as the putative father and the inti

mate friend of the Redeemer, worthy of highest venera

tion. Conformably to the will and mandate of the Lord,

his arrival spread inutterable joy in this countless gather

ing of the saints by the announcement of their speedy

rescue.

167. It is necessary to mention that the long sickness

and sufferings which preceded the death of saint Joseph

154 CITY OF GOD

was not the sole cause and occasion of his passing away;

for with all his infirmities he could have extended the

term of his life, if to them he had not joined the fire of

the intense love within his bosom. In order that his

death might be more the triumph of his love than of the

effects of original sin, the Lord suspended the special and

miraculous assistance by which his natural forces were

enabled to withstand the violence of his love during his

lifetime. As soon as this divine assistance was with

drawn, nature was overcome by his love and the bonds

and chains, by which this most holy soul was detained in

its mortal body, were at once dissolved and the separa

tion of the soul from the body in which death con

sists took place. Love was then the real cause of the

death of saint Joseph, as I have said above. This was

at the same time the greatest and most glorious of all

his infirmities for in it death is but a sleep of the body

and the beginning of real life.

168. Her spouse having thus passed away, the great

Lady began to prepare his body for burial according to

Jewish custom. No other hands touched him than her

own and those of the holy angels, who assisted Her in

visible human forms. In order that the utmost propriety

might be observed by the Virgin Mother, God enveloped

the body of saint Joseph in a wonderful light, which hid

all except his countenance; and thus his purest Spouse,

although She clothed him for burial, saw only his face.

Sweetest fragrance exhaled from his body and it

remained so beautiful and lifelike, that the neighboring

people eagerly came to see it and were filled with admira

tion. Accompanied by the Redeemer of the world, his

most blessed Mother and a great multitude of angels, and

escorted by their friends and many others, the sacred

body of the most glorious saint Joseph was borne to the

THE TRANSFIXION 155

common burying place. But on all these occasions and

in these occupations, the most prudent Queen preserved

her composure and gravity, without allowing her counte

nance to exhibit any unwomanly or disorderly excite

ment; nor did her sorrow prevent Her from attending

to all that belonged to the service of her deceased spouse

or her divine Son. In every one of her movements was

visible the royal and magnanimous behavior of the Queen

of the human race. She reiterated her thankful acknowl

edgment of the great favors done to her spouse by the

son of God and, prostrate at his feet in new abasement

of humility, She said to Him: "Lord and Master of

my whole being, my true Son, the holiness of my spouse

Joseph might until now have detained Thee in my com

pany; though unworthy of it, I beseech Thee by thy

own goodness not to forsake me now; receive me anew

as thy servant and look upon the humble desires and

longings of my heart." The Savior of the world accepted

this new offering of his most holy Mother and He

promised not to leave Her until the time when obedience

to his eternal Father would oblige Him to begin his

life of public preaching.

TEACHING OF MARY, THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

169. My dearest daughter, it was not without special

reason that thy heart was moved to great compassion

and pity toward those who are at the point of death

and that thou art inspired with a desire to help them in

that hour; for it is true, as thou hast perceived, that

then the souls of men incur the most incredible and

dangerous attacks from the demons, as well as from

their own frailty and from the creatures around them.

That hour is the great trial of life, upon which depends

the last sentence of eternal death or eternal life, of

156 CITY OF GOD

eternal suffering or eternal glory. As the Most High

has condescendingly vouchsafed to fill thee with these

sentiments, I exhort thee to exert all thy powers and

faculties to act accordingly. Remember, then, my

friend, that when Lucifer and his satellites of darkness

perceive, by the course of natural events, that any one

falls a prey to a dangerous and mortal disease, they

immediately prepare to assail the poor and unbewaring

soul with all their malice and astuteness in order to

vanquish them if possible by various temptations. When

ever they see an opening for attacking the souls, they

try to supply in fury and malice the shortness of time.

170. At such times they gather like v blood-thirsty

wolves and search out the natural and acquired failings

in his nature, taking into account his inclinations, habits

and customs, and where his passions cause him greater

weakness, in order to direct toward this part the

strongest battery and engines of war. Those that have

a disorderly love of earthly life, they persuade that there

is not such great danger and they prevent others from

undeceiving them. Those that have been negligent in

the reception of the Sacraments, they try to make still

more careless and they place obstacles and difficulties in

the way in order that they may die without them, or in

order that they may receive them without fruit and with

a bad disposition. Others they fill with false suggestions

and shame in order that they may not confess their sins

and open their conscience. Others they confuse and try

to prevent from making proper restitution and thus

unburdening their consciences. Others, who love vanity,

they entangle, even at that last hour, in many vain and

proud desires with regard to what is to be done for them

after death. Those that have been avaricious or sensual,

they seek to excite violently toward what they loved so

THE TRANSFIXION 157

blindly during life. In short, of all the bad habits and

customs this cruel enemy avails himself in order to

fill their minds with images of creatures and draw them

away from their salvation or make them incapable of

it. All the sinful actions and vicious habits of their

previous life have become, as it were, pledges in the

hands of the common enemy for the possession of the

sinner and weapons for assault and battery in this tre

mendous hour of death. Every appetite, which has been

inordinately indulged, is an avenue or bypath by which

he enters into the citadel of the soul. Once in, he

breathes forth his pestilential fumes, and raises the

clouds of darkness, his proper work, so that the soul

may not give heed to the divine inspirations, have no true

sorrow for its sins, and do no penance for its wicked

life.

171. Generally these enemies cause a great damage

to the souls in that hour by exciting the vain hope of

a longer life and being able to execute later on what

God suggests to them by means of the holy angels. Giv

ing way to this deceit, they find themselves afterwards

betrayed and lost. Just as great is the danger of those

who have shown little esteem for the saving graces of

the Sacraments: for this contempt is very offensive to

the Lord and to the saints, and divine justice is wont

to punish it by leaving these souls to their own wicked

counsels. This leads them to great neglect in profiting

by this help. Thus they are themselves forsaken by the

Lord in their last hour, in which they expected to pro

vide for their salvation. There are few among the just

whom this ancient serpent does not furiously attack in

their last agony. And if satan boasts of having ruined

even saints at such times, what hope have the wicked,

the negligent and sinful, who have spent their whole

3-12

158 CITY OF GOD

lives in making themselves unworthy of divine favor

and grace, and who are devoid of meritorious works to

offset the assaults of their enemies? My holy Spouse,

saint Joseph, was one of those who enjoyed the privilege

of neither seeing nor feeling the presence of the demon

in his last hour; for as soon as they approached to deal

with him as they do with the rest of men, they felt a

powerful force, which kept them at a distance and the

holy angels hurled them back into their abyss. Seeing

themselves thus oppressed and crushed, they were seized

with great uneasiness and confusion. Almost stupefied,

Lucifer called a meeting of his followers in hell, in order

to consult about this surprising event and in order

to have them once more search the earth for the Messias ;

and then happened what thou shalt relate later on in its

place.

172. Hence thou wilt understand the great danger in

the hour of death, when both the good works and the

bad will begin to show their effects. I will not tell

thee how many are thus lost, in order that thy sincere

love of God may not cause thee to die of sorrow at

this loss. But the general rule is: a good life gives

hope of a good end; all other reliance is doubtful, and

salvation resting upon it is very rare and merely acci

dental. The best precaution is to take a good start from

afar; and therefore I admonish thee, that, at the dawn

ing of each day, when thou lookest upon the light, thou

seriously consider whether it may not be the last of

thy life, and, if it should be the last (for thou dost not

know), that thou place thy soul in such a state as to be

able to meet death with a smiling face. Do not delay

even for one instant sorrow for thy sins and a firm pur

pose of confessing them as soon as thou findest thyself

guilty of any and of amending the least of thy imperfec-

THE TRANSFIXION 159

tions. In all this be so careful that thou leave not upon

thy conscience the smallest defect without being sorry

for it and without cleansing thyself by the blood of my

most holy Son. Place thyself in such a condition that

thou art ready to appear before the just Judge, who is

to examine and judge thy least thoughts and all thy

movements.

173. In order that according to thy pious wishes, thou

mayest help those who are in danger of death, thou

shouldst give to others the same counsels that I have

now given thee. Exhort them to lead a careful life in

order to secure a happy death. Moreover, say some

prayers for this intention every day of thy life, fervently

asking the Almighty to disperse the deceits of the devils,

to destroy the snares prepared against those who are in

the throes of death, and that his right hand confound

all the demons. Know that I have directed my prayers

to that end for mortals and in this I wish thee to imitate

me. That thou mayest help them so much the more, I

wish thee to order and command the demons to depart

from the sick and stop their persecutions ; and thou canst

very efficaciously use this power, even when thou art

absent from the sick, for thou art to command them in

the name of the Lord, and thou art to compel them to

obey thee for his greater honor and glory.

174. When thy own religious are in danger of death

do thou, without exciting them, instruct them in what they

are to do. Admonish them and help them to receive

the holy Sacraments, and see that they receive them fre

quently during life in preparation for a good end. Seek

to encourage and console them, speaking to them of the

things of God and his mysteries contained in the holy

Scriptures. Exhort them to awaken their good inten

tions and desires and to prepare themselves to receive

160 CITY OF GOD

the light and the graces of the Most High. Excite them

to hope, strengthen them against temptations and teach

them how they are to resist and overcome them, seeking

to divine them before they themselves manifest them

to thee. The Almighty will give thee an understanding

of them so that thou mayest apply the right medicine

to each; for the infirmities of the soul are hard to

diagnose and cure. All that I now tell thee thou must

execute as the most beloved daughter of the Lord and

in his service, and I will procure for thee certain privi

leges for thyself and for those thou desirest to aid in

that terrible hour. Do not stint thy charity in these

works for thou shalt work not by thy own strength alone,

but by the power which God wishes to exercise in thee

for his own glory.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE AGE OF THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN AT THE DEATH OP

SAINT JOSEPH, AND SOME OF THE PRIVILEGES OF

HER HOLY SPOUSE.

175. The most fortunate of men, saint Joseph,

reached an age of sixty years and a few days. For at

the age of thirty-three he espoused the blessed Virgin

and he lived with Her a little longer than twenty-seven

years as her husband. When saint Joseph died, She

had completed the half of her forty-second year ; for She

was espoused to saint Joseph at the age of fourteen (as

stated in the first part, book second, chapter twenty-sec

ond). The twenty-seven years of her married life com

pleted her forty-first year, to which must be added the

time from the eighth of September until the death of her

blessed spouse. The Queen of heaven still remained in

the same disposition of natural perfection as in her

thirty-third year; for, as already stated in the thirteenth

chapter of this book, She showed no signs of decline,

or of more advanced age, or of weakness, but always

remained in that same most perfect state of womanhood.

She felt the natural sorrow due to the death of saint

Joseph; for She loved him as her spouse, as a man pre

eminent in perfection and holiness, as her protector and

benefactor. This sorrow in the most prudent Lady was

well-ordered and most perfect, but it was far from being

therefore less deep; for her love was great, yea so much

the greater as She was well informed of the high rank

he held among the saints, who are written in the book

161

162 CITY OF GOD

of eternal life and in the eternal mind of the Most High.

We do not lose without sorrow what we love in an

ordinary manner ; so much the greater will be our sorrow

for losing what we love much.

176. It is not the purpose of this history to describe

at length the perfections and excellences of saint Joseph,

nor have I any commission to do so, except in so far as

will suffice to point out his dignity and that of our

Queen, to whose merits (next to those of her divine

Son) must be ascribed the gifts and graces conferred by

the Almighty upon this glorious Patriarch. The

heavenly Lady was either the instrumental or meritori

ous cause of the holiness of her spouse, or at least the

final object or purpose of this holiness. For all the vast

perfection of his virtues and graces were conferred upon

saint Joseph for the purpose of making of him a worthy

protector and spouse of Her, whom God selected as his

Mother. According to this standard and according to

the love of God for his most holy Mother is to be meas

ured the holiness of saint Joseph; and from my under

standing of this matter, if there had been in the world

another man more perfect and more worthy, the Lord

would have chosen this other one for the spouse of his

Mother. Since he was chosen by God, saint Joseph was

no doubt the most perfect man upon earth. Having

created and destined him for such a high end, it is cer

tain that God, in his almighty power, prepared and per

fected him in proportion to the exaltedness of his end.

That is (according to our way of thinking), his holiness,

virtues, gifts, graces and infused and natural habits were

made to correspond by divine influence with the end for

which he was selected.

177. I perceive a certain difference in the graces given

to this great Patriarch and those vouchsafed to other

THE TRANSFIXION 163

saints; for many saints were endowed with graces and

gifts that are intended not for the increase of their own

sanctity, but for the advance of the service of the Most

High in other souls; they were, so to say, gifts and

graces freely given and not dependent upon the holiness

of the receiver. But in our blessed Patriarch all the

divine favors were productive of personal virtue and

perfection; for the mysterious purpose, toward which

they tended and helped along, was closely connected with

the holiness of his own life. The more angelic and

holy he grew to be, so much the more worthy was he

to be the spouse of most holy Mary, the depository and

treasure-house of heavenly sacraments. He was to be

a miracle of holiness, as he really was. This marvelous

holiness commenced with the formation of his body in

the womb of his Mother. In this the providence of God

himself interfered, regulating the composition of the

four radical humors of his body with extreme nicety

of proportion and securing for him that evenly tempered

disposition which made his body a blessed earth fit for

the abode of an exquisite soul and well-balanced mind

(Wisdom 8, 19). He was sanctified in the womb of his

mother seven months after his conception, and the leaven

of sin was destroyed in him for the whole course of his

life, never having felt any impure or disorderly move

ment. Although he did not receive the use of his reason

together with this first sanctification, which consisted

principally in justification from original sin, yet his

mother at the time felt a wonderful joy of the Holy

Ghost. Without understanding entirely the mystery she

elicited great acts of virtue and believed that her Son,

or whomever she bore in her womb, would be wonder

ful in the sight of God and men.

178. The holy child Joseph was born most beautiful

164 CITY OF GOD

and perfect of body and caused in his parents and in his

relations an extraordinary delight, something like that

caused by the birth of saint John the Baptist, though

the cause of it was more hidden. The Lord hastened

in him the use of his reason, perfecting it in his third

year, endowing it with infused science and augmenting

his soul with new graces and virtues. From that time

the child began to know God by faith, and also by natural

reasoning and science, as the cause and Author of all

things. He eagerly listened and understood profoundly

all that was taught him in regard to God and his works.

At this premature age he already practiced the highest

kinds of prayer and contemplation and eagerly engaged

in the exercise of the virtues proper to his youth; so

that, at the time when others come to the use of reason,

at the age of seven years or more, saint Joseph was

already a perfect man in the use of it and in holiness.

He was of a kind disposition, loving, affable, sincere,

showing inclinations not only holy but angelic, growing

in virtue and perfection and advancing toward his

espousal with most holy Mary by an altogether Jrre-

proachable life.

179. For the confirmation and increase of his good

qualities was then added the intercession of the blessed

Lady; for as soon as She was informed that the Lord

wished Her to enter the married state with him, She

earnestly besought the Lord to sanctify saint Joseph and

inspire him with most chaste thoughts and desires in

conformity with her own. The Lord listened to her

prayer and permitted Her to see what great effects his

right hand wrought in the mind and spirit of the

patriarch saint Joseph. They were so copious, that they

cannot be described in human words. He infused into

his soul the most perfect habits of all the virtues and

i

THE TRANSFIXION 165

gifts. He balanced anew all his faculties and filled him

with grace, confirming it in an admirable manner. In

the virtue and perfection of chastity the holy spouse was

elevated higher than the seraphim ; for the purity, which

they possessed without body, saint Joseph possessed in

his earthly body and in mortal flesh ; never did an image

of the impurities of the animal and sensible nature

engage, even for one moment, any of his faculties. This

freedom from all such imaginations and his angelic sim

plicity fitted him for the companionship and presence of

the most Pure among all creatures, and without this

excellence he would not have been worthy of so great a

dignity and rare excellence.

180. Also in the other virtues he was wonderfully

distinguished, especially in charity; for he dwelt at the

fountainhead of that living water, which flows on to

eternal life (John 4, 14) ; he was in close proximity to

that sphere of fire and was consumed without resistance.

The best that can be said of the charity of our saint is

what I have already said in the preceding chapter;

namely, that his love of God was really the cause of his

mortal sickness and of his death. The manner of his

death was a privilege of his singular love, for his sweet

sighs of love surpassed and finally put an end to those of

his sickness, being far more powerful. As the objects

of his love, Christ and his Mother, were present with

him always and as both of Them were more closely

bound to him than to any of the woman-born, his most

pure and faithful heart was unavoidably consumed by the

loving effects of such a close union. Blessed be the

Author of such great wonders and blessed be the most

fortunate of mortals, saint Joseph, who so worthily

corresponded to their love. He deserves to be known

and extolled by all the generations of men and all

166 CITY OF GOD

nations, since the Lord has wrought such things with no

other man and to none has He shown such love.

181. The divine visions and revelations vouch

safed to saint Joseph, I have particularly men

tioned in the course of this history (Vol. II 422, 423,

471); but there were many more than can be de

scribed, and the greatest of them all was his hav

ing known the mysteries of the relation between

Christ and his Mother and his having lived in their

company for so many years as the putative father of the

Lord and as the true spouse of the Queen of heaven.

But I have been informed concerning certain other

privileges conferred upon saint Joseph by the Most High

on account of his great holiness, which are especially

important to those who ask his intercession in a proper

manner. In virtue of these special privileges the inter

cession of saint Joseph is most powerful: first, for

attaining the virtue of purity and overcoming the sen

sual inclinations of the flesh; secondly, for procuring

powerful help to escape sin and return to the friendship

of God ; thirdly, for increasing the love and devotion to

most holy Mary; fourthly, for securing the grace of a

happy death and protection against the demons in that

hour; fifthly, for inspiring the demons with terror at

the mere mention of his name by his clients; sixthly,

for gaining health of body and assistance in all kinds of

difficulties; seventhly, for securing issue of children in

families. These and many other favors God confers

upon those who properly and with good disposition

seek the intercession of the spouse of our Queen, saint

Joseph. I beseech all the faithful children of the Church

to be very devout to him and they will experience these

favors in reality, if they dispose themselves as they

should in order to receive and merit them.

THE TRANSFIXION 167

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

182. My daughter, although thou hast described my

spouse, saint Joseph, as the most noble among the

princes and saints of the heavenly Jerusalem ; yet neither

canst thou properly manifest his eminent sanctity, nor

can any of the mortals know it fully before they arrive

at the vision of the Divinity. Then all of them will be

filled with wonder and praise as the Lord will make

them capable of understanding this sacrament. On the

last day, when all men shall be judged, the damned will

bitterly bewail their sins, which prevented them from

appreciating this powerful means of their salvation,

and availing themselves, as they easily could have, of

this intercessor to gain the friendship of the just Judge.

The whole human race has much undervalued the privi

leges and prerogatives conceded to my blessed spouse and

they know not what his intercession with God is able to

do. I assure thee, my dearest, that he is one of the greatly

favored personages in the divine presence and has

immense power to stay the arms of divine vengeance.

183. I desire that thou be very thankful to the divine

condescension for vouchsafing thee so much light and

knowledge regarding this mystery, and also for the

favor which I am doing thee therein. From now on,

during the rest of thy mortal life, see that thou advance

in devotion and in hearty love toward my spouse, and

that thou bless the Lord for thus having favored him

with such high privileges and for having rejoiced me so

much in the knowledge of all his excellences. In all thy

necessities thou must avail thyself of his intercession.

Thou shouldst induce many to venerate him and see that

thy own religious distinguish themselves in their devo-

168 CITY OF GOD

tion to him. That which my spouse asks of the Lord in

heaven is granted upon the earth and on his intercession

depend many and extraordinary favors for men, if they

do not make themselves unworthy of receiving them.

All these privileges were to be a reward for the amiable

perfection of this wonderful saint and for his great

virtues; for divine clemency is favorably drawn forth

by them and looks upon saint Joseph with generous

liberality, ready to shower down its marvelous mercies

upon all those who avail themselves of his intercession.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DOINGS OF MOST HOLY MARY AFTER THE DEATH OF

SAINT JOSEPH AND SOME OF HER DEALINGS WITH

THE HOLY ANGELS.

184. Christian perfection is all included in the two

states of life known to the Church: the active and the

contemplative life. To the active life belong all the opera

tions of the body and the senses, practiced in our inter

course with our neighbor in temporal affairs. They

embrace a wide field and include the practice of the

moral virtues, which constitute the perfection of our

active life. To the contemplative life belong the interior

activities of the understanding and will, aiming at the

most noble and the spiritual objects proper to the rational

creature. Therefore, the contemplative life is more

excellent than the active, and, as it is more quiet, more

delightful and beautiful, it is also more desirable in

itself. It tends more directly toward the highest end,

that is God, since it consists in the deepest knowledge and

love of God, and thus participates of the qualities of

eternal life, which is entirely contemplative. These two

lives, the two sisters Martha and Mary (Luke 10, 41),

the one quiet and thoughtful, the other solicitous and

bustling; or those other two sisters and wives, Lia and

Rachel : the one, fruitful, but ugly and with sore eyes,

the other beautiful and gracious, but sterile in the

beginning. For the active life is more productive,

though in it the soul .is taken up with numerous and

various occupations, during which it is kept in disturb-

169

170 CITY OF GOD

ance and cannot raise itself up to penetrate the high

things of God ; while the contemplative life is most beau

tiful, although, in the beginning, not so productive, be

cause its fruits are to be the result of prayer and merits.

These presuppose great advance in the perfection and in

the friendship of God, which draw down the liberality

of God in favor of other souls, and produce the fruits

of benediction, very copious and very precious.

185. The combination of these two lives is the acme

of Christian perfection. But this combination is very

difficult. We do not see both kinds of life united in one

person, but existing in a remarkable degree separated in

Martha and Mary, in Lia and Rachel, representing singly

either the active or the contemplative life. In none of

them could both the active and the contemplative life be

properly represented on account of the difficulty of com

bining the practice of both in one subject to any great

extent. Although the saints have labored much to attain

this perfect combination, and all the teachers of spiritual

life have sought to direct souls toward it; although there

are so many instructions of learned and apostolic men

and the examples of the Apostles and of the Founders

of the holy religion, who have sought to join contem

plation with action as far as is possible with divine grace ;

yet they always knew, that the active life, on account of

the multitude of its interests and occupations concerning

inferior objects, dissipates the heart and disturbs it, as

the Lord tells Martha. Although those engaged in it

may seek quiet and repose in order to raise themselves to

the highest objects of contemplation, they never succeed

in doing so during this kind of life without great diffi

culty and only for a short time, except by a special privi

lege of the Most High. On this account the saints that

wished to give themselves up to contemplation sought the

I

THE TRANSFIXION 171

deserts and solitudes, which are more favorable to that

kind of life; and the other, that pursued the active life,

and the care of souls by teaching and exhortation, set

aside some of their time for retirement from exterior

activity, and divided their days between contemplation

and active life. By thus attending to both with perfec

tion, they attained the merits and reward of the two

kinds of life, founded on love and grace as their prin

cipal support.

186. The most blessed Mary alone joined these two

lives in a perfect manner : the highest and most ardent

contemplation was not hindered by her occupations in

the active life. In Her was the solicitude of Martha

without its excitement, and the quiet and rest of Mary

without idleness of the body; She possessed the beauty

of Rachel and the fruitfulness of Lia; and only this

great and prudent Queen truly exemplified what these

sisters mysteriously typified. Although She attended

upon her ailing spouse, and supported him and her most

holy Son by her labor, She did not on that account inter

rupt or curtail her heavenly contemplations, nor was

She under any necessity of seeking solitude or retire

ment, in order to restore the quiet and peace of her

heart and raise it beyond the seraphic regions. Yet,

when She found Herself alone and deprived of the

company of saint Joseph, She so arranged her exercises,

as to spend her time entirely in the interior activity of

divine love. She immediately perceived, by her insight

into the interior of her most holy Son, that such was his

will, that She should relax her labors by which She had

attended to the wants of saint Joseph through night and

day, and that instead of this hard labor, She should now

join his Majesty in his prayers and exalted works.

187. The Lord also reminded Her that for the moder-

172 CITY OF GOD

ate nourishment necessary to Them it would be sufficient

to engage in labor only for a short time each day; for

from that time on they were to eat only once a day

at eventide, having until now followed another custom

out of regard to saint Joseph and in order to keep him

consoling company at mealtimes. Thenceforward Jesus

and Mary ate but once a day at about six o clock in the

evening; many times their meal consisted merely of

bread, at other times the blessed Lady added fruits or

herbs, or perhaps fish ; and this formed the only refresh

ment of the Sovereigns of the heaven and earth. Al

though their frugality and abstinence had always been

great, yet it was greater after they were left alone, and

They never dispensed Themselves except in regard to

the kind of food and in regard to the time of taking it.

When They were invited they ate a little of what was

offered to Them, without abstaining entirely, commenc

ing to practice the advice which Jesus was afterwards to

give to his disciples for their conduct while preaching

the Gospel. The simple food used by the heavenly

Sovereigns was served by the great Lady to her divine

Son on her knees, having asked permission thus to serve

it. Sometimes She also prepared it in that posture,

moved thereto by the thought that it was to serve as

nourishment of the true Son of God.

188. The presence of saint Joseph was no hindrance

to the most blessed Mother in treating her Son with all

due reverence, not missing the least point of what this

reverence toward Him demanded. But after the death

of saint Joseph the great Lady practiced prostrations

and genuflections much more frequently; for there was

always more freedom for such actions in the presence

of her holy angels, than in the presence of her spouse

who was man. Many times She remained prostrate upon

THE TRANSFIXION 173

the ground until the Lord commanded Her to rise ; very

often She kissed his feet, at other times his hand, usually

She was filled with tears of the profoundest humility

and reverence. She always stood in the presence of

her divine Son in posture of adoration and most ardent

love, awaiting his divine pleasure and intent upon imitat

ing his interior virtues. Although She had no faults,

and was not guilty of even the least imperfection or

negligence in the service and love of her most holy Son,

her eyes (like those of the servant and of the anxious

handmaid mentioned by the Prophet, only more de

votedly) were continually upon the hands of her Master,

in order to obtain the graces She desired for assisting

Her to greater perfection. It cannot enter into human

thought what divine science aided Her in understanding

and performing so many and so great works in union

with the incarnate Word during the time They both lived

alone together, without any other company than that of

the holy angels of their guard and service. They alone

were the eye-witnesses and were moved to admiration

and to highest praises, to see themselves so inferior in

wisdom and purity to a mere Creature who was worthy

of such holiness : for She alone made a full return for

the graces She received.

189. With the holy angels the Queen of heaven entered

into a sweet emulation and strife in regard to the ordi

nary and humble services which were necessary for the

comfort of the Word of God and the well-ordering of

their little dwelling, for there was no one to attend to

these things except the heavenly Lady and those most

noble and faithful vassals and ministers, who, for this

purpose assisted in human forms ready and anxious to

attend to all the work. The great Queen wished to per

form all the humble work Herself and with her own

3-13

174 CITY OF GOD

hands to scrub the house and arrange its poor furnish

ings, wash the dishes and cooking utensils, and set the

rooms in order; but these courtiers of the Most High,

being truly courteous and more expeditious, though not

more humble in their operations, usually anticipated

these services before the Queen could find time to per

form them. Sometimes, and at certain periods, often,

She would find them thus at the work which She was

about to perform, the holy angels having begun it before

hand ; but at her word they desisted and allowed Her to

satisfy her humility and devotion in completing it Her

self. In order that they might not interfere with her

affectionate desires, She said to the holy angels : "Min

isters of the Most High, you are such pure spirits that

you reflect the light of the Divinity for my illumination,

and, therefore, these low and servile occupations are not

suitable to your state, your nature and condition. These

pertain to me, who, besides being only of earth, am the

lowest of the mortals and the least of the servants of my

Lord and Son. Permit me, my friends, to perform the

service to which I am bound, since I can thereby gain

merits which, on account of your station and dignity,

you do not need. I know the value of these servile

works which the world despises, and the Lord has given

me this knowledge not in order that I may allow them to

be done by others, but that I may perform them myself."

190. "Our Queen and Lady," answered the angels, "it

it true that in thy eyes and in the estimation of the

Lord these works are as valuable as Thou knowest them

to be; but if Thou dost thereby earn the precious re

wards of thy humility, take notice that we would be

deficient in obedience to the Lord if we would know

ingly omit any of these works permitted us by the Most

High. The merits which Thou losest in not perform-

THE TRANSFIXION 175

ing this service, Thou, O Lady, canst easily make up by

the mortification of denying thyself the desire of execut

ing them." The most prudent Virgin answered these

arguments by saying: "No, my masters and sovereign

spirits, you must not look upon these works in such a

light ; for if you consider yourselves bound to serve me as

the Mother of your great Lord, whose creatures you are,

remember that He has raised me from the dust to this

great dignity and that therefore my debt of gratitude

for this benefit is greater than yours. As my obligation

is so much the greater, my return must also be greater

than yours. If you desire to serve my Son as his crea

tures, I likewise must serve Him on this account, and I

am more bound to do so because I am the Mother of

such a Son. Thus you will always find me more obliged

than yourselves to be humble, thankful and annihilated

to the very dust in his presence."

191. These and similar sweet and admirable conten

tions were going on between most holy Mary and her

angels ; and the palm of humility always remained in the

hands of their Queen and Mistress, The world is

justly ignorant of these mysteries, being unworthy of

knowing them on account of its vanity and pride. Its

foolish arrogance deems insignificant and contemptible

these humble and servile occupations, while the courtiers

of heaven who know their value appreciate them, and

the Queen of creation eagerly sought after them as very

precious. But let us leave the world to its intentional or

unconscious ignorance. Humility is not for the proud of

heart, nor lowly service for purple and fine linen, nor

scrubbing and washing for costly gems and silks, nor are

the precious jewels of these virtues intended indiscrimi

nately for all men. But if the contagion of worldly

176 CITY OF GOD

pride enters into the schools of humility and contempt of

the world, namely, into religious communities, and if

this kind of humiliation is looked upon by them as a

disgrace, we cannot deny that such sentiments are

nothing but a most shameful and reprehensible pride.

If we religious men and women despise the benefits of

such humble occupations and count them a degradation

like worldly people, how can we appear before the angels

and our Queen, who esteemed as greatest honors those

very works which we look upon as contemptible and dis

honorable ?

192. My sisters, daughters of this great Queen and

Lady, to you I speak, who are called and transported to

the bridal -chamber of the great King to true joy and

exaltation (Ps. 44, 16) ! Do not allow yourselves to be

robbed of your right to be called children of such a

Mother! If She, who was the Queen of angels and men,

humbled Herself by engaging in such lowly and trivial

occupations, in scrubbing and busying Herself in the

most common handiwork, what presumption shall the

haughtiness, vain pride and want of humility of mere

slaves appear to be in her sight and in the sight of the

Lord God himself? Far from our community be such

treason, fit only for Babylon and its inhabitants. Let us

feel honored by that which the exalted Queen esteemed

as a crown of merit, and let it be for us a subject of most

shameful confusion and a cause for dreadful reprehen

sion to be found wanting in the same zealous conten

tion of humility which She entertained with the holy

angels. Let us eagerly seek after humble and servile

occupation and let us cause in the angels and heavenly

companions the same emulation, which was so pleasing

to our Queen, and to her most holy Son and our Spouse.

THE TRANSFIXION 177

193. We must understand that without real and solid

humility, it is audacious to seek the reward of uncertain

spiritual or sensible consolations, and to strive after them

is daring foolishness. Let us rather look upon our

heavenly Teacher who is the perfect example of a holy

and perfect life. In the great Queen the favors and

delights of heaven alternated with her humble and serv

ile occupations for it happened many times when She

was engaged in prayer with her Son, that the holy

angels in sweet, harmonious voices sang the hymns and

canticles composed by Mary herself in praise of the

infinite Being of God and of the hypostatical union of

the Word with human nature in the second Person of

the Trinity. The Blessed Lady often asked the angels

to repeat these hymns to her Lord and Creator and,

alternating the verses with them, She added new hymns.

They obeyed Her, lost in admiration at the profound

wisdom manifested in what She thus said and composed

for them. Then, whenever her most holy Son retired

to rest, or during his meals, She commanded them, as the

Mother of their Creator, solicitous to entertain Him,

that they furnish sweet music in her name and the Lord

permitted it whenever She so ordered, therein yielding

to the ardour of her love and veneration, with which

She served Him in his last years. In order to narrate

all that has been revealed to me in this regard, a much

longer discourse were necessary and much greater ability

than mine. From what I have insinuated one can judge

to some extent of other deep mysteries of this intercourse

and find motive and occasion to magnify and extol the

great Lady and Queen whom may all nations know and

praise as blessed among creatures, as the Mother of the

Creator and Redeemer of the world.

178 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN.

194. My daughter, I wish that, before proceeding to

narrate other mysteries, thou understand well all that

the Lord commanded in regard to my intercourse with

my holy spouse, saint Joseph. When I espoused myself

to him, God commanded me to change the order of my

meals and other exterior duties in order to accommodate

myself to his circumstances; for he was the head of the

family, and, according to the common rule, I was the

inferior. The same conduct was also followed by my

most holy Son, though He was true God, yet He sub

jected Himself before the eyes of the world to him who

was thought to be his father. As soon as We were

alone after the death of my spouse, who was the occa

sion of this change in our lives, we returned to our

former way of living. The Lord did not expect saint

Joseph to accommodate himself to us, but that We should

accommodate ourselves to him as the common order

among men required. Nor did the Lord resort to

miracles in order to escape the necessity of taking food

or of following ordinary human occupations; for in

all things, He acted as the Teacher of all virtues, and of

all perfection, being an example to parents and children,

to prelates, superiors and superioresses, to subjects and

inferiors; to parents, in order that they may learn to

love their children, help them, nourish them, exhort

them, correct them and lead them on in the way of

salvation without remissness or carelessness; to chil

dren, in order that they may learn to esteem, love and

honor their parents as the instruments of their existence,

diligently obey them according to the natural law, which

requires and teaches obedience and repudiates the oppo-

THE TRANSFIXION 179

site as monstrous and horrible ; to prelates and superiors,

in order that they may love their subjects and direct them

as their children; to inferiors, that they obey without

resistance, even if they should in other respects be of

higher and better condition in life; for in so far as the

superior represents God, the prelate is always superior

in dignity ; but real charity must always teach both to be

of one spirit.

195. In order that thou mayest acquire this great

virtue, I desire that thou conform and accommodate

thyself to thy sisters and inferiors without affection of

formality, and that thou treat them with dove-like meek

ness and sincerity. Do thou pray when they pray, work

and eat, and take thy recreation with them. For real

perfection in a convent consists in conforming with the

common spirit, and if thou act thus, thou wilt be guided

by the holy Spirit, who governs all well-regulated com

munities. Following this order thou canst make progress

in abstinence, eating less than the others, though the

same amount of food is placed before thee. Without

being singular thou canst, with a little discretion, abstain

from what thou desirest for the love of thy Spouse and

of me. If thou art not hindered by some grave infirmity,

never absent thyself from the common exercises unless

perhaps obedience to thy superiors sometimes prevent

thee. Be present at all common exercises with special

reverence, attention and devotion, for at such times thou

wilt most frequently be visited by the Lord.

196. I wish also that thou learn from this chapter

to conceal carefully the special works thou undertakest

in imitation of my own ; for, although I had no need of

refraining from any work in the presence of saint Joseph,

yet I was eareful to add retirement as an additional

observance of perfection and prudence, since retirement

180 CITY OF GOD

of itself makes good works more praiseworthy. But this

is not to be understood of ordinary and obligatory works,

since thou must give a good example and let thy light

shine, avoiding any danger of scandal or cause for cavil.

There are many works which can be done in secret and

unobserved by the eyes of creatures, and which are not

lightly to be exposed to the danger of publicity and

ostentation. In thy retirement thou canst make many

genuflections ; prostrate in the dust, thou canst humiliate

thyself, adoring the supreme Majesty of the Most High

and offering thy mortal body, which oppresses thy soul,

as a sacrifice for the disorderly inclinations against

justice and reason. Thus thou wilt not reserve any part

of thy being from the service of thy Creator and

Spouse, and thou wilt force thy body to make up the

loss which it causes to the soul by its passions and earthly

affections.

197. With this object in view seek to keep it always

in strict subjection, allowing it to partake only of those

comforts which serve to keep it in proper condition for

the activity of the soul and not to pander to its passions

and appetites. Mortify and crush it until it is dead to all

that is delightful to the senses, so that even the common

actions necessary for life shall appear to thee more

painful than agreeable, taste more of bitterness than

of dangerous enjoyment. Although I have already on

other occasions spoken to thee of the value of this morti

fication and humiliation, thou shouldst now, by this

example which I have given thee, be still more convinced

of their great value. I now command thee not to despise

any of these acts or deem them of little consequence, but

esteem all of them as precious treasures to be gained for

thyself. In this thou must be covetous and avaricious,

eagerly grasping the occasions of doing servile work,

THE TRANSFIXION 181

such as scrubbing, cleaning the house, engaging in the

most menial services, and attending upon the sick and

infirm as I have said before. In all of these works place

me before thy eyes as an example in order that my care

fulness and humility may urge thee on, full of joy to

be able to imitate me, and shame for any negligence

therein. If I, who never had displeased or offended the

Lord since the beginning of my existence, judged this

virtue of humility so necessary in order to find grace in

his eyes and be raised up by his right hand, how much

more is it necessary for thee to humble thyself to the

dust and annihilate thyself in his sight, who wast con

ceived in sin and hast so often offended Him? (Ps. 50,

7). Humiliate thyself to nothingness, and acknowledge

that what being the Most High has given thee, thou hast

but ill employed, and that, therefore, thy very existence

should be a subject of humiliation to thee. Thus wilt

thou at last find the treasure of grace.

CHAPTER XVIII.

OTHER MYSTERIES AND OCCUPATIONS OF THE GREAT

QUEEN AND LADY AND HER MOST HOLY SON, WHILE

THEY LIVED ALONE TOGETHER.

198. As I have already said in other places the

knowledge of many of the sacramental mysteries of

Jesus and Mary are reserved for the increase of the ac

cidental beatitude of the predestined in eternal life. The

highest and most ineffable of these mysteries took place

during the four years in which they lived together after

the death of saint Joseph and after the public preaching

of our Lord. It is impossible for any mortal worthily

to understand such profound secrets : how much less

can I, rude and untutored as I am, manifest properly

what I have been made to understand concerning them.

But in that which I do manifest, will be seen the cause

of my inability. The soul of Christ our Lord was a

most transparent and flawless mirror, in which the blessed

Mother saw reflected all the mysteries and sacraments

which the Lord, as the Head and Artificer of the holy

Church, the Restorer of the human race, the Teacher

of eternal salvation and the angel of the great council,

wrought and accomplished according to eternal decrees

of the most blessed Trinity.

199. In the execution of this work consigned to Him

by the eternal Father, Christ our Lord consumed his

whole earthly life and lent to it all the perfection pos

sible to a God man. In the measure as He approached its

consummation and the full accomplishment of its sacra-

182

THE TRANSFIXION 183

ments, so also the force of His divine Wisdom and

Omnipotence became more evident. Of all these mysteries

our great Queen and Lady was the eye-witness and her

purest heart was their depository. In all things She

co-operated with her divine Son, as his helpmate in the

works of the reparation of mankind. Accordingly, in

order to understand entirely the designs of eternal Provi

dence and the process of dispensing all the mysteries of

salvation, it was necessary that She comprehend also the

things hidden in the science of Christ our Redeemer, the

works of his love and prudence, by which He prepared

the efficient means of attaining his high purposes. In the

little which I can say of the works of most holy Mary, I

must always presuppose the works of her most Holy Son ;

for She co-operated with Him and imitated Him as her

pattern and model.

200. The Savior of the world was already twenty-six

years of age; and in the measure as his most holy

humanity approached its perfect growth and its earthly

end, Christ proceeded to manifest it by permitting his

operations to show more and more openly the purpose

of the Redemption. All these mysteries the evangelist

Luke includes in those few words, with which he closes

the second chapter : "And Jesus advanced in wisdom,

and age, and grace with God and man." Among men

his blessod Mother co-operated and grew in knowledge

with the increase and progress of her Son, without re

maining ignorant of anything that the Son of God and

man could ever communicate to a mere creature. Among

these hidden and divine mysteries the great Lady also

perceived during these years, how her Son and true God

began more and more to extend his plans, not only those

of his uncreated Divinity, but of his humanity, so as to

include all the mortals in his Redemption as a whole;

184 CITY OF GOD

how He weighed its value in the eyes of the eternal

Father, and how, in order to close the gates of hell and

call men to eternal happiness, He had come down from

heaven to suffer the bitterest torments and death; and

how, in spite of all this, the folly and wickedness of those

that were to be born after He had thus annihilated

Himself on the Cross, would rather urge Him to widen

the portals and open the lowest abysses of hell, consigning

them to those horrible and dreadful torments, which their

blind ignorance continued to disregard.

201. The knowledge and contemplation of this sad fate

caused great affliction and sorrow to the human nature

of Christ our Lord, and sometimes pressed forth a bloody

sweat. In these agonies the divine Teacher persevered in

his petitions for all that were to be redeemed. In con

formity with the will of his eternal Father He desired

with the most ardent love to be sacrificed for the rescue

of men. For, as not all were to be saved by his merits

and sacrifices, He knew, that at all events the divine

justice must be satisfied and the offenses to the Divinity

be made good by the punishment, which divine equity

and justice had prepared from all eternity for the infidels

and the thankless sinners on the day of retribution. En

tering into these profound secrets by her deep wisdom

the great Lady joined her most holy Son in the sorrowful

contemplation and sighs for those unfortunates, while

at the same time her heart was torn by grief at the heavy

affliction of the blessed fruit of her womb. Many times

the meekest Dove shed ensanguined tears, when She saw

her Son sweat blood in the agonies of his sorrow. For

only this most prudent Lady and her Son, the true God

and man, could ever justly weigh, as in the scales of the

sanctuary, what it meant, on the one hand to see a God

dying upon a cross in order to seal up the infernal

THE TRANSFIXION 185

regions, and, on the other hand, the hardness and blind

ness of mortal hearts in casting themselves headlong

into the jaws of eternal death.

202. In these great sorrows it sometimes happened,

that the most loving Mother was overcome by deathly

weaknesses, and they would no doubt have ended her life,

if She had not been preserved by divine intervention.

Her sweetest Son, in return for her most faithful and

loving compassion, sometimes commanded the angels to

console Her and take Her into their arms, at other times,

to sing her own heavenly canticles of praise in honor of

the Divinity and humanity. At other times the Lord

himself took Her into his arms and gave Her new celes

tial understanding of her exemption from this iniquitous

law of sin and its effects. Sometimes, thus reclining in his

arms, the angels sang to Her in admiration, while She,

transformed and enraptured in heavenly ecstasies, ex

perienced new and exquisite influences of the Divinity.

At such times this chosen One, this perfect and only One,

was truly reclining on the left hand of the humanity,

while rejoiced and caressed by the right hand of the

Divinity (Cant. 2, 6) ; her most loving Son and Spouse

conjured the daughters of Jerusalem not to wake his Be

loved from his sleep, which cured the sorrows and infirmi

ties of her love, until She herself desired to be thus

waked; and the supernal spirits broke forth in wonder,

to see Her raised above them all, resting on her beloved

Son, clothed in varicolored garment at his right hand,

and they blessed and extolled Her above all creatures

(Ps. 44, 10).

203. The great Queen was made acquainted with the

deepest secrets concerning the predestination of the elect

in virtue of the Redemption, and She saw them as they

were written in the eternal memory of her Son. She was

186 CITY OF GOD

enabled to see how He applied to them his merits and

efficaciously interceded for their salvation; how his love

and grace, of which the reprobate made themselves un

worthy, were awarded to the predestined according to

their different dispositions. Among the predestined She

also saw those, whom the Lord in his wisdom and solici

tude was to call to his apostolate and imitation, and how

by means of his hidden and fore-ordained decrees, He

began to enlist them to the standard of his Cross, which

they themselves afterwards were to unfold before the

world; and how He pursued the policy of a good general,

who, planning a great battle or conquest, assigns the dif

ferent duties to different parts of his army, chooses the

most courageous and well-disposed for the most arduous

positions. Thus Christ our Redeemer, in order to enter

upon the conquest of the world and despoil the demon of

his tyrannical possession by the power of his Godhead

as the Word, disposed of this new army to be enlisted,

assigned the dignities and offices of his courageous and

strong captains and predestined them for their posts of

duty. All the preparations and apparatus of this war

were prearranged in the divine wisdom of his most holy

will just in the order in which all was to take place.

204. All this was also open and manifest to the most

prudent Mother; and to Her was given, by infused

species, to see and personally to know many of the pre

destined, especially the Apostles and disciples, and a

great number of those, who were called to the holy Church

in the primitive and later ages. On account of this super

natural knowledge given to Her by God, She knew the

Apostles and others before coming in contact with them,

and just as the divine Master had prayed and obtained

for them their vocation before He called them, so also

the heavenly Lady had made them the object of her

THE TRANSFIXION 187

prayers. Hence, in the favors and graces, which the

Apostles received before hearing or seeing their Master,

and which disposed and prepared them to accept their

vocation to the apostolate, the Mother of grace had like

wise co-operated. In proportion as the time of his public

preaching drew nearer, the Lord redoubled his prayers

and petitions for them and sent them greater and more

efficacious inspirations. In like manner the prayers of

the heavenly Lady grew to be more fervent and effica

cious; and when afterwards they attached themselves to

the Lord and saw Her face to face, She was wont to say

of them as well as of many others, to her Son : "These,

my Son and Master, are the fruits of thy prayers and of

thy holy desires." And She sang songs of praise and

thanksgiving, because She saw his wishes fulfilled, and

because She saw those, who were called from the begin

ning of the world, drawn to his following.

205. In the prudent contemplation of those wonders

our great Queen was wont to be absorbed and to break

out in matchless hymns of admiration and pra^e, per

forming heroic acts of love and adoring the secret judg

ments of the Most High. Entirely transformed and pene

trated by this fire, which issued from the Lord in order

to consume the world, She was accustomed, some times

in the secret of her heart, at others in a loud voice, to

exclaim : "O infinite love ! O manifestation of goodness

ineffable and immense! Why do mortals not know

Thee? Why should thy tenderness be so ill repaid?

O ye labors, sufferings, sighs, petitions and desires of my

Beloved, altogether more precious than pearls, than all

the treasures of the world! Who shall be so unhappy

and so ungrateful as to despise Thee? O children of

Adam, whom can you find to die for you many times, in

order that your ignorance might be undeceived, your

188 CITY OF GOD

hardness be softened and your misfortunes relieved?"

After these ardent exclamations, the blessed Mother con

versed with her Son mouth to mouth, and the highest

King consoled and dilated her heart reminding Her, how

pleasing She herself was to the Most High, how great a

grace and glory were to be merited for the predestined

in comparison with the ingratitude and hardness of the

reprobate. Especially He showed Her the love of Him

self toward Her, that of the blessed Trinity, and how

much God was pleased with her faithful correspondence

and immaculate purity.

206. At other times the Lord showed Her, what He

was to do in his public preaching; how She was to co

operate with Him and help Him in the affairs and in the

government of the new Church. She was informed of

the denial of saint Peter, the unbelief of Thomas, the

treachery of Judas, and other events of the future. From

that moment on the dutiful Lady resolved to labor zeal

ously in order to save that treasonous disciple, and She

followed her resolve, as I shall relate in its place. The

perdition of Judas began by his despising her good will

and by conceiving against the Mother of Grace a sort of

ill-will and impiety. Of these great mysteries and sacra

ments the heavenly Lady was informed by her most holy

Son. So great was the wisdom and science deposited in

Her, that all attempts at fully explaining them is vain;

for only the knowledge of the Lord could exceed that of

Mary, which far excelled that of all the seraphim and

cherubim. But if our Lord and Redeemer Jesus, and

Mary, his most holy Mother, employed all these gifts of

grace and science in the service of mortals ; and if a single

sigh of Christ our Lord was of incalculable value for all

creatures, and if those of his Mother, though they had

not the same value as his, being those of a mere creature,

THE TRANSFIXION 189

were worth more in the eyes of God than the doings of

all creation taken together, to what an immense value

will both their united merits swell, when we add together

what Son and Mother did for us, in their petitions, tears,

bloody sweat, fearful torment and death of the Cross and

all the other actions, in which the Mother joined the

divine Son as his helpmate and partaker of all his acts !

ingratitude of men! O hardness of our carnal heart,

more than adamantine! Where is our insight? Where

our reason ? Where is even the most common compassion

or gratitude of human nature? Is it not moved to pity

and compassion by the sensible objects, the causes of its

eternal damnation? Why then does it so completely

forget to be moved by the life and sufferings of the Lord,

the cause of everlasting happiness and peace in the life

to come?

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY.

207. My daughter, it is certain, that even if thou or

any of the mortals were able to speak in the language of

the angels, they would not on that account be able to

describe the blessings and favors, which the right hand

of the Most High showered upon me in those last years

of the life of my Son with me. These works of the

Lord are of an order, far above thy capacity and that

of the rest of the mortals. But since thou hast received

such special enlightenment concerning these sacraments,

1 wish that thou praise and extol the Almighty for all

that He did for me and for raising me out of the dust by

such exalted favors. Although thy love of the Lord must

be spontaneous as that of a devoted daughter and of a

most loving spouse, not selfish or forced ; yet I wish, that,

for the support of thy human weakness and the strength-

3-14

190 CITY OF GOD

ening of thy hope, thou fondly remember, how delightful

the Lord is in his charity toward those who love Him

with filial fear. O my dearest Daughter, if men would

place no hindrance by their sins, and if they would not

resist this infinite bounty, how measureless would be the

favors and blessings upon them! According to thy way

of understanding thou must look upon Him as being out

raged and made sorrowful by the opposition of mortals

to his boundless desires of doing them good. And they

carry their opposition so far, that they accustom them

selves not only to be unworthy of tasting of his sweetness,

but also not to believe, that others ever participate in his

sweetness and blessings, which He desires so much to

communicate to all.

208. Be careful also to give thanks for the incessant

labors of my most holy Son for all men, and for what I

have done in union with Him, as has been shown thee.

Catholics should bear in mind more constantly the passion

and death of the Lord, because the Church so often re

calls it to their remembrance, although few show them

selves grateful. But there are still fewer who take thought

of the other works of my Son and of mine. For the

Lord allowed not one hour, yea not a moment, to pass,

in which He did not employ in gaining gifts and graces

for rescuing all men from eternal damnation and making

them participants of his glory. These works of the Lord

God incarnate will be witnesses against the forgetfulness

and hard-heartedness of the faithful, especially on the day

of judgment If thou, who possessest the light and the

doctrine of the Most High and my teachings, wilt not be

grateful, thy confusion will be even greater than that of

others, since thy guilt is more heinous. Thou must not

only correspond to the many general blessings, but also

to the special and particular ones, which thou experiencest

THE TRANSFIXION 191

every day. Guard against the danger of forgetfulness

and conduct thyself as my daughter and disciple. Do not

delay for one moment to apply thyself to a good life in

the best way possible to thee. For this purpose attend

well to the interior lights and to the instructions of thy

spiritual guides, the ministers of the Lord. Be assured,

if thou correspond to some of the graces and favors, the

Most High will open up his almighty hands and fill thee

with riches and treasures.

CHAPTER XIX.

CHRIST OUR LORD BEGINS TO PREPARE FOR HIS PUBUC

PREACHING BY ANNOUNCING TO SOME THE PRESENCE

OF THE REDEEMER INTO THE WORLD; HIS MOST HOLY

MOTHER ASSISTS HIM THEREIN AND THE POWERS OF

HELL BEGIN TO GET UNEASY.

209. The fire of divine charity burned in the bosom of

our Redeemer and Master as in a closed furnace until the

opportune time destined for its manifestation. For in due

time He was to lay bare the burning love of his bosom

by means of his public preaching and miracles, and at last

even to break the vase of his humanity in order to pour

forth his charity. Although it is true, as Solomon says,

that fire cannot be concealed in the bosom without burn

ing the vestments (Prov. 6, 27), and although the Lord

always manifested his love, sending forth from Him its

sparks and flames in all his doings since the moment of

his Incarnation; yet, in comparison to what He was to

accomplish in his chosen time and in comparison to the

conflagration of his interior love, we may say that the

flames of his love had until then remained covered and

enclosed. The Lord had now reached perfect adolescence,

attaining his twenty-seventh year. According to our way

of speaking, it seemed as if He could not any more re

strain the impetus of his love and of his desire to fulfill the

will of the eternal Father in accomplishing the salvation

of men. He was filled with sorrowing love, prayed and

fasted much, and began to mingle with the people and

communicate with mortals. Many times He passed the

192

THE TRANSFIXION 193

nights in prayer on the mountains, and began to absent

Himself two or three days from the house and from

his most holy Mother.

210. The most prudent Lady, by these absences and

excursions of her Son, foresaw the approach of his labors

and sufferings. She already felt the sword, prepared for

her devout and affectionate love, piercing her heart and

soul, and was entirely consumed in most tender acts of

love for her Beloved. During these absences of her Son

her heavenly courtiers and vassals, the holy angels, at

tended upon Her in visible forms, and the great Lady

spoke to them of her sorrows, and sent them as messen

gers to her Son and Lord in order that they might bring

Her news of his occupations and exercises. The holy

angels obeyed their Queen and by their frequent messages

She was enabled, in her retirement, to follow the highest

King Christ in all his prayers, supplications and exercises.

Whenever the Lord returned She received Him prostrate

upon the ground, adoring Him and thanking Him for the

blessings, which He had gained for the sinners. She

served Him as a loving Mother and sought to procure

for Him the poor refreshment, of which She knew He

stood in need as a true man subject to suffering; for often

it happened that He had passed two or three days without

rest, or food or sleep. As already described the most

blessed Mother was well aware of the labors and cares

weighing down the soul of the Redeemer. The Lord

always informed Her of them, and of his new undertak

ings, of the hidden blessings communicated to many souls

by new light concerning the Divinity and concerning the

Redemption.

211. Full of this knowledge the great Queen was wont

to say to her most holy Son : "My Lord, highest and true

happiness of souls! I see, Light of my eyes, that thy

194 CITY OF GOD

most ardent love for men will not rest or be appeased

until it has secured eternal salvation for them ; this is the

proper occupation of thy charity and the work assigned

to Thee by the eternal Father. Thy words and precious

works must necessarily draw toward Thee many hearts ;

but, O my sweetest Love, I desire that all the mortals be

attracted and that all of them correspond to thy solicitude

and exceeding great charity. Behold me, thy slave, O

Lord, with a heart prepared to fulfill all thy wishes and to

offer her life, if necessary, in order that all creatures may

submit to the longings of thy most ardent love, which so

completely devotes itself to drawing them to thy grace

and friendship." To this offering the Mother of mercy

was urged by her ardent desire to see the teaching and

labors of our Redeemer and Master bring forth their

proper fruit. As the most prudent Lady fully estimated

their value and dignity, She wished that they be lost for

none of the souls, nor that proper thanks for them should

be wanting in men. In her charity She wished to assist

the Lord, or rather to assist her fellowmen, who heard

his words and witnessed his works, in corresponding to

these favors and lose not their chances of salvation. She

was consumed with a desire to render worthy thanks and

praise to the Lord for his wonderful bounty toward souls,

seeking to repay the debt of acknowledgment and grati

tude, not only for those mercies that were efficacious, but

for those which the guilt of men made inactive. In this

thanksgiving the thanks of our great Lady were as hidden

as they were admirable. For in all the works of Christ

our Lord She participated in a most exalted degree, not

only in so far as She co-operated as the cause, but in as

far as the effects are concerned. She so labored for each

soul, as if She herself were the one to be benefited. Of

this I will say more in the third part.

THE TRANSFIXION 195

212. To this offering of the most loving Mother her

most holy Son answered: "My dearest Mother! already

the time is come in which I must, conformably to the will

of my eternal Father, commence to prepare some hearts

for the reception of my light and doctrine and for giving

them notice of the opportune and foreordained time of

the salvation of men. In this work I wish thee to follow

and assist Me. Beseech thou my Father to send his light

into the hearts of the mortals and awaken their souls,

that they may with an upright intention receive the mes

sage of the presence of their Savior and Teacher in the

world." From that day on his Mother, according to his

own desire, accompanied Him in all his excursions from

the town of Nazareth.

213. Our Lord began to make these excursions more

frequently in the three years preceding his public preach

ing and Baptism ; in the company of our great Queen He

made many journeys in the neighborhood of Nazareth

and to the province of Nephthali, as was prophesied by

Isaias (Is. 5,2), or other parts. In his conversation with

men He began to announce to them the coming of the

Messias, assuring them, that He was already in the world

and in the territory of Israel. He told them of it without

intimating that He himself was the one they thus ex

pected ; for the first testimony of his being Son of God,

was given publicly by the eternal Father, when the voice

from heaven was heard at the Jordan : "This is my beloved

Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matth. 3, 17). Without

especially announcing his true dignity, the Onlybegotten

spoke of it in general terms, as one who knows with cer

tainty. Without performing any public miracles or using

other outward demonstration, He secretly accompanied

his teachings and testimonies by interior inspirations and

helps, which He conferred on the hearts of those with

196 CITY OF GOD

whom He conversed and treated. Thus disposing their

souls by faith, He prepared them to receive Him after

wards so much the more readily in person.

214. He made acquaintance with such, as, by his divine

wisdom, He knew to be prepared and capable (or rather,

less unsuited) to accept the seed of truth. To the more

ignorant He spoke of the signs of the coming of the Re

deemer known to all, such as the coming of the three

Kings and the slaughter of the Innocents, and of similar

events. With the more enlightened He adduced the testi

monies of the Prophets, already fulfilled, and He ex

plained to them these truths with the power and force

of a divine Teacher. He proved to them, that the Messias

had already come to Israel, and He pointed out to them

the kingdom of God and the way to reach it. As He

exhibited in his outward appearance so much beauty,

grace, peace, sweetness and gentleness of manner and of

speech, and as all his discourse, though veiled, was never

theless so vivid and strong, and as He added thereto also

his interior help of grace, the fruit of this wonderful

mode of teaching was very great. Many souls forsook

the path of sin, others began a virtuous life, all of them

were instructed and made capable of understanding the

great mysteries, and especially of believing, that the Mes

sias had already begun his reign.

215. To these works of mercy the divine Teacher added

many others ; for He consoled the sorrowful, relieved the

oppressed, visited the sick and grief-stricken, encouraged

the disheartened, gave salutary counsel to the ignorant,

assisted those in the agony of death, secretly gave health

of body to many, helped those in great distress, and at the

same time led them on to the path of life and of true peace.

All those that trustfully came to Him, or heard Him with

devout and upright mind, were filled with light and with

THE TRANSFIXION 197

the powerful gifts of his Divinity. It is not possible to

enumerate or estimate the admirable works of the Re

deemer during these three years of public preaching after

his Baptism. All was done in a mysterious manner so that

without manifesting Himself as the Author of salvation,

He communicated it to a vast number of souls. In nearly

all these wonderful operations our great Lady was present

as a most faithful witness and co-worker. As all of them

were manifest to Her, She assisted and gave thanks for

them in the name of the creatures and the mortals who

were thus favored by divine bounty. She composed

hymns of praise to the Almighty, prayed for the souls as

one knowing all their interior necessities, and by her

prayers gained for them new blessings and favors. She

herself also undertook to exhort and counsel them, draw

ing them to the sweet teachings of her Son and giving

them intimation of the coming of the Messias. Yet She

practiced these works of mercy more among women, imi

tating among them the works of mercy which her most

holy Son performed for men.

216. Few persons accompanied or followed the Savior

and his most blessed Mother in those first years; for it

was not yet time to call them to a close following of his

doctrines. He permitted them to remain in their homes,

simply instructing and urging them to a more perfect life

by his divine enlightenment. The ordinary companions

of the heavenly Teachers were the holy angels, who

served them as most faithful vassals and servants. Al

though they often returned from these excursions to

their home in Nazareth, yet on their journeys They stood

more in need of the ministry of these courtiers of heaven.

Some of the nights they passed in prayer without any

other shelter than that of the sky, and on these occasions

the angels protected them and sheltered Them from the in-

198 CITY OF GOD

clemency of the weather, and sometimes they brought

food. At other times the Lord and his Mother begged

food, refusing to accept any money, or other gifts not nec

essary for their present nourishment. When at times They

separated, the Lord Jesus visiting the sick in hospitals and

his Mother other sick persons, innumerable angels accom

panied Mary in visible forms. Through their mediation

She performed some of her works of charity and was

kept informed of the doings of her most holy Son. I do

not dilate in particular upon the wonders performed by

Them during this time ; nor upon the labors and difficulties

encountered on these excursions, in the taverns, and from

the obstacles which the common enemy placed in their

way : it is enough to know that the Teacher of life and his

most holy Mother were looked upon as poor pilgrims, and

that they preferred the way of suffering, without evading

any labor deemed advisable for our salvation.

217. In this hidden manner the divine Master and his

Mother spread the knowledge of his coming to all sorts of

persons ; yet the poor were more especially the objects of

his blessed solicitude. They ordinarily are more capable

of God s truths, because they are less burdened with sin

and endowed with more light, and because their minds

are more free and unhampered by vain anxieties. They

are likewise more humble and diligent in subjecting their

will and understanding, and in applying themselves to an

upright and virtuous life. Moreover, as during these

three years Jesus did not preach openly, nor with mani

fest authority confirmed by miracles, He addressed Him

self rather to the humble and poor, who are led to the

truth with less show of authority. Nevertheless the at

tention of the ancient serpent was much aroused by many

of the doings of Jesus and his Mother; for not all of his

miracles remained concealed, though the power by which

THE TRANSFIXION . 199

they were done was hidden. Satan saw that through

his words and exhortations many sinners were brought

to penance, amended their life and escaped his tyranny;

others advanced in virtue, and in all who listened to the

Teacher of life, the common enemy noticed a great and

unheard of change.

218. What enraged him most, was that he could not

succeed in his attempts with those that were in the throes

of death. Though he multiplied his cunning and malice in

these last hours of the souls in this life, it often happened

that this bloodthirsty dragon, having approached the sick

in order to exert his malice, was interrupted by the en

trance of Jesus or Mary and felt a powerful force, which

hurled him and his demons to the deepest caverns of hell.

If Jesus or Mary had previously come to the sickroom,

the demons could not enter and could exert no influence

upon the sick person, who thus died in the powerful pro

tection of the Lord. As the dragon felt this divine power

without being able to account for it, he conceived an in

sane rage, and anxiously sought means of counteracting

the damage. Then happened what I shall relate in the

next chapter, as I do not wish to enlarge this present one.

TEACHING OF THE MOST HOLY QUEEN, MARY.

219. My daughter, I see thee astonished at the infor

mation, which I give thee concerning the mysterious

works of my most holy Son and concerning my own share

in them. For thou seest on the one hand, how powerful

they are for making an impression on human hearts, and

on the other, that many of them have remained hidden

until now. Thy wonder should not be that men have not

known these mysteries, but that, having been informed of

so many others concerning the life and activity of their

own and my Lord, they have held them in such contempt

200 CITY OF GOD

and forgetf ulness. If they were not so ignoble of heart,

and would lovingly contemplate the divine truths, they

would find in my Son s and in my own life, as far as it is

known to them, most powerful motives for thankfulness.

By the articles of faith and by the many other truths

taught and preached in the holy Church, many worlds

could be converted. For these truths exhibit clearly, that

the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father clothed Himself

in the mortal flesh of sinful man in order to redeem the

human race by the frightful death of the Cross (Philip

2, 7), acquiring for them eternal life by the loss of his

own, and recalling and liberating them from everlasting

death. If this blessing were taken at its true value and

mortals were not so ungrateful to their God and Savior

and so cruel toward themselves, none would lose their

chance of salvation or bring upon themselves eternal dam

nation. In thy amazement then, my dearest, weep cease

lessly over the terrible loss sustained by so many insane

and thankless souls, who are forgetful of God, of their

duty and of their own selves.

220. On former occasions I have already told thee, that

the number of those foreknown as doomed, is so great,

and of those that save themselves is so small, that it is not

expedient to say more in particular. For if thou hast the

sentiments of a true daughter of the Church, the spouse of

Christ, my Son and Lord, thou wouldst die at seeing such

misfortune. What thou mayest know, is, that all the loss

and misfortune apparent in Christian nations and govern

ments, as well among chiefs as among subjects of the

Church and of the secular state, all originate and flow ;

from the forgetf ulness and contempt of the works of ,

Christ and of the works of his Redemption. If then

were a way of rousing them to a sense of thankfulness

and to a sense of their duty as faithful and acknowledgec

THE TRANSFIXION 201

children of their Creator and Redeemer, and of me, who

am their Intercessor, the wrath of the divine Judge would

be appeased, and there would be some diminution of the

widespread ruin and perdition among Catholics. The

eternal Father, who is justly zealous for the honor of his

Son and rigorously chastises the servants, who know the

will of their Lord and refuse to fulfill it, would again

be reconciled.

221. The faithful in the Church make much of the sin

of the infidel Jews in taking away the life of their God

and Master. They are right in doing so, for it was a

most heinous crime and merited the punishments decreed

against that people. But Catholics forget, that their own

sins are rendered heinous by other elements of guilt sur

passing that of the Jews; for although their error was

culpable, they esteemed it as truth in the end ; then also the

Lord delivered Himself up to them, allowing them to fol

low the counsels of hell, by which they were oppressed

for their sins (Luke 22, 53). In our days the Catholics

are not in ignorance, but in the fullness of the light, by

which they know and understand the divine mysteries of

the Incarnation and Redemption. The holy Church has

been founded, spread out, made illustrious by miracles,

by saints, by holy writings, by the knowledge and procla

mation of truths unknown to the Jews. In spite of all

these multiplied advantages, blessings, truths and enlight

enments, many live like infidels and as if they had not

before their eyes so many inducements to draw them on

and oblige them, nor so many chastisements to fill them

with dread. How can Catholics then, under these circum

stances, imagine that the sins of others were greater or

more grievous than their own? How can they presume

that their punishment shall not be more lamentable? O

my daughter, ponder well this doctrine, and be filled with

202 CITY OF GOD

a holy fear! Humiliate thyself to the dust and confess

thyself the lowest of the creatures before the Most High.

Look upon the works of thy Redeemer and Master. Imi

tate them and apply them sorrowfully to satisfy for thy

own faults in sorrow and penance. Do thou imitate and

follow me in my ways, as far as thou art enlightened from

on high. And I wish that thou labor not only for thy

own salvation, but also for the salvation of thy brethren.

This thou must do by praying and suffering for them,

charitably admonishing those thou canst, and eagerly do

ing for them more than is thy duty. Show thyself even

more anxious to benefit those who have offended thee,

be patient with all, and humiliate thyself below the most

abject. According to the directions given thee before

be thou solicitous to assist, with fervent charity and firm

assurance, those that are in the dangers of death.

CHAPTER XX.

LUCIFER CALLS A MEETING IN HELL IN ORDER TO HINDER

THE WORKS OF CHRIST OUR REDEEMER AND OF HIS

MOST HOLY MOTHER.

222. The tyrannic sway of Lucifer over this world was

not any more so unobstructed as it had been in the

ages preceding the Incarnation of the divine Word;

for from the hour in which the Son of the

eternal Father descended from heaven and assumed

flesh in the bridal chamber of his virginal Mother, this

strongly armed one felt a superior force, which oppressed

and crushed him, as I have related in its place (Luke

11, 21). After the birth of Christ he felt this power,

when the Infant Jesus entered into Egypt (Vol. II 130,

643), and on many occasions afterward this dragon was

routed and overcome by the force of divine truth issuing

from the great Queen. Comparing- and connecting these

past happenings with all the new experiences related in

the foregoing chapter, the ancient serpent was beginning

to be much troubled by his fears and suspicions, lest a

new and vast force had established itself on the earth.

But as the sacrament of the Incarnation was deeply hidden

from him, he lived on in his blind fury without suspicion

of the truth, although, since his fall from heaven, he had

most anxiously tried to ascertain when and how the divine

Word would leave heaven and assume human flesh ; for

this wonderful work of God was what his arrogance and

pride feared most of all. This anxiety induced him to

convoke the many council meetings, of which I have

203

204 CITY OF GOD

spoken in this history, and also the one of which I now

speak.

223. Finding himself then full of uncertainty concern

ing the experiences of the demons and of Himself with

Jesus and Mary, this enemy of the human race questioned

himself by what power he had been vanquished and put

to flight in his attempts to ruin the dangerously sick and

the dying and in his other encounters with the Queen of

heaven. As he could not clear the mystery for himself,

he resolved to consult those of his associates who excelled

in malice and astuteness. He gave forth a roar or tre

mendous howl in hell, using the language understood by

the demons, and called together those who were subject

to him. All of them having been gathered together, he

made them a speech, saying : "My ministers and compan

ions, who have always followed me in my just opposition,

you well know that in the first state in which we were

placed by the Creator of all things, we acknowledged Him

as the universal source of all our being and thus also

respected Him. But as soon as, to the detriment of our

beauty and pre-eminence, so close to the Deity, He im

posed upon us the command, that we adore and serve the

person of the Word, in the human form, which He in

tended to assume, we resisted his will. For although I

knew, that this reverence was due Him as God, yet as He

chose to unite Himself to the nature of man, so ignoble

and inferior to mine, I could not bear to be subject to

Him, nor could I bear to see, that He did not favor me

rather than the creature man. He not only commanded

us to adore Him, but also to recognize as our superior a

Woman, his Mother, a mere earthly creature. To these j

grievances I took exception and you with me. We ob- ;

jected to them and resolved to deny Him obedience. On

account of our behavior at that time we are punished and |

THE TRANSFIXION 205

made to suffer the pains of our present condition. Al

though we are aware of these truths and acknowledge

them with terror among ourselves, it will not do to con

fess them before men (Jas. 2, 19). And this I put as a

command upon you all, in order that they may not know

of our present difficulty and weakness."

224. "But if this Godman and his Mother are really

to come, it. is clear, that their coming into this world

shall be the beginning of our greatest ruin and torment,

and that, for this reason, I must seek with all my strength

to prevent it and to destroy Them, even at the cost of

overturning and destroying all the world. You all know

how invincible has been my strength until now, since

such a great portion of the world obeyed my command

and is subject to my will and cunning. But in the last

few years I have noticed on many occasions, that your

powers seemed to have decreased and weakened, that you

were oppressed and overcome, and I myself feel a superior

force, which restrains and intimidates me. Several times

I have searched with you through the whole world, trying

to find some clue for this loss and oppression which we

feel. If this Messias, who is promised to the chosen

people of God, is already in the world, we not only fail

to discover Him on the whole face of the earth, but we

see no certain signs of his coming and we perceive none

of the pomp and outward show naturally attendant upon

such a person. Nevertheless I have my misgivings, lest

the time of his coming from heaven onto this earth be al

ready near. Therefore we ought all be eager to destroy

Him and the Woman whom He shall choose for His

Mother. Whoever shall distinguish himself in this work,

shall not complain of my thankfulness and reward. Until

now I have found guilt and the effects of guilt in all men,

and I have seen no such majesty and grand magnificence

3-15

206 CITY OF GOD

as would induce the Word to become man and which

would oblige mortals to adore Him and offer Him sacri

fice, for by this homage we shall be able to recognize Him.

The certain indication of his coming and the distinguish

ing mark of the Messias will no doubt be, that neither sin

nor its consequences, common to other children of Adam,

will ever be able to touch Him."

225. "So much the greater therefore," continued Luci

fer, "is my confusion at present; for, if the eternal Word

has not yet come into the world, I cannot understand

these new experiences, nor whence comes this strong op

position which overpowers us. Who drove us out and

hurled us from Egypt? Who destroyed the temples and

crushed the idols of that country in which we were adored

by all the inhabitants ? Who oppresses us now in the land

of Galilee and its neighborhood, and prevents us from

perverting many of the persons in danger of death ? Who

keeps away from sin so many souls as if they were with

drawn from our jurisdiction, and who causes so many

to better their lives and begin to seek the kingdom of

God? If this damaging influence is allowed to continue,

great misfortune and torment may arise for all of us

from this secret force, which we do not comprehend. It

is necessary to put a stop to it and search anew all over

the world, whether it does not contain a great prophet or

saint, who seeks our destruction ; I have not been able to

discover any one to whom I could ascribe such a power.

Only I have a great hatred against that Woman, our

enemy, especially since we persecuted Her in the temple

and later on in her house at Nazareth. For we have al

ways been vanquished and terrified by the virtue which

shields Her and resists our malice. Never have I been

able to search her interior or come near her person. She

has a Son, and, when Both of Them attended at his

THE TRANSFIXION 207

father s death, all of us were unable to approach the place

where They were. They are poor and neglected people;

She is an unknown and helpless little woman : but I pre

sume without a doubt, that both Son and Mother must be

counted among the just. For I have continually sought

to draw them into the failings common to men, and yet

I have never succeeded in causing them to commit the

least of the disorderly or reprehensible of actions, which

are so common and natural with other people. I know

that the Almighty conceals from me the state of these

souls ; and this doubtlessly argues some hidden danger for

us. Although the interior condition of some other souls

has been concealed from us on certain occasions, yet this

was but rarely and not in the manner as with these Two.

Even if this Man is not the Messias, it is certain that they

are just and our enemies, which is sufficient reason for

persecuting Them and ruining Them, and especially for

seeking to find out who They are. Do you all follow

me in the enterprise with all diligence, for I shall be

your leader in our fight against Them."

226. With this exhortation Lucifer concluded his long"

speech, in which he gave to the demon much other infor

mation and malicious counsel. But I need not mention

them here, since this history will contain other references

to the hellish plots to make us understand the cunning of

that venomous serpent. Immediately the prince of dark

ness, together with countless legions of evil spirits, issued

forth from hell and spread over the whole world. They

persisted in roaming through it many times, searching out

in their malice and cunning all the just, tempting those

they recognized as such and provoking them and other

men to commit the evil deeds hatched out in their own in

fernal minds. But Christ our Lord in his wisdom con

cealed his own person and that of his Mother for many

208 CITY OF GOD

days from the haughty Lucifer. He did not permit him

to see or recognize Him, until He betook Himself to the

desert, where He allowed and wished the devil to tempt

Him after his long fast; and Lucifer did tempt Him, as

I shall relate in its place.

227. When this meeting was held in the infernal re

gions, Christ, to whom as our divine Master all was

known, betook Himself to prayer against the malice of the

dragon and among other petitions He prayed as follows :

"Eternal and most high God and Father, I adore Thee

and exalt thy infinite and immutable Essence; I confess

Thee as the highest and boundless Good and I offer Myself

in sacrifice to thy divine will for the vanquishing and

crushing of the infernal powers and of their malicious

counsels against my creatures. I shall battle for them

against my and their enemies, and by my own works and

victories I shall leave them an encouragement and example

of what they must do, so that those who serve Me from

their heart, may prevail against Lucifer s malice. Defend,

my Father, the souls from the snares and cruelty of the

serpent and its followers, and grant to the just the power

of thy right hand, in order that through my intercession

and Death they may gain victory over their temptations

and dangers." Our great Queen and Lady had a like

knowledge of the evil counsels of Lucifer and saw all that

passed in her divine Son and the prayer He offered. As

the Coadjutrix of his triumphs She joined in the prayers

and petitions of her Son to the eternal Father. The Most

High granted all of them, and on this occasion Jesus and

Mary obtained immense assistance and rewards from the

Father for those that battle against the demons in the

name of Jesus and Mary. So great was the efficacy of

their prayers, that all those who pronounce these names

in reverence and faith, overcome their hellish enemies and

THE TRANSFIXION 209

precipitously repel them in virtue of the prayers, tri

umphs and victories of our Savior and of his most

holy Mother. On account of the protection thereby

offered to us against the arrogant giants of hell, and on

account of all the other helps furnished us in the holy

Church of our Lord, no excuse is left us for not battling

legitimately and valiantly, or for not overcoming and

vanquishing the demon, as the enemy of the eternal God

and our own. For in this we should follow the example

of our Savior according to our ability.

TEACHING OF THE MOST HOLY MARY, THE QUEEN

OF HEAVEN.

228. My daughter, weep with bitterest sorrow over

the stubbornness and blindness of mortals in not under

standing and acknowledging the loving protection, which

they have in my divine Son and in me as a relief from all

their troubles and necessities. My Lord spared Himself

no exertion and left no means unemployed in order to

gain for them inestimable treasures of heaven. He

garnered up his infinite merits in the holy Church, the

most important fruit of his Passion and Death; He left

the secure pledges of his glorious love; and procured

for them most easy and efficacious means in order that all

of them might enjoy and apply them for their use and for

their eternal salvation. He offers them moreover his

protection and mine ; He loves them as children ; He cher

ishes them as his chosen friends; He calls them by his

inspirations ; He invites them by his blessings and graces;

He awaits them as a most kind Father ; He seeks them as

their Pastor; He helps them as the most Powerful; He

rewards them as One possessing infinite riches, and

governs them as a mighty King. All these and innum

erable other favors, which are pointed out by faith, offered

210 CITY OF GOD

by the Church and presented before their very eyes, men

forget and despise; as if blind, they love the darkness

and deliver themselves up to the fury and rage of those

cruel enemies. They listen to his lies, obey his wicked

suggestions and confide in his snares ; they trust and give

themselves up to the unquenchable fire of his wrath. He

seeks to destroy them and consign them to eternal death,

only because they are creatures of the Most High, who

vanquished and crushed this most cruel foe.

229. Guard thyself, therefore, my dearest, against this

deplorable error of the children of men and disengage thy

faculties in order that thou mayest clearly see the differ

ence between the service of Christ and that of Belial.

Greater is that difference than the distance between

heaven and earth. Christ is eternal life, the true light and

the pathway to eternal life; those who follow Him He

loves with imperishable love, and He offers them his life

and his company; with it, an eternal happiness, such as

neither eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, nor ever can

enter into the mind of man (John 14, 6) . Lucifer is dark

ness itself, error, deceit, unhappiness and death ; he hates

his followers and forces them into evil as far as possible,

and at the end inflicts upon them eternal fire and horrid

torments. Let mortals give testimony, whether they are

ignorant of these truths, since the holy Church propounds

them and calls them to their minds every day. If men

believe these truths, where is their good sense? Who

has made them insane? Who drives from their remem

brance the love, which they ought to have for themselves ?

Who makes them so cruel to themselves? O insanity

never sufficiently to be bewailed and so little considered

by the children of Adam! All their life they labor and

exert themselves to become more and more entangled in

the snares of their passions, to be consumed in deceitful

THE TRANSFIXION 211

vanities and to deliver themselves over to an inex

tinguishable fire, death and everlasting perdition, as if all

were a mere joke and as if Christ had not come down

from heaven to die on a Cross for their rescue ! Let them

but look upon the price, and consider how much God him

self paid for this happiness, who knew the full value of it.

230. The idolaters and heathens are much less to blame

for falling into this error ; nor does the wrath of the Most

High enkindle so much against them as against the faith

ful of his Church, who have such a clear knowledge of

this truth. If the minds of men, in our present age, have

grown forgetful of it, let them understand that this hap

pened by their own fault, because they have given a free

hand to their enemy Lucifer. He with tireless malice

labors to overthrow the barriers of restraint, so that, for

getful of the last things and of eternal torment, men may

give themselves over, like brute beasts, to sensual

pleasures, and unmindful of themselves consume their

lives in the pursuit of apparent good, until, as Job says

(Job 21, 13), they suddenly fall a prey to eternal perdi

tion. Such is in reality the fate of innumerable foolish

men, who abhor the restraint imposed upon them by this

truth. Do thou, my daughter, allow me to instruct thee,

and keep thyself free from such harmful deceit and from

this forget fulness of the worldly people. Let the despair

ing groans of the damned, which begin at the end of their

lives and at the beginning of their eternal damnation, ever

resound in thy ears: O we fools, who esteemed the life

of the just as madness ! O how are they counted among

the sons of God, and their lot is among the saints ! We

have erred then from the path of truth and of justice.

The sun has not arisen for us. We have wearied our

selves in the ways of iniquity and destruction, we have

sought difficult paths and erred by our own fault from

212 CITY OF GOD

the way of the Lord. What has pride profited us ? What

advantage has the boasting 1 of riches brought us ? All has

passed away from us like a shadow. O had we but never

been born ! This, my daughter, thou must fear and pon

der in thy heart, so that, before thou goest to that land of

darkness and of eternal dungeons from whence there is

no return, thou mayest provide against evil and avoid it

by doing the good. During thy mortal life and out of

love do thou now perform that of which the damned in

their despair are forced to warn thee by the excess of

their punishment.

CHAPTER XXL

SAINT JOHN, HAVING OBTAINED GREAT FAVORS FROM THE

MOST HOW MARY, IS ORDERED BY THE HOLY GHOST TO

GO FORTH ON HIS PUBLIC PREACHING. HE FIRST

SENDS TO THE HEAVENLY LADY HIS CROSS.

231. I have already spoken of some of the favors con

ferred on saint John by the blessed Mary during her so

journ in Egypt; also of her solicitude for her cousin

Elisabeth and saint John, when Herod resolved to take

away the lives of the holy Innocents. I have also men

tioned, that the future Precursor of Christ, after the death

of his mother, remained altogether in the desert until the

time appointed by the divine wisdom, and that he lived

there more the life of a seraph than of a man. His con

versation was with the holy angels and with the Lord of

all creation; this was his sole occupation and never was

he idle in the exercise of his love and of the heroic virtues,

which he began in the womb of his mother. Not for one

moment was grace in him unprofitable, nor did he fail in

the least point of perfection possible. His senses, being al

together withdrawn from earthly things, did not in any

way hinder him ; for they did not serve him as windows,

through which the images of the deceitful vanities of the

creatures are wont to bring death to the souls. Since

this saint was so fortunate as to be visited by the divine

light before he saw the light of created sun of this

world, he overlooked all that is seen by eyes of flesh,

and fixed his interior gaze immovably upon the being

of God and his infinite perfections.

213

214 CITY OF GOD

232. The divine favors received by saint John exceed

all human intelligence, capacity and thought ; his holiness

and exalted merits we shall understand in the beatific

vision and not before. As it does not pertain to the object

of this history to relate what I have seen of these mys

teries, and what the holy doctors and other authors have

written of his prerogatives, I must confine myself to re

late that which is necessary for my present purpose;

namely, what refers to the share of the heavenly Lady in

his exaltation ; for through Her saint John received most

inestimable favors. Among them not the least was her

sending food to him every day until he reached the age

of seven years, which She did by the ministry of the holy

angels, as I mentioned above. From his seventh

year until he reached the ninth, She sent him only bread ;

but after that year she ceased to send him any food. For

She understood that during the rest of his stay in the

desert, it was the will of heaven and of himself, that he

nourish himself by roots, wild honey and locusts,

which he accordingly did until he came forth to preach.

Yet, though Mary did not any more send him food, She

continued to send to him her holy angels in order to con

sole him and inform him of the doings and mysteries of

the incarnate Word ; but these visits happened no oftener

than once a week.

233. These great favors, besides serving other ends,

encouraged saint John to bear with his solitude: not

that the desolation of his abode and the severity of his

penance caused him any discouragement; to make these

desirable and sweet to him, his own wonderful holiness

and grace were sufficient. But these tokens of love served

to counteract the vehemence of his love, which drew him

toward Christ and his Mother and to make their absence

and the want of their intercourse bearable to him. For

THE TRANSFIXION 215

there is no doubt, that restraining his desire for this

intercourse was a far greater pain and suffering to his

loving soul, than all the inclemencies of his habitation,

his fasting and penances, and the horrors of the lonely

mountains, and would have been impossible if his

heavenly Lady and aunt had not assisted him by contin

ually sending her holy angels to bring messages from his

Beloved. The great Hermit inquired into all the particu

lars of the Son and Mother with the anxious solicitude

of a loving bridegroom (Cant. 1, 6). He transmitted to

them the messages of his ardent love and of the sighs,

that came from his inmost heart wounded by the absence

of the Objects of his love. He besought the celestial

Princess through her messengers to send him their bless

ing and he asked the angels to adore and humbly reverence

the Lord in his name. He himself ceased not to adore

Him in spirit and in truth from his solitude. He asked

also the holy angels, who visited him and the others that

attended upon him, to do the same. These were the ordi

nary occupations of the Precursor until he arrived at the

perfect age of thirty years and in this manner he was

prepared by divine Providence for his appointed task.

234. The destined and acceptable time decreed by the

eternal wisdom for sending forth saint John, the Har

binger of the incarnate Word, the Voice resounding in

the desert, had now come (Is. 40, 3). As related by

the Evangelists, in the fifteenth year of the reign of

Tiberius Cassar, under the high priests Annas and

Caiphas, the command of God came to John, the son of

Zacharias in the desert (Luke 3, 1). And he came to

the banks of the Jordan, preaching the baptism of pen

ance for the remission of sins and preparing the hearts

for the reception of the promised Messias, pointing Him

out with his finger, who had been expected for so many

216 CITY OF GOD

ages. This command of the Lord saint John heard

in an ecstasy, in which, by an especial operation of the

Divinity, he was enlightened and prepared by the pleni

tude of the light and grace of the holy Spirit. In this

rapture he obtained a deep insight into the mysteries of

the Redemption, and he was favored with an abstractive

vision of the Divinity, so wonderful that he was trans

formed and changed to a new existence of sanctity and

grace. The Lord commanded him to issue forth from

the desert in order to prepare the way for the preaching

of the incarnate Word by his own, thus exercising the

office of a Precursor and all that pertained to it; for he

was now instructed and filled with most abundant grace

for his work.

235. The new preacher saint John came from the

desert clothed in camel skin, girded with a cincture

or cord made likewise of leather. His feet were bare,

his features thin and emaciated, his appearance wonder

fully graceful, modest and humble, his soul was rilled

with invincible and magnanimous courage, his heart

inflamed with the love of God and man, his words rang

forth strong and forceful, piercing to the souls of his

hearers like the sparks from the immutable and divine

essence of the Almighty. He was gentle toward the

meek, loving toward the humble, wonderful in the sight

of angels and men, terrible to the proud, dreadful to the

sinners, and an object of horror to the demons. He was

a Preacher fit to be the instrument of the incarnate Word

and such as was needed for this people of the Hebrews,

who were so hard-hearted, thankless and stubborn,

and who were now cursed with heathen governors, avari

cious and proud priests, without enlightenment, without

prophets, without piety, without fear of God, though

they had been visited by so many calamities and chastise-

THE TRANSFIXION 217

ments for their sins. He was now sent to open the eyes

of his people to their miserable state and prepare their

hearts to know and receive their Savior and Teacher.

236. The anchoret John, many years before, had

made for himself a large cross, which he had placed at

the head of his couch : with it he performed some exer

cises of penance and he was accustomed to place himself

upon it in the form of one crucified, when he was en

gaged in prayer. He did not wish to leave this treasure

in the desert; therefore, before issuing forth, he sent it

by the hands of the holy angels to the Queen of heaven

and eirth and requested them to tell Her that the cross

had been his greatest and most beloved companion in

his long banishment ; that he sent it to Her as a precious

treasure, because he knew what was to be wrought upon

it by the Son of God, and also because the holy angels

had told him, that her most holy Son and Redeemer of

the world often made use of a cross like this, when per

forming his prayers in his oratory. The angels had made

this cross fashioning it from a tree in the desert at his

request; for the saint had neither the necessary strength

nor the instruments for this kind of work, whereas the

holy angels wanted not the skill and needed no instru

ments on account of the power they have over material

creation. With this present and message of saint John

the holy princes returned to their Queen, and She re

ceived this token from their hands with innermost emo

tions of sorrow and consolation, at the thought of what

mysteries were in so short a time to be enacted upon the

hard wood of the Cross. She addressed it in words of

tenderness and placed it in her oratory, where She kept

it ever afterwards together with the other cross which

had been used by her Son. At her death the most pru

dent Lady left these crosses, with other remembrances,

218 CITY OF GOD

to the Apostles as a priceless heritage, and by them they

were carried through different countries where they

preached.

237. In regard to this matter I had some doubts, which

I proposed to the Mother of wisdom, saying to Her:

"Queen of heaven and my Mistress, most holy among

the saints and chosen among creatures as the Mother of

God himself: being an ignorant and dull woman, I find

a difficulty in what I have here written ; if Thou give me

permission, I would like to mention it to Thee, for Thou,

O Lady, art the Mistress of wisdom and hast deigned to

be my Teacher in the doctrine of eternal life and salva

tion. My difficulty is this: I see not only saint John

but also Thee, my Queen, reverence the Cross before thy

most holy Son had died upon it ; whereas I have always

believed, that until the hour in which He wrought our

salvation upon sacred wood of the Cross, it had served

as a gibbet of shame for the punishment of criminals

and that therefore it was considered as a token of con

tempt and ignominy; and even the holy Church teaches

us, that all its value and dignity came to the Cross by

its contact with the body of the Redeemer and through

its connection with mystery of man s Redemption."

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY

QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY.

238. My daughter, gladly will I satisfy thy desire and

answer thy doubt. What thou sayest is true : the Cross

was ignominious before my Son and Lord honored and

sanctified it by his Passion and Death and solely on ac

count of this Passion and Death the adoration and

reverence shown to it by the Church is now due to it.

If any one, who was ignorant of the mysteries, which

were connected with it and which were so well known

THE TRANSFIXION 219

to me and saint John, would have given it such worship

and honor as I have before the Redemption, he would

have been guilty of error and idolatry ; for he would have

worshipped a creature of which he did not know that it

was worthy of such honor. But we showed this venera

tion to the Cross for several reasons : We knew for cer

tain, that the Redeemer was to accomplish his work upon

the Cross; we knew also that, before dying upon it, He

had begun to sanctify this sacred emblem by his contact

in placing Himself upon it during his prayers and in

offering Himself freely to die upon it. The eternal

Father moreover had accepted these foreseen works of

the Cross from his divine Son by an unalterable decree.

All the actions and the contacts of the incarnate Word

were of infinite value and thus sanctified the sacred wood,

making it worthy of the highest veneration. Whenever

I or saint John showed this reverence to the Cross, we

had before our minds these mysteries and truths : we did

not adore the Cross in itself, nor the material of which

it was made; for the divine worship was not due to it

until the works of the Redemption should have been

completed upon it; but we waited for the formal exe

cution of the work intended to be performed upon it

by the incarnate Word. This was the real object of

our reverence and worship of the Cross. And this is

also now the meaning and intent of the practice of the

adoration of the Cross in the holy Church.

239. Accordingly thou must ponder well thy obligation

and that of all the mortals in regard to the reverence and

esteem due to the holy Cross; for if I and the holy Pre

cursor, even before the Death of my divine Son upon it,

so eagerly imitated Him in his love and reverence of it

and in the exercises which He performed in connection

therewith, what should not the faithful children of the

220 CITY OF GOD

Church do after they have seen their Creator and their

Redeemer crucified upon it, and when they have the image

of the Crucified before their very eyes? I desire, then,

my daughter, that thou embrace the Cross with bound

less esteem, that thou use it as the priceless jewel of thy

Spouse, and that thou accustom thyself to perform those

exercises upon it, which are known and practiced by thee,

without ever of thy own will forgetting or neglecting

them as long as obedience will permit thee. Whenever

thou approachest such sacred exercises, let it be with a

profound reverence and with a deep pondering of the

Passion and Death of the Lord, thy Beloved. Try to in

troduce the same custom among thy religious, zealously

exhorting them thereto; for no exercise is more proper

to the spouses of Christ, and if performed with devotion

and reverence, it will be most pleasing to their Lord. In

addition to this, I wish that thou, in imitation of saint

John the Baptist prepare thy heart for all that the holy

Spirit wishes to work in thee for his own glory and for

the benefit of souls. As far as depends upon thee, love

solitude and withdraw thy soul from the confusion of

created things. Whenever thy duty to God forces thee

to deal with creatures, seek always thy own sanctification

and the edification of thy neighbor, so that in thy outward

conversation and intercourse the zeal of thy spirit may

shine forth. His exalted virtues now known to thee

and those resplendent in the lives of other saints, should

serve thee as a spur and as an example : seek, like a busy

bee, to build up the sweet honeycomb of sanctity and

innocence so much desired in thee by my divine Son.

Distinguish well between the labors of the bee and of the

spider : the one converts her nourishment into sweetness

useful for the living and the dead, while the other

changes it into snare and venom. Do thou gather the

THE TRANSFIXION 221

flowers of virtue from the saints in the garden of the

Church, as far as thy weak endeavors with the aid of

grace will permit ; imitate them eagerly and incite others

by thy eloquence, thus drawing blessings upon the living

and the dead while thou anxiously flyest from the harm

and damage of sinful deeds.

3-16

CHAPTER XXII.

MOST HOLY MARY OFFERS HER ONLYBEGOTTEN SON FOR

THE REDEMPTION OF THE HUMAN RACE TO THE

ETERNAL FATHER; IN RETURN FOR THIS SACRIFICE

HE GRANTS HER A CLEAR VISION OF THE DIVINITY/

SHE TAKES LEAVE OF HER SON AS HE DEPARTS FOR

THE DESERT.

240. The love of our great Queen and Lady for her

divine Son must always remain the standard by which

we must measure as well her actions as all her emotions

either of joy or sorrow during her earthly life. But we

cannot measure the greatness of her love itself, nor can

the holy angels measure it, except by the love which they

see in God by the intuitive vision. All that can ever be

expressed by our inadequate words, similes and analogies,

is but the least portion of what this heavenly furnace of

love really contained. For She loved Jesus as the Son

of the eternal Father, equal to Him in essence and in

all the divine attributes and perfections ; She loved Him

as her own natural Son, Son to Her in as far as He was

man, formed of her own flesh and blood ; She loved Him

because as man He was the Saint of saints and the meri

torious cause of all other holiness (Dan. 9, 24). He

was the most beautiful among- the sons of men (Ps.

44, 3). He was the most dutiful Son of his Mother, her

most magnificent Benefactor ; since it was He, that by his

sonship, had raised Her to the highest dignity possible

among creatures. He had exalted Her among all and

above all by the treasures of his Divinity and by con-

222

THE TRANSFIXION 223

ferring upon Her the dominion over all creation together

with favors, blessings and graces, such as were never to

be conferred upon any other being.

241. These motives and foundations of her love

were established and as it were, all comprehended

in the wisdom of the heavenly Lady, together with

many others, which only her exalted knowledge

could appreciate. In her heart there was no hind

rance of love, since it was the most innocent and

pure; She was not ungrateful, because her profoundest

humility urged Her to a most faithful correspondence;

She was not remiss, because in Her the most abundant

grace wrought with all its efficacy ; She was not slow or

careless, since She was filled with most zealous and dili

gent fervor; not forgetful, since her most faithful memory

was constantly fixed upon the blessings received and upon

the reasons and the precepts of deepest love. She moved

in the sphere of the divine love itself, since She remained

in his visible presence and attended the school of divine

love of her Son, copying his works and his doings in his

very company. Nothing was wanting to this peerless

One among lovers for entertaining love without limita

tion of measure or manner. This most beautiful Moon

then, being at its fullness, and looking into this Sun of

justice just as it had risen like a divine aurora from

height to height and reached the noontide splendor of the

most clear light of grace; this Moon, Mary, detached

from all material creatures and entirely transformed by

the light of this Sun, having experienced on her part all

the effects of his reciprocal love, favors and gifts, in the

height of her blessedness, at a time when the loss of all

these blessings in her Son made it most arduous, heard

the voice of the eternal Father, calling Her as once He

had called upon her prototype, Abraham, and demanding-

224 CITY OF GOD

the deposit of all her love and hope, her beloved Isaac

(Gen. 22, 1).

242. The most prudent Mother was not unaware, that

the time of her sacrifice was approaching; for her

sweetest Son had already entered the thirtieth year of

his life and the time and place for satisfying the debt

He had assumed was at hand. But in the full possession of

the Treasure, which represented all her happiness, Mary

was still considering its loss as far off, not having as

yet had its experience. The hour therefore drawing near,

She was wrapt in a most exalted vision and felt that She

was being called and placed in the presence of throne

of the most blessed Trinity. From it issued a voice of

wonderful power saying to Her: "Mary, my Daughter

and Spouse, offer to Me thy onlybegotten Son in sacri

fice." By the living power of these words came to Her

the light and intelligence of the Almighty s will, and in

it the most blessed Mother understood the decree of

the Redemption of man through the Passion and Death

of her most holy Son, together with all that from now on

would happen in the preaching and public life of the

Savior. As this knowledge was renewed and perfected

in Her, She felt her soul overpowered by sentiments of

subjection, humility, love of God and man, compassion

and tenderest sorrow for all that her Son was to suffer.

243. But with an undismayed and magnanimous heart

She gave answer to the Most High: "Eternal King and

omnipotent God of infinite wisdom and goodness, all that

has being outside of Thee exists solely for thy mercy and

greatness, and Thou art undiminished Lord of all. How

then dost Thou command me, an insignificant wormlet

of the earth, to sacrifice and deliver over to thy will the

Son, whom thy condescension has given me? He is

thine, eternal Father, since from all eternity before the

THE TRANSFIXION 225

morning star Thou hast engendered Him (Ps. 109, 3),

and Thou begettest Him and shalt beget Him through

all the eternities; and if I have clothed Him in the form

of servant (Philip 2,7) in my womb and from my own

blood, and if I have nourished his humanity at my breast

and ministered to it as a Mother: this most holy

humanity is also thy property, and so am I, since I have

received from Thee all that I am and that I could give

Him. What then can I offer to Thee, that is not more thine

than mine? I confess, most high King, that thy mag

nificence and beneficence are so liberal in heaping upon

thy creatures thy infinite treasures, that in order to bind

Thyself to them Thou wishest to receive from them as a

free gift, even thy own onlybegotten Son, Him whom

Thou begettest from thy own substance and from the light

of thy Divinity. With Him came to me all blessings

together and from his hands I received immense gifts

and graces (Wis. 7, 11) ; He is the Virtue of my virtue,

the Substance of my spirit, Life of my soul and Soul of

my life, the Sustenance of all my joy of living. It would

be a sweet sacrifice, indeed, to yield Him up to Thee who

alone knowest his value ; but to yield Him for the satis

faction of thy justice into the hands of his cruel enemies

at the cost of his life, more precious than all the works of

creation ; this indeed, most high Lord, is a great sacrifice

which Thou askest of his Mother. However let not my

will but thine be done. Let the freedom of the human race

be thus bought; let thy justice and equity be satisfied;

let thy infinite love become manifest; let thy name be

known and magnified before all creatures. I deliver Him

over into thy hands before all creatures. I deliver over

into thy hands my beloved Isaac, that He may be truly

sacrificed; I offer my Son, the Fruit of my womb, in

order that, according to the unchangeable decree of thy

226 CITY OF GOD

will, He may pay the debt contracted not by his fault,

but by the children of Adam, and in order that in his

Death He may fulfill all that thy holy Prophets, inspired

by Thee, have written and foretold."

244. This sacrifice with all that pertained to it, was

the greatest and the most acceptable that ever had been

made to the eternal Father since the creation of the world,

or ever will be made to the end, outside of that made by

his own Son, the Redeemer; and hers was most inti

mately connected with and like to that, which He offered.

If the greatest charity consists in offering one s life for

the beloved, without a doubt most holy Mary far sur

passed this highest degree of love toward men, as She

loved Her Son much more than her own life. For in

order to preserve the life of her Son, She would have

given the lives of all men, if She had possessed them, yea

and countless more. Among men there is no measure by

which to estimate the love of that heavenly Lady, and it

can be estimated only by the love of the eternal Father

for his Son. As Christ says to Nikodemus (John 15, 13):

so God loved the world, that He gave his only Son in

order that none of those , who believed in Him might

perish; so this might also be said in its degree of the love

of the Mother of mercy and in the same way do we

owe to Her proportionately our salvation. For She also

loved us so much, that She gave her only Son for our

salvation; and if She had not given it in this manner,

when it was asked of Her by the eternal Father on this

occasion, the salvation of men could not have been exe

cuted by this same decree, since this decree was to be

fulfilled on condition, that the Mother s will should co

incide with that of the eternal Father. Such is the ob

ligation which the children of Adam owe to most holy

Mary.

THE TRANSFIXION 227

245. Having 1 accepted the offering of the great Lady,

it was fitting that the most Blessed Trinity should re

ward and immediately pay Her by some favor, which

would comfort Her in her sorrow and manifest more

clearly the will of the eternal Father and the reasons

for his command. Therefore the heavenly Lady, still

wrapped in the same vision and raised to a more exalted

ecstasy, in which She was prepared and enlightened in the

manner elsewhere described (I, 623), the Divinity mani

fested Itself to Her by an intuitive and direct vision. In

this vision, by the clear light of the essence of God, She

comprehended the inclination of the infinite Good to com

municate his fathomless treasures to the rational crea

tures by means of the works of the incarnate Word,

and She saw the glory, that would result from these

wonders to the name of the Most High. Filled with

jubilation of her soul at the prospect of all these sacra

mental mysteries, the heavenly Mother renewed the offer

ing of her divine Son to the Father ; and God comforted

Her with the life-giving bread of heavenly understand

ing, in order that She might with invincible fortitude

assist the incarnate Word in the work of Redemption as

his Coadjutrix and Helper, according to the disposition

of infinite Wisdom and according as it really happened

afterwards in the rest of her life.

246. Then most holy Mary issued forth from this ex

alted rapture in the description of which I will not further

detain myself; for it was accompanied by the same cir

cumstances as the other intuitive visions already men

tioned. But by its effects and the strength imparted

through it, She was now prepared to separate from her

divine Son, who had already resolved to enter upon his

fast in the desert in view of receiving his Baptism. He

therefore called his Mother and, speaking to Her with

228 CITY OF GOD

the tokens of sweetest love and compassion, He said:

"My Mother, my existence as man I derive entirely from

thy substance and blood, of which I have taken the form

of a servant in. thy virginal womb (Phil. 2, 7). Thou

also hast nursed Me at thy breast and taken care of Me

by thy labors and sweat. For this reason I account Me

more thine own and as thy Son, than any other ever

acknowledged, or more than any ever will acknowledge

himself as the son of his mother. Give Me thy permis

sion and consent toward accomplishing the will of my

eternal Father. Already the time has arrived, in which

I must leave thy sweet intercourse and company and be

gin the work of the Redemption of man. The time of

rest has come to an end and the hour of suffering for

the rescue of the sons of Adam has arrived. But I wish

to perform this work of my Father with thy assistance,

and Thou art to be my companion and helper in preparing

for my Passion and Death of the Cross. Although I

must now leave Thee alone, my blessing shall remain

with Thee, and my loving and powerful protection. I

shall afterwards return to claim thy assistance and com

pany in my labors; for I am to undergo them in the

form of man, which Thou hast given Me."

247. With these words, while both Mother and Son

were overflowing with abundant tears, the Lord placed

his arms around the neck of the most tender Mother, yet

Both maintaining a majestic composure such as befitted

these Masters in the art of suffering. The heavenly

Lady fell at the feet of her divine Son and, with ineffable

sorrow and reverence, answered : "My Lord and eternal

God : Thou art indeed my Son and in Thee is fulfilled

all the force of love, which I have received of Thee : my

inmost soul is laid open to the eyes of thy divine wisdom.

My life I would account but little, if I could thereby save

THE TRANSFIXION 229

thy own, or if I could die for Thee many times. But the

will of the eternal Father and thy own must be fulfilled

and I offer my own will as a sacrifice for this fulfillment.

Receive it, my Son, and as Master of all my being, let

it be an acceptable offering, and let thy divine protection

never be wanting to me. It would be a much greater

torment for me, not to be allowed to accompany Thee in

thy labors and in thy Cross. May I merit this favor,

my Son, and I ask it of Thee as thy true Mother in re

turn for the human form, which Thou hast received of

me." The most loving Mother also besought Him to

take along some food from the house, or that He allow

it to be sent to where He was to go. But the Savior

would not consent to anything of the sort, at the same

time enlightening his Mother of what was befitting for

the occasion. They went together to the door of their

poor house, where She again fell at his feet to ask his

blessing and kiss his feet. The divine Master gave Her

his benediction and then began his journey to the Jordan,

issuing forth as the good Shepherd to seek his lost sheep

and bring them back on his shoulders to the way of

eternal life, from which they had been decoyed by deceit

(Luke 15, 5).

248. When our Redeemer sought saint John in order

to be baptized, He had already entered his thirtieth year,

although not much of it had yet passed; for He betook

Himself directly to the banks of the Jordan, where saint

John was baptizing (Matth. 3, 13), and He received Bap

tism at his hands about thirty days after He had finished

the twenty-ninth year of his life on the same day as is

set aside for its celebration by the Church. I cannot

worthily describe the sorrow of most holy Mary at his

departure, nor the compassion of the Savior for Her.

All words and description are far too inadequate to mani-

230 CITY OF GOD

fest what passed in the heart of the Son and Mother.

As this was to be part of their meritorious sufferings,

it was not befitting that the natural effects of their mutual

loves should be diminished. God permitted these effects

to work in Them to their full extent, and as far as was

compatible with the holiness of both Mother and Son.

Our divine Teacher found no relief in hastening his steps

toward the goal of our Redemption, to which He was

drawn by the force of his immense charity ; nor was the

thought of what He intended, a lessening of the sense

of loss, which She sustained at his departure ; for all this

only made more certain and more conspicuous the tor

ments which He was to undergo. O my dearest Love!

Why does not our ingratitude and hardness of heart al

low us to meet Thee with a responsive love ? Why does

not the perfect uselessness of man, and still more, his

ingratitude, influence Thee to desist ? Without us, O my

eternal Goodness and Life, Thou wilt be just as happy

without us as with us, just as infinite in perfections,

holiness and glory; we can add nothing to that which

Thou hast in Thyself, since Thou art entirely independent

of creatures. Why then, O my Love, dost Thou so anx

iously seek us out and care for us? Why dost Thou, at

the cost of thy Passion and the Cross, purchase our hap

piness? Without doubt, because thy incomprehensible

love and goodness esteems it as thy own, and we alone

insist in treating our own happiness as alien to Thee and

to ourselves.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY,

QUEEN OF HEAVEN, GAVE ME.

249. My daughter, I wish that thou ponder and pene

trate more and more this mystery of which thou hast

written, so fixing it in thy soul, that thou wilt be drawn

THE TRANSFIXION 231

to imitate my example at least in some part of it. Con

sider then, that in the vision of the Divinity which I had

on this occasion, I was made to comprehend the high

value which the Lord sets upon the labors, the Passion

and Death of my Son, and upon all those who were to

imitate and follow Jesus in the way of the Cross. Know

ing this, I not only offered to deliver my Son over to Pas

sion and Death, but I asked Him to make me his com

panion and partaker of all his sorrows, sufferings and tor

ments, which request the eternal Father granted. Then,

in order to begin following in the footsteps of his bitter

ness, I besought my Son and Lord to deprive me of in

terior delights; and this petition was inspired in me by

the Lord himself, because He wished it so, and because

my own love taught me and urged me thereto. This de

sire for suffering and the wishes of my divine Son led

me on in the way of suffering. He himself, because He

loved me so tenderly, granted me my desires; for those

whom He loves, He chastises and afflicts (Prov. 3, 12).

I as his Mother was not to be deprived of this blessed

distinction of being entirely like unto Him, which alone

makes this life most estimable. Immediately this will of

the Most High, this my earnest petition, began to be ful

filled : I began to feel the want of his delightful caresses

and He began to treat me with greater reserve. That

was one of the reasons, why He did not call me Mother,

but Woman, at the marriage-feast at Cana and at the foot

of the Cross (John 2, 4, 19, 26) ; and also on other occa

sions, when He abstained from words of tenderness. So

far was this from being 1 a sign of a diminution of his love,

that it was rather an exquisite refinement of his affection

to assimilate me to Him in the sufferings which He chose

for Himself as his precious treasure and inheritance.

250. Hence thou wilt understand the ignorance and

232 CITY OF GOD

error of mortals, and how far they drift from the way

of light, when, as a rule, nearly all of them strive to avoid

labor and suffering- and are frightened by the royal and

secure road of mortification and the Cross. Full of this

deceitful ignorance, they do not only abhor resemblance

to Christ s suffering and my own, and deprive themselves

of the true and highest blessing of this life ; but they make

their recovery impossible, since all of them are weak and

afflicted by many sins, for which the only remedy is suf

fering. Sin is committed by base indulgence and is re

pugnant to suffering sorrow, while tribulation earns the

pardon of the just judge. By the bitterness of sorrow

and affliction the vapors of sin are allayed ; the excesses of

the concupiscible and irascible passions are crushed ; pride

and haughtiness are humiliated; the flesh is subdued;

the inclination to evil, to the sensible and earthly creatures,

is repressed ; the judgment is cleared ; the will is brought

within bounds and its desultory movements at the call

of the passions, are corrected ; and, above all, divine love

and pity are drawn down upon the afflicted, who embrace

suffering with patience, or who seek it to imitate my

most holy Son. In this science of suffering are renewed

all the blessed riches of the creatures ; those that fly from

them are insane, those that know nothing of this science

are foolish.

251. Exert thyself then, my dearest daughter, to ad

vance in this knowledge, welcome labors and suffering,

and give up ever desiring human consolations. Remem

ber also that in the spiritual consolations the demon con

ceals his pitfalls for thy ruin and destruction, for thou

shouldst know his continual attempts to ruin the spirit

ually inclined. The pleasures of contemplating and look

ing upon the Lord, and his caresses great or small, are

so enticing, that delight and consolation overflow in the

THE TRANSFIXION 233

faculties of the mind and cause some souls to accustom

themselves to the sensible pleasures of this intercourse.

In consequence thereof they make themselves unfit for

other duties belonging\* to reasonable life of human

creatures ; and when it is necessary to attend to them they

are annoyed, lose their interior peace and control, become

morose, intractable, full of impatience toward their

neighbors, forgetting all humility and charity. When

they then perceive their own restlessness and its conse

quences, they blame all to their exterior occupations, in

which the Lord has placed them for the exercise of their

obedience and charity, failing to see or acknowledge that

all their troubles arise from their want of mortification

and subjection to providence and from their attachment

to their own selfish inclinations. The demon tries to be

guile them by mere desires for quiet and solitude and the

secret communications of the Lord in solitude; for they

imagine, that in retirement all is good and holy, and that

all their trouble arises from inability to follow their pious

desires in solitude.

252. In these very faults thou hast fallen sometimes,

and from now on I wish that thou guard against them

especially. For all things there is a time, as the Wise

man says (Eccles. 3, 5), both for enjoying delightful em

braces and for abstaining therefrom. To seek to pre

scribe to the Lord a time for his intimate embraces is

the error of souls only beginning imperfectly to serve

the Lord and to strive after virtue; and similar is the

fault of feeling too deeply the want of these consolations.

I do not tell thee therefore purposely to seek distraction

and exterior occupations, nor to find thy pleasure in them,

for this is nothing short of dangerous : but to obey with

peace of mind whenever thy superiors command, and

willingly to leave the delights of the Lord in order to

234 CITY OF GOD

find Him again in useful labor and in the service of thy

neighbor. This thou must prefer to retirement and to

private consolations, and on this account thou must not

love them too much ; for in the anxious cares of a superior

thou must learn to believe, hope and love so much the

more deeply. In this manner thou must find thy Lord at

all times, in all places and occupations, as thou hast al

ready experienced. I desire that thou never consider

thyself deprived of his sweetest vision and presence, or of

his most loving intercourse, or that thou doubt with

pusillanimity, whether thou canst find and enjoy God

outside of thy retirement. All creation is full of his

glory (Eccli. 42, 16), and there is no void, and thou

livest and movest and hast thy being in God (17, 28).

Enjoy thou thy solitude whenever He does not oblige

thee to these exterior occupations.

253. All this thou wilt still more fully understand in

the nobility of the love, which I require of thee for the

imitation of my Son and of me. With Him thou must

rejoice sometimes in his youth; sometimes accompany

Him in his labors for the salvation of men; sometimes

retire with Him to solitude; sometimes be transfigured

with Him to a new creature; sometimes embrace with

Him tribulations and the cross, following up the divine

lessons which He taught thereby; in short, I wish thee

to understand well, that in me there was a continual de

sire to imitate, or an actual imitation, of all that was most

perfect in his works. In this consisted my greatest per

fection and holiness, and therein I wish thee to follow

me, so far as thy weak strength, assisted by grace, will

allow. For this purpose thou must first die to all the

inclinations of a daughter of Adam, without reserving

in thee any choice of desires, any self-constituted judg

ment as to admitting or rejecting the good; for thou

THE TRANSFIXION 235

knowest not what is befitting, and thy Lord and Spouse,

who knows it and who loves thee more than thou dost

thyself, will decide all this for thee, if thou resignest thy

self entirely to his will. He gives thee a free, hand

only in regard to thy love of Him and in thy desire to

suffer for Him, while in all the rest thy desires will only

make thee drift away from his will and mine. This will

surely be the result of following thy own will and incli

nations, desires and appetites. Deny and sacrifice them

all, raising thyself above thyself, up to the high and

exalted habitation of the Lord and Master; attend to his

interior lights and to the truth of his words of eternal

life (John 6, 69), and in order that thou mayest follow

them, take up the Cross (Matth. 16, 24), tread in his

footsteps, walk in the odor of his ointments (Cant. 1, 3),

and be anxious to reach thy Lord ; and having obtained

possession of Him, do not leave Him (Cant. 3, 4).

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE OCCUPATIONS OF THE VIRGIN MOTHER DURING THE

ABSENCE OF HER MOST HOLY SON AND HER INTER

COURSE WITH HER GUARDIAN ANGELS.

254. When the Redeemer of the world had left the

bodily presence of his most loving Mother, She felt Her

self as it were in an eclipse or under a shadow, caused by

the transposition of the clear Sun of justice, which had

illumined and rejoiced Her; yet, though this might be

true of her senses, her soul lost nothing of the light in

which it bathed and in which it was raised above the burn

ing love of the seraphim. As all the operations of her fac

ulties, during the absence of the human personality of her

Son, concerned themselves with the Deity, She so ordered

all her doings, that, retired within her dwelling and sepa

rated from all human intercourse, She might apply Her

self to the contemplation and praise of the Lord. She

wanted to give Herself up entirely to the exercise of

prayer and petition in order that the seed of the divine

word and doctrine, which the Lord was to plant into the

hearts of men, might not be lost on account of their

hardness and ingratitude and not fail to give abundant

fruit of eternal life and salvation of souls. By means of

her infused knowledge She knew the intentions of the in

carnate Word and therefore the most prudent Lady re

solved not to converse with any human creature, in order

to imitate Him in his fasting and retirement of the desert,

236

THE TRANSFIXION 237

as I will relate farther on; for She was a living image

and faithful reproduction of Christ, whether He was

absent or present.

255. Shut up in her house during all the days in which

her divine Son was absent, our blessed Lady spent her

time in exercise of devotion. Her prayers were so ardent,

that She shed tears of blood in weeping over the sins

of men. She genuflected and prostrated Herself upon

the ground more than two hundred times each day; and

this was an exercise, which She practiced with especial

earnestness during all her life, as an exterior manifesta

tion of her humility, charity, reverence and worship of

God. Of it I shall speak many times in the course of this

history. Thus co-operating with her absent Son and Re

deemer, She interceded so powerfully and efficaciously

with the eternal Father, that on account of her merits

and on account of her presence here upon this earth,

(according to our way of speaking) He forgot the sins

of all the mortals, who were then making themselves un

worthy of the preaching and doctrine of his most holy

Son. Mary then, cleared away this hindrance by the

clamors of her burning charity. She was the Mediatrix,

who merited and gained for us the blessing of being

taught by our Lord himself and of receiving the law of

his holy Gospel from his own lips.

256. What time still remained after her prolonged con

templations and exalted prayers, the great Queen spent

in conversation and intercourse with her holy angels;

for the Lord had commanded them anew to attend upon

their Mistress in bodily forms during all the time in

which her Son was to be absent. It is in this form that

they were to serve his Tabernacle and guard the holy City

of his habitation. The ministers of God obeyed most

3-17

238 CITY OF GOD

diligently and served their Queen with admirable and

befitting reverence. As love is so active and so impatient

of the absence and privation of the object beloved, it

finds its greatest comfort in speaking of its sorrow and

rehearsing the cause of it, in renewing ever again the

memory and discussing the excellences and conditions of

the beloved; by such discourse it beguiles its sorrow,

diverts its grief, and recalls to memory the images of

her well-beloved. Such was also the course pursued by

the most loving Mother of our truest and highest Good ;

for while her faculties were overwhelmed by the immense

ocean of the Divinity She felt not the bodily absence of

her Son and Lord; but as soon as She again recovered

the use of her senses, which had been accustomed to his

amiable intercourse, and now found Herself deprived

of it, She immediately felt the irresistible force of her

most intense, chaste and sincere love, unfathomed by any

creature. It would have been impossible for nature to

suffer such pain and still retain life, had it not in Her

been divinely supported and strengthened.

257. In order to afford some relief to her sorrow-

laden heart, She therefore returned to her holy angels

and complained to them as follows: "Ye diligent min

isters of the Most High, fashioned by the hands of my

Beloved, my friends and companions, give me intelli

gence of my cherished Son and Master; tell me where

He tarries, and inform Him that I am dying on account

of the want of his life-giving presence. O sweet and

bounteous love of my soul! Where art Thou, more

beautiful than all the sons of men? Where dost Thou

lay thy head? Where rests thy most delicate and most

holy body from its fatigues? Who is there to attend

upon Thee, light of my eyes? How can my tears ever

cease to flow, deprived of the clear light of the Sun,

THE TRANSFIXION 239

which illumined mine? Where, O my Son, canst Thou

find repose ? Where shall this thy lonely and poor little

bee find Thee? What course shall this thy little bark

pursue in the vast billows of this ocean of love ? Where

shall I find peace? O Beloved of my desires, to forget

thy presence is not possible to me ! How then can it be

possible to live in mere memory of Thee without actual

intercourse? What shall I do? O who shall console

me and lend me his company in this bitter solitude, whom

shall I seek among creatures, as long as Thou art absent,

who art the only One and all that my heart yearns after

in its love? Sovereign spirits, tell me, what does my

Lord and my Beloved? Inform me of his exterior

movements, and omit nothing of his interior doings, as

far as in the light of his Divinity is made clear to you.

Point out to me all his footsteps in order that I may

follow and imitate Him."

258. The holy angels obeyed their Queen, consoling

Her in the sorrows of her mournful love, speaking of the

Most High and repeating to Her most exalted praises

of the most sacred humanity of her son and of all his

perfections. They informed Her of all his occupations

and undertakings, and of the places in which He wan

dered. This they did by enlightening her understanding

in the same way a higher angel is wont to enlighten

those of an inferior order: for this was her manner of

intercourse with the angels, unhindered by her body and

the senses. The heavenly Spirits communicated to Her

the prayers of the incarnate Word, his teachings, his

visits to the poor and the sick, and other actions, so that

the heavenly Lady was enabled to imitate Him in all

these proceedings according to her condition. She thus

engaged in most excellent and magnanimous undertak-

240

CITY OF GOD

ings, as I shall yet describe, and by this means She was

eased in her sorrow and grief.

259. She also several times sent the holy angels to

visit in her name her sweetest Son. On such occasions

She gave them most prudent instructions, full of deep

and reverential love: also supplying them with linen

cloths and towels, prepared by her own hands, in order

that they might wipe the divine visage of the Savior,

when they saw him exhausted and covered with a bloody

sweat; for the blessed Mother knew, that He was thus

overcome more and more often, as He approached the

fulfillment of all the works of the Redemption. The

holy angels obeyed their Queen therein with incredible

reverence and holy fear, because they knew that the

Lord himself permitted it in order to yield to the ardent

desires of his most holy Mother. At other times, in

formed by the angels or by a special vision or revelation

of the Lord, She knew of his prayers and petitions for

mankind in the mountains : then She would perform the

same prayers in her house in the same posture and with

the same words. Sometimes, when She saw that the

Lord of all creation was in want of food, She also sent

Him, by the hands of the angels, some nourishment,

although this happened but seldom; for the Lord, as I

have indicated in the foregoing chapter, did not always

permit his Mother to act according to the promptings

of her love; therefore, during the forty days of his fast,

She did not send any food, because She understood

such to be his will.

260. At other times the heavenly Lady occupied Her

self in composing hymns of praise and thanksgiving to

the Most High; this She did by Herself or in company

and alternating songs with the angels. All these can-

THE TRANSFIXION 241

tides were most exalted in style and contained the

deepest mysteries. At other times She hastened to the

assistance of her neighbor in imitation of her most holy

Son. She visited the sick, consoled the sorrowful and

afflicted, enlightened the ignorant, brought relief to them

and enriched them with divine grace and bounty. Only

during the time of the great fast of our Lord She retired

and remained in her house, as I have already mentioned.

During this retirement, our Queen and Lady separated

Herself from all human company and She was favored

by almost continually recurring ecstasies, in which She

received peerless gifts and treasures of the Divinity;

for the hand of the God imprinted and painted, as upon

an admirably prepared canvas, the outlines and images

of his infinite perfections. All these new graces and

gifts She employed in working for the salvation of men,

and all her occupations and thoughts followed closely

the doings of the Savior, as becoming the Coadjutrix

of the Lord in his labors for the Redemption of mor

tals. Although these benefits and close intercourse with

the Lord could not but bring Her a great and ever new

joy and exultation of soul in the Holy Spirit, yet in the

inferior and sensible parts of her being She experienced

the pains, which She had sought and asked of the

Savior in union with Him and in imitation of his suf

ferings. In this desire of following Him in his suffer

ings, She was insatiable, and She besought the eternal

Father for this privilege with incessant and burning love.

She renewed that most pleasing sacrifice of the life of her

Son and her own, which She had made in accordance

with the will of God, and She was consumed with the

desire of suffering with her Beloved, enduring the great

est pains precisely because of the want of such suffering.

242

CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

261. My dearest daughter, the wisdom of the flesh

has made men ignorant, foolish and hostile to God, be

cause it is of the devil, deceitful, earthly and rebellious

to the divine laws (Rom. 8, 7). The more the children

of Adam study and exert themselves to reach the evil

objects of their carnal and animal passions, and to attain

the means of indulging them, so much the more will they

fall into ignorance of divine things, by which alone they

can come to their true ultimate end. This ignorance

and worldly prudence is still more abominable and still

more hateful in the eyes of God, when it occurs in the

children of the Church. By what right can the children

of this world call themselves sons of God, brethren of

Christ and inheritors of his possessions? The adopted

son must be, in all that is possible, like unto the natural

son. A brother is not of different blood or position from

that of his brother. One is not called an heir merely

because he is in some way concerned with the possessions

of his father, but because he has the full enjoyment and

comes into the possession of the principal property of

the testator. How then are those heirs of Christ, who

love, desire and seek only earthly goods and are perfectly

satisfied with them? How can those be his brothers,

who so widely depart from his position, his teachings

and his holy rule of life? How can they be similar to

Him and claim to be his image and likeness, when they

so often destroy in themselves all likeness of Him and

allow themselves to be so often sealed with the image

of the infernal beast? (Apoc. 16, 2).

262. By divine light thou knowest, my daughter, these

truths, and how much I exerted myself to make myself

THE TRANSFIXION 243

the image of the Most High, namely, my Son and Lord.

Do not think, that I have given thee such deep insight

into my works without some purpose; for it is my wish

that this remain written in thy heart and be forever

before thy eyes, serving thee as a rule for all thy conduct

during the remainder of thy life, which cannot be of

very long duration now. Do not allow thyself to be

retarded and snared away from my following by inter

course with creatures; let them alone, avoid them, de

spise them in so far as they can hinder thee on thy way.

In order that thou mayest advance in my school, I wish

to see thee poor, humble, despised, abased yet always

with a cheerful heart and countenance. Do not try to

repay thyself with the applause or the love of any crea

ture, nor allow human sentiment to rule thee; for the

Most High has not destined thee for such useless en

tanglements, or for occupations so lowly and adverse

to the religious state to which He has called thee. Think

attentively and humbly of the tokens of his love received

at his hands; and of the treasures of his grace, which

He has showered upon thee. Neither Lucifer nor any

of his ministers and followers are ignorant of them : they

are filled with wrath against thee and in their cunning

they will let no stone unturned for thy destruction. His

greatest efforts will be directed against thy interior,

where he has planted his battery of cunning and deceit.

Do thou live well prepared and watchful against all his

attacks, close the portals of thy senses and preserve the

authority of thy will, without allowing it to be spent on

human undertakings no matter how good and upright

they may appear to thee: for if in the least point thou

curtail the love which God requires of thee, this very

point will be seized upon by thy enemies as a portal of

entrance. All the kingdom of God is within thee (Luke

244

CITY OF GOD

17, 21), keep it there, and there wilt thou find it, and

in it all the good thou desirest. Forget not my teachings

and discipline, lock it up in thy bosom and remember

how great is the danger and damage from which I there

by wish to preserve thee. That thou art called to imitate

and follow me, is the greatest blessing, which thou canst

ever desire. I am ready in my extreme clemency to

grant thee this blessing, if thou dispose thyself to high

resolves, holy words and perfect works, which alone can

raise thee to the state which the Almighty and I desire

thee to attain.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUR SAVIOR JESUS GOES TO THE BANKS OF THE JORDAN,

WHERE HE IS BAPTIZED BY SAINT JOHN. SAINT JOHN

HIMSELF THEN ASKS TO BE BAPTIZED BY THE SAVIOR.

263. Leaving his beloved Mother in the poor dwelling

at Nazareth, our Redeemer, without accompaniment of

any human creature, but altogether taken up with the

exercise of his most ardent charity, pursued his journey

to the Jordan, where, in the neighborhood of a town

called Bethany, otherwise called Betharaba, on the far

ther side of the river, his Precursor was preaching and

baptizing. At the first steps from the house, our

Redeemer, raising his eyes to the eternal Father, offered

up to Him anew with an infinite love, whatever He was

now about to begin for the salvation of mankind: his

.^bors, sorrows, passion and death of the Cross, assumed

for them in obedience to the eternal Will, the natural

grief at parting as a true and loving Son from his

Mother and at leaving her sweet company, which for

twenty-nine years He had now enjoyed. The Lord of

all creation walked alone, without show and ostentation

of human retinue. The supreme King of kings and Lord

of lords (Apoc. 19, 16), was unknown and despised by

his own vassals, vassals so much his own, that they owed

their life and preservation entirely to Him. His royal

outfit was nothing but the utmost poverty and destitu

tion.

264. As the Evangelists have passed over in silence the

doings of our Savior during his early years, and so many

245

246 CITY OF GOD

other circumstances of his life, which were most real

and most worthy of our attention, and since our gross

forgetfulness is so much accustomed to pass over un

noticed what has not been written, therefore we exam

ine and consider so little the immensity of his blessings

and of his measureless love, by which He has enriched

us so much and has sought us to bind us to Him with so

many bonds of charity (Oseas. 11, 4). O eternal love

of the Onlybegotten of the Father! O delight and life

of my soul! How little known, and much less acknowl

edged, is thy most burning love? Why, O Lord and

sweet love of my soul, why dost Thou exhibit so many

artifices of love, so many watchings and sufferings for

those whom Thou needest not and who will neither

correspond nor attend to thy favors, not any more than

if they had been offered but deceit or buffoonery? O

hearts of men, more rude and fierce than that of wild

beasts ! What has hardened you so ? What detains you ?

What oppresses you and makes you so sluggish that

you will not follow thankfully in the ways of your

Benefactor? O lamentable illusion and aberration of

the human understanding! What mortal lethargy has

come over it? Who has blotted out from its memory

such infallible truths and such memorable benefits, and

even thy own true happiness ? Are we of flesh and have

we our senses? Who has made us more hard and

insensible than are the rocks and stony mountain

heights ? Why do we not wake up and recover some of

our sensibility at sight of the benefits of our Redemp

tion? At the words of a Prophet the dead bones came

to life and moved about (Ezechiel 37, 10), but we resist

the words and exertions of Him who gives life and being

to all. So defective is our earthly love; so great our

forgetfulness !

THE TRANSFIXION 247

265. Accept me then, O my "Lord, and light of my

soul, accept this vile wormlet of the earth, which creeps

along in order to meet thy beautiful footsteps now begun

in search of me! By them thou raisest me to the cer

tain hope of finding in Thee the truth, the way and the

delights of eternal life. I possess nothing wherewith

to repay Thee, my Beloved, except thy own goodness

and love and the being which through them Thou hast

given me. Less than thy own Self cannot be paid for the

infinite bounty Thou hast shown to me. Thirsting

after thy love I go to meet Thee on the way: do not,

O my Lord and Master, take away or deprive her of the

vision of thy clemency, whom in her poverty Thou hast

sought so diligently and lovingly. Life of my soul and

Soul of my life, as I have not been so fortunate as to

merit to see Thee bodily in this life and in that blessed

age of thy earthly life, let me at least be a daughter of

thy holy Church, let me be a part of this thy mystical

body and the congregation of thy faithful. In this life,

so full of dangers, in this frail flesh, in these times of

calamity and tribulations, do I live ; but I cry out from its

profound depths, I sigh from the bottom of my heart

for thy infinite merits. That I shall share them, I

have the assurance of faith, the spur of hope, and the

claims of holy charity. Look down then upon thy

humble slave in order to make me thankful for such

great blessings, meek of heart, constant in love, and

entirely comfortable and pleasing to thy holy will.

266. While proceeding on his way to the Jordan, our

Savior dispensed his ancient mercies by relieving the

necessities of body and soul in many of those whom He

encountered at different places. Yet this was always

done in secret ; for before his Baptism He gave no public

token of his divine power and his exalted office. Before

248 CITY OF GOD

appearing at the Jordan, He filled the heart of saint

John with new light and joy, which changed and elevated

his soul. Perceiving these new workings of grace within

himself, he reflected upon them full of wonder, saying:

"What mystery is this? What presentiments of happi

ness ? From the moment when I recognized the presence

of my Lord in the womb of my mother, I have not felt

such stirring of my soul as now ! Is it possible that He

is now happily come, or that the Savior of the world is

now near me ?" Upon this enlightenment of the Baptist

followed an intellectual vision, wherein he perceived with

greater clearness the mystery of the hypostatic union of

the person of the Word with the humanity and other

mysteries of the Redemption. In the fulness of this

intellectual light he gave the testimonies, which are

recorded by saint John in his Gospel and which occurred

while the Lord was in the desert and afterwards, when

He returned to the banks of the Jordan. The Evange

list mentions one of these public testimonies as happening

at the interpellation of the Jews, and the other when the

Precursor exclaimed: "Behold the lamb of God," as I

shall narrate later on (John 1, 36). Although the Bap

tist had been instructed in great mysteries, when he was

commanded to go forth to preach and baptize ; yet all of

them were manifested to him anew and with greater

clearness and abundance on this occasion, and he was

then notified that the Savior of the world was coming to

be baptized.

267. The Lord then joined the multitude and asked

Baptism of saint John as one of the rest. The Baptist

knew Him and, falling at his feet, hesitated, saying:

"I have need of being baptized, and Thou, Lord, askest

Baptism of me?" as is recorded by saint Matthew. But

the Savior answered : "Suffer it to be so now. For so it

I

THE TRANSFIXION 249

becometh us to fulfill all justice" (Matth. 3, 14). By

thus hesitating to baptize Christ his Lord and asking Him

for Baptism instead, he gave evidence that he recognized

Him as the true Redeemer and there is no contradiction

between this and what saint John records of the Baptist

as saying to the Jews: "And I knew Him not; but He

who sent me to baptize with water said to me : He, upon

whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining,

He it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw,

and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God" (John

1, 33, 34). There is also no contradiction between these

words of saint John and those of saint Matthew; for the

testimony of heaven and the voice of the eternal Father

over Christ on the banks of the Jordan happened when

the Precursor had the vision mentioned in the preceding

paragraph. Hence he had not seen Christ bodily until

then and could, therefore, deny having known Christ, at

least in the same way as he then knew Him; for just be

cause he knew Christ then both by sight and by intellec

tual vision, he prostrated himself at the feet of the Savior.

268. When saint John had finished baptizing our Lord,

the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descended visibly

in the form of a dove upon his head and the voice of

his Father was heard: "This is my beloved Son, in

whom I am well pleased" (Matth. 3, 17). Many of the

bystanders heard this voice, namely, those who were not

unworthy of such a wonderful favor; they also saw

the Holy Ghost descending upon the Savior. This was

the most convincing proof which could ever be given of

the Divinity of the Savior, as well on the part of the

Father, who acknowledged Him his Son, as also in

regard to the nature of the testimony given ; for without

any reserve was Christ manifested as the true God, equal

to his eternal Father in substance and in perfection. The

250 CITY OF GOD

Father himself wished to be the first to testify to the

Divinity of Christ in order that by virtue of his testi

mony all the other witnesses might be ratified. There

was also another mystery in this voice of the eternal

Father : it was as it were a restoration of the honor of

his Son before the world and a recompense for his hav

ing thus humiliated Himself by receiving the Baptism

of the remission of sins, though He was entirely free

from fault and never could have upon Him the guilt of

sin (Heb. 7, 26).

269. This act of humiliation in receiving Baptism in

the company of those who were sinners, Christ our Re

deemer offered up to the eternal Father as an act of

acknowledgment of the inferiority of his human nature,

which, in common with all the rest of the children of

men, He had derived from Adam. By it He also insti

tuted the sacrament of Baptism, which was to wash away

the sins of the world through his merits. By thus humili

ating Himself in this baptism of sins, He sought and

obtained from the eternal Father a general pardon for

all those who were to receive it ; He freed them from the

power of the demon and of sin, and regenerated them

to a new existence, spiritual and supernatural as adopted

sons of the Most High, brethren of their Redeemer and

Lord. The past, present and future sins of men always

remaining in the sight of the eternal Father, had prevented

the effects of this Baptism ; but Christ our Lord merited

the application of this so easy and delightful remedy, so

that the eternal Father was obliged to accept it in justice

as a complete satisfaction according to all the require

ments of his equity. Christ was also not deterred from

thus securing this remedy by his foreknowledge of the

abuse of holy Baptism by so many mortals in all ages

and of its neglect by innumerable others. All these im-

THE TRANSFIXION 251

pediments and hindrances Christ our Lord removed by

satisfying for their offenses, humiliating Himself and

assuming the form of a sinner in his Baptism (Rom. 8,

3). This is the meaning of the words : suffer it to be so

now for so it becometh us to fulfill all justice. Then in

order to honor the incarnate Word and in recompense

for his humiliation, and in order to approve of Baptism

and establish its wonderful efficacy, the eternal Father

gave forth his voice and the Holy Ghost descended.

Thus was Christ proclaimed as the true Son of God, and

all three Persons of the Holy Trinity ratified the sacra

mental rite of Baptism.

270. The great Baptist was the one who reaped the

greatest fruit from these wonders of holy Baptism;

for he not only baptized his Redeemer and Master, saw

the Holy Ghost and the celestial light descending upon

the Lord together with innumerable angels, heard the

voice of the Father and saw many other mysteries by

divine revelation: but besides all this, he himself was

baptized by the Redeemer. The Gospel indeed says no

more than that he asked for it, but at the same time it

also does not say that it was denied him ; for, without a

doubt, Christ after his own Baptism, conferred it also on

his Precursor and Baptist. It was He that instituted this

Sacrament afterwards as He made it a general law and

enjoined the public ministration of it upon the Apostles

after the Resurrection. As I shall relate later on, it was

also the Lord who baptized his most holy Mother before

its general promulgation, and He, on that occasion,

established the form in which Baptism was to be admin

istered. These facts were made known to me, and also

that saint John was the first-fruit of the Baptism of

Christ our Lord and of the new Church, which He

founded in this Sacrament. Through it the Baptist re-

252 CITY OF GOD

ceived the character of a Christian together with a great

plenitude of grace, since he had not upon him original

sin; for he had been justified by the Redeemer before he

was born, as was said in its place. By the answer of the

Savior : "Suffer it to be so now, that all justice be ful

filled," He did not refuse, but He deferred saint John s

Baptism until He himself should have been baptized and

have fulfilled the requirements of God s justice. Imme

diately after his own Baptism He baptized saint John,

gave him his blessing, and betook Himself to the desert.

271. Let us return now to the main subject of this

history, namely, to the occupations of our great Queen

and Lady. As soon as her most holy Son was baptized,

although She knew by the divine light of his movements,

the holy angels who had attended upon their Lord

brought Her intelligence of all that had happened at the

Jordan; they were those that carried the ensigns or

shields of the passion of the Savior, as described in the

first part. To celebrate all these mysteries of Christ s

Baptism and the public proclamation of his Divinity, the

most prudent Mother composed new hymns and canticles

of praise and of incomparable thanksgiving to the Most

High and to the incarnate Word. All his actions of

humility and prayers She imitated, exerting Herself

by many acts of her own to accompany and follow Him

in all of them. With ardent charity She interceded for

men, that they might profit by the sacrament of Bap

tism and that it might be administered all over the world.

In addition to these prayers and hymns of thanksgiving,

She asked the heavenly courtiers to help Her in magni

fying her most holy Son for having thus humiliated Him

self in receiving Baptism at the hands of one of his

creatures.

THE TRANSFIXION 253

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

272. My daughter, since in recounting to thee the

works of my most holy Son I so often remind thee how

thankfully I appreciated them, thou canst understand

how pleasing to the Most High is the faithful correspond

ence on thy part, and the great mysteries of his blessings

connected with it. Thou art poor in the house of the

Lord, a sinner, insignificant and useless as dust; yet I

ask thee to assume the duty of rendering ceaseless thanks

for all that the incarnate Word has done for the sons of

Adam and for establishing the holy and immaculate, the

powerful and perfect law for their salvation. Especially

shouldst thou be thankful for the institution of Baptism

by which He frees men from the tyranny of the devil,

fills them with grace, clothes them with justice and assists

them to sin no more. This is indeed a duty incumbent

upon all men in common; but since creatures neglect it

almost entirely, I enjoin thee to give thanks for all of

them, as if thou alone wert responsible for them. Thou

art bound to the Lord for other things to special thank

fulness, because He has shown Himself so generous to

none among other nations as He has with thee. In the

foundation of his holy law and of his Sacraments thou

wert present in his memory ; He called and chose thee as

a daughter of his Church, proposing to nourish thee by

his own blood with infinite love.

273. And if the Author of grace, my most holy Son,

as a prudent and wise Artificer, in order to found his

evangelical Church and lay its first foundations in the

sacrament of Baptism, humiliated Himself, prayed and

fulfilled all justice, acknowledging the inferiority of his

human nature; and if, though at the same time God and

3-18

254 CITY OF GOD

man, He hesitated not to lower Himself to the nothing

ness of which his purest soul was created and his human

being formed: how much must thou humiliate thyself,

who hast committed sins and art less than the dust and

despicable ashes? Confess that in justice thou meritest

only punishment, the persecution and wrath of all the

creatures ; that none of the mortals who has offended his

Creator and Redeemer can say in truth that any injustice

or offense is done to them if all the tribulations and afflic

tions of the world from its beginning to its end were to

fall upon them. Since all sinned in Adam (I Cor. 15,

22), how deeply should they humiliate themselves when

the hand of the Lord visits them ? (Job 19,21). If thou

shouldst suffer all the afflictions of men with the utmost

resignation and at the same time wouldst fulfill all that

I enjoin upon thee by my teachings and exhortations with

the greatest fidelity, thou nevertheless must esteem thy

self as a useless and unprofitable servant (Luke 17, 10).

How much then must thou humiliate thyself when thou

failest so much in thy duty and in the return due to all

the blessings received from God? As I desire thee to

make a proper return both for thyself and for others,

think well how much thou art obliged to annihilate thy

self to the very dust, not offering any resistance, nor ever

being satisfied until the Most High receive thee as his

daughter and accept thee as such in his own presence

and in the celestial vision of the triumphant Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XXV.

OUR REDEEMER, AFTER HIS BAPTISM, WALKS TO THE

DESERT WHERE, BY THE PRACTICE OF HEROIC VIRTUES,

HE GAINS GREAT VICTORIES OVER OUR VICES; HIS

MOST HOLY MOTHER KNOWS OF ALL HIS DOINGS AND

IMITATES HIM MOST PERFECTLY.

274. By the testimony which the eternal Truth had

vouchsafed to give of the Divinity of Christ our Savior,

his Person and his teachings were so fully accredited be

fore men that He could have immediately begun his

public life and his divine activity and miracles, so that

all should have recognized Him as the natural Son of

the eternal Father, as the Messias of the Jews, and the

Savior of men. Nevertheless the divine Teacher of all

holiness did not wish to commence his preaching nor to

be known as our Redeemer without having first

triumphed over our enemies, over the world, the demon

and the flesh, in order that afterwards He might so much

the more easily overcome the hellish deceits continually

spread about by satan. By his heroic exercises of virtue

He wished to give us the first lesson of a Christian and

spiritual life and to teach us by these triumphs of Chris

tian perfection, how we are to strengthen our weakness

and discourage our common enemies by continued battle

and victories, lest we be otherwise delivered over to

them by the fluctuations of our own wills. Although

the Lord, as being God, was infinitely above the demon

and, as man without deceit of sin, supremely holy and

the Master over all creation (I Pet. 2, 22) ; He never

theless wished to overcome in his human nature, by his

personal justice and holiness, all the vices and their

255

256 CITY OF GOD

author ; and, therefore, He offered his most holy human

ity to the bufferings of temptation, concealing his supe

riority from his invisible enemies.

275. By his retirement Christ our Lord began to con

quer and taught us to conquer the world; for it is an

established fact that the world is accustomed to forsake

those whom it does not need for its earthly purposes,

that it does not seek those who themselves do not seek it.

Therefore, he who really despises the world must show

his contempt by ceasing to have any connection with it in

his affections and aspirations. The Lord vanquished

also the flesh, teaching us to overcome it by imposing

upon his most innocent body such a severe and prolonged

fast; though his body showed no rebellion toward the

good nor any inclinations to evil. The devil He van

quished by the preaching of the truth, as I shall explain

more fully afterward; for all the temptations of the

father of lies are wont to come cloaked and veiled in

deceitful snares. That the Lord should not enter upon

his public teaching and make Himself known to the

world before He had gained his triumphs over the body

is another warning and admonition against the weakness

of our flesh. He wished to caution us against the honors

of this world, even those that accrue to us from super

natural favors, as long as our passions are not con

quered and as long as we have not vanquished our

common enemies. For if the applause of men finds us

unmortified and still living under the influence of the

enemies within our own selves, the favors and blessings

of the Lord offer us little security and the wind of vain

glory may overturn even the towering mountains of

virtues. It imports much to all men to remember that we

carry the treasures of heaven in most fragile vases (II

Cor. 4, 7) ; and that, if God wishes to glorify his name

THE TRANSFIXION 257

by our weakness, He will know by what means He shall

draw his doings to light. Avoidance of the enemy alone

is incumbent upon us and most suitable.

276. Without delay Christ our Lord pursued his jour

ney from the Jordan to the desert after his Baptism.

Only his holy angels attended and accompanied Him,

serving and worshipping Him, singing the divine praises

on account of what He was now about to undertake for

the salvation of mankind. He came to the place chosen

by Him for his fast : a desert spot among bare and bee

tling rocks, where there was also a cavern much con

cealed. Here He halted, choosing it for his habitation

during the days of his fast (Matth. 4, 1). In deepest

humility He prostrated Himself upon the ground which

was always the prelude of his prayer and that of his most

blessed Mother. He praised the eternal Father and gave

Him thanks for the works of his divine right hand and

for having according to his pleasure afforded Him this

retirement. In a suitable manner He thanked even this

desert for accepting his presence and keeping Him hidden

from the world during the time He was to spend there.

He continued his prayers prostrate in the form of a cross,

and this was his most frequent occupation in the desert;

for in this manner He often prayed to the eternal Father

for the salvation of men. During these prayers, for

reasons which I shall explain when I come to the prayer

in the garden, He sometimes sweated blood.

277. Many of the wild beasts of the desert came to

the neighborhood now inhabited by their Creator;

for He sometimes walked about in these regions. With

an admirable instinct they recognized Him and gave

forth their voices, moving about as if in testimony of

his Divinity. But the birds of heaven of which great

multitudes gathered around the Savior, were especially

258 CITY OF GOD

eager in their demonstrations, manifesting their joy at

the blessed presence of their divine King and Lord by

their sweet and loud singing and in divers other ways.

After the Savior had begun his fast He persevered

therein without eating anything for forty days, offer

ing up his fast to the eternal Father as a satisfaction for

the disorder and sins to which men are drawn by the

so vile and debasing, yet so common and even so

much esteemed vice of gluttony. Just as our Lord over

came this vice so He also vanquished all the rest, and He

made recompense to the eternal Judge and supreme

Legislator for the injuries perpetrated through these

vices by men. According to the enlightenment vouch

safed to me, our Savior, in order to assume the office

of Preacher and Teacher and to become our Mediator

and Redeemer before the Father, thus vanquished all

the vices of mortals and He satisfied the offenses com

mitted through them by the exercises of the virtues con

trary to them, just as He did in regard to gluttony.

Although He continued this exercise during all his life

with the most ardent charity, yet during his fast He

directed in a special manner all his efforts toward this

purpose.

278. A loving Father, whose sons have committed

great crimes for which they are to endure the most hor

rible punishment, sacrifices all his possessions in order

to ward off their impending fate: so our most loving

Father and Brother, Jesus Christ, wished to pay our

debts. In satisfaction for our pride He offered his

profound humility; for our avarice, his voluntary pov

erty and total privation of all that was his ; for our base

and lustful inclinations, his penance and austerity; for our

hastiness and vengeful anger, his meekness and charity

toward his enemies; for our negligence and laziness, his

I

THE TRANSFIXION 259

ceaseless labors; for our deceit fulness and our envy, his

candid and upright sincerity and truthfulness and the

sweetness of his loving intercourse. In this manner He

continued to appease the just Judge and solicited pardon

for us disobedient and bastard children; and He not

only obtained this pardon for them, but He merited for

them new graces and favors, so that they might make

themselves worthy of his company and of the vision of

his Father and his own inheritance for all eternity.

Though He could have obtained all this for us by the

most insignificant of his works; yet He acted not like we.

He demonstrated his love so abundantly, that our in

gratitude and hardness of heart will have no excuse.

279. In order to keep informed of the doings of our

Savior the most blessed Mary needed no other assistance

than her continual visions and revelations; but in addi

tion to all these, She made use of the service of her holy

angels, whom She sent to her divine Son. The Lord

himself thus ordered it, in order that, by means of these

faithful messengers, both He and She might rejoice in

the sentiments and thoughts of their inmost hearts faith

fully rehearsed by these celestial messengers; and thus

They each heard the very same words as uttered by Each,

although both Son and Mother already knew them in

another way. As soon as the great Lady understood

that our Redeemer was on the way to the desert to ful

fill his intention, She locked the doors of her dwelling,

without letting any one know of her presence; and her

retirement during the time of our Lord s fast was so

complete, that her neighbors thought that She had left

with her divine Son. She entered into her oratory and re

mained there for forty days and nights without ever

leaving it and without eating anything, just as She knew

was done by her most holy Son. Both of them observed

260 CITY OF GOD

the same course of rigorous fasting. In all his prayers

and exercises, his prostrations and genuflections She fol

lowed our Savior, not omitting any of them; moreover

She performed them just at the same time ; for, leaving

aside all other occupations, She thus profited by the in

formation obtained from the angels and by that other

knowledge, which I have already described. Whether

He was present or not, She knew the interior opera

tions of the soul of Christ. All his bodily movements,

which She had been wont to perceive with her own

senses, She now knew by intellectual vision or through

her holy angels.

280. While the Savior was in the desert He made

every day three hundred genuflections, which also was

done by our Queen Mary in her oratory; the other por

tions of her time She spent in composing hymns with

the angels, as I have said in the last chapter. Thus imi

tating Christ the Lord, the Holy Queen co-operated with

Him in all his prayers and petitions, gaining the same

victories over the vices, and on her part proportionately

satisfying for them by her virtues and her exertions.

Thus it happened, that, while Christ as our Redeemer

gained for us so many blessings and abundantly paid all

our debts, most holy Mary, as his Helper and our

Mother, lent us her merciful intercession and became our

Mediatrix to the fullest extent possible to a mere crea

ture.

INSTRUCTIONS WHICH THE QUEEN AND LADY

GAVE ME.

281. My daughter, corporal penances are so appro

priate and fitted to mortal creatures, that the ignorance

of this truth and the neglect and contempt of bodily

mortification cause the loss of many souls and bring

THE TRANSFIXION 261

many more into the danger of eternal loss. The first

reason why men should afflict their body and mortify

their flesh is their having been conceived in sin (Ps. 50,

7). By this original sin human nature is depraved,

filled with passions, rebellious to reason, inclined to evil

and adverse to the spirit (Rom. 7, 23). If the soul

allows itself to be carried away by them, it will be precip

itated by the first vice into many others. But if this

beastly flesh is curbed by mortification and penance, it

loses its strength and acknowledges the authority of the

spirit and the light of truth. The second reason is that

none of the mortals have altogether avoided sinning

against God; and the punishment and retribution must

inevitably correspond to the guilt, either in this life or

the next; therefore, as the soul commits sin in union with

the body, it follows that both of them must be punished.

The interior sorrow is not sufficient for atonement, if the

flesh seeks to evade the punishment corresponding to the

guilt. Moreover, the debt is so great and the satisfac

tion that can be given by the creature so limited and

scanty that there remains continual uncertainty whether

the Judge is satisfied even after the exertions of a whole

lifetime: hence, the soul should find no rest to the end

of life.

282. Even though divine clemency is so liberal with

men, that, if they try to satisfy for their sins by penance

as far as their limited capacity goes, God remits their

offenses and in addition thereto has promised the guilty

ones new gifts and graces and eternal rewards: yet his

faithful and prudent servants, who really love their

Lord, are constrained voluntarily to add other penances ;

for the debtor who merely wishes to do what he is

obliged to and adds nothing of his own freewill, cer

tainly pays his debts, but will remain poor and destitute.

262 CITY OF GOD

if after payment of his debts nothing remains. What

then are those to expect, who neither pay nor make any

efforts towards paying? The third reason for bodily

mortification, and the most urgent one, is the duty of

Christians to imitate their divine Teacher and Master.

Moreover, my divine Son and I, without being guilty of

any faults, or bad inclinations, devoted ourselves to

labors and made our lives a continual practice of pen

ance and mortification of the flesh. It was thus that the

Lord saw fit to attain the glory of his body and of his

holy name, and He wished me to follow Him in all

things. If We then pursued such a course of life because

it was reasonable, what must be thought of mortals that

seek nought but sweetness and delight, and abhor all

penances, affronts, ignominies, fasting and mortifica

tion? Shall then only Christ, our Lord, and I suffer all

these hardships while the guilt-laden debtors and de-

servers of all these punishments throw themselves head

over heels into the filth of their carnal inclinations?

Shall they employ their faculties, given to them for the

service of Christ, my Lord, and for his following, merely

in dancing attendance on their lusts and the devil, who

has introduced evil into the world? This absurd posi

tion, maintained by the children of Adam, is the cause of

great indignation in the just Judge.

283. It is true, my daughter, that by the bodily afflic

tions and mortifications of my most blessed Son, the de

fects and deficiencies of human merits have been atoned

for; and that He wished me, as a mere creature and as

one taking the place of other creatures, to co-operate

with Him most perfectly and exactly all in his penances

and exercises. But this was not in order to exempt men

from the practice of penance, but in order to encourage

them to it; for in order merely to save them, it was not

THE TRANSFIXION 263

necessary to suffer so much. Our blessed Savior, as a

true Father and Brother, wished also to enhance the

labors and penances of those who were to follow in his

footsteps; for the efforts of creatures are of little value

in the eyes of God unless they are made precious by the

merits of Christ. If this is true of works which are

entirely virtuous and perfect, how much more is it true

of those which are infected with so many faults and

deficiencies, even in the greatest acts of virtue, as ordi

narily performed by the children of Adam ? For in the

works of even the most spiritual and virtuous persons

many deficiencies occur. These deficiencies are made

good by the merits of Christ, our Lord, so that the

works of men may become acceptable to the eternal

Father. But those who neglect good works and remain

altogether idle can by no means expect to apply to

themselves the good works of Christ; for they have in

themselves nothing that can be perfected by the works of

Christ, but only such things as deserve condemnation. I

do not speak now, my daughter, of the damnable error of

some of the faithful, who have introduced into the

works of penance the sensuality and vanity of the world,

so that they merit greater punishment for their penance

than for their sins, since they foster in their penances

vain and imperfect purposes and forget the supernatural

ends of penance, which alone give value to penance and

life to the soul. On some other occasion, if necessary,

I will speak of this error; do thou now deplore this

blindness and labor with great zeal; for if thy labors

were even as great as that of the Apostles, Martyrs,

Confessors, they would be no greater than they should

be. Chastise thy body with ever greater severity, and

remember that thou art deficient in many things, while

thou hast but a short life and art so weak and incapable

of repaying thy debts.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AFTER HIS FAST THE LORD ALLOWS HIMSELF TO BE

TEMPTED BY LUCIFER/ CHRIST VANQUISHES HIM,

AND HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER IS KEPT INFORMED

OF ALL THAT HAPPENS.

284. In the twentieth chapter I have related how

Lucifer came forth from the infernal caverns in order

to find and tempt the divine Master. I mentioned also

that the Lord concealed Himself in the desert, where,

after a fast of about forty days, He permitted the

tempter to approach Him, as told by the Evangelists

(Matth. 4, 2). Coming to the desert and finding the

object of his search alone, Lucifer was highly rejoiced;

for he found Jesus separated from his Mother, whom he

and his satellites esteemed their Enemy on account of

the defeats they had suffered at her hands. As he never

had entered into any contest with the Lord, and as Mary

was absent, the dragon in his pride accounted his victory

secure. But when Lucifer and the other demons ob

served their Opponent more closely, they began to feel

great fear and discouragement. Not because they recog

nized his Divinity, for of this they had no suspicions as

long as they saw Him so despised ; nor because of any pre

vious experience with Him, for as yet they had measured

their forces only with the heavenly Queen; but because

they saw manifested in his exterior so much reserve and

so much majesty, and because his actions were so per

fect and heroic, that they inspired great fear and dread.

His behavior and his condition were totally different

264

THE TRANSFIXION 265

from those of other men, whom they had tempted and

easily overcome. Lucifer conferred about these matters

with his demons, saying : "What manner of man is this,

who is so adverse to the vices by which we assail other

men? If He is so forgetful of the world and has his

flesh in such entire subjection and control, how shall we

find any opening for our temptations? How shall we

hope for victory, if He has deprived us of the weapons,

by which we make warfare among men? I have many

misgivings about this contest." So great is the value and

power of contempt of the world and subjection of the

flesh, that they fill with terror the devil and all hell;

and the demons would not rise up against us in such

pride, if they would not find men subject to these tyrants

before he comes to tempt them.

285. Christ the Savior permitted Lucifer to remain

under the false impression, that He was a mere human

creature though very holy and just; He wished to raise

his courage and malice for the contest, for such is the

effect of any advantages espied by the devil in his attacks

upon the victims of his temptations. Rousing his cour

age by his own arrogance, he began this battle in the

wilderness with greater prowess and fierceness than the

demons ever exhibited in their battles with men. Lucifer

and his satellites strained all their power and malice,

lashing themselves into fury against the superior

strength which they soon found in Christ our Lord.

Yet our Savior tempered all his actions with divine

wisdom and goodness, and in justice and equity con

cealed the secret source of his infinite power, exhibiting

just so much as would suffice to prove Him to be a

man so far advanced in holiness as to be able to gain

these victories against the infernal foes. In order to

begin the battle as man, He directed a prayer to the

266 CITY OF GOD

eternal Father from his inmost soul, to which the intel

ligence of the demon could not penetrate, saying: "My

Father and eternal God, I now enter into battle with the

enemy in order to crush his power and humble his pride

and his malice against my beloved souls. For thy glory

and for the benefit of souls I submit to the daring pre

sumption of Lucifer. I wish thereby to crush his head

in order that when mortals are attacked by his tempta

tions without their fault, they may find his arrogance

already broken. I beseech Thee, my Father, to remember

my battle and victory in favor of mortals assailed by

the common enemy. Strengthen their weakness through

my triumph, let them obtain victory; let them be en

couraged by my example, and let them learn from Me

how to resist and overcome their enemies."

286. During this battle the holy angels that attended

upon Christ were hidden from the sight of Lucifer, in

order that he might not begin to understand and suspect

the divine power of our Savior. The holy spirits gave

glory and praise to the Father and the Holy Ghost, who

rejoiced in the works of the incarnate Word. The most

blessed Virgin also from her oratory witnessed the

battle in the manner to be described below. The tempta

tion of Christ began on the thirty-fifth day of his fast

in the desert, and lasted to the end of the fast, as related

by the Evangelists. Lucifer assumed the shape of a

man and presented himself before the Lord as a stranger,

who had never seen or known Him before. He clothed

himself in refulgent light, like that of an angel, and,

conjecturing that the Lord after his long fast must be

suffering great hunger, he said to Him: "If Thou be

the Son of God, command that these stones be made

bread" (Matth. 4, 3). By thus cunningly resting his

advice on the supposition of his being the Son of God,

THE TRANSFIXION 267

the demon sought some information on what was giving

him the greatest concern. But the Savior of the world

answered only in these few words : "Not in bread alone

doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from

the mouth of God." Christ took the words from the

eighth chapter of Deuteronomy. But the devil did not

penetrate into the meaning given to these words by

Christ for Lucifer understood Him to mean, that God

could sustain the life of man without bread or any other

nourishment. But though this was also the true signifi

cation of these words, yet our divine Master included

a much deeper meaning; desiring by these words to say

to the devil : This Man, with whom thou speakest, lives

in the word of God, which is the divine Word, hypo-

statically united to his humanity. Though that was pre

cisely what the Lucifer desired so much to know, he

did not deserve to understand the words of the Godman,

because He did not wish to adore Him as true God.

287. Lucifer found himself repulsed by the force of

this answer and by the hidden power which accompanied

it; but he wished to show no weakness, nor desist from

the contest. The Lord allowed the demon to continue

in his temptation and for this purpose permitted Himself

to be carried by the devil bodily to Jerusalem and to be

placed on the pinnacle of the temple. Here the Lord

could see multitudes of people, though He himself was

not seen by anybody. Lucifer tried to arouse in the

Lord the vain desire of casting Himself down from this

high place, so that the crowds of men, seeing Him un

hurt, might proclaim Him as a great and wonderful man

of God. Again using the words of the holy Scriptures,

he said to Him: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast

Thyself down, for it is written (Ps. 90, 11) : that He

hath given his angels charge over Thee, and in their

268 CITY OF GOD

hands they shall bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash

thy foot against a stone" (Matth. 4, 6). The heavenly

spirits who accompanied their King, were full of wonder,

that He should permit Lucifer to carry Him bodily in

his hands, solely for the benefit of mortal man. With

the prince of darkness were gathered innumerable de

mons; for on that occasion hell was almost emptied of

its inhabitants in order to furnish assistance for this

enterprise. The Author of wisdom answered: "It is

also written: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy

God" (Deut. 6, 16). While giving these answers the

Redeemer of the world exhibited a matchless meekness,

profoundest humility, and a majesty so superior to all

the attempts of satan, as was of itself alone sufficient to

crush Lucifer s arrogance and to cause him torments and

confusion never felt before.

288. Being thus foiled, he attacked our Lord in still

another way, seeking to rouse his ambition by offering

Him some share in his dominion. For this purpose he

took the Lord upon a high mount, from whence could

be seen many lands, and said to Him with perfidious

daring: "All these will I give to Thee, if falling down,

Thou wilt adore me" (Matth. 4, 9). Exorbitant bold

ness, and more than insane madness and perfidy ! Offer

ing to the Lord what he did not possess, nor ever could

give, since the earth, the stars, the kingdoms, princi

palities, riches and treasures, all belong to the Lord,

and He alone can give or withhold them when it serves

and pleases Him! Never can Lucifer give anything,

even not of the things of the earth, and therefore all

his promises are false. The King and Lord answered

with imperial majesty: "Begone, satan, for it is written:

Tlie Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt

tliuu serve." By this command, "Begone satan," Christ

THE TRANSFIXION 269

the Redeemer took away from Lucifer permission further

to tempt Him, and hurled him and all his legions into

the deepest abysses of hell. There they found themselves

entirely crushed and buried in its deepest caverns, unable

to move for three days. When they were permitted

again to rise, seeing themselves thus vanquished and

annihilated, they began to doubt whether He, who had

so overwhelmed them, might not be the incarnate Son

of God. In this doubt and uncertainty they remained,

without ever being able to come to certain conviction until

the death of the Savior. Lucifer was overcome by hellish

wrath at his defeat and was almost consumed in his

fury.

289. Our divine Conqueror Christ then sang hymns

of praise and thanks to the eternal Father for having

given Him this triumph over the common enemy of

God and man ; and amid the triumphal songs of a multi

tude of angels, He was borne back to the desert. They

carried Him in their hands, although He had not need

of their help, since He could make use of his own divine

power; but this service of the angels was due to Him

in recompense for enduring the audacity of Lucifer in

carrying to the pinnacle of the temple and to the moun

tain top the sacred humanity of Christ, in which dwelt

substantially and truly the Divinity itself. It would

never have entered into the thoughts of man, that the

Lord should give such a permission to satan, if it had

not been made known to us in the Gospels. But I do

not know which deserves the greater astonishment : that

He should consent to be carried about from one place

to another by Lucifer, who did not know Him; or that

He should allow Himself to be sold by Judas, or to be

received in the holy Sacrament by this treacherous dis

ciple and by so many sinful members of the Church, who

3-18

270 CITY OF GOD

do know Him to be their God and yet receive Him

unworthily. What we certainly must wonder at, is that

He permitted as well the one as the other and that He

continues to permit it for our benefit and in order to

draw us to Him by his meekness and by his patient love.

O sweetest master of my soul! How sweet, and kind,

and merciful art Thou not toward the souls! (Joel 2,

13). Out of purest love Thou didst descend from heaven

to earth for them, Thou didst suffer and give away thy

life for their salvation. Mercifully Thou waitest for

them and bearest with them, Thou callest and seekest

after them ; Thou receivest them and dost enter into their

bosom; Thou yieldest Thyself entirely to them and anx

iously desirest them to be thine. What transfixes and

bursts my heart, is that, while Thou seekest to draw us

to Thee out of pure love, we fly from Thee and respond

to all Thy excesses of love only by ingratitude. O

immense love of my God, so badly repaid and so little

acknowledged! Give me, O Lord, fountains of tears to

weep over this wrong, which is so deeply to be deplored,

and let all the just of the earth help me. When the

Lord had been carried back to the desert, the angels,

according to the Gospel, ministered unto Him (Matth.

4, 11); for at the end of his temptation and fast they

served Him with a celestial food, in order that his sacred

body might again be invigorated. Not only were the

angels present to rejoice at this divine banquet, but also

the birds of the desert came in order to contribute to the

recreation of their Creator by their harmonious songs

and graceful movements ; and in their own way the wild

animals of the desert joined them, throwing off their

native wildness and producing their joyful antics and

sounds in acknowledgment of the victory of their Lord.

290. Let us return to Nazareth, where, in her oratory,

THE TRANSFIXION 271

the Princess of the angels had witnessed the battles of

her most holy Son. She had seen them all by the divine

light already described and by the uninterrupted mes

sages of her angels, who brought them back and forth

between the Savior and the blessed Queen. She repeated

the same prayers as the Lord and at the same time . She

entered likewise into the conflict with the dragon, al

though invisibly and spiritually. From her retreat She

anathemized and crushed Lucifer and his followers,

co-operating in all the doings of Christ in our favor.

When She perceived that the demon carried the Lord

from place to place, She wept bitterly, because the

malice of sin reduced the King of kings to such mis-

usage. In honor of all the victories, which He gained

over the devil, She composed hymns of praise to the

Divinity and the most holy humanity of Christ, while

the angels set them to music and were sent with them

to congratulate Him for the blessings won for the

human race. Christ on his part sent back the angels

with words of sweet consolation and rejoicing on ac

count of his triumphs over Lucifer.

291. And since She had been his faithful companion

and sharer in his labors and fasts of the desert, the

Lord sent Her some of the celestial food and com

manded the angels to present and minister it to Her.

Wonderful to record, the great multitudes of the birds

that had gathered around the Savior, flew after these

angels with a heavier, yet an exceedingly swift flight,

and entered the dwelling of the Queen of heaven and

earth; and while the blessed Lady partook of the food

sent to her by her Son, they sang and chirped before

our Lady in the same way as they had done in the

presence of the Savior. The most holy Virgin tasted

the heavenly food, now even more precious to Her,

272

CITY OF GOD

since it came from and was blessed by the hands of

her Son; and by it She was again rejoiced and strength

ened after her long and rigorous fast. She gave thanks

to the Almighty and humiliated Herself to the very

earth; and the acts of her virtue were so heroic and

excellent, that our words and conceptions are not

able to encompass them. We shall see them in their

true light, when we shall rejoice with the Lord; then

we shall give glory and praise for these ineffable bless

ings, as is due Him from all the human race.

QUESTION WHICH I ASKED THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

292. Queen of all the heavens and Mistress of the uni

verse, thy kind condescension emboldens me to ask Thee,

as my Teacher and Mother, for information concerning

a certain doubt raised in my mind by the mention of

the celestial food, which the angels served to the Savior

in the desert. I understood it to be of the same quality

as that served to Thee and to the Lord on other occa

sions, when the ordinary food was wanting. I have

called it celestial food, because I had no other name

for it; yet I do not know if that name is appropriate.

For I am uncertain whence this food was procured and

what was its nature. In heaven I understand, there

is no need of bodily food, for there the earthly mode

of sustaining life is not continued. Although the

blessed enjoy also sensible delight from created objects,

and also the taste must have its proper function in

heaven just as the other senses, I suspect that its

pleasures are not derived from the eating of food, but

from some overflow of the soul s glory into the body

and its senses. Thus the grossness and imperfection

of the senses in mortal life have no share in their

THE TRANSFIXION 273

heavenly activity and in its objects. Of all this, I,

being so ignorant, desire to be informed by thy motherly

kindness and condescension.

ANSWER AND INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE

HEAVENLY LADY.

293. My daughter, thou hast well doubted: for it

is true, that in heaven no material food or nourishment

is used, as thou hast already understood and declared.

The food which the angels brought to my holy Son

and to me, was truly a heavenly food, and I myself have

suggested this name to thee, because the strength of

this food is heavenly and not earthly, where everything

is gross, very material and limited. It will help thee

to understand something of the quality of this food,

and the manner of its creation, when I tell thee, that

the Lord, to supply our wants, made use of some

created material, most ordinarily water, on account of

its clearness and simple composition; for the Lord does

not require complicated matter for his miracles. At

other times it was bread or some kinds of fruit. These

materials He furnished with such a power and such

qualities of taste, that they exceeded, as heaven does

the earth, all the delicacies here below. There is nothing

in the world which can be compared to them; for all

other food is insipid and strengthless in comparison to

this celestial food. To understand this the better, con

sider the examples mentioned in holy Scripture: for

instance the food given to Elias, by the strength of

which he walked for forty days and nights to mount

Horeb; the manna, which was called the bread of the

angels, because they prepared it by condensing the

vapors of the earth (Exod. 16, 14) and thus condensed

and shaped like grain, they showered it upon the earth.

274 CITY OF GOD

It possessed a great variety of tastes, as Scripture tells

us, and it was very nourishing to the body. Also the

water converted into wine by the most holy Son at the

nuptials of Cana was of such good taste and strength,

that it excited the admiration of the guests (John 2, 10).

294. In the same way as the Lord gave a supernatural

excellence to the water and turned it into a most sweet

and delicate liquor, so He also gave a spiritual strength

to the bread or the fruit. Such nourishment restored

the waste of bodily strength and delighted the senses

in an admirable manner, renewing their vigor and fitting

them for labors and difficulties without causing the least

loathing or inconvenience. This kind of food was min

istered by the holy angels to my most holy Son after

his fast, and this I and my spouse Joseph received on

different occasions. The Almighty showed the same

favor also to some of his friends and servants, rejoicing

them with heavenly food, although not so frequently

and in so wonderful a manner as He did Us. Thy

doubt is then answered; but now listen to the instruc

tion pertaining to this chapter.

295. In order to understand better what thou hast

written, thou must keep in mind three motives of our

Lord in entering upon this battle with Lucifer, and this

understanding will furnish thee great light and strength

against Satan and his followers. His first motive was

to destroy sin and the seeds of sin, sown in the human

nature by satan in the first transgression of Adam.

These seeds are the seven capital vices: pride, avarice,

lust and the others, being the seven heads of the dragon.

Lucifer appointed an infernal chieftain over each one

of these vices in the battle of hell against the human

race, and the evil spirits were distributed into squad

rons under these leaders in order to maintain the sort

THE TRANSFIXION 275

of orderly confusion, which I have described in the

first part of this heavenly history (Part I, No. 103).

Accordingly my divine Son entered into conflict with

each one of these princes of darkness, vanquishing them

and destroying their power. In the Gospels only three

temptations are mentioned, being those which are more

manifest to the senses; but the conflict and the triumph

was far more extensive, for Christ our Lord overcame

all these princes and their vices. Pride He overcame

by his humility ; anger, by his meekness ; avarice, by his

contempt for riches; and all the other vices, by their

corresponding virtues. The greatest defeat and con

sternation, however, overtook these enemies at the foot

of the Cross, when they became certain that it was

the incarnate Word who had conquered and crushed

them. Since that time they are timid in entering into

conflict with those men, who rely on the power and

triumph of my Son.

296. The second motive for engaging in this conflict

was obedience to the command of the eternal Father,

who not only wished Him to die for men, and redeem

them by his Passion and Death, but also to enter into

battle with the demons and vanquish them by the force

of his incomparable virtues. The third motive, and the

one that was consequent upon the second, was to fur

nish mankind an example and a model for triumphing

over their enemies and to take away from all men any

cause of wonder or surprise at being tempted and per

secuted by the devils. He wished that all should have

this consolation in their temptations and conflicts, that

their Redeemer and Teacher first suffered them in his

own Person (Heb. 4, 15) ; for, though in some respects

his temptations were different from ours, yet in sub

stance, they were entirely the same, only of greater

276 CITY OF GOD

satanic force and malice. My Lord permitted Lucifer

to strain all his powers in his battle with Him, in order

that by his divine power He might crush and enfeeble

hell in its battles against mankind, making it more

easy for us to overcome them, if we wish to avail our

selves of the advantages gained by this very conflict

of our Redeemer.

297. All mortals have need of this instruction, if

they are to vanquish the demon ; but thou, my daughter,

needest it more than many generations on account of

the wrath of this dragon against thee and on account

of thy natural weakness in battle, when not assisted by

my teaching and this example. Before all see that thou

keep in subjection thy flesh and the influences of the

world. Mortifying thy flesh and flying the world by

retiring from creatures to the interior of thy soul, thus

conquering both these enemies and preserving the

blessed light of grace, which thou there receivest, and

loving nothing except in as far as well ordered charity

permits. For this purpose renew in thyself the memory

of the narrow path pointed out to thee; for the Lord

has given thee a natural faculty of ardent love, and

We wish that thou consecrate this faculty entirely to

the love of God. Consent not to any movement of thy

appetites, no matter in how small a matter; and allow

thy senses no liberty, except for the exaltation of the

Most High, or for suffering or doing something for

the benefit and love of thy neighbor. If thou obey me

in all things, I will see that thou art protected and

strengthened against this cruel dragon for the battles

of the Lord (I King 25, 28). A thousand shields will

surround thee both for defense and offense against the

demon. Accustom thyself always to use against him

the words of holy Writ, not deigning to exchange many

THE TRANSFIXION 277

words with such an astute enemy. Weak creatures

should not indulge in conferences or arguments with

their mortal enemy and the master of lies; since even

my divine Son, who was all-powerful and infinitely wise,

did not do so. In this He gave the souls an example

how circumspectly they are to act with the devil. Arm

thyself with living faith, unwavering hope and love of

humility, for these are the virtues by which the dragon

is crushed and vanquished and against which he dares

not make a stand. He flies from them because they are

powerful weapons against his pride and arrogance.

CHAPTER XXVII.

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER LEAVES THE DESERT AND RE

TURNS TO THE PLACE WHERE SAINT JOHN WAS

BAPTIZING. HIS OCCUPATION UNTIL HE CALLS THE

FIRST DISCIPLES. THE BLESSED VIRGIN KNOWS OF

ALL HIS DOINGS AND IMITATES THEM.

298. Christ our Redeemer, having triumphed over the

devil and all his vices and having attained the high and

mysterious ends of his retirement and fast in the desert,

now resolved to leave his solitude in order to pursue

the further works enjoined upon Him by the eternal

Father for the Redemption of man. In taking leave of

the desert, He prostrated Himself upon the ground,

praising the eternal Father and giving Him thanks for

all that He had done through his sacred humanity for

the glory of the Divinity and for the benefit of the

human race. He added also a fervent prayer for all

those who would, in imitation of Him, retire either

for their whole life or for some time, into solitude,

and far from the world and its allurements follow Him

in contemplation and holy exercises for their spiritual

advancement. The Father in heaven promised his

favors and his words of eternal life as well as his

special helps and his blessings of sweetness to all those,

who on their part dispose themselves properly to receive

and correspond with them. Having said this prayer

the Savior, as true man, asked permission to leave the

desert and attended by the holy angels He departed.

299. The Master directed his most faithful steps to-

278

THE TRANSFIXION 279

ward the Jordan, where his great Precursor saint John

was still preaching and baptizing. By his presence and

appearance there He wished to secure new testimony

of his mission and Divinity through the mouth of saint

John. Moreover He was drawn by his own love to see

and speak with him, for during his Baptism the heart

of the Precursor had become inflamed and wounded by

the divine love of the Savior, which so resistlessly at

tracted all creatures. In the hearts which were well

disposed, as was that of saint John, the fire of love

burned with so much the greater ardor and violence.

When the Baptist saw the Savior coming to him

the second time, his first words were those recorded

by the Evangelist: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold

Him who taketh away the sin of the world." Saint

John gave this testimony while pointing out the Lord

with his finger to those who were listening to his instruc

tions and were receiving Baptism at his hands. He

added: "This is He of whom I said: after me there

cometh a Man, who is preferred before me; because

He was before me. And I knew Him not; but that He

may be made manifest in Israel, therefore I am come

baptizing with water."

300. These words the Baptist spoke, because before

Jesus had come to be baptized, he had not seen Him,

nor received any revelations concerning his coming, as

was the case on this occasion and as I have said in

chapter the twenty- fourth. He continued to speak of

Christ, telling the bystanders how he had seen the Holy

Ghost descend upon the Lord in Baptism, and how he

had given testimony of his being Christ the Son of

God (John 1, 29-32). For while Jesus was in the desert

the Jews had sent to Him the embassy from Jerusalem,

which is spoken of in the first chapter of the Gospel

280 CITY OF GOD

of saint John, asking him, who he was and the other

questions there recorded. The Baptist answered that

he was baptizing in water, but that in their midst had

been One whom they knew not (for Christ had been

among them at the Jordan). This One, saint John said,

was to come later, whose shoe-latches he was not worthy

to loosen. Hence, when saint John again saw the Savior

returning from the desert, he called Him the Lamb of

God and referred to the testimony, which shortly before

he had given to the Pharisees, at the same time adding,

that he had seen the Holy Ghost descending upon his

head, as had been promised him by revelation before

hand. Both saint Matthew and saint Luke also men

tion, that the voice of the Father was heard at his

Baptism, whereas saint John the Apostle mentions only

the appearance of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove;

for he wished to record merely the words of saint John

to the Jews in regard to Christ.

301. The Queen of heaven, in her retirement, knew

of this faithful testimony of the Precursor in denying,

that he himself was the Christ and in asserting the

Divinity of her Son. In return She begged the Lord

to reward his faithful servant John. The Almighty

granted her prayer, for the holy Baptist was raised

above all the woman-born in the esteem of the Most

High. Because saint John refused the honors offered

to him, the Lord conferred upon him the highest honor

that is possible to give to a man next to the Redeemer.

On this occasion, when the Baptist saw the Savior the

second time, he was filled with new and vast graces of

the Holy Ghost. Some of the bystanders, when they

heard him say: "Behold the Lamb of God," were

strongly moved and asked him many questions; but,

the Savior, permitting him to inform his hearers of the

THE TRANSFIXION 281

truth as explained above, turned away and left this

place to go to Jerusalem. Jesus was but a very short

time near the Precursor. He did not go directly to

the holy city; but for many days He tarried in smaller

towns, teaching the people and in a veiled manner telling

them, that the Messias was already in the world. He

directed them on the way of salvation, and induced

many to seek the Baptism of John, in order to prepare

themselves by penance for the coming Redemption.

302. The Evangelists say nothing of the time and of

the doings of Christ immediately after his fast. But I

have been informed, that the Savior remained about ten

months in Judea before He returned to Nazareth in

order to see his blessed Mother. Nor did He enter

Galilee until He had again allowed Himself to be seen

by saint John, who for the second time proclaimed Him

as the Lamb of God. This time it was done in the hear

ing of Andrew and the first Apostles; and immediately

afterward He called Philip, as related by John the Evan

gelist (John 1, 36-43). These ten months the Savior

spent in enlightening the souls and preparing them by

his helps, his teaching and admirable blessings, stirring

them up from their stupor, so that afterwards, when

He should begin to work miracles, He might find them

more ready to believe and follow Him as their Re

deemer. Many of those whom He had during this time

catechized and instructed, really became his followers.

He did not speak with the pharisees and scribes during

this time; for they were not so well disposed to believe

that the Messias had come. They did not admit such

belief even afterwards, when this truth had been con

firmed by his preaching and when his miracles and other

testimonies had so clearly given witness to Christ our

282 CITY OF GOD

Lord (Matth. 11, 5). To the humble and the poor, who

on account of their station of life merited to be the first

to be evangelized and instructed (Luke 4, 18), the

Savior preached during these ten months in the kingdom

of Judea; to them He showed his merciful liberality not

only by individual instruction, but by his hidden favors

and private miracles. Hence they received Him as a

great Prophet and a holy Man. He stirred the hearts

of innumerable persons to forsake sin and to seek the

kingdom of God, which was now approaching.

303. Our blessed Lady remained during all this time

in Nazareth, knowing of all the doings of her Son;

She was kept informed of them not only by the divine

light, of which I have spoken, but also by the messages

brought to Her by her thousand angels, who, during

the absence of the Redeemer, always appeared to Her

in bodily forms. In order to imitate Him perfectly, She

left her solitude at the same time as the Savior. Though

She could not grow in love, yet, after the overthrow

of the demons through our Lord s fasting and other

virtues, She manifested it by greater fervor. The

heavenly Mother having received new increase of

grace, ardently set about imitating all the works of her

Son for the benefit of the human race and acting as his

messenger in the manifestation of his office as Re

deemer of mankind. Accompanied by her angels, filled

with the plenitude of wisdom and furnished with the

power of Mistress of the universe, She went forth from

her house in Nazareth to the neighboring places and per

formed great miracles, although in a hidden manner,

just as the incarnate Word was doing in Judea. She

spoke of the advent of the Messias without revealing

who He was; She instructed many in the way of life,

THE TRANSFIXION 283

drew them from their sins, put to flight the demons,

enlightened the erring and the ignorant and prepared

them for the Redemption by inducing them to believe

in its Author. To these spiritual works of mercy She

added many bodily blessings, healing the sick, consoling

the afflicted, visiting the poor. Though She labored

mostly among the women, yet She benefited also many

of the men, who, if they were despised and poor, were

not deprived of her aid and of the happiness of being

visited by the Sovereign of the angels and of all the

universe.

304. In imitation of all that the Lord was doing in

Judea, She also went about on foot spending nearly all

this time on her excursions, yet She returned a few

times to her dwelling in Nazareth. During these ten

months She ate very little; for, as I have indicated in

the preceding chapter, She had been so satiated and

strengthened by the celestial food sent to Her by her

Son from the desert, that She was enabled not only to

travel afoot to many places and over great distances,

but also to abstain from other nourishment. The blessed

Lady likewise knew of the doings of saint John while

preaching and baptizing on the banks of the Jordan.

Several times She sent him a multitude of her angels in

order to encourage him and thank him for the loyalty he

had shown to her Lord and Son. In the midst of all these

occupations the loving Mother suffered great agonies of

desire to enjoy the sight and the presence of her most

holy Son; while the heart of Jesus in return was

wounded by the clamors of her chaste and heavenly

love. Before returning to visit Her and before begin

ning his public preaching and miracles, happened what

I shall relate in the following chapter.

284 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY.

305. I will give thee two important lessons deducted

from this chapter. First, love solitude and seek it with

particular affection in order that thou mayest partake

of the blessings promised and merited by my divine

Son for those who imitate Him therein. As far as

possible, when thou art not obliged to converse with thy

neighbor in virtue of obedience always try to be alone;

and when thou art obliged to come out of thy retire

ment and solitude, carry it with thee in the secret of thy

heart in such a manner that thy senses and thy occu

pations shall not deprive thee of it. Attend to thy out

ward employments as if they were to be done only in

passing, and consider thy retirement as something which

is to be permanent; for this purpose thou must not

allow the images of creatures to enter thy mind, for,

very often, they occupy the mind more completely than

the objects themselves, and they .always embarrass the

soul and take away from it the liberty of the heart. It

is unworthy of thee to let thy heart be interested in

anything or be taken up by any creature. My divine

Son wishes to be in it all alone and this is also what

I desire. My second lesson is that thou learn to set a

proper value on thy soul, in order to preserve it in its

purity and innocence. Over and above this, however,

although it is my will that thou labor for the justifica

tion of all men, I wish that thou, in imitation of my Son

and of me, busy thyself especially with the poor and

despised of this world. These little ones often beg for

the bread of counsel and instruction (Thren. 4, 4), and

they find none to give it to them, as do the rich and

powerful of the earth who have many to advise them.

THE TRANSFIXION 285

Of these poor and despised ones many come to thee;

admit them with true compassion; console them kindly,

so that, in their simplicity, they may follow enlightened

counsel; for counsel is to be administered to the better

instructed in a different way. Seek to gain those souls,

who, on account of their temporal necessities, are so

much the more precious in the eyes of God; I wish that

thou labor incessantly, that they and all others may not

waste the fruit of Redemption; nor do thou ever rest

from this labor; be ready even to die, if necessary, to ad

vance this enterprise.

3-20

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CHRIST, OUR REDEEMER, BEGINS TO CALL AND SELECT

HIS DISCIPLES IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BAPTIST,

AND COMMENCES TO PREACH. THE MOST HIGH

COMMANDS HIS BLESSED MOTHER TO FOLLOW HIM.

306. Our Savior, having visited the villages in Judea

for ten months after his fast, now resolved to manifest

Himself to the world; not that He had spoken ex

clusively only in private of the truths of eternal life; but

He had not until then proclaimed Himself publicly as

the Messias and the Master of life, whereas now the

time for doing so, according to the decrees of infinite

Wisdom, had arrived. Hence the Lord sought again

the presence of his Precursor John, in order that through

his testimony (since such was his office in the world),

the light might be manifested in the darkness (John

1, 5). By divine revelation the Baptist knew of this

visit of the Savior and of his intention to make Him

self known to the world as the Redeemer and the true

Son of the eternal Father. When, therefore, saint John

saw Him coming he exclaimed in wonderful joy of his

spirit to his disciples: "Ecce Agnus Dei," "Behold the

Lamb of God." This testimony referred not only to

his previous identical words in regard to Christ, but

also presupposed the more particular instructions which

he had given to his close disciples. It was as if he said

to them : Here now you see the Lamb of God, of whom

I have spoken to you, who has come to redeem the world

and open the way to heaven. This was the last time that

286

THE TRANSFIXION 287

the Baptist saw the Savior in the natural way ; but Christ

appeared to him just before his death, as I shall relate

farther on.

307. The two first disciples of Christ who were with

saint John at the time, heard this testimony and, moved

by it and by the light and grace interiorly imparted to

them, they began to follow the Lord. Benignantly turn

ing to them the Lord asked them, what they sought (John

1, 38). They answered that they wished to know

where He lived; and the Lord bade them follow. They

were with Him that day as saint John tells us. One of

them, he says, was saint Andrew, the brother of saint

Peter; the other he does not mention. But I was made

to understand that it was saint John himself, who, in

his great modesty, did not wish to give his name. These

two, then, saint John and saint Andrew, were the first

fruits of the Baptist s apostolate, being the first of the

disciples of the Baptist who followed the Savior in con

sequence of his express testimony and without being

outwardly called by the Lord. Saint Andrew imme

diately sought his brother Simon and took him along,

saying that he had found the Messias, who called Him

self Christ. Looking upon Peter He said: "Thou art

Simon the son of Jona : thou shalt be called Cephas,

which is interpreted Peter." All this happened within

the confines of Judea and on the next day the Lord

entered Galilee. The.re He found saint Philip and

called him to his following. Philip immediately sought

Nathanael and brought him to Jesus, telling him what

had happened and that they had found the Messias in

the Person of Jesus of Nazareth. Nathanael, having

spoken with the Lord as recorded in the first chapter of

saint John s Gospel, joined as the fifth of the disciples

of Christ.

288 CITY OF GOD

308. With these five disciples, the first stones in the

foundation of the new Church, Christ, the Savior,

entered Galilee for the purpose of beginning his public

preaching and baptizing. In the Apostles thus called

He enkindled, from the moment of their joining the

Master, a new light and fire of divine love and showered

upon them the sweetness of his blessings (Ps. 20, 4).

It is not possible worthily to describe the labors under

gone by the divine Teacher in tfre vocation and educa

tion of these and of the other disciples, in order to found

upon them the Church. He sought them out with great

diligence and solicitude; He urged them on frequently

by the powerful and efficacious help of his grace; He

enlightened their hearts and enriched them with incom

parable gifts and blessings; He received them with ad

mirable kindness; He nourished them with the sweetest

milk of his doctrines ; He bore with them with invincible

patience; He caressed them as a most loving Father

caresses his tender and darling sons. As our nature

is base and uncouth material for the exalted and ex

quisite aspirations of the Spirit, and as they were to be

not only perfect disciples, but consummate masters of

perfection in the world and in the Church, the work

of transforming and raising them from their rough

natural state into such a heavenly and divine position

by his instructions and example, necessarily was a vast

enterprise. In the performance pf this work the Lord

has left a most exalted example of patience, meekness

and charity for all the prelates, princes and whoever

is charged with the guidance of subjects. Not less sig

nificant for us sinners are the proofs of his fatherly

kindness : for He was not satisfied with simply bear

ing with their faults and defects, their natural inclina

tions and passions: but He allowed his tender kindness

THE TRANSFIXION 289

to overflow thus wonderfully toward them, in order

that we might be cheered on to trust Him and not per

mit ourselves to be dismayed amidst the countless imper

fections and weaknesses natural to our earthly exist

ence.

309. By the means already mentioned the Queen of

heaven was informed of all the wonderful doings of

our Savior in the vocation of the Apostles and dis

ciples and in his public preaching. She gave thanks to

the eternal Father for these the first disciples, acknowl

edging and admitting them in imitation of her Son as

her spiritual children, and offering them to the divine

Majesty with new songs of praise and joy. On this

occasion of the choice of the first disciples She was

favored by a neV revelation of the Most High in which

She was informed again of his holy and eternal de

cree concerning the Redemption of man and of the

manner in which it was to be executed in the preaching

of his most holy Son. He said to Her : "My Daughter

and my Dove, chosen out of thousands, it is necessary

that Thou accompany and assist my Onlybegotten and

thine in the labors which He is about to undertake in

the work of the Redemption. The time of his suffering

is come and I am about to open up the stores of wis

dom and goodness in order to enrich men by my treas

ures. Through their Redeemer and Teacher I wish to

free them from the slavery of sin and of the devil and

to pour out the abundance of my grace upon the hearts

of all the mortals who prepare themselves to know my

incarnate Son and to follow Him as their Head and

Guide upon the way of eternal salvation. I wish to

raise from the dust and enrich the poor, cast down the

proud, exalt the humble and enlighten the blind in

the darkness of death (Is. 9, 2). I wish to setup my

290 CITY OF GOD

friends and chosen ones and make known the greatness

of my name. In the execution of this, my holy and eter

nal will, I wish that Thou my cherished and chosen

One, co-operate with my Son, that thou accompany Him,

follow and imitate Him, and I will be with Thee in

all that Thou shalt do."

310. "Supreme King of the universe," most holy

Mary answered, "from whom all creatures receive their

being and preservation, although I am but vile dust and

ashes, I will speak in thy presence according to thy

condescension (Gen. 18, 27). Accept, O most high

Lord and God, the heart of thy handmaid, which is

prepared to sacrifice itself for the accomplishment of thy

pleasure. Receive the holocaust, not only of my lips,

but of my inmost soul in obedience to the orders of thy

wisdom manifested unto thy slave. Behold me prostrate

before thy presence and supreme Majesty: fulfill in me

entirely thy will and pleasure. I desire, O almighty

God, if it is possible, to suffer and to die either with

or instead of thy and my Son. This would be the

fulfillment of all my desires and the excess of my joy,

that the sword of thy justice strike rather me, since

I am closer to guilt. He is sinless as well by nature

as also by the prerogatives of the Divinity. All crea

tures are infinitely distant from his dignity; yet it is

also true that any of the acts of thy Onlybegotten is

abundantly sufficient for the Redemption, and that He

has done much for men. If on account of this it is

possible for me to die in order to save his priceless life,

I am prepared to die. But if thy decree is unchangeable,

grant me, highest God and Father, if possible, that I

pour out my life with his. But in this also will I submit

to thy will, just as I am ready to obey Thee in follow-

THE TRANSFIXION 291

ing Him and in sharing his labors. Do Thou assist

me with the power of thy right hand in order that I

may hasten to imitate Him and fulfill thy pleasure and

my own longings."

311. I cannot further describe in words what I under

stood concerning the heroic and wonderful acts per

formed by our Queen and Lady on this occasion; how

fervently She desired to die and suffer on receiving

this command of the Most High, either in order to

exempt her most holy Son from death or at least to share

his Death with Him. Hence, if fervent acts of love,

even when they are directed toward things impossible,

so highly oblige God, that if they arise from a true and

upright heart, He accepts them as really effective and as

worthy of full reward : what must have been the merits

of the Mother of grace and love in thus offering her

life as a sacrifice of her love? Neither human nor

angelic intellect shall ever reach this exalted sacrament

of love. It would have been sweet to Her to suffer and

die; but it occasioned Her much more pain not to be

permitted to die with her Son, or to be alive while

She saw Him suffer and die, as I shall record later

on. Hence, one can form some estimate how closely

allied in glory Mary must be with Christ and how simi

lar her grace and sanctity was to that of her model,

Christ; for in all things She corresponded to his love

and rose to the highest point imaginable in a mere

creature. In these sentiments our Queen issued forth

from her vision, and the Most High again commanded

her angels to assist and serve Her in what She was to

do. They, as the most faithful ministers of the Lord,

obeyed, ordinarily accompanied Her in visible forms

and served Her wherever She went.

292 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION WHICH OUR QUEEN AND LADY

GAVE ME.

312. My daughter, all the doings of my most holy

Son prove his divine love toward men and how dif

ferent this love is from that which they have among

themselves. Mortals are ordinarily so small-minded,

niggardly, avaricious and sluggish, that they are usually

not moved to love any one unless they see some advan

tage in the objects of their love. Hence the love of

creatures is founded upon the good thought to be in

that which they love. But divine love, having its foun

tain within itself, and being capable of effecting its own

wishes, does not seek the creature because it is worthy,

but it loves creatures in order to make them worthy of

love. Therefore, no soul must despair of the divine

goodness. Yet no one must on that account have a vain

and presumptuous trust, expecting divine love to work in

it effects of grace of which he is altogether unworthy;

for in these gifts of his love the Most High follows

a course of equity most mysterious to the creature. Al

though God loves them all and wishes all to be saved,

yet in the distribution of these gifts and effects of his

love He undeniably applies a certain measure and

weight of his sanctuary, by which He dispenses them.

Now, as man cannot penetrate or comprehend this

secret, he must take care not to forfeit or lose the first

grace and first vocation; for he does not know whether

he will not lose the second by his ingratitude, and he

can be certain of not losing the second only by making

use of the first grace. The soul can know for certain

only this : that grace will not be denied if the soul does

not make itself unworthy. These workings of divine

love in the soul are accompanied by interior enlighten-

THE TRANSFIXION 293

ment, so that in the presence of this light, men are re

proved for their sins and convinced of their evil state

and of the danger of eternal death. But human pride

makes many of them so foolish and base of heart that

they resist this light; others are hard to move and

never fail to have some vain excuse for their negligence ;

whence they counteract the first effects of the love of

God and make themselves unfit for future graces. Now,

without the help of grace, men cannot avoid evil, nor

can they do the good, or even know it; thus many cast

themselves from abyss to abyss. For, since they coun

teract and repel grace, and thus are unworthy of fur

ther help, they inevitably draw upon themselves ruin by

falling from sin to sin.

313. Be attentive, therefore, my dearest, to the light

which has excited thy heart to the love of the Most

High; for by the enlightenment which thou hast re

ceived in the history of my life, even if thou hadst no

other light, thou art placed under such great obligations

that if thou dost not correspond with them in the holi

ness of thy life, thou shalt be more reprehensible in the

eyes of God and in mine, and in the presence of angels

and men, than all the other human-born. Let also the

conduct of the first disciples of my most holy Son, and

the promptitude with which they followed Him, serve

thee as an example. Although his forbearance and kind

instruction were a special grace, they faithfully cor

responded to it and followed the teachings of their Mas

ter. Their human nature was weak, yet they did not make

themselves incapable of receiving further blessings of

God s right hand and they set their desires toward much

higher aims than their weak strength would be able to

attain. In order to bring this faithful love in thee to

its greatest perfection, I wish that thou imitate me in

294 CITY OF GOD

all the works which I have performed on this occasion,

and in the desire to die for my divine Son or with Him,

if it had been permitted. Prepare thy heart for what

I shall yet reveal to thee of the Death of the Lord and

of my own life in order that thou mayest in all things

do what is perfect and holy. Consider, my daughter,

that I have a complaint against the human race, of which

I have spoken to thee at other times, and which ap

plies to nearly all men: that they neglect and forget to

inform themselves of what I and my most holy Son

have done for them; that they do not weigh gratefully

the blessings of each hour, nor seek to make a proper

return. See that thou do not thus offend me, since I

have made thee a sharer in these exalted secrets and

sacraments, wherein thou findest so much light and in

struction and the practice of the highest and most ex

cellent virtues. Raise thyself above thyself, labor dili

gently in order that thou mayest receive more and more

grace, and, by corresponding with it, gather much merit

and eternal rewards.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHRIST RETURNS WITH THE FIVE FIRST DISCIPLES TO

NAZARETH; HE BAPTIZES HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER;

OTHER INCIDENTS DURING THIS TIME.

314. The mystic edifice of the militant Church which

aspires to the most exalted mysteries of the Divinity,

is founded entirely upon the holy Catholic faith, estab

lished by our Redeemer and Master, its wise and pru

dent Architect. To insure this firmness in the first

foundation stones, his disciples, He began immediately

to imbue them with the truths and mysteries relating to

his Divinity and humanity. In order to make Him

self known as the Messias and the Redeemer of the

world, who had descended from the bosom of his eter

nal Father to assume human flesh, it was urgently nec

essary to explain to them the manner of his Incarna

tion in the womb of his most blessed Mother. It be

hooved Him, therefore, in order that they might know

and venerate Her as a true Mother and Virgin, to speak

to them of this heavenly mystery together with what

relates to the hypostatic union and the Redemption.

With this heavenly doctrine, then, were nourished the

first-born sons of the Savior and, before the Apostles

came into the presence of the great Queen and Lady,

they had already conceived most exalted ideas of her

celestial excellences. They had been informed that She

was a Virgin before, during and after her parturition,

and they had been inspired by Christ with the pro-

foundest reverence and love and filled with the desire

295

296 CITY OF GOD

of immediately seeing and knowing such a heavenly

Creature. Christ thus aimed not only to satisfy his

own zeal in extending the honor of his holy Mother,

but also to excite in his Apostles the highest veneration

and reverence toward Her. Although all of them were

divinely enlightened, yet saint John began to distinguish

himself in this love of Mary before all the rest; from

the very first words of the Master concerning the dignity

and excellence of his purest Mother, he grew in the

loving esteem of her holiness; for he was selected and

prepared for greater privileges in the service of his

Queen, as I shall relate and as is recorded in the Gospels.

315. The five disciples of the Lord begged Him to

grant them the consolation of seeing and reverencing his

Mother. In accordance with their petition, He jour

neyed directly to Nazareth through Galilee, continuing

to preach and teach publicly on the way and proclaiming

Himself as the Master of truth and eternal life. Many,

carried away by the force of his doctrines and by the

light and grace overflowing into their hearts, began to

listen to Him and to follow Him; though He did not,

for the present, call any more to be his disciples. It is

worthy of notice that though the five disciples had

conceived such an ardent devotion to the heavenly Lady

and though they saw with their own eyes how worthy

She was of her eminent position among creatures, yet

they all maintained strict silence about their thoughts.

By the disposition of heaven they seemed as if mute and

ignorant in all that concerned the publication of what

they thought and felt in regard to her excellences ; for it

was not befitting that these mysteries of our holy faith

should be proclaimed to all men indiscriminately. The

Sun of justice was now dawning upon souls (Mai. 4,

2), and it was necessary that its own splendor should

THE TRANSFIXION 297

shine forth to illumine all the nations; and although its

resplendent moon, his Mother, was now in the fullness

of her sanctity, it behooved Her to reserve her light for

the night, in which the Church should deplore the ab

sence of that Sun in the bosom of his eternal Father.

And this office She fulfilled, as I shall relate in the third

part; for then the splendor of the great Lady broke

forth, while before that time her holiness and excel

lence were manifested only to the Apostles, in order that

they might know and reverence Her, and that they

might listen to Her as the worthy Mother of the Re

deemer of the world and as the Teacher of all virtue

and perfection.

316. The Savior then pursued his way to Nazareth,

instructing, his new children and disciples not only in

the mysteries of faith, but in all virtues by word and

example, as He continued to do during the whole period

of his evangelical preaching. With this in view He

searched out the poor and afflicted, consoled the sick

and sorrowful, visited the infirmaries and prisons, per

forming miracles of mercy as well for body as for soul.

Yet He did not profess Himself as the Author of any

miracles until he attended the marriage feast at Cana,

as I shall relate in the next chapter. While the Savior

proceeded on his journey his most holy Mother pre

pared to receive Him and his disciples at Nazareth; for

She was aware of all that happened, and therefore hos

pitably set her poor dwelling in order and solicitously

procured the necessary victuals beforehand for their

entertainment.

317. When the Savior of the world approached

the house, his blessed Mother awaited Him at the door,

and, as He entered, prostrated Herself on the ground,

adoring Him and kissing his hands and feet, while She

298 CITY OF GOD

asked for his blessing. Then She sounded the praise

of the most holy Trinity in exalted and wonderful

words, and also of his humanity in the presence and

hearing of the new disciples. This She did not without

mysterious purpose on her part; for, besides showing to

her divine Son the honor and adoration due to Him as

the true Godman, She wished also to make a return for

the praise with which her Son had exalted Her in the

eyes of his disciples. Thus, just as the Son had in her

absence instilled into their minds the reverence for the

dignity of his Mother, so the most prudent and faithful

Mother, in the presence of her Son, wished to instruct

them in regard to the worship due to their divine Master,

as to their God and Redeemer. The profound humility

and worship with which the great Lady received Christ

the Savior filled the disciples with new devotion and

reverential fear for their divine Master; henceforth She

served them as an example and model of true devotion,

entering at once into her office as Instructress and spirit

ual Mother of the disciples of Christ by showing them

how to converse with their God and Redeemer. They

were immediately drawn toward their Queen and cast

themselves on their knees before Her, asking to be re

ceived as her sons and servants. The first to do this

was saint John, who from that time on distinguished

himself in exalting and reverencing Mary before all

the Apostles, while She on her part received him with

an especial love; for, besides his excelling in virginal

chastity, he was of a meek and humble disposition.

318. The great Lady received them all as her guests,

serving them their meals and combining the solicitude

of a Mother with the modesty and majesty of a Queen,

so that She caused admiration even in the holy angels.

She served her divine Son on her knees in deepest rever-

THE TRANSFIXION 299

ence. At the same time She spoke of the Majesty of

their Teacher and Redeemer to the Apostles instructing

them in the great doctrines of the Christian faith. Dur

ing that night, when the Apostles had retired, the Savior

betook himself to the oratory of his purest Mother as

He had been wont to do, and She, the most Humble

among the humble, placed Herself at his feet as in the

years gone by. In regard to the practice of humility,

all that She could do seemed little to the great Queen,

and much less than She ought to in view of his infinite

love and the immense gifts received at his hands. She

confessed Herself as useless as the dust of the earth.

The Lord lifted Her from the ground and spoke to Her

words of life and eternal salvation, yet quietly and

serenely. For at this period He began to treat Her with

greater reserve in order to afford Her a chance of

merit, as I have mentioned when I spoke of this depart

ure for the desert and for his Baptism.

319. The most blessed Lady also asked Him for

the Sacrament of Baptism, which He had now instituted,

and which He had promised Her before. In order that

this might be administered with a dignity becoming as

well the Son as the Mother, an innumerable host

of angelic spirits descended from heaven in visible

forms. Attended by them, Christ himself baptized his

purest Mother. Immediately the voice of the eternal

Father was heard saying: "This is my beloved

Daughter, in whom I take delight." The incarnate

Word said: "This is my Mother, much beloved, whom

I have chosen and who will assist Me in all my works."

And the Holy Ghost added: "This is my Spouse,

chosen among thousands." The purest Lady felt and

received such great and numerous effects of grace in her

soul, that no human words can describe them; for She

300 CITY OF GOD

was exalted to new heights of grace and her holy soul

was made resplendent with new and exquisite beauty

of heaven. She received the characteristic token im

pressed by this Sacrament, namely, that of the children

of Christ in his holy Church. In addition to the ordi

nary effects of this Sacrament (outside of the remis

sion of sins, of which She stood in no need), She merited

especial graces on account of the humility with which

She submitted to this Sacrament of purification. By it

She accumulated blessings like to those of her divine

Son, with only this difference: that She received an in

crease of grace, which was not possible in Christ There

upon the humble Mother broke out in a canticle of praise

with the holy angels, and prostrate before her divine

Son, She thanked Him for the most efficacious graces

She had received in this Sacrament.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN.

320. My daughter, I see thee much moved to emula

tion and desire by the great happiness of the disciples

of my most holy Son, and especially that of saint John,

my favored servant. It is certain that I loved him in

a special manner; because he was most pure and candid

as a dove; and in the eyes of the Lord he was very

pleasing, both on account of his purity and on account

of his love toward me. His example should serve thee

as a spur to do that which my Son and I expect of thee.

Thou art aware, my dearest, that I am the most pure

Mother and that I receive with maternal affection all

those who fervently and devoutly desire to be my chil

dren and servants in the Lord. By the love which He

has given me, I shall embrace them with open arms and

shall be their Intercessor and Advocate. Thy poverty,

THE TRANSFIXION 301

uselessness and weakness shall be for me only a more

urgent motive for manifesting toward thee my most

liberal kindness. Therefore, I call upon thee to become

my chosen and beloved daughter in the holy Church.

321. I shall, however, make the fulfillment of my

promise depend upon a service on thy part: namely,

that thou have a true and holy emulation of the love

with which I loved saint John, and of all the blessings

flowing from it, by imitating him as perfectly as thy

powers will allow. Hence, thou must promise to fulfill

all that I now command thee, without failing in the

least point. I desire, then, that thou labor until all love

of self die within thee, that thou suppress all the effects

of the first sin until all the earthly inclinations con

sequent upon it are totally extinguished; that thou seek

to restore within thee that dove-like sincerity and sim

plicity which destroys all malice and duplicity. In all

thy doings thou must be an angel, since the condescen

sion of the Most High with thee was so great as to

furnish thee with the light and intelligence more of an

angel than that of a human creature. I have procured

for thee these great blessings and, therefore, it is but

reasonable on my part to expect thee to correspond with

them in thy works and in thy thoughts. In regard to

me thou must cherish a continual affection and loving

desire of pleasing and serving me, being always attentive

to my counsels and having thy eyes fixed upon me in

order to know and execute what I command. Then

shalt thou be my true daughter, and I shall be thy

Protectress and loving Mother.

3-21

BOOK TWO

BOOK V, VI OF II PART

The Marriage at Cana; How Most Holy Mary Accompanied the Re

deemer of the World In His Preaching; the Humility shown by the

Heavenly Queen in regard to the Miracles Wrought by Her

Divine Son; the Transfiguration of the Lord; His Entrance

into Jerusalem; His Passion and Death; His Triumph

over Lucifer and his Demons by His Death on

the Cross; the Most Sacred Resurrection

of the Savior and His Wonderful As

cension into Heaven

CHAPTER I.

AT THE REQUEST OF HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER, CHRIST,

OUR SAVIOR, BEGINS TO MANIFEST HIMSELF TO THE

WORLD BY HIS FIRST MIRACLE.

322. The evangelist, saint John, who in his first

chapter mentions the calling of Nathanael, the fifth

disciple of the Lord, begins his second chapter with the

words: "And the third day, there was a marriage at

Cana of Galilee; and the Mother of Jesus was there.

And Jesus also was invited and his disciples to the mar

riage" (John 2, 1). Hence it appears that the blessed

Lady was in Cana before her most holy Son was invited

to the wedding. I was ordered by my superiors to in

quire how this harmonizes with what I have said in the

preceding chapter and to ascertain what day was meant.

Then I was informed that, notwithstanding, the dif

ferent opinions of the commentators, this history of

the Queen and that of the Gospels coincided with each

other, and that the course of events was as follows:

303

304 CITY OF GOD

Christ the Lord, with the five Apostles or disciples on

entering Galilee, betook themselves directly to Nazareth,

preaching and teaching on the way. On this journey He

tarried only a short time, but at least three days. Hav

ing arrived at Nazareth He baptized his blessed Mother,

as I have related, and thereupon immediately went forth

to preach with his disciples in some of the neighboring

places. In the meanwhile the blessed Lady, being invited

to the marriage mentioned by the Evangelist, went to

Cana ; for it was the marriage of some of her relatives in

the fourth degree on her mother s, Saint Anne s, side.

While the great Queen was in Cana, the news of the com

ing of the Redeemer into the world and of his having

chosen some disciples had already spread. By the dis

position of the Lord, who secretly ordained it for his own

high ends, and through the management of his Mother,

He was called and invited to the wedding with his

disciples.

323. The third day mentioned by the Evangelist as

the wedding day of Cana is the third day of the week,

and, although he does not say this expressly, yet like

wise he does not say that it was the third day after the

calling of the disciples or his entrance into Galilee. If

he had meant this he certainly would have been more

explicit. According to the ordinary course, it was im

possible that Jesus should be present at a wedding on the

third day after his entering Galilee from Judea at the

place where He chose his first disciples; for Cana lay

within the limits of the tribe of Zabulon, near the

boundary of Phoenicia, far northward from Judea and

adjoining the tribe of Aser, a considerable distance

from the place where the Savior entered from Judea

into Galilee. If the wedding at Cana had been on the

third day after the calling of the first disciples, then only

THE TRANSFIXION 305

two days intervened, whereas the journey from Judea to

Cana required three days ; moreover, He would first have

to be near Cana in order to receive such an invitation,

which would likewise require some time. Then, also,

in order to journey from Judea to Cana, He would

have to pass through Nazareth, for Cana is nearer to the

Mediterranean sea and to the tribe of Aser, as I have

said; hence his Mother would certainly have known of

his coming, and therefore would have awaited his arrival

instead of going on her visit to Cana. That the Evan

gelist does not mention the visit of the Lord to Nazareth,

nor the Baptism of the blessed Lady, was not because

it did not really happen, but because He and the other

writers confine themselves to that which pertains to

their purpose. Saint John himself says that they omit

the mention of many miracles performed by the Lord

(John 20, 30), since it was not necessary to describe

all of them. From this explanation it will be seen that

this history is confirmed by the Gospels themselves and

by the very passage in question.

324. While, therefore, the Queen of the world was

in Cana, her most holy Son with his disciples was in

vited to the marriage; and as in his condescension He

had brought about this invitation, He accepted it. He

betook himself to this wedding in order to sanctify and

confirm the state of Matrimony and in order to begin

to establish the authenticity of his doctrine by the mira

cle which He was to perform and of which He was to

declare Himself openly as the Author. As He had

already proclaimed Himself as the Teacher by admitting

his disciples, it was necessary to confirm their calling

and give authority to his doctrine in order that they

might receive and believe it. Hence, though He had

performed other wonders in private, He had not made

306 CITY OF GOD

Himself known as the Author of them in public, as on

this occasion. On this account the Evangelist says:

"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Gali

lee" (John 2, 11). This miracle took place on the same

day on which a year ago had happened the Baptism of

Jesus by saint John. This day was also the anniversary of

the adoration of the Kings, and, therefore, the holy

Roman Church celebrates the three mysteries on one

and the same day, the sixth of January. Our Lord had

now completed the thirtieth year of his life and had

begun his thirty-first year thirteen days before, being

those from the Nativity to Epiphany.

325. The Master of life entered the house of the

marriage feast saluting those present with the words:

"The peace of the Lord and his light be with you,"

literally fulfilling them by his arrival. Thereupon He

began to exhort and instruct the bridegroom concern

ing the perfection and holiness of his state of life. In

the meanwhile the Queen of heaven instructed the bride

in a similar manner, admonishing her in sweetest and yet

most powerful words concerning her obligations. Both

of the marriage couple afterwards fulfilled most per

fectly the duties of their state, into which they were

ushered and for which they were strengthened by the

Sovereigns of heaven and earth. I will not detain

myself in declaring that this bridegroom was not saint

John the Evangelist. It is enough to know (as I have

stated in the last chapter), that saint John had come

with the Savior as his disciple. The Lord had not

come to this wedding in order to disapprove of matri

mony, but in order to establish it anew and give it

credit, sanctifying and constituting it a Sacrament by

his presence. Hence He could not have had the inten

tion of separating the two married people immediately

THE TRANSFIXION 307

after they had entered into this union. Nor did the

Evangelist ever have any intention of marrying. On

the contrary, our Savior, having exhorted the bride

groom and bride, added a fervent prayer addressed to

the eternal Father, in which He besought Him to pour

his blessings upon the institution for the propagation of

the human race in the new Law and to vest this state

with sacramental power to sanctify all those who would

receive it worthily in his holy Church.

326. The blessed Virgin, co-operating in this work

and in all others for the benefit of the human race,

knew of the wishes and the prayer of her divine Son

and joined Him therein; and as She took upon Herself

the duty of making a proper return, which is so much

neglected by other men, She broke out in canticles of

praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for this benefit, and

the angels, at her invitation, joined Her in the praise of

God. This, however, was known only to the Lord and

Savior, who rejoiced in the wise behavior of his purest

Mother as much as She rejoiced in his. Then They

spoke and conversed with those that came to the wed

ding; but always with a wisdom and gravity worthy of

Themselves and with a view of enlightening the hearts

of all that were present. The most prudent Lady spoke

very few words and only when She was asked or when

it was very necessary; for She always listened and at

tended without interruption to the doings and sayings

of the Lord, treasuring them up and meditating upon

them in her most pure heart. All the words and be

havior of this great Queen during her life furnish an

exquisite example of retirement and modesty; and on

this occasion She was an example not only for the reli

gious, but especially for women in the secular state, if

they could only keep it before their mind in similar

308 CITY OF GOD

%

circumstances (such, for instance, as this marriage feast

afforded), thus learning to keep silence, to restrain them

selves, compose their interior and allow no levity or

looseness to creep into their exterior deportment. For

never is moderation more necessary than in times of

danger ; and in women the most precious adornment and

the most charming beauty is silence, restraint and

modesty by which many vices are shut out and by which

all virtues of a chaste and respectable woman receive

their crowning grace.

327. At table the Lord and his most holy Mother ate

of some of the food, but with the greatest moderation;

yet also without showing outwardly their great absti

nence. Although when They were alone They did not

eat of such food, as I have already recorded, yet these

Teachers of perfection, who wished not to disapprove of

the common life of men, but wished to perfect it, accom

modated Themselves to all circumstances without any

extremes or noticeable singularity wherever it was pos

sible to do so without blame and without imperfection.

The Lord not only inculcated this by his example, but

He commanded his disciples and Apostles to eat of what

was placed before them on their evangelical tours of

preaching and not to show any singularity in their way

of life, such as is indulged in by the imperfect and those

little versed in the paths of virtue; for the truly poor

and humble must not presume to have a choice in their

victuals. By divine arrangement and in order to give

occasion to the miracle, the wine gave out during the

meal and the kind Lady said to her Son: "They have

no wine." And the Lord answered : "Woman, what is

that to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come."

This answer of Christ was not intended as a reproach,

but contained a mystery; for the most prudent Queen

THE TRANSFIXION 309

had not asked for a miracle by mere accident, but by

divine light. She knew that the opportune time for the

manifestation of the divine power of her Son was at

hand. She, who was full of wisdom and knowledge

concerning the works of the Redemption and was well

informed at what time and on what occasions the Lord

was to perform them; therefore, She could not be ig

norant of the proper moment for the beginning of this

public manifestation of Christ s power. It must also

be remembered that Jesus did not pronounce these words

with any signs of disapproval, but with a quiet and

loving majesty. It is true that He did not address the

blessed Virgin by the name of Mother, but Woman;

however, this was because, as I have said before, He

had begun to treat Her with greater reserve.

328. The mysterious purpose hidden in this answer

of Christ was to confirm the disciples in their belief of

his Divinity and to show Himself to all as the true God,

independent of his Mother in his being and in his power

of working miracles. On this account, also, He sup

pressed the tender appellation of Mother and called Her

Woman, saying: What does it concern thee or what

part have We, thou and I, in this? As if He wanted to

say: The power of performing miracles I have not re

ceived from thee, although thou hast given Me the

human nature in which I am to perform them. My

Divinity alone is to perform them and for It the hour

is not yet come. He wished to give Her to understand

that the time for working miracles was not to be de

termined by his most holy Mother, but by the will of

God, even though the most prudent Lady should ask for

them at an opportune and befitting time. The Lord

wished to have it understood that the working of mir

acles depended upon a higher than the human will, on

310 CITY OF GOD

a will divine and above that of his Mother and alto

gether beyond it; that the will of his Mother was to be

subject to that which was his as the true God. Hence

Christ infused into the minds of the Apostles a new

light by which they understood the hypostatic union of

his two natures, and the derivation of the human na

ture from his Mother and of the divine by generation

from his eternal Father.

329. The blessed Lady well understood this mys

tery and She said with quiet modesty to the servants,

"Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." In these

words, showing her wise insight into the will of her

Son, She sj&gt;oke as the Mistress of the whole human race,

teaching us mortals, that, in order to supply all our

necessities and wants, it was required and sufficient on

our part to do all that the Savior and those taking his

place shall command. Such a lesson could not but come

from such a Mother and Advocate, who is so desirous

of our welfare and who, since She so well knew what

hindrance we place in the way of his great and numerous

miracles for our benefits, wishes to instruct us to meet

properly the beneficent intentions of the Most High.

The Redeemer of the world ordered the servants to fill

the jars or waterpots, which according to the Hebrew

custom had been provided for the occasion. All having

been filled, the Lord bade them draw some of the wine

into which the water had been changed, and bring it to

the chief steward of the feast, who was at the head of

the table and was one of the priests of the Law. When

this one had tasted of the wine, he called the bridegroom

in surprise and said to him : "Every man at first setteth

forth good wine, and when men have well drunk, then

that which is worse, but thou hast kept the good wine

until now."

THE TRANSFIXION 311

330. The steward knew nothing of the miracle when

he tasted of the wine; because he sat at the head of

the table, while Christ and his Mother with his disciples

occupied the lower end of the table, practicing the doc

trine which He was afterwards to teach us; namely,

that in being invited to a feast we should not seek to

occupy the better places, but be satisfied with the lowest.

Then the miracle of changing the water into wine and

the dignity of the Redeemer was revealed. The disciples

believed anew as the Evangelist says, and their faith

in Him was confirmed. Not only they, but many of the

others that were present, believed that He was the true

Messias and they followed Him to the City of Caper

naum, whither the Evangelist tells us He, with his

Mother and disciples went from Cana. There, accord

ing to saint Matthew, He began to preach, declaring

Himself the Teacher of men. What saint John says of

his manifesting His glory by this sign or miracle does

not contradict his having wrought miracles before, but

supposes them to have been wrought in secret. Nor

does he assert that his glory was not shown also in

other miracles; but infers merely that Jesus did not

wish to be known as their Author, because the right

time determined by divine wisdom had not come. It

is certain that He performed many and admirable

wonders in Egypt; such as the destruction of the

temples and their idols. To all these miracles most

holy Mary responded with heroic acts of virtue in praise

and thanksgiving to the Most High, that his Holy name

was thus gloriously manifested. She was intent on

encouraging the new believers and in the service of her

divine Son, fulfilling these duties with peerless wisdom

and charity. With burning love She cried to the eternal

Father, asking Him to dispose the hearts and souls

312 CITY OF GOD

of men for the enlightening words of the incarnate

Word and drive from them the darkness of their ig

norance.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN, THE

MISTRESS OF HEAVEN.

331. My daughter, without any excuse is the forget-

fulness and negligence shown by each and everyone of

the children of the Church in regard to the spread and

manifestation of the glory of their God by making

known his holy name to all rational creatures. This

negligence is much more blamable now, since the eternal

Word became man in my womb, taught the world and

redeemed it for this very purpose. With this end in

view the Lord founded his Church, enriched it with

blessings and spiritual treasures, assigned to it min

isters and endowed it with temporal riches. All these

gifts are intended not only to preserve the Church in its

present state, but to extend it and draw others to the

regeneration of the Catholic faith. All should help

along to spread the fruits of the Death of their Re

deemer. Some can do it by prayer and urgent desires

for the exaltation of his holy name; others by alms

giving, others by diligent preaching, others by fervent

works of charity. But if this remissness is perhaps less

culpable in the ignorant and the poor, who have none

to exhort them; it is very reprehensible in the rich and

the powerful, and especially in the ministers and pre

lates of the Church, whose particular duty is the ad

vancement of the Church of God. Many of them, for

getting the terrible account which they will have to

render, seek only their own vain honor instead of

Christ s. They waste the patrimony of the blood of the

Redeemer in undertakings and aims not even fit to

THE TRANSFIXION 313

mention; and through their fault allow innumerable

souls to perish, who by proper exertions could have

been gained for the holy Church ; or at least they lose the

merit of such exertions and deprive Christ of the glory

of having such faithful ministers in his Church. The

same responsibility rests upon the princes and the

powerful of the world, who receive from the hands of

God, honors, riches and temporal blessings for advanc

ing the glory of the Deity, and yet think less of this

obligation than of any other.

332. Do thou grieve for all these evils and labor, as

far as thy strength will allow, that the glory of the

Most High be manifest, that He be known in all na

tions, and that from the very stones may be generated

sons of Abraham (Matth. 3, 9), since of all this thou

art capable. Beseech Him to send able workers and

worthy ministers to his Church in order to draw men

to the sweet yoke of the Gospel; for great and plentiful

is the harvest, and few are the faithful laborers and zeal

ous helpers for harvesting it. Let what I have told

thee of my maternal and loving solicitude in gaining fol

lowers for my Son and in preserving them in his doc

trine and companionship, be to thee a living example for

thy own conduct. Never let the flame of this charity

die out in thy breast. Let also my silence and modesty

at the wedding feast be an inviolable rule for thee and

thy religious in all exterior actions, in retirement, mod

eration and discretion of words, especially in the pres

ence of men; for these virtues are the court dress, with

which the spouses of Christ must adorn themselves in

order to find grace in his divine eyes.

CHAPTER II.

MOST HOLY MARY ACCOMPANIES THE SAVIOR IN HIS

PREACHING TOURS; SHE BEARS MANY HARDSHIPS

AND TAKES CARE OF THE WOMEN THAT FOLLOW HIM,

CONDUCTING HERSELF IN ALL THINGS WITH THE

HIGHEST PERFECTION.

333. It would not be foreign to the purpose of this

history to describe the miracles and the heroic works of

Christ, our Redeemer and Master; for in almost all of

them his most blessed and holy Mother concurred

and took a part. But I cannot presume to undertake a

work so arduous and- so far above human strength and

capacity. For the Evangelist saint John, after having

described many miracles of Christ, says at the

end of his Gospel, that Jesus did many other things,

which, if they were all described, could not be con

tained in all the books of the world (John 21, 25). If

such a task seemed so impossible to the Evangelist, how

much more to an ignorant woman, more useless than

the dust of the earth? All that is necessary and proper,

and abundantly sufficient for founding and preserving

the Church has been written by the four Evangelists;

and it is not necessary to repeat it in this history. Yet

in order to compose this history and in order not to

pass over in silence so many great works of the exalted

Queen, which have not been mentioned, it is necessary

to touch on a few particulars. Moreover, I think,

that to write of them and thus fasten them in my

memory will be both consoling and useful for my ad-

314

THE TRANSFIXION 315

vancement. The others, which the Evangelists recorded

in their Gospels and of which I have not been com

manded to write, are better preserved for the beatific

vision, where the saints shall see them manifested to

them by the Lord and where they will eternally praise

Him for such magnificent works.

334. From Cana in Galilee Christ, the Redeemer,

walked to Capernaum, a large and populous city near

the sea of Tiberias. Here, according to saint John

(John 2, 12), He remained some days, though not

many; for as the time of the Pasch was approaching,

He gradually drew nigh to Jerusalem in order to cele

brate this feast on the fourteenth of the moon of March.

His most blessed Mother, having rid Herself of her

house in Nazareth, accompanied Him thenceforth in

his tours of preaching and of teaching to the very foot

of the Cross. She was absent from Him only a few

times, as when the Lord absented Himself on Mount

Tabor (Matth. 17, 1), or on some particular conversions,

as for instance that of the Samaritan woman, or when

the heavenly Lady herself remained behind with certain

persons in order to instruct and catechize them. But

always after a short time, She returned to her Lord and

Master, following the Sun of justice until it sank into

the abyss of Death. During these journeys the Queen

of heaven proceeded on foot, just as her divine Son.

If even the Lord was fatigued on the way, as saint

John says (John 4, 6), how much more fatigued was

this purest Lady? What hardships did She not endure

on such arduous journeys in all sorts of weather? Such

is the rigorous treatment accorded by the Mother of

mercy to her most delicate body ! What She endured in

these labors alone is so great that not all the mortals

together can ever satisfy their obligations to Her in

316 CITY OF GOD

this regard. Sometimes by permission of the Lord, She

suffered such great weakness and pains that He was

constrained to relieve Her miraculously. At other

times He commanded Her to rest Herself at some stop

ping-place for a few days; while again on certain occa

sions, He gave such lightness to her body, that She could

move about without difficulty as if on wings.

335. As I have already mentioned, the heavenly Lady

had the whole doctrine of the evangelical law written

in her heart. Nevertheless She was as solicitous and

attentive as a new disciple to the preaching and doctrine

of her divine Son, and She had instructed her angels to

report to Her, if necessary, the sermons of the Master

whenever She was absent. To the sermons of her Son

She always listened on her knees, thus according to the

utmost of her powers showing the reverence and wor

ship due to his Person and doctrine. As She was aware

at each moment, of the interior operations of the Soul

of Christ, and of his continual prayers to the eternal

Father for the proper disposition of the hearts of his

hearers and for the growth of the seed of his doctrine

into eternal life, the most loving Mother joined the

divine Master in his petitions and prayers and in secur

ing for them the blessings of her most ardent and tear

ful charity. By her attention and reverence She taught

and moved others to appreciate duly the teaching and

instructions of the Savior of the world. She also knew

the interior of those that listened to the preaching of

the Lord, their state of grace or sin, their vices and

virtues. This various and hidden knowledge, so far

above the capacity of men, caused in the heavenly

Mother many wonderful effects of highest charity and

other virtues; it inflamed Her with zeal for the Honor

of the Lord and with ardent desires, that the fruits of

THE TRANSFIXION 317

the Redemption be not lost to the souls, while at the

same time, the danger of their loss to the souls through

sin moved Her to exert Herself in the most fervent

prayer for their welfare. She felt in her heart a pierc

ing and cruel sorrow, that God should not be known,

adored and served by all his creatures : and this sorrow

was in proportion to the unequaled knowledge and un

derstanding She had of all these mysteries. For the

souls, that would not give entrance to divine grace and

virtue, She sorrowed with ineffable grief, and was wont

to shed tears of blood at the thought of their mis

fortune. What the great Queen suffered in this her

solicitude and in her labors exceeds beyond all measure

the pains endured by all the martyrs of the world.

336. All the followers of the Savior, and whomever

He received into his ministry, She treated with incom

parable prudence and wisdom, especially those whom

She held in such high veneration and esteem as the

Apostles of Christ As a Mother She took care of

all, and as a powerful Queen She procured necessaries

for their bodily nourishment and comforts. Sometimes,

when She had no other resources, She commanded the

holy angels to bring provisions for them and for the

women in their company. In order to assist them

toward advancing in the spiritual life, the great Queen

labored beyond possibility of human understanding;

not only by her continual and fervent prayers for them

but by her precious example and by her counsels, with

which She nourished and strengthened them as a most

prudent Mother and Teacher. When the Apostles or

disciples were assailed by any doubts, which frequently

happened in the beginning, or when they were attacked

by some secret temptation, the great Lady immediately

hastened to their assistance in order to enlighten and

3-22

318 CITY OF GOD

encourage them by the peerless light and charity shin

ing forth in Her; and by the sweetness of her words

they were exquisitely consoled and rejoiced. They

were enlightened by her wisdom, chastened by her

humility, quieted by her modesty, enriched by all the

blessings that flowed from this storehouse of all the

gifts of the Holy Ghost. For all these benefits, for the

calling of the disciples, for the conversion and persever

ance of the just, and for all the works of grace and

virtue, She made a proper return to God, celebrating

these events in festive hymns.

337. As the Evangelists tell us, some of the women of

Galilee followed Christ the Redeemer on his journeys.

Saint Matthew, saint Mark and saint Luke tell us that

some of those whom He had cured of demoniacal pos

session and of other infirmities, accompanied and served

Him (Matth. 27; Mark 15; Luke 8); for the Master

of eternal life excluded no sex from his following,

imitation and doctrine. Hence some of the women at

tended upon Him and served Him from the very begin

ning of his preaching. The divine wisdom so ordered

it for certain purposes, among which was also the de

sire to provide proper companions for his blessed

Mother during these travels. Our Queen interested

Herself in a special manner in these pious and holy

women, gathering them around Her, teaching and cate

chising them and bringing them as listeners to the ser

mons of her divine Son. Although She herself was

fully enlightened and instructed in the evangelical doc

trine and abundantly able to teach them the way of

eternal life, nevertheless, partly in order to conceal this

secret of her heart, She always availed Herself of the

sayings of Christ in his public preaching as a text for

her instructions and exhortations, whenever She taught

THE TRANSFIXION 319

these and many other women who came to Her either

before or after hearing the Savior of the world. Not

all of them followed Christ, but through the efforts of

the heavenly Lady all of them received sufficient knowl

edge of the sacred mysteries for their conversion. Thus

She drew innumerable women to the knowledge of

Christ, to the way of eternal salvation and evangelical

perfection; though the Evangelists say no more of them

than that some of them followed Christ. It was not

necessary for the Evangelists to go into these particulars

in their histories. The admirable works of the blessed

Lady among the women stopped not short with merely

teaching them divine faith and virtues by word of

mouth, but She also taught them to practice the most

ardent charity by visiting the sick in the infirmaries,

the poor, the imprisoned and afflicted; nursing with her

own hands the wounded ; consoling the sorrowful and

giving aid to those in necessity. If I were to mention

all these works, it would be necessary to fill the greater

part of this history with discourse on them, or to make

it much more extensive.

338. Nor are the innumerable and vast miracles of

the great Queen during the public preaching of Christ

our Lord recorded in the Gospels or in other histories;

for the Evangelists spoke only of the wonders wrought

by Christ and in so far as was useful to establish the

faith of the Church. It was necessary that men should

first be well established and confirmed in this faith,

before the great deeds of the most holy Mother should

become manifest. According to what has been given

me to understand, it is certain that She brought about

not only many miraculous conversions, but She cured

the blind and the sick, and called the dead to life. That

this should be so was proper for many reasons : on the

320 CITY OF GOD

one hand, She was the Assistant in the principal work

for which the incarnate Word came into the world,

namely in his preaching and his Redemption ; for thereby

the eternal Father opened up the treasures of his Omnip

otence and infinite Goodness, manifesting them in the

divine Word and in the heavenly Mother. On the

other hand, She as his Mother was to resemble her Son

in the working of miracles, increasing the glory of

Both; for in this way She accredited the dignity and

doctrine of her Son and eminently and most efficaciously

assisted Him in his ministry. That these miracles

should remain concealed, was due both to the disposition

of divine Providence and to the earnest request of

Mary herself; hence She performed them with such a

wise secrecy, that all the glory redounded to the exalta

tion of the Redeemer in whose name and virtue they

were wrought. The same course She also maintained in

her instructions; for She did not preach in public, nor

at any pre-arranged place or time, nor to those who

were attended to by the appointed teachers and min

isters of the divine word. The blessed Lady knew that

this kind of work was not incumbent upon women (I

Cor. 14, 34). She contented Herself with the assist

ance She could render by private instruction and con

versation, which She did with celestial wisdom and

efficacy. By this assistance and by her prayers, She se

cured more conversions than all the preachers of the

world.

339. This will be better understood if we remember

that, besides the heavenly influence of her words, She

possessed a most intimate knowledge of the nature, dis

position, inclinations and bad habits of all men, of the

time and occasion best suited to bring all to the way of

eternal life, and that to this knowledge were added the

THE TRANSFIXION 321

most fervent prayers and the exquisite sweetness of

her conversation. All these gifts were animated by

her most ardent charity and the desire to bring souls

to salvation and to the friendship of the Lord, and,

therefore, the results of her labors were exceedingly

great: She rescued innumerable souls, drawing them

on and enlightening them. None of her petitions were

denied Her and none of her efforts failed of the holy

effects which She asked for them. As, then, the work

of salvation was the principal object of all her endeavors,

She without a doubt performed greater deeds than can

ever be understood by men in this mortal life. In all

these labors the heavenly Lady proceeded with the great

est gentleness, like the simplest dove, with extreme pa

tience and forbearance, overlooking the imperfections and

rudeness of the new faithful ; enlightening the ignorance

of the vast number of those that came to subject them

selves to the doctrines of the Redeemer. On all occa

sions She preserved the quiet high-mindedness of a

Queen ; yet at the same time only She, in imitation of the

Savior, could ever have joined with it such perfection

of humility and sweetness. Between Themselves They

treated all with such great kindness and fullness of

charity, that no one could ever be excused from humble

subjection to such Teachers. They spoke and conversed

and ate with the disciples and with the women that

followed them (Matth. 9, 10; John 12, 2; Luke 5, 29;

7, 36), observing all due moderation and reserve, so that

no one found it strange, or doubted that the Savior

was a true man, the natural and legitimate Son of the

most holy Mary. It was for this purpose also, that the

Lord treated other guests with such affability, as is

recorded in the holy Gospels.

322 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE MOST HOLY QUEEN

MARY GAVE ME.

340. My daughter, it is true that I labored more than

is known or imagined by mortals in following and ac

companying my divine Son to the foot of the Cross; nor

were my anxieties for their welfare any less after his

death, as thou wilt be made to understand in writing the

third part of this history. Amidst all my labors and

hardships I was ineffably rejoiced in spirit to see the

incarnate Word working for the salvation of men and

opening the book sealed by the seven mysteries of his

Divinity and sacred humanity. The human race owes

me no less for my rejoicing at the welfare of each one,

than for my solicitude in procuring it, because both

sprang from the same love. In this I wish thee to imi

tate me, as I have so often exhorted thee. Although

thou dost not hear with thy bodily ears the sermons of

my divine Son, nor his own voice in preaching, thou

canst yet imitate me in the reverence with which I

listened to Him; for it is the same One that speaks to

thy heart, and who teaches thee the same doctrine.

Therefore, I exhort thee whenever thou recognizest the

enlightening voice of thy Spouse and Pastor, to kneel

down in reverence and listen to his words, adoring Him

full of thankfulness and writing his counsel in thy

heart. If thou happenest to be in a public place,

where thou canst not show this external reverence,

do it interiorly and obey Him in all things as if thou

wert present at his very preaching; for, just as hearing

Him then without obeying Him would not have made

thee happy, so thou canst now make thyself blessed by

executing that which Thou hearest Him say to thee

interiorly, even though thou dost not hear Him with

thy bodily ears. Great is thy obligation, since most

THE TRANSFIXION 323

extraordinary is the kindness and mercy shown to thee

by the Most High and by me. Be thou not dull of heart,

lest thou remain poor amidst such riches of the divine

enlightenment.

341. But not only to the interior voice of the Lord

must thou listen reverently, but also to the voice of his

ministers, preachers and priests, whose words are the

echoes of the Most High and the aqueducts through

which the blessed doctrine of life and the perennial

fountains of divine truth flow to the souls. In them

God speaks and the voice of his divine law resounds;

hear them with such reverence, that thou art unwilling

to look for any error, nor presume to pass judgment on

what they say. For thee all must appear wise and elo

quent, and in every one of them hear only the voice

of Christ, my Son and Lord. Be warned not to fall

into the foolish presumption of the worldly, who with

very reprehensible vanity and pride, most hateful in

the sight of God, despise his ministers and preachers,

because they do not speak in accordance with their de

praved taste. When they go to hear the divine truth,

they judge only of the expression and style, as if the

word of God were not simple and strong (Heb. 4, 12),

depending not on oratorical and artful arrangement of

words, adjusted merely to the weakness of those that

listen. Do not count this as an unimportant advice;

listen to all that I say to thee in this history, since, as a

careful Teacher, I wish to inform thee of little things

as well as of great, of unimportant as well as of im

portant points. Remember, that to perform anything

with perfection is always great. I also exhort thee to

treat affably the rich as the poor, without the accepta

tion of persons so common among the children of Adam.

My divine Son and I rejected and condemned all such

324 CITY OF GOD

distinction, showing ourselves equally kind to all, and

even more so to those who were most despised, indigent

and afflicted (James 2, 2). Worldly wisdom looks upon

the person, not at the state of the souls, nor at virtue,

but at outward ostentation; but heavenly prudence con

siders the image of God in all. Just as little shouldst

thou wonder that thy sisters and neighbors perceive thy

defects of nature, such as are derived from the first sin,

thy infirmities, fatigues, thy appetites and other short

comings. Sometimes the hiding of these defects is hy

pocrisy and want of humility; the friends of God should

fear only sin and should desire to die rather than

commit it: all the other defects do not sully the con

science and it is not necessary to conceal them.

CHAPTER III.

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED MARY NOTWITHSTAND

ING THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE LORD J THE

INSTRUCTION ON HUMILITY WHICH SHE GAVE TO

THE APOSTLES IN REGARD TO THE WONDERS WHICH

THEY THEMSELVES WERE TO PERFORM; OTHER RE-

FLECTIONS.

342. The principal lesson to be learned from the

history of the most holy Mary (if it is attentively

studied), is a clear demonstration of the profound

humility of the Queen and Mistress of the humble. This

virtue in Her is so ineffable, that it can never be suffi

ciently extolled or duly appreciated; for it will never be

understood in all its perfection either by angels or

men. But just as the sweetness of sugar is added to

confections and medicines in order to relieve the bitter

ness of taste, thus humility was mingled in all the virtues

and doings of the most holy Mary, perfecting them and

rendering them agreeable to the wishes of the Most

High and pleasing to men; so that on account of her

humility the Almighty looked upon Her with pleasure

and all the nations call Her blessed (Luke 1, 48). The

most prudent Lady lost not a single chance, occasion,

time or place during her whole life for performing all

the acts of virtue possible to Her; but it is a greater

marvel that none of her actions or virtues ever was

found wanting in the least point of humility. This

virtue raised Her above all that was not God; and just

as by humility Mary conquered all creatures, so, in a

certain sense, by the same virtue, She also overcame God

himself, causing Him to find such complaisance in Her,

325

326 CITY OF GOD

that no grace which She chose to ask either for Her

self or for others was ever denied Her. She subdued

all creatures to her wishes by her humility : for in the

house of her parents, as I have related in the first part,

She won over her mother, saint Anne, and the servants

to permit Her to practice humility; in the temple, the

maiden and her companions at last yielded to her self-

abasement; in matrimony, saint Joseph allowed Her to

perform the humblest services; the angels gave way to

her desire for lowly occupations; and the Apostles and

Evangelists obeyed Her in not proclaiming her praises

to the world. By her humility She moved the Father

and the Holy Spirit, and even her most holy Son, to

ordain that her dignity should remain concealed to the

world, and that She should be treated in such a way as

not to cause men to praise Her for being the Mother

of Him who wrought such great miracles and holy

doctrines.

343. Such profound and exquisite humility could be

practiced only by the most Humble among the humble;

for neither the other children of Adam, nor the angels

themselves could ever be placed in similar positions for

practicing it, even if they should not fall short on ac

count of the inferiority of nature. We will understand

this better when we consider how the poison has so

deeply entered the rest of the mortals by the first bite

of the ancient serpent, that, in order to counteract it,

the divine Wisdom has appointed the bad effects of sin

itself as a remedy. For our own and proper defects,

brought home to each one s consciousness, are intended

to make sensible of the inherent degradation of our

present state of existence, which we would otherwise

continue to ignore. It is manifest that we have a spir

itual soul, but it belongs to the lowest order of spiritual

THE TRANSFIXION 327

beings, while God occupies the highest and the angels an

intermediate degree; and as regards the body, we are

made not only of the lowest elements, that is of earth,

but also of its most unclean constituents, that is of its

slime (Gen. 2, 7). All this was arranged not in vain by

the eternal Wisdom and Power, but with a great pur

pose, intending that the slime of the earth should al

ways take its proper place and be satisfied with the

lowest position, no matter how much it might find itself

embellished and adorned with grace. For it must bear

all these graces in a vessel of clay and dust (II Cor. 4,

7). We all lose sight of this truth and of our lowliness,

so inherent in our human nature; and in order to keep

alive the sense of our vileness and degradation, it is

necessary that we experience the attacks of our pas

sions and the disorder of our doings. And even our

daily experience in this regard is sufficient to bring

us to our senses and to make us confess our perversity :

we still lay claim to the full excellence and distinction of

a noble humanity, while we are but dust and slime of

the earth, and, moreover, by our actions prove our

selves unworthy even of this lowly and earthly exist

ence.

344. The most holy Mary alone not having on Her

the touch of Adam s guilt nor experiencing any of its

foul and dangerous consequences, was proficient in the

art of true humility and carried it to its highest per

fection; and just because She understood to its fullest

extent the position occupied by a mere creature, She

humiliated Herself more than all the children of Adam,

though they are burdened not only with terrestrial ori

gin, but with their own sins. Other men, if they be

come humble, were first humiliated and must confess with

David: "Before I was humbled, I offended;" and "It

328 CITY OF GOD

is good for me that thou hast humbled me, that I may

learn thy justification" (Ps. 118, 67, 71). But the

Mother of humility did not enter into her humility by

being humbled; She was humble without ever being

humiliated. She was never degraded by guilt or pas

sion, but always generously humble of her own accord.

Though the angels cannot be properly compared with

men, being of a superior hierarchy and nature, and free

from passions or guilt of sin; yet these sovereign spirits

could not attain the humility of most holy Mary, even

if they did humble themselves before their Creator as

his creatures. That the blessed Lady was of terrestrial

and human make was for Her a motive and a means of

excelling the angels in self-abasement, since they could

not make their higher spiritual nature serve as a reason

for abasing themselves as much as the blessed Queen.

Moreover, She possessed the dignity of being the

Mother of God and the Mistress of the angels and of

all creation, and none of them could ever claim such a

dignity and excellence, which enhanced any act of humil

ity on the part of the blessed Virgin and made her

humility surpass all perfection of this virtue ever at

tained by any other created being.

345. There was in Mary an excellence of humility

altogether singular and peculiar to Her; for neither the

full knowledge that She was the Mother of God, nor the

consideration of all the wonders that She wrought, or

that were wrought by her divine Son, nor her position

as the Keeper and Dispenser of all the divine treasures,

as the most immaculate among all creatures and as the

most powerful and most favored of all God s creatures,

could ever cause her heart to forsake the place She had

chosen in estimating Herself as the lowest of all the

handiwork of the Most High. O rare humility!

THE TRANSFIXION 329

fidelity never experienced among mortals! O wisdom

which even the angels themselves cannot aspire to!

Who that is acknowledged by all as the most highly

exalted of all creation, can ever in his own mind belittle

himself and count himself as the most insignificant?

Who, like She, can conceal from himself the praise

which all unite in giving? Who, in imitation of Her,

can be so contemptible in his own eyes, while for the

rest he is so admirable? Who, singled out for high

distinction, does not lose sight of lowliness, and who,

invited to a like position, can thus select the most lowly,

not by necessity or in sadness, nor with impatient pro

test, but with all his heart and with the sincerest content !

O children of Adam, how slow and dull we all are in

this divine science! How necessary it is that the Lord

conceal from us our own blessings, or accompany them

with some burden or counterweight, lest we frustrate

all his goodness toward us and lest we be prevented from

scheming some robbery of the glory due to Him as

the Author of all good in us! Let us then understand

what a dastardly humility ours is, and how precarious,

if we ever have it at all; for the Lord (let us so express

it), must use much circumspection and care in entrusting

us with any advantage or virtue on account of the weak

ness of our humility and seldom does our ignorance fail

to indulge itself with some petty theft on such occasions,

or at least with a vain complacency or inconsiderate

joy.

346. The humility in the conduct of the most holy

Mary in regard to the miracles of Christ our Lord was

a source of great admiration to her holy angels ; for they

were not accustomed to behold in the children of Adam,

and not even among themselves, such self-abasement

united to such great perfection and magnificence of

330 CITY OF GOD

activity. Nor did the miracles of the Savior, in whom

the holy angels expected and had already experienced

proofs of his Omnipotence, excite their admiration so

much as the peerless fidelity with which the most

blessed Virgin referred all miraculous works to the glory

of God and by which She esteemed Herself so unworthy

of them, that She deemed his not omitting them on ac

count of her demerits, an especial favor of her divine

Son. Such humility She practiced in spite of the fact

that She, by her constant prayer, was precisely the

instrumental cause of nearly all the miracles wrought

by the Lord; not to mention this other fact that if the

heavenly Mother had not intervened between Christ

and the human race, the world would never have come

into the possession of the Gospel, nor ever merited to ex

perience any of its effects.

347. The miracles and doings of Christ our Lord and

Savior were so new and unheard of in the world that

great admiration and honor could not but have been

the result for his most holy Mother; for She was not

only known to the Apostles and disciples, who acknowl

edged Her as the true Mother of the Redeemer, but by

the new faithful, who all came to acknowledge Her as

the true Mother of the Messias and many times con

gratulated Her on account of the wonders wrought by

her Son. All this, however, was for Her a new occa

sion of humility; for She always humbled Herself to

the dust and debased Herself in her own mind beyond

all conception of created mind. Yet with all her humil

ity She did not show Herself slow and ungrateful in

the acknowledgment of all the favors lavished upon

Her ; for in humiliating Herself at sight of all the great

works of Christ, She rendered worthy thanks to the

eternal Father for each one of them and thus filled out

THE TRANSFIXION 331

the great void of ingratitude of the human race. And

by means of the secret communication of her purest

soul with that of the Savior, She sought to divert toward

God, her Son, the honor attributed to Her by his hearers.

This happened on some occasions which even the

Evangelists mention. For instance, when the Jews

attributed the healing of the deaf mute to the devil, the

Lord incited a woman to exclaim : Blessed is the womb

that bore Thee, and the paps that gave Thee suck," the

humble and attentive Mother, hearing these words of

praise, begged her divine Son to divert this praise from

Her, and the Lord acceded to her request in such a way,

that He turned these words into a still greater, yet, at

that time a hidden, praise. For the Lord answered:

"Yea rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God

and keep it" (Luke 11, 27). By these words He neutral

ized the praise given to Her as Mother&gt; but enhanced it

in application to Her as a saint; directing the attention

of his hearers to the essential of all virtue, in which his

Mother was distinguished above all others and most

wonderful, though at the same time none of his hearers

adverted to this hidden signification.

348. Another instance of this kind is mentioned by

saint Luke, when he says that some one interrupted the

preaching of the Lord by the message that his Mother

and his brethren had arrived, and that they could not

come near to Him on account of the press of the multi

tude. The most prudent Virgin, fearing lest those within

hearing would break out in applause at seeing the Mother

of the Savior, asked her Son to prevent such an event.

The Lord again yielded, and said : "My mother and my

brethren are they who hear the word of God and do

it" (Luke 8, 21). In these words likewise the Lord did

not deprive his Mother of the honor due to Her on ac-

332 CITY OF GOD

count of her holiness; but referred it to Her above all

others; yet in such a way that the attention of the by

standers was diverted from Her, and She, on her part,

gained her object of seeing the Lord alone praised and

acknowledged for his works. I wish to mention that

these events, as I have been made to understand,

happened on different occasions and at different places.

Accordingly saint Luke records them in two different

chapters, eight and nine, though saint Matthew refers

to the wonderful cure of the possessed mute in chapter

the twelfth, and immediately adds that the Savior was

notified of the presence of his Mother and his brethren,

who wished to speak to the Lord. On this account and

on account of what else is said there, some commentators

have thought that both the above-mentioned incidents

took place at one and the same time. But having again

been ordered to ask by my superiors, I was told that

they were separate events, happening at different times;

which can also be deduced from the balance of the con

text of these chapters; for saint Luke mentions the inci

dent of the exclaiming woman after having related the

healing of the possessed deafmute. The other incident

he relates in the eighth chapter, after the Lord had

preached the parable of the seed; and both of them

followed immediately after what the Evangelist had

said before that.

349. In order to understand more fully the perfect

accord of the Evangelists and the reason why the

blessed Queen came to her Son on those occasions, I

wish to state that the Virgin Mother frequented the

sermons of Christ our Savior for two reasons. Some

times She wished to hear Him, as I have stated above;

at other times She sought Him in order to ask some

favor for the souls, either regarding their conversion or

THE TRANSFIXION 333

the cure of the sick or afflicted; for the kindest Lady

took the remedy of all such evils into her own hand,

just as She had done at the marriage-feast of Cana.

Being made aware of these and other pressing necessi

ties either by the angels or by her interior light, She

was accustomed to approach the Lord; and such was

also the object of seeking the Master on the occasions

mentioned by the Evangelists. As this happened not

only once but many times, and since the crowds attending

the sermon of the Lord were often very great, He was

notified on these and many other occasions not men

tioned, that his Mother and his brethren were seeking

Him, and on these two occasions He spoke the words

recorded by saint Luke and saint Matthew. There is

nothing strange in his having repeated the same words

on two different occasions ; for He also repeated on sev

eral occasions this other saying of his : "Because every

one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that

humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14, 11; 18,

14), which the Lord used in the parable of the publican

and the pharisee, as also in that of the guests invited

to the marriage, as can be seen in the fourteenth and

eighteenth chapters of saint Luke and the twenty-third

chapter of saint Matthew.

350. The blessed Mary practiced humility not only

Herself, but She was the great Teacher of humility for

the Apostles and disciples ; for it was necessary that they

be well founded and rooted in this virtue in order to

receive the gifts and to work the wonders, not only later

on in the foundation of the Church, but even now, in the

first beginnings of their duties as preachers of the word

(Mark 3, 14). The holy Evangelists tell us that the

Lord sent before Him the Apostles (Luke 9, 2), and

afterwards, the seventy-two- disciples, and that He gave

3-23

334 CITY OF GOD

them power to expel the demons from the possessed and

to cure the sick. The great Mistress of the humble coun

seled and exhorted them with words of eternal life,

how they were to govern themselves in performing these

miracles. By her teaching and intercession the spirit

of wisdom and humility was deeply planted into their

hearts, so that they well understood how entirely these

miracles are wrought by divine power and that all the

glory of these works belonged to the Lord alone. They

understood that they themselves were merely the instru

ments; that, just as the brush does not deserve the glory

attached to a work of art, nor the sword that of vic

tory, but all belongs to the artist or to the wielder of the

sword ; so all the honor and praise due to their miracles

belonged to the Lord and Master, in whose name they

performed them. It is worthy of notice that none of

these lessons given to the Apostles before being sent to

preach are mentioned in the holy Gospels; but this was

intentional, because all these instructions were given to

them by the blessed Lady. Yet when the disciples re

turned to their Master, and full of exultation told Him

that they had subjected to themselves the demons in his

name (Luke 10, 17), He reminded them that He had

given them this power and that they should not be

elated except in having their names recorded in heaven.

So feeble is our humility, that the Savior was obliged to

apply such corrections and antidotes in order to preserve

it in his own disciples.

351. But afterwards, in order that they might be

worthy founders of the holy Church, the science of

humility, taught them by Christ the Lord and his holy

Mother, was still more necessary; for then they were to

perform still greater miracles in the name of Christ and

in confirmation of the faith and of their evangelical

THE TRANSFIXION 335

preaching. The heathens, being accustomed blindly to

give divine honors to anything great or strange, and

seeing the miracles wrought by the Apostles, were only

too ready to adore them as gods. Thus when they saw

saint Paul and saint Barnaby in Lycaonia cure the man

crippled from his birth (Acts 14, 9), they proclaimed the

one as Mercury and the other as Jupiter. Later on, when

saint Paul survived the bite of a viper while all the

others had been bitten and died thereof, he was called

a god (Acts 28, 6). All these miraculous events and

occasions most holy Mary foresaw in the fullness of her

knowledge and as the Assistant of her divine Son in the

establishment of the law of grace. During the time of

his preaching, which lasted three years, Christ went to

celebrate the Pash three times, and the blessed Lady ac

companied Him each time, being present when in the

first year He used the whip to drive the sellers of sheep,

pigeons and cattle from the house of God. In all the

doings of the Savior in the city and in his sufferings,

the great Lady accompanied Him with admirable affec

tion and heroic acts of virtue according to her condition

and circumstances; and She conducted Herself with

sublime perfection, especially in regard to the practice

of her most ardent charity, which She derived from the

Lord Himself. Since She lived only in God, and God

in Her, the charity of Christ burned in her bosom and

left Her to seek the good of her fellow-men with all

the powers of her body and soul.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN.

352. In his malice and astuteness, the ancient serpent

strains all his powers to destroy in the human heart

the science of humility, sowed by the Redeemer as a

336 CITY OF GOD

seed of holiness in the human heart; and in its place

he seeks to sow the cockle of pride (Matth. 13, 25). In

order to root out these and allow free growth to the

blessing of humility, it is necessary that the soul consent

and seek to be humiliated by its fellow-creatures and that

it ask the Lord incessantly and in all sincerity of heart

for this virtue and for the means to attain it. Very

scarce are the souls that apply themselves to this science

and reach the perfection of this virtue; for it requires

entire conquest of one s whole self to which few at

tain, even among those who profess to be virtuous. This

contagion of pride has so deeply penetrated into the

human faculties, that it is communicated to nearly all

of men s doings and there is scarcely one among men

who is without pride, just as the rose never grows with

out thorns or the grain without husks. On this account

the Most High makes so much of the truly humble;

and those who entirely triumph over pride, He exalts

and places with the princes of his people, esteeming them

as his favored children and exempting them from the

jurisdiction of the demon. Thus it comes that the

devil dares scarcely approach them, because he fears

the humble and their victories over him more than the

fires of hell.

353. I desire, my dearest, that thou attain the inestim

able treasure of humility in all its fulness, and that thou

offer to the Most High a docile and yielding heart, in

order that He may impress upon it, like on soft wax,

the image of my own most humble activity. As thou

hast been informed of such deeply hidden secrets con

cerning this sacrament, thou art under great obligations

to correspond to my wishes, not losing the least occa

sion of humiliation and advancing in this virtue. Neg

lect none of them, since thou knowest how much I

THE TRANSFIXION 337

sought after them, who was the Mother of God himself,

most pure and full of grace. The greater my preroga

tives, so much the greater was my humility, because in

my estimation they far exceeded my merits and only

increased my obligations. All you children of Adam

(Ps. 50, 7), were conceived in sin, and there is none

who has not sinned on his own account. If none can

deny this infection of his nature, why should not all

humiliate themselves before God and before men?

Lowering themselves to the very dust and placing them

selves in the last place is not such a great humiliation

for those who have sinned, for even then they will always

be more honored than they deserve. The truly humble

must lower themselves beneath that which they have

deserved. If all the creatures would despise and abhor

them, or offend them ; if they would consider themselves

worthy of hell-fire, they would only fulfill justice, but

not the requirement of humility, since that would only

be admitting their deserts. But real, deep humility goes

to the length of desiring a greater humiliation than

that due to one s self in justice. On this account there

is no mortal who can attain to the kind of humility

which I practiced, such as thou hast understood and

described; but the Most High will be satisfied with and

ready to reward the efforts of those who humble them

selves as far as they can and as they deserve in justice.

354. Let then the sinners admit their baseness and

understand how they make of themselves monsters of

hell by imitating Lucifer in his pride. For pride found

him beauteous and endowed with great gifts of grace

and nature; and although he dissipated these blessings,

he had nevertheless possessed them as his own. But

man, who is mere slime, and moreover has sinned and

is full of ugliness and baseness, is a monster, if he

338 CITY OF GOD

b4oats himself up in vain pride. By such absurdity he

surpasses even the demon; since man possesses a nature

neither so noble, nor was ever gifted with such grace

and beauty as Lucifer. He and his hellish followers

despise and laugh over men, who in such inferiority

swell up in pride; for they can well understand this

vain and contemptible madness and delirium. Mind well

therefore, my daughter, this lesson, and humiliate thyself

lower than the earth, showing just as little sense of in

jury as the dust, whenever the Lord, either himself or

through others, sends thee humiliation. Never judge

thyself injured by any one nor consider thyself offended;

if thou abhor pretense and lying, remember, that the

greatest offense is to aspire after honor or high position.

Do not attribute to creatures that which God brings

about in order to humiliate thee or others by affliction

and tribulations; for this is protesting against mere in

struments, while it is divine mercy which inflicts punish

ment on men for their humiliation. This, if they would

only understand, is really what is happening by the

disposition of the Lord to the kingdoms of our day.

Humiliate thyself in the divine presence for thyself and

for all thy fellow-men, in order to placate his wrath,

just as if thou alone wert guilty; and as if thou never

hadst made any satisfaction; since during mortal life

no one can ever know whether he has satisfied for his

transgressions. Seek to appease Him as if thou alone

hadst offended Him; and in regard to the gifts and

favors which thou hast received and dost receive, show

thyself grateful as one who deserves much less and owes

much more. By these considerations humiliate thyself

more than all others, and labor without ceasing to cor

respond to the divine clemency, which has shown itself

so liberal toward thee.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DEVIL IS MUCH DISTURBED AND DISCONCERTED ON

ACCOUNT OF THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST AND OF SAINT

JOHN THE BAPTIST. HEROD SEIZES AND BEHEADS

SAINT JOHN ; SOME PARTICULARS OF HIS DEATH.

355. The Redeemer of the world, departing- from

Jerusalem and traveling about in Judea for some time,

pursued the work of preaching- and performing 1 miracles.

While He was baptizing and at the same time commis

sioning his disciples to baptize, as is recorded in the

third and fourth chapter of Saint John s Gospel, his

Precursor also continued to baptize in Ainon on the

banks of the Jordan near the city of Salem. But the

Baptisms of the Lord and those of saint John were not

of the same kind : for saint John continued to give only

the baptism of water and of penance, while our Lord

administered his own Baptism, that of real pardon of

sins and justification, such as it is now in the Church,

accompanied by the infusion of grace and of the virtues.

To the mysterious power and effects of the Baptism of

Christ was moreover added the efficacy of his words and

instructions confirmed by the wonder of his miracles.

On this 1 account more disciples and followers soon

gathered around Christ than around saint John, in ful

fillment of the words of the Baptist, that Christ must

grow, while he must be diminished (John 3, 22). At

the Baptisms of the Lord his most holy Mother ordi-

339

340 CITY OF GOD

narily was present and She beheld all the great results

of this regeneration in the favored souls. With the same

gratitude as if She herself were receiving the benefits

of the Sacrament, She gave thanks for them, breaking

forth in canticles of praise and exercising heroic virtues

as a thank-offering to the Author of them. Thus in all

these wonderful activities She gained for Herself incom

parable and unheard of merits.

356. When by divine permission Lucifer and his fol

lowers arose from the ruinous defeat which they had

experienced at the triumph of Christ in the desert, and

when they returned and saw the works of the most

sacred humanity, divine Providence ordained, that,

though always remaining ignorant of the principal mys

tery connected with Christ they should nevertheless see

enough to lead to their entire discomfiture. Lucifer

therefore perceived the great results of the preaching,

the miracles, the Baptism of Christ our Lord, and how

by these means innumerable souls were withdrawn from

his jurisdiction and from the shackles of sin in the

reformation of their life. The same effects he recognized

also in the preaching of saint John and in his baptism.

He remained ignorant of the essential difference be

tween these two preachers and their baptisms and at the

same time had no doubts about the final overthrow of

his dominion, if their activity should continue. Hence,

Lucifer could not but be full of fear and unrest He

knew well that he was too weak to resist the power of

heaven, which he felt was exerted against him in these

new Preachers and their doctrines. These considera

tions filled his proud mind with great apprehension, and

therefore he called another meeting of the princes of

darkness and said to them: "Strange things happen in

the world during these years, and every day do they

THE TRANSFIXION 341

multiply, so that my fears lest the divine Word has

come into the world according to the promise are grow

ing more and more harrowing. I have searched the face

of the whole earth and cannot find Him. But these

two Men, who are preaching and deprive me every day

of many souls, excite within me great misgivings; the

one I could never overcome in the desert, and the other

vanquished all of us, so that even now we are disheart

ened and crushed. If They continue as They have begun,

all our triumphs will turn to confusion. They cannot

Both be the Messias, and I cannot as yet be sure that

either one of them is He; but to draw so many souls

from a life of sin, is a work not equalled by any to this

day. It supposes a new power, which we must investi

gate and trace to its source; and we must destroy these

two Men. Follow me and assist me with all your

strength, astuteness and sagacity; because otherwise

they will frustrate our intentions."

357. These ministers of evil therefore came to the

determination of persecuting anew our Savior Christ

and his Precursor saint John; but as they had no

knowledge of the mysteries of the divine Wisdom, all

their great projects and resolves were vain and without

firmness. They were sadly misled and confused on the

one hand, by so many miracles, and on the other hand by

outward appearances entirely different from those which

they had attributed to the incarnate Word at his coming

into the world. In order that his malice might find some

enlightenment, and in order that his companions, who

were to spy out and discover what secret power had so

discomfited them, might be more successful in assisting

him, Lucifer ordered meetings of the demons to be held,

in which they were to communicate to each other what

they had seen and understood concerning recent events;

342 CITY OF GOD

and he offered them great rewards and preferments in

his hellish dominions for good service. For the purpose

of throwing them into a still greater doubt and con

fusion, the Lord permitted the hellish fiends to imagine

greater holiness in the life of saint John the Baptist.

He did not perform the same wonders as Christ ; but the

outward signs of his holiness were very remarkable and

his exterior virtues were wonderful. God also con

cealed some of the more extraordinary wonders per

formed by Jesus from the dragon, and there was a great

similarity between Christ and saint John in regard to

certain particulars which came to the knowledge of the

devil, so that he remained in doubt and could not come

to a certain decision as to which of Them really de

served to hold the office and dignity of Messias. "Both,"

(he said to himself) "are great Saints and Prophets;

the life of the One is that of the common people, but yet

extraordinary and strange in some respects; the other

performs many miracles and his doctrine is nearly the

same. Both cannot be the Messias : but let Them be

whoever They may, I recognize Them as my great Ene

mies and as Saints, and must persecute Them until I

have undone Them."

358. These suspicions of the demons began from the

time when he saw saint John in the desert leading such

a wonderful and unheard of life even from his childhood,

and at the time he thought that his virtues were greater

than that of a mere man could be. On the other

hand, he also learned of some of the doings and of the

heroic virtues of the life of Christ our Lord, which were

not less wonderful, and the dragon compared them with

those of John. Yet as the Savior lived a life more of

the common order among men, Lucifer was more

anxious to find out who this John could be. With this

THE TRANSFIXION 343

desire he incited the Jews and the pharisees of Jerusalem

to send the priests and levites to saint John in order

to ascertain who he was (John 1, 19) whether he was

Christ, as through Lucifer they were led to suspect. And

the devil s suggestions must have been very persistent,

since they knew that the Baptist was of the tribe of Levi,

and hence, as was well known, could not be the Mes-

sias; for according to the Scriptures and according to

their knowledge of the law and of revealed truth, the

Messias was to be of the tribe of Juda (Ps. 81, 11).

But the devil troubled their minds so much, that yielding

to his astute malice, they asked this question. The devil

pursued a double object; for if John was the Messias,

he wanted him to reveal it ; if not, he wanted to diminish

his influence with the people, who believed him to be

the Messias; or he wished saint John to fall into a vain

complaisance or at least usurp, either wholly or in part,

the honor thus held out to him. Hence the demon eagerly

listened to every word of the answer given by saint John.

359. But the holy Precursor answered with heavenly

wisdom, confessing the truth in such a way that the

astuteness of the enemy was foiled and his uncertainty

was greater than before. He answered, that he was

not Christ. Then they asked again, whether he was

Elias. Since it was written of Elias, that he was to come

before Christ and as the Jews were so dull as not to know

how to distinguish between the first and second coming,

they asked him, whether he was Elias. He answered:

"I am not," adding: "I am the voice of one crying in

the wilderness, make straight the way of the Lord," as

said the prophet Isaias (John 1, 20, 21). All these

questions were put by the messengers through instigation

of the devil ; for he expected that if saint John was a

holy man, he would tell the truth, and therefore reveal

344 CITY OF GOD

clearly who he was. When he heard saint John call

himself a "voice," he was much taken aback, suspecting

in his ignorance that he meant to call himself the eternal

Word. His restlessness was augmented the more, when

he reflected on the apparent unwillingness of saint John

to reveal himself to the Jews. Hence he suspected, that

his having called himself a "voice" was only a covered

way of speaking. The devil argued, that if saint John

had called himself openly the Word of God he would

have thereby revealed his Divinity ; hence, in order not to

discover himself, he had assumed the name "voice" in

stead of "word." Into such confusion of mind did Luci

fer fall concerning the mystery of the Incarnation ; and,

while he believed the Jews had been deluded and misled,

he himself was cast into a much greater error by his

false theology.

360. Thus deceived, his fury against the Baptist out

grew all bounds. But remembering his defeats in the

battles against the Savior, and conscious of having had

just as little success in leading saint John into any

grave fault, he resolved to make war upon him by

another channel. And he found such a channel already

prepared. The Baptist had reprehended Herod for his

disgraceful and adulterous connection with Herodias,

who had openly left her husband, Philip, his brother,

as is related by the Evangelists (Marc. 6, 17). Herod

was aware of the holiness of saint John and of his say

ings; he held him in fear and veneration and listened

to him with pleasure. But whatever force the truth and

the light of reason exerted in Herod, it was readily per

verted to evil by the malicious and boundless hatred of

the wicked Herodias and her daughter, who was like her

mother in morals. The adulterous woman was deeply

degraded by her passions and sensuality, and therefore

THE TRANSFIXION 345

lent herself readily as an instrument of demoniac malice.

This woman, having 1 been previously instigated by the

devil to procure the death of saint John in different

ways, now incited the king to condemn him to death.

He that had called himself the voice of God and who

was the greatest of woman-born, was therefore taken

prisoner. The anniversary of the unfortunate birthday

of Herod was to be celebrated by a banquet and ball,

given by him to the magistrates and nobles of Galilee,

of which he was king. The degraded Herodias brought

her daughter to the feast, in order to dance before the

guests. The blinded and adulterous king was so taken

in by the dancing girl, that he promised her any gift or

favor she desired, even if it were the half of his king

dom. She, directed by her mother (and both of them by

the devil), asked for more than a kingdom, yea, more

than many kingdoms, namely, the head of John the Bap

tist, and that it be given to her immediately on a plate.

The king commanded it to be done on account of the

oath he had taken and because he had subjected himself

to the influence of a vile and degraded woman. Men

are accustomed to consider it an unbearable offense to be

called a woman, because they think it denies them the

superiority deemed peculiar to manhood; but it is a

greater disgrace to be governed and led about by women s

whims; for he that obeys, is inferior to the one that

commands. And yet many are thus degraded without

adverting thereto, and so much the greater is their degra

dation, the more immodest the woman they follow;

for, having lost the virtue of modesty, nothing remains

in a woman, which is not most despicable and abominable

in the sight of God and man.

361. During the imprisonment of saint John brought

about by Herodias, he was much favored by our Savior

346 CITY OF GOD

and by his Mother. The Lady comforted him many

times by sending her holy angels, sometimes also order

ing them to prepare and bring him nourishment. The

Lord also conferred on him many interior graces

and favors. But the demon who wished to destroy him,

gave no rest to Herodias until he should see him dead.

He eagerly seized the occasion of the banquet, inciting

Herod to utter that foolish promise and oath for the

sake of Herodias daughter and confusing his mind so

that he impiously looked upon a failure to fulfill his

sworn promise as a sin and as a dishonor, and thus in

his blindness he delivered the head of the Baptist to the

dancing girl, as is related in the Gospel. At the same

time the Queen of the world was, in the usual manner,

made aware of the interior will of her most holy Son,

that the hour of martyrdom had arrived for the Baptist

and that he should give his life in testimony of the

truths he had preached. The most pure Mother prostrated

Herself at the feet of Christ our Lord and tearfully im

plored Him to assist his servant and Precursor in that

hour, to comfort and console him, and that his death

might be so much the more precious in his eyes in view

of his suffering for the honor and defense of the truth.

362. The Savior responded to her petition with much

pleasure, saying that He would fulfill it entirely and

bidding Her immediately to accompany Him on a visit

to saint John. Then Christ and his holy Mother were

miraculously and invisibly borne to the dungeon cell

where saint John lay fettered in chains and wounded in

many parts of his body ; for the wicked adulteress, wish

ing to do away with him, had ordered some of her

servants, (six on three different occasions), to scourge

and maltreat him, which they actually did in order to

please their mistress. By these means this tigress had

THE TRANSFIXION 347

attempted to murder the Baptist before the banquet at

which Herod commanded him to be beheaded. The

devil incited these cruel henchmen to assail saint John

with vilest insults and bodily illtreatment for they were

most wicked men, fit servants of such an accursed and

infamous adultress. The presence of Christ and his

blessed Mother filled that foul prison of the Baptist with

celestial light. While the other parts of the palace of

Herod were infested by innumerable demons and syco

phants more criminal than the state prisoners in their

dungeons below, the cell of saint John was entirely sanc

tified by the presence of the Sovereigns of heaven, who

were accompanied by a great host of angels.

363. As soon as the Precursor beheld before him the

Redeemer and his Mother in the midst of the angelic

hosts, his chains fell from him and his wounds were

healed. With ineffable joy he prostrated himself on the

ground and in deepest humility and admiration asked the

blessing of the incarnate Word and his blessed Mother.

Having fulfilled his request, They remained for some time

holding divine converse with their friend and servant,

which I cannot all repeat here, though I will mention some

of what impressed itself more vividly on my dull mind. In

kindest tone and manner the Savior said: "John, my

servant, how eagerly thou pressest on to be persecuted,

imprisoned and scourged, and to offer thy life for the

glory of my Father even before I myself enter upon my

sufferings! Thy desires are quickly approaching their

fulfillment, since thou art soon to enjoy thy reward in

suffering tribulations such as I myself have in view for

my humanity; but it is thus the eternal Father rewards

the zeal with which thou hast fulfilled the office of being

my Precursor. Let thy loving anxieties now cease and

offer thy neck to the axe ; for such is my wish, and thus

348 CITY OF GOD

shalt thou enjoy the happiness of suffering 1 and dying- for

my name. I offer to the eternal Father thy life, in order

that mine be yet prolonged."

364. The sweetness and power of these words pene

trated the heart of the Baptist and filled it with such

delights of divine love, that for a time he could not give

any answer. But being 1 re-enforced by divine grace and

dissolved in tears, he thanked his Lord and Master for

the ineffable favor of this visit, which was now added

to so many other great ones he had received at his hands ;

and with sighs of love from his inmost soul he said:

"My eternal God and Lord, I cannot ever merit pains

or sufferings worthy of such a great consolation and

privilege as that of enjoying thy divine presence and

that of thy exalted Mother, my Mistress; altogether un

worthy am I of this new blessing. In order that thy

boundless mercy may be exalted, permit me, Lord, to die

before Thee, so that thy holy name may be made more

widely known ; and look with favor on my desire of en

during the most painful and lingering death. Let Herod

and sin, and hell itself, triumph over me in my death,

for I offer my life for Thee, my Beloved, in the joy of

my heart. Receive it, my God, as a pleasing sacrifice.

And thou, Mother of my Savior and my Mistress, turn

thy most loving eyes in clemency upon thy servant and

continue to show him thy favor as a Mother and as the

cause of all blessing. During all my life I have despised

vanities and loved the Cross, which is to be sanctified

by my Redeemer; I have desired to sow in tears; but

never could I have merited the delight of such a visit,

which has sweetened all my sufferings, gladdened my

bondage and makes death itself more pleasing and ac

ceptable than life."

365. While They were yet engaged in this conversa-

THE TRANSFIXION 349

tion, three servants of Herod entered his prison with a

hangman ready to execute upon him the implacable fury

of the cruel adultress. Saint John presented his neck

and the executioner fulfilled the impious order of Herod

by cutting 1 off his head. The High Priest Christ at the

same moment received in his arms the body of the Saint,

while his blessed Mother held his head in her hands,

both of Them offering this victim to the eternal Father

on the altar of their sacred hands. This was possible

not only because the two Sovereigns of the world were

invisible, but also because the servants of Herod had be

gun to quarrel as to which of them should flatter the in

famous dancer and her mother by bringing them the head

of saint John. In their dispute one of them, without

paying attention to any other circumstance, snatched the

head from the hands of the Queen of heaven and the

rest of them followed in order to offer it on a plate to

the daughter of Herodias. The sacred soul of the Bap

tist, in the company of a multitude of angels, was sent

to limbo, and its arrival renewed the joy of the holy

souls there imprisoned. The Sovereigns of heaven re

turned to the place, whence they had come. Of the holi

ness and excellence of the great Precursor many things

are written in the Church, and although I have been in

formed of several other mysteries concerning- him, which

I could relate, I cannot depart from my original purpose

or extend this history in writing of them. I wish only

to say, that the fortunate and blessed Precursor of Christ

received great favors at the hands of Christ the Redeemer

and his holy Mother during\* the whole course of his life:

in his happy birth, his stay in the desert, his preaching

and in his holy death. Such wonders were wrought for

no other man by the right hand of God.

2-24

350 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE MOST HOLY

QUEEN MARY.

366. My daughter, thou hast been very short in de

scribing the mysteries of this chapter ; yet a great lesson

is contained therein for thee and all the children of light.

Write it in thy heart and notice well the great difference

between the innocence and holiness of the Baptist, who

was poor, afflicted, persecuted and imprisoned, and the

abominable wickedness of Herod, the powerful king,

who was flattered and served in the midst of his riches

and base pleasures. Both were of the same human

nature, but entirely different in the sight of God, accord

ing as they used ill or well their free will and the created

things around them. The penance, poverty, humility,

contempt, tribulations of saint John, and his zeal for the

glory of my divine Son, merited for him the singular

favor of dying in our arms. Herod, on the contrary, by

his hollow pomp, his pride, vanity, tyranny and wicked

ness was struck down by the minister of God in order to

be punished in the eternal flames. Remember that the

same happens now and always in the world; although

men do not pay attention to it or fear it. They fear the

vain strength of the world, not reflecting that it is but

fleeting shadow and withering grass.

367. Just as little do men think of the ultimate end,

and of the abyss, into which vices draw them even in this

world. Although the demon cannot take away man s

liberty, nor ever completely sway his free will, yet, by

leading them into so many and grievous sins, he obtains

such an influence over it, that he is enabled to use it

as an instrument of the evil he proposes. In spite of wit

nessing so many and such terrible examples, men remain

callous to the fearful danger to which they expose them

selves by their sins in imitation of Herod and his adulter-

THE TRANSFIXION 351

ous concubine. In order to cast souls into this abyss of

wickedness Lucifer meets them with the vain pride and

honor of this world and with its base pleasures, repre

senting them as alone important and desirable. Thus the

ignorant children of perdition loosen the bonds of reason

in order to follow the degrading pleasures of their flesh

and be enslaved by their mortal enemy. My daughter,

the Savior and I have taught the way of humility, of

contempt, and tribulation. This is the royal road, on

which we first walked, and of which We have set Our

selves up as Teachers. We are the Protectors of all the

afflicted and ill-used, ready to assist by miraculous and

especial favors all those who call upon Us in their neces

sities. Of this assistance and protection the followers of

this world and its vain pleasures deprive themselves,

since they hate the way of the Cross. To the Cross thou

wast called and invited, and on account of it thou art

favored with the sweetness of my loving guidance. Fol

low me and labor to imitate me, since thou hast found the

secret treasure (Matth. 12, 44) and the precious pearl,

for the possession of which thou must despise all that is

earthly and give up all human freedom in so far as it is

contrary to the pleasure of my most exalted Lord.

CHAPTER V.

THE FAVORS BESTOWED UPON THE APOSTLES BY CHRIST,

THE SAVIOR, ON ACCOUNT OF THEIR DEVOTION TO HIS

MOST HOLY MOTHER, AND THE SAD PERDITION OF

JUDAS ON ACCOUNT OF NEGLECT OF THIS DEVOTION.

368. One of the great miracles of divine omnipotence

and a wonder of wonders was the conduct of the most

holy Mary toward the Apostles and disciples of her Son

and Savior Christ. A full account of her wisdom is im

possible to human tongue, and if I would wish to de

scribe no more than what I have been made to under

stand concerning this matter, I would be obliged to write

a large volume. I will touch upon it in this chapter and

as occasion requires in the rest of this history. All that

I can say is very little, yet from it the faithful can infer

enough for their instruction. All those whom the Savior

received into his divine school, were to see and treat

familiarly his most blessed Mother. Hence He infused

into their hearts an especial reverence and devotion

toward that blessed Lady. But though this infused

reverence was common to all, it was not equal in all the

disciples ; for the Lord distributed his gifts according to

his free will in reference to their dispositions and in

accordance with the duties and offices for which each

one was destined. By conversation and familiar inter

course with their great Queen and Lady their reverential

love and devotion was to grow and increase; for the

blessed Lady spoke to all, loved them, consoled them,

instructed and assisted them in their necessities, without

ever permitting them to leave her conversation and

presence unreplenished by interior joy and consolation

352

THE TRANSFIXION 353

greater than they had asked for. Yet the measure of

good fruit derived from them was dependent upon the

disposition of the heart of those that received these

favors.

369. They were all enabled to begin their intercourse

with the Mother of God in high admiration of her pru

dence, wisdom, purity, holiness and great majesty, and

were made sensible of a sweetness in Her inexpressibly

humble and pleasing. This was so ordained by the

Most High, because as I have said in the fifth book,

chapter twenty-second, it was not yet time to reveal this

mystic Ark of the new Testament to the world. Thus,

just as the Lord, however much He wished to break forth

in her praise, could not manifest it in words and concen

trated it within his heart; so the holy Apostles, sweetly

constrained into silence, found a vent for their fervent

feelings in a so much the more intense love of most holy

Mary and praise of her Maker. As the great Lady, on

account of her peerless insight knew the natural disposi

tion of each of the disciples, his measure of grace, his

present condition and future office, She proceeded ac

cording to this knowledge in her petitions and prayers,

in her instructions and conversings with them, and

in the favors She obtained for each in support of his

vocation. Such a loving zeal in the conduct of a mere

Creature so entirely pleasing to the wishes of his Lord,

excited a new and boundless admiration in the holy

angels. Of no less admiration was the hidden providence

of the Almighty by which the Apostles were made to

correspond to the blessings and favors received by them

at the intercession of the most holy Mother. All this

caused a divine harmony of action, hidden to men and

manifest only to the heavenly spirits.

370. Especially signalized for the reception of these

354 CITY OF GOD

sacramental favors were saint Peter and saint John ; the

former because he was destined to be the vicar of Christ

and head of the militant Church and because he therefore

deserved the special reverence and love of the holy

Mother; the latter because he was to take the place of

the Lord after his Passion in attending 1 upon and con

versing with the heavenly Lady upon earth. As there

fore the government and custody of the mystic Church,

namely of Mary immaculate and of the visible militant

Church, namely the faithful on earth, was to be divided

between these two Apostles, it was no wonder, that they

should be singularly favored by the great Queen of the

world. But as saint John was chosen to serve Mary and

attain the dignity of an adopted son of the Mistress of

heaven, he at once began to experience special urg-

ings of grace and signalize himself in the service of the

most holy Mary. Although all the Apostles excelled in

devotion to the Queen beyond our power of understand

ing or conception, the evangelist saint John penetrated

deeper into the mysteries of this City of God and re

ceived through Her such divine enlightenment as to

excel all the other Apostles. This is also evident from

his Gospel (John 21, 20) ; all the divine insight therein

manifested he received through the Queen of heaven,

and the distinction of being called the beloved disciple of

Jesus, he gained by his love toward the most blessed

Mother. As this love was reciprocated by the heavenly

Lady, he became the most beloved disciple both of Jesus

and Mary.

371. The Evangelist besides chastity and virginal

purity, possessed some other virtues which were es

pecially pleasing to the Queen; among them were a

dovelike simplicity, as is manifest from his writings, and

a great gentleness and humility, which made him most

THE TRANSFIXION 355

meek and tractable. The heavenly Mother always looked

upon the peaceful and the humble as the most faithful

imitators of her divine Son. On this account the blessed

Queen favored saint John above all the other Apostles and

he himself became more and more anxious to serve Her

with ever increasing reverential love and affection. From

the very first moment of his vocation saint John com

menced to excel all the rest in piety toward the Mother

Mary and to fulfill the least of her wishes as her most

humble slave. He attended upon Her more assiduously

than the rest ; and whenever it was possible he sought to

be in her company and take upon himself some of the bod

ily labors connected with her present life. Sometimes it

happened that the fortunate Apostle competed with the

holy angels in his zeal for thus assisting the great Queen ;

while She still more eagerly sought to perform these

works of humility Herself; for in this virtue She

triumphed over all other creatures and none of them could

ever hope in the least to surpass or equal Her in acts of

humility. The beloved disciple was very diligent in re

porting to the heavenly Lady the works and miracles

wrought by the Savior, whenever She herself could not

be present, and in informing Her of the new disciples

converted by his teaching. He was constantly alert and

studious to serve Her in the least of her wishes, fulfilling

each one of them with a loving eagerness.

372. Saint John also distinguished himself by the

reverence with which he spoke to Mary, for in her pres

ence he always called Her "Lady," or "my Mistress;"

and in Her absence he entitled Her "Mother of our

Master Jesus." After the Ascension of the Lord when

speaking of Her, he was the first to call Her "Mother

of God and of the Redeemer of the world;" and when

speaking to Her, he addressed Her "Mother" and

356 CITY OF GOD

"Mistress." In her honor he invented also the other

titles calling- Her "The propitiation for sin" and "the

Mistress of Nations." In particular saint John invented

the title "Mary of Jesus," as She was often called in the

primitive Church; and he gave Her that name, because

he knew that the sound of these words awoke the sweetest

memories in the heart of the blessed Virgin. I also desire

to give joyful thanks to the Lord, that without my merits

He has called me to the light of holy faith and to

the religious life, which I profess under this very name

of Mary of Jesus. The other Apostles were well aware

of the favor in which he stood with most holy Mary,

and they often asked him to be their messenger in their

behalf for what they desired to say or ask of their Queen.

The gentle intercession of this holy Apostle often pro

cured for them tokens of the loving kindness of the

sweetest Mother. Concerning 1 this intercourse of saint

John with the Mother of grace, I will say more in the

third part and it would be easy to write an extensive

history in merely mentioning the favors and blessings

obtained by saint John from this Mistress and Queen of

the world.

373. Next to saint Peter and saint John, saint James

was most beloved by the blessed Mother. He was the

brother of saint John, and, as we shall see from some

instances to be related in the third part of this history,

he obtained admirable favors at the hands of the great

Lady. Also saint Andrew was among those especially

favored by the Queen; because She knew of his great

devotion to the passion and cross of Christ and of his

being destined to die on it like his divine Master. I will

not stop to speak of her love toward the other Apostles,

for She regarded them all with great affection, some on

account of one virtue, some on account of another, and

THE TRANSFIXION 357

all of them because of their connection with her most

holy Son. This affection toward them She showed with

rarest prudence, humility and charity. Magdalen also

had a share in her special love ; for Mary knew that the

love of this woman for her Son was most ardent and

that this great penitent was eminently chosen for the

manifestation of the magnificence of God s mercy toward

men. Most holy Mary distinguished her before the other

women in her familiar intercourse and enlightened her

in regard to most exalted mysteries, by which She in

flamed still more the love of Magdalen toward Jesus and

toward Herself. The holy penitent consulted the heavenly

Lady in regard to her desire of retreating into solitude

in order to live in continual contemplation and penance;

and the sweetest Mother instructed her in the deep mys

teries of solitary life. This life She afterwards em

braced with the consent and blessing of the Queen. Later

on Mary visited her in her retreat in person and by

means of the angels often encouraged and consoled Mag

dalen in the horrors of the desert. The other women,

who were in the company of Jesus, were much favored

by the most blessed Mother; all of them and all the

disciples of the Lord experienced her incomparable kind

ness and they were filled with an intense devotion and

affection toward the Mistress and Mother of grace.

They drew of the treasures of grace from Her as from

a storehouse, where God had laid up his gifts for the

whole human race. I do not dwell longer on this doctrine,

for, aside of its being unnecessary since it is expounded

by our holy Church, it would consume much time to do

it justice.

374. I will, however, say something of that which has

been made known to me concerning the wicked Apostle

Judas; for it belongs to this history and less is known

358 CITY OF GOD

of him. It will at the same time be a warning to the

obstinate and an admonition for those little devoted to

the most blessed Mary; for it is a sad truth that there

should be any mortals who entertain little love toward

a Creature so lovable, and One whom the infinite God

himself loves without bound or measure; whom the

angels love with all their heavenly powers, the Apostles

and saints from their inmost souls, whom all creatures

should eagerly strive to love, and who never can be

loved according to her merits. Yet this unhappy Apostle

strayed from the royal road of divine love and its bless

ings. The understanding, which has been given me con

cerning this defection for the purpose of making it known

in this history, is contained in the following paragraphs.

375. Judas was attracted to the school of Christ our

Teacher by his forceful doctrines, and was filled with

the same good intentions which moved the others.

Powerfully drawn by these motives, he asked the Savior

to admit him among his disciples, and the Savior received

him with the bowels of a loving Father, who rejects

none that come to Him in search of truth. In the be

ginning Judas merited special favors and forged ahead

of some of the other disciples, deserving to be numbered

among the twelve Apostles; for the Savior loved his

soul according to its present state of grace and his good

works, just as He did the others. The Mother of grace

and mercy observed the same course with him, although

by her infused knowledge She immediately became aware

of the perfidious treachery with which he was to end his

apostolate. She did not, on this account, deny him her

intercession and maternal love; but she applied Herself

even more zealously to justify as far as possible the cause

of her divine Son against this perfidious and unfortunate

man, in order that his wickedness, as soon as it should

THE TRANSFIXION 359

be put into action, might not have the shadow of an ex

cuse before men. Well knowing that such a character

as his could not be overcome by rigor, but would only

be driven by it to so much the greater obstinacy, the

most prudent Lady took care, that none of the wants or

the comforts of Judas should be ignored and She began

to treat him, speak and listen to him more gently and

lovingly than to all the rest. This She carried so far,

that Judas, when the disciples once disputed among them

selves concerning their standing with the Queen (as, ac

cording to the Evangelist [Luke 22, 24], it happened

also concerning the Redeemer), never experienced the

least jealousy or doubt in this matter; for the blessed

Lady in the beginning always distinguished him by

tokens of special love and he, at that time, also showed

himself thankful for these favors.

376. But as Judas found little support in his natural

disposition, and as the disciples, not being as yet con

firmed in virtue and not as yet even in grace, were guilty

of some human failings, the imprudent man began to

compliment himself on his perfection and to take more

notice of the faults of his brethren than of his own

(Luke 6, 41 ). He permitted himself thus to be deceived,

making no effort to amend or repent, he allowed the

beam in his own eyes to grow while watching the

splinters in the eyes of others. Complaining of their little

faults and seeking, with more presumption than zeal, to

correct the weaknesses of his brethren, he committed

greater sins himself. Among the other Apostles he

singled out saint John, looking upon him as an inter-

meddler and accusing him in his heart of ingratiating

himself with the Master and his blessed Mother. The

fact that he received so many special favors from Them

was of no avail to deter him from this false assumption.

360 CITY OF GOD

Yet so far Judas had committed only venial sins and had

not lost sanctifying grace. But they argued a very bad

disposition, in which he wilfully persevered. He had

freely entertained a certain vain complacency in himself ;

this at once called into existence a certain amount of envy,

which brought on a calumnious spirit and harshness in

judging of the faults of his brethren. These sins opened

the way for greater sins; for immediately the fervor of

his devotion decreased, his charity toward God and men

grew cold, and his interior light was lost and extin

guished; he began to look upon the Apostles and upon

the most holy Mother with a certain disgust and find

little pleasure in their intercourse and their heavenly

activity.

377. The most prudent Lady perceived the growth of

this defection in Judas. Eagerly seeking his recovery

and salvation before he should cast himself entirely into

the death of sin, She spoke to him and exhorted him as

her beloved child and with extreme sweetness and force

of reasoning. Although at times this storm of torment

ing thoughts, which had begun to rise in the breast of

Judas, was allayed ; yet it was only for a short time, and

soon it arose and disturbed him anew. Giving entrance

to the devil into his heart, he permitted a furious rage

against the most meek Dove to take possession of him.

With insidious hypocrisy he sought to deny his sins or

palliate them by alleging other reasons for his conduct:

as if he could ever deceive Jesus and Mary and hide from

Them the secrets of his heart. Thereby he lost his in

terior reverence for the Mother of mercy, despising her

exhortations and openly reproaching Her for her gentle

words and reasonings. This ungrateful presumption

threw him from the state of grace, the Lord was highly

incensed and deservedly left him to his own evil counsels.

THE TRANSFIXION 361

By thus designedly rejecting the kindness and the inter

cession of most holy Mary, he closed against himself the

gates of mercy and of his only salvation. His disgust

with the sweetest Mother soon engendered in him an ab

horrence of his Master; he grew dissatisfied with his doc

trines and began to look upon the life of an Apostle and

intercourse with the disciples as too burdensome.

378. Nevertheless divine Providence did not abandon

him immediately, but continued to send him interior as

sistance, although in comparison with former helps they

were of a kind more common and ordinary. They were,

however, in themselves sufficient for his salvation, if he

would have made use of them. To these graces were

added the gentle exhortations of the kindest Mistress,

urging him to restrain himself and to humble himself

and ask pardon of his divine Master. She offered him

mercy in his name and her own kind assistance in ob

taining it, promising to do penance for him, if he would

consent to be sorry for his sins and amend his life. All

these advances did the Mother of grace make in order to

prevent the fall of Judas. She was well aware, that not

seeking to arise from a fall and to persevere in sin was

a much greater evil than to have fallen. The conscience

of this proud disciple could not but reproach him with

his wickedness ; but becoming hardened in his heart, he

began to dread the humiliation, which would have been

to his credit, and he fell into still greater sins. In his

pride he rejected the salutary counsels of the Mother of

Christ and chose rather to deny his guilt, protesting with

a lying tongue, that he loved his Master and all the rest,

and that there was no occasion for amending his con

duct in this regard.

379. It was indeed an admirable example of patience

and charity which Christ, our Savior, and his most

362 CITY OF GOD

blessed Mother gave us in their conduct toward Judas

after his fall into sin ; for as long as he remained in their

company, They never showed exteriorly any change or

irritation in their behavior toward him, nor did They

cease to treat him with the same kindness and gentleness

as all the rest. This was the reason why the wickedness

of Judas, who necessarily showed signs of his evil state

in his daily conversation and intercourse, remained so

long concealed to the Apostles. For it is not easy, and

perhaps not possible, continually to cover up or hide the

tendencies of one s mind. In matters not depending upon

deliberation we always act according to our character

and our habits, and thus we disclose them at least to the

watchful eyes of those with whom we have much inter

course. But as all of the disciples witnessed the constant

affability and love of Christ our Redeemer and his most

blessed Mother toward Judas, they suppressed their sus

picions and ignored the exterior proofs of his wickedness.

Hence all of them were much disturbed and agitated,

when at the last Supper the Lord told them, that one of

them was to betray Him (Matth. 24) ; and each one

searched his soul, whether the accusation could refer to

his own self. Saint John, on account of his greater

intimacy, had some suspicion of the wicked doings of

Judas and he was made more restless by his love ; there

fore Jesus pointed out the traitor, but only by a sign,

as is related in the Gospel (John 13, 26). Before that

time the Lord had not given the least intimation of what

was passing in the heart of Judas. This forbearance

was yet more wonderful in the most blessed Mary, who,

though the Mother of Christ and a mere Creature, saw

his perfidious betrayal close at hand and about to cause

the death of her own Son, whom She loved so tenderly

as a Mother and as a Handmaid.

THE TRANSFIXION 363

380. O ignorance and folly of men ! How differently

do we behave, if we are slightly affronted, though we de

serve it so much! How unwillingly do we bear with the

weaknesses of others, though expecting all men to bear

with ours! How grudgingly we pardon an offense,

though daily and hourly asking the Lord to pardon us

our own! (Matth. 6, 12). How prompt and cruel are

we in making known the faults of our brethren, yet how

resentful and angry at any word of criticism against us!

None do we measure with the same measure with which

we desire to be measured, and we do not wish to be

judged by the same standard as we judge others (Matth.

7, 1, 2). All this is perversity and darkness, a breath

from the mouth of the hellish dragon, who wishes to

stem the flow of the most precious virtue of charity and

disconcert the order of human and divine reasonableness ;

for God is charity, and he who exercises it perfectly is in

God and God is in him. Lucifer is wrath and vengeance

and all those that yield to these vices follow the devil,

who is leading them on to all the vices opposed to the

good of the neighbor. Though the beauty of this virtue

of charity has always filled my heart with the desire of

possessing it fully, nevertheless I see, as in a clear

mirror, that I have arrived not even at a beginning of

this most noble virtue as exhibited in these wonders of

divine charity toward the most ungrateful disciple Judas.

381. In order that I may not incur the blame of con

cealing what belongs to this chapter, I will mention

another cause of the ruin of Judas. When the number

of the Apostles and disciples increased, the Lord resolved

to appoint one of them to take charge of the alms re

ceived ; thus to supply the common needs and pay the

imperial tribute. Jesus made known his wishes to all

indiscriminately without addressing Himself to any one

364 CITY OF GOD

in particular. While all of them feared such an office

and sought to evade it, Judas immediately strove to

obtain it. In order to secure his appointment he humbled

himself so far as to ask saint John to speak to the most

holy Queen and induce Her to arrange this matter for

him with her Son. Saint John yielded to the request

of Judas and spoke to the most prudent Mother; but

She, knowing that this request of Judas was not proper

or just, but proceeded from ambition and avarice, did

not wish to propose it to the divine Master. The same

kind of influence Judas sought to bring into play through

saint Peter and other Apostles, without success; for the

Lord in his goodness wished to stay his ruin, and justify

his cause before men, if He should grant the request.

At this resistance the heart of Judas, already corrupted

by avarice, instead of quietly yielding, was consumed

with unhappy desires for the office, and the devil stirred

up thoughts of vilest ambition, such as would have been

most improper and wicked in any one, and hence were

much more culpable in Judas, who had been a disciple

in the school of highest perfection and who had lived in

the light of the Sun of justice and its beautiful Moon,

Mary ! Neither in the day of abundant graces, when the

Sun Jesus lighted his paths, nor in the night of temp

tations, when the Moon Mary disclosed to him the wiles

of the poisonous serpent, could he have failed to become

aware of the wickedness of such suggestions. But, as he

flew from the light and cast himself willfully into dark

ness, he presumed to ask most holy Mary in a direct

manner for her influence in obtaining his object. He

had lost all fear and hid his avarice in the cloak of

virtue. Approaching Her, he said that he had made his

request through saint Peter and saint John, with the sole

desire of diligently serving Her and his divine Master,

THE TRANSFIXION 365

since not all would attend to the duties of this office

with proper solicitude; and that, therefore, he now asked

Her to obtain the position of purser for him from the

Master.

382. The great Lady answered him with extreme

gentleness: "Consider well, my dearest, what thou

askest, and examine whether thy intentions are up

right. Ponder well, whether it is good for thee to seek

that which all thy brethren fear and refuse to accept,

unless they shall be compelled thereto by the command

of their Lord and Master. He loves thee more than

thou lovest thyself and without doubt knows what will

benefit thee; resign thyself to his most holy will, change

thy purpose, and seek to grow rich in humility and pov

erty. Rise from thy fall, for I will extend thee a helpful

hand and my Son will show thee his loving mercy." Who

would not have yielded to these sweetest words and

such urgent advice, spoken by such an amiable and

heavenly Creature as was most holy Mary? But this

fierce and adamantine heart was not softened or moved.

On the contrary, the soul of Judas was offended and

enraged against the heavenly Lady for thus offering him

a means of escaping from his dreadful danger. Bound

less ambition and avarice roused his fury against Her

who seemed to hinder him in his projects and he con

sidered her well-meant advice as an insult. But the

most meek and loving Dove pretended not to notice his

obstinacy and said nothing more to him at that time.

383. After his interview with most holy Mary, the

avarice of Judas would not allow him to rest; casting

off all modesty and natural shame (and the least spark

of faith), Judas now resolved to apply to his divine

Master and Savior. Clothing himself like a consummate

hypocrite in the garb of a sheep, he went to his Master

3-25

366 CITY OF GOD

and said: "Master, I wish to fulfill thy wishes and

serve Thee as thy purser and as the dispenser of the

alms which we receive; I will look to the interests of

the poor, fulfilling thy doctrine that we should do unto

others as we wish them to do unto us, and I will see to

it that alms are distributed according to thy wishes,

more profitably and orderly than hitherto." Such reason

ing the specious hypocrite boldly used, committing many

enormous sins in one and the same act. For, first of all

he lied, concealing his real intention. Then, being am

bitious of an honor which he did not merit, he neither

wished to appear in his true light nor did he wish to be

in truth what he merely pretended to be. He also

blamed his brethren, discrediting them and praising him

self : the ordinary course of those who are ambitious.

What is especially to be noticed in this conduct of Judas

is that he showed his loss of infused faith; for he at

tempted to deceive Christ, his divine Master, by wear

ing the cloak of hypocrisy. For, if he had firmly believed

that Christ was true God and man who penetrated into

the secrets of the heart, he could not have hoped to be

able to deceive Him; nor would he have attempted such

double dealing, not only because he would have known

Christ as the omniscient God, but because he would not

have hoped to impose upon the infused and beatific

science of Christ as man. Hence Judas had lost belief

in all these prerogatives, and to his other sins, added the

sin of heresy.

384. What the Apostle says in his first letter to

Timothy was literally fulfilled in this treacherous dis

ciple : "For they that will become rich, fall into tempta

tion and into the snares of the devil and into many un

profitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into

destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is

THE TRANSFIXION 367

the root of all evils; which some coveting have erred

from the faith and have entangled themselves in many

sorrows" (I Tim. 6,9). All this happened to the perfid

ious and avaricious disciple, and his avarice was so much

the more blamable, since he had the striking and admir

able example of Christ and of his Mother and that of the

whole apostolic company before his eyes; and they all

accepted only very moderate alms. But the wicked dis

ciple imagined that on account of the great miracles of

his Master and the multitudes which followed and

gathered around Him, the alms and offerings would in

crease and he could have at his disposal large amounts.

Seeing that his expectations were not realized, he was

much disappointed, as he plainly showed on the occa

sion of the anointing of the Lord by Mary Magdalen

(Mark 14, 4) ; his desire of gathering in alms induced

him to estimate the value of the ointment at three

hundred pence and to complain that this money was

withheld from the poor, among whom it could have been

distributed. He was moved to say this because he

regretted very much not to lay hands on it himself;

little cared he for the poor. He was highly incensed

against the Mother of mercy because She distributed

such generous alms among the poor; against the Lord

because He would not accept large donations, and

against the Apostles and disciples because they did not

ask for them. All this vexed him sorely because his

purse was thereby kept empty. Some months before the

Death of the Savior, he began frequently to avoid the

other Apostles, absenting himself from their company

and from the Redeemer; for the intercourse with them

was getting irksome to him, and he joined them only in

order to collect what donations he could. During these

368 CITY OF GOD

times of absence the demon inspired him with the

thought of breaking entirely with the Master and of

delivering Him over to the Jews.

385. But let us return to the answer given to Judas

by the Master, whom he asked to make him purser. We

shall see how hidden and terrible are the judgments of

the Most High. The Redeemer wished to ward off from

him the danger which lay behind this request and which

threatened the avaricious Apostle with final perdition.

In order that Judas might not excuse himself under plea

of ignorance, the Lord answered him : "Dost thou know,

Judas, what thou seekest and what thou askest ? Be not

so cruel toward thy own self as to solicit and seek to

obtain the poison and the arms which may cause thy

death." Judas replied : "Master I desire to serve Thee

by employing my strength in the service of thy faithful

followers and in this way I can do it better than in any

other; for I offer to fulfill all the duties of this office

without fail." This daring presumption of Judas in

seeking and coveting danger, justified the cause of God

in allowing him to enter and perish in the danger thus

sought and coveted. He resisted the light (Eccli. 15,

17), and hardened himself against it, water and fire

was shown him, life and death : he stretched forth his

hand and chose perdition. The justice of the Most High

was made clear and his mercy was exalted, since He had

so often presented Himself at the portals of this hardened

heart, whence He had been spurned in order to make way

for the devil. Later on I will mention further particu

lars of the wickedness of Judas as a warning to mortals;

for I do not wish to prolong this chapter too much and

they will fit better into other parts of this history. What

mortal, subject to sin, will not be seized with great

fear when he thus sees one of his fellow-beings, who

THE TRANSFIXION 369

belonged to the school of Christ and of his blessed

Mother, who was reared in the light of his doctrines

and miracles, who performed the same wonders as the

rest, in so short a time pass from the condition of an

Apostle into that of a demon? transform himself from

an innocent sheep into a ravening and bloodthirsty wolf?

From venial sins, Judas proceeded to most grievous

and horrible crimes. He yielded himself to the devil,

who already suspected that Christ was God and who

began to exercise the wrath he had against the Lord

upon this unfortunate disciple strayed from the little

flock. If then the fury of Lucifer is just as great and

much greater after having learnt to his cost that Christ

is the true God and Redeemer, what hope has the soul

of escaping this inhuman and cruel enemy who so ve

hemently and furiously seeks our eternal damnation ?

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE MOST HOLY

QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

386. My daughter, all that thou hast written in this

chapter is a most important warning for all those that

live in the flesh and in the imminent danger of losing

their eternal happiness. It should teach them to seek my

most kind and powerful intercession and to fear the

judgments of the Most High; for in this lies an effica

cious means of salvation and of meriting higher reward

for the Lord. I wish to remind thee once more, that

among the secrets revealed to the beloved John at the last

Supper, was also this, that he had become the beloved

disciple of Christ on account of his love toward me, and

that Judas fell because he despised the mercy and kind

ness which I had shown him. At that time, also, the

Evangelist understood other great mysteries communi

cated and wrought in me ; that I should take part in the

370 CITY OF GOD

labor and suffering of the Passion and that he should

have special charge of me. My dearest, the purity which

I require of thee must be greater than that of an angel;

and if thou strive after it thou wilt become my dearest

child, as saint John, and a most beloved and favored

spouse of my Son and Lord. His example and the ruin

of Judas should continually serve thee as a stimulus

and as a warning, to seek only after my love and to be

sincerely thankful for the love shown thee without thy

merit.

387. I wish thee also to understand another secret

hidden from the world : namely, that one of the most

vile and horrible sins before the Lord is the little esteem

in which the just and the friends of the Church are

held, and especially the little veneration shown toward

me, who was chosen for his Mother and am the cause of

the happiness of all men. If the failure to love the

enemies and contempt of them is so displeasing to the

Lord and to the saints of heaven (Matth. 18, 35), how

shall He bear with such treatment of his most dear

friends, whom He holds as the apple of his eye and in

deepest affection? (Ps. 33, 16). This counsel thou canst

never bear in mind too much in this mortal life, and it

is one of the signs of reprobation to hold in abhorrence

the just. Beware of this danger and judge no one,

especially those that reprehend and admonish thee

(Matth. 7, 1). Do not allow thyself to desire worldly

things, least of all any office of superiority; a desire

which allures the human sense, disturbs the judgment

and obscures reason. Envy no one his honor, nor the

possession of any earthly thing, nor seek to obtain from

the Lord anything else than his love and friendship.

Man is full of blindest inclinations, and if he does not

restrain them, he will begin to ask for that which will

THE TRANSFIXION 371

cause his eternal perdition. Sometimes the Lord, accord

ing to hidden judgments, grants these petitions in punish

ment for wicked desires and of other sins, as it happened

with Judas. Such souls receive earthly reward for any

good actions which they may have performed during

mortal life. If thou wilt look into the deceptive course

of the lovers of this world, thou wilt see that they con

sider themselves fortunate, whenever they attain all that

they desire according to their earthly inclinations. This

only hastens their greater misfortune; for they, having

received their reward, cannot expect any in the eternal

life. But the just, who despise the world and meet with

many adversities, are withdrawn and shielded from

danger, because the Lord denies them the temporal

goods, which they desire and ask for. In order that

thou mayest not fall into such danger, I exhort and com

mand thee never to hanker after nor to seek earthly

possession. Separate thyself from all; preserve thy will

free and independent; never desire for anything beyond

what is God s pleasure, for He will assume charge of all

those that resign themselves to his divine Providence.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRIST IS TRANSFIGURED ON MOUNT TABOR IN THE

PRESENCE OF HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER; THEY GO

FROM GALILEE TO JERUSALEM PREPARATORY TO THE

PASSION ; AND THE SAVIOR IS ANOINTED BY MAGDALEN

IN BETHANY.

388. Our Redeemer and Master Jesus had already

consumed more than two years and a half in preaching

and performing wonders, and He was approaching the

time predestined by the eternal wisdom for satisfying

divine justice, for redeeming the human race through

his Passion and Death and thus to return to his eternal

Father. Since all his works were ordered with the

highest wisdom for our instruction and salvation, the

Lord resolved to prepare and strengthen some of his

Apostles for the scandal of his Passion by manifesting

to them beforehand in its glory that same body, which

He was so soon to exhibit in the disfigurement of the

Cross. Thus would they be reassured by the thought,

that they had seen it transfigured in glory before they

looked upon it disfigured by his sufferings. This he had

promised a short time before in the presence of all, al

though not to all, but only to some of his disciples, as

is recorded by saint Matthew (Matth. 16, 28). For his

Transfiguration He selected a high mountain in the center

of Galilee, two leagues east of Nazareth and called

Mount Tabor. Ascending to its highest summit with

the three Apostles, Peter, and the two brothers James

and John, He was transfigured before them (Matth. 17,

1; Mark 9, 1; Luke 9, 28).\* The three Evangelists

372

THE TRANSFIXION 373

tell us that besides these Apostles, were present also the

two prophets, Moses and Elias, discoursing with Jesus

about his Passion, and that, while He was thus trans

figured, a voice resounded from heaven in the name

of the eternal Father, saying : "This is my beloved Son,

in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him."

389. The Evangelists do not say that most holy Mary

was present at this Transfiguration, nor do they say

that She was not there; this did not fall within their

purpose, and they did not think it proper to speak of the

hidden miracle by which She was enabled to be there.

For the purpose of recording this event here, I was

given to understand that at the same time in which some

of the holy angels were commissioned to bring the soul

of Moses and Elias from their abode, others of

her own guard carried the heavenly Lady to Mount

Tabor, in order to witness the Transfiguration of her

divine Son, for without a doubt She really witnessed it.

There was no necessity of confirming the most holy

Mother in her faith, as was necessary with the Apos

tles ; for She was invincibly confirmed in faith. But the

Lord had many different objects in view at his Trans

figuration; and there were special reasons for his not

wishing to celebrate this great event without the pres

ence of his most holy Mother. What for the Apostles

was a gratuitous favor, was a duty in regard to the

Queen and Mother, since She was his Companion and

Co-partner in the works of the Redemption even to the

foot of the Cross. It was proper to fortify Her by this

favor against the torments in store for her most holy

soul. Moreover, She was to remain on earth as the

Teacher of the holy Church, therefore it was proper

that She should be one of the eye-witnesses of this great

mystery. To grant such a favor was easily within the

374 CITY OF GOD

power of her divine Son, since He was wont to lay

open to Her all the workings of his divine soul. Nor

would the love of such a Son permit Him to withhold

that favor from his Mother; for He otherwise omitted

nothing whereby He could in any way demonstrate his

tender love for Her, and this certainly would be a token

of highest esteem for her excellence and dignity. I

have, therefore, been informed that for these reasons

and for many others not necessary to mention here, most

holy Mary assisted at the Transfiguration of her divine

Son, our Redeemer.

390. During this Transfiguration the blessed Mary

saw not only the humanity of Christ our Lord trans

formed in glory, but She was favored by an intuitive

and clear vision of the Divinity itself; for the Lord

wished Her to partake of the privilege implied in being

present at this event in a more abundant and distin

guished manner than the Apostles. Moreover, there

was a great difference between her insight and that of

the Apostles into the glory of the transfigured body;

for the Apostles, as saint Luke tells us (Luke 9, 32),

were not only asleep when Jesus at the beginning of this

mysterious glorification retired to pray, but they were

also seized with such fear at the voice resounding from

heaven, that they fell with their faces to the earth and

rose not until the Lord himself spoke to them and raised

them up (Matth. 17, 6). The blessed Mother, on the

other hand, witnessed and heard all these events without

undue excitement ; for, besides being accustomed to such

great manifestations of glory, She was divinely forti

fied and enlightened for looking upon the Divinity.

Hence She was enabled to look fixedly upon the glori

fied body, without experiencing the terror and weak

ness of the senses which overtook the Apostles. The

THE TRANSFIXION 375

most blessed Mother had already on other occasions

seen the body of her divine Son glorified, as was re

lated in other parts of this history (Nos. 695, 851) ; but

on this occasion She looked upon Him with much greater

enlightenment and with a mind much more alert to

all the wonders therein hidden. Hence, also, the effects

caused in Her by this vision were such that She was

totally renewed and inflamed by this communication

with the Divinity. As long as She lived She never

lost the impression caused by the sight of such glory

manifested in the humanity of Christ. The memory of

it greatly consoled Her in the absence of her divine

Son, whenever his glorious presence was not otherwise

felt by Her, as we shall see in the third part of this

history. Yet on the other hand the memory of this

glorious Transfiguration of Christ also made Her feel

so much the more deeply the maltreatment experienced

by Christ in his Passion and Death.

391. But no human ingenuity can suffice fully to de

scribe the effects of this glorious vision of her Son on

her most holy soul. With inmost gratitude and deepest

penetration She began to ponder upon what She had

seen and heard; exalted praise of the omnipotent God

welled forth from her lips, when She considered how

her eyes had seen refulgent in glory that same bodily

substance, which had been formed of her blood, carried

in her womb and nursed at her breast; how She had

with her own ears heard the voice of the eternal Father

acknowledge her Son as his own and appoint Him as

the Teacher of all the human race. With her holy

angels She composed new canticles to celebrate an

event so full of festive joy for her soul and for the

most sacred humanity of her Son. I will not expatiate

upon this mystery, nor discuss in what the Transfigura-

376 CITY OF GOD

tion of the body of Jesus really consisted. It is enough

to know that his countenance began to shine like the sun

and his garments became whiter than the snow (Matth.

17, 2). This outward splendor was merely the effect

of the glory of his Divinity always united to his beauti

fied soul. At his Incarnation, the glory which would

naturally have been communicated permanently to his

sacred body, was miraculously suspended for the time

of his natural life: now, this suspension of his divine

glory ceased and the body, for a short time, was allowed

to share the glory of his soul. This is the splendor

which became visible to those who were present. Im

mediately after the miraculous suspense, the divine glory

was again confined only to his soul. As his soul was

always in the beatified state, so also his body, according

to the common order, should have continually shared in

this glory, and therefore this transient glorification of his

body was likewise a miracle.

392. After the Transfiguration the most blessed

Mother was brought back to her house in Nazareth;

her divine Son descended the mountain and im

mediately came to visit her in order to take final leave

of his parental province and set out for Jerusalem.

There, on the following Pasch, which was to be for

Him the last upon earth, He was to enter upon his

Passion. Having spent only a few days at Nazareth,

He departed with his Mother, his disciples and Apostles

and some of the holy women, traveling about through

Galilee and Samaria before entering Judea and Jerusa

lem. The Evangelist saint Luke writes of this journey

where he says, that He set his face toward Jerusalem

(Luke 9, 51); for He journeyed to Jerusalem with a

joyous countenance and full of desire to enter upon his

sufferings, in order thereby, according to his own most

THE TRANSFIXION 377

ardent and generous desire, to sacrifice Himself for the

human race. He was not to return to Galilee, where

He had wrought so many miracles. Knowing this at

his departure from Nazareth, He glorified his eternal

Father and, in the name of his sacred humanity, gave

thanks for having, in that house and neighborhood, re

ceived the human form and existence which He was now

to deliver over to suffering and death. Of the prayers

of Christ our Lord on this occasion I will record as far

as I can the following one :

393. "My eternal Father, in compliance with thy will

I gladly haste to satisfy thy justice by suffering even

unto death. Thus shall I reconcile to Thee all the chil

dren of Adam, paying their debts and opening to them

the gates of heaven which have been closed against them.

I shall seek those who have turned away and lost them

selves, so that they may be restored by the force of my

love. I shall find and gather together the lost of the house

of Jacob (Is. 56, 8), raise up the fallen, enrich the poor,

refresh the thirsty, cast down the haughty and exalt the

humble. I wish to vanquish hell and enhance the glories

of the triumph over Lucifer (I John 3, 8), and over the

vices which he has sown into the world. I wish to

raise up the standard of the Cross, beneath which vir

tue, and all those that put themselves under its protec

tion, are to fight their battles. I wish to satiate my

heart with insults and affronts, which are so estimable

in thy eyes. I wish to humiliate Myself even to death

at the hands of my enemies, in order that our chosen

friends may be consoled in their tribulations and that

they may be honored by high rewards, whenever they

choose to humiliate themselves in suffering the same

persecutions. O beloved Cross! When shalt thou re

ceive Me in thy arms ? O sweet ignominies and affronts !

378 CITY OF GOD

When shalt thou bear Me on to overcome death through

the sufferings of my entirely guiltless flesh? Ye pains,

affronts, ignominies, scourges, thorns, torments, death,

come to Me, who wish to embrace you, yield yourselves

to my welcome, since I well understand your value. If

the world abhors you, I long for you. If the world,

in its ignorance, despises you, I, who am truth and wis

dom, love and embrace you. Come then to Me, for

in welcoming you as man, I exalt you as the true God

and am ready to efface the touch of sin from you and

from all that will embrace you. Come to Me, ye pains,

and disappoint Me not; heed not my Omnipotence, for

I shall permit you to exert your full force upon my

humanity. You shall not be rejected and abhorred by

Me as you are by mortals. The deceitful fascination of

the children of Adam in vainly judging the poor and the

afflicted of this world as unhappy, shall now disappear;

for if they see their true God, their Creator, Master

and Father, suffering horrible insults, scourgings, the

ignominious torment and destitution of the Cross, they

will understand their error and esteem it as an honor

to follow their crucified God."

394. These are some of the sentiments which I have

been made to perceive in the heart of the Master of

life, our Savior. The sufferings of his Death on the

Cross show (as my words cannot express), how great

was the love with which He sought and underwent

them. Notwithstanding all this, our hearts are weighed

down by sin entangled in vanities (Ps. 4, 3). Though

we have life and truth before our eyes, we are neverthe

less carried away by our pride and repelled by humility,

ravished by what is pleasurable and full of abhorrence

for what is painful. O lamentable error! To labor

much in order to avoid laboring a little, to exhaust our-

THE TRANSFIXION 379

selves entirely, merely in order to avoid a small incon

venience, to foolishly resolve on suffering eternal shame

and confusion, just in order to evade a slight dishonor,

or in order not to forego one hour of vain and apparent

honor! Who that claims the use of his reason, can say

that he loves himself by following such a course? No

mortal enemy of his can ever do him a greater harm

than he does himself by doing what is displeasing to

God. We hold those as our enemies who flatter and

entertain us while they have treason in their hearts;

and we would call those foolish who would allow

themselves to be betrayed by an insignificant pleasure and

delight. If we judge right in this, as we really do, what

shall we say of the judgment of those who are devotees

of the world? Who has intoxicated them? Who has

thus deprived them of their reason? O how great is the

number of fools!

395. Most holy Mary alone of all the children of

Adam adjusted her whole life according to the will and

conduct of her Son, without departing in the least from

the closest imitation of his life and fulfillment of his

doctrine. She was that most prudent Creature, full of

knowledge and wisdom, who could make up for our

ignorance and foolishness and gain for us eternal truth

in the midst of our darkness. This happened also on

the occasion of which I have spoken, for the heavenly

Lady, being the mirror of her Son s soul, saw all the

affection and love actuating his interior. Since this

was also the guide of her activity, She entirely con

formed to them and with Him addressed her prayers

to the eternal Father as follows : "Most High God and

Father of mercies, I confess thy infinite and immutable

essence. Eternally do I praise and exalt Thee, for in

this place, after Thou hadst created me, Thou hast

380 CITY OF GOD

deigned to glorify the power of thy arm by raising me

to the dignity of Mother of thy Onlybegotten and mag

nified the outflowing of thy ancient mercies with me,

thy humble slave, and because thy and my Onlybegotten

in the flesh which He assumed from my substance, has

condescended to retain me in his most delightful com

pany for thirty-three years, permitting me to enjoy his

graces, his teachings and his guidance for the enlighten

ment of the soul of thy handmaid. Today, my Lord

and eternal Father, I leave my country and I joyfully

follow my Son and Master in order to be present at the

sacrifice of his life and of his human existence for man

kind. There is no sorrow like unto my sorrow at see

ing the Lamb, which taketh away the sins of the world,

delivered over to bloodthirsty wolves; at seeing that

One subjected to suffering, torment, and death, who is

the living image and figure of thy substance (Heb. 1, 3) ;

who is engendered of Thee from all eternity, and equal

to Thee through all the ages; at seeing that One sub

jected to insult and death of the Cross, whom I have

given life in my womb, and at seeing the beauty of that

countenance obscured by filth and wounds, which is the

joy of my eyes and the delight of all the angels. O

would it were possible, that I receive the pains and sor

rows which await Him, and that I might suffer death in

order to save his life ! Accept, heavenly Father, the sac

rifice of my sorrowing affection, which I offer in union

with Him, in order that thy holy will and pleasure may

be fulfilled. O how quickly flee the days and hours,

which shall end in the night of my sorrow and bitterness !

It will be a fortunate day for the children of men, but

a night of affliction for my sorrow-laden heart, so soon

to be deprived of its illuminating Sun. O children of

Adam, so deeply lost in error and so forgetful of your-

THE TRANSFIXION 381

selves ! Awake at last from your heavy slumber and

recognize the weight of your sins in the devastation they

are about to cause in your God and Creator! See their

dire effects in my mortal sorrow and bitterness of my

soul ! Begin at last to take heed of the damage wrought

by sin!"

396. I cannot worthily express all the thoughts and

affections of the Mistress of the world in this her de

parture from Nazareth, her prayers and petitions to the

eternal Father, her most sweet and sorrowful conversa

tions with her divine Son, the greatness of her grief and

the vastness of her merits. For, on account of the con

flict between the love of a true Mother, by which She

naturally desired to preserve Him from the terrible tor

ments, and the conformity of her will with that of Jesus

and of his eternal Father, her heart was pierced by the

sword of sorrow, prophesied by Simeon (Luke 2, 35).

In her affliction She complained to her divine Son in

words of deepest prudence and wisdom, yet also of

sweetest sorrow, that She should be unable to prevent

his sufferings, or at least die with Him. These sor

rows of the Mother of God exceeded the sufferings of

all the martyrs who have died or will die for love of

God to the end of the world. In such a state of mind

and affection the Sovereigns of the world pursued their

way from Nazareth toward Jerusalem through Galilee,

which the Savior was not to revisit in this life. As the

end of his labors for the salvation of men drew to a

close, his miraculous works increased in number, and, as

the sacred writers of the Gospels relate, they became

especially numerous in the last months intervening be

tween his departure from Galilee and the day of his

entrance into Jerusalem. Until that day, after having

celebrated the feast or the Pasch of the Tabernacles, the

382 CITY OF GOD

Savior traveled about and labored in Judea, awaiting

the appointed time, when, according to his will, He was

to offer Himself in sacrifice.

397. During these journeyings his most holy Mother

accompanied Him, except on a few occasions, when They

separated in order to attend to the welfare of souls in

different localities. On such errands saint John was

deputed to accompany Her and administer to her wants.

From that time on saint John received most exalted en

lightenments in regard to the great mysteries and hidden

sacraments of the most pure Virgin and Mother. Among

the wonders wrought by the most prudent and powerful

Queen at this time, were those of most exalted flights

of charity in procuring by her petitions and prayers the

justification of souls; for also She, just as her most

holy Son, now began to be more lavish in her blessed

benefactions to mankind, bringing many to the path

of eternal life, curing the sick, visiting the poor and the

afflicted, the destitute and the infirm, assisting the dying

with her own hands, especially those that were most

forsaken and afflicted with greater suffering and pain.

Of all these works in his special office of attending upon

the blessed Mother, the beloved disciple was a witness.

But as the force of her love, at the prospect of seeing

her divine Son leave Her to return to his eternal Father,

had now increased a thousandfold, the blessed Mother

had such a yearning desire of being in his presence, that

She often swooned away in ecstasies of love and affec

tion, whenever She was obliged to endure his absence for

any length of time. The divine Master on his part, who

as God knew all that passed in the heart of his beloved

Mother, faithfully corresponded with her feelings.

Speaking to Her those words, which were now fulfilled

to the letter : "Thou hast wounded my heart, my Sister,

THE TRANSFIXION 383

my Spouse, thou hast wounded my heart with one of

thy eyes ;" for, as if wounded and overcome by his own

love, He was drawn again to her presence. According

to what has been made known to me, Christ our Lord, in

as far as He was man, could not ever have left the pres

ence of his Mother, if He had given full sway to his

love for a Mother who loved Him so much. Hence it

was natural that He should hasten to relieve and con

sole Her by his presence and intercourse. The beauty

of the most pure soul of his Mother refreshed Him and

made all his labors and hardships appear sweet to Him.

He looked upon Her as the choice and only fruit of all

his exertions, and the mere presence of Mary repaid

Him for all his bodily sufferings.

398. Our Savior continued to perform his miracles in

Judea. Among them was also the resurrection of

Lazarus in Bethany, whither He had been called by the

two sisters, Martha and Mary. As this miracle took

place so near to Jerusalem, the report of it was soon

spread throughout the city. The priests and Pharisees,

being irritated by this miracle, held a council (John 9,

17), in which they resolved upon the death of the Re

deemer and commanded all those that had any knowl

edge of his whereabouts, to make it known; for after

the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus retired to the town

of Ephrem, until the proximate feast of the Pasch should

arrive. As the time of celebrating it by his own Death

drew nigh, He showed Himself more openly with his

twelve disciples, the Apostles; and He told them pri

vately that they should now get themselves ready to go

to Jerusalem, where the Son of man, He himself, should

be delivered over to the chiefs of the Pharisees, bound

as a prisoner, scourged, and ill-treated unto the death

of the Cross (Matth. 20, 18). In the meanwhile the

384 CITY OF GOD

priests kept a sharp watch to find Him among those

who came to celebrate the Pasch. Six days previous He

again visited Bethania, where He had called Lazarus to

life, and where He was entertained by the two sisters.

They arranged a banquet for the Lord and his Mother,

and for all of his company. Among those that were at

table with Them, was also Lazarus, whom He had

brought back to life a few days before.

399. While our Savior, according to the custom of the

Jews, was reclining at this banquet, Magdalen, filled with

divine enlightening and most magnanimous sentiments,

entered the banquet hall. As an outward token of her

ardent love toward Christ, her divine Master, she

anointed his feet and poured out over them and over his

head an alabaster vase filled with a most fragrant and

precious liquor, composed of spikenard and other

aromatic ingredients. Then She wiped his feet with her

hair just as she had done at another occasion in the

house of the pharisee, related by saint Luke (Luke 7,

38). Although the other three Evangelists in relating

this second anointment, apparently differ as to some of the

circumstances ; yet I was not informed that they refer to

different anointments or speak of more than one woman,

but that they refer only to Magdalen, who was moved to

these acts of devotion by inspiration of the Holy Ghost

and by her own burning love toward Christ the Re

deemer. The fragrance of this ointment filled the whole

house, for She had procured a large quantity, and of the

most precious kind; nor did she stint it in any way, but

broke the vessel in token of her generous love and de

votion to the Master. The avaricious Apostle Judas,

who wished to get possession of the ointment in order

to sell it for the increase of his purse, began to criticize

this mysterious anointing of his Master and also to stir

THE TRANSFIXION 385

up some of the other Apostles under pretext of poverty

and of charity toward the poor (John 12, 5). These,

he said, are defrauded of their alms by this lavish ex

pense and waste of so costly an article. At the same

time all this had been ordained by divine Providence,

while Judas acted only as an avaricious and disgruntled

hypocrite.

400. The Teacher of truth and life defended Mag

dalen against this accusation of inconsiderate prodi

gality. He commanded Judas and the others not to

molest her (Matth. 24, 10), since her action had not been

vain or without good cause. He told them the poor would

not on that account lose the alms, which they should

receive each day, whereas such opportunity of showing

honor to his Person would not be afforded every day;

that the anointment had been performed by this generous

and loving woman through enlightenment of the holy

Spirit and as a prophetic announcement of the mysteri

ous unction the Savior was so soon to undergo in the tor

ments of his Death and at his burial. Nothing of all

this the perfidious disciple took to heart, but on the

contrary he conceived a furious wrath against his Master

on account of his thus justifying the action of Mag

dalen. Lucifer, profiting by the disposition of this de

praved heart, incited it to new upwellings of avarice,

anger, and mortal hate against the Author of life.

Thenceforth Judas schemed to bring about his Death,

and resolved, as soon as he should come to Jerusalem, to

betray Him to the pharisees and help to discredit Him

in their eyes, as he afterwards did. After this banquet

he betook himself secretly to Jerusalem and told them

that his Master taught new laws contrary to those of

Moses and of the emperors; that He was addicted to

banqueting, a friend of depraved and profane com-

386 CITY OF GOD

pany; that He had admitted as his followers many of a

wicked life, both men and women; that without delay

they should see such conduct stopped lest ruin overtake

them when it was too late to secure relief. As the

pharisees were already of the same mind and were insti

gated by the same prince of darkness, they gladly ac

cepted his advice. With them therefore he agreed on a

price for the betrayal of Christ our Savior.

401. All the thoughts of Judas lay open not only to

his divine Master, but also to his most blessed Mother.

The Lord said nothing to Judas in regard to this matter,

but continued to deal with him as a kind Father and to

enlighten his obstinate heart. His Mother, however, re

doubled her admonitions and gentle endeavors to with

draw Judas from the precipice; and on this night of the

banquet, which was that preceding Palm Sunday, She

called him aside to speak to him alone, representing to

him amid a flood of tears and with most sweet and per

suasive words, what terrible danger threatened him if he

should persist in his intentions. She asked him to give

up his designs and, if he was offended at his Master, to

take vengeance on Her. For this was a smaller evil,

since She was only a creature, while He was his Master

and the true God. In order to satisfy the avarice of this

insatiable heart, She offered him some presents, which

She had received for this purpose from Magdalen. But

none of her efforts were of any avail with this hardened

soul, nor did any of these sweet and living words soften

this more than adamantine heart. On the contrary, as

he did not find an answer and the exhortations of the

most prudent Queen were so urgent, he lashed himself

into greater fury, showing his wrath by a sullen silence.

He was, however, not ashamed to take what she offered

to him; for his avarice was equal to his perfidy. The

THE TRANSFIXION 387

most blessed Mary then left him and betook Herself to

her Son and Master. Full of the bitterest sorrow She

cast Herself weeping at his feet. In her exquisite grief

and compassion She wished to bring some consolation

to the sacred humanity of Christ her Son, whom She

now beheld suffering of the sorrow unto death, which

He afterwards manifested in the presence of his disciples

(Matth. 24, 38). Of this kind were the sufferings of

Christ for the sins of those men who were to misapply

his Passion and Death, as I shall relate farther on.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

402. My daughter, thou daily understandest and de-

clarest more fully in this history, that my Son, and I

with Him, in our ardent love, embraced the way of the

Cross and suffering for the whole course of our natural

life. Thou receivest this knowledge more fully and near

est this doctrine repeated so often, that thou must strive

to follow it closely in thy daily life. This duty grows

upon thee from the day in which my Son has chosen

thee as bride, and will oblige thee more and more, so

that thou canst not evade the duty of embracing and

loving hardships to such an extent, that thy greatest pain

shall be to be without them. Renew every day this de

sire in thy heart, for I wish thee to be very proficient in

this science, which the world abhors so much. But re

member, at the same time, that God does not afflict crea

tures merely for the sake of afflicting them, but in order

to make them more capable and worthy of receiving the

blessings and treasures prepared for them beyond all

human conception (I Cor. 2, 9). For the confirmation

of this truth and as a pledge of his promises He per

mitted the Transfiguration of Himself on Mount Tabor

388 CITY OF GOD

in my presence and that of some of the disciples. In

the prayer which He then made to the eternal Father and

which I alone knew of and understood, He humbled

Himself before his Father confessing Him (as He al

ways did in his prayers) as the true God, infinite in his

perfections and attributes, and besought Him to concede

a share of the glory of his own body to all those, who

in their mortal bodies should afflict themselves and bear

hardships for his love and in imitation of his own, and

to grant this glory in the measure proper to each after

the resurrection of their bodies in the final judgment.

Since the eternal Father granted this request, there is

a certain contract between God and man. The glory

which was given to the body of Christ the Savior was a

pledge of that which Christ was to secure for all his fol

lowers. Great, therefore, is the value of the momentary

hardships endured in the privation of earthly delights

and in mortifications and sufferings for the sake of

Christ (II Cor. 4, 17).

403. On account of the merits of this prayer of Christ,

this glory which belongs to Him is due to the creatures in

justice, since men are the members of Christ s mystical

body (II Tim. 4, 8). Yet this union with Christ, by

which man merits such reward, must be brought about

by grace and by imitation of the same suffering which

merited it for the Redeemer. If all bodily suffering

merits its crown, a much greater crown is merited by the

patient endurance and pardoning of injuries, and by

returning good for them, as We acted in regard to

Judas; for the Lord did not only not take away from

Judas his apostolate, or show Himself in any way ir

ritated against him, but He patiently bore with him to

the very end, when Judas had already made himself

altogether unfit for any graces by giving himself up to

THE TRANSFIXION 389

the devil. During our mortal life the Lord is very slow

in visiting his vengeance upon us; but He will make up

for his slowness in the severity of his punishments after

death. If then God suffers and bears with us so much,

how much must one poor worm of the earth bear with

another, since both are of the same nature and condition?

By the light of this truth and by the charity of the Lord

and Spouse, thou must regulate the amount of thy pa

tience and long suffering with others and the zeal for

their salvation. I do not say that thou must therefore

permit what is against the honor of God, for that would

not be a true zeal for the good of thy neighbor; but

thou must love them as creatures of the Lord and abhor

sin; thou must suffer and ignore whatever is done

against thee, always seeking, as far as in thee lies, the

salvation of others. Do not lose heart, when thou seest

no immediate fruit, but continue to present to the eternal

Father the merits of my most holy Son, my intercession

and that of the saints and angels; for as God is charity

and as they are the ministers of the Most High, they will

gladly make use of this same charity for the benefit of

those who are still on their pilgrimage.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SACRAMENTAL MYSTERY PRECEDING THE TRIUMPHAL

ENTRY OF CHRIST INTO JERUSALEM ; HOW HE

ENTERED INTO THE CITY AND HOW HE WAS RECEIVED

BY ITS INHABITANTS.

404. Among the works of God, which, because they

are performed outside of his own essence, are called

ad extra, the greatest was that of assuming flesh, suffer

ing and dying for the salvation of men. This sacra

ment human wisdom could never have perceived, if its

Author had not demonstrated it to us by so many proofs

and testimonies. In spite of all these proofs, many who

are wise only according to the flesh, find it difficult to

believe that which is so much to their own salvation and

benefit. Others, though they believe it, do not believe all

the circumstances connected with it. But the true Catho

lics believe and confess this sacrament such as the holy

Church proposes it to them. By explicitly professing our

faith in the mysteries thus revealed, we at the same time

explicitly profess our faith in the mysteries, which are

thereunder included, and which it was not necessary to

define more particularly, because they are not especially

necessary for salvation. Some of these God reserves for

their proper time, while others will be reserved for the

last day, when all of them shall be manifest to men

in the presence of the just Judge (I Cor. 4, 5). The in

tention of the Lord in commanding me to write this

history (as I have often said and yet oftener under

stood), was to manifest many of these hidden mysteries

without admixture of mere human opinion and con-

390

THE TRANSFIXION 391

jecture; many of them I have therefore recorded, just

as they have been made known to me, while I am aware

at the same time, that many other wonderful and vener

able sacraments will still remain hidden. Toward these

mysteries I wish to prepare the pious faith of Catholics.

To believe what is accessory, should not be hard for those

who believe the principal mysteries of the Catholic faith.

For upon these principal mysteries of the faith rests

all that I have written and all that I shall yet write,

especially in regard to the Passion of our Redeemer.

405. On the sabbath following the anointment of

Magdalen in Bethany and after the banquet mentioned

in the preceding chapter, our divine Master sought re

tirement. The most blessed Mother, leaving Judas to

his hard-heartedness, betook Herself to her divine Son,

and, as was her wont, joined Him in his prayers and

sacred exercises. Our Lord was now about to enter

upon the greatest conflict in his career as man, having, as

David says (Ps. 18, 7), reached out from highest heaven

in order to engage in this battle and by it to vanquish

the demon, sin and death. As this most Obedient of

sons accepted freely the torments of the Cross, He now,

at their approach, offered Himself anew to the eternal

Father. Prostrate, with his face touching the ground,

He confessed Him and adored Him, with deepest resigna

tion beseeching Him to accept the insults and pains,

ignominies and death of the Cross for his own glory and

for the rescue of the human race. The most blessed

Mother had retired to one side of the oratory, accom

panying her beloved Son and Lord in his prayers and

shedding with Him tears of inmost affection.

406. On this occasion, before the hour of midnight,

the eternal Father and the Holy Ghost appeared in visible

form with multitudes of angels as witnesses. The eter-

392 CITY OF GOD

nal Father accepted the sacrifice of Christ, his most

blessed Son, and formally consented that the rigor of

his justice should be satisfied upon his Person for the

pardon of the world. Then the eternal Father, address

ing the blessed Mother herself, said: "Mary, our

Daughter and Spouse, I desire that thou now again

ratify this sacrifice of thy Son, since I on my part am

willing to deliver Him up for the Redemption of man."

And the humble and sincerest Dove replied: "Behold,

O Lord, I am but dust and ashes, unworthy that thy

Onlybegotten and the Redeemer of the world should

also be my Son. But I hold myself entirely subject to

thy ineffable condescension, which has given Him being

in my womb, and I offer Him and myself entirely as a

sacrifice to thy divine pleasure, I beseech Thee, O Lord

God and Father, to permit me to suffer with thy and my

Son." The eternal Father received this subjection of

most holy Mary as a pleasing sacrifice. Raising up from

the ground both the Son and the Mother, He said : "This

is the fruit of the blessed earth, which I have desired."

Immediately thereupon He exalted the Humanity of

Christ to the throne of his Majesty, and placed Him on

his right hand equal in authority and pre-eminence with

Himself.

407. The blessed Mother remained in the place where

She was, but entirely transformed and exalted in won

derful splendor and jubilee of soul. On seeing her

Onlybegotten seated at the right hand of the eternal

Father, She pronounced those first words of the one

hundred and ninth psalm, in which David had mysteri

ously prophesied this event: "The Lord said unto my

Lord: Sit thou at my right hand." Expatiating upon

these words the heavenly Queen composed a mysterious

hymn of praise in honor of the eternal Father and of

THE TRANSFIXION 393

the incarnate Word. When She had finished, the Father

added all the rest of the psalm, decreeing then and there

by his immutable will, that all the import of these mys

terious and profound words should now be executed and

fulfilled. It is very difficult for me to mould into the

inadequate words which are within my power, the intel

ligence which was given me of this high mystery; but I

will make an attempt to do so, as far as the Lord will

empower me. Let something of this hidden and wonder

ful sacrament, and of that which most holy Mary and

the angelic spirits understood, be felt also by ourselves.

408. The eternal Father then proceeded and said:

"Until I make thy enemies thy footstool." Since Thou

hast humiliated Thyself in accordance with my eternal

will, Thou hast merited that Thou be exalted above all

the creatures ; and that, in the very nature of man which

Thou hast received from Me, Thou reign at my right

hand forever and ever without end. For all eternity I

place thy enemies under thy feet and dominion, subject

to thy humanity as their God and Redeemer; so that

those who will not obey Thee or acknowledge Thee, shall

see thy humanity exalted and glorified. Although I do

not put this decree into full execution until the Redemp

tion of man shall have been accomplished, I desire that

even now my courtiers shall witness what both the

demons and mankind shall see afterwards; I place Thee

in possession at my right hand at the very moment in

which Thou hast humiliated Thyself to the ignominious

death of the Cross. If I now deliver Thee over to thy

enemies and to the workings of their malice, it is done

for my glory and good pleasure, and in order that after

wards they may be placed beneath thy feet to their entire

confusion. "The Lord will send forth the sceptre of thy

power out of Sion : rule Thou in the midst of thy

394 CITY OF GOD

enemies." For I, the omnipotent God, who am He that

is truly and indeed, control and send forth the invincible

sceptre of my power; so that afterwards, when Thou

shalt have triumphed over death by completing the Re

demption of the human race, they may recognize Thee

as their Savior, their Guide, their Leader and as the

Lord of all; but I desire even now, before Thou sufferest

death, and at the very moment when men are plotting thy

ruin in their contempt of Thee, that Thou triumph in a

wonderful manner. I ordain that Thou triumph both

over their malice and over their death; and that by the

very power of thy virtue they be compelled to honor

Thee, confess Thee, adore and worship Thee of their

own free will; that the demons be vanquished and con

founded by the strength of thy own virtue, that the

Prophets and the Just, who are waiting for Thee in

limbo, together with my heavenly spirits, recognize thy

wonderful exaltation according to my good will and

pleasure. "With Thee is the principality in the day of thy

strength : in the brightness of the saints : from the womb

before the day-star I begot Thee." On the day of this

thy strength and power, by which Thou triumphest over

thy enemies, I am in Thee and with Thee as the Begin

ning. From this Source, by the eternal fecundity of my

intellect, Thou didst issue forth before the light of grace

by which We decreed to manifest Ourselves to creatures,

and from this Beginning didst thou come forth, clothed

in the light of glory, by which the saints are rejoiced and

beatified. And also in as far as Thou art man, thy be

ginning is with Thee and Thou was engendered in the

day of thy virtue; for from the instant in which Thou

ha^t received human existence by temporal generation

from thy Mother, Thou didst possess the merit of the

works, which is with Thee now, and Thou didst deserve

THE TRANSFIXION 395

the glory and honor by which thy virtue is to crown

Thee on this day and in the days of my eternity. "The

Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent: Thou art a

priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech."

I, who am the Lord God Almighty, able to fulfill all my

promises, absolutely decree, as by an immutable oath, that

Thou be the Highpriest of the new Church and of the

evangelical law, according to the order of Melchisedech

of old ; for Thou shalt be the true Priest, who shall offer

the bread and wine prefigured by the oblation of Mel

chisedech (Gen. 14, 18). And I shall not regret this

decree ; for this oblation shall be pure and acceptable, and

a sacrifice of praise in my honor. "The Lord at thy

right hand hath broken kings in the day of his wrath."

This shalt Thou do by the works of thy humanity, as

sisted by the right hand of thy Divinity in the fullness of

its strength. By thy humanity, I who am one God with

Thee, shall crush the tyranny of the princes of darkness

and of this world, as well the apostate angels as also

wicked men, who will not acknowledge, serve and adore

Thee as their Lord and God. This chastisement I will

inflict at a time when neither Lucifer nor his followers

shall yet know Thee, and it shall be for them the day

of my wrath. Afterwards that day will also come for

those men who have not received Thee nor followed thy

holy law. All of them shall I crush and humiliate in

my just indignation. "He shall judge among nations,

He shall fill with ruins; He shall crush the heads in the

land of many." Having then justified my cause with all

the children of Adam, who have not profited of thy mercy

in graciously redeeming them from sin and from eternal

death, I, the Lord, shall judge according to my equity

and justice all the nations; and choosing the just from

the midst of the sinners and the reprobate, I shall fill

396 CITY OF GOD

up the ruined places of the apostate angels, who have

not preserved for themselves their habitations in the

reign of grace. At the same time I shall crush upon

earth the multitudes of those men who, by their own

obstinate and depraved will, persist in their pride. "He

shall drink of the torrent in the way : therefore He shall

lift up his head." Thy head shall be raised up by the

Lord God of vengeance himself, in order that thou

mayest judge the earth and justly deal with the proud.

As if Thou hadst drunk of the torrent of his wrath,

Thou shalt dip thy arrows in the blood of thy enemies

and, with the sword of his chastisement, Thou shalt con

found them in their expectation of happiness. Thus shall

thy head be lifted up and exalted above all thy enemies,

who are disobedient to the law and faithless to thy doc

trines and teachings. For this shall be thy just reward

for thy having drunk of the torrent of reproaches and

affronts even to the death of the Cross for their Re

demption.

409. Such and much deeper understanding was given

to most holy Mary concerning this mysterious psalm,

which the eternal Father repeated on this occasion. Al

though some of the verses are quoted as of another per

son, yet they all referred to Himself and to the incarnate

Word. The mysteries contained therein may be reduced

to two principal heads: threats against sinners, infidels,

and wicked Christians, because they do not acknowledge

the Redeemer of the world or observe his laws; and

promises of the eternal Father to his incarnate Son,

that He will glorify his name and exalt it in spite of and

above all his enemies. As if in pledge or advance pay

ment of the universal exaltation of Christ after his

Ascension, and especially at the final judgment, the

Father decreed that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should

THE TRANSFIXION 397

meet Him with great applause and honor at his entrance

into Jerusalem on the day following this mysterious

vision. Thereupon the Father and the Holy Ghost, with

the holy angels, that wonderingly had assisted at this

great sacrament, disappeared, while Christ and his

blessed Mother remained to spend the rest of that blessed

night in divine colloquies.

410. On the morning of the next day, which corres

ponds to our Palm Sunday, the Lord proceeded with his

disciples toward Jerusalem, being accompanied by many

angels, who sang hymns of praise at seeing Him so

enamored of men and so solicitous for their eternal sal

vation. Having walked more or less of two miles and

arrived in the village of Bethphage, He sent two dis

ciples to an influential man of that neighborhood. From

him they brought two beasts of burden, one of which had

not yet been used or ridden by any one. The Lord

progressed on his way to Jerusalem while they spread

some of their cloaks and other garments both upon

the ass and her colt. The Lord was to make use of

both of them according to the prophecies of Isaias (Is.

62, 11), and Zacharias (Zach. 9, 9), who had foretold

these particulars many ages before, in order that the

priests and scribes should not be able to allege ignorance

as an excuse. All the four Evangelists describe this

wonderful triumph of Christ and relate what was seen

by the bodily eyes of those present. As they proceeded

on their way the disciples, and with them all the people,

the infants as well as the grown persons, hailed Jesus as

the true Messias, the Son of David, the Savior of the

world and as their legitimate King. Some of them ex

claimed : "Peace be in heaven and glory in the highest :

blessed be He that cometh as the King in the name of

the Lord," others : "Hosanna to the Son of David : save

3-27

398 CITY OF GOD

us, Son of David : blessed be the kingdom which now has

arrived, the kingdom of our forefather David. \* Some

others lopped branches from palms and other trees in

sign of triumph and joy, and spread their garments upon

the ground to prepare a way for the triumphant Con

queror, Christ our Lord.

411. All these demonstrations of worship and admira

tion, which these men gave to the divine and incarnate

Word, were calculated to manifest the power of his

Divinity, especially at this time, when the priests and

pharisees were watching Him and seeking to put an end

to his life in that very city. For if they had not been

moved interiorly by a divine power, above and beyond

that of their admiration for the miracles wrought by

Him, it would have been impossible to draw such a

gathering. Many of them were heathens and his de

clared enemies, who nevertheless hailed Him as the true

Messias, Savior and King, and subjected themselves to

a poor, despised and persecuted Man, who came not in tri

umphal chariots, or in the prancing of steeds and osten

tation of riches, but without any show of arms or out

ward human power. Outwardly all this was wanting, as

He thus entered seated on a beast contemptible in the

sight of human vanity and pretension. The only signs

of his dignity were in his countenance, which showed

forth the gravity and serene majesty of his soul; while

all the rest fell far short and was opposed to what the

world is wont to applaud and celebrate. Hence the out

ward happenings of this day proclaimed his divine

power, which directly moved the hearts of men to ac

knowledge Him as their Christ and Redeemer.

412. In order that the promise of the eternal Father

might be entirely fulfilled, He not only moved the hearts

of men in the city of Jerusalem by his divine light, to

THE TRANSFIXION 399

acknowledge Him as Redeemer, but He caused his tri

umph to be felt among all creatures especially those who

were capable of reasoning (No. 408). For the entry

of Jesus into Jerusalem was announced by the archangel

Michael to the holy Fathers and Prophets in limbo; and

moreover, by a special vision, they were made to see

whatever happened on this occasion. From those cavern

ous abodes they acknowledged, confessed and adored

Christ, our Lord and Master, as their true God and as

the Redeemer of the world. They composed new hymns

of praise in honor of his admirable triumph over death,

sin, and hell. The divine influence was also active in the

hearts of many of those yet living in the world. For

those that had faith or knowledge of Christ our Lord,

not only in Palestine and its surroundings, but in Egypt

and in other countries, were moved to adore the Re

deemer in spirit; and this they did with unwonted joy,

caused in them by the divine visitation of grace, although

they did not expressly know the cause or the object of

this movement in their hearts. But it came to them not

without profit for their souls: for they were confirmed

in their faith and in their well-doing. In order that the

triumph of our Savior over death might be more glori

ous, the Most High ordained, that on that day death

should have no power over any of the mortals, so that,

although in the natural course many would have died,

not one of the human race died within those twenty- four

hours.

413. To this triumph over death was added the tri

umph over hell, which, though it was more hidden, was

even more glorious. For as soon as the people began

to proclaim and invoke Christ as their Savior and King

who came in the name of the Lord, the demons felt the

power of the right hand of God, and all of them, in

400 CITY OF GOD

whatever place they lurked throughout the world, were

hurled into the dark caverns of the infernal abyss. Dur

ing the short space of time in which Christ proceeded on

his triumphal march, not a demon remained upon the

earth, but all of them were trembling with wrath and

terror in the depths of hell. Hence they began to be

filled with a still greater dread, lest the Messias be al

ready in the world, and they immediately communicated

their suspicions to each other, as I shall relate in the next

chapter. The Savior proceeded on his triumphal way to

the gates of Jerusalem, while the angels, who witnessed

and followed his march, chanted new hymns of praise

and glory in wonderful harmony. Having entered the

city amid the jubilee of all its inhabitants, Jesus dis

mounted from the foal, and directed his divinely beauti

ful footsteps toward the temple, where He roused the

admiration of all the multitudes by the wonders, which,

according to the Evangelists, He wrought on that occa

sion (Matth. 21, 12; Luke 19, 45). Burning with zeal

for the house of his Father, He overthrew the tables

of those that bought and sold within the sacred precincts

and cast forth those who made it a place of business and

a den of thieves. Yet with the triumphal march the Lord

suspended also the divine influence, which had disposed

so well the hearts of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Al

though the just had been much benefited, and many

others had been justified, others returned to their vices

and imperfections, because they did not profit by the light

and inspiration sent to them from on high. Though so

many had hailed and acknowledged Christ our Savior

as King of Jerusalem, not one tendered Him hospitality

or received Him in his house (Mark 11, 11).

414. The Lord remained in the temple teaching and

preaching until nightfall. Wishing by his own example

THE TRANSFIXION 401

to confirm his teaching in regard to the veneration and

worship due to that place, He would not permit even a

glass of water to be brought to Him, and without hav

ing partaken either of this or any other refreshment, He

returned that evening to Bethany (Matth. 21; 17, 18),

whence He daily made his way to the city until the day

of his Passion. The heavenly Mother and Mistress, most

holy Mary, remained that day in Bethany, where from

her retirement She saw by a supernatural vision all that

happened in the wonderful triumph of her Son and

Master. She witnessed all the doings of the sovereign

spirits of heaven and of the mortals upon earth, and

what befell the demons in hell; and how in all this the

eternal Father merely fulfilled the promises, which He

had made to his incarnate Son in giving Him command

and power over all his enemies. She saw also all that

the Savior did on this occasion and in the temple. She

heard the heavenly Father s voice answering the prayer

of Christ, our Redeemer: "I have glorified, and will

glorify again." By these words He gave men to under

stand that besides the glory and triumph conceded to

the incarnate Word on that day and on other occasions,

as described in this history, He would glorify and exalt

Him after his Death, for such was the meaning of the

words of the eternal Father; in this sense also it was

understood and fully comprehended by the most blessed

Mother in wonderful exultation of her spirit.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY, THE MOST BLESSED

MOTHER, GAVE ME.

415. My daughter, thou hast partly described, and

hast understood much more concerning the mysterious

triumph of my most holy Son on his entrance into Jeru

salem and its preparations; but thou wilt understand

402 CITY OF GOD

much more of it, when thou shalt come face to face with

the Lord, for as pilgrims, mortals cannot penetrate into

such secrets. Nevertheless thou canst learn and under

stand enough from what thou hast written to perceive

how exalted are the judgments of the Lord and how far

removed from all the thoughts of men (Is. 55, 9). The

Most High looks into the hearts of men and at the

interior, where is hidden the beauty of the King s daugh

ter (Ps. 44, 14); while men look only at the exterior

and at what is perceived by the senses. On this account

the just and the chosen ones are highly esteemed by the

Lord in their humiliation and self-abasement; while the

proud are cast down and rejected by Him in their

self-sufficiency. This truth, my daughter, is understood

by few, and therefore the children of darkness know not

how to strive after any other honor or exaltation than

that of the world. Sad to s-ay, also the children of the

Church, although well knowing and confessing that this

worldly honor is vain and without substance, and that it

does not have any more stability than the flowers or

herbs of the field, do not live up to this knowledge. As

their conscience does not give them witness of faithful

co-operation with the light of grace and the practice of

virtue, they seek after the false and deceitful applause

and commendation of men ; whereas God alone can truly

honor and exalt those, who merit his regard. The world

ordinarily and fraudulently misjudges true merit, lavish

ing its honors upon those who least deserve it, or upon

those who know how to solicit and strive after it most

cunningly and inconsiderately.

416. Fly from this deceit, my daughter, and let the

praise of men make no impression upon thee; repel its

flatteries and compliments. Give to each the importance

and consideration due to it; for the children of the world

THE TRANSFIXION 403

are very much blinded in their judgments. None of the

mortals could ever merit the honor and applause of men

so much as my most holy Son; yet He readily yielded

it up and judged at its true worth that which the people

gave Him at his entrance into Jerusalem. He permitted it

merely in order that the divine power might be mani

fested and in order that his Passion might afterwards

be so much the more ignominious. He wished to teach

men, that no one should accept honors for their own

value, but in order that the higher end, that is the glory

of God and the exaltation of the Most High, might

thereby be advanced; that without this object in view

they are altogether vain and useless, void of profit or

advantage of any kind; for they can never procure the

true happiness of a creature capable of eternal glory.

Since I see thee desirous of knowing why I was not

present at this triumph of my most holy Son, I shall

fulfill thy desire, and I refer thee to what thou hast

often related in this history about the clear vision of

the interior of my Son, which was always present to

me. By this vision I was enabled to perceive, when and

why He wished me to absent myself from Him. On

such occasions I would throw myself at his feet, be

seeching Him to declare his will and pleasure in regard

to what I should do. Then the Lord would sometimes

give his orders plainly and in express commands; at

others He would leave it to my own discretion and

choice, permitting me to act according to my prudence

and divine enlightenment. This was the course He

pursued at the time, when He resolved to enter in tri

umph the gates of Jerusalem. He left it altogether to

my own judgment, whether I should accompany Him or

remain in Bethany. Thereupon I asked his permission

to absent myself from this mysterious event, begging

404 CITY OF GOD

Him to take me with Him to his Passion and Death.

I thought it more befitting and more pleasing in his eyes

to offer myself as participant in the ignominies and sor

rows of his Passion, than to share in the outward honor

given to Him by men. For, as I was his Mother, some

of this honor would certainly have devolved upon me,

if I had shown myself to those who were praising and

blessing Him. I knew that this triumph, beside its not

being desired by me, was ordained by the Lord for the

manifestation of his infinite power and Divinity, and

therefore in no wise pertaining to me; nor would the

honor, which they would have extended to me, augment

that which was due to Him as the Savior of the human

race. At the same time, in order that I might properly

rejoice in this mystery and duly glorify the Almighty

for these wonders, I was made to see by divine enlight

enment and especial vision all that thou has already

written concerning this event. This behavior should in

struct thee and teach thee to imitate me; follow thou

my humble footsteps, withdraw thy affections from all

that is earthly, lift thy aspirations on high, despising and

fleeing all human honors and in divine enlightenment

esteeming them as vanity of vanities and affliction of

spirit (Eccles. 1, 14).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEMONS MEET IN HELL TO DISCUSS THE TRIUMPH

OF CHRIST OUR LORD IN JERUSALEM; THE RESULTS

OF THIS CONFERENCE, AND MEASURES RESOLVED UPON

BY THE PRIESTS AND PHARISEES OF JERUSALEM.

417. All the mysteries connected with the triumph of

our Savior were great and admirable; but not the least

wonderful were the hidden effects of the divine power on

the hellish fiends, when, at the entrance of Jesus into

Jerusalem, they were cast into the infernal abysses. Two

entire days, from Sunday until Tuesday of that week, the

demons lay shattered by the right hand of the Almighty,

manifesting their furious torment to the damned souls

of those hellish caverns by their horrid and confused

howls of despair. The whole infernal dominion was

filled on that occasion with unwonted confusion and

pain. The prince of this darkness, Lucifer, more con

founded than all the rest, called to his presence all the

devilish hosts, and stationing himself on an eminence,

spoke to them as their chief.

418. "It cannot be otherwise than that this Man, who

thus persecutes us and destroys our influence, and who

thus crushes my power, is more than a Prophet. For

Moses, Elias and Eliseus and others of our enemies

among the ancients never vanquished us so completely, al

though they performed miracles; nor did they ever suc

ceed in hiding from me so many of their doings as thi s

One ; for especially of his interior works I can obtain little

information. How can a mere man perform such works

and manifest such supreme power over all creation, as

405

406 CITY OF GOD

are publicly ascribed to Him? Without any change or

inflation of mind He received the praise and glorification

for these works from the mouths of men. In celebrating

this triumphal entry into Jerusalem He has shown new

power over us and over all the world; for even now I

find my strength for visiting destruction upon Him and

blotting out his name from the land of the living vanish

ing away (Jer. 11, 19). In his present triumph not only

his own friends have extolled Him and proclaimed Him

as blessed, but even many of those who were subject to

me have done the same and have called Him the Messias

promised in their law ; He has drawn them all to venerate

and adore Him. This certainly seems to exceed mere

human power; and if He is no more than man, there

never was one who partook of the divine power in such

a degree, and He is doing and will do us great damage.

Since the time when we were cast from heaven we

have never experienced such ruinous defeat, nor have

I ever encountered such overwhelming power before

this man came into the world. If He should be the in

carnate Word (as we suspect) there is necessity for

thorough deliberation; for if we permit Him to live, He

will by his example and teaching draw after Him all

mankind. In my hate I have several times sought to bring

about his death; but without success. In his own coun

try, when I instigated his countrymen to cast Him from

the precipice, He contemptuously took his way through

the midst of those who were to execute the sentence

(Luke 4, 30). On another occasion He simply made

Himself invisible to the pharisees, whom I had incited to

stone Him."

419. "But now, with the help of his disciple and our

friend Judas, matters seem to promise better success. I

have so wrought upon the mind of Judas, that he is will-

THE TRANSFIXION 407

ing to sell and betray his Master to the pharisees, whom

I have likewise incited to furious envy. They are anxious

to inflict upon Him a most cruel death, and will no

doubt do so. They are only waiting for an occasion,

which I will try my utmost to procure for them; for

Judas and the priests and the pharisees are ready to do

anything I suggest. Nevertheless I see in this a great

danger, which demands our closest attention; for if this

Man is the Messias expected by his people, He will offer

his Death and all his sufferings for the Redemption of

men and thereby satisfy for their misdeeds and gain

infinite merits for all of them. He will open the heavens

and pave the way for mortals to the enjoyment of those

rewards of which God has deprived us. Such an issue,

if we do not prevent it, shall indeed be a terrible torment

for us. Moreover this Man will leave to the world a

new example of patience in suffering and show its merit

to all the rest of mankind; for He is most meek and

humble of heart, and was never seen impatient or ex

cited. These same virtues He will teach all men, which

even to think of is an abomination to me, since these are

the virtues most offensive to me and to all those who

follow my guidance or are imbued with my sentiments.

Hence it is necessary to unite on a course of action in

regard to persecuting this strange Man, Christ, and

that you let me know what is your understanding of this

matter."

420. Then the princes of darkness, lashing themselves

to incredible fury against our Redeemer held long con

sultations concerning this enterprise. They deeply de

plored their having been probably led into great error,

by plotting his death with so much cunning and malice.

They concluded henceforth to make use of redoubled

astuteness and cunning to repair the damage done and

408 CITY OF GOD

hinder his death, for they were by this time confirmed in

their suspicion, that He was the Messias, although they

did not reach altogether definite conclusions in this mat

ter. This suspicion was for Lucifer the cause of so much

anxiety and torment, that he approved of the new de

termination to hinder the death of the Savior and he

closed the meeting by saying: "Believe me, friends,

that if this Man is at the same time true God, He will,

by his Passion and Death, save all men; our dominion

will be overthrown and mortals will be raised to new

happiness and dominion over us. We were greatly mis

taken in seeking his death. Let us immediately proceed

to repair our damage."

421. With this intention Lucifer and all his ministers

betook themselves to the city and neighborhood of

Jerusalem, and there, as is referred in the Gospels, they

exerted their influence with Pilate and his wife to pre

vent the death of the Lord (Matth. 27, 19), and to

place other hindrances, which certainly arose, but are

not recorded in the Gospels. For before all others they

beset Judas with new suggestions, dissuading him from

his intended treachery toward his divine Master. When

by their suggestions they failed to change his mind or

make him desist from his purpose, Lucifer appeared to

him in visible and corporeal form and reasoned with

him not to procure the death of Christ through the help

of the pharisees. Being aware of the unbounded avarice

of the disciple, the demon offered him great riches, if he

would not deliver Him over to his enemies. Lucifer

now tried much more earnestly to deter Judas than

formerly to persuade him to sell his most meek and

divine Master.

422. But, O woe and misery of human aberration!

Judas had given himself up to the leading of satan s

THE TRANSFIXION 409

malice, but would not now follow his guidance away

from it! For the enemy could not call to aid the force

of divine grace, and vain are all other motives and in

fluences to prevent man from falling into sin and to make

him follow his true good. It was not impossible for

God to convert the heart of this perfidious disciple; but

the persuasion of the demon, who had torn him from

grace, was of no avail for this purpose. The Lord how

ever was justified in not supplying Judas with further

help, since he had cast himself into his exceeding great

obstinacy while in the very school of his divine Master,

continuing to resist his teaching, inspirations and vast

favors; disregarding, in dreadful presumption, the coun

sels of the Lord and those of his most holy Mother;

despising the living example of their lives, the intercourse

with them and with all the Apostles. Against all these

influences for good the impious disciple had hardened

himself with more than demoniacal obstinacy and beyond

all the malice of a man free to follow the right. Having

run such a course of evil, he arrived at a state, in

which his hatred of Christ and of his Mother made him

incapable of seeking any of their mercy, unworthy of

any light to recognize it and blind to all reason and natu

ral law, which could have made him hesitate to in

jure the guiltless Originator of so many blessings con

ferred upon him. This is indeed an astounding example

and dreadful warning for the foolish weakness and

malice of men, all of whom, if they have no fear, may

be drawn into similar dangers and destruction, and bring

upon themselves a like unhappy and lamentable ruin.

423. The demons, in despair of ever being able to

influence Judas, betook themselves to the pharisees. By

many suggestions and arguments they sought to dissuade

them from persecuting Christ, our Lord and Savior.

410 CITY OF GOD

But the same happened with them as with Judas and for

the same reasons; they could not be diverted from their

purpose nor from the wicked deed which they had

planned. Although some of the scribes, from motives

of human prudence, were led to reconsider whether what

they had resolved was advisable; yet, as they were not

assisted by divine grace, they were soon again overcome

by their hate and envy of the Savior. Hence resulted

the further efforts of Lucifer with the wife of Pilate and

with Pilate himself. The former, as is recorded in the

Gospels, they incited to womanly pity in order that she

might urge Pilate to beware of condemning that just

Man (Matth. 27, 19). By these suggestions and by

others, which they themselves made to Pilate, they in

duced him to resort to so many different shifts in order

to evade passing sentence of death upon the innocent

Savior. Of these I will speak in their proper place. As

Lucifer and his satellites were entirely discomfited in

their efforts, they again changed their purpose and in

their fury now resolved to induce the pharisees, the

executioners and their helpers, to heap the most atrocious

cruelties upon the Lord and, by the excess of torment, to

overcome the invincible patience of the Redeemer. All

these machinations of the devil the Lord permitted in

order that the high ends of the Redemption might be at

tained; yet He did not allow the executioners to execute

on the sacred person of the Savior some of the more

indecent atrocities, to which they were incited by the

demons.

424. On the Wednesday following his triumphal entry

into Jerusalem Christ our Lord remained at Bethany

without going to Jerusalem, and on this day the scribes

and pharisees met at the house of Caiphas in order to

plan the death of the Savior of the world (Mark 14, 1).

THE TRANSFIXION 411

The welcome, which the Redeemer had met with among

the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and which had followed

so shortly upon the resurrection of Lazarus and the

many other miracles of those days, had excited their

envy to the highest pitch. Besides they had already

resolved to take away his life under the false pretext

of the public good, as Caiphas had prophesied so con

trary to his intention (John 11, 49). The demon, who

saw them thus determined, suggested to some of them

not to execute their design on the feast of the Pasch

lest the people who venerated Christ as the Messias or a

great prophet, should cause a disturbance. Lucifer

sought by this delay an opportunity to hinder the death

of the Lord altogether. But as Judas was now entirely

in the clutches of his avarice and hate, and altogether

deprived of any saving grace, he came to the meeting of

the priests in great disturbance and terror of mind, and

began to treat with them concerning the betrayal of his

Master. He closed the deal by accepting thirty pieces

of silver, contenting himself with such a price for Him

who contained within Himself all the treasures of

heaven. In order not to lose their opportunity the priests

put up with the inconvenience of its being so near the

Pasch. All this was so disposed by divine Providence

directing these events.

425. At the same time happened what our Savior is

recorded as saying in saint Matthew : "You know that

after two days shall be the Pasch, and the Son of man

shall be delivered up to be crucified" (Matth. 26, 2).

Judas was not present when these words were uttered

by Christ ; but in the same furious spirit in which he had

sold Jesus, he returned to the Apostles and perfidiously

began to inquire of his companions, and even of the

Lord and his blessed Mother, whither They were to go

412 CITY OF GOD

from Bethany and what the Master was to do on the

following few days. All this was merely a treacherous

preparation of the perfidious disciple for the betrayal of

his Master to the chief pharisees. Like a consummate

hypocrite, Judas sought to palliate his treachery by a

pretended interest and anxiety. But both the Savior and

his most blessed Mother well understood the purpose of

feverish activity; for the holy angels immediately re

ported to Them his shameful contract to which he had

bound himself for thirty pieces of silver. On that very

day, when the traitor approached the great Lady to

ask Her, where the Lord proposed to partake of the

Pasch, She, with ineffable meekness, answered him:

"Who can penetrate, O Judas, the secret judgments of

the Most High?" Thenceforward She ceased to warn

him against committing the sin; but both She and the

Lord tolerated his presence, until he himself despaired

of remedy and eternal salvation. But this meekest Dove,

now certain of the irreparable ruin of Judas and of the

delivery of her most holy Son into the hands of his

enemies, broke out in tenderest lamentations in the pres

ence of the angels, for they were the only ones with

whom She could confer about her heartrending sorrow.

In their presence She permitted the sea of her sorrow

to overflow and gave expression of words of greatest

wisdom and affection. She excited the wonder of these

holy angels, who saw such an exalted and new perfection

practiced by a mere Creature in the midst of bitterest

sorrows and tribulations.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN.

426. My daughter, all that thou hast understood and

written in this chapter contains great and instructive

THE TRANSFIXION 413

mysteries for the mortals who will meditate upon it.

Prudently consider first of all, how my most holy Son,

though He, in order to foil and overcome the devil, and

in order to weaken his power against men, permitted him

to retain the nature and the penetrating knowledge of an

angel, nevertheless concealed many things from him,

as thou hast already recorded in other places. In with

holding them from his knowledge the Almighty foiled

the malice of this dragon in a manner most befitting his

sweet and irresistible Providence. On this account was

the hypostatic union of the divine and the human natures

concealed, and the devil was allowed to fall into so great

confusion regarding this mystery and to be driven into

so many cross purposes, until the Lord revealed himself

and convinced him of the divine glory of his soul even

from the moment of his conception. Likewise He per

mitted the devil to witness some of the miracles of his

most holy life, and concealed from him many others. In

a similar manner the Lord provides for the welfare of

souls in our days, for, although the devil can by his

natural powers inform himself of all the doings of each

soul, God will not permit it and hides much from him

for reasons of his own Providence. Afterwards He

allows him to find them out for his greater humiliation.

Thus after the work of the Redemption, He permitted

the demon for his greater torment and confusion to be

come aware of so many unheeded mysteries. The in

fernal dragon is continually lurking about to search into

the doings of souls, not only into the exterior, but into

the interior activities of each soul. But my most holy

Son exerts a most loving care over them ever since He

was born and died for them.

427. This blessed care would be much more general

and continual with many, if they themselves did not

414 CITY OF GOD

make themselves unworthy by delivering themselves over

to the enemy and listening to his deceits and his mali

cious and cunning advice. Just as the virtuous and the

friends of God gradually become instruments in the

hands of the Lord and resign themselves entirely to his

divine disposition, so that He alone governs and directs

them and does not allow them to be moved by other

agencies; so, in like manner, many of the reprobate and

of those who are forgetful of their Creator and Re

deemer and who deliver themselves over to the devil

by repeated sins, are moved and drawn into all kinds of

wickedness and are mere tools of his depraved malice.

An example of this we have in the perfidious disciple and

in the murderous pharisees persecuting their Redeemer.

None of the mortals are blameless in this respect : for,

just as Judas and the priests by the use of their own free

will, refused to follow the good advice of the demon

and desist from persecuting Christ our Savior, so they

could much more easily have refused to join him in

persecuting Christ, when they were first tempted. For

then they were assisted by grace, if only they wished to

use it, while afterwards they were assisted only by their

own free choice and led by their bad habits. That they

were in the second instance deprived of grace and help

of the Holy Ghost, was only just, because they had

given themselves up and subjected themselves to the

demon. They had made up their minds to follow him in

all his malice and allow themselves to be governed en

tirely by his perversity, without ever considering the

goodness and power of their Creator.

428. Hence you will understand that this infernal

serpent can have no power to lead anyone toward the

good, but very much toward leading those souls into

sin, who are neglectful in issuing from their evil state.

THE TRANSFIXION 415

Truly I say to thee, my daughter, that if mortals would

thoroughly understand this danger, they would be

struck with great terror; for there is no created power,

which can prevent a soul that has once yielded to sin

from casting itself from abyss to abyss. Since the sin

of Adam, the weight of human nature, burdened with the

concupiscible and irascible passions, is drawn toward sin

as the stone toward its center. Joined to this tendency

are the bad habits and customs, the power of satan over

those who have sinned, and his unceasing tyranny. Who

is there, that is so much an enemy of his own welfare

as to despise these dangers? The Almighty alone can

free him and to his right hand is reserved the remedy.

In spite of all this mortals live as secure and forgetful of

their ruin as if each one had it in his own power to

prevent and repair it at his pleasure. Though many

know and openly confess that they cannot rise from their

own ruin without the help of God; yet they allow this

consciousness to become a mere habit and a vague senti

ment and instead of lovingly seeking his aid, they offend

and irritate God, expecting Him to wait upon them with

his grace until they are tired of sinning or until they

are unable to continue their abominable wickedness and

ingratitude.

429. Do thou fear, my dearest, this dreadful clanger

and beware of the first sin, for after the first sin thou

wilt be still less able to resist the second, and thou in-

creasest the power of the devil over thee. Remember

that thy treasure is most valuable and the vase, in which

thou carriest it, fragile: by one fall thou canst lose it

all (II Cor. 4, 7). Great is the cunning and sagacity

which the serpent uses against thee, and thy insight is

but small. Therefore thou must collect thy senses and

close them to all outward things; thou must withdraw

416 CITY OF GOD

thy interior within the wall of protection and refuge

raised for thee by the Almighty, whence thou canst repel

all the inhuman assaults of thy enemies. To excite this

fear in thee, it will be sufficient to consider the punish

ment of Judas which has been made clear to thy under

standing. In regard to thy imitation of my behavior in

other matters : how thou shouldst act toward those who

hate and persecute thee, how thou shouldst love them

and bear with them in charity and patience, and how

thou shouldst pray for them to the Lord with true zeal

for their salvation, as I have done for the traitor Judas :

in all this I have before this often exhorted thee. I

desire that thou excel and distinguish thyself therein,

and that thou instruct thy religious and all those with

whom thou dealest in this manner of acting. For in

view of the patience and meekness of my most holy

Son and my own example, the wicked and all mortals

shall be covered with unutterable confusion because they

have not pardoned each other with fraternal charity.

The sins of hate and vengeance shall be punished with

greater severity than other sins on the judgment day;

and in this life these vices will soonest drive away the

infinite mercy of God and cause eternal punishment of

men, unless they amend in sorrow. Those that are kind

and sweet toward their enemies and persecutors, and

who forget injuries, resemble on that account more par

ticularly the incarnate Word: for Christ always went

about seeking to pardon and to load with blessings those

who were in sin. By imitating the charity and the meek

ness of the Lamb, the soul disposes itself to receive and

maintain that noble spirit of charity and love of God

and the neighbor, which makes it apt for all the influences

of divine grace and benevolence.

CHAPTER IX.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR PARTS FROM HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER

IN BETHANY IN ORDER TO ENTER UPON HIS SUFFER

INGS ON THE THURSDAY OF HIS LAST SUPPER; THE

GREAT LADY ASKS TO PARTAKE OF HOLY COMMUNION

WITH THE REST, AND AFTERWARDS FOLLOWS WITH

MAGDALEN AND OTHER HOLY WOMEN.

430. Let us now proceed in our history and return to

our Savior in Bethany, whither, after his triumphal entry

into Jerusalem, He had returned with his Apostles. In

the last chapter we anticipated the course of events in re

lating what was undertaken by the demons before the

betrayal of Christ and what resulted from the infernal

consultation, the treachery of Judas and the council of

the pharisees. We will now take up the thread of events

in Bethany, where the great Queen attended upon and

served her divine Son during the three days intervening

between the Palm Sunday and Maundy Thursday. All

this time, except what was consumed on Monday and

Tuesday in going to Jerusalem and teaching in the

temple, the Author of life spent with his blessed Mother;

for on Wednesday He did not go to Jerusalem, as I have

already said. On these last journeys He instructed his

disciples more clearly and fully concerning the mysteries

of his Passion and of human Redemption. Nevertheless,

although they listened to the teachings and forewarnings

of their God and Master, each one was affected thereby

only in so far as his disposition allowed and according to

the motives and sentiments of his heart. They were

417

418 CITY OF GOD

always tardy in their response and in the weakness they

fell short of their protestations of zealous love, as the

events afterwards showed and as we shall see later on.

431. But to the most blessed Mother our Savior, dur

ing the day immediately preceding his Passion, com

municated such exalted sacraments and mysteries of the

Redemption and of the new law of grace, that many

of them will remain hidden until they shall be revealed

in the beatific vision. Of those which I have understood

I can say very little : but into the heart of the great

Queen her Son deposited all that David calls uncertain

and hidden of his divine wisdom (Ps. 50, 8). Namely

the greater part of the secrets of his works ad extra;

such as our salvation, the glorification of the predestined

and the consequent exaltation of his holy name. The

Lord instructed Mary in all that She was to do during

his Passion and Death and enlightened Her anew with

divine light. In all these conferences her most holy

Son spoke to Her with a new and kingly reserve, such as

was in harmony with the greatness of the matter treated

of ; for now the tenderness and caresses of a Son and

Spouse had entirely ceased. But as the natural love of

the sweetest Mother and the burning charity of her

purest soul had now reached a degree above all com

prehension of the human mind, and as the conversation

and intercourse with her divine Son was now drawing

to a close, no created tongue can describe the tender and

mournful affections of that purest of hearts and the sighs

of her inmost soul. She was as the mysterious turtle

dove, that already began to feel the approach of that

solitude, which the company of no creature in heaven or

on earth could ever relieve or compensate.

432. Thursday, the eve of the Passion and Death of

the Savior, had arrived ; at earliest dawn the Lord called

THE TRANSFIXION 419

to Him his most beloved Mother and She, hastening to

prostrate Herself at his feet, responded; "Speak, my

Lord and Master, for thy servant heareth." Raising

Her up from the ground, He spoke to Her in words of

soothing and tenderest love: "My Mother, the hour

decreed by the eternal wisdom of my Father for ac

complishing the salvation and restoration of the human

race and imposed upon Me by his most holy and accept

able will, has now arrived ; it is proper that now We sub

ject to Him our own will, as We have so often offered

to do. Give Me thy permission to enter upon my suffer

ing and death, and, as my true Mother, consent that I

deliver Myself over to my enemies in obedience to my

eternal Father. In this manner do Thou also willingly

co-operate with Me in this work of eternal salvation,

since I have received from Thee in thy virginal womb

the form of a suffering and mortal man in which I am

to redeem the world and satisfy the divine justice. Just

as thou, of thy own free will, didst consent to my Incar

nation, so I now desire thee to give consent also to my

passion and death of the Cross. To sacrifice Me now

of thy own free will to the decree of my eternal

Father, this shall be the return which I ask of thee for

having made thee my Mother; for He has sent Me in

order that by the sufferings of my flesh I might recover

the lost sheep of his house, the children of Adam"

(Matth. 18, 11).

433. These and other words of the Savior, spoken

on that occasion, pierced the most loving heart of Mary

and cast Her into the throes of a sorrow greater than

She had ever endured before. For now had arrived

that dreadful hour, whence there was no issue for her

pains, neither in an appeal to the swift-fleeting time nor

to any other tribunal against the inevitable decree of the

420 CITY OF GOD

eternal Father, that had fixed the term of her beloved

Son s life. When now the most prudent Mother looked

upon Him as her God, infinite in his attributes and per

fections, and as the true Godman in hypostatical union

with the person of the Word, and beheld Him sanctified

and ineffably exalted by this union with the Godhead:

She remembered the obedience He had shown Her as

his Mother during so many years and the blessings He

had conferred upon Her during his long intercourse with

Her; She realized that soon She was to be deprived of

this blessed intercourse and of the beauty of his counte

nance, of the vivifying sweetness of his words; that She

was not only to lose all this at once, but moreover that

She was to deliver Him over into the hands of such

wicked enemies, to ignominies and torments and to the

bloody sacrifice of a death on the Cross. How deeply

must all these considerations and circumstances, now so

clearly before Her mind, have penetrated into her tender

and loving heart and filled it with a sorrow unmeasur-

able ! But with the magnanimity of a Queen, vanquish

ing this invincible pain, She prostrated Herself at the

feet of Her divine Son and Master, and, in deepest

reverence, kissing his feet, answered :

434. "Lord and highest God, Author of all that has

being, though Thou art the Son of my womb, I am thy

handmaid; the condescension of thy ineffable love alone

has raised me from the dust to the dignity of being thy

Mother. It is altogether becoming that I, vile wormlet,

acknowledge and thank thy most liberal clemency by

obeying the will of the eternal Father and thy own. I

offer myself and resign myself to his divine pleasure,

in order that in Me, just as in Thee, my Son and Lord,

his eternal and adorable will be fulfilled. The greatest

sacrifice which I can make, is that I shall not be able to

THE TRANSFIXION 421

die with Thee, and that our lot should not be inverted;

for to suffer in imitation of Thee and in thy company

would be a great relief for my pains, and all torments

would be sweet, if undergone in union with thine. That

Thou shouldst endure all these torments for the sal

vation of mankind shall be my only relief in my pains.

Receive, O my God, this sacrifice of my desire to

die with Thee, and of my still continuing to live, while

thou, the most innocent Lamb and figure of the substance

of thy eternal Father undergoes! Death (Heb. 1, 3).

Receive also the agonies of my sorrow to see the in

human cruelty of thy enemies executed on thy exalted

Person because of the wickedness of the human kind.

O ye heavens and elements and all creatures within them,

ye sovereign spirits, ye Patriarchs and Prophets, assist

me to deplore the death of my Beloved, who gave you

being, and bewail with me the misery of men, who are

the cause of this Death, and who, failing to profit of

such great blessings, shall lose that eternal life so dearly

bought! O unhappy you, that are foreknown as

doomed! and O ye happy predestined, who shall wash

your stoles in the blood of the Lamb (Apoc. 7, 14), you,

who knew how to profit by this blessed sacrifice, praise

ye the Lord Almighty ! O my Son and infinite delight of

my soul, give fortitude and strength to thy afflicted

Mother; admit Her as thy disciple and companion, in

order that she may participate in thy Passion and Cross,

and in order that the eternal Father may receive the

sacrifice of thy Mother in union with thine."

435. With these and other expressions of her senti

ments, which I cannot all record in words, the Queen

of heaven answered her most holy Son, and offered

Herself as a companion and a coadjutrix in his Passion.

Thereupon, thoroughly instructed and prepared by

422 CITY OF GOD

divine light for all the mysteries to be wrought by the

Master of life towards accomplishing all his great ends,

the most pure Mother, having the Lord s permission,

added another request in the following words: "Be

loved of my soul and light of my eyes, my Son, I am

not worthy to ask Thee what I desire from my inmost

soul; but Thou, O Lord, art the life of my hope, and in

this my trust I beseech Thee, if such be thy pleasure, to

make me a participant in the ineffable Sacrament of thy

body and blood. Thou hast resolved to institute it as a

pledge of thy glory and I desire in receiving Thee sacra-

mentally in my heart to share the effects of this new and

admirable Sacrament. Well do I know, O Lord, that no

creature can ever merit such an exquisite blessing, which

Thou hast resolved to set above all the works of thy

magnificence; and in order to induce Thee to confer it

upon me, I have nothing else to offer except thy own self

and all thy infinite merits. If by perpetuating these

merits through the same humanity which thou hast re

ceived from my womb, creates for me a certain right,

let this right consist not so much in giving Thyself to

me in this Sacrament, as in making me thine by this new

possession, which restores to me thy sweetest companion

ship. All my desires and exertions I have devoted to the

worthy reception of this holy Communion from the mo

ment in which Thou gavest me knowledge of it and ever

since it was thy fixed decree to remain in the holy Church

under the species of consecrated bread and wine. Do

Thou then, my Lord and God, return to thy first habita

tion which Thou didst find in thy beloved Mother and

thy slave, whom Thou hast prepared for thy reception

by exempting Her from the common touch of sin. Then

shall I receive within me the humanity, which I have

communicated to Thee from my own blood, and thus

THE TRANSFIXION 423

shall we be united in a renewed and close embrace. This

prospect enkindles my heart with most ardent love, and

may I never be separated from Thee, who art the infinite

Good and the Love of my soul."

436. Many words of incomparable love and reverence

were spoken on that occasion by the Queen and Lady;

for in the wonderful love of her heart She sought of

her most holy Son the privilege of participating in his

sacred body and blood. The Lord on his part answered

Her with great tenderness and granted her request,

promising Her the blessing of holy Communion at the

hour of its institution. The purest Mother, in deepest

devotion, broke out in heroic acts of humility, thank

fulness, reverence and living faith in expectation of the

desired participation in the most holy Eucharist. Then

happened what I shall relate next.

437. The Savior commanded the holy angels of her

guard to attend upon Her in visible forms and to serve

and console Her in her sorrow and loneliness. With this

command they complied most faithfully. The Lord

also expressed his desire, that after his departure for Jeru

salem with his disciples, She should follow shortly after

in company with the holy women who had accompanied

them from Galilee, and that She should instruct and en

courage them, in order that they might not be scandal

ized in seeing Him suffer the great ignominies and tor

ments of the frightful death of the Cross. At the close

of this interview the Son of the eternal Father gave

his blessing to his beloved Mother and prepared to

enter upon that last journey, which led to his suffering

and Death. The sorrow which filled the hearts of

both Son and Mother passes all conception of man; for

it was proportioned to the love They had for each other,

and this love again was proportioned to the dignity and

424 CITY OF GOD

greatness of the persons concerned. But, although we

can so little describe it in words, we are not free to

exempt ourselves from meditating upon it and following

Them on their sorrowful journey with the deepest com

passion. For if we neglect to do so as far as our

strength and ability permits, we cannot avoid being

reprehended as hard-hearted ingrates.

438. Our Savior, having thus parted with his most

beloved Mother and sorrowful Spouse, and taking along

with Him all his Apostles, a little before midday of the

Thursday of the last Supper, departed on his last jour

ney from Bethany to Jerusalem. At the very outset He

raised his eyes to the eternal Father, and, confessing

Him in words of thankfulness and praise, again pro

fessed his most ardent love and most lovingly and

obediently offered to suffer and die for the Redemption

of the human race. This prayer and sacrifice of our

Savior and Master sprang from such ineffable love and

ardor of his spirit, that it cannot be described; all that

I say of it seems to me rather a gainsaying of the truth

and of what I desire to say. "Eternal Father and my

God," said Christ our Lord, "in compliance with thy

holy will I now go to suffer and die for the liberation of

men, my brethren and the creatures of thy hands. I

deliver Myself up for their salvation and to gather those

who have been scattered and divided by the sin of Adam

(John 11, 52). I go to prepare the treasures, by which

the creatures, made according to thy image and likeness,

are to be enriched and adorned, so that they may be re

stored to the height of thy friendship and to eternal

happiness, and in order that thy holy name may be

known and exalted among all creatures. As far as

shall depend upon Thee and Me, no soul shall be deprived

THE TRANSFIXION 425

of a salvation most abundant; and thy inviolate equity

shall stand justified in all those who despise this copious

Redemption."

439. Then following the Author of life, the most

blessed Mother, in the company of Magdalen and of the

other holy women who had attended upon the Savior

and had followed Him from Galilee, took leave of

Bethany. In the same manner as the divine Master

instructed his Apostles and prepared them for his

Passion, in order that they might not desert Him on ac

count of the ignominies they were to witness and on

account of the temptations of satan: so also the Queen

and Mistress of all virtues exerted Herself in preparing

the devoted band of her disciples for witnessing coura

geously the Death and the frightful scourging and tor

ments of their divine Master. Although, on account

of their feminine nature, these women naturally were

more frail and weak than the Apostles, yet some of

them showed much more fortitude in adhering to the

teachings and in relying on the previous exhortations

and examples of their great Mistress and Queen. Among

them all, as the Evangelists relate, Mary Magdalen dis

tinguished herself, for she was entirely consumed in the

flames of her love; and even naturally She was of a

magnanimous, courageous and energetic disposition,

well educated and full of a noble fidelity. She, before

all others of the apostolate, had taken it upon herself

to accompany the Mother of Jesus and attend upon Her

during the entire Passion and this her resolve she ful

filled as the most faithful friend of the blessed Mother.

440. The most holy Mother imitated and joined the

Savior in his prayer and the offering which He made at

this time; for, as I have often said, in the clear mirror

furnished Her by the divine light, She was made to see

426 CITY OF GOD

all the works of her divine Son in order that She might

imitate them as closely as possible. The holy angels of

her guard, obeying the orders of the Savior, accompanied

and attended upon Her in visible forms. With these

heavenly spirits She conversed about the great sacra

ment of the Passion, which was yet hidden to her com

panions and to all the human creatures. They well per

ceived and deeply pondered the measureless conflagration

of love in the pure and candid heart of the Mother and

the force with which they saw Her drawn after the sweet

ointments of mutual love between Her and Christ, her

Son, Spouse and Redeemer. They presented to the eter

nal Father the sacrifice of praise and expiation offered to

Him by his first-born and only Daughter among the

creatures. Since all the mortals were insensible of this

benefit and of the indebtedness, in which they were

placed by the love of Christ their Lord and his blessed

Mother, She ordered the holy angels to give benediction,

glory and honor to the Father, the Son and the Holy

Ghost; and they eagerly fulfilled the wish of their great

Princess and Queen.

441. Words fail me, and worthy sentiments of sorrow,

for expressing properly what I understood on this occa

sion concerning the amazement of the holy angels, when

on the one hand they saw the incarnate Word and his

most holy Mother wending their way in most ardent love

of mankind toward the accomplishment of man s Re

demption, and on the other beheld the vileness, ingrati

tude, and hard-hearted neglect of men concerning their

obligations consequent upon this blessing; a blessing

which would have moved to recognition even the demons,

if they had been the objects of such a benefit. The amaze

ment of the angels arose not from any ignorance on

their part, but from indignation at our unbearable in-

THE TRANSFIXION 427

gratitude. I am but a weak woman and less than a

wormlet of the earth; but in the light which has been

given me concerning this matter, I wish to raise up my

voice, so that it may be heard through all the world and

rouse up the children of vanity and lovers of deceit

(Cant. 1, 3), to a sense of their obligation toward Christ

and his holy Mother. Prostrate on the ground, I wish to

implore all men, not to be so dull of heart and hostile

to themselves as not to rise from this stupor of forget-

fulness, which keeps us in constant danger of eternal

death and deprives us of the celestial life and happiness

merited for us by the Redeemer and Lord by the bitter

ness of the Cross.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

442. My daughter, as thy soul has been furnished with

special gifts of enlightenment, I call and invite thee anew

to cast thyself into the sea of mysteries contained in the

passion and death of my divine Son. Direct all thy fac

ulties and strain all the powers of thy heart and soul, to

make thyself at least somewhat worthy of understanding

and meditating upon the ignominies and sorrows of the

Son of the eternal Father in his death on the Cross for

the salvation of men ; and also of considering my doings

and sufferings in connection with his bitterest Passion.

This science, so much neglected by men, I desire that

thou, my daughter, study and learn, so as to be able to

follow thy Spouse and imitate me, who am thy Mother

and Teacher. Writing down and feeling deeply all that

I shall teach thee of these mysteries, thou shouldst de

tach thyself entirely of human and earthly affections and

of thy own self, so as freely to follow our footsteps in

destitution and poverty. And since I do thee the special

428 CITY OF GOD

favor of calling thee aside to instruct thee in fulfillment of

the will of my holy Son and since We seek through thee to

teach others; thou shouldst correspond to this copious

Redemption as if it was solely for thy benefit and as if

all of it would be lost, if thou dost not profit by its

blessings. So much must thou esteem it; for in the love

which caused my most holy Son to die for thee, He looked

upon thee with as great an affection, as if thou hadst been

the only one that needed the remedy of his Passion and

Death.

443. This is the standard by which thou must meas

ure thy obligations and thy gratitude. Since thou then

both seest the base and dangerous forgetfulness of men

in regard to this benefit, and knowest that for these

very men their God and Creator had died, it should be

thy earnest endeavor to compensate Him for their neg

lect by thy ardent love, as if the proper return for his

benefits was left entirely to thy fidelity and gratitude

alone. At the same time grieve over the blind folly

of men in despising eternal felicity and in treasuring up

for themselves the wrath of the Lord by frustrating the

boundless effects of his love for the world. This is the

purpose for which I make known to Thee so many secrets

and my unparalleled sorrow in the hour of his parting

from me to go to his sacred sufferings unto death. There

are no words which can describe the bitterness of my

soul on that occasion; but the contemplation of it should

cause thee to esteem no hardship great, to seek no rest

or consolation on earth, except to suffer and die for

Christ. Do thou sorrow with me ; for this faithful cor

respondence is due to me, who favor thee with these

graces.

444. I wish thee also to ponder, what a horrible crime

it is in the eyes of the Lord, in mine, and in those of all

THE TRANSFIXION 429

the saints, that men should despise and neglect the fre

quent reception of the holy Communion, and that they

should approach it without preparation and fervent de

votion. Principally in order that thou mayest under

stand and record this warning, I have manifested to

thee, what I did on that occasion and how I prepared

myself so many years for receiving my most blessed Son

in the holy Sacrament and also the rest, which thou art

yet to write for the instruction and confusion of men.

For if I, who was innocent of any hindering sin and

filled with all graces, sought to increase my fitness for

this favor by such fervent acts of love, humility and

gratitude, consider what efforts thou and the other chil

dren of the Church, who every day and hour incur new

guilt and blame, must make in order to fit yourselves for

the beauty of the Divinity and humanity of my most

holy Son? What excuse can those men give in the last

judgment, who have despised this ineffable love and

blessing, which they had always present in the holy

Church, ready to fill them with the plenitude of his

gifts, and who rather sought diversion in worldly pleas

ures and attended upon the outward and deceitful vani

ties of this earthly life? Be thou amazed at this insanity

as were the holy angels, and guard thyself against fall

ing into the same error.

3-29

CHAPTER X.

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR CELEBRATES THE LAST SUPPER WITH

HIS DISCIPLES ACCORDING TO THE LAW AND HE

WASHES THEIR FEET; HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER

OBTAINS A FULL KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING

OF ALL THESE MYSTERIES.

445. Our Redeemer proceeded on his way to Jerusalem

on the evening of the Thursday preceding his Passion

and Death. During their conversation on the way,

while he instructed them in the approaching mysteries,

the Apostles proposed their doubts and difficulties, and

He, as the Teacher of wisdom and as a loving Father

answered them in words which sweetly penetrated into

their very hearts. For, having always loved them, He,

like a divine Swan, in these last hours of his life, mani

fested his love with so much the greater force of amiable

sweetness in his voice and manner. The knowledge of his

impending Passion and the prospect of his great torments,

not only did not hinder Him in the manifestations of his

love, but, just as fire is more concentrated by the frost,

so his love broke forth with so much the greater force

at the prospect of these sufferings. The conflagration

of the love which burned in the heart of Jesus, issued

forth to overpower by its penetrating activity, first those

who were nearest about Him and then also those, who

sought to extinguish it forever. Excepting Christ and His

blessed Mother, the rest of us mortals are ordinarily

roused to resentment by injury, or dismayed and dis

gusted by adversity, and we deem it a great thing not to

revenge ourselves on those who offend us; but the love

430

THE TRANSFIXION 431

of the divine Master was not daunted by the impending

ignominies of his Passion, nor dampened by the ignorance

of his Apostles and the disloyalty, which He was so soon

to experience on their part.

446. The Apostle asked Him where He wished to

celebrate the paschal supper (Matth. 26); for on that

Thursday night the Jews were to partake of the lamb of

the Pasch, a most notable and solemn national feast.

Though of all their feasts, this eating of the paschal lamb

was most prophetic and significant of the Messiah and

of the mysteries connected with Him and his work, the

Apostles were as yet scarcely aware of its intimate con

nection with Christ. The divine Master answered by

sending saint Peter and saint John to Jerusalem to make

arrangements for the paschal lamb. This was to be in

a house, where they would see a servant enter with a jug

of water, and whose master they were to request in

Christ s name to prepare a room for his last Supper

with his disciples. This man lived near to Jerusalem;

rich and influential, he was at the same time devoted to

the Savior and was one of those who had witnessed and

had believed in his miracles and teachings. The Author

of life rewarded his piety and devotion by choosing his

house for the celebration of the great mystery, and thus

consecrate it as a temple for the faithful of future times.

The two Apostles immediately departed on their com

mission and following the instructions, they asked the

owner of this house to entertain the Master of life for

the solemn celebration of this feast of the unleavened

bread.

447. The heart of this householder was enlightened

by special grace and he readily offered his dwelling with

all the necessary furniture for celebrating the supper

according to the law. He assigned to them a very large

432 CITY OF GOD

hall, appropriately tapestried and adorned for the mys

teries which, unbeknown to him and the Apostles, the

Lord was to celebrate therein. After due preparation had

thus been made the Savior and the other Apostles arrived

at this apartment. His most blessed Mother and the

holy women in her company came soon after. Upon

entering, the most humble Queen prostrated Herself on

the floor and adored her divine Son as usual, asking his

blessing and begging Him to let Her know what She

was to do. He bade Her go to another room, where

She would be able to see all that was done on this night

according to the decrees of Providence, and where She

was to console and instruct, as far as was proper, the

holy women of her company. The great Lady obeyed

and retired with her companions. She exhorted them

to persevere in faith and prayer, while She, knowing that

the hour of her holy Communion was at hand, continued

to keep her interior vision riveted on the doings of her

most holy Son and to prepare Herself for the worthy

reception of his body and blood.

448. His most holy Mother having retired, our Lord

and Master, Jesus, with his Apostles and disciples, took

their places to celebrate the feast of the lamb. He ob

served all the ceremonies of the Law (Exodus 12, 3),

as prescribed by Himself through Moses. During this

last Supper He gave to the Apostles an understanding of

all the ceremonies of the figurative law, as observed by

the Patriarchs and Prophets. He showed them how be

neath it was hidden the real truth, namely, all that He

himself was to accomplish as Redeemer of the world. He

made them understand, that now the law of Moses and

its figurative meaning was evacuated by its real fulfill

ment ; that, as the light of the new law of grace had be

gun to shine, the shadows were dispelled and the natural

THE TRANSFIXION 433

law, which had been reconfirmed by the precepts of

Moses, was now placed permanently upon its real founda

tion, ennobled and perfected by his own teachings; that

the efficacy of the Sacraments of the new Law abrogated

those of the old as being merely figurative and ineffectual.

He told them that, by celebrating this Supper, He set

an end to the rites and obligations of the old Law, which

was only a preparation and a representation of what He

was now about to accomplish, and hence having attained

its end, had now become useless.

449. This instruction enlightened the Apostles concern

ing the deep mysteries of this last Supper. The other

disciples that were present, did not understand these

mysteries as thoroughly as the Apostles. Judas attended

to and understood them least of all, yea, not at all; for

he was completely under the spell of his avarice, thinking

only of his prearranged treason and how he could

execute it most secretly. The Lord revealed none of his

secret treachery; for so it best served the designs and

equity of his most high Providence. He did not wish

to exclude him from the Supper and from the other

mysteries, leaving it to his own wickedness to bring about

his exclusion. The divine Master always treated him as

his disciple, apostle and minister, and was careful of his

honor. Thus He taught the children of the Church by

his own example, with what veneration they should treat

his ministers and priests, how they must guard their honor

and avoid speaking of their sins and weaknesses still

adhering to frail human nature in spite of their high

office. None of them will ever be worse than Judas, as

we can well assume ; and not one of the faithful will ever

be like Christ, our Lord and Savior, nor, as our faith

teaches us, will anyone ever have his divine authority and

power. Hence, as all men are of infinitely smaller con-

434 CITY OF GOD

sideration than our Savior, let them accord to his min

isters, who though wicked will ever be better than Judas,

the same treatment as He condescended to accord to this

most wicked disciple and Apostle. This duty toward

priests is not less urgent even in superiors ; for also Christ

our Lord who bore with Judas and was so careful of his

reputation was infinitely his superior.

450. On this occasion the Redeemer composed a new

canticle by which He exalted the eternal Father for hav

ing in his Son fulfilled the figures of the old Law and for

thus advancing the glory of his holy name. Prostrate

upon the earth, He humiliated Himself in his humanity

before God, confessing, adoring and praising the Divinity

as infinitely superior to his humanity. Then addressing

the eternal Father, He gave vent to the burning affection

of his heart in the following sublime prayer.

451. "My eternal Father and infinite God, thy divine

and eternal will resolved to create this my human nature

in order that I may be the Head of all those that are

predestined for thy glory and happiness and who are to

attain their true blessedness by availing themselves of my

works. For this purpose, and in order to redeem them

from the fall of Adam, I have lived with them thirty-

three years. Now, my Lord and Father, the opportune

and acceptable hour for fulfilling thy eternal will has ar

rived, the greatness of thy holy name is about to be

revealed to men and thy incomprehensible Divinity,

through holy faith, is to be made known and exalted

among all nations. It is time that the seven-sealed book

be opened as Thou hast commissioned Me to do, and that

the figures of old come to a happy solution (Apoc.

5, 7). The ancient sacrifices of animals, which pre

figured the one I am now voluntarily to make of Myself

for the children of Adam, for the members of my mysti-

THE TRANSFIXION 435

cal body, for the sheep of thy flock, must now come to an

end, and I beseech Thee in this hour to look down with an

eye of mercy. If in the past thy anger has been placated

by these ancient figures and sacrifices which I am now

about to abrogate, let it now, my Father, be entirely

extinguished, since I am ready to offer Myself in volun

tary sacrifice to die for men on the Cross and give Myself

as a holocaust of my love (Eph. 5, 2). Therefore, Lord,

let the rigor of thy justice be relaxed and look upon the

human race with eyes of mercy. Let Us institute a new

law for men, by which they may throw down the bars

of their disobedience and -open for themselves the gates

of heaven. Let them now find a free road and open

portals for entering with Me upon the vision of thy

Divinity, as many of them as will follow my footsteps

and obey my law."

452. The eternal Father graciously received this prayer

of our Redeemer and sent innumerable hosts of his

angelic courtiers to assist at the wonderful works, which

Christ was to perform in that place. While this happened

in the Cenacle, most holy Mary in her retreat was raised

to highest contemplation, in which She witnessed all that

passed as if She were present. Thus She was enabled to

co-operate and correspond as a most faithful Helpmate,

enlightened by the highest wisdom. By heroic and celes

tial acts of virtue She imitated the doings of Christ, our

Savior; for all of them awakened fitting resonance in her

bosom and :aused a mysterious and divine echo of like

petitions and prayers in the sweetest Virgin. Moreover

She composed new and admirable canticles of praise for

all that the sacred humanity of Christ was now about to

accomplish in obedience to the divine will and in accord

ance and in fulfillment of the figures of the old Law.

453. Very wonderful and worthy of all admiration

436 CITY OF GOD

would it be for us, as it was for the holy angels and as it

will be for all the blessed, if we could understand the

divine harmony of the works and virtues in the heart of

our great Queen, which like a heavenly chorus neither

confused nor hindered each other in their super

abundance on this occasion. Being filled with the intel

ligence of which I have spoken, She was sensible of the

mysterious fulfillment and accomplishment of the cere

monies and figures of the old Law through the most noble

and efficacious Sacraments of the new. She realized the

vast fruits of the Redemption in the predestined ; the ruin

of the reprobate; the exaltation of the name of God and

of the sacred humanity of Christ; the widespread

knowledge and faith in the true God now beginning

throughout the world. She fully understood, how the

heavens had been closed for so many ages in order that

now the children of Adam might enter through the es

tablishment and progress of the new evangelical Church

and its ministers ; and how her divine Son was the most

wonderful and skillful Artificer of all these blessings,

exciting the admiration and praise of all the courtiers

of heaven. For these magnificent results, without for

getting the least of them, She now blessed the eternal

Father and gave Him ineffable thanks in the consolation

and jubilee of her soul.

454. But also She reflected, that all these admirable

works were to cost her divine Son the sorrow, ignominies,

affronts and torments of his Passion, and at last the bit

ter death of the Cross, all of which He was to endure in

the very humanity that He had received from Her; while

at the same time, such a number of the children of Adam,

for whom He suffered, would ungratefully waste the

copious fruit of the Redemption. This knowledge filled

with bitterest sorrow the purest heart of the loving

THE TRANSFIXION 437

Mother. But as She was a living and faithful reproduc

tion of her most holy Son, all these sentiments and opera

tions found room in her magnanimous and expanded

heart, and therefore She was not disturbed nor dismayed,

nor did She fail to console and instruct her companions ;

but, without losing touch of her high intelligences, She

descended to their level of thought in her words of con

solation and of eternal life for their instruction. O ad

mirable Instructress and superhuman example entirely to

be followed and imitated ! It is true, that in comparison

with this sea of grace and light, our prerogatives dwindle

into insignificance ; but it is also true, that our sufferings

and trials in comparison with hers are so to say only

imaginary and not worthy to be even noticed, since She

suffered more than all the children of Adam together.

Yet neither in order to imitate Her, nor for our eternal

welfare, can we be induced to suffer with patience even

the least adversity. All of them excite and dismay us

and take away our composure; we give vent to our pas

sions, we angrily resist and are consumed with restless

sorrow; in our stubbornness we lose our reason, give

free reign to evil movements and hasten on toward the

precipice. Even good fortune lures us to destruction,

and so no reliance can be placed in our infected and

spoiled nature. Let us be mindful of our heavenly Mis

tress on such occasions, in order that we may set our

selves right.

455. Having 1 completed the Supper and fully instructed

his disciples, Christ our Savior, as saint John tells us

(John 13, 4), arose from the table in order to wash their

feet. He first prostrated Himself before his eternal Father

and addressed to Him another prayer of the same kind as

that before the supper. It was not uttered in words, but

was conceived interiorly, as follows: "Eternal Father,

438 CITY OF GOD

Creator of the universe, I am thy image and the figure

of thy substance, engendered by thy intellect (Heb. 1, 3).

Having offered Myself for the Redemption of the world

through my Passion and Death according to thy will, I

now desire to enter upon these sacraments and mysteries

by humiliating Myself to the dust, so that the pride of

Lucifer may be confounded by the humility of thy Only-

begotten. In order to leave an example of humility to

my Apostles and to my Church, which must be built up

on the secure foundation of this virtue, I desire, my

Father, to wash the feet of my disciples, including the

least of all of them, Judas, steeped in his own malice.

I shall prostrate Myself before him in deepest and sin-

cerest self-abasement to offer him my friendship and sal

vation. Though he is my greatest enemy among the

mortals, I shall not refuse him pardon for his treachery,

nor deny him kindest treatment, so that, if he shall decline

to accept it, all the world may know, that I have opened

up to him the arms of my menfy, and that he repelled my

advances with obstinate contempt."

456. Such was the prayer of the Savior in preparing

to wash the feet of his disciples. There are not words

or similitudes in all creation which could properly express

the divine impetus of the love with which He undertook

and accomplished these works of mercy; for in compari

son to it the activity of fire is but slow, the inflowing of

the tide but weak, the tendency of a stone toward its

center but tardy, and all the forces of the elements in the

world that we can imagine in their united activity, but

inadequate representations of the power of his love. But

we cannot fail to perceive, that divine love and wisdom

alone could ever conceive a humiliation, by which both the

Divinity and his sacred humanity lowered themselves

beneath the feet of mere creatures, and beneath the feet

THE TRANSFIXION 439

of the worst of them, Judas, that He who is the Word

of the eternal Father, the Holy of the holy, the essential

Goodness, the Lord of lords and the King of kings,

should prostrate Himself before the most wicked of men

and touch the feet of this most impure and degraded of

his creatures with his lips, and that He should do all this

merely for the chance of justifying his wayward disciple

and securing for him immeasurable blessings.

457. The Master arose from his prayer and, his

countenance beaming with peace and serenity, commanded

his disciples to seat themselves like persons of superior

station, while He himself remained standing as if He

were their servant. Then He laid aside the mantle,

which He wore over the seamless garment and which

covered all his Person except the feet. He wore sandals,

which however He sometimes had dispensed with on his

preaching tours, though at other times He had worn them

ever since his most holy Mother had put them on his feet

in Egypt. They grew in size with his feet as He advanced

in age, as I have already remarked (Vol. II, 691 ). Having

laid aside this mantle, which was the garment spoken of

by the Evangelist (John 13, 4), He girded his body with

one end of a large towel, permitting the other part to

hang down free. Then He poured water into a basin for

washing the feet of the Apostles, who were wonderingly

observing the proceedings of their divine Master.

458. He first approached the head of the Apostle, saint

Peter. But when this excitable Apostle saw prostrate at

his feet the Lord, whom he had acknowledged and pro

claimed as the Son of God, being again renewed and en

lightened in his faith and overcome by humiliation at his

own insignificance, he said : "Thou shalt never wash my

feet!" The Author of life answered him with some

earnestness : "Thou dost not know at present what I am

440 CITY OF GOD

doing, but later on thou wilt understand it." This was the

same as to say to him : obey now first my command and

will, and do not prefer thy will unto mine, disturbing and

perverting the order of virtues. Before all thou must

yield captive thy understanding and believe that what I

do is proper ; then, having believed and obeyed, thou wilt

understand the hidden mysteries of my doings, into the

knowledge of which thou must enter by obedience. With

out obedience thou canst not be truly humble, but only

presumptuous. Nor can thy humility take preference of

mine; I humiliated Myself unto the Death; and in order

to thus humiliate Me, I sought the way of obedience;

but thou, who art my disciple, dost not follow my

doctrine. Under color of humility thou art disobedient,

by thus perverting the right order thou stripst thyself as

well of humility as of obedience, following thy own pre

sumptuous judgment.

459. Saint Peter did not understand this doctrine con

tained in the first answer of our Lord ; for though he be

longed to his school, he had not yet experienced the divine

effects of this washing and contact. Floundering in the

errors of his indiscreet humility, he answered the Lord :

"I will never consent that Thou wash my feet !" But the

Lord of life answered with greater severity : "If I wash

thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me." By this

threatening answer the Lord sanctioned obedience forever

as the secure way. According to human insight, saint

Peter certainly had some excuse for being slow in per

mitting God to prostrate Himself before an earthly and

sinful man as he was and to allow Him, whom he had so

recently acknowledged and adored as his Creator, to per

form such an unheard of act of self-abasement. But his

opposition was not excusable in the eyes of the divine

Master, who could not err in what He wished to do. For

THE TRANSFIXION 441

whenever there is not an evident error in what is com

manded, obedience must be blind and without evasion.

In this mystery the Lord wished to repair the disobedience

of our first parents, Adam and Eve, by which sin entered

into the world ; and because of the similarity and relation

between it and the disobedience of saint Peter, our Lord

threatened him with a similar punishment, telling him,

that if he did not obey, he should have no part in Him;

namely, that he should be excluded from the merits and

fruits of the Redemption, by which alone we become

worthy of his friendship and glory. He also threatened

to deprive him of participation in his body and blood,

which He was now about to perpetuate in the sacramental

species of bread and wine. The Savior gave him to

understand, that how ardently soever He desired to com

municate Himself not only in part but in entirety, yet

disobedience would certainly deprive even the Apostle of

this blessing.

460. By this threat of our Lord Christ saint Peter

was so chastened and instructed, that he immediately sub

mitted from his whole heart and said: "Lord, not only

my feet, but also my hands and my head." He wished to

say: I offer my feet in order to walk in obedience, my

hands in order to exercise it, and my head in order to

surrender all of my own judgment, that may be contrary

to its dictates. The Lord accepted this submission of

saint Peter and said : "He that is washed, needs not but

to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean,

but not all," for among them was seated the most unclean

Judas. This Christ said, because the disciples (all except

Judas), had been justified and cleaned by his doctrines;

and they needed only to be cleansed from imperfections

and venial sins, so that they might approach holy Com

munion with so much the more worthiness and better

442 CITY OF GOD

preparation, such as is required in order to participate

fully in its divine effects and receive its abundant graces

with so much the greater efficacy and plenitude. For

venial sins, distractions and lukewarmness hinder all

these benefits very much. Thereupon the feet of saint

Peter were washed, as also those of the other disciples,

who permitted it in great astonishment and bathed in

tears ; for all of them were filled with new enlightenment

and gifts of grace.

461. The divine Master then proceeded to wash also

the feet of Judas, whose perfidious treason could not pre

vent the charity of Christ from secretly bestowing upon

him tokens of even greater charity than upon the other

Apostles. Without permitting it to be noticed by the

others, He manifested his special love toward Judas in

two ways. On the one hand, in the kind and caressing

manner in which He approached Him, knelt at his feet,

washed them, kissed them and pressed them to his bosom.

On the other hand, by seeking to move his soul with

inspirations proportionate to the dire depravity of his

conscience ; for the assistance offered to Judas was in it

self much greater than that offered to the other Apostles.

But as the disposition of this Apostle was most wicked,

his vices deeply ingrown upon him, his understanding

and his faculties much disturbed and weakened ; as he had

entirely forsaken God and given himself over to the devil,

and, as he had enthroned the evil spirit in his heart ; he

resisted all the divine advances and inspirations connected

with this washing of his feet. He was moreover harassed

by the fear of breaking his contract with the scribes and

pharisees. As the bodily presence of Christ and the inte

rior urgency of his inspirations both bestormed his sense

of right, there arose within his darkened soul a dreadful

hurricane of conflicting thoughts, filling him with dismay

THE TRANSFIXION 443

and bitterness, and fiercest anger, whirling him still

farther away from his Savior and turning the divine

balsam applied to his soul into deadly poison of hellish

malice and total depravity.

462. Thus it came that the malice of Judas resisted the

saving contact of those divine hands, in which the eternal

Father had placed miraculous power to enrich all crea

tures with his blessings. Even if he had not received

any other assistance except that naturally flowing from

the visible and personal presence of the Author of life,

the wickedness of this unhappy disciple would have been

beyond all bounds. The outward aspect of Christ our

Lord was most exquisitely charming and attractive; his

countenance, serenely dignified, yet sweetly expressive and

beautiful, was framed in abundant waves of golden chest

nut hair, freely growing after the manner of the Naza-

renes; his frank and open eyes beamed forth grace and

majesty; his mouth, nose and all the features of his face

exhibited the most perfect proportion and his whole Per

son was clothed in such entrancing loveliness, that He

drew upon Himself the loving veneration of all who be

held Him without malice in their hearts. Over and above

all this, the mere sight of Him caused in the beholders an

interior joy and enlightenment, engendering heavenly

thoughts and sentiments in the soul. This divine Per

sonage, so lovable and venerable, Judas now saw at his

feet, striving to please him by new tokens . of affection

and seeking to gain him by new impulses of love. But

so great was the perversity of Judas, that nothing could

move or soften his hardened heart; on the contrary, he

was irritated by the gentleness of the Savior, and he

refused to look upon his face or take notice of his actions ;

for from the time in which he had lost faith and grace,

he was filled with hatred toward his Master and toward

444 CITY OF GOD

his heavenly Mother and never looked Them in the face.

Greater, in a certain respect, was the terror of Lucifer

at the presence of Christ our Savior; for this demon,

having established himself in the heart of Judas, could

not bear the humility of the divine Master toward his

disciples and sought to escape from Judas and from the

Cenacle. But the Lord detained him by his almighty

power in order that his pride might be crushed. Yet

later on he was cast out from that place, filled with fury,

and with the suspicion, that Christ might after all be the

true God.

463. The Lord completed the washing of the feet, and

again assuming the upper garment, seated Himself in the

midst of his Apostles and began the discourse recorded by

saint John: "Know you what I have done to you? You

call me Master, and Lord; and you say well; if then I,

being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet ; you

also ought to wash one another s feet. For I have given

you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do

also. Amen, Amen, I say to you: The servant is not

greater than his lord ; neither is the Apostle greater than

He that sent him" (John 13, 13). Then the Lord pro

ceeded to propound great mysteries and truths, which I

will not expatiate upon, but for which I refer the reader

to the Gospels. This discourse still further enlightened the

Apostles in the mysteries of the most blessed Trinity and

of the Incarnation, and prepared them by new graces for

the holy Eucharist, confirming them in their understand

ing of the vast significance of his doctrines and miracles.

Among them all saint Peter and saint John were most

fully enlightened ; but each of the Apostles received more

or less insight according to his disposition and according

to the divine ordainment. What saint John says about

his questioning the Lord concerning the traitor who was

THE TRANSFIXION 445

to sell Him, and the answer of the Lord, all happened be

fore at the Supper itself, when the beloved disciple re

clined on the bosom of his divine Master. For saint Peter,

in his fervent attachment to his Master and his outspoken

love, was anxious to know who was the traitor, in order

that he might avenge or prevent the treason. But saint

John, though he recognized the traitor by the bread dipped

into the sauce and handed to Judas, would not inform

saint Peter. He alone knew the secret, but taught by the

charity which he had acquired in the school of his divine

Master, he buried the secret in his bosom.

464. While he thus reclined on the bosom of Jesus our

Savior, saint John was privileged in many other ways;

for there he was made to see many most exalted mysteries

of the divine humanity and of the Queen of heaven, his

most holy Mother. On this occasion also he was com

missioned to take charge of Her ; for on the Cross Christ

did not say to him : She shall be thy Mother, nor, thou

shalt be her son; but, behold thy Mother, because this

was not a matter resolved upon at that time, but one

which was then to be made manifest publicly as having

been ordained and decreed beforehand. Of all these sac

raments connected with the washing of the feet, of the

words and discourses of her Son, his most pure Mother

was minutely informed by interior vision, as I have stated

at other times, and for all of them She gave thanks and

glory to the Most High. And when afterwards the won

derful works of the Lord were accomplished, She beheld

them not as one ignorant of them ; but as one who saw

fulfilled, what She had known before and what had

been recorded in her heart like the law recorded on the

tablets of Moses. She enlightened also her companions

of all that was proper, reserving whatever they were not

capable of understanding.

3-30

446 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTIONS WHICH THE GREAT MISTRESS OF

THE WORLD, MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

465. My daughter, in three virtues mentioned by thee

in the foregoing chapter as especially practiced by my

Son and Lord, I wish that thou be particularly zealous

as his spouse and my beloved disciple. They are the

virtues of charity, humility and obedience in which Jesus

desired to signalize Himself toward the end of his life.

Without doubt He manifested his love for men during

his whole life, since He performed for them such admir

able works from the very first instant of his conception

in my womb. But towards the end of his life, when He

established the evangelical law of the New Testament,

the fire of ardent love, that burned in his bosom, burst

out in more consuming flames. On this last occasion the

charity of the Savior for the children of Adam exerted

its full force, since it was urged on by the sorrows of

death that encompassed Him, and was spurred on from

the outside by the dislike of men for suffering, their self-

chosen misfortunes and their boundless ingratitude and

perversity in seeking to destroy the honor and the life

of Him, who was ready to sacrifice all for their eternal

happiness. By this conflict his love was inflamed to the

point at which it could not be extinguished (Cant. 8, 7) ;

and thus being now about to leave the earth, He was

driven to exercise all his ingenuity in attempting to pro

long his benefactions and his intercourse with men, leav

ing among them, by his teachings, works and examples,

the sure means of participating in the effects of his

divine charity.

466. In this art of loving thy neighbor for God s sake

I wish that thou be very expert and zealous. This thou

wilt be, if the very injuries and sufferings with which

THE TRANSFIXION 447

they afflict thee, shall waken in thee a greater love. Thou

must remember, that then alone wilt thou be secure and

unwavering, when neither benefits nor flatteries of men

have any effect on thee. For to love those who do thee

gTDod, is a duty ; but if thou art heedless, thou canst not

know, whether in that case thou lovest them for God s

sake, or for the sake of the benefits they confer, which

would be loving thy own advantage or thyself rather than

thy neighbor for God s sake. He who loves for other

than God s sake or for vain complaisance merely, has not

yet learned true charity ; since he is yet taken up with the

blind love of his own ease. But if thou love those who

do not satisfy any of these cravings, thou art led on to

love them for the Lord s sake as the principal motive

and object of thy love, loving Him in his creatures, who

ever they be. Thou must exercise thyself in both the cor

poral and the spiritual works of mercy; but as thou hast

fewer occasions to exercise those of the body than those

of the spirit, thou must continually extend thy spiritual

works of chanty, multiplying, according to the will of

thy Savior, thy prayers, petitions, pious practices, accom

panying them with prudent and holy admonitions and

thus advancing the spiritual welfare of souls. Remember

that my Lord and Son conferred no bodily blessings on

any one, without accompanying them with spiritual, and

it would have been derogatory to the divine perfection of

his works, to perform them without this plenitude of

goodness. From this thou wilt understand how much we

must prefer the benefits of soul to those of the body;

hence thou must always seek them in the first place, al

though earthly-minded men blindly prefer temporal bless

ings, forgetting the eternal ones and those tending toward

the friendship and grace of the Most High.

467. The virtues of humility and obedience were highly

448 CITY OF GOD

exalted by the conduct of my most holy Son in washing

the feet of his Apostles. If by thy interior enlightenment

concerning this extraordinary example thou dost not

humble thyself to the dust, thy heart is indeed hardened

and thou art very obtuse in the knowledge of the Lord.

Let it then be understood henceforth, that thou never

canst consider or profess thyself sufficiently humbled, even

when thou findest thyself despised and trodden under foot

by all men, sinners as they are ; for they never can be as

bad as Judas, or thou as good as thy Lord and Master.

But to merit and to be honored by this virtue of humility,

will give thee such perfection and worthiness, that thou

wilt deserve the name of a spouse of Christ and make thy

self somewhat like unto Him. Without this humility no

soul can be raised to excellence and communication with

the Lord ; for the exalted must first be humbled and only

the lowly ones can and should be exalted (Matth. 23, 12) ;

and souls are always raised up by the Lord in proportion

as they have humiliated themselves.

468. In order that thou mayest not lose this pearl of hu

mility just at the time when thou thinkest thyself secure of

it, remember that the exercise of it is not to be preferred

to obedience, nor must thou practice it merely at thy own

will, but in subjection to thy superiors; for if thou prefer

thy own judgment to that of thy superiors even if thou

do it under color of humility, thou art guilty of pride;

for that would be not only refusing to seek the lowest

place, but placing thyself above thy superior. Hence

thou mayest understand the error of shrinking back, like

saint Peter, from the favors and blessings of the Lord,

depriving thee thereby not only of the gifts and treasures

offered thee, but of the advantage of humility, which thou

seekest and which is much preferable. Thou failest also

in gratefully acknowledging the high ends and in striving

THE TRANSFIXION 449

r

after the exaltation of his holy name, which the Lord

seeks in such works. It is not thy business to enter into

the examination of his secret and exalted judgments, nor

to correct them by thy reasonings and thy objections on

account of which thou mightst think thyself unworthy of

his favors or incapable of performing the works enjoined.

All this is a seed of Lucifer s pride, covered up by appar

ent humility as he thus seeks to hinder the communica

tions of the Lord, his gifts and his friendship, which thou

desirest so much. Let it then be to thee an inviolable rule,

that as soon as thy confessors and superiors approve of

certain favors and blessings as coming from the Lord,

thou accept them as such with due thanks and reverence.

Do not allow thyself to be led into new doubts and vacil

lating fears, but correspond with the favors of the Lord

in humble fear and tranquil obedience.

CHAPTER XL

CHRIST OUR SAVIOR CELEBRATES THE SACRAMENTAL

SUPPER, CONSECRATING HIS TRUE AND SACRED BODY

AND BLOOD IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST ; HIS PRAYERS

AND PETITIONS; THE COMMUNION OF HIS BLESSED

MOTHER AND OTHER MYSTERIES OF THIS OCCASION.

469. With great diffidence do I enter upon the treat

ment of the ineffable mystery of the holy Eucharist and of

what happened at its institution ; for, raising the eyes of

my soul toward the light which encompasses and governs

me in the performance of this work, the high intelligence

given me of these vast wonders and sacraments reproaches

me with my littleness in comparison with the greatness

therein manifested. My faculties are disturbed and I can

not find words to explain what I see and conceive,

although all these conceptions are far from the reality

that is shown to my understanding. But, though ignorant

of the terms and though very unfit for such discourse,

I must speak, in order that I may continue this history

and relate what part the great Lady of the world had

in these wonders. If I do not speak as appropriately as

the matter demands, let my amazement and my lowly

condition be my excuse ; for it is not easy to yield to the

exactions of spoken words, when the will is so intent on

supplying the defects of the understanding and on enjoy

ing that, which it is hopeless and even unbecoming to

manifest.

470. Christ had partaken of the prescribed supper with

his disciples reclining on the floor around a table, which

4.5.0

THE TRANSFIXION 451

was elevated from it little more than the distance of six

or seven fingers; for such was the custom of the Jews.

But after the washing of the feet He ordered another,

higher table to be prepared, such as we now use for our

meals. By this arrangement He wished to put an end to

the legal suppers and to the lower and figurative law and

establish the new Supper of the law of grace. From that

time on He wished the sacred mysteries to be performed

on the tables or altars, which are in use in the Catholic

Church. The table was covered with a very rich cloth and

upon it was placed a plate or salver and a large cup in the

form of a chalice, capacious enough to hold the wine. All

this was done in pursuance of the will of Christ our

Savior, who by his divine power and wisdom directed all

these particulars. The master of the house was inspired

to offer these rich vessels, which were made of what

seemed a precious stone like emerald. The Apostles often

used it afterwards in consecrating, whenever the occasion

permitted it. The Lord seated himself at this table with

the Apostles and some of the other disciples, and then

ordered some unleavened bread to be placed on the table

and some wine to be brought, of which He took suffi

cient to prepare the chalice.

471. Then the Master of life spoke words of most en

dearing love to his Apostles, and, though his sayings were

wont to penetrate to the inmost heart at all times, yet on

this occasion they were like the flames of a great fire of

charity, which consumed the souls of his hearers. He

manifested to them anew the most exalted mysteries of

his Divinity, humanity and of the works of the Redemp

tion. He enjoined upon them peace and charity, of which

He was now to leave a pledge in the mysteries about to be

celebrated. He reminded them, that in loving one

another, they would be loved by the eternal Father with

452 CITY OF GOD

the same love in which He was beloved. He gave them

an understanding of the fulfillment of this promise in

having chosen them to found the new Church and the law

of grace. He renewed in them the light concerning the

supreme dignity, excellence and prerogatives of his most

pure Virgin Mother. Among all the Apostles, saint John

was most deeply enlightened in these mysteries on account

of the office imposed upon him. The great Lady, from her

retreat, beheld in divine contemplation all these doings

of her Son in the Cenacle; and in her profound intelli

gence She entered more deeply into their meaning than

the Apostles and the angels, who also were present in

bodily forms, adoring their true Lord, Creator and King.

By the hands of these angels Enoch and Elias were

brought to the Cenacle from their place of abode; for the

Lord wished that these Fathers of the natural and of

the written Laws should be present at the establishment

of the law of the Gospel, and that they should participate

in its mysteries.

472. All these being present, awaiting full of wonder

what the Author of life intended to do, there appeared

also in the hall the person of the eternal Father and of the

Holy Ghost as they had appeared at the baptism of Christ

at the Jordan and at the Transfiguration on mount Tabor.

Although all the Apostles and disciples felt this divine

presence, yet only some of them really were favored with

a vision of it ; among these was especially saint John the

evangelist, who was always gifted with eagle-sight into

the divine mysteries. The entire heaven was transplanted

to the Cenacle of Jerusalem ; for of such great importance

was the magnificence of this work, by which the new

Church was founded, the law of grace established and

eternal salvation made secure. For a better understand

ing of the doings of the incarnate Word, I must remind

THE TRANSFIXION 453

the reader, that He possessed two natures in one Person,

the divine and the human nature united in one divine

Person of the Word ; hence the proper activities of both

natures are rightly attributed to one and the same Per

son, just as the same Person is called both God and man.

Consequently, when I say that the incarnate Work spoke

and prayed to the eternal Father, it must not be inter

preted as meaning, that He prayed or spoke in as far as

He was divine, since in Divinity He was equal to the

Father; but in as far as He was human, inferior and

composed of body and soul as we ourselves are. In this

sense therefore Christ confessed and extolled the immen

sity and infinitude of the eternal Father, praying for the

whole human race.

473. "My Father and eternal God, I confess, praise

and exalt thy infinite essence and incomprehensible Deity,

in which I am one with Thee and the Holy Ghost, en

gendered from all eternity by thy intellect, as the figure

of thy substance and the image of thy individual nature

(John 10, 30; Ps. 119,3;Heb. 1,3). In the same nature,

which I have assumed in the virginal womb of my

Mother, I wish to accomplish the Redemption of the

human race with which Thou hast charged Me. I wish

to restore to this human nature the highest perfection

and the plenitude of thy divine complaisance; and then

I wish to pass from this world to thy right hand, bear

ing with Me all those whom Thou hast given Me with

out losing a single one of them for want of willingness

on our part to help them (John 17, 12). My delight is

to be with the children of men (Prov. 8, 31) and as, in

my absence, they will be left orphans, if I do not give

them assistance, I wish, my Father, to furnish them with

a sure and unfailing token of my inextinguishable love

and a pledge of the eternal rewards, which Thou holdest

454 CITY OF GOD

in reserve for them. I desire that they find in my merits

an easy and powerful remedy for the effects of sin, to

which they are subject on account of the disobedience of

the first man, and I wish to restore copiously their right

to the eternal happiness for which they are created."

474. "But since there will be few who will preserve

themselves in this justice, they will need other assistance,

so that they may reinstate themselves and strengthen

themselves in the way of justification and sanctification

by being continually furnished with new and exalted

gifts and favors of thy clemency in their dangerous pil

grimage through life. It was our eternal decree, that

they should have created existence and participate in our

divine perfections and happiness for all eternity ; and thy

love, which caused Me to assume a nature able to suffer

and welcome the humiliation of the cross (Philip 2, 8),

would not rest satisfied, until it invented new means of

communicating itself to men according to their capacity

and our wisdom and power. These means shall consist

in visible and sensible signs adapted to their condition

as sentient beings and causing invisible effects in the spir

itual and immaterial part of their natures."

475. "To advance these high ends for thy exaltation

and glory, eternal Lord and Father, in my name and in

that of all the poor and afflicted children of Adam, I

ask the fiat of thy eternal will. If their sins call out

for thy justice, their neediness and misery appeal to thy

infinite mercy. At the same time I, on my part, inter

pose all the works of my humanity, which is indissolubly

bound to my Divinity. I offer my obedience in accepting

suffering unto death; my humility, in subjecting Myself

to the depraved judgment of men; the poverty and labors

of my life, the insults of my Passion and Death, and

the love, which urges Me to undergo all this for the

THE TRANSFIXION 455

advance of thy glory and for the spreading of thy

knowledge and adoration among all creatures capable

of thy grace and happiness. Thou, O eternal Lord and

my Father, hast made Me the Brother and the Chief

of men, and hast destined them to partake eternally of

the joys of our Divinity (Colos. 1, 18). As thy chil

dren, they are to be heirs with Me of thy everlasting

blessings (Rom. 8, 17), and as members of my body,

they are to participate in the effects of my brotherly love

(I Cor. 6, 15). Therefore, as far as depends upon Me,

I desire to draw them on toward my friendship and

to see them share in the goods of the Divinity, to which

they were destined in their origin from their natural

head, the first man."

476. "Impelled by this boundless love, Lord and

Father, I ordain, that from now on men may re-enter

into thy full friendship and grace through the sacrament

of Baptism, and that they may do so as soon as they

shall be born to daylight; and their desire of renascence

into grace, which they cannot in their infancy manifest

on their own account, shall, with thy permission, be

manifested for them by their elders. Let them become

immediate heirs of thy glory; let them be interiorly and

indelibly marked as children of my Church; let them

be freed from the stain of original sin; let them receive

the gifts of faith, hope and charity, by which they may

perform the works of thy children: knowing Tihee,

trusting in Thee, and loving Thee for thy own Self.

Let them also receive the virtues by which they restrain

and govern disorderly inclinations and be able to dis

tinguish, without fail, the good from the evil. Let this

Sacrament be the portal of my Church, and the one

which makes men capable of receiving all the other

favors and disposes them to new gifts and blessings of

456 CITY OF GOD

grace. I ordain also, that besides this Sacrament, they

may receive another, in which they shall be confirmed

and rooted in the holy faith they have accepted, and

become courageous in its defense as soon as they shall

arrive at the use of reason. And because human frailty

easily falls away from the observance of my law and

since my charity will not permit Me to leave them with

out an easy and opportune remedy, I wish to provide the

sacrament of Penance. Through it men, by acknowledg

ing their faults and confessing them with sorrow, may

be reinstated in justice and in the merits of glory prom

ised to them. Thus shall Lucifer and his followers be

prevented from boasting of having so soon deprived

them of advantages of Baptism."

477. "By the justification of these Sacraments men

shall become fit to share in the highest token of my love

in the exile of this their mortal life; namely, to receive

Me sacramentally under the species of bread and wine

in an ineffable manner. Under the species of bread I

shall leave my body, and under the species of wine, my

blood. In each one of them I shall be present really and

truly and I institute this mysterious sacrament of the

Eucharist as a heavenly nourishment proportioned to

their condition as wayfaring men; for their sake shall

I work these miracles and remain with them until the

end of the coming ages (Matth. 28, 20). For the

strengthening and defense of those, who approach the

end of their lives, I moreover appoint the sacrament of

Extreme Unction, which shall at the same time be a

certain pledge of the bodily resurrection of those thus

anointed. In order that all may contribute proportion

ately to the sanctification of the members of the mystical

body of the Church, in which by the most harmonious

and orderly co-operation all must have their proper posi-

THE TRANSFIXION 457

tion, I institute the sacrament of Ordination to distin

guish and mark some of its members by a special degree

of holiness and place them above the other faithful as

fit ministers of the Sacraments and as my chosen priests.

Although they derive all their powers from Me, I never

theless wish that it should flow from Me through one

of their number, who shall be my Vicar and the Chief,

representing my Person and act as my high priest. Into

his keeping I deposit the keys of heaven and him all

upon earth shall obey. For the further perfection of

my Church I also establish the last of the Sacraments,

Matrimony, to sanctify the natural union of man and

wife for the propagation of the human race. Thus shall

all the grades of my Church be enriched and adorned

by my infinite merits. This, eternal Father, is my last

will, whereby I make all the mortals inheritors of my

merits in the great storehouse of grace, my new Church."

478. This prayer Christ our Redeemer made in the

presence of the Apostles, but without any exterior mani

festation. The most blessed Mother, who from her re

treat observed and followed Him, prostrated Herself

upon the floor and, as his Mother, offered to the eternal

Father the same petitions as her Son. Although She

could not add anything to the merits of the works of her

divine Son, nevertheless, as on other occasions, She, as

his Helpmate, united her petitions with his, in order

that by her faithful companionship She might move the

eternal Father to so much the greater mercy. And the

Father looked upon Them both, graciously accepting the

prayers respectively of the Son and Mother for the sal

vation of men. Besides prayer, her divine Son left the

performance of yet another work in her charge. In

order to understand what this was, it must be remem

bered (as I mentioned in the preceding chapter) that

458 CITY OF GOD

Lucifer was present at the washing of the Apostles feet,

and that, being forced to remain and witness the doings

of Christ in the Cenacle, he astutely conjectured some

great blessings to be intended for the Apostles. Although

the dragon felt his forces much diminished and altogether

unavailing against the Redeemer, he nevertheless sought

with implacable fury and pride to spy out these mys

teries for the concoction of future malicious plans. The

great Lady perceived these intentions of Lucifer and

knew that the foiling of them was to be left in her

hands. Therefore, inflamed by zeal and love for the

Most High, She, as sovereign Queen, commanded the

dragon and all his squadrons to leave the hall and descend

to the depths of hell.

479. To accomplish this the arm of the Almighty gave

new power to the Blessed Virgin, so that neither the re

bellious Lucifer nor all his hosts could resist. They were

hurled into the infernal abysses, there to remain until

they should again be permitted to issue as witnesses to

the passion and death of the Savior in order to be finally

convinced of his being the Messias and Redeemer, true

God and man. Let it then be understood, that Lucifer

and his demons were present at the legal supper and

washing of the feet, and also afterwards at the entire

passion of Christ ! but that they were not present at this

institution of the holy Eucharist, nor at the Communion

of the disciples. Then the great Queen was raised to a

most sublime state of contemplation of the mysteries

about to be enacted, and the holy angels, as to another

valorous Judith, sang to Her of this glorious triumph

over the dragon. At the same time Christ our Lord

offered up to the eternal Father exalted thanksgiving

and praise for the blessings conceded to the human race

in consequence of his petition.

THE TRANSFIXION 459

480. Thereupon Christ our Lord took into his vener

able hands the bread, which lay upon the plate, and in

teriorly asked the permission and co-operation of the

eternal Father, that now and ever afterwards in virtue

of the words about to be uttered by Him, and later to

be repeated in his holy Church, He should really and

truly become present in the host, Himself to yield obe

dience to these sacred words. While making this peti

tion He raised his eyes toward heaven with an expression

of such sublime majesty, that He inspired the Apostles,

the angels and his Virgin Mother with new and deepest

reverence. Then He pronounced the words of conse

cration over the bread, changing its substance into the

substance of his true body and immediately thereupon

He uttered the words of consecration also over the wine,

changing it into his true blood. As an answer to these

words of consecration was heard the voice of the eternal

Father, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I

delight, and shall take my delight to the end of the world;

and He shall be with men during all the time of their

banishment." In like manner was this confirmed by the

Holy Ghost. The most sacred humanity of Christ, in

the Person of the Word, gave tokens of profoundest

veneration to the Divinity contained in the Sacrament

of his body and blood. The Virgin Mother, in her re

treat, prostrated Herself on the ground and adored her

Son in the blessed Sacrament with incomparable rever

ence. Then also the angels of her guard, all the angels

of heaven, and among them likewise the souls of Enoch

and Elias, in their own name and in the name of the

holy Patriarchs and Prophets of the old law, fell down

in adoration of their Lord in the holy Sacrament.

481. All the Apostles and disciples, who, with the

exception of the traitor, believed in this holy Sacrament,

460 CITY OF GOD

adored it with great humility and reverence according to

each one s disposition. The great high priest Christ

raised up his own consecrated body and blood in order

that all who were present at this first Mass might adore

it in a special manner, as they also did. During this

elevation his most pure Mother, saint John, Enoch and

Elias, were favored with an especial insight into the

mystery of his presence in the sacred species. They

understood more profoundly, how, in the species of the

bread, was contained his body and in those of the wine,

his blood; how in both, on account of the inseparable

union of his soul with his body and blood, was present

the living and true Christ; how with the Person of the

Word, was also therein united the Person of the Father

and of the Holy Ghost; and how therefore, on account

of the inseparable existence and union of the Father, Son

and Holy Ghost, the holy Eucharist contained the perfect

humanity of the Lord with the three divine Persons of

the Godhead. All this was understood most profoundly

by the heavenly Lady and by the others according to

their degree. They understood also the efficacy of the

words of the consecration, now endowed with such di

vine virtue, that as soon as they are pronounced with

the intention of doing what Christ did at that time,

by any priest since that time over the proper material,

they would change the bread into his body and the wine

into his blood, leaving the accidents to subsist in a new

way and without their proper subject. They saw, that

this change would take place so certainly and infallibly,

that heaven and earth would sooner fall to pieces, than

that the effect of these words of consecration, when

pronounced in the proper manner by the sacerdotal

minister of Christ, should ever fail.

482. The heavenly Queen understood also by a special

THE TRANSFIXION 461

vision how the most sacred body of Christ is hidden

beneath the accidents of bread and wine without change

in them or alteration of the sacred humanity ; for neither

can the Body be the subject of the accidents, nor can

the accidents be the form of the body. The accidents

retain the same extension and qualities as before, and

each of their parts retain the same position after the host

has been consecrated; and the sacred body is present

in an invisible form, also retaining the same size without

intermingling of parts. It remains in the whole host,

and all of it in every particle of the host, without being

strained by the host, or the host by the body. For

neither is the extension of his body correlative with the

accidental species, nor do they depend upon the sacred

body for their existence. They therefore have a totally

different mode of existence and the body interpenetrates

the accidents without hindrance. Although naturally the

head would demand a different place than the hands, or

these a different one from the breast or any other part

of the body ; yet by the divine power the consecrated body

places itself unimpaired in its extent in one and the same

place, because it bears no relation to the space which it

would naturally occupy, having thrown aside all these

relations though still remaining a quantitative body.

Moreover it need not necessarily remain in one deter

mined place only, or in only one host, but at the same

time it can be present in many innumerable consecrated

hosts.

483. She understood likewise, that the sacred body,

although not naturally depending upon the accidents as

above declared, yet does not continue to exist sacramen-

tally in these accidents after the corruption of the species

of the bread and wine ; and this for no other reason than

because it was so willed by Christ the Author of these

3-31

462 CITY OF GOD

wonders. The co-existence of the sacred body and blood

of our Lord with the incorrupted species of bread and

wine therefore rests upon the arbitrary and voluntary

disposition of the Creator of this Sacrament. As soon

as they deteriorate and disappear on account of the nat

ural process destructive of these species (for instance,

as happens in holy Communion with the sacramental

host, which is changed and corrupted by the heat of the

stomach, or when this is effected by other causes) then

God, in the last instant, when the species are ready for

their last transformation, again creates another substance.

This new substance, being now devoid of the Divinity,

nourishes the human body and finally coalesces with the

human form of existence, which is the soul. This won

derful creation of a new substance for the assumption of

the changed and corrupted species is consequent upon the

will of the Lord, who wishes not to continue the exis

tence of his body in the corrupted accidents, and this pro

cess is demanded also by the laws of nature ; for the sub

stance of man cannot grow except by some other sub

stance, which, being newly added, prevents the accidents

from continuing to exist.

484. All these and other wonders the right hand of

the Almighty perpetuated in this most august sacrament

of the holy Eucharist. All of them the Mistress of

heaven and earth understood and comprehended pro

foundly. In like manner saint John, the Fathers of the

ancient Law, and the Apostles who were present, per

ceived these mysteries each in their degree. Aware of

the great blessing contained therein for all men, Mary

foresaw also the ingratitude of mortals in regard to this

ineffable Sacrament, established for their benefit, and

She resolved to atone, with all the powers of her being,

for our shameless and ungrateful behavior. She took

THE TRANSFIXION 463

upon Herself the duty of rendering thanks to the eternal

Father and to his divine Son for this extraordinary and

wonderful benefit to the human race. This earnest desire

dwelled in her soul during her whole life and many times

did She shed tears of blood welling forth from her purest

heart in order to satisfy for our shameful and torpid

forgetfulness.

485. Still greater was my admiration when Jesus our

God, having raised the most holy Sacrament, as I said

before, for their adoration, divided it by his own sacred

hands, first partook of it Himself as being the First and

Chief of all the priests. Recognizing Himself, as man,

inferior to the Divinity, which He was now to receive

in this his own consecrated body and blood. He humili

ated and, as it were, with a trembling of the inferior part

of his being, shrank within Himself before that Divinity,

thereby not only teaching us the reverence with which

holy Communion is to be received; but also showing us

what was his sorrow at the temerity and presumption of

many men during the reception and handling of this

exalted and sublime Sacrament. The effects of holy

Communion in the body of Christ were altogether mirac

ulous and divine; for during a short space of time the

gifts of glory flowed over in his body just as on mount

Tabor, though the effects of this transfiguration were

manifest only to his blessed Mother, and partly also to

saint John, Enoch and Elias. This was the last conso

lation He permitted his humanity to enjoy as to its in

ferior part during his earthly life, and from that moment

until his Death He rejected all such alleviation. The

Virgin Mother, by a special vision, also understood how

Christ her divine Son received Himself in the blessed

Sacrament and what was the manner of its presence in

his divine Heart. All this caused inestimable affection

in our Queen and Lady.

464 CITY OF GOD

486. While receiving his own body and blood Christ

our Lord composed a canticle of praise to the eternal

Father and offered Himself in the blessed Sacrament as

a sacrifice for the salvation of man. He took another

particle of the consecrated bread and handed it to the

archangel Gabriel who brought and communicated it to

the most holy Mary. By having such a privilege con

ferred on one of their number, the holy angels considered

themselves sufficiently recompensed for being excluded

from the sacerdotal dignity and for yielding it to man.

The privilege of merely having even one of their number

hold the sacramental body of their Lord and true God

filled them with a new and immense joy. In abundant

tears of consolation the great Queen awaited holy Com

munion. When saint Gabriel with innumerable other

angels approached, She received it, the first after her

Son, imitating his self-abasement, reverence and holy

fear. The most blessed Sacrament was deposited in the

breast and above the heart of the most holy Virgin

Mother, as in the most legitimate shrine and tabernacle

of the Most High. There the ineffable sacrament of the

holy Eucharist remained deposited from that hour until

after the Resurrection, when saint Peter said the first

Mass and consecrated anew, as I shall relate in its place.

The Almighty wished to have it so for the consolation

of the great Queen and in order to fulfill his promise,

that He would remain with the children of men until

the consummation of the ages (Matth. 28, 20) ; for

after his death his most holy humanity could not remain

in his Church any other way than by his consecrated body

and blood. This true manna was then deposited in the

most pure Mary as in the living ark together with the

whole evangelical law, just as formerly its prophetic fig

ures were deposited in the ark of Moses (Heb. 9, 4).

THE TRANSFIXION 465

The sacramental species were not consumed or altered in

the heart of the Lady and Queen of heaven until the

next consecration. Having received holy Communion,

the blessed Mother gave thanks to the eternal Father and

to her divine Son in new canticles similar to the ones the

incarnate Word had rendered to his Father.

487. After having thus favored the heavenly Princess,

our Savior distributed the sacramental bread to the Apos

tles (Luke 22, 17), commanding them to divide it among

themselves and partake of it. By this commandment He

conferred upon them the sacerdotal dignity and they

began to exercise it by giving Communion each to Him

self. This they did with the greatest reverence, shedding

copious tears and adoring the body and blood of our

Lord, whom they were receiving. They were established

in the power of the priesthood, as being founders of the

holy Church and enjoying the distinction of priority over

all others (Ephes. 2, 20). Then saint Peter, at the com

mand of Christ the Lord, administered two of the par

ticles of holy Communion to the two patriarchs, Enoch

and Elias. This holy Communion so rejoiced these two

holy men, that they were encouraged anew in their hope

of the beatific vision, which for them was to be deferred

for so many ages, and they were strengthened to live on

in this hope until the end of the world. Having given

most fervent and humble thanks to the Almighty for

this blessing, they were brought back to their abiding-

place by the hands of the holy angels. The Lord desired

to work this miracle in order to pledge Himself to in

clude the ancient natural and written laws in the benefits

of the Incarnation, Redemption and general resurrection ;

since all these mysteries were contained in the most holy

Eucharist. By thus communicating Himself to the two

holy men, Enoch and Elias, who were still in their mortal

466 CITY OF GOD

flesh, these blessings were extended over the human race

such as it existed under the natural and the written laws,

while all the succeeding generations were to be included

in the new law of grace, the Apostles at the head. This

was all well understood by Enoch and Elias, and, return

ing to the midst of their contemporaries, they gave thanks

to their and our Redeemer for this mysterious blessing.

488. Another very wonderful miracle happened at the

Communion of the Apostles. The perfidious and treach

erous Judas, hearing the command of his Master to par

take of holy Communion, resolved in his unbelief not to

comply, but if he could do so without being observed,

determined to secrete the sacred body and bring it to

the priests and pharisees in order to afford them a chance

of incriminating Jesus by showing them what He had

called his own body ; or if he should not succeed therein,

to consummate some other vile act of malice with the

divine Sacrament. The Mistress and Queen of heaven,

who by a clear vision was observing all that passed and

knew the interior and exterior effects and affections in

the Apostles at holy Communion, saw also the accursed

intentions of the obstinate Judas. All the zeal for the

glory of her Lord, existing in Her as his Mother, Spouse

and Daughter, was aroused in her purest heart. Knowing

that it was the divine will, that She should make use of

her power as Mother and Queen, She commanded the

holy angels to extract from the mouth of Judas the con

secrated particles as well of the bread as of the wine

and replace them from whence they had been taken. It

well befitted Her on this occasion to defend the honor of

her divine Son and prevent Judas from heaping such an

ignominious injury upon Christ the Lord. The holy

angels obeyed their Queen, and when it was the turn of

Judas to communicate, they withdrew the consecrated

THE TRANSFIXION 467

species one after the other, and, purifying them from

their contact with Judas, the most wicked of living men,

they restored them to their place, altogether unobserved

by the disciples. Thus the Lord shielded the honor of

his malicious and obstinate Apostle to the end. This was

attended to by the angels in the shortest space of time

and the others then received holy Communion, for Judas

was neither the first nor the last to communicate. Then

our Savior offered thanks to the eternal Father and there

with ended both the legal and the sacramental Supper

in order to begin the mysteries of his Passion, which I

will relate in the subsequent chapters. The Queen of

heaven attended to all full of wonder and joyful praise,

magnifying the Most High.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN

OF HEAVEN.

489. O my daughter ! Would that the believers in the

holy Catholic faith opened their hardened and stony

hearts in order to attain to a true understanding of the

sacred and mysterious blessing of the holy Eucharist!

If they would only detach themselves, root out and reject

their earthly inclinations, and, restraining their passions,

apply themselves with living faith to study by the divine

light their great happiness in thus possessing their eternal

God in the holy Sacrament and in being able, by its

reception and constant intercourse, to participate in the

full effects of this heavenly manna! If they would only

worthily esteem this precious gift, begin to taste its

sweetness, and share in the hidden power of their omnip

otent God ! Then nothing would ever be wanting to them

in their exile. In this, the happy age of the law of grace,

mortals have no reason to complain of their weakness

and their passions; since in this bread of heaven they

468 CITY OF GOD

have at hand strength and health. It matters not that

they are tempted and persecuted by the demon; for by

receiving this Sacrament frequently they are enabled to

overcome him gloriously. The faithful are themselves

to blame for all their poverty and labors, since they pay

no attention to this divine mystery, nor avail themselves

of the divine powers, thus placed at their disposal by my

most holy Son. I tell thee truly, my dearest, that Lucifer

and his demons have such a fear of the most holy Eucha

rist, that to approach it, causes them more torments than

to remain in hell itself. Although they do enter churches

in order to tempt souls, they enter them with aversion,

forcing themselves to endure cruel pains in the hope of

destroying a soul and drawing it into sin, especially in

the holy places and in the presence of the holy Eucha

rist. Their wrath against the Lord and against the souls

alone could induce them to expose themselves to the tor

ment of his real sacramental presence.

490. Whenever He is carried through the streets they

usually fly and disperse in all haste ; and they would not

dare to approach those that accompany Him, if by their

long experience they did not know, that they will induce

some to forget the reverence due to their Lord. There

fore they make special efforts to tempt the faithful in the

churches; for they know what great injury they can

thereby do to the Lord himself, who in his sacramental

love is there waiting to sanctify men and to receive the

return of his sweetest and untiring love. Hence thou

canst also understand the strength of those who prepare

themselves to partake of this bread of the angels and how

the demons fear the souls, who receive the Lord worthily

and devoutly and who strive to preserve themselves in

this purity until the next Communion. But there are

very few who live with this intention, and the enemy is

THE TRANSFIXION 469

ceaselessly alert in striving to throw them back into their

forget fulness, distraction and indifference, so that he

may not be obliged to encounter such powerful weapons

in the hands of men. Write this admonition in thy

heart; and since without thy merit the Almighty has

ordained, that thou receive holy Communion daily, seek

by all possible means to preserve thyself in the good dis

positions from one Communion to the other. It is the

will of the Lord and my own, that with this sword thou

fight the battles of the Almighty in the name of the holy

Church against the invisible enemies. For in our days

they are heaping affliction and sorrow upon the mistress

of nations, while there is none to console her or to take

it to heart (Thren. 1,1). Do thou thyself weep for

the same reason and let thy heart be torn in sorrow.

But while the omnipotent and just Judge who is so

greatly incensed against the Catholics for having out

raged his justice by their unmeasurable and continual

transgressions even under the aegis of their grand faith,

none are found to consider and weigh the fearful damage,

nor to approach the easy remedy of receiving the holy

Eucharist with a contrite and humble heart ; nor does any

one ask for my intercession.

491. Though all the children of the Church largely

incur this fault, yet more to be blamed are the un

worthy and wicked priests; for by the irreverence with

which they treat the blessed Sacrament the other Catho

lics have been drawn to undervalue it. If the people see

that their priests approach the divine mysteries with holy

fear and trembling, they learn to treat and receive their

God in like manner. Those that so honor Him shall shine

in heaven like the sun among the stars ; for the glory of

my divine Son s humanity will redound in a special

measure in those who have behaved well toward Him

470 CITY OF GOD

in the blessed Sacrament and have received Him with

all reverence ; whereas this will not happen to those who

have not frequented this holy table with devotion. More

over the devout will bear on their breast, where they

have so often harbored the holy Eucharist, most beauti

ful and resplendent inscriptions, showing that they were

most worthy tabernacles of the holy Sacrament. This

will be a great accidental reward for them and a source

of jubilation and admiration for the holy angels and all

the rest of the blessed. They will also enjoy the special

favor of being able to penetrate deeper into the mystery

of the presence of the Lord in the sacrament and to

understand all the rest of the wonders hidden therein.

This will be such a privilege, that it alone would suffice

for their eternal happiness, even if there were no other

enjoyment in heaven. Moreover the essential glory of

those, who have worthily and devoutly received the holy

Eucharist, will in several respects exceed the glory of

many martyrs who have not received the body and blood

of the Lord.

492. I wish thee also to hear, my dearest daughter,

from my own mouth, what were my sentiments when

in mortal life I was about to receive holy Communion.

In order that thou mayest better understand what I say,

reflect on all I have commanded thee to write about my

gifts, merits and labors in life. I was preserved from

original sin and, at the instant of my Conception, I

received the knowledge and vision of the Divinity, as

thou hast often recorded. I knew more than all the

saints ; I surpassed the highest seraphim in love ; I never

committed any fault; I constantly practiced all the vir

tues in a heroic degree and in the least of them I was

greater than all the saints in their highest perfection;

the intention and object of my actions were most exalted

THE TRANSFIXION 471

and my habits and gifts were noble without measure;

I imitated my most holy Son most closely; I labored

most faithfully; I suffered with eagerness and co-oper

ated with the doings of the Lord exactly as was becoming

to me; I ceased not to exercise my love and gain new

and supereminent merits of grace. Yet I thought my

self to have been fully repaid by being allowed to receive

Him even once in the holy Eucharist ; yea, I did not con

sider myself worthy of this one favor. Reflect then

what should be thy sentiments, and those of the rest of

the children of Adam, on being admitted to the reception

of this admirable Sacrament. And if for the greatest

of saints one holy Communion is a superabundant re

ward, what must the priests and the faithful think, when

they are allowed to receive it so frequently? Open thy

eyes in the deep darkness and blindness which over

whelm men around thee, and raise them up to the divine

brightness in order to understand these mysteries. Look

upon all thy works as insufficient, all thy sufferings as

most insignificant, all thy thanksgiving as falling far

short of what thou owest for such an exquisite blessing

as that of possessing in the holy Church, Christ my

divine Son, present in the holy Sacrament in order to

enrich all the faithful. If thou hast not wherewith to

show thy thanks for this and the other blessings which

thou receivest, at least humiliate thyself to the dust and

remain prostrate upon it; confess thyself unworthy in

all the sincerity of thy heart. Magnify the Most High,

bless and praise Him, preserving thyself at all times

worthy to receive Him and to suffer many martyrdoms

in return for such a favor.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PRAYER OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN AND ITS

MYSTERIES. WHAT HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER KNEW

OF IT.

493. By the wonderful mysteries, which our Savior

Jesus had celebrated in the Cenacle, the reign which,

according to his inscrutable decree, his eternal Father had

consigned to Him, was well established; and the Thurs

day night of his last Supper having already advanced

some hours, He chose to go forth to that dreadful battle

of his suffering and death by which the Redemption was

to be accomplished. The Lord then rose to depart from

the hall of the miraculous feast and also most holy

Mary left her retreat in order to meet Him on the way.

At this face to face meeting of the Prince of eternity

and of the Queen, a sword of sorrow pierced the heart

of Son and Mother, inflicting a pang of grief beyond

all human and angelic thought. The sorrowful Mother

threw Herself at the feet of Jesus, adoring Him as her

true God and Redeemer. The Lord, looking upon Her

with a majesty divine and at the same time with the

overflowing love of a Son, spoke to Her only these

words : "My Mother, I shall be with thee in tribulation ;

let Us accomplish the will of the eternal Father and the

salvation of men." The great Queen offered Herself

as a sacrifice with her whole heart and asked his bless

ing. Having received this She returned to her retire

ment, where, by a special favor of the Lord, She was

enabled to see all that passed in connection with her

472

THE TRANSFIXION 473

divine Son. Thus She was enabled to accompany Him

and co-operate with Him in his activity as far as de

volved upon Her. The owner of the house, who was

present at this meeting, moved by a divine impulse,

offered his house and all that it contained to the Mistress

of heaven, asking Her to make use of all that was his

during her stay in Jerusalem; and the Queen accepted

his offer with humble thanks. The thousand angels of

her guard, in forms visible to Her, together with some of

the pious women of her company, remained with the Lady.

494. Our Redeemer and Master left the house of the

Cenacle with all the men, who had been present at the

celebration of the mysterious Supper; and soon many of

them dispersed in the different streets in order to attend

to their own affairs. Followed by his twelve Apostles,

the Lord directed his steps toward mount Olivet outside

and close to the eastern walls of Jerusalem. Judas,

alert in his treacherous solicitude for the betrayal of his

divine Master, conjectured that Jesus intended to pass

the night in prayer as was his custom. This appeared

to him a most opportune occasion for delivering his

Master into the hands of his confederates, the scribes and

the pharisees. Having taken this dire resolve, he lagged

behind and permitted the Master and his Apostles to

proceed. Unnoticed by the latter he lost them from

view and departed in all haste to his own ruin and de

struction. Within him was the turmoil of sudden fear

and anxiety, interior witnesses of the wicked deed he

was about to commit. Driven on in the stormy hurri

cane of thoughts raised by his bad conscience, he arrived

breathless at the house of the high priests. On the way

it happened, that Lucifer, perceiving the haste of Judas

in procuring the death of Jesus Christ, and (as I have re

lated in chapter the tenth), fearing that after all Jesus

474 CITY OF GOD

might be the true Messias, came toward him in the shape

of a very wicked man, a friend of Judas acquainted with

the intended betrayal. In this shape Lucifer could speak

to Judas without being recognized. He tried to persuade

him that this project of selling his Master did at first

seem advisable on account of the wicked deeds attributed

to Jesus ; but that, having more maturely considered the

matter, he did not now deem it advisable to deliver Him

over to the priests and pharisees; for Jesus was not so

bad as Judas might imagine; nor did He deserve death;

and besides He might free Himself by some miracles and

involve his betrayer into great difficulties.

495. Thus Lucifer, seized by new fear, sought to

counteract the suggestions with which he had previously

filled the heart of the perfidious disciple against his

Author. He hoped to confuse his victim; but his new

villainy was in vain. For Judas, having voluntarily lost

his faith and not being troubled by any such strong sus

picions as Lucifer, preferred to take his Master s life

rather than to encounter the wrath of the pharisees for

permitting Him to live unmolested. Filled with this fear

and his abominable avarice, he took no account of the

counsel of Lucifer, although he had no suspicion of his

not being the friend, whose shape the devil had assumed.

Being stripped of grace he neither desired, nor could be

persuaded by any one, to turn back in his malice. The

priests, having heard that the Author of life was in

Jerusalem, had gathered to consult about the promised

betrayal. Judas entered and told them that he had left

his Master with the other disciples on their way to

mount Olivet; that this seemed to be the most favorable

occasion for his arrest, since on this night they had al

ready made sufficient preparation and taken enough pre

caution to prevent his escaping their hands by his arti-

THE TRANSFIXION 475

fices and cunning tricks. The sacrilegious priests were

much rejoiced and began to busy themselves to procure

an armed force for the arrest of the most innocent Lamb.

496. In the meanwhile our divine Lord with the eleven

Apostles was engaged in the work of our salvation and

the salvation of those who were scheming his death. Un

heard of and wonderful contest between the deepest mal

ice of man and the unmeasurable goodness and charity of

God! If this stupendous struggle between good and

evil began with the first man, it certainly reached its

highest point in the death of the Repairer ; for then good

and evil stood face to face and exerted their highest pow

ers : human malice in taking away the life and honor of

the Creator and Redeemer, and his immense charity freely

sacrificing both for men. According to our way of rea

soning, it was as it were necessary that the most holy

soul of Christ, yea that even his Divinity, should revert

to his blessed Mother, in order that He might find some

object in creation, in which his love should be recon&gt;

pensed and some excuse for disregarding the dictates of

his justice. For in this Creature alone could He expect

to see his Passion and Death bring forth full fruit; in

her immeasurable holiness did his justice find some com

pensation for human malice; and in the humility and

constant charity of this great Lady could be deposited

the treasures of his merits, so that afterwards, as the

new Phcenix from the rekindled ashes, his Church might

arise from his sacrifice. The consolation which the

humanity of Christ drew from the certainty of his

blessed Mother s holiness gave Him strength and, as it

were, new courage to conquer the malice of mortals ; and

He counted Himself well recompensed for suffering such

atrocious pains by the fact that to mankind belonged also

his most beloved Mother.

476 CITY OF GOD

497. All that happened the great Lady observed from

her retreat. She perceived the sinister thoughts of the

obstinate Judas, how he separated himself from the rest

of the Apostles, how Lucifer spoke to him in the shape

of his acquaintance, and all the rest that passed when

he reached the priests and helped them to arrange with

so much haste the capture of the Lord. The sorrow

which then penetrated the chaste heart of the Virgin

Mother, the acts of virtue which She elicited at the sight

of such wickedness, and what else She then did, cannot

be properly explained by us ; we can only say that in all

She acted with the plenitude of wisdom and holiness,

and with the approbation of the most holy Trinity. She

pitied Judas and wept over the loss of that perfidious

disciple. She sought to make recompense for his malice

by adoring, confessing, praising and loving the Lord,

whom he delivered by such fiendish and insulting

treachery. She offered Herself with eagerness to die in

her Son s stead, if necessary. She prayed for those who

were plotting the capture and death of her divine Lamb,

for She regarded them as prizes to be estimated accord

ing to the infinite value of his precious life-blood for

which this most prudent Lady foresaw they would be

bought.

498. Our Savior pursued his way across the torrent of

Cedron (John 18, 1) to mount Olivet and entered the

garden of Gethsemane. Then He said to all the Apos

tles : "Wait for Me, and seat yourselves here while I go

a short distance from here to pray (Matth. 26, 36) ; do

you also pray, in order that you may not enter into temp

tation" (Luke 22, 40). The divine Master gave them

this advice, in order that they might be firm in the temp

tations, of which He had spoken to them at the Supper:

that all of them should be scandalized on account of what

THE TRANSFIXION 477

they should see Him suffer that night, that Satan would

assail them to sift and stir them up by his false sug

gestions; for the Pastor (as prophesied) was to be

illtreated and wounded and the sheep were to be dis

persed (Zach. 13, 7). Then the Master of life, leav

ing the band of eight Apostles at that place and taking

with Him saint Peter, saint John, and saint James, re

tired to another place, where they could neither be seen

nor heard by the rest (Mark 14, 33). Being with the

three Apostles He raised his eyes up to the eternal

Father confessing and praising Him as was his custom ;

while interiorly He prayed in fulfillment of the prophecy,

of Zacharias, permitting death to approach the most in

nocent of men and commanding the sword of divine

justice to be unsheathed over the Shepherd and descend

upon the Godman with all its deathly force. In this

prayer Christ our Lord offered Himself anew to the

eternal Father in satisfaction of his justice for the rescue

of the human race; and He gave consent, that all the

torments of his Passion and Death be let loose over

that part of his human being, which was capable of suf

fering. From that moment He suspended and re

strained whatever consolation or relief would otherwise

overflow from the impassible to the passible part of his

being, so that in this dereliction his passion and sufferings

might reach the highest degree possible. The eternal

Father granted these petitions and approved this total

sacrifice of the sacred humanity.

499. This prayer was as it were the floodgate through

which the rivers of his suffering were to find entrance

like the resistless onslaught of the ocean, as was foretold

by David (Ps. 68, 2). And immediately He began to

be sorrowful and feel the anguish of his soul and there

fore said to the Apostles: "My soul is sorrowful unto

3-32

478 CITY OF GOD .

death" (Mark 14, 34). As these words and the sorrow

of Christ our Lord contain such great mysteries for our

instruction, I will say something of what has been shown

me and as far as I can understand concerning them. The

Lord permitted this sorrow to reach the highest degree

both naturally and miraculously possible in his sacred

humanity. This sorrow penetrated not only all the

lower faculties of his human life in so far as his natural

appetites were concerned; but also all the highest facul

ties of his body and soul, by which He perceived the in

scrutable judgments and decrees of the divine justice,

and the reprobation of so many, for whom He was to

die. This was indeed by far the greater source of his

sorrow, as we shall see farther on. He did not say that

He was sorrowful on account of his death, but. unto

death; for the sorrow naturally arising from the repug

nance to the death He was about to undergo, was a

minor fear. The sacrifice of his natural life, besides

being necessary for our Redemption, was also demanded

as a return for the joy of having in his human body ex

perienced the glory of the Transfiguration. On account of

the glory then communicated to his sacred body He held

Himself bound to subject it to suffering, deeming that a

recompense of what He had received. This we see veri

fied also in the three Apostles, who were witnesses as

well of the glorious as of the sorrowful mystery. This

they themselves now understood, being informed thereof

by an especial enlightenment.

500. Moreover the immense love of our Savior for us

demanded that full sway be given to this mysterious sor

row. For if He had caused it to stop short of the high

est which that sorrow was capable of, his love would

not have rested satisfied, nor would it have been so evi

dent that his love was not to be extinguished by the mul-

THE TRANSFIXION 479 ;

titude of tribulations (Cant. 8, 7). At the same time He

showed thereby his charity toward the Apostles, who

were with Him and were now much disturbed by per

ceiving, that his hour of suffering and death, which He

had so often and in so many ways foretold them, was

now at hand. This interior disturbance and fear con

founded and confused them without their daring to

speak of it. Therefore the most loving Savior sought

to put them more at rest by manifesting to them his own

sorrow unto death. By the sight of his own affliction

and anxiety they were to take heart at the fears and

anxieties of their own souls. There was still another

mystery contained in this sorrow of the Lord, which re

ferred especially to the three Apostles, saint Peter, John

and James. For, more than all the rest, they were im

bued with an exalted conception of the greatness and

Divinity of their Master as far as the excellence of his

doctrine, the holiness of his works, and the power of

his miracles were concerned. They realized more com

pletely and wondered more deeply at his dominion over

all creation. In order that they might be confirmed in

their belief of his being a man capable of suffering,

it was befitting that they should know as eye-witnesses

his truly human sorrow and affliction. By the testimony

of these three Apostles who were distinguished by such

favors, the holy Church was afterwards to be well forti

fied against the errors, which the devil would try to

spread against the belief in the humanity of Christ our

Savior. Thus would the rest of the faithful have the

consolation of this firmly established belief in their own

affliction and sorrow.

501. Interiorly enlightened in this truth, the three

Apostles were exhorted by the Author of life by the

words : "Wait for Me, watch and pray with Me." He

480 CITY OF GOD

wished to inculcate the practice of all that He had taught

them and to make them constant in their belief. He

thereby reminded them of the danger of backsliding

and of the duty of watchfulness and prayer in order to

recognize and resist the enemy, remaining always firm

in the hope of seeing his name exalted after the ignominy

of his Passion. With this exhortation the Lord separated

Himself a short distance from the three Apostles. He

threw himself with his divine face upon the ground and

prayed to the eternal Father: "Father, if it is possible,

let this chalice pass from Me" (Matth. 26, 38). This

prayer Christ our Lord uttered, though He had come

down from heaven with the express purpose of really

suffering and dying for men; though He had counted

as naught the shame of his Passion, had willingly em

braced it and rejected all human consolation; though

He was hastening with most ardent love into the jaws

of death, to affronts, sorrows and afflictions ; though He

had set such a high price upon men, that He determined

to redeem them at the shedding of his life-blood. Since

by virtue of his divine and human wisdom and his in

extinguishable love He had shown Himself so superior

to the natural fear of death, that it seems this petition

did not arise from any motive solely coming from Him

self. That this was so in fact, was made known to me

in the light which was vouchsafed me concerning the

mysteries contained in this prayer of the Savior.

502. In order to explain what I mean, I must state,

that on this occasion Jesus treated with the eternal

Father about an affair, which was by far the most

important of all, namely, in how far the Redemption

gained by his Passion and Death should affect the hidden

predestination of the saints. In this prayer Christ

offered, on his part, to the eternal Father his torments,

THE TRANSFIXION 481

his precious blood and his Death for all men as an

abundant price for all the mortals and for each one of

the human born till that time and yet to be born to the

end of the world; and, on the part of mankind, He pre

sented the infidelity, ingratitude and contempt with which

sinful man was to respond to his frightful Passion and

Death; He presented also the loss which He was to

sustain from those who would not profit by his clemency

and condemn themselves to eternal woe. Though to die

for his friends and for the predestined was pleasing to

Him and longingly desired by our Savior; yet to die for

the reprobate was indeed bitter and painful; for with

regard to them the impelling motive for accepting the

pains of death was wanting. This sorrow was what the

Lord called a chalice, for the Hebrews were accustomed

to use this word for signifying anything that implied

great labor and pain. The Savior himself had already

used this word on another occasion, when in speaking to

the sons of Zebedee He asked them : whether they could

drink the chalice, which the Son of man was to drink

(Matth 20, 22). This chalice then was so bitter for

Christ our Lord, because He knew that his drinking it

would not only be without fruit for the reprobate, but

would be a scandal to them and redound to their greater

chastisement and pain on account of their despising it

(I Cor. 1, 23).

503. I understood therefore that in this prayer. Christ

besought his Father to let this chalice of dying for the

reprobate pass from Him. Since now his Death was

not to be evaded, He asked that none, if possible, should

be lost; He pleaded, that as his Redemption would be

superabundant for all, that therefore it should be

applied to all in such a way as to make all, if possible,

profit by it in an efficacious manner; and if this was not

482 CITY OF GOD

possible, He would resign Himself to the will of his

eternal Father. Our Savior repeated this prayer three

times at different intervals (Matth. 26, 44), pleading

the longer in his agony in view of the importance and

immensity of the object in question (Luke 22, 43).

According to our way of understanding, there was a con

tention or altercation between the most sacred humanity

and the Divinity of Christ. For this humanity, in its

intense love for men who were of his own nature, de

sired that all should attain eternal salvation through his

Passion; while his Divinity, in its secret and high judg

ments, had fixed the number of the predestined and in

its divine equity could not concede its blessings to those

who so much despised them, and who, of their own free

will, made themselves unworthy of eternal life by repel

ling the kind intentions of Him who procured and offered

it to them. From this conflict arose the agony of Christ,

in which He prayed so long and in which He appealed

so earnestly to the power and majesty of his omnipotent

and eternal Father.

504. This agony of Christ our Savior grew in propor

tion to the greatness of his charity and the certainty of

his knowledge, that men would persist in neglecting to

profit by his Passion and Death (Luke 22, 44). His

agony increased to such an extent, that great drops of

bloody sweat were pressed from Him, which flowed to

the very earth. Although this prayer was uttered sub-!

ject to a condition and failed in regard to the reprobate 1

who fell under this condition; yet He gained thereby a|

greater abundance and secured a greater frequency of

favors for mortals. Through it the blessings were mul

tiplied for those who placed no obstacles, the fruits of

the Redemption were applied to the saints and to the

just more abundantly, and many gifts and graces, of

THE TRANSFIXION 483

which the reprobates made themselves unworthy, were

diverted to the elect. The human will of Christ, con

forming itself to that of the Divinity, then accepted suf

fering for each respectively : for the reprobate, as suffi

cient to procure them the necessary help, if they would

make use of its merits, and for the predestined, as an

efficacious means, of which they would avail themselves

to secure their salvation by co-operating with grace.

Thus was set in order, and as it were realized, the sal

vation of the mystical body of his holy Church, of which

Christ the Lord was the Creator and Head.

505. As a ratification of this divine decree, while yet

our Master was in his agony, the eternal Father for the

third time sent the archangel Michael to the earth in

order to comfort Him by a sensible message and con

firmation of what He already knew by the infused

science of his most holy soul; for the angel could not

tell our Lord anything He did not know, nor could he

produce any additional effect on his interior conscious

ness for this purpose. But, as I related above (No.

498), Christ had suspended the consolation, which He

could have derived from his human nature from this

knowledge and love, leaving it to its full capacity for

suffering, as He afterwards also expressed Himself on

the Cross (No. 684). In lieu of this alleviation and

comfort, which He had denied Himself, He was recom

pensed to a certain extent, as far as his human senses

were concerned, by this embassy of the archangel. He

received an experimental knowledge of what He had

before known by interior consciousness; for the actual

experience is something superadded and new and is cal

culated to move the sensible and bodily faculties. Saint

Michael, in the name of the eternal Father, intimated

and represented to Him in audible words, what He al-

484 CITY OF GOD

ready knew, that it was not possible for those to be

saved who were unwilling; that the complaisance of the

eternal Father in the number of the just, although

smaller than the number of the reprobate was great;

that among the former was his most holy Mother, a

worthy fruit of his Redemption; that his Redemption

would also bear its fruits in the Patriarchs, Prophets,

Apostles, Martyrs, Virgins and Confessors, who should

signalize themselves in his love and perform admirable

works for the exaltation of the name of the Most High.

Among these the angel moreover mentioned some of the

founders of religious orders and the deeds of each one.

Many other great and hidden sacraments were touched

upon by the archangel, which it is not necessary to

mention here, nor have I any command to do so; and

therefore what I have already said, will suffice for con

tinuing the thread of this history.

506. During the intervals of Christ s prayer, the

Evangelists say, He returned to visit the Apostles and

exhort them to watch and pray lest they enter into temp

tation (Matth. 14, 41 ; Mark 14, 38; Luke 22, 42). This

the most vigilant Pastor did in order to show the digni

taries of his Church what care and supervision they were

to exercise over their flocks. For if Christ, on account

of his solicitude for them interrupted his prayer, which

was so important, it was in order to teach them, how

they must postpone other enterprises and interests to

the salvation of their subjects. In order to understand

the need of the Apostles, I must mention, that the in

fernal dragon, after having been routed from the Cen-

acle and forced into the infernal caverns, was per

mitted by the Savior again to come forth, in order that

he might, by his malicious attempts, help to fulfill the

decrees of the Lord. At one fell swoop many of these

THE TRANSFIXION 485

demons rushed to meet Judas and, in the manner already

described, to hinder him, if possible, from consummating

the treacherous bargain. As they could not dissuade

him, they turned their attention to the other Apostles,

suspecting that they had received some great favor at

the hands of the Lord in the Cenacle. What this favor

was Lucifer sought to find out, in order to counteract

it. Our Savior saw this cruelty and wrath of the prince

of darkness and his ministers ; therefore as a most loving

Father and vigilant Superior He hastened to the assist

ance of his little children and newly acquired subjects,

his Apostles. He roused them and exhorted them to

watch and pray against their enemies, in order that they

might not enter unawares and unprovided into the threat

ening temptation.

507. He returned therefore to the three Apostles,

who, having been more favored, also had more reasons

for watchfulness in imitation of their Master. But He

found them asleep; for they had allowed themselves to

be overcome by insidious disgust and sorrow and in it

had been seized by such a remissness and lukewarmness,

that they fell asleep. Before speaking to them or waking

them, the Lord looked at them for a moment and wept

over them. For He saw them oppressed and buried in

this deathly shade by their own sloth and negligence.

He spoke to Peter and said to him: "Simon, sleepest

thou? couldst not thou watch one hour?" And imme

diately He gave him and the others the answer : "Watch

ye, and pray that you enter not into temptation (Mark

14, 37) ; for my enemies and your enemies sleep not as

you do." That He reprehended Peter especially was

not only because he was placed as head of the rest, and

not only because he had most loudly protested that he

would not deny Him and was ready to die for Him,

486 CITY OF GOD

though all the others should be scandalized in Him and

leave Him; but also because Peter, having from his

whole heart made freely these protests, deserved to be

corrected and admonished before all the rest. For no

doubt the Lord chastises those whom He loves and is

always pleased by our good resolutions, even when we

afterwards fall short in their execution, as happened

with the most fervent of all the Apostles, saint Peter.

When the Lord came the third time and woke up all

the twelve, Judas was already approaching in order to

deliver Him into the hands of his enemies, as I shall

relate in the next chapter.

508. Let us now return to the Cenacle, where the

Queen of heaven had retired with the holy women of

her company. From her retreat, by divine enlighten

ment, She saw most clearly all the mysteries and doings

of her most holy Son in the garden. At the moment

when the Savior separated Himself with the three Apos

tles Peter, John and James, the heavenly Queen sepa

rated Herself from the other women and went into an

other room. Upon leaving them She exhorted them to

pray and watch lest they enter into temptation, but She

took with Her the three Marys, treating Mary Magda

len as the superior of the rest. Secluding Herself with

these three as her more intimate companions, She begged

the eternal Father to suspend in Her all human allevia

tion and comfort, both in the sensitive and in the spir

itual part of her being, so that nothing might hinder Her

from suffering to the highest degree in union with her

divine Son. She prayed that She might be permitted

to feel and participate in her virginal body all the pains

of the wounds and tortures about to be undergone by

Jesus. This petition was granted by the blessed Trinity

and the Mother in consequence suffered all the torments

THE TRANSFIXION 487

of her most holy Son in exact duplication, as I shall

relate later. Although they were such, that, if the right

hand of the Almighty had not preserved Her, they would

have caused her death many times over; yet, on the

other hand, these sufferings, inflicted by God himself,

were like a pledge and a new lease of life. For in her

most ardent love She would have considered it incom

parably more painful to see her divine Son suffer and

die without being allowed to share in his torments.

509. The three Marys were instructed by the Queen

to accompany and assist Her in her affliction, and for

this purpose they were endowed with greater light and

grace than the other women. In retiring with them the

most pure Mother began to feel unwonted sorrow and

anguish and She said to them: "My soul is sorrowful,

because my beloved Son is about to suffer and die, and

it is not permitted me to suffer and die of his torments.

Pray, my friends, in order that you may not be over

come by temptation." Having said this She went apart

a short distance from them, and following the Lord in

his supplications. She, as far as was possible to Her and

as far as She knew it to be conformable to the human

will of her Son, continued her prayers and petitions,

feeling the same agony as that of the Savior in the gar

den. She also returned at the same intervals to her

companions to exhort them, because She knew of the

wrath of the demon against them. She wept at the per

dition of the foreknown; for She was highly enlight

ened in the mysteries of eternal predestination and repro

bation. In order to imitate and co-operate in all things

with the Redeemer of the world, the great Lady also

suffered a bloody sweat, similar to that of Jesus in the

garden, and by divine intervention She was visited by

the archangel saint Gabriel, as Christ her Son was vis-

488 CITY OF GOD

ited by the archangel Michael. The holy prince ex

pounded to Her the will of the Most High in the same

manner as saint Michael had expounded it to Christ

the Lord. In both of Them the prayer offered and the

cause of sorrow was the same ; and therefore They were

also proportionally alike to one another in their actions

and in their knowledge. I was made to understand that

the most prudent Lady was provided with some cloths

for what was to happen in the Passion of her most be

loved Son; and on this occasion She sent some of her

angels with a towel to the garden in which her Son was

then perspiring blood, in order to wipe off and dry his

venerable countenance. The Lord, for love of his

Mother and for her greater merit, permitted these min

isters of the Most High to fulfill her pious and tender

wishes. When the moment for the capture of our

Savior had arrived, it was announced to the three Marys

by the sorrowful Mother. All three bewailed this in

dignity with most bitter tears, especially Mary Magda

len, who signalized herself in tenderest love and piety

for her Master.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY, THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, GAVE ME.

510. My daughter, all that thou hast understood and

written in this chapter will serve as a most potent incen

tive to thee and to all the mortals who will consider it

carefully. Estimate then, and weigh within thy soul,

how important is the eternal predestination or reproba

tion of the souls, since my most holy Son looked upon

it with such great anxiety, that the difficulty or impossi

bility of saving all men added such immense bitterness to

the Death, which He was about to suffer for all. By

this conflict He manifests to us the importance and grav-

THE TRANSFIXION 489

ity of the matter under consideration, He prolonged his

supplications and prayers to his eternal Father and his

love for men caused his most precious blood to ooze

forth from his body on perceiving, that the malice of

men would make them unworthy of participation in the

benefits of his Death. The Lord my Son has indeed

justified his cause in thus having lavished his love and

his merits without measure for the purchase of man s

salvation; and likewise the eternal Father has justified

Himself in presenting to the world such a remedy and

in having made it possible for each one freely to reach

out for such widely different lots, as death and life, fire

and water (Eccli. 15, 71).

511. But what pretense or excuse will men advance

for having forgotten their own eternal salvation, when

my divine Son and I have desired and sought to procure

it for them with such sacrifices and untiring watchful

ness? None of the mortals will have any excuse for

their foolish negligence, and much less will the children

of the holy Church have an excuse, since they have re

ceived the faith of these admirable sacraments and yet

show in their lives little difference from that of infidels

and pagans. Do not think, my daughter, that it is writ

ten in vain: "Many are called, but few are chosen"

(Matth. 20, 16) : fear this sentence and renew in thy

heart the care and zeal for thy salvation, conformable

to the sense of obligation arising from the knowledge

of such high mysteries. Even if it were not a question

of eternal salvation for thee, thou shouldst correspond

to the loving kindness with which I manifest to thee such

great and divine secrets. That I call thee my daughter

and a spouse of my Lord, should cause thee to pay no

attention to any visible thing and embrace only love

and suffering for his sake. This I have shown thee by

490

CITY OF GOD

my example, since I applied all my faculties continually

to these two things with the highest perfection. In order

that thou mayest attain this, I wish that thy prayer be

without intermission and that thou watch one hour with

me, that is during the whole of thy life; for, compared

with eternity, life is less than one hour, yea less than

one moment. With such sentiments I wish that thou

follow up the mysteries of the Passion, writing them,

feeling them and imprinting them upon thy heart.

CHAPTER XIII.

OUR SAVIOR IS DELIVERED INTO THE HANDS OF HIS

ENEMIES BY THE TREASON OF JUDAS AND IS TAKEN

PRISONER; THE BEHAVIOR OF THE MOST HOLY MARY

ON THIS OCCASION AND SOME OF THE MYSTERIES OF

THIS EVENT.

512. While our Savior occupied Himself in praying

to his Father for the spiritual salvation of the human

race, the perfidious disciple Judas sought to hasten the

delivery of Christ into the hands of the priests and

pharisees. At the same time Lucifer and his demons,

not being able to divert the perverse will of Judas and

of the other enemies of Christ from their designs on

the life of Christ their Creator and Master, changed the

tactics of their satanic malice and began to incite the

Jews to greater cruelty and effrontery in their dealings

with the Savior. As I have already said several times,

the devil was filled with great suspicions lest this most

extraordinary Man be the Messias and the true God.

He now resolved to ascertain whether his misgivings

were well founded or not by instigating the Jews and

their ministers to the most atrocious injuries against the

Savior. He imparted to them his own dreadful envy

and pride, and thus literally fulfilled the prophecy of

Solomon (Wis. 2, 7). For it seemed to the demon,

that if Christ was not God and only a man, He cer

tainly must weaken and be conquered in these persecu

tions and torments. If on the other hand He was God,

He would manifest it by freeing Himself and perform

ing new miracles.

513. Similar motives urged on the priests and phari-

491

492 CITY OF GOD

sees. At the instigation of Judas they hastily gathered

together a large band of people, composed of pagan sol

diers, a tribune, and many Jews. Having consigned to

them Judas as a hostage, they sent this band on its way

to apprehend the most innocent Lamb, who was awaiting

them and who was aware of all the thoughts and schemes

of the sacrilegious priests, as foretold expressly by Jere-

mias (Jer. 11, 19). All these servants of malice, bearing

arms and provided with ropes and chains, in the glaring

torch and lantern-light, issued from the city in the direc

tion of mount Olivet. The prime mover of the treach

ery, Judas, had insisted upon so much precaution; for,

in his perfidy and treachery, he feared that the meekest

Master, whom he believed to be a magician and sorcerer,

would perform some miracle for his escape. As if arms

and human precautions could ever have availed if Jesus

should have decided to make use of his divine power!

As if He could not have brought this power into play in

the same way as He had done on other occasions, should

He now choose not to deliver Himself to suffering and

to the ignominies of the Cross!

514. While they were approaching, the Lord returned

the third time to his Apostles and finding them asleep

spoke to them: "Sleep ye now, and take your rest. It

is enough : the hour is come ; behold the Son of man

shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise up,

let us go. Behold he that will betray Me is at hand"

(Mark 14, 41). Such were the words of the Master of

holiness to the three most privileged Apostles; He was

unwilling to reprehend them more severely than in this

most meek and loving manner. Being oppressed, they

did not know what to answer their Lord, as Scripture

says (Mark 14, 40). They arose and Jesus went with

them to join the other eight disciples. He found them

THE TRANSFIXION 493

likewise overcome and oppressed by their great sorrow

and fallen asleep. The Master then gave orders, that

all of them together, mystically forming one body with

Him their Head, should advance toward the enemies,

thereby teaching them the power of mutual and perfect

unity for overcoming the demons and their followers and

for avoiding defeat by them. For a triple cord is hard

to tear, as says Ecclesiastes (4, 12), and he that is mighty

against one, may be overcome by two, that being the

effect of union. The Lord again exhorted all the Apos

tles and forewarned them of what was to happen. Al

ready the confused noise of the advancing band of sol

diers and their helpmates began to be heard. Our Savior

then proceeded to meet them on the way, and, with

incomparable love, magnanimous courage and tender

piety prayed interiorly: "O sufferings longingly desired

from my inmost soul, ye pains, wounds, affronts, labors,

afflictions and ignominious death, come, come, come

quickly, for the fire of love, which burns for the salva

tion of men, is anxious to see you meet the Innocent one

of all creatures. Well do I know your value, I have

sought, desired, and solicited you and I meet you joyous

ly of my own free will; I have purchased you by my

anxiety in searching for you and I esteem you for your

merits. I desire to remedy and enhance your value

and raise you to highest dignity. Let death come, in

order that by my accepting it without having deserved

it I may triumph over it and gain life for those who

have been punished by death for their sins (Osee 13, 14).

I give permission to my friends to forsake Me; for I

alone desire and am able to enter into this battle and

gain for them triumph and victory" (Is. 53, 3).

515. During these words and prayers of the Author

of life, Judas advanced in order to give the signal upon

3-33

494 CITY OF GOD

which he had agreed with his companions (Matth. 26,

48), namely the customary, but now feigned kiss of

peace, by which they were to distinguish Jesus as the

One whom they should single out from the rest and

immediately seize. These precautions the unhappy dis

ciple had taken, not only out of avarice for the money

and hatred against his Master, but also, on account of

the fear with which he was filled. For he dreaded the

inevitable necessity of meeting Him and encountering

Him in the future, if Christ was not put to death on this

occasion. Such a confusion he feared more than the

death of his soul, or the death of his divine Master, and,

in order to forestall it, he hastened to complete his

treachery and desired to see the Author of life die at

the hands of his enemies. The traitor then ran up to

the meekest Lord, and, as a consummate hypocrite, hid

ing his hatred, he imprinted on his countenance the kiss

of peace, saying: "God save Thee, Master." By this

so treacherous act the perdition of Judas was matured

and God was justified in withholding his grace and help.

On the part of the unfaithful disciple, malice and temerity

reached their highest degree; for, interiorly denying or

disbelieving the uncreated and created wisdom by which

Christ must know of his treason, and ignoring his power

to destroy him, he sought to hide his malice under the

cloak of the friendship of a true disciple; and all this for

the purpose of delivering over to such a frightful and

cruel death his Creator and Master, to whom he was

bound by so many obligations. In this one act of treason

he committed so many and such formidable sins, that it

is impossible to fathom their immensity; for he was

treacherous, murderous, sacrilegious, ungrateful, inhu

man, disobedient, false, lying, impious and unequalled in

hypocrisy ; and all this was included in one and the same

THE TRANSFIXION 495

crime perpetrated against the person of God made man.

516. On the part of the Lord shone forth his ineffable

mercy and equity, since those words of David were ful

filled in an eminent manner: "With them that hated

peace I was peaceable ; when I spoke to them they fought

against Me without cause" (Ps. 119, 7). So completely

did the Lord fulfill this prophecy, that when, in answer

to the kiss of Judas, He said : "Friend, whereto art thou

come?" He sent into the heart of the traitorous disciple

a new and most clear light, by which Judas saw the

atrocious malice of his treason, the punishment to follow,

if he should not make it good by true penitence, and the

merciful pardon still to be obtained from the divine

clemency. What Judas clearly read in those few words

of Christ was: "Friend, take heed lest thou cause thy

perdition and abuse my meekness by this treason. If

thou seek my friendship, I will not refuse it to thee on

account of this deed, as soon as thou art sorry for thy

sin. Consider well thy temerity in delivering Me by

false friendship and under cover of a false peace and a

kiss of reverence and love. Remember the benefits thou

hast received of my charity, and that I am the Son of

the Virgin, by whom thou hast been so often favored

and rejoiced with motherly advice and counsel during

thy apostolate. Even if it were only for her sake, thou

shouldst not commit such a treason as to sell and deliver

her Son. In no wise does her loving meekness deserve

such an outrageous wrong, for She has never been unkind

to thee. But although thou hast now committed this

wrong, do not despise her intercession, for She alone

will be powerful with Me and for her sake I offer thee

pardon and life, since She has many times besought Me

to do so. I assure thee, that We love thee ; for thou art

yet in life, where there is hope and where we will not

496 CITY OF GOD

deny thee our friendship, if thou seek it. But if thou

refuse it, thou wilt merit our abhorrence and eternal

chastisement and pain." The seed of the divine words

took no root in the heart of that unhappy reprobate. It

was harder than adamant and more inhuman than that

of a wild beast. Resisting the divine clemency he finally

fell into despair, as I shall relate in the next chapter.

517. The signal of the kiss having been given by

Judas, the Lord with his disciples and the soldiers, who

had come to capture Him, came face to face, forming

two squadrons the most opposed and hostile that ever

the world saw. For on the one side was Christ our

Lord, true God and man, as the Captain of all the just,

supported by his eleven Apostles the chieftains and cham

pions of his Church with innumerable hosts of angelic

spirits full of adoring wonder at this spectacle. On the

other side were Judas, the originator of the treason, filled

with hypocrisy and hatred, and many Jews and gentiles,

bent on venting their malice with the greatest cruelty.

Surrounding these were Lucifer and a multitude of

demons, inciting and assisting Judas and his helpers

boldly to lay their sacrilegious hands upon their Creator.

With unfathomable love for suffering and great force

and authority the Lord then spoke to the soldiers, say

ing: "Whom seekye?" (John 18, 4-5). They answered :

"Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus said to them: "I am He."

By these inestimably precious and blessed words Christ

declared Himself as our Redeemer and Savior; for only

by his offering Himself freely to redeem us by his Pas

sion and Death, could our hope of eternal life ever rest

on firm foundation.

518. His enemies could not understand or fathom the

true meaning of these words : I am He. But his most

blessed Mother and the angels understood them, as did

THE TRANSFIXION 497

also, to a great extent, the Apostles. It was as if He

had said: "I am who am" (Exod. 3, 14), as I have

said to my prophet Moses; for I am of Myself, and all

creatures have their being and existence from Me : I am

eternal, immense, infinite, one in substance and attri

butes; and I have made Myself man hiding my glory,

in order that, by means of my Passion and Death, to

which you wish to condemn Me, I might save the world.

As the Lord spoke with divine power, his enemies could

not resist and when his words struck their ears, they all

fell backwards to the ground (John 18, 6). This hap

pened not only to the soldiers, but to the dogs, which

they had brought with them, and to the horses on which

some of them rode: all of them fell to the ground and

remained motionless like stones. Lucifer and his demons

were hurled down with them, deprived of motion and

suffering new confusion and torture. Thus they re

mained for some seven or eight minutes, showing no

more signs of life than if they had died. O word of

a God, so mysterious in meaning and more than invin

cible in power! Let not the wise glory before Thee in

their wisdom and astuteness; nor the powerful in their

valor (Jer. 9, 23) ; let the vanity and arrogance of the

children of Babylon be humbled, since one word from

the mouth of the Lord, spoken with so much meekness

and humility, confounds, destroys and annihilates all the

pride and power of man and hell. Let us children of the

Church also learn, that the victories of Christ are gained

by confessing the truth, by giving place unto wrath

(Rom. 12, 19), by showing meekness and humility of

heart (Matth. 11, 29), by overcoming and being over

come with dove-like simplicity, by the peacefulness and

resignment of sheep free from resistance of furious and

ravenous wolves.

498 CITY OF GOD

519. Sadly our divine Lord contemplated the picture

of eternal damnation exhibited in them and listened to

the prayer of his most holy Mother to let them rise,

for upon her intercession his divine will had made that

dependent. When it was time for them to come to

themselves, He prayed to the eternal Father, saying:

"My Father and eternal God, in my hands Thou hast

placed all things (John 13, 3), and hast consigned to Me

the Redemption required by thy justice. I wish to satisfy

it and give Myself over to death with all my heart, in

order to merit for my brethren participation in thy treas

ures and the eternal happiness held out to them." By

this expression of his efficacious will the Lord gave per

mission to that whole miserable band of men, demons

and animals to arise and be restored to the same condi

tion as before their falling down. A second time the

Savior said to them : "Whom seek ye ?" and they again

answered: "Jesus of Nazareth." The Lord answered

most meekly: "I have already told you, that I am He.

If therefore you seek Me, let these go their way" (John

18, 8). With these words He gave permission to the

servants and the soldiers to take Him prisoner and exe

cute their designs, which, without their understanding it,

meant nothing else than to draw upon his divine Person

all our sorrows and infirmities (Is. 53, 4).

520. The first one who hastened to approach in order

to lay hands upon the Master of life, was a servant of

the highpriests named Malchus. In spite of the fear and

consternation of all the Apostles, saint Peter, more than

all the rest, was roused with zeal for the defense of the

honor and life of the divine Master. Drawing a cutlass

which he had with him, he made a pass at Malchus and

cut off one of his ears, severing it entirely from the head

(John 18, 10). The stroke would have resulted in a

THE TRANSFIXION 499

much more serious wound, if the divine providence of

the Master of patience and meekness had not diverted

it. The Lord would not permit that any other death

than his own should occur at his capture; his wounds,

his blood and suffering alone should rescue to eternal

life the human race, as many of it as are willing. Nor

was it his will, or according to his teaching, that his Per

son be defended by the use of arms, and He did not

wish to leave such an example in his Church as one

to be principally imitated for her defense. In order to

confirm this doctrine, which He had always inculcated,

He picked up the severed ear and restored it to its place,

perfectly healing the wound and making Malchus more

sound and whole than he was before. But He first

turned to saint Peter and reprehended him, saying:

"Put up thy sword into the scabbard, for all that shall

take it to kill with it, shall perish. Dost thou not wish

that I drink the chalice, which my Father hath given

Me? Thinkst thou that I cannot ask my Father, and

He will give me presently many legions of angels for

my defense? But how then shall the Scriptures and the

Prophets be fulfilled?" (John 18, 11 ; Matth. 26, 53).

521. Thus saint Peter, the head of the Church, by this

loving exhortation had been taught and enlightened, that

his arms for the establishment and defense of the Church

were to be spiritual and that the law of the Gospel does

not inculcate battles and conquests with material weapons,

but conquests of humility, patience, meekness and perfect

charity, which overcome the demon, the world, and the

flesh; that divine virtue would triumph over its enemies

and over the power and intrigues of this world; that

arms for attack and defense were not for the followers

of Christ our Savior, but for the princes of the earth to

safeguard their earthly possessions; while the sword of

500 CITY OF GOD

the Church was to be spiritual, reaching rather the soul

than the body. Then Christ our Lord, turning toward

his enemies and the servants of the Jews, spoke to them

with great majesty and grandeur: "You are come as it

were to a robber with swords and clubs to apprehend

Me. I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and

you laid not hands on Me. But this is your hour and

the power of darkness" (Matth. 26, 55; Luke 22, 53).

All the words of our Savior contained the profoundest

mysteries, and it is impossible to comprehend them all

or explain them, especially those which He spoke at his

Passion and Death.

522. Well might those ministers have been softened

and made ashamed of their wickedness by this reprehen

sion of the divine Master; but they were far from it,

because they were of the cursed and sterile earth, drained

of the dew of virtue and human kindness. Nevertheless

the Author of life wished to admonish them of the truth

to that extent. Thereby their malice would be so much

the more inexcusable and this sin and all the others, com

mitted in the very presence of the highest holiness and

justice, would have its due correction and they themselves

a powerful help for conversion, if they should desire it;

moreover it would thereby become evident that He knew

all that was to happen, that He delivered Himself into

their hands and over to this Death of his own free will.

For these, and for many other sublime reasons, the Lord

spoke the above words, penetrating their inmost mind.

For He knew and fully understood the cause of their

malice, hatred and envy: namely, because He had pub

licly reprehended the vices of the priests and pharisees;

because He had taught the truth and the way of life

to the people; because He had, by his example and his

miracles, captured the good will of the humble and the

THE TRANSFIXION 501

pious and brought many sinners to his friendship and

grace. He reminded them, that one who had power to

bring about all these results in public, and who could

not be apprehended in the temple or in the city in which

He taught, could certainly not be captured in the open

field without his consent. He clearly made them sen

sible, that the reason of their failing to do so before,

was because He himself had not given his permission to

men or demons until the hour chosen by Himself. In

order to signify to them, that the hour of his being cap

tured, illtreated and afflicted had come He said : "This

is your hour and the power of darkness." As if He

had said to them : Until now it was necessary for Me

to be with you as your Master for your instruction,

therefore I did not permit you to take my life. But I

desire to consummate by my death the work of the

Redemption consigned to Me by my eternal Father ; and

therefore I now permit you to take Me prisoner and to

execute your will upon my Person. Thereupon they

fell upon the most meek Lamb like fierce tigers, binding

Him securely with ropes and chains in order thus to

lead Him to the house of the highpriest, as I shall

presently relate.

523. The most pure Mother of Christ our Lord was

most attentive to all that passed in his capture, and by

means of her clear visions saw it more clearly than if

She had been present in person; for by means of her

supernatural visions She penetrated into all the mys

teries of his words and actions. When She beheld the

band of soldiers and servants issuing from the house

of the high priest, the prudent Lady foresaw the irrev

erence and insults with which they would treat their

Creator and Redeemer; and in order to do what was

within her power, She invited the holy angels and many

502 CITY OF GOD

others in union with Her to render adoration and praise

to the Lord of creation as an offset to the injuries and

affronts He would sustain at the hands of those min

isters of darkness. The same request She made to the

holy women who were praying with Her. She told

them, that her most holy Son had now given permission

to his enemies to take him prisoner and illtreat him,

and that they were about to make use of this permis

sion in a most impious and cruel manner. Assisted by

the holy angels and the pious women the faithful Queen

engaged in interior and exterior acts of devoted faith

and love, confessing, adoring, praising and magnifying

the infinite Deity and the most holy humanity of her

Creator and Lord. The holy women imitated Her in

the genuflections and prostrations, and the angelic

princes responded to the canticles with which She mag

nified, celebrated and glorified the Divinity and humanity

of Christ. In the measure in which the children of

malice increased their irreverence and injuries, She

sought to compensate them by her praise and veneration.

Thus She continued to placate the divine justice, lest it

should be roused against his persecutors and destroy

them; for only most holy Mary was capable of staying

the punishment of such great offenses.

524. And the great Lady not only placated the just

Judge, but even obtained favors and blessings from the

divine clemency for the very persons who irritated Him

and thus secured a return of good for those who were

heaping wrong s upon Christ the Lord for his doctrine

and benefits. This mercy attained its highest point in

the disloyal and obstinate Judas ; for the tender Mother,

seeing him deliver Jesus by the kiss of feigned friend

ship, and considering how shortly before his mouth had

contained the sacramental body of the Lord, with whose

THE TRANSFIXION 503

sacred countenance so soon after those same foul lips

were permitted to come in contact, was transfixed with

sorrow and entranced by charity. She asked the Lord

to grant new graces, whereby this man, who had enjoyed

the privilege of touching the face whereon angels desire

to look, might, if he chose to use them, save himself from

perdition. In response to this prayer of most holy Mary,

her Son and Lord granted Judas powerful graces in the

very consummation of his treacherous delivery. If the

unfortunate man had given heed and had commenced to

respond to them, the Mother of mercy would have

obtained for him many others and at last also pardon

for his sin. She has done so with many other great

sinners, who were willing to give that glory to Her,

and thus obtain eternal glory for themselves. But Judas

failed to realize this and thus lost all chance of salva

tion, as I shall relate in the next chapter.

525. Likewise, when the great Lady saw all the serv

ants and soldiers who had come to take Him, fall to the

ground at his divine word, She, in company with the

angels, broke out in a song of praise of his infinite

power and of the virtue of his humanity, which thereby

renewed the victory of the Most High over Pharao and

his troops in the Red sea (Exod. 15, 4). She exalted

the Lord of hosts, because He was about to deliver Him

self in an admirable manner to suffering and death in

order to save the human race from the captivity of

Lucifer. Then She besought the Lord to permit all

these dumbfounded and vanquished enemies to regain

their senses and to arise. She was moved to the peti

tion by her most generous kindness and deep compassion

for these men created by the Lord according to his own

image and likeness; on the other hand, She wanted to

fulfill in an eminent degree the law of loving our enemies

504 CITY OF GOD

and doing good to those who persecute us, inculcated and

practiced by her own Son and Master (Matth. 5, 44),

and finally because She knew that the prophecies of holy

Scripture were to be fulfilled in the Redemption of man.

Although all these were infallible, this did not hinder

the most holy Mary from giving voice to her prayer

and thereby moving the Most High to grant these

favors; for in the infinite wisdom and in the decrees of

his eternal will all these means were foreseen as produc

ing these effects in the manner most conformable to the

foreknowledge and foresight of the Lord. But it is not

necessary to enter into further explanation of such mys

teries at present. When the servants of the high priest

laid hands on and bound the Savior, the most blessed

Mother felt on her own hands the pains caused by the

ropes and chains, as if She Herself was being bound and

fettered; in the same manner She felt in her body the

blows and torments further inflicted upon the Lord,

for, I have already said, this favor was granted to his

Mother, as we shall see in the course of the Passion.

This her sensible participation in his sufferings was some

kind of relief of the pain, which She would have suf

fered in her loving soul at the thought of not being with

Him in his torments.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

526. My daughter, in all that thou art made to under

stand and write concerning these mysteries, thou drawest

upon thyself (and upon mortals) a severe judgment, if

thou dost not overcome thy pusillanimity, ingratitude

and baseness by meditating day and night on the Passion

and Death of Jesus crucified. This is the great science

of the saints, so little heeded by the worldly; it is the

THE TRANSFIXION 505

bread of life and the spiritual food of the little ones,

which gives wisdom to them and the want of which

starves the lovers of this proud world (Wis. 15, 3).

In this science I wish thee to be studious and wise, for

with it thou canst buy thyself all good things (Wis.

7, 11). My Son and Lord taught us this science when

He said: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no one

cometh to my Father except through Me" (John 14, 6).

Tell me then, my daughter: if my Lord and Master has

made Himself the life and the way for men through his

Passion and Death, is it not evident that in order to

go that way and live up to this truth, they must follow

Christ crucified, afflicted, scourged and affronted? Con

sider the ignorance of men who wish to come to the

Father without following Christ, since they expect to

reign with God without suffering or imitating his Pas

sion, yea without even a thought of accepting any part

of his suffering and Death, or of thanking Him for it.

They want it to procure for them the pleasures of this

life as well as of eternal life, while Christ their Creator

has suffered the most bitter pains and torments in order

to enter heaven and to show them by his example how

they are to find the way of light.

527. Eternal rest is incompatible with the shame of

not having duly labored for its attainment. He is not

a true son of his father, who does not imitate him, nor

he a good disciple, who does not follow his Master,

nor he a good servant, who does not accompany his

lord; nor do I count him a devoted child, who does not

suffer with me and my divine Son. But our love for

the eternal salvation of men obliges us, who see them

forgetful of this truth and so adverse to suffering, to

send them labors and punishments, so that if they do

not freely welcome them, they may at least be forced to

506 CITY OF GOD

undergo them and so be enabled to enter upon the way

of salvation. And yet even all this is insufficient, since

their inclinations and their blind love of visible things

detains them and makes them hard and heavy of heart;

they rob them of remembrance and affection toward

these higher things, which might raise them above them

selves and above created things. Hence it comes, that

men do not find joy in their tribulations, nor rest in

their labors, nor consolation in their sorrows, nor any

peace in adversities. For, altogether different from the

saints who glory in tribulation as the fulfillment of

their most earnest desires, they desire none of it and

abhor all that is painful. In many of the faithful this

ignorance goes still farther; for some of them expect to

be distinguished by God s most intimate love, others, to

be pardoned without penance, others, to be highly fa

vored. Nothing of all this will they attain, because they

do not ask in the name of Christ the Lord and because

they do not wish to imitate Him and follow Him in his

Passion.

528. Therefore, my daughter, embrace the Cross and

do not admit any consolation outside of it in this mortal

life. By contemplating and feeling within thyself the

sacred Passion thou wilt attain the summit of perfection

and attain the love of a spouse. Bless and magnify

my most holy Son for the love with which He delivered

Himself up for the salvation of mankind. Little do

mortals heed this mystery; but I, as an Eyewitness, as

sure thee, next to ascending to the right hand of his

eternal Father, nothing was so highly estimated and so

earnestly desired by Him, as to offer Himself for suffer

ing and death and to deliver Himself up entirely to his

enemies. I wish also that thou lament with great sorrow

the fact that Judas, in his malice and treachery, has

THE TRANSFIXION

507

many more followers than Christ. Many are the in

fidels, many the bad Catholics, many the hypocrites, who

under the name of a Christian, sell and deliver Him and

wish to crucify Him anew. Bewail all these evils, which

thou understandest and knowest, in order that thou

mayest imitate and follow me in this matter.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FLIGHT AND DISPERSION OF THE APOSTLES AFTER

THE CAPTURE OF THEIR MASTER; HOW HIS MOST

BLESSED MOTHER WAS AWARE OF ALL THAT HAP

PENED AND HOW SHE ACTED IN CONSEQUENCE;

THE PERDITION OF JUDAS AND THE WORRY OF

THE DEMONS OVER WHAT THEY WERE OBLIGED TO

EXPERIENCE.

529. After the seizure of our Savior Jesus, his

prophecy at the Supper, that all of the Apostles would

be greatly scandalized in his Person (Matth. 26, 31)

and that satan would attack them in order to sift them

like wheat, was fulfilled. For when they saw their

divine Master taken prisoner and when they perceived,

that neither his meekness, nor his words so full of

sweetness and power, nor his miracles, nor his doctrine

exemplified by such an unblamable life, could appease

the envy of the priests and pharisees, they fell into

great trouble and affliction. Naturally the fear of per

sonal danger diminished their courage and confidence

in the counsels of their Master, and beginning to wander

in their faith, each one became possessed with anxious

thoughts as to how he could escape the threatening per

secutions foreshadowed by what had happened to their

Captain and Master. The Apostles, availing themselves

of the pre-occupation of the soldiers and servants in

binding and fettering the meek Lamb of God, betook

themselves to flight unnoticed. Certainly their enemies,

508

THE TRANSFIXION 509

if they had been permitted by the Author of life, would

have captured all the Apostles, especially if they had

seen them fly like cowards or criminals (Matth. 26, 56).

But it was not proper that they should be taken and

made to suffer at that time. This was clearly indicated

as the will of the Lord, when He said: that if they

sought Him, they should let his companions go free;

these words had the force of a divine decree and were

verified in the event. For the hatred of the priests and

pharisees extended to the Apostles, and was deep enough

to make them desire the death of all of them. That is

the reason why the highpriest Annas asked the divine

Master about his disciples and his doctrine (John 18, 8).

530. At the flight of the Apostles, Lucifer, already

troubled and vaguely perplexed, betook himself off hesi

tating between different projects of his redoubled malice.

He certainly wished to see the doctrine of the Savior

and all his disciples blotted out from the world, so that

not even the memory of them be left. Hence he would

have been well satisfied, if the Jews had imprisoned and

killed them all. But he had no hope of easily attaining

this wish, and therefore he busied himself in disquieting

the Apostles by various suggestions and inciting them to

flight, in order that they might not witness the patience

and virtues of their Master in his sufferings. The astute

dragon feared, that by this new proof of his doctrine

in his living example the Apostles might be confirmed

and fortified in their faith and thus resist the temptations

which he planned for them ; therefore it seemed to him,

that if he could weaken them now, he could more easily

cause them to fall away entirely by subsequent persecu

tions easily to be raised against them among the only

too ready enemies of their Master. Thus the demon

deceived himself by his own malicious calculations.

3-34

510 CITY OF GOD

When therefore he saw the Apostles filled with cowardly

fear and much disturbed by the sorrow of their hearts,

he rejoiced in their evil plight and considered it the

best time to begin his temptations. He assailed them

with rabid fury, filling them with strong doubts and

suspicions against the Master of life and urging them

to give Him up and betake themselves to flight. They

easily yielded to his suggestions of flight; but they re

sisted many of the doubts against faith, although some

failed more, some less, not all of the Apostles being

equally disturbed or scandalized.

531. They separated from each other, scattering in

different directions; for it would have been difficult for

all of them to hide as they wished, if they remained

together. Only saint Peter and saint John kept each

other company to follow their God and Master and see

the end of his misfortune (Matth. 26, 58). But in the

soul of each one of the eleven Apostles raged a battle

of sorrow and grief, which wrung their hearts and left

them without consolation or the least rest. On the one

side battled reason, grace, faith, love and truth; on the

other temptation, suspicion, fear, cowardice and sorrow.

Reason and truth reproached them with their incon

stancy and disloyalty in having forsaken their Master

by cowardly flying from danger, after having been

warned of it and after having offered themselves so

shortly before to die for Him if necessary. They re

membered their disobedience in neglecting to pray and

strengthen themselves against temptations, as the Lord

had commanded them. Their love for his sweet con

versation and company, for his teaching and miraculous

power, and their conviction that He was true God, urged

them to return and seek Him, and to offer themselves

to danger and death like faithful servants and disciples.

THE TRANSFIXION 511

To all this was joined the memory of his most sweet

Mother, the consideration of her intense sorrow, and the

desire to seek Her and attend upon Her in her trouble.

But on the other hand was their timidity, exaggerating

their fears of the Jews, their dread of death, of shame

and confusion. In regard to seeking the company of the

sorrowful Mother, they feared lest She would oblige

them to return to their Master, and lest they should be

more easily found if they stayed with Her in the same

house. Dreadful above all were the impious and hor

rible suggestions of the demons. For the dragon rilled

them with harassing doubts, whether it would not be

suicide to thus deliver themselves to a certain death;

that, if their Master could not free Himself, much less

could He free them from the hands of the priests; that

He would now certainly be put to death, and that there

fore all ties between Him and them were dissolved,

since they would not see Him any more; that, although

his life seemed to be blameless, yet He had taught some

very hard doctrines, some of them unheard of until that

time, whence He had incurred the hatred of those learned

in the law and of the priests, as well as the indignation

of all the people. Moreover it was a serious matter to

follow a Man, who was to be condemned to an infamous

and frightful death.

532. Such was the interior contention and strife in the

hearts of the Apostles. Satan under cover of this excite

ment, continually sought to instill into their minds doubts

concerning the teachings of Christ and concerning the

prophecies, that treated of the mysteries of his Passion.

As in their sad interior conflict they failed to see the

least assurance of seeing their Master escape the hands

of the priests alive, their fears settled into a profound

sorrow and melancholy, in which they decided to fly

512 CITY OF GOD

from the danger and save their own lives. And they

were seized with such timidity and cowardice, that during

this night they felt nowhere safe, and every shadow or

noise made them tremble with fear. The consideration

of the treachery of Judas added still more to their fear;

for, as he had not been seen in the company of any of

the eleven after his treacherous delivery of the Lord,

they dreaded lest he should excite against them the

hatred of the priests. Saint Peter and saint John, being

more fervent in the love of their Master, made a greater

show of resistance to fear and to the demon; and the

two together resolved to follow their Master at a dis

tance. In taking this resolve, they relied much upon the

acquaintance of saint John with the highpriest Annas,

who with Caiphas alternated in the office of highpriest.

In that year it was held by Caiphas, who in the meeting

had given the prophetic counsel, asking whether one man

had not better die in order that the whole world might

not perish (John 18, 15, 49). This acquaintance had

arisen from the fact, that saint John was esteemed as a

man, distinguished and of noble lineage, of affable and

courteous manners and amiable in person. Trusting to

these favorable circumstances the two Apostles followed

the Lord with less fear. The thought of their heavenly

Queen was deep in their hearts, and they reflected on her

bitter sorrow and desired to bring relief and console Her

if possible. In this pious and loving desire especially

saint John excelled all the others.

533. The heavenly Princess, from the Cenacle, clearly

understood and saw all : not only her most holy Son in

captivity and suffering, but all that happened inwardly

and outwardly to the Apostles. She observed their trib

ulation and temptations, their thoughts and resolves,

where each one was and what he did. But although afl

THE TRANSFIXION 513

was known to the most gentle Dove, She allowed Herself

no feeling of indignation against the Apostles, nor did

She ever in the least reproach them for their disloyalty ;

on the contrary, She was the One, who was principally

instrumental in restoring them to a better mind, as I

shall show later on (746, 747). From that hour on

She commenced to pray for them. In sweetest charity

and with the compassion of a Mother, She interiorly

addressed them : "O ye simple sheep, chosen by the Lord,

do ye forsake your most loving Pastor, who cares for

you and feeds you on the pastures of eternal life? Why,

being disciples of such a truthful doctrine, do you leave

your Benefactor and Master? How can you forget the

sweet and loving intercourse, which so attracted your

hearts? Why do you listen to the master of lies and

follow the ravenous wolf, who seeks your ruin ? O most

patient and sweetest Lord, how meek, and kind and mer

ciful does the love of men make Thee ! Extend thy gentle

love to this little flock, which is now troubled and dis

persed by the fury of the serpent. Do not deliver over

to the beasts those souls, who have confessed thy name

(Ps. 73, 19). Great hopes hast thou set in those, whom

Thou hast chosen as thy servants and through whom

Thou hast already accomplished great things. Let not

such graces be in vain, nor reject those whom Thou hast

freely chosen for the foundations of thy Church. Let

not Lucifer glory in having, beneath thy very eyes, van

quished the best of thy family and household. My Son

and Lord, look upon thy beloved disciples John, Peter

and James, so much favored by thy love and good will.

Turn an eye of clemency also upon the rest, crush the

pride of the dragon, which now pursues them with im

placable fury."

534. In all that most holy Mary did on this occasion

514 CITY OF GOD

and in the pleasure She caused the Almighty by her

holiness, She exceeded in grandeur all that was ever

possible in men and angels. Over and above the sensible

and spiritual sorrows caused by the torments of her

divine Son and the affronts perpetrated against his divine

Person (for which the blessed Mother entertained the

highest veneration attainable by a creature), She was

overwhelmed with the sorrow caused by the fall of the

Apostles, the greatness of which She alone could prop

erly estimate. She was obliged to witness their weakness

and forgetfulness in the face of his divine favors, his

doctrines and exhortations, and in so short a time after

the last Supper, when He had warned them so lovingly,

given them holy Communion and elevated them to such

a high dignity as the priesthood. She saw also the danger

of their falling into even greater sins on account of the

astute and furious attacks of Lucifer and his demons,

and on account of the heedlessness of the Apostles in

their greater or less confusion and fear. Yet notwith

standing this great sea of sorrow She multiplied and

intensified her petitions in order to merit for them suffi

cient assistance and speedy pardon from her Son, so that

they might again return to their faith and to his friend

ship in grace. She alone was the powerful and efficacious

instrument of these results. During these hours the

great Lady united within Herself all the faith, all the

holiness, all the worship and divine cult of the Church;

for in Her was preserved and enclosed as in the living

and incorruptible ark and as in the temple and sanctuary,

the evangelical law and sacrifice. She by Herself alone

then constituted the entire Church, because She alone

preserved full faith, hope and love, complete worship and

adoration for the great object of our faith, not only sup

plying her full share for Herself, but for the Apostles

1

THE TRANSFIXION 515

and for the whole human race. She it was who com

pensated, as far as was possible to a creature, for the

deficiencies and faults in the rest of the mystical mem

bers of the Church. She performed heroic acts of faith,

hope, love toward Her Son and true God, She venerated

and adored Him by her prostrations and genuflections,

She blessed Him with wonderful songs of praise, not

allowing her deep and bitter sorrow to interfere with the

beautiful and harmonious disposition and the full opera

tion of all her faculties, as pre-ordained by the Almighty.

What Ecclesiasticus says of music : that it is inopportune

in time of sorrow (Eccli. 22, 6), does not apply to Her;

for only the blessed Mary was able and knew how to

augment the beautiful harmony of virtues in the midst

of sorrow.

535. Leaving the twelve Apostles in the sad state

above mentioned, I now proceed to relate the mos^t

unhappy end of the traitor Judas, somewhat anticipating

the course of events, in order to have done with his

lamentable and unfortunate lot and continue the narra

tive of the Passion. With the band that had taken the

Lord prisoner, the sacrilegious disciple arrived at the

house of the highpriest, that of Annas first, and then

at that of Caiphas, who, with the scribes and pharisees

were awaiting results. When the perfidious disciple saw

his divine Master overwhelmed with blasphemies and

injuries and how He suffered all with such admirable

silence, meekness and patience, he began to reflect upon

his own treachery and that it alone caused such cruel

injustice to be heaped upon an innocent Man and his

Benefactor. He recalled the miracles he had witnessed,

the doctrines he had heard, and the benefits enjoyed at his

hands, and he remembered the kindness and meekness

of the most holy Mary, the charity with which She had

516 CITY OF GOD

solicited his conversion, and the malice with which he

had offended the Son and the Mother for such insig

nificant gain. All the sins he had committed piled them

selves up before his interior gaze like a dark and chaotic,

impenetrable mountain.

536. As I have stated above, Judas was forsaken by

divine grace at the time when he consummated his treach

ery by his perfidious kiss and by his contact with Christ

our Savior. According to the hidden judgments of the

Most High, although he was now left to his own coun

sels, the divine justice and equity, ingrained in the natural

reason, permitted these reflections to arise and to be

supplemented by many suggestions of Lucifer who pos

sessed him. But though Judas thus reasoned correctly

in these matters, it was the devil who awakened these

truths and added many other false and deceitful sug

gestions, in order to deduct from them not the salutary

hope of remedy, but to convince him of the impossibility

of repairing the damage and to lead him to the despair

to which he at last yielded. Lucifer roused in him a

keen sorrow for his misdeeds; not however for a good

purpose, nor founded upon having offended the divine

Truth, but upon his disgrace among men and upon the

fear of retribution from his Master, whom he knew to be

miraculously powerful and One whom he would be able

to escape nowhere in the whole world. Everywhere the

blood of the just One would forever cry for vengeance

against him. Filled with these thoughts and others

aroused by the demon, he was involved in confusion,

darkness and rabid rage against himself. Fleeing from

all human beings he essayed to throw himself from the

highest roof of the priests house without being able to

execute his design. Gnawing like a wild beast at the

flesh of his arms and hands, striking fearful blows at his

THE TRANSFIXION 517

head, tearing out his hair and raving in his talk, he

rushed away and showered maledictions and execrations

upon himself as the most unfortunate and miserable of

men.

537. Seeing him thus beside himself Lucifer inspired

him with the thought of hunting up the priests, returning

to them the money and confessing his sin. This Judas

hastened to do, and he loudly shouted at them those

words: "I have sinned, betraying innocent blood!"

(Matth. 27, 4). But they, not less hardened, answered

that he should have seen to that before. The intention

of the demon was to hinder the death of Christ if pos

sible, for reasons already given and yet to be given

(No. 419). This repulse of the priests, so full of

impious cruelty, took away all hope from Judas and he

persuaded himself that it was impossible to hinder the

death of his Master. So thought also the demon, al

though later on he made more efforts to forestall it

through Pilate. But as Judas could be of no more use

to him for his purpose, he augmented his distress and

despair, persuading him that in order to avoid severer

punishments he must end his life. Judas yielded to this

terrible deceit, and rushing forth from the city, hung him

self on a dried-out figtree (Matth. 27, 5). Thus he that

was the murderer of his Creator, became also his own

murderer. This happened on Friday at twelve o clock,

three hours before our Savior died. It was not becoming

that his death and the consummation of our Redemption

should coincide too closely with the execrable end of the

traitorous disciple, who hated him with fiercest malice.

538. The demons at once took possession of the soul

of Judas and brought it down to hell. His entrails burst

from the body hanging upon the tree (Acts 1, 18). All

that saw this stupendous punishment of the perfidious

518 CITY OF GOD

and malicious disciple for his treason, were filled with

astonishment and dread. The body remained hanging

by the neck for three days, exposed to the view of the

public. During that time the Jews attempted to take it

down from the tree and to bury it in secret, for it was

a sight apt to cause great confusion to the pharisees and

priests, who could not refute such a testimony of his

wickedness. But no efforts of theirs sufficed to drag

or separate the body from its position on the tree until

three days had passed, when, according to the dispensa

tion of divine justice, the demons themselves snatched

the body from the tree and brought it to his soul, in order

that both might suffer eternal punishment in the pro-

foundest abyss of hell. Since what I have been made

to know of the pains and chastisements of Judas,

is worthy of fear-inspiring attention, I will according to

command reveal what has been shown me concerning it.

Among the obscure caverns of the infernal prisons was

a very large one, arranged for more horrible chastise

ments than the others, and which was still unoccupied;

for the demons had been unable to cast any soul into it,

although their cruelty had induced them to attempt it

many times from the time of Cain unto that day. All hell

had remained astonished at the failure of these attempts,

being entirely ignorant of the mystery, until the arrival

of the soul of Judas, which they readily succeeded in

hurling and burying in this prison never before occupied

by any of the damned. The secret of it was, that this

cavern of greater torments and fiercer fires of hell, from

the creation of the world, had been destined for those,

who, after having received Baptism, would damn them

selves by the neglect of the Sacraments, the doctrines,

the Passion and Death of the Savior, and the intercession

of his most holy Mother. As Judas had been the first

I

THE TRANSFIXION 519

one who had so signally participated in these blessings,

and as he had so fearfully misused them, he was also

the first to suffer the torments of this place, prepared

for him and his imitators and followers.

539. This mystery I was commanded to reveal more

particularly for a dreadful warning to all Christians,

and especially to the priests, prelates and religious, who

are accustomed to treat with more familiarity the body

and blood of Christ our Lord, and who, by their office

and state are his closer friends. In order to avoid blame

I would like to find words and expressions sufficiently

strong to make an impression on our unfeeling obduracy,

so that we all may take a salutary warning and be

filled with the fear of the punishments awaiting all bad

Christians according to the station each one of us occu

pies. The demons torment Judas with inexpressible

cruelty, because he persisted in the betrayal of his Mas

ter, by whose Passion and Death they were vanquished

and despoiled of the possession of the world. The wrath

which they had conceived against the Savior and his

blessed Mother, they wreck, as far as is allowed them,

on all those who imitate the traitorous disciple and who

follow him in his contempt of the evangelical law, of

the Sacraments and of the fruits of the Redemption.

And in this the demons are but executing just punish

ment on those members of the mystical body of Christ,

who have severed their connection with its head Christ,

and who have voluntarily drifted away and delivered

themselves over to the accursed hate and implacable fury

of his enemies. As the instruments of divine justice they

chastise the redeemed for their ingratitude toward their

Redeemer. Let the children of the Church consider well

this truth, for it cannot fail to move their hearts and in

duce them to evade such a lamentable fate.

520 CITY OF GOD

540. During the whole course of the Passion Lucifer

with his demons moved about, eagerly spying out all the

circumstances of each event in order to ascertain whether

Christ the Lord was really the Messias and Redeemer of

the world. On the one hand the miracles seemed to argue

the truth of his suspicions, on the other very often the

doings and the sufferings, so much like those of weak

human nature, argued the contrary. The strongest argu

ment for the truth of his suspicions was Lucifer s per

sonal experience of the power of the Redeemer, when

He said "I am He," which caused him and all his asso

ciates to fall prostrate, annihilated in the presence of the

Lord ; and this had happened only a short time after he

had been permitted to issue from hell, whither the demons

.had been hurled from the Cenacle. It was true, Mary

had routed them from the hall of the last Supper; yet

Lucifer with his ministers connected it with the power

exercised by Jesus and they could not but admit, that

this power of both Mother and Son was something alto

gether new and unexperienced by them. When he had

received permission to rise from his fall in the garden,

he conferred with the rest and expressed his opinion,

that this could not be merely human power, but without

doubt the power of One, who is God and at the same

time man. "If He shall die, as we have planned, He

will accomplish the Redemption of man and satisfy the

justice of God; then our sway will cease and all our

intentions will be frustrated. We have erred in seeking

his death. If now we cannot prevent his death, let us

see how far his endurance will go and excite his enemies

to torture Him with most impious cruelty. Let us stir

up their fury against Him ; let us suggest to their minds

new insults, affronts, ignominies and torments to be

inflicted upon his Person ; let us drive them to vent upon

THE TRANSFIXION 521

Him all their wrath in order to exhaust his patience,

and let us carefully study the results." These proposals

the demons sought to realize, although, on account of

the hidden mysteries alluded to above (and to be men

tioned later, No. 579, 627, 631), they found that not

all of their plans succeeded. Whenever they incited the

executioners to inflict tortures unbecoming his royal and

divine Person, the Lord would not permit such indigni

ties farther than was becoming, while He gave free scope

to their inhuman barbarities and savage fury in all the

rest.

541. The great Lady of heaven, Mary, likewise inter

fered in order to curb the insolent malice of Lucifer;

for She was well aware of all the designs of the infernal

dragon. At times She would make use of her sovereign

power as Queen to prevent some of the hellish sugges

tion to reach the ministers of the Passion ; at others She

prevented their execution by her prayers, or She enlisted

the service of her holy angels to drive away and confuse

the persecutors of her Son. Those sufferings, which by

her great wisdom She knew, that her Son wished to

undergo, She permitted, fulfilling in all things the divine

will. She knew all about the unhappy death of Judas,

his torments and place of imprisonment in hell; the bed

of fire, which He was to occupy for all eternity, as the

master of hypocrisy and the leader of all those who were

to deny Christ our Redeemer, as well in thought as in

their works, who, according to Jeremias (17, 3), leave

the veins of living waters, that is Christ, and whose names

are written and sealed upon the earth, far from heaven,

where are written the names of the predestined. All this

the Mother of mercy knew and She wept over his fate

most bitterly, praying for the welfare of men and for

522 CITY OF GOD

their salvation from such great blindness and ruinous

destruction. Yet in all this She conformed Herself to

the just and hidden decrees of divine Providence.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MARY, GAVE ME.

542. My daughter, thou art astonished, not without

cause, at what thou hast learned and recorded of the

unhappy fate of Judas and of the fall of the Apostles,

who were all disciples in the school of Christ, nursed at

his breast by his doctrine, by the example of his life,

and by his miracles, enjoying his sweetest and gentlest

intercourse, and many other benefits of my assistance and

intercession. But I truly say to thee, if all the children

of the Church would attentively consider this example,

they would find a salutary exhortation and warning in

this mortal state of life against the danger surrounding

them even in the midst of the favors and blessings they

continually receive at the hands of the Lord. All of them

cannot be equal to seeing Him with bodily eyes and

having intercourse with Him as the living image of all

sanctity. The Apostles received from me personal ex

hortations and they were eye-witnesses of my blameless

and holy conduct ; they received great tokens of my kind

ness and my charity flowed directly from God through

me upon them. If they, in the very act of receiving

such favors and in the very presence of their God and

Savior, forgot all of them and all of their obligation

of corresponding to them: who then shall be so pre

sumptuous in this mortal life as not to fear the danger

of eternal ruin, no matter how many favors he has

received from the Almighty ? They were Apostles chosen

by their divine Master, their true God; yet one of them

fell lower than any other individual of the human race;

THE TRANSFIXION 523

and the others failed in faith, the foundation of all

virtue. Yet all this was conformable to the just judg

ments of the Most High. Why then should those who

are not Apostles, be without fear, who have not so

labored in the school of Christ and who have not so

merited my intercession?

543. Concerning the perdition of Judas and of his

most just punishment thou hast written enough in order

to set forth to what extremes a man can be brought by

yielding to vices and to the devil, and by refusing to

hear and follow the pleading of grace. I moreover

inform thee, that not only the torments of the traitorous

disciple Judas, but also those of many other Christians,

who condemn themselves and shall be sent to the same

place of punishment, which was assigned to them and

Judas from the beginning of the world, are greater than

the torments of many demons. For my most holy Son

did not die for the angels, but for men; nor were the

fruits and results of the Redemption for the demon,

but entirely at the disposal of the children of the Church

in the holy Sacraments. The contempt for these incom

parable benefits is not properly the sin of the devils,

but of the Christians ; and therefore they must expect a

special and appropriate punishment for this contempt.

The mistake of not having recognized Christ as the true

God causes the deepest and most tormenting regret to

Lucifer and his evil spirits for all eternity. Hence, on

account of this error, they are filled with special wrath

against those that were redeemed, particularly against

the Christians, who derived the greatest benefits from

the Redemption and the blood of the Lamb. That is

why the devils are so eager to cause forgetfulness and

misuse of these graces in them and why afterwards in

hell, they are permitted to vent so much the greater fury

524 CITY OF GOD

and wrath upon the wicked Christians. If it were not

for the equitable dispositions of divine justice by which

the pains are proportioned to the guilt, they would wreck

still fiercer vengeance upon them. But the goodness of

the Lord extends even to this place and restrains the

malice of the demons by his infinite power and wisdom.

544. In the fall of the other eleven Apostles, I wish,

my dearest, that thou learn the frailty of human nature,

since even in such great blessings and favors received

of the Lord, it easily falls into the habit of gross negli

gence and ingratitude, such as the Apostles manifested

in flying from their heavenly Master and leaving Him

in a spirit of doubt. Men incur this danger from their

earthly and sensuous inclinations, the result of past sins

and of the habits formed by a terrestrial, carnal and

sensuous life, void of spirituality. On account of it

they desire and love the divine favors and benefits only

in a carnal manner. As soon as they fail to find that

kind of enjoyment in them, they turn to other sensible

enjoyments, are moved by them and lose the true con

ception of a spiritual life; for they treat it and estimate

it according to the low standard of mere sensuality.

Hence the Apostles, though they were so greatly favored

by my most holy Son, fell into such gross heedlessness

and sins ; for the miracles, the teachings and the examples

affected them only in a sensible manner; and as they, in

spite of their being raised to justice and perfection, per

mitted themselves to be affected by them only outwardly,

they were presently disturbed by temptation and yielded

to it. They acted like men who had done little to pene

trate into the mysteries and into the spirit of what they

had seen and heard in the school of their Master. By

this example, my daughter, and by my teachings thou

oughtest to be well instructed, a spiritual disciple of

THE TRANSFIXION 525

mine, and not a terrestrial, accustoming thyself to de

spise mere outwardness, even in favors bestowed upon

thee by the Lord or myself. When thou receivest them,

do not attach thyself merely to the material or sensible

in them, but raise thy mind to the exalted and the spir

itual contained therein; to that which is perceived by

the interior and spiritual, and not by the animal senses

(I Cor. 2, 14). If even the merely sensible can hinder

the spiritual life, how much is this true of that which

pertains altogether to earthly, animal and carnal life?

Clearly I desire of thee to forget and blot out of thy

faculties all images and remembrances of mere creatures

in order that thou mayest be fit to receive my salutary

teaching and be capable of imitating me.

CHAPTER XV.

JESUS THE SAVIOR, BOUND AS A PRISONER, IS DRAGGED

TO THE HOUSE OF ANNAS/ WHAT HAPPENED IN CON

NECTION THEREWITH AND WHAT THE MOST BLESSED

MOTHER SUFFERED DURING THAT TIME.

545. Fit were it to speak of the suffering, the affronts

and the Death of our Savior Jesus in such vivid and

efficacious words, that they enter into the soul like a

two-edged sword, piercing with deepest sorrow our

inmost hearts (Heb. 4, 13). Not of an ordinary kind

were the pains He suffered and there is no sorrow like

unto his sorrow (Thren. 1, 12). For his body was not

like the bodies of the rest of men, nor did the Lord

suffer for Himself, nor for his own sins, but for us and

for our sins (I Pet. 2, 21). Hence the words and

expressions, by which we describe his torments and sor

rows, should not be of the common or ordinary kind.

But, woe is me, who cannot give sufficient force to my

words, and cannot find those my soul seeks in order

to manifest this mystery! I will speak according to my

capacity and as far as is given me, although my powers

constrain and limit the greatness of what I understand,

and my inadequate words cannot reach the secret con

cepts of the heart. Let then the vividness and force of

the faith, which we profess as children of the Church,

supply what is defective in my words. If our words

are but of the ordinary kind, let our compassion and

our sorrow be extraordinary; let our thoughts be of

the loftiest, our comprehension most real, our consid

eration of the deepest, our thankfulness heartfelt, and

526

THE TRANSFIXION 527

our love most fervent; for all that we can do shall fall

short of what the reality demands, of what we owe as

servants, as friends, and as children adopted through

his most sacred Passion and Death.

546. Having been taken prisoner and firmly bound,

the most meek Lamb Jesus was dragged from the garden

to the house of the highpriests, first to the house of

Annas (John 18, 13). The turbulent band of soldiers

and servants, having been advised by the traitorous dis

ciple that his Master was a sorcerer and could easily

escape their hands, if they did not carefully bind and

chain Him securely before starting on their way, took

all precautions inspired by such a mistrust (Mark 14,

44). Lucifer and his compeers of darkness secretly

irritated and provoked them to increase their impious

and sacrilegious illtreatment of the Lord beyond all

bounds of humanity and decency. As they were willing

accomplices of Lucifer s malice, they omitted no out

rage against the person of their Creator within the

limits set them by the Almighty. They bound Him with

a heavy iron chain with such ingenuity, that it encircled

as well the waist as the neck. The two ends of the

chain, which remained free, were attached to large rings

or handcuffs, with which they manacled the hands of

the Lord, who created the heavens, the angels and the

whole universe. The hands thus secured and bound, they

fastened not in front, but behind. This chain they had

brought from the house of Annas the highpriest, where

it had served to raise the portcullis of a dungeon. They

had wrenched it from its place and provided it with

padlock handcuffs. But they were not satisfied with

this unheard-of way of securing a prisoner; for in their

distrust they added two pieces of strong rope: the one

they wound around the throat of Jesus and, crossing it

528 CITY OF GOD

at the breast, bound it in heavy knots all about the body,

leaving two long ends free in front, in order that the

servants and soldiers might jerk Him in different direc

tions along the way. The second rope served to tie his

arms, being bound likewise around his waist. The two

ends of this rope were left hanging free to be used by

two other executioners for jerking Him from behind.

547. In this manner the almighty and holy One per

mitted Himself to be bound and made helpless, as if

He were the most criminal of men and the weakest of

the woman-born; for He had taken upon Himself all

the iniquities and weaknesses of our sins (Is. 53, 6).

They bound Him in the garden, adding to the chains

and ropes insulting blows and vilest language; for like

venomous serpents they shot forth their sacrilegious

poison in abuse and blasphemy against Him who is

adored by angels and men, and who is magnified in

heaven and on earth. They left the garden of Olives in

great tumult and uproar, guarding the Savior in their

midst. Some of them dragged Him along by the ropes

in front and others retarded his steps by the ropes hang

ing from the handcuffs behind. In this manner, with a

violence unheard of, they sometimes forced Him to run

forward in haste, frequently causing Him to fall; at

others they jerked Him backwards ; and then again they

pulled Him from one side to the other, according to

their diabolical whims. Many times they violently threw

Him to the ground and as his hands were tied behind He

fell upon it with his divine countenance and was severely

wounded and lacerated. In his falls they pounced upon

Him, inflicting blows and kicks, trampling upon his

body and upon his head and face. All these deviltries

they accompanied with festive shouts and opprobrious

insults, as was foretold by Jeremias (3, 30).

THE TRANSFIXION 529

548. During all this time Lucifer, while inciting these

ministers of evil, watched all the actions and move

ments of our Savior. His patience he thus put to the

test in order to find out, whether Jesus was only a man ;

for this doubt and perplexity tormented his wicked pride

above all others. As he was obliged to acknowledge the

meekness, patience and sweetness of Christ, his serene

majesty without change or disturbance amid all these

injuries and sufferings, the infernal dragon was enraged

only so much the more and at one time, like one crazed

by fury, he attempted to seize the ropes in order that

he and his fellow-demons might pull at them more vio

lently than his human foes and thus perhaps overcome

the meekness of the Savior. But he was withheld by

the most holy Mary, who, from her retreat by a clear

vision saw all that happened to her divine Son. When

She noticed this attempt of Lucifer, She made use of

her power as sovereign Queen and commanded him to

desist. All strength immediately left Lucifer and he

could not proceed in his presumptuous intent. It was

not becoming that his malice should add to the sufferings

and death of the Redeemer in such a manner. He was

however given permission to excite all his fellow-demons

against the Lord, and these again were left a free hand

to incite his mortal enemies among the Jews; since the

latter had liberty of will to consent or not. Lucifer used

this freedom to its full extent, and therefore said to the

other evil spirits : "What kind of a man is this, now born

into the world, who by his patience and by his works so

torments us and annihilates us? None ever maintained

such equanimity and such long-suffering in tribulations

since the time of Adam until now. Never have we found

among mortals such humility and meekness. How can

we rest, when we see in the world such a rare and

530 CITY OF GOD

powerful example, drawing others after Him? If this is

the Messias, He will certainly open heaven and close

up the highway, by which we have so far led men into

our eternal torments; we shall be vanquished and all

our plans will be frustrated. Even if He is but a mere

man, I cannot permit such an example for the rest of

mankind. Haste then, ministers of my exalted power,

let us persecute Him through his human foes, who, obe

dient to my sway, have conceived of me some of our

own furious envy."

549. The Author of our salvation, hiding his power

of annihilating his enemies in order that our Redemption

might be the more abundant, submitted to all the conse

quences of the impious fury which Lucifer and his

hellish squadron fomented in the Jews. They dragged

Him bound and chained under continued ill-treatment

to the house of Annas, before whom they presented Him

as a malefactor worthy of death. It was the custom of

the Jews to present thus bound those criminals who

merited capital punishment; and they now made use of

this custom in regard to Jesus, in order to intimate his

sentence even before the trial. The sacrilegious priest

Annas seated himself in proud and arrogant state on the

platform or tribunal of a great hall. Immediately Luci

fer placed himself at his side with a multitude of evil

spirits. The servants and soldiers brought before Him

Jesus, bound and fettered, and said : "At last we bring

hither this wicked Man, who by his sorceries and evil

deeds has disturbed all Jerusalem and Judea. This time

his magic art has not availed Him to escape our hands

and power."

550. Our Savior Jesus was attended by innumerable

angels, who confessed and adored Him, full of admira

tion for the incomprehensible judgments of his wisdom

THE TRANSFIXION 531

(Rom. 11, 33) by which the Lord consented to be held

as a sinner and a criminal. The iniquitous highpriest

pretended to be just and zealous for the honor of the

Lord, whose life he was seeking. The most meek Lamb

was silent and opened not his mouth, as Isaias prophesied

(53, 7). Imperiously and haughtily the highpriest asked

Him about his disciples (John 18, 19), and what doc

trine He was preaching and teaching. This question was

put merely for the purpose of misinterpreting his an

swer, if Jesus should utter any word that afforded such

a chance. But the Master of holiness, who is the Guide

and the Corrector of the most wise (Wis. 7, 15), offered

to the eternal Father the humiliation of being presented

as a criminal before the highpriest and of being ques

tioned by him as a prevaricator and author of a false

doctrine. Our Redeemer with an humble and cheerful

countenance answered the question as to his doctrines:

"I have spoken openly to the world : I have always taught

in the synagogue and in the temple, whither all the Jews

resort : and in secret I have spoken nothing. Why askest

thou Me ? ask those, who have heard what I have spoken

unto them: behold they know what I have said." As

the doctrine of Christ our Lord came from his eternal

Father, He spoke for it and defended its honor. He

referred them to his hearers, both because those by whom

He was now surrounded, would not believe Him and

wished to distort all He should say, and because the

truth and force of his teachings recommended and forced

themselves upon the minds of his greatest enemies by

their own excellence.

551. Concerning the Apostles He said nothing, be

cause it was not necessary on this occasion and because

they were not reflecting much credit upon their Master

by their present conduct. Though his answer was so

532 CITY OF GOD

full of wisdom and so well suited to the question, yet

one of the servants of the highpriest rushed up with

raised hand and audaciously struck the venerable and

sacred face of Jesus, saying : "Answerest Thou the high

priest so?" The Lord accepted this boundless injury,

praying for the one who had inflicted it; and holding

Himself ready, if necessary, to turn and offer the other

cheek for a second stroke, according to the doctrine

He had himself inculcated (Matth. 5, 39). But in order

that the atrocious and daring offender might not shame

lessly boast of his wickedness, the Lord replied with

great tranquillity and meekness : "If I have spoken evil,

give testimony of the evil; if well, why strikest thou

Me?" O sight most astounding to the supernal spirits!

Since this is He, at the mere sound of whose voice the

foundations of the heavens tremble and ought to tremble

and the whole firmament is shaken! This is the Lord

of whom Job says, He is wise of heart and mighty in

strength; who hath resisted Him and hath peace? Who

hath removed mountains, and they, whom He overthrew

in his wrath, knew it not; He who moveth the earth

out of its place; who commandeth the sun, and it riseth

not; and shutteth up the stars as it were under a seal;

who doth things great and incomprehensible, whose

wrath no man can resist, and under whom they stoop,

that bear up the world (Job 9, 4, etc.) ; this is the One,

who for the love of men patiently suffers a servant to

strike and wound Him in the face by a buffet!

552. By the humble and appropriate reply of the Lord,

the wickedness of the sacrilegious servant stood repri

manded. Yet neither the shame of this reprimand, nor

the shameful negligence of the highpriest, which per

mitted such a criminal unfairness in his very presence,

moved either him or the other Jews to moderate their

THE TRANSFIXION 533

conduct toward the Author of life. While this ill-

treatment of the Lord was going on, saint Peter and

the other disciple, who was none other than saint John,

arrived at the house of Annas. Saint John, as being well

known there, readily obtained entrance, while saint

Peter remained outside. Afterwards the servant maid,

who was an acquaintance of saint John, allowed also him

to enter and see what would happen to the Lord (John

18, 16). The two disciples remained in the portico

adjoining the court-hall of the priest, and saint Peter

approached the fire, which the soldiers, on account of

the coldness of the night, had built in the enclosure near

the portico. The servant maid, on closer inspection,

noticed the depressed bearing of saint Peter. Coming

up to him she recognized him as a disciple of Jesus, and

said : "Art thou not perhaps one of the disciples of this

Man?" This question was asked by the maid with an

air of contempt and reproach. Peter in his great weak

ness and hesitancy yielded to a sense of shame. Over

come also by his fear he answered: "I am not his dis

ciple." Having given this answer, he slipped away to

avoid further conversation, and left the premises. But

he soon afterwards followed his Master to the house

of Caiphas, where he denied Him again at two different

times, as I shall relate farther on.

553. The denial of Peter caused greater pain to the

Lord than the buffet which He had received; for this

sin was directly opposed and abhorrent to his immense

charity, while pains and sufferings were sweet and wel

come to Him, since He could thereby atone for our sins.

After this first denial of Peter, Christ prayed for him

to his eternal Father and ordained that through the

intercession of the blessed Mary he should obtain pardon

even after the third denial. The great Lady witnessed

534 CITY OF GOD

all that passed from her oratory, as I have said. As

She contained in her own breast the propitiatory and

sacrifice of her Son and Lord in sacramental form, She

directed her petitions and loving aspirations to Him,

eliciting most heroic acts of compassion, thanksgiving,

adoration and worship. She bitterly wept over the denial

of saint Peter, and ceased not, until She perceived that

the Lord would not refuse him the necessary helps for

effectually rising from his fall. The purest Mother also

felt all the wounds and torments of her Son in the same

portions of her virginal body as the Savior. When the

Lord was bound with the chains and ropes, She felt on

her wrists such pains, that the blood oozed from her

fingernails, as if they had been really bound and crushed :

in the same manner also the other wounds affected her

body. As to these tortures were added the sorrows of

her heart in seeing Christ our Lord suffer, She shed mir

aculous tears of blood. She felt also the buffet in the j

same way, as if that sacrilegious hand had struck at the

same time her Son and Herself. At this wicked affront

and at the blasphemous insult offered to the Lord, She

called out to her holy angels to join Her in magnifying

and adoring their Creator in compensation for the in

juries offered Him by sinners, and in many most sor- I

rowful lamentations She conferred with the angels con- [

cerning the cause of her affliction and mourning.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN AND

LADY GAVE ME.

554. My daughter, to great deeds art thou called and

invited on account of the divine enlightenment thou re-

ceivest concerning the mysteries of the sufferings of m)

most holy Son and of myself for the human race, and 01

account of the knowledge which thou hast obtained coi

THE TRANSFIXION 535

cerning the small return made by heartless and ungrate

ful men for all our pains. Thou livest yet in mortal

flesh and art thyself subject to this ignorance and weak

ness; but by the force of truth thou art now roused to

great wonder, sorrow and compassion at the want of

attention displayed by mortals toward these great sacra

ments and at the losses sustained by them through their

lukewarmness and negligence. What then are the

thoughts of the angels and saints, and what are my

thoughts in beholding this world and all the faithful in

such a dangerous and dreadful state of carelessness,

when they have the Passion and Death of my divine

Son before their eyes, and when they have me, for their

Mother and Intercessor and his most pure life and mine

for an example? I tell thee truly, my dearest, only my

intercession and the merits of his Son, which I offer

to the eternal Father, can delay the punishment and

placate his wrath, can retard the destruction of the world

and the severe chastisement of the children of the Church,

who know his will and fail to fulfill it (John 15, 15).

But I am much incensed to find so few who condole with

me and try to console my Son in his sorrows, as David

says (Ps. 68, 21). This hardness of heart will cause great

confusion to them on the day of judgment; since they

will then see with irreparable sorrow, not only that they

were ungrateful, but inhuman and cruel toward my di

vine Son, toward me and toward themselves.

555. Consider then thy duty, my dearest, and raise

thyself above all earthly things and above thyself; for

I am calling thee and choose thee to imitate and follow

me into the solitude, in which I am left by creatures,

whom my Son and I have pursued with so many bless

ings and favors. Weigh in thy heart, how much it cost

my Lord to reconcile mankind to the eternal Father

536 CITY OF GOD

(Colos. 1, 22) and regain for them his friendship. Weep

and afflict thyself that so many should live in such for-

getfulness and that so many should labor with all

their might at destroying and losing what was bought

by the blood of God itself and all that I from the first

moment of my Conception have sought to procure and

am procuring for their salvation. Awaken in thy heart

the deepest grief, that in his holy Church there should

be many followers of the hypocritical and sacrilegious

priests who, under cover of a false piety, still condemn

Christ; that pride and sumptuousness with other grave

vices should be raised to authority and exalted, while

humility, truth, justice and all virtues be so oppressed

and debased and avarice and vanity should prevail. Few

know the poverty of Christ, and fewer embrace it. Holy

faith is hindered and is not spread among the nations

on account of the boundless ambition of the mighty

of this earth; in many Catholics it is inactive and dead;

and whatever should be living, is near to death and to

eternal perdition. The counsels of the Gospel are for

gotten, its precepts trodden under foot, charity almost

extinct. My son and true God offers his cheeks in pa

tience and meekness to be buffeted and wounded (Thren.

3, 30). Who pardons an insult for the sake of imitating

Him? Just the contrary is set up as law in this world,

not only by the infidels, but by the very children of the

faith and of light.

556. In recognizing these sins I desire that thou imi

tate me in what I did during the Passion and during my

whole life, namely practice the virtues opposed to these

vices. As a recompense for their blasphemies, I blessed

God ; for their oaths, I praised Him ; for their unbelief,

I excited acts of faith, and so for all the rest of the sins

committed. This is what I desire thee to do while living

THE TRANSFIXION 537

in this world. Fly also the dangerous intercourse with

creatures, taught by the example of Peter, for thou art

not stronger than he, the Apostle of Christ; and if thou

fall in thy weakness, weep over thy fault and imme

diately seek my intercession. Make up for thy ordinary

faults and weaknesses by thy patience in adversities,

accept them with a joyous mien and without disturbance,

no matter what they may be, whether they be sickness

or the molestations coming from creatures, or whether

they arise from the opposition of the flesh to the spirit,

or from the conflicts with visible or invisible enemies.

In all these things canst thou suffer and must thou bear

up in faith, hope and magnanimous sentiment. I remind

thee, that there is no exercise more profitable and useful

for the soul than to suffer: for suffering gives light,

undeceives, detaches the heart from visible things and

raises it up to the Lord. He will come to meet those in

suffering, because. He is with the afflicted and sends to

them his protection and help (Ps. 40, 15).

CHAPTER XVI.

CHRIST IS DRAGGED TO THE HOUSE OF THE PRIEST

CAIPHAS, WHERE HE IS FALSELY ACCUSED AND ASKED

WHETHER HE IS THE SON OF GOD ; SAINT PETER

DENIES HIM FOR THE SECOND AND THIRD TIME;

WHAT MOST HOLY MARY DID ON THIS OCCASION, AND

OTHER MYSTERIES.

557. After Jesus had been thus insulted and struck in

the house of Annas, He was sent, bound and fettered as

He was, to the priest Caiphas, the father-in-law of

Annas, who in that year officiated as the prince and high

priest; with him were gathered the scribes and distin

guished men of the Jews in order to urge the condem

nation of the most innocent Lamb (Matth. 26, 57). The

invincible patience and meekness of the Lord of all vir

tues (Ps. 23, 10) astounded the demons, and they were

filled with a confusion and fury so great as no words

can describe. Since they could not penetrate into the

interior of the sanctuary of his humanity, and since they

noticed in the meekest Lord no inordinate movement, nor

any sign of complaint, nor any sighing, nor the least

attempt at human relief, by which they are wont to search

the hearts of other men, the dragon was in the utmost

torments and surprised as at something altogether new

and unheard of among weak and imperfect mortals. In

his fury he redoubled his efforts to irritate the scribes

and servants of the priests against Him and excite them

to shower their abominable insults and affronts upon his

538

THE TRANSFIXION 539

devoted head. In all that the demon suggested to them

they showed themselves most eager and they executed

it as far as the divine will allowed.

558. The whole rabble of infernal spirits and merci

less foes of Christ left the house of Annas and dragged

our Lord Savior through the streets to the house of

Caiphas, exercising upon Him all the cruelty of their

ignominious fury. The highpriests and his attendants

broke out in loud derision and laughter, when they saw

Jesus brought amid tumultuous noise into their presence

and beheld Him now subject to their power and juris

diction without hope of escape. O mystery of the most

exalted wisdom of heaven ! O foolishness and ignorance

of hell, and blind stupidity of mortals ! What a distance

immeasurable do I see between the doings of the Most

High and yours! At the very time when the King of

glory, as the Lord of all virtues and mighty in battles,

(Ps. 23, 8), is vanquishing vice, and death, and all sin

by the virtues of patience, humility and charity, the world

boasts of having overcome and subjected Him to its arro

gance and proud presumption! How different were the

thoughts of Christ our Lord from those of the ministers

of wickedness! The Author of life offered up to the

eternal Father the triumph, which his meekness and

humility won over sin; He prayed for the priests, the

scribes and servants, presenting his patience and suffer

ings as a compensation for their persecutions and excus

ing them on account of their ignorance. The same prayer

and petition was sent up at the same time by his blessed

Mother, for her enemies and the enemies of her divine

Son, thus following and imitating the Lord in all his

doings; for, as I have many times said, She saw all as

if personally present. Between the actions of the Son

540 CITY OF GOD

and the Mother there was a most sweet and wonderful

harmony and a correspondence, most pleasing to the

eyes of the eternal Father.

559. The highpriest Caiphas, filled with a deadly envy

and hatred against the Master of life, was seated in his

chair of state or throne. With him were Lucifer and

all his demons, who had come from the house of Annas.

The scribes and pharisees, like bloodthirsty wolves, sur

rounded the gentle Lamb; all of them were full of the

exultation of the envious, who see the object of their

envy confounded and brought down. By common con

sent they sought for witnesses, whom they could bribe

to bring false testimonies against Jesus our Savior

(Matth. 26, 59). Those that had been procured, ad

vanced to proffer their accusations and testimony; but

their accusations neither agreed with each other, nor

could any of their slander be made to apply to Him, who

of his very nature was innocence and holiness (Mark

25, 56; Heb. 7, 26). In order not to be foiled, they

brought two other false witnesses, who deposed, that

they had heard Jesus say, He could destroy the temple

of God made by the hands of men, and build up another

one in three days, not made by them (Mark 16, 58).

This testimony did not seem to be of much value, al

though they founded upon it the accusation, that He

arrogated to Himself divine power. Even if this testi

mony had not been false in itself, the saying, if uttered

by the Lord Almighty, would have been infallibly true

and could not have been presumptuous or false. But

the testimony was false; since the Lord had not uttered

these words in reference to the material temple of God,

as the witnesses wished to inculcate. At the time when

He expelled the buyers and sellers from the temple and

when asked by what power He did it, He answered:

THE TRANSFIXION 541

"Destroy this temple" that is : destroy this sacred human

ity, and on the third day I shall restore it, which He

certainly did at his Resurrection in testimony of his

divine power.

560. Our Savior Jesus answered not a word to all the

calumnies and lies brought forward against his inno

cence. Caiphas, provoked by the patient silence of the

Lord, rose up in his seat and said to Him : "Why dost

Thou not answer to what so many witnesses testify

against Thee?" But even to this the Lord made no

response. For Caiphas and the rest were not only indis

posed to believe Him; but they treacherously wished to

make use of his answer in order to calumniate Him and

satisfy the people in their proceedings against the Gali-

leean, so that they might not be thought to have con

demned Him to death without cause. This humble

silence, which should have appeased the wicked priest,

only infuriated him so much the more because it frus

trated his evil purpose. Lucifer, who incited the high

priest and all the rest, intently watched the conduct of

the Savior. But the intention of the dragon was differ

ent from that of the high priest. He merely wanted to

irritate the Lord, or to hear some word, by which he

could ascertain whether he was true God.

561. With this purpose satan stirred up Caiphas to

the highest pitch of rage and to ask in great wrath and

haughtiness: "I adjure Thee by the living God, that

Thou tell us, if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

This question of the highpriest certainly convicted him

at once of the deepest folly and of dreadful blasphemy ;

for if it was sincere, he had permitted Christ to be

brought before his tribunal in doubt whether He was

the true God or not, which would make him guilty of

the most formidable and audacious crime. The doubt

3-36

542 CITY OF GOD

in such a matter should have been solved in quite an

other way, conformable to the demands of right reason

and justice. Christ our Savior, hearing Himself con

jured by the living God, inwardly adored and rever

enced the Divinity, though appealed to by such sacrile

gious lips. Out of reverence for the name of God He

therefore answered : "Thou hast said: I am He. Never

theless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of

man (who I am) sitting on the right hand of the power

of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matth.

26, 64). At this divine answer the demons and the men

were affected in different ways. Lucifer and his devils

could not bear it; but immediately felt a superior force,

which hurled them down into the abyss and oppressed

them by the truth it contained. And they would not

have dared to come again into the presence of Christ

our Savior, if the divine Providence had not allowed

them to fall again into doubts, whether this Man Christ

had really spoken the truth or had merely sought this

means of freeing Himself from the hands of the Jews.

This uncertainty gave them new courage and they came

forth once more to the battlefield. The ultimate triumph

over the demons was reserved to the Cross itself, on

which the Savior was to vanquish both them and death,

as Zachary had prophesied and as will appear later.

562. But the highpriest, furious at the answer of the

Lord, instead of looking upon it as a solution of his

doubt, rose once more in his seat, and rending his

garments as an outward manifestation of his zeal for

the honor of God, loudly cried out: "He hath blas

phemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Be

hold, now you have heard the blasphemy: what think

you?" (Matth. 26, 65.) The real blasphemy however

consisted rather in these words of Caiphas, since he

THE TRANSFIXION 543

denied the certain fact that Christ was the Son of

God by his very nature, and since he attributed to

the divine Personality sinfulness, which was directly

repugnant to his very nature. Such was the folly of the

wicked priest, who by his office should have recognized

and proclaimed the universal truth. He made of himself

an execrable blasphemer in maintaining that He, who

is holiness itself, had blasphemed. Having previously,

with satanical instinct, abused his high office in prophe

sying that the death of one man is better than the ruin

of all the people, he now was hindered by his sins from

understanding his own prophecy. As the example and

the opinions of princes and prelates powerfully stirs up

the flattery and subserviency of inferiors, that whole gath

ering of wickedness was incensed at the Savior Jesus:

all exclaimed in a loud voice : "He is guilty of death

(Matth, 26, 66), let Him die, let Him die!" Roused

by satanic fury they all fell upon their most meek Master

and discharged upon Him their wrath. Some of them

struck Him in the face, others kicked Him, others tore

out his hair, others spat upon his venerable countenance,

others slapped or struck Him in the neck, which was a

treatment reserved among the Jews only for the most

abject and vile of criminals.

563. Never among men were such outrageous and

frightful insults heaped upon any one as were then

heaped upon the Redeemer. Saint Luke and saint Mark

say that they covered his face and then struck Him

with their hands and fists saying : Prophesy, prophesy to

us, Thou Prophet, who was it that struck Thee? The

reason for their doing this was mysterious : namely, the

joy with which our Savior suffered all these injuries and

blasphemies (as I will soon relate) made his face shine

forth in extraordinary beauty, and on this account those

544 CITY OF GOD

ministers of wickedness were seized with unbearable con

sternation and shame. They sought to attribute it to

sorcery and magic and, by a resolution befitting also

well their unworthiness, they covered the face of the

Lord with an unclean cloth, so that they might not be

hindered and tormented by its divine light in venting

their diabolical wrath. All these affronts, reproaches

and insults were seen and felt by the most holy Mary,

causing in Her the same pains and wounds in the same

parts of her body and at the same time as inflicted upon

the Lord. The only difference was, that in our Lord

the blows and torments were inflicted by the Jews them

selves, while in his most pure Mother they were caused

by the Almighty in a miraculous manner and upon re

quest of the Lady. According to natural laws, the

vehemence of her interior sorrow and anxiety would

have put an end to her life; but She was strengthened

by divine power, so as to be able to continue to suffer

with her beloved Son and Lord.

564. The interior acts performed by the Savior under

these barbarous and unheard of persecutions, cannot be

fathomed by human reason or faculties. Mary alone

understood them fully, so as to be able to imitate them

with the highest perfection. But as the divine Master

now experienced in his own Person, how necessary his

sympathy would be for those who were to follow him

and practice his doctrine, He exerted Himself so much

the more in procuring for them grace and blessings on

this occasion, in which He was teaching them by his

own example the narrow way of perfection. In the

midst of these injuries and torments, and those which

followed thereafter, the Lord established for his perfect

and chosen souls the beatitudes, which He had promised

and proposed to them some time before. He looked upon

THE TRANSFIXION 545

the poor in spirit, who were to imitate Him in this virtue

and said: "Blessed are you in being stripped of the

earthly goods; for by my Passion and Death I am to

entail upon you the heavenly kingdom as a secure and

certain possession of voluntary poverty. Blessed are

those who meekly suffer and bear adversities and tribu

lations ; for, besides the joy of having imitated Me, they

shall possess the land of the hearts and the good will

of men through the peacefulness of their intercourse

and the sweetness of their virtues. Blessed are they

that weep while they sow in tears; for in them, they

shall receive the bread of understanding and life, and

they shall afterwards harvest the fruits of everlasting

joy and bliss."

565. "Blessed are also those who hunger and thirst

for justice and truth ; for I shall earn for them satiation

far beyond all their desires, as well in the reign of grace

as in the reign of glory. Blessed are they, who, imitat

ing Me in my offers of pardon and friendship, merci

fully pity those that offend and persecute them; for I

promise them the fulness of mercy from my Father.

Blessed be the pure of heart, who imitate Me in cruci

fying their flesh in order to preserve the purity of their

souls. I promise them the vision of peace and of my

Divinity, by becoming like unto Me and. by partaking

of Me. Blessed are the peaceful, who, yielding their

rights, do not resist the evil-minded and deal with them

with a sincere and tranquil heart without vengeance;

they shall be called my children, because they imitate

my eternal Father and I shall write them in my memory

and in my mind as my adopted sons. Those that suffer

persecution for justice s sake, shall be the blessed heirs

of my celestial kingdom, since they suffer with Me; and

where lam, there also they shall be in eternity. Rejoice,

546 CITY OF GOD

ye poor ; be consoled all ye that are and shall be afflicted ;

glory in your lot, ye little ones and despised ones of

this world, you who suffer in humility and longanimity,

suffer with an interior rejoicing; since all of you are

following Me in the path of truth. Renounce vanity,

despise the pomp and haughtiness of the false and de

ceitful Babylon ; pass ye through the fires and the waters

of tribulation until you reach Me, who am the light,

the truth and your guide to the eternal rest and

refreshment."

566. In such divine acts and in other aspirations for

the good of sinners, our Savior Jesus occupied Himself,

while He was surrounded by his malignant enemies as

by ravenous dogs (Ps. 21, 17), who pursued Him and

satiated Him with insults, affronts, blasphemies and

wounds. The Virgin Mary, who was most attentive to

all that passed, accompanied Him in all his acts and peti

tions ; for She made the same petitions for his enemies.

She took charge of the blessings lavished by her Son

upon the just and the predestined, and constituted Her

self as their Mother, their Helper and Protectress. In

the name of all of them She composed hymns of praise

and thanksgiving, because the Lord had assigned such

an exalted position in the reign of grace to the despised

and poor of this earth. On this account also, and on

account of what She afterwards witnessed in the interior

of Christ, She chose anew labor and contempt, tribula

tions and pains as her share during the Passion and

during the rest of her most holy life.

567. Saint Peter had followed the Lord Jesus from

the house of Annas to that of Caiphas, although he took

care to walk at some distance behind the crowd of

enemies for fear that the Jews might seize him. He

partly repressed this fear on account of the love of his

THE TRANSFIXION 547

Master and by the natural courage of his heart. Among

the great multitude which crowded in and out of the

house of Caiphas and in the darkness, it was not diffi

cult for the Apostle to find entrance into the house of

Caiphas. In the gates of the courtyard a servant-maid,

who was a portress as in the house of Annas, likewise

noticed saint Peter; she immediately went up to the

soldiers, who stood at the fire with him and said : "This

man is one of those who were wont to accompany Jesus

of Nazareth." One of the bystanders said: "Thou art

surely a Galileean and one of them." Saint Peter denied

it and added an oath, that he was not a disciple of Jesus,

immediately leaving the company at the fire. Yet, in his

eagerness to see the end, although he left the courtyard,

he did not leave the neighborhood. His natural love

and compassion for the Lord still caused him to linger

in the place, where he saw Him suffer so much. So the

Apostle moved about, sometimes nearer, sometimes

farther from the hall of justice for nearly an hour. Then

a relative of that Malchus, whose ear he had severed,

recognized him and said: Thou art a Galileean and a

disciple of Jesus; I saw thee with Him in the garden."

Then Peter deeming himself discovered, was seized with

still greater fear, and he began to assert with oaths and

imprecations, that he knew not the Man (Matth. 26, 72).

Immediately thereupon the cock crowed the second time,

and the prediction of his divine Master, that he should

deny Him thrice before the cock crowed twice, was ful

filled to the letter.

568. The infernal dragon was very anxious to destroy

saint Peter. It was Lucifer that incited the two maids,

whom he could more easily influence, and afterwards,

the soldiers, to molest the Apostle by their attention and

inquiries. At the same time as soon as he saw him in

548 CITY OF GOD

his dangerous hesitation and change of mind he tried

to disturb saint Peter by vivid imaginations of impend

ing cruelty. Thus tempted, Peter simply denied the

Lord at first, added an oath to the second denial, and

curses and imprecations against himself at the third.

Hence, from one sin he fell into another greater one,

yielding to the cruel persecutions of the enemies. But

saint Peter, now hearing the crowing of the cock, re

membered the warning of his divine Master (Luke 22,

61 ); for, the great Queen in her gentle love having inter

ceded for him, the Lord now cast upon him a look of

boundless mercy. From her oratory in the Cenacle She

had witnessed the denials together with all the circum

stances and the causes which had brought the Apostle

to fall so deeply. She had seen him beset with natural

fear and much more by the merciless assaults of Lucifer.

She threw Herself upon the ground and tearfully inter

ceded for him, alleging his frailty and appealing to the

merits of her divine Son. The Lord himself moved

the heart of Peter, and by means of the light sent to

him, gently reproached him, exhorting him to acknowl

edge his fault and deplore his sin. Immediately the

Apostle left the house of the highpriest, bursting with

inmost sorrow into bitter tears over his fall. In order

to weep in the bitterness of his heart he betook himself

to a cave, even now called that of the Crowing Cock;

there he poured forth his sorrow and confusion in a

flood of tears. At the end of three hours he had obtained

pardon for his crimes ; and the holy impulses and inspir

ations had continued during that whole time until he

was again restored to grace. The most pure Mother

and Queen sent to him one of her angels, who secretly

consoled him and excited in him the hope of forgiveness,

so that he might not delay his full pardon by want of

THE TRANSFIXION 549

trust in the goodness of God. The angel was ordered

not to manifest himself, because the Apostle had so

recently committed his sin. Hence the angel fulfilled his

commission without being seen by the Apostle. Saint

Peter was consoled and strengthened in his great sorrow

by these inspirations and thus obtained full pardon

through the intercession of most holy Mary.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN AND

LADY GAVE ME.

569. My daughter, the mysterious sacrament of the

patience of my Son, by which He bore all the affronts

and insults, is a sealed book, which can be opened and

understood only by the divine light. Thou hast come to

the knowledge of it, as it has been partly laid open for

thee, although on account of thy limited powers, thou

writest much less than thou hast seen. But as this mys

tery is being made clear and intelligible to thee in the

secret of thy heart, I wish that it be also written there

and that thou study by this living example that divine

science, which neither flesh nor blood can teach thee.

For the world does not know, nor does it merit to know,

this science. This philosophy consists in recognizing and

loving the happy lot of the poor, the humble, the afflicted,

the despised, and those unknown among the children of

vanity. This school my most holy and loving Son estab

lished in his Church, when He proclaimed and set up

the eight beatitudes (Matth. 5, 2-10). Afterwards, when

He himself assumed all the sufferings of his Passion,

He became for us a Teacher, who practices what He

teaches, as thou hast seen. Nevertheless, although this

is set before the eyes of the Catholics, and can be plainly

read by them in this book of life during their whole

earthly pilgrimage, there are but few and scattered souls

550 CITY OF GOD

who enter into this school and study this book, while

countless are the wayward and foolish, who ignore this

science in their unwillingness to be taught.

570. All abhor poverty and thirst after riches, none of

them being willing to recognize their emptiness. Infinite

is the number of those who are carried away by their

anger and vengeance, despising meekness. Few deplore

their real miseries and struggle merely for terrestrial

consolations; scarcely any love justice, or loyally pursue

it in their dealings with the neighbors. Mercy is almost

extinct, purity of heart is sullied and infringed upon,

peace is constrained. None grant pardon, none wish to

suffer for justice s sake, yea not even the least of the

many torments and pains, which they have so justly

merited. Thus, my dearest, there are few who attain

the blessings promised by my divine Son and by me.

Many times the just indignation and anger of the Al

mighty is roused against the professors of the true faith;

since in the very sight of the living example of their

Master, they live almost like infidels; many of them

being even more abominable in their lives ; for they are

properly those who despise the fruits of the Redemp

tion, which they have come to know and confess. In

the land of saints they impiously perform the works of

wickedness (Is. 26, 10), and make themselves unworthy

of the remedies, which are put at their disposal in more

merciful abundance.

571. Of thee I desire, my daughter, that thou labor

valiantly for this blessedness, by seeking to imitate me

perfectly according to thy grace of so deeply understand

ing this doctrine, which is hidden from the prudent and

wise of this world (Mark 11, 25). Day for day I mani

fest to thee new secrets of my wisdom, in order that it

may be established in thy heart and thou mayest extend

THE TRANSFIXION 551

thy hands to valiant deeds (Prov. 31, 19). And now

I will tell thee of an exercise which I practiced and which

thou canst imitate to a certain degree. Thou knowest

already, that from the very first instant of my Concep

tion I was full of grace, without the least stain or par

ticipation of the least effect of original sin. On account

of this singular privilege I was blessed in all the virtues,

without feeling any repugnance or opposition in the

exercise of them, and without being conscious of owing

satisfaction for any sins of my own. Nevertheless the

divine enlightenment taught me, that I was a Daughter

of Adam by nature, which in him had sinned, and there

fore I felt bound to humiliate myself to the very dust,

even though I shared none of the guilt of that sin. And

since I also possessed senses of the same kind as those,

through which sin and its effects were contracted and

which then and afterwards are operative in present

human conditions, I thought myself obliged to mortify

them, humiliate them and deprive them of the enjoyment

proper to their nature, simply on account of this my

parentage from Adam. I acted like a most faithful

daughter of a family, who assumes the debt of her father

and of her brothers as her own, though she had no share

in contracting it, and who strives to pay and satisfy for

it the more earnestly, the more she loves her family and

the more they are unable to satisfy and free themselves

from it, not giving herself any rest until she succeeds.

This have I done with all the human race, whose miseries

and transgressions I bewailed. Because I was a Daughter

of Adam I mortified in me the senses and faculties with

which he sinned, and I humiliated myself as one that had

fallen and one guilty of his sin and disobedience, though

I was entirely free from them. All this I did not only

for Adam, but for all who by nature are my brethren.

552

CITY OF GOD

Thou canst not imitate me under like conditions, since

thou art a partaker in his sin and guilt. But I herewith

impose upon thee to labor without ceasing for thyself

and for thy neighbor, and to humiliate thyself to the

very dust ; since a contrite and humble heart draws down

mercy from the divine goodness.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE SUFFERINGS OF OUR SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST AFTER

THE DENIAL OF SAINT PETER UNTIL MORNING; AND

THE GREAT SORROW OF HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER.

572. The holy Evangelists pass over in silence what

and where the Savior suffered after the ill-treatment in

the house of Caiphas and the denial of saint Peter. But

they all take up again the thread of events, when they

speak of the council held by them in the morning in

order to deliver Him over to Pilate, as will be related in

the next chapter. I had some doubts as to the propriety

of speaking of this intervening time and of manifesting

that which was made known to me concerning it : for it

was intimated to me, that all cannot be known in this

life, nor is it proper that all should be made known to

all men. On the day of judgment these and many other

sacraments of the life and the Passion of our Lord shall

be published to the whole world. I cannot find words

for describing that which I might otherwise manifest:

I do not find adequate expressions for my concepts, and

much less for the reality itself; all is ineffable and above

my capacity. But in order to obey the orders given me,

I will say what I am able, so as not to incur the blame

of concealing the truth, which directly reproaches and

confuses our vanity and forgetfulness. In the presence

of heaven I confess my own hardness of heart, in not

dying of sorrow and shame for having committed such

great sins at such a cost to my God, the Originator of

my life and being. We cannot ignore the wickedness and

553

554 CITY OF GOD

gravity of sin, which caused such ravages in the Author

of grace and glory. I would be the most ungrateful of

all the woman-born, if I would not now abhor sin more

than death and as much as even the demon, and I cannot

but intimate and assert, that this is the duty likewise of

all the children of the holy Catholic church.

573. By the ill-treatment, which the Lord received in

the presence of Caiphas, the wrath of this highpriest and

of all his supporters and ministers was much gratified,

though not at all satiated. But as it was already past

midnight, the whole council of these wicked men resolved

to take good care, that the Savior be securely watched

and confined until the morning, lest He should escape

while they were asleep. For this purpose they ordered

Him to be locked, bound as He was, in one of the sub

terranean dungeons, a prison cell set apart for the most

audacious robbers and criminals of the state. Scarcely

any light penetrated into this prison to dispel its dark

ness. It was filled with such uncleanness and stench, that

it would have infected the whole house, if it had not

been so remote and so well enclosed ; for it had not been

cleaned for many years, both because it was so deep down

and because of the degradation of the criminals that were

confined in it; for none thought it worth while making

it more habitable than for mere wild beasts, unworthy

of all human kindness.

574. The order of the council of wickedness was exe

cuted; the servants dragged the Creator of heaven and

earth to that polluted and subterranean dungeon there

to imprison Him. As the Lord was still bound with the

fetters laid upon Him in the garden, these malicious

men freely exercised all the wrathful cruelty with which

they were inspired by the prince of darkness; for they

dragged Him forward by the ropes, inhumanly causing

THE TRANSFIXION 555

Him to stumble, and loading Him with kicks and cuffs

amid blasphemous imprecations. From the floor in

one corner of the subterranean cavern protruded part

of a rock or block, which on account of its hardness

had not been cut out. To this block, which had the

appearance of a piece of column, they now bound and

fettered the Lord Jesus with the ends of the ropes, but

in a most merciless manner. For they forced Him to

approach it and tied Him to it in a stooping position,

so that He could neither seat Himself nor stand upright

for relief, forcing Him to remain in a most painful and

torturing posture. Thus they left Him bound to the

rock, closing the prison-door with a key and giving it

in charge of one of the most malicious of their number.

575. But the infernal dragon rested not in his ancient

pride. In the desire of finding out who this Christ was

and of overcoming his imperturbable patience, he invented

another scheme, to the execution of which he incited the

jailer and some others of the servants. He inspired the

one who held the key of the divine Treasure Trove, the

greatest in heaven and earth, with the idea of inviting

some of his equally evil-minded companions to descend

to the dungeon and entertain themselves for awhile with

the Master of life by forcing Him to speak of prophecy,

or do some other strange or unheard of thing; for they

believed Him to be a diviner or magician. Moved by

this diabolical suggestion, he invited some of the soldiers

and servants, who readily consented. While they were

discussing this matter, a multitude of angels, who assisted

the Redeemer in his Passion, when they saw Him so

painfully bound in such an improper and polluted place,

prostrated themselves before Him, adoring Him as their

true God and Master, and showing Him so much the

more reverence and worship the more they admired the

556 CITY OF GOD

love which moved Him to subject Himself to such abuse

for the sake of mankind. They sang to Him some of

the hymns and canticles which his own Mother had com

posed in his praise, as I have mentioned above. The

whole multitude of angelic spirits begged Him, in the

name of the same Lady, that, since He would not permit

his own almighty power to alleviate the sufferings of

his humanity, He give them permission to unfetter and

relieve Him of this torturing position and to defend Him

from that horde of servants now instigated by the

demons to heap upon Him new insults.

576. The Lord would not permit the angels to render

this service and He said to them: "Ministering spirits

of my eternal Father, I do not wish to accept any alle

viation in my sufferings at present and I desire to undergo

these torments and affronts in order to satiate my burning

love for men and leave to my chosen friends this example

for their imitation and consolation in their sufferings;

and in order that all may properly estimate the treasures

of grace, which I am gaining for them in great abundance

through my pains. At the same time I wish to justify

my cause, so that, on the day of my wrath, all may

know how justly the reprobate shall be condemned for

despising the most bitter sufferings by which I sought

to save them. Tell my Mother to console Herself in this

tribulation, since the day of rest and gladness shall

come. Let Her accompany Me now in my works and

sufferings for men ; for her affectionate compassion and

all her doings, afford Me much pleasure and enjoyment."

Thereupon the holy angels betook themselves to their

great Queen and Lady and consoled Her with this mes

sage, although She already knew in another way the will

of her divine Son and all that happened in the house of

Caiphas. When She perceived the new cruelty with

THE TRANSFIXION 557

which they had left Christ the Lord bound in a posture

so painful arid hard, She felt in her purest body the same

pains; just as She had felt that of the blows and cuffs

and other insults inflicted upon the Author of life. All

the sufferings of the Lord miraculously reacted upon

the virginal body of this sincerest Dove ; the same pains

beset the Son and Mother, and the same sword pierced

both their hearts; with only this difference, that Christ

suffered as Godman and sole Redeemer of mankind,

while Mary suffered as a creature and as a faithful helper

of her most holy Son.

577. When the blessed Queen perceived that this band

of vile miscreants, incited by the devil, would be per

mitted to enter the dungeon, She wept bitterly at what

was to happen. Foreseeing the malicious intentions of

Lucifer, She held Herself ready to make use of her

sovereign power to prevent the executions of any designs

upon the person of Christ that would imply indecency,

such as the dragon sought to induce those unhappy men

to carry out. For although all they did was most unbe

coming and irreverent in his regard, yet there were in

sults, which would have been still more indecent, and by

which the demon, not having succeeded hitherto, desired

now to try the meek forbearance of the Lord. So exqui

site and rare, wonderful and heroic, were the doings of

the Lady at this time and during the whole Passion,

that they could not worthily be mentioned or becomingly

extolled, even if many books were written for this sole

object; and as they are indescribable in this life, we must

leave their full revelation to the beatific vision.

578. The ministers of wickedness therefore broke into

the dungeon, blasphemously gloating over the expected

feast of insult and ridicule, which they were now to

hold with the Lord of all creation. Going up to Him

3-37

558 CITY OF GOD

they began to defile Him with their loathsome spittle

and rain blows and cuffs upon Him with unmentionable

and insulting mockery. The Lord opened not his mouth

or made any answer; He raised not his divine eyes and

lost not the humble serenity of his countenance. The

sacrilegious buffoons wished to drive Him to some ridicu

lous or extraordinary saying or action, so that they

might make a laughing-stock of Him as a sorcerer; and

when they were compelled to witness his unchanging

meekness, they allowed themselves to be incited still more

by the demons. They untied the divine Master from

the stone block and placed Him in the middle of the

dungeon, at the same time blindfolding Him with a

cloth; there they began to come up one after the other

and strike Him with their fists, or slap or kick Him,

each one trying to outdo the other in vehemence of their

blasphemous cruelty and asking Him to prophesy who

had struck Him. This kind of sacrilegious treatment

these servants repeated even more often and continued

longer than before the tribunal of Annas, to which saint

Matthew (26, 67), saint Mark (14, 65), and saint Luke

(22, 64) refer, tacitly including all that followed.

579. The most meek Lamb silently bore this flood of

insults and blasphemies. Lucifer, tormented by his anx

ious desire of seeing some sign of impatience in Him,

was lashed into fury at the equanimity with which the

Savior bore it all. Therefore he inspired those slaves

and friends of his with the project of despoiling the Lord

of all his clothes and pursuing their ill-treatment accord

ing to suggestions which could only originate in the exe

crable demon. They readily yielded to this new inspira

tion and set about its execution. But the most prudent

Lady was moved to most tearful prayers and aspiration? j

at this abominable attempt and interfered with her

THE TRANSFIXION 559

power as the Queen. She asked the eternal Father to

withdraw his co-operation with the secondary or created

causes toward such a beginning and She commanded the

faculties of these servants not to perform their natural

functions. Thus it happened that none of the ruffians

could execute the indecencies, which the demon or their

own malice suggested to them. Some of these suggestions

they forgot immediately and others they could not follow

up, because their limbs became as it were frozen or par

alyzed until they again changed their intent. As soon

as they desisted the use of their limbs would again be

restored, for this was not intended as a punishment, but

merely in order to prevent their practicing any indecen

cies. They were left entirely free to practice those cruel

ties or indulge in other irreverence, which were not so

indecent, or were permitted by the Lord.

580. The powerful Queen also commanded the demons

to be silent and forbade them to follow out the indecent

intentions of Lucifer, their leader. By this command of

the powerful Lady the dragon completely lost his power

in those matters which Mary wished to include in her

prohibition. Neither could he further irritate the foolish

anger of those depraved men, nor could they go any

further in their indecency than She permitted. But while

experiencing within themselves the wonderful and ex

traordinary effects of her commands, they did not merit

to be undeceived or recognize the divine power, although

they thus saw themselves alternately paralyzed and sud

denly restored to the full use of their powers. They

attributed it merely to the sorcery and magic of the

Master of truth. In their diabolical infatuation they con

tinued to practice their insulting mockery and tortures

upon the person of Christ, until they noticed that the

night had already far advanced; then they again tied

560 CITY OF GOD

Him to the column and leaving Him thus bound, they

departed with all the demons. It was ordained by the

divine Wisdom, that the power of the blessed Mother

safeguard propriety and decency due to the person of her

most pure Son against the improper intentions of Lucifer

and his ministers.

581. Again the Savior was alone in the dungeon, sur

rounded by the angelic spirits, who were full of admira

tion at the doings and the secret judgments of the Lord

in what He wished to suffer. They adored Him with

deepest reverence and magnified his holy name in exalted

praise. The Redeemer of the world addressed a long

prayer to his eternal Father for the children of the evan

gelical Church, for the spreading of the holy faith, and

for the Apostles, especially for saint Peter, who during

that time was beweeping his sin. He prayed also for

those who had injured and tormented Him; above all

He included in his prayer his most holy Mother and all

those who in imitation of Him were to be afflicted and

despised in this world. At the same time He offered

up his Passion and his coming Death for these ends.

His grief -stricken Mother followed Him in these prayers,

offering up the same petitions for the children of the

Church and for its enemies without any movements of

anger, indignation or dislike toward them. Only against

the demon was She incensed, because he was entirely in

capable of grace on account of his irreparable obstinacy.

In sorrowful complaints She addressed the Lord, saying :

582. "Divine Love of my soul, my Son and Lord,

Thou art worthy to be reverenced, honored and praised

by all creatures, since Thou art the image of the eternal

Father and the figure of his substance (Heb. 1, 3), infi

nite in thy being and in thy perfections. Thou art the be

ginning of all holiness (Apoc. 1, 8). But if the creatures

THE TRANSFIXION 561

are to serve Thee in entire subjection, why do they now,

my Lord and God, despise, vilify, insult and torture thy

Person, which is worthy of the highest worship and

adoration? Why has the malice of men risen to such

a pitch ? Why has pride dared to raise itself even above

heaven? How can envy become so powerful? Thou

art the only and unclouded Sun of justice, which en

lightens and dispels the darkness of sin (John 1, 9).

Thou art the fountain of grace, withholding its waters

from no one. Thou art the One, who in his liberal love

givest being and life to all that live upon this earth, and

all things depend upon Thee, while Thou hast need of

none (Acts 17, 28). What then have they seen in thy

doings, what have they found in thy Passion, that they

should treat Thee in so vile a manner ? O most atrocious

wickedness of sin, which has so disfigured the heavenly

beauty and obscured the light of thy countenance! O

cruel sin, which so inhumanly pursues the Repairer of

all thy evil consequences! But I understand, my Son

and Master, I understand that Thou art the Builder of

true love, the Author of human salvation, the Master

and Lord of virtues (Ps. 23, 10) : Thou wishest to

put in practice Thyself what Thou teachest the humble

disciples of thy school : Thou wishest to humble pride,

confound haughtiness and become the example of eternal

salvation to all. And if Thou desirest that all imitate

thy ineffable patience and charity, then that is my duty

before all others, since I have administered to Thee the

material and clothed Thee in this body now subjected to

suffering, and wounded, spit upon and buffeted. O would

that I alone should suffer these pains, and that Thou, my

most innocent Son, be spared ! And since this is not pos

sible, let Me suffer with Thee unto death. You, O

heavenly spirits, who full of wonder at the long-suffering

562 CITY OF GOD

of my Son recognize his immutable Deity and the inno

cence and excellence of his humanity, seek ye to com

pensate for these injuries and blasphemies heaped upon

Him by men. Give Him glory and magnificence, wisdom

honor, virtue and power (Apoc. 5, 12). Invite the

heavens, the planets and the stars and the elements to ac

knowledge and confess Him; and see whether there is

another sorrow equal to mine!" (Thren. 1, 12). Such

and many more were the sorrowful aspirations of the

most pure Lady, in giving vent to the bitterness of her

grief and pain.

583. Peerless was the patience of the heavenly Prin

cess in the Death and Passion of her beloved Son and

Lord; so that what She suffered never seemed to Her

much, nor her afflictions equal to those demanded by her

affection, which was measured only by the love and the

dignity of her Son and the greatness of his sufferings.

Nor did She in any of the injuries and affronts against

the Lord take any account of their being committed

against Herself. She reflected not on the share which

She herself had in them, although She was made to

suffer so much by all of them : She deplored them only

in so far as they outraged the divine Personality and

caused damage to the aggressors. She prayed for them

all, that the Most High might pardon them and grant

them salvation from the evils of sin and enlightenment

for gaining the fruits of Redemption.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

584. My daughter, it is written in the holy Gospels

(John 5, 57) that the eternal Father has given to his

only Son and mine the power to judge and condemn

the reprobate on the last day, the day of universal judg-

THE TRANSFIXION 563

ment. This was eminently proper, not only in order that

all the sinners may see their Judge, who will sentence

them according to the most just will of God; but also

in order that they may behold and recognize his hu

manity, by which they were redeemed, and be confronted

in it with the torments and injuries it suffered in order

to rescue them from eternal damnation. The same Judge

and Lord, who shall judge them, shall also advance the

charge. As they cannot answer or satisfy for the

crimes with which He charges them, their confusion will

be only the beginning of the eternal torments, which they

merit by their obstinate ingratitude; for then shall be

come evident to all the world the greatness of his most

merciful and kind Redemption and the justice of their

damnation. Great was the sorrow, most bitter the grief,

of my most holy Son, that not all should make use of

the fruits of his Redemption. This same thought also

pierced my heart and immensely added to the sorrow of

seeing Him spit upon, buffeted, and blasphemed more

cruelly than can ever be understood by living man. But

I understood all these sufferings clearly and as they

should be understood; therefore my sorrow was great

in proportion to this knowledge, just as it was also the

measure of my reverence and love of the person of

Christ, my Son and Lord. But next to this sorrow, my

greatest one was to know, that after all these death-

dealing sufferings of the Lord, so many men should still

damn themselves even within sight of all the infinite

treasures of grace.

585. I wish that thou imitate and follow me in this

sorrow and that thou lament this fearful misfortune;

for among all the losses sustained by men, there is none

which deserves to be so deplored, nor which can ever

be compared to it. My Son and I look with especial

564 CITY OF GOD

love upon those who imitate this sorrow and afflict

themselves on account of the perdition of so many souls.

Seek thou, my dearest, to distinguish thyself in this

exercise and continue to pray: for thou canst scarcely

imagine how acceptable are such prayers to the Almighty.

But remember his promise, that those who pray shall

receive (Luke 11, 9), and that to those who knock the

gates of his infinite treasures shall be opened. In order

that thou mayest have something to offer in return,

write into thy heart, what my most holy Son and thy

Spouse suffered at the hands of those vile and depraved

men, and the invincible patience, meekness and silence

with which He submitted to their wicked whims. With

this example, labor from now on, that no anger, nor

any other passion of a daughter of Adam have any sway

over thee. Let an interior and ever active horror of

pride, and a dread of injuring thy neighbor, be engen

dered in thy bosom. Solicitously ask the Lord for

patience, meekness, and peacefulness and for a love of

sufferings and Christ s Cross. Embrace this Cross with

a pious affection and follow Christ thy Spouse, in order

that thou mayest at last possess Him (Matth. 16, 14).

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE COUNCIL CONVENES ON THE FRIDAY MORNING TO

SUBSTANTIATE THE CHARGES AGAINST THE SAVIOR

JESUS; THEY SEND HIM TO PILATE J MOST HOLY

MARY, WITH SAINT JOHN AND THE THREE MARYS,

GOES FORTH TO MEET JESUS.

586. At the dawn of Friday morning, say the Evan

gelists (Matth. 27, 1; Mark 15, 1; Luke 22, 66; John

11, 47), the ancients, the chief priests and scribes, who

according to the law were looked upon with greatest

respect by the people, gathered together in order to come

to a common decision concerning the death of Christ.

This they all desired; however they were anxious to

preserve the semblance of justice before the people. This

council was held in the house of Caiphas, where the Lord

was imprisoned. Once more they commanded Him to

be brought from the dungeon to the hall of the council

in order to be examined. The satellites of justice rushed

below to drag 1 Him forth bound and fettered as He was ;

and while they untied Him from the column of rock,

they mocked Him with great contempt saying: "Well

now, Jesus of Nazareth, how little have thy miracles

helped to defend Thee. The power which Thou didst

vaunt, of being able to rebuild the temple in three days,

has failed altogether in securing thy escape. But Thou

shalt now pay for thy presumption and thy proud aspir

ations shall be brought low. Come now to the chief

priests and to the scribes. They are awaiting Thee to

put an end to thy imposition and deliver Thee over to

Pilate, who will quickly finish Thee." Having freed the

565

566 CITY OF GOD

Lord from the rock they dragged Him up to the council.

The Lord did not open his lips; but the tortures, the

blows and the spittle, with which they had covered Him

and which He could not wipe off on account of his bonds,

had so disfigured Him, that He now rilled the members

of the council with a sort of dreadful surprise, but not

with compassion. Too great was their envious wrath

conceived against the Lord.

587. They again asked Him to tell them, whether He

was the Christ ( Luke 22, 1 ) , that is, the Anointed. Just

as all their previous questions, so this was put with the

malicious determination not to listen or to admit the

truth, but to calumniate and fabricate a charge against

Him. But the Lord, being perfectly willing to die for

the truth, denied it not; at the same time He did not

wish to confess it in such a manner that they could

despise it, or borrow out of it some color for their cal

umny ; for this was not becoming his innocence and wis

dom. Therefore He veiled his answer in such a way,

that if the pharisees chose to yield to even the least

kindly feeling, they would be able to trace up the mystery

hidden in his words; but if they had no such feeling,

then should it become clear through their answer, that

the evil which they imputed to Him was the result of

their wicked intentions and lay not in his answer. He

therefore said to them : "If I tell you that I am He of

whom you ask, you will not believe what I say; and if

I shall ask you, you will not answer, nor release Me.

But I tell you, that the Son of man, after this, shall

seat Himself at the right hand of the power of God"

(Luke 22, 67). The priests answered: "Then thou art

the Son of God?" and the Lord replied: "You say that

I am." This was as if He had said: You have made

a very correct inference, that I am the Son of God ; for

THE TRANSFIXION 567

my works, my doctrines, and your own Scripture, as

well as what you are now doing with Me, testify to the

fact, that I am the Christ, the One promised in the law.

588. But this council of the wicked was not disposed

to assent to divine truth, although they themselves

inferred it very correctly from the antecedents and could

easily have believed it. They would neither give assent

nor belief, but preferred to call it a blasphemy deserving

death. Since the Lord had now reaffirmed what He

had said before, they all cried out : "What need have we

of further witnesses, since He himself asserts it by his

own lips?" And they immediately came to the unani

mous conclusion that He should, as one worthy of death,

be brought before Pontius Pilate, who governed Judea

in the name of the Roman emperor and was the tem

poral Lord of Palestine. According to the laws of the

Roman empire capital punishment was reserved to the

senate or the emperor and his representatives in the

remote provinces. Cases of such importance as involved

the taking away of life were looked upon as worthy of

greater attention and as not to be decided without giving

the accused a hearing and an opportunity of defense and

justification. In these affairs of justice the Roman peo

ple yielded to the requirements of natural reason more

faithfully than other nations. In regard to this trial

of Christ the priests and scribes were pleased with the

prospect of having sentence of death passed upon Christ

our Lord by the heathen Pilate, because they could then

tell the people, that He was condemned by the Roman

governor and that this certainly would not have hap

pened if He were not guilty of death. To this extent

had they been blinded by their sins and their hypocrisy,

that they failed to see how much more guilty and sacri

legious they would even then be than the gentile judge.

568 CITY OF GOD

But the Lord arranged it thus, in order that by their

own behavior before Pilate they might reveal all their

wickedness more plainly, as we shall see immediately.

589. The executioners therefore brought our Savior

Jesus Christ to the house of Pilate, in order to present

Him, still bound with the same chains and ropes in which

they had taken Him from the garden, before his tribunal.

The city of Jerusalem was full of strangers, who had

come from all Palestine to celebrate the great Pasch

of the Lamb and of the unleavened bread. As the rumor

of this arrest was already spread among the people, and

as the Master of life was known to all of them, a count

less multitude gathered in the streets to see Him brought

in chains through the streets. They were divided in

their opinion concerning the Messiah; some of them

shouted out: Let Him die, let Him die, this wicked

impostor, who deceives the whole world. Others an

swered: His doctrines do not appear to be so bad, nor

his works ; for He has done good to many. Still others,

who had believed in Him, were much afflicted and wept;

while the whole city was in confusion and uproar con

cerning the Nazarene. Lucifer and all his demons were

very attentive to what was passing; for, seeing himself

secretly overcome by the invincible patience and meek

ness of Christ the Lord, he was stirred to uncontrollable

fury by his own pride and haughtiness at the haunting

suspicion, that such virtues could not be those of a mere

human being. On the other hand, he could not under

stand how his allowing Himself to be despised and ill-

treated and his succumbing to so much bodily weak

ness and, as it were, total annihilation, could ever har

monize with his being true God; for, if He were God,

said the dragon to himself, his Divinity would never con

sent to such annihilation, and the power inherent in his

THE TRANSFIXION 569

divine nature and communicated to the humanity, would

certainly prevent such weakness. Lucifer argued like

one who knew nothing of the suspension of the overflow

of the divine upon the human nature; which the Lord

had secretly ordained for the purpose of securing the

highest degree of suffering possible, as I have mentioned

above (No. 498). By these misgivings, the pride of

satan was lashed to still more furious efforts in the

persecution of the Lord so as to ascertain who this

One was that knew how to suffer torments in such a

manner.

590. The sun had already arisen while these things

happened and the most holy Mother, who saw it all

from afar, now resolved to leave her retreat and follow

her divine Son to the house of Pilate and to his death

on the Cross. When the great Queen and Lady was

about to set forth from the Cenacle, saint John arrived,

in order to give an account of all that was happening;

for the beloved disciple at that time did not know of

the visions, by which all the doings and sufferings of

her most holy Son were manifest to the blessed Mother.

After the denial of saint Peter, saint John had retired

and had observed, more from afar what was going on.

Recognizing also the wickedness of his flight in the gar

den, he confessed it to the Mother of God and asked

her pardon as soon as he came into her presence; and

then he gave an account of all that passed in his heart and

of what he had done and what he had seen in following

his Master. Saint John thought it well to prepare the

afflicted Mother for her meeting with her most holy Son,

in order that She might not be overcome by the fearful

spectacle of his present condition. Therefore He sought

to impress Her beforehand with some image of his suf

ferings by saying : "O my Lady, in what a state of suf-

570 CITY OF GOD

fering is our divine Master! The sight of Him cannot

but break one s heart; for by the buffets and the blows

and by the spittle, his most beautiful countenance is so

disfigured and defiled, that Thou wilt scarcely recognize

Him with thy own eyes." The most prudent Lady lis

tened to his description, as if She knew nothing of the

events; but She broke out in bitterest tears of heart

rending sorrow. The holy women, who had came forth

with the Lady, also listened to saint John, and all of

them were filled with grief and terror at his words. The

Queen of heaven asked the Apostle to accompany Her

and the devout women, and, exhorting them all, She

said : "Let us hasten our steps, in order that my eyes

may see the Son of the eternal Father, who took human

form in my womb ; and you shall see, my dearest friends,

to what the love of mankind has driven Him, my Lord

and God, and what it costs Him to redeem men from sin

and death, and to open for them the gates of heaven."

591. The Queen of heaven set forth through the

streets of Jerusalem accompanied by saint John and by

some holy women. Of these not all, but only the three

Marys and other very pious women, followed Her to

the end. With Her were also the angels of her guard,

whom She asked to open a way for Her to her divine

Son. The holy angels obeyed and acted as her guard.

On the streets She heard the people expressing their

various opinions and sentiments concerning the sorrow

ful events now transpiring in reference to Jesus of Naza

reth. The more kindly hearted lamented over his fate,

and they were fewest in number. Others spake about

the intention of his enemies to crucify Him; others re

lated where He now was and how He was conducted

through the streets, bound as a criminal ; others spoke of

the illtreatment He was undergoing; others asked, what

THE TRANSFIXION 571

evil He had done, that He should be so misused ; others

again in their astonishment and in their doubts, ex

claimed: To this then have his miracles brought Him!

Without a doubt they were all impostures, since He can

not defend or free Himself ! All the streets and squares

were full of people and excited talk. But in the midst of

this excitement the invincible Queen, though filled with

the bitterest sorrow, preserved her constancy and com

posure, praying for the unbelievers and the evil-doers,

as if She had no other care than to implore grace and

pardon for their sins. She loved them as sincerely as

if She were receiving favors and blessings at their hands.

She permitted no indignation or anger to arise in her

heart against the sacrilegious ministers of the Passion

and Death of her beloved Son, nor any sign of such

feelings in her exterior conduct. All of them She looked

upon with chanty and the desire of doing them good.

592. Some of them that met Her on the streets, recog

nized Her as the Mother of Jesus of Nazareth and

moved by their natural compassion, said : "O sorrowful

Mother! What a misfortune has overtaken Thee! How

must thy heart be wounded and lacerated with grief!"

Others again impiously said: "-Why didst Thou permit

Him to introduce such novelties among the people? It

would have been better to restrain and dissuade Him ;

but it will be a warning for other mothers, and they will

learn from thy misfortunes, how to instruct their chil

dren." These and other more horrible sentiments were

expressed in the hearing of this sincerest Dove; but all

of them She met with burning charity, accepting the pity

of the kind-hearted, and suffering the malice of the

unbelievers. She was not surprised at the ingratitude

of the unresponsive and the ignorant; but implored the

eternal Father to impart suitable blessings to all.

572 CITY OF GOD

593. Through the swarming and confused crowds the

angels conducted the Empress of heaven to a sharp turn

of the street, where She met her most holy Son. With

the profoundest reverence She prostrated Herself before

his sovereign Person and adored it more fervently and

with a reverence more deep and more ardent than ever

was given or ever shall be given to it by all the creatures.

She arose and then the Mother and Son looked upon

each other with ineffable tenderness, interiorly convers

ing with each other in transports of an unspeakable sor

row. The most prudent Lady stepped aside and then

followed Christ our Lord, continuing at a distance her

interior communication with Him and with the eternal

Father. The words of her soul are not for the mortal

and corruptible tongue: but among other prayers the

afflicted Mother said : "Most high God and my Son, I

am aware of thy burning love for men, which leads Thee

to hide the infinite power of thy Divinity beneath a form

of passible flesh (Phil. 2, 7) formed in my womb. I

confess thy incomprehensible wisdom in accepting such

affronts and torments, and in sacrificing Thyself, who

art the Lord of all creation, for the rescue of man, who

is but a servant, dust and ashes (Gen. 3, 19). Thy good

ness is to be praised, blessed, confessed and magnified

by all creatures; but how shall I, thy Mother, ever

cease to desire that all these injuries be heaped upon

me and not upon thy divine Person, who art the beauty

of the angels and the glory of the eternal Father? How

shall I cease to desire the end of these pains? With

what sorrow is my heart filled to behold Thee so afflicted,

thy most beautiful countenance so defiled, and when I see,

that to the Creator and Redeemer alone is denied pity

and compassion in such bitter suffering? But if it is

not possible, that I relieve Thee as Mother, do Thou

THE TRANSFIXION 573

accept my sorrowful sacrifice in not being able to bring

Thee the relief which is due to the true and holy Son

of God."

594. The image of her divine Son, thus wounded, de

filed and bound, remained so firmly fixed and imprinted

in the soul of our Queen, that during her life it was

never effaced, and remained in her mind as distinctly,

as if She were continually beholding Him with her own

eyes. Christ our God arrived at the house of Pilate,

followed by many of the council and a countless multi

tude of the people. The Jews, wishing to preserve them

selves as clean before the law as possible for the cele

bration of the Pasch and the unleavened bread, excused

themselves before Pilate for their refusing to enter the

pretorium or court of Pilate in presenting Jesus. As

most absurd hypocrites they paid no attention to the sac

rilegious uncleanness, with which their souls were affected

in becoming the murderers of the innocent Godman.

Pilate, although a heathen, yielded to their ceremonious

scruples, and seeing that they hesitated to enter his pre

torium, he went out to meet them. According to the

formality customary among the Romans, he asked them

(John 18, 28) : "What accusation have you against this

Man?" They answered: "If He were not a criminal,

we would not have brought Him to thee thus bound and

fettered." This was as much as to say: We have con

vinced ourselves of his misdeeds and we are so attached

to justice and to our obligations, that we would not have

begun any proceedings against Him, if He were not a

great malefactor. But Pilate pressed his inquiry and

said: "What then are the misdeeds, of which He

has made Himself guilty?" They answered: "He is

convicted of disturbing the commonwealth, He wishes to

make Himself our king and forbids paying tribute to

3-38

574 CITY OF GOD

Caesar (Luke 23, 2) ; He claims to be the son of God,

and has preached a new doctrine, commencing in Galilee,

through all Judea and Jerusalem." "Take Him then

yourselves," said Pilate, "and judge Him according to

your laws; I do not find a just cause for proceeding

against Him." But the Jews replied : "It is not per

mitted us to sentence any one to death, nor to execute

such a sentence."

595. The most holy Mary, with saint John and the

women who followed Her, was present at this interview ;

for the holy angels made room for them where they

could hear and see all that was passing. Shielded by

her mantle She wept tears of blood, pressed forth by

the sorrow which pierced her virginal heart. In her

interior acts of virtue She faithfully reproduced those

practiced by her most holy Son, while in her pains and

endurance She copied those of his body. She asked the

eternal Father to grant Her the favor of not losing sight

of her divine Son, as far as was naturally possible, until

his Death ; and this was conceded to Her, excepting dur

ing the time in which He was in prison. Considering it

but just, that amid all the false accusations of the Jews

the innocence of the Savior and the injustice of the

sentence should become known, the most prudent Lady

fervently prayed, that the judge be not deceived and

that he obtain clearest insight into Christ s being deliv

ered over to him by the envy of the priests and scribes.

In virtue of this prayer, Pilate clearly saw the truth,

was convinced of the innocence of Christ and of his

being 1 a victim of their envy (Matth. 28, 18). On her

account also the Lord declared Himself more openly

to Pilate, although the latter did not co-operate with the

truth made known to him. It profited not him, but us;

and it served to convict the priests and pharisees of their

treachery.

THE TRANSFIXION 575

596. In their wrath the Jews were anxious to dispose

Pilate favorably toward their project and they wished

him to pronounce the sentence of death against Jesus

without the least delay. When they perceived his hesi

tation, they ferociously raised their voices, accusing Jesus

over and over again of revolting against the government

of Judea, deceiving and stirring up the people (Luke

23, 5), calling Himself Christ, that is an anointed King.

This malicious accusation they pressed particularly, hop

ing to stir Pilate to fear for the temporal welfare of

his government, with which he was charged by the

Romans. Among the Jews the kings were anointed;

therefore they insisted, that Jesus in having called Him

self Christ, intended to constitute Himself as King, and,

as Pilate was a heathen and knew nothing of the anoint

ing of kings, they wished to persuade him, that calling

oneself Christ among the Jews was identical with calling

onself king of the Jews. Pilate asked the Lord : "What

dost Thou answer to the accusations which they bring

against Thee?" But the Savior answered not one word

in the presence of his accusers, causing much wonder in

Pilate at such silence and patience. But, desiring to

inquire more closely, whether Jesus was truly a King,

he withdrew from the clamoring Jews and brought

Jesus into the pretorium. There he asked Him face to

face: "Tell me, can it be that Thou art a King of the

Jews?" Pilate could not bring himself to think that

He was a King in fact; since he knew that Christ was

not reigning. Therefore he wished to find out, whether

Jesus claimed or really possessed any right to the title

of King. Our Savior answered him: "Sayst thou this

thing of thyself, or have others told it thee of Me?"

(John 18, 34). Pilate replied : "Am I a Jew? Thy own

nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee up to

576 CITY OF GOD

me. What hast Thou done?" Jesus answered: "My

kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of

this world, my servants would certainly strive that I be

not delivered to the Jews: but now my kingdom is not

from hence." The judge partly believed this assertion

of Jesus and therefore answered: "Art Thou a king

then?" Jesus answered: "Thou sayest that I am a king.

For this I was born and for this I came into the world.

Every one that is of the Truth, heareth my voice."

Pilate wondered at this answer and asked: "What is

truth?" But without waiting for an answer, he left Him

in the pretorium, and said to the Jews : "I find no cause

in Him. But you have a custom, that I should release

one unto you at the Pasch: will you, therefore, that I

release unto you the King of the Jews, or Barabbas?"

This Barabbas was a thief and murderer, who had killed

some one in a quarrel. All the people raised their voice

and said: "We desire that you release Barabbas, and

crucify Jesus." In this demand they persisted until it

was granted.

597. Pilate was much disturbed by the answers of

Jesus and the obstinacy of the Jews. For on the one

hand, seeing that they were so determined on the death

of Jesus, he well knew, that it would be difficult to satisfy

them without consenting to their demands; and on the

other hand, he clearly saw that they persecuted Him out

of mortal envy and that their accusations about his dis

turbing the people, were false and ridiculous (Matth.

17, 18). In regard to the imputation, that He had made

Himself King, he was likewise satisfied of the contrary

by the answers of Christ and by his humility, poverty

and patient forbearance toward their calumnies. By the

light and grace which Pilate received, he became fully

convinced that Jesus was truly innocent, although he

THE TRANSFIXION 577

never pierced the mystery of his Divinity and the great

ness of this innocence. The living words of Christ

created an exalted idea of Him in his mind and made

him think that some great mystery was connected with

Him; therefore he desired to free Him and finally deter

mined to send Him to Herod. But all these shifts failed,

because Pilate made himself unworthy by his sin and

paid attention only to his worldly prospects, allowing

himself to be governed by them and not by the dictates

of justice, but more by the suggestions of Lucifer,

as I have related above (No. 423), than by the truth,

which he so clearly knew. Fully understanding the true

circumstances, he acted the part of a wicked judge in

continuing to treat the cause of an innocent Man with

those who were his declared enemies and false accusers.

Thus he committed the still greater crime of condemning

Jesus to such an inhuman scourging and then to death,

without having any other cause than to satisfy the Jews.

598. But though Pilate for these and other reasons

was a most wicked and unjust judge in thus condemning

Christ, whom he held to be a mere man, though good

and innocent; yet his crime was much smaller than that

of the priests and pharisees. And this not only because

they were moved by envy, cruelty and other vices, but

also because they sinned in not acknowledging Christ as

their true Messias and Redeemer, God and Man, such

as He had been promised in the Law, which they believed

and professed. For their own condemnation the Lord

permitted, that in their very accusations they called Him

Christ and anointed King, thus confessing with their

lips what they denied and discredited in their proceed

ings. They were bound to believe this truth, which they

confessed in their words, and thus come to the under

standing of the true anointment of the Savior, which

578 CITY OF GOD

was an unction prefigured in the kings and priests of

the olden times and consisted in the anointment mentioned

by David (Ps. 44, 8) and different from theirs; namely,

the unction of the Divinity resulting from its union with

the humanity and by which Christ s soul was anointed

with the gifts of grace and glory corresponding to the

hypostatic union. All these mysteries of truth were

providentially hidden beneath the accusations of the

Jews, although they in their perfidy would not believe

them, and in their envy interpreted them falsely. For

they imputed to the Savior the desire of making Him

self king, without his being one, while just the contrary

was really the truth: He was in every respect the

supreme Lord, but did not wish to show or make use

of the power of a temporal king. He had not come

into this world to command men, but to obey (Matth.

20, 28). Still greater was the blindness of the Jews

in hoping for a temporal king as their Messias and at

the same time calumniously asserting that Jesus made of

Himself a king. It seems that they sought for their

Messias a King so powerful, that they would not be

able to resist Him; although they then would have to

receive a king by compulsion and not with the free will

benevolently desired by the Lord.

599. Our great Lady profoundly understood these

hidden sacraments and the wisdom of her chaste heart

made use of them to excite heroic acts of all the virtues.

Other children of Adam, conceived in original sin and

defiled by their own, are wont to be disturbed and op

pressed in proportion to the increase of sorrow and tribu

lation, and excited to impatience and other inordinate

passions; but most holy Mary, who was actuated not

by sin or its effects, or by mere nature, was impelled

by exalted grace to just the contrary course of action.

THE TRANSFIXION 579

For the great persecutions and the vast waters of afflic

tion and sorrow extinguished not in her bosom the fire

of divine love (Cant. 8, 7) ; but they were new incen

tives to the fires of divine love in her soul, breaking forth

in petitions for the sinners so much the more ardently,

as the malice of men reached greater excesses. O

Queen of virtues, Mistress of creatures and sweetest

Mother of mercy! How hard of heart am I, how slow

and insensible, that my soul is not annihilated by sorrow

at what I understand of thy sufferings and those of

thy divine Son! That I still live, knowing all I do

know, should cause in me a sorrow unto death. It is a

crime against love and piety to beg favors from the inno

cent, whom we see suffering torments. With what truth

can we then say as creatures, that we love God, our

Redeemer, and Thee, my Queen, who art his Mother, if

Thou and He alone drink out the chalice of such tor

ments and pains, while we are draining the chalice of

the pleasures of Babylon? O that I might understand

this truth! O that it might penetrate into my deepest

heart and that it might pierce my very soul at the sight

of such inhuman torments of my Savior and his afflicted

Mother! How can I conceive, that any one can do me

an injustice in persecuting me, that they offend me by

despising me, that they insult me by abhorring me?

How can I complain of suffering, even if I am blamed,

neglected and contemned by the world? O great Chief-

tainess of the martyrs, Queen of the courageous, Mis

tress of all the imitators of thy Son, if I am thy daughter

and disciple, as Thou condescendest to call me, and as

my Lord wishes me to merit, do not reject my longing

desire to follow thy footsteps on the way of the cross.

If in my weakness I have fallen, do Thou, my Lady

and Mother, obtain for me the courage of a contrite

580 CITY OF GOD

heart, justly humiliated on account of its vile ingrati

tude. Gain for me through thy prayers the love of the

eternal Father, which is so precious, that only thy pow

erful intercession can obtain it and only my Lord and

Redeemer can merit it for me.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF

HEAVEN GAVE ME.

600. My daughter, great is the neglect and the inat

tention of men in failing to consider the works of my

most holy Son and to penetrate with humble reverence

the mysteries which He has concealed within them for

the salvation of all. But many do not know, and others

are astonished, that the Lord should have consented to

be presented as a criminal before iniquitous judges and

be examined by them as a wicked malefactor; that they

should have been allowed to treat Him as an ignorant

fool; and that He should not have made use of his

divine wisdom to defend his innocence, convict the Jews

and all his enemies of their malice, since He could so

easily have done it. But these sentiments of wonder

should be especially united to a deep veneration for the

judgments of the Lord, who disposed all things connected

with the Redemption according to his equity, goodness

and rectitude and in a manner befitting all his attri

butes, denying none of his enemies sufficient help to

follow the good, if only they wished to use their free

dom for that purpose. He wished all of them to be

saved (I Tim. 2, 4), and if not all of them attained this

salvation, no one can justly complain of his superabun

dant kindness.

601. But besides this, I wish, my dearest, that thou

understand the instructive lessons contained in these

works; for in each one of them my Son acted as Re-

THE TRANSFIXION 581

deemer and Teacher of men. In the silence and the

meekness, which He maintained during his Passion, per

mitting Himself to be reputed as a wicked and foolish

man, He left to mankind a lesson just as important as

it is unnoticed and unpracticed by the children of Adam.

Because they do not heed the contagion of Lucifer

through sin, which is perpetuated in the world, they do

not seek in the Physician the medicine of suffering, which

the Lord in his immense charity has left to the world

in word and deed. Let men then consider themselves

conceived in sin (Ps. 50, 7), and let them realize how

strong has grown in them the hellish seed of pride, of

presumption, vanity, self-esteem, avarice, hypocrisy,

deceitfulness, and all other vices. Each one ordinarily

seeks to advance his honor and vainglory, struggling

to be applauded and renowned. The learned and those

who think themselves wise, wish to be applauded and

looked up to, bragging about their knowledge. The

unlearned try to appear wise. The rich glory in their

riches and wish to be respected on their account. The

poor strive to be and appear rich, anxious to gain the

approbation of the wealthy. The powerful seek to be

feared, worshipped and obeyed. All of them are pur

suing the same deceit of seeking\* to appear what they

are not in fact, and fail in reality to come up to what

they appear to be. They palliate their faults, extol their

virtues and abilities, they attribute to themselves the

goods and the blessings as if they had not received them

from God. They receive them as if they were their due

and not owing to his liberal kindness; instead of being

thankful for them they abuse them as weapons against

God and against their own selves. Commonly all are

swollen up by the mortal poison of the serpent and so

much the more anxious to drink it, the more deeply

582 CITY OF GOD

they are already wounded and weakened by his lament

able assaults. The way of the cross and imitation of

Christ in humble Christian sincerity is deserted, because

they are so few that walk upon it.

602. In order to crush the head of Lucifer and over

come pride and arrogance, my Son observed this patient

silence in his Passion, permitting Himself to be treated

as an ignorant and foolish criminal. As the Teacher

of this philosophy and as the Physician of the sickness

of sin, He would not deny the charges nor defend or

justify Himself, nor refute those who accused Him,

showing us by his own living example, how to oppose

and counteract the intentions of the serpent. In the

Lord was that teaching of the wise man put into prac

tice: More precious is a little foolishness in its time

than wisdom and glory (Eccles. 10, 1) ; for it is better

that human frailty be at times considered ignorant and

wicked, than that it make a vain show of virtue and

wisdom. Infinite is the number of those who are en

tangled in this dangerous error, who, desiring to appear

wise, speak much and multiply words like the foolish

(Eccles. 1, 14). They only lose what they strive so

much to attain, since they become known as foolish.

All these vices arise from the pride rooted in human

nature. But do thou, my daughter, preserve the doc

trine of my divine Son and that which comes from me.

Abhor human ostentation, suffer in silence and let the

world consider thee ignorant; for it does not know

where true wisdom dwells.

CHAPTER XIX.

PILATE; SENDS THE JEWS WITH JESUS AND THEIR AC

CUSATIONS TO HEROD, WHERE THEY ADVANCE THEIR

CHARGES; HEROD TREATS JESUS WITH CONTEMPT AND

SENDS HIM BACK TO PILATE; MARY FOLLOWS THE

SAVIOR; OTHER HAPPENINGS IN CONNECTION.

603. One of the accusations of the Jews and the priests

before Pilate was, that Jesus our Savior had begun to

stir up the people by his preaching in the province of

Galilee (Luke 23, 6). This caused Pilate to inquire,

whether He was a Galileean; and as they told him, that

Jesus was born and raised in that country, he thought

this circumstance useful for the solution of his difficulties

in regard to Jesus and for escaping the molestations of

the Jews, who so urgently demanded his death. Herod

was at that time in Jerusalem, celebrating the Pasch of

the Jews. He was the son of the first Herod, who had

murdered the Innocents to procure the death of Jesus

soon after his birth (Matth 2, 16). This murderer had

become a proselyte of the Jews at the time of his mar

riage with a Jewish woman. On this account his son

Herod likewise observed the law of Moses, and he had

come to Jerusalem from Galilee, of which he was gover

nor. Pilate was at enmity with Herod, for the two

governed the two principal provinces of Palestine,

namely, Judea and Galilee, and a short time before it had

happened that Pilate, in his zeal for the supremacy of

the Roman empire, had murdered some Galileeans dur

ing a public function in the temple, mixing the blood

583

584 CITY OF GOD

of the insurgents with that of the holy sacrifices. Herod

was highly incensed at this sacrilege, and Pilate, in order

to afford him some satisfaction without much trouble

to himself, resolved to send to him Christ the Lord to

be examined and judged as one of the subjects of

Herod s sway. Pilate also expected that Herod would

set Jesus free as being innocent and a Victim of the

malice and envy of the priests and scribes.

604. Christ our Lord therefore went forth from the

house of Pilate to the palace of Herod, being still bound

and chained as before and accompanied by the scribes

and priests as his accusers. There were also a large

number of soldiers and servants, who dragged Him along

by the ropes and cleared the streets, which had been

filled with multitudes of the people to see the spectacle.

The military broke their way through the crowds; and

as the servants and priests were thirsting so eagerly for

the blood of the Savior and wished to shed it on this very

day, they hastened with the Lord through the streets

nearly on a run and with great tumult. Mary also set

forth from the house of Pilate with her company in

order to follow her sweetest Son Jesus and accompany

Him on the ways, which He was still to go until his

death on the Cross. It would not have been possible for

the Lady to follow her Beloved closely enough to be

in his sight, if She had not ordered her holy angels to

open a way for Her. They made it possible for Her to

be constantly near lier Son, so that She could enjoy his

presence, though that also brought with it only a fuller

participation in all torments and sorrows. She obtained

the fulfillment of all her wishes; for walking along

through the streets near the Savior She saw and heard

the insults of the servants, the blows they dealt Him,

the reproaches of the people, expressed either as their

own or repeated from hearsay.

THE TRANSFIXION 585

605. When Herod was informed that Pilate would

send Jesus of Nazareth to him, he was highly pleased. He

knew that Jesus was a great friend of John the Baptist,

whom he had ordered to be put to death (Mark 6, 27),

and had heard many reports of his preaching. In vain

and foolish curiosity he harbored the desire of seeing

Jesus do something new and extraordinary for his en

tertainment and wonder (Luke 23, 8). The Author of

life therefore came into the presence of the murderer

Herod, against whom the blood of the Baptist was call

ing more loudly to this same Lord for vengeance, than

in its time the blood of Abel (Gen. 4, 10). But the un

happy adulterer, ignorant of the terrible judgment of the

Almighty, received Him with loud laughter as an en

chanter and conjurer. In this dreadful misconception he

commenced to examine and question Him, persuaded

that he could thereby induce Him, to work some miracle

to satisfy his curiosity. But the Master of wisdom, and

prudence, standing with an humble reserve before his

most unworthy judge, answered him not a word. For

on account of his evil-doing he well merited the pun

ishment of not hearing the words of life, which he would

certainly have heard if he had been disposed to listen to

them with reverence.

606. The princes and priests of the Jews stood around,

continually rehearsing the same accusations and charges

which they had advanced in the presence of Pilate. But

the Lord maintained silence also in regard to these

calumnies, much to the disappointment of Herod. In

his presence the Lord would not open his lips, neither in

order to answer his questions, nor in order to refute the

accusations. Herod was altogether unworthy of hearing

the truth, this being his greatest punishment and the

punishment most to be dreaded by all the princes and

586 CITY OF GOD

the powerful of this earth. Herod was much put out by

the silence and meekness of our Savior and was much

disappointed in his vain curiosity. But the unjust judge

tried to hide his confusion by mocking and ridiculing the

innocent Master with his whole cohort of soldiers and

ordering him to be sent back to Pilate. Having made

fun of the reserve of the Lord, the servants of Herod

joined in treating Him as a fool and as one deficient in

mind and they clothed Him in a white garment, in

order to mark Him as insane and to be avoided as dan

gerous. But by the hidden providence of the Most High

this dress signified the purity and innocence of the Savior,

and these ministers of wickedness were thus unwittingly

giving testimony of the truth, which they were trying to

obscure in deriding the miraculous power of the Lord.

607. Herod showed himself thankful to Pilate for the

courtesy of sending Jesus of Nazareth to be judged be

fore his tribunal. He informed Pilate, that he found no

cause in Him, but held Him to be an ignorant man of

no consequence whatever. By the secret judgments of

divine Wisdom, Herod and Pilate were reconciled on

that day and thenceforward remained friends. Con

ducted by many soldiers, both of Herod and Pilate,

amid a still greater concourse, tumult, and excitement of

the people, Jesus returned from Herod to Pilate. For

the very ones who had some time before hailed and

venerated Him as the Savior and Messias, blessed of

the Lord (Matth. 21, 9), now perverted by the priests

and magistrates, had changed their minds, and they

despised and condemned the same Lord, whom they had

so shortly before reverenced and glorified. For of such

influence is usually the erroneous example of the chiefs

in misleading the people. In the midst of all this con

fusion and ignominy the Lord passed along, repeating

THE TRANSFIXION 587

within Himself in unspeakable love, humility and patience,

those words, which He had long before spoken by the

mouth of David: "I am a worm and no man; the re

proach of men and the outcast of people. All they

that saw me have laughed me to scorn : they have spoken

with their lips and wagged the head" (Ps. 21, 7). The

Lord was a worm and no man, not only because He was

not engendered like the rest of men, and because He was

not merely and solely a man, being true God and man;

but also because He was not treated like a man, but like

a wretched and despised worm. Amid all the scorn

with which He was overwhelmed and trodden under foot,

He made no more outcry than an humble wormlet,

which is despised and crushed as a most vile and despicable

creature. All the innumerable multitudes that saw our

Redeemer spoke of Him with wagging heads, as if re

tracting their previous conception and opinion of this

Prophet of Nazareth.

608. Although his afflicted Mother was made interiorly

aware of all that happened, She was not present in body

when the priests advanced their insulting accusations

before Herod, and when he sputtered forth his questions

to the Author of life. She remained outside of the hall

of judgment, whither they had taken the Lord. But

when He came forth from the hall She met him and

They looked upon each other in reciprocal sorrow of their

souls, such as corresponded to the love between such a

Son and Mother. The sight of the white vestment, by

which they proclaimed Him fit to be treated only as an

insane fool, pierced her heart with new sorrow; though

She alone, of all mankind, recognized the mystery of

his purity and innocence indicated by this vestment. She

adored Him in it with deepest reverence and followed

Him through the streets back to the house of Pilate ; for

588 CITY OF GOD

in this house was to be executed the divine decree for our

salvation. On this way from Herod to Pilate it hap

pened, that on account of the crush of the people and

on account of the haste, they tripped Him up and threw

Him on the ground several times. By their cruel pulling

at the ropes with which He was bound, they caused the

blood to flow from his sacred veins. His hands being

tied, He could not easily help Himself to rise from his

falls. Therefore the multitudes of the people, who fol

lowed and who were neither able, nor cared to stop in

their onward rush, stepped upon the divine Lord, tread

ing Him under foot and kicking Him. The blows and

wounds He thus received, instead of stirring the com

passion of the soldiers, only excited them to loud laughter ;

for, instigated by the demons, they had become devoid of

all human compassion, no less than so many wild beasts.

609. At the sight of such unmeasured cruelty, the most

sorrowful and loving Mother was moved to deepest com

passion, and turning to her holy angels She commanded

them to gather up the divine blood in order that it might

not be trodden upon and dishonored by the feet of sin

ners. This the heavenly servants willingly fulfilled. She

commanded also, that if her divine Son should again

fall to the earth, they hasten to his assistance and prevent

these evil-doers from injuring and stepping on his most

sacred body. But She was the most prudent of all mor

tals, She did not wish them to execute her command,

unless it met the approval of the Lord; and therefore

She urged them to make this proposal themselves and

ask his permission, representing to Him at the same time

her anguish as his Mother in seeing Him thus irreverently

subjected to the feet of sinners. In order to so much

the sooner move the Lord to grant this petition, She

begged Him through the holy angels, that He commute

THE TRANSFIXION 589

this humiliation of being trodden upon and crushed by

the rabble into an act of obedience in complying with

the petition of his afflicted Mother, who at the same time

acknowledged Herself as his slave and formed of the

dust. All these petitions of his blessed Mother the angels

presented to the Lord Christ in her name; not that He

was ignorant of them, since He knew all things and was

Himself the instigator of them through his divine grace,

but the Lord desires in all these matters a regard for the

due process of reason. The great Lady was aware of

this desire and in her most exalted wisdom practiced

virtues in diverse ways and by diverse activities, unim

peded by the foreknowledge of the Lord concerning all

things.

610. Our Savior Jesus yielded to the desire and peti

tions of his most blessed Mother and gave the angels

permission to execute her requests as her ministers. Dur

ing the rest of the passage to the house of Pilate they

would not permit the Lord to be tripped or cast to the

ground, or to be stepped upon by the crowd as had hap

pened before. But in regard to other injuries, He al

lowed the stupid wrath and blind malice of the servants

of the law and of the populace to vent themselves freely

and fully upon his divine Person. His most holy Mother

heard and saw all with an unconquered but lacerated

heart. In a proportionate manner this was also witnessed

by the other Marys and saint John, who with ceaseless

tears followed the Lord in company with his purest

Mother. I do not stop to describe the sorrows of these

and other pious women, who attended upon the Queen,

because I would go too wide of my subject, especially

f I were to describe the doings of Magdalen, most dis-

inguished in her ardent love of Christ and most pleas-

ng to the Savior. For to her we must apply, what Christ

3-39

590 CITY OF GOD

himself said when He justified Her: that those love most

to whom the greater sins are forgiven (Luke 7, 43).

611. Pilate was again confronted with Jesus in his

palace and was bestormed anew by the Jews to condemn

Him to death of the cross. Convinced of the innocence

of Christ and of the mortal envy of the Jews, he was

much put out at Herod s again referring the disagreeable

decision to his own tribunal. Feeling himself obliged

in his quality of judge to give this decision, he sought to

placate the Jews in different ways. One of these was a

private interview with some of the servants and friends

of the highpriests and priests. He urged them to pre

vail upon their masters and friends, not any more to

ask for the release of the malefactor Barabbas, but in

stead demand the release of our Redeemer; and to be

satisfied with some punishment he was willing to ad

minister before setting Him free. This measure Pilate

had taken before they arrived a second time to press

their demand for a sentence upon Jesus. The proposal

to choose between freeing either Barabbas or Jesus was

made to the Jews, not only once, but two or three times.

The first time before sending Him to Herod and the

second time after his return ; this is related by the Evan

gelists with some variation, though not essentially con

tradicting truth (Matth. 27, 17). Pilate spoke to the

Jews and said : "You have brought this Man before me,

accusing Him of perverting the people by his doctrines;

and having examined Him in your presence, I was not

convinced of the truth of your accusations. And Herod,

to whom I have sent Him. and before whom you repeated

your accusations, refused to condemn Him to death. It

will be sufficient to correct and chastise Him for the

present, in order that He may amend. As I am to re

lease some malefactor for the feast of the Pasch, I will

THE TRANSFIXION 591

release Christ, if you will have Him freed, and punish

Barabbas." But the multitude of the Jews, thus informed

how much Pilate desired to set Jesus free, shouted with

one voice: "Enough, enough, not Christ, but Barabbas

deliver unto us."

612. The custom of giving freedom to an imprisoned

criminal at this great solemnity of the Pasch was intro

duced by the Jews in grateful remembrance of the re

lease of their forefathers from servitude by their passage

through the Red Sea, when the Almighty freed them

from the power of Pharao by killing the first-born chil

dren of the Egyptians and afterwards annihilating him

and his armies in the waters of the Red sea (Exodus

12, 29). In gratitude for this favor the Jews always

sought out the greatest malefactor and pardoned him

his crimes ; while they refused such clemency to those who

were less guilty. In their treaties with the Romans they

expressly reserved this privilege ; and the governors com

plied with it. But in the present instance they failed to

follow out in their demands what they were so loudly

proclaiming in regard to Jesus. According to law they

were to demand the release of the greatest criminal and

this they proclaimed Jesus to be; yet they persisted in

demanding the punishment of Christ and the release of

Barabbas, whom they judged less guilty. In such blind

ness and perversity had the wrath and envy of the demon

cast them, that they lost the light of reason even in their

own affairs and against their own selves.

613. While Pilate was thus disputing with the Jews

in the pretorium, his wife, Procula, happened to hear of

his doings and she sent him a message telling him : "What

hast thou to do with this Man? Let him go free; for I

warn thee that I have had this very day some visions in

regard to Him!" This warning of Procula originated

592 CITY OF GOD

through the activity of Lucifer and his demons. For

they, observing all that was happening in regard to the

person of Christ and the unchangeable patience with which

He bore all injuries, were more and more confused and

staggered in their rabid fury. Although the swollen

pride of Lucifer could not explain how his Divinity could

ever subject Itself to such great insults, nor how He

could permit his body to suffer such ill-treatment, and

although he could not come to any certain conviction,

whether this Jesus was a Godman or not ; yet the dragon

was persuaded, that some great mystery was here tran

spiring among men which would be the cause of great

damage and defeat to him and his malice if he did not

succeed in arresting its progress in the world. Having

come to this conclusion with his demons, he many times

suggested to the pharisees the propriety of ceasing their

persecutions of Christ. These suggestions, however, since

they originated from malice and were void of any power

for good, failed to move the obstinate and perverted

hearts of the Jews. Despairing of success the demons

betook themselves to the wife of Pilate and spoke to

her in dreams, representing to her that this Man was

just and without guilt, that if her husband should sen

tence Him he would be deprived of his rank and she her

self would meet with great adversity. They urged her

to advise Pilate to release Jesus and punish Barabbas, if

she did not wish to draw misfortune upon their house

and their persons.

614. Procula was filled with great fear and terror at

these visions, and as soon as she heard what was passing

between the Jews and her husband, she sent him the

message mentioned by saint Matthew, not to meddle

with this Man nor condemn One to death, whom she held

to be just. The demon also injected similar misgivings

THE TRANSFIXION 593

into the mind of Pilate and these warnings of his wife

only increased them. Yet, as all his considerations rested

upon worldly policy, and as he had not co-operated with

the true helps given him by the Savior, all these fears

retarded his unjust proceedings only so long as no other

more powerful consideration arose, as will be seen in

effect. But just now he began for the third time to

argue (as saint Luke tells us), insisting upon the inno

cence of Christ our Lord and that he found no crime in

Him nor any guilt worthy of death, and therefore he

would punish and then dismiss Him (Luke 23, 22). As

we shall see in the next chapter, he did really punish

Christ in order to see whether the Jews would be satisfied.

But the Jews, on the contrary, demanded that Christ be

crucified. Thereupon Pilate asked for water and released

Barabbas. Then he washed his hands in the presence of

all the people, saying: "I have no share in the death of

this just Man, whom you condemn. Look to yourselves

in what you are doing, for I wash my hands in order

that you may understand they are not sullied in the blood

of the Innocent." Pilate thought that by this ceremony

he could excuse himself entirely and that he thereby could

put its blame upon the princes of the Jews and upon the

people who demanded it. The wrath of the Jews was so

blind and foolish that for the satisfaction of seeing Jesus

crucified, they entered upon this agreement with Pilate

and took upon themselves and upon their children the

responsibility for this crime. Loudly proclaiming this

terrible sentence and curse, they exclaimed : "His blood

come upon us and upon our children" (Matth. 27, 25).

615. O most foolish and cruel blindness! O incon

ceivable rashness! The unjust condemnation of the Just

and the blood of the Innocent, whom the judge himself

is forced to proclaim guiltless, you wish to take upon

594 CITY OF GOD

yourselves and upon your children, in order that his blood

may call out against you to the end of the world! O

perfidious and sacrilegious Jews ! So lightly then weighs

the blood of the Lamb, who bears the sins of the world,

and the life of a Man, who is at the same time God!

How is it possible you wish to load with it yourselves

and your children? If He had been only your brother,

your benefactor and master, your audacity would have

been tremendous and your malice execrable. Justly in

deed do you merit the punishment which you meet; and

that the burden, which you have put upon yourselves

and your children, allows you no rest or relief in all

the world: it is just that this burden should rest upon

you heavier than heaven and earth. But, alas ! Though

this divine Blood was intended to wash and cleanse all

the children of Adam, and though it was in effect poured

out upon all the children of the holy Church, yet there

are many belonging to it who make themselves guilty of

this blood by their works in the same manner as the

Jews charged themselves with it, both by word and deed.

They did not know or believe that it was the blood of

the Savior, while Catholics both know and confess that

it is their Redeemer s.

616. The sins and depraved lives of the Christians

proclaim louder than tongues their abuse of the blood

of Christ and their consent to the guilt in his death

which they load upon themselves. Let Christ be

affronted, spit upon, buffeted, stretched upon a cross,

despised, let Him yield to Barabbas and die ; let Him be

tormented, scourged and crowned with thorns for our

sins: let his blood interest us no more than that it flow

copiously and be imputed to us for all eternity: let the

incarnate God suffer and die; if only we are left free

to enjoy the apparent goods of this world, to seize the

THE TRANSFIXION 595

pleasing hour, to use creatures for our comfort, to be

crowned with roses, live in joy; let our power be unre-

frained, let no one seek preference before us ; be we per

mitted to despise humility, abhor poverty, hoard up riches,

engage in all deceits, forgive no injuries, entertain the

delights of carnal pleasures, let our eyes see nothing that

they shall not covet. Such be our rule in life without re

gard for aught else. And if by all this we crucify Christ,

let his blood come upon us and upon our children.

617. Ask the damned in hell, whether these were not

the sentiments expressed in their works as described by

Solomon, and whether it was not because they spoke thus

foolishly in their hearts, that they were called impious,

and were so in reality. What else except damnation can

they expect, who abuse the blood of Christ and waste it

upon themselves, not as such who are seeking a remedy ?

Where do we find, among the children of the Church,

any one that would willingly permit a thief and male

factor to be preferred to him? So little is this doctrine

of humility practiced, that one excites surprise if he al

lows another just as good and honorable as himself, or

even more honorable, to take precedence. Though it is

certain that no one can be found as good as Christ or as

bad as Barabbas, yet there are innumerable men who,

in spite of this example, are offended and judge them

selves disgraced, if they are not preferred and exalted

by honors, riches and dignities, and in whatever pertains

to the ostentation and applause of the world. These are

sought after, contended for and solicited ; in such things

are consumed the thoughts and all the exertions and

powers of men, almost from the time in which they can

use their faculties until they lose them. The most la

mentable misfortune is, that even those who, by their

profession and their state, have renounced and turned

596 CITY OF GOD

their backs upon such things, do not free themselves.

While the Savior has commanded them to forget their

people and the house of their parents (Ps. 44, 11), they

devote to them the best part of their human existence, by

giving them their attention and solicitude in the direction

of their affairs, their best wishes and care in the augmen

tation of their worldly goods. It seems but a small

matter to them to engage themselves in these vanities.

Instead of forgetting the house of their father they forget

the house of their God in which they live, and where they

are divinely assisted to gain a salvation, an honor and

esteem never possible in the world, and where they re

ceive their sustenance without any anxiety or worry.

They show themselves ungrateful for all these benefits

by drifting away from the humility due to their state.

Thus the humility of Christ our Savior, his patience, his

injuries, the dishonor of the cross, the imitation of

Christ s works, the following of his doctrines ; all is left

to the poor, to the lonely ones, to the weak and humble

of this world; while the ways of Sion are deserted and

full of wailing, because there are so few who will come

to the solemn feast of the imitation of Christ our Lord

(Thren. 1, 4).

618. Pilate was not conscious of the absurdity of his

pretense, that to have washed his hands and to have

charged the Jews with the blood of Christ, was sufficient

to clear him before his conscience and before men; for

by this ceremony, so full of hypocrisy and deceit, he tried

to satisfy both. It is true that the Jews were the prin

cipal actors and more guilty in the condemnation of the

innocent Godman, and that they themselves expressly

charged themselves with its guilt. But Pilate was not on

that account free from it; since, knowing the innocence

of Christ our Lord, he should not have allowed a thief

THE TRANSFIXION 597

and robber to be preferred before Christ ; neither should

he have chastised, nor pretended to correct Him, who

showed nothing that could be corrected or amended

(Luke 23, 25). Much less should he have condemned

and delivered Him over to his mortal enemies, whose

envy and cruelty was so evident. He is not a just judge

who is aware of the truth and justice and places it in

the balance with his own human respect and his own

personal interest ; for such a course drags down the right

reason of men who are so cowardly of heart. Since

they do not possess the strength and perfection of mind

necessary to a judge, they cannot resist their greed, or

their human respect. In their blind passions they forsake

justice in order not to endanger their temporal advan

tages, as happened to Pilate.

619. In the house of Pilate, through the ministry of

the holy angels, our Queen was placed in such a posi

tion that She could hear the disputes of the iniquitous

judge with the scribes and priests concerning the inno

cence of Christ our Savior, and concerning the release

of Barabbas in preference to Him. All the clamors

of these human tigers She heard in silence and admirable

meekness, as the living counterpart of her most holy Son.

Although She preserved the unchanging propriety and

modesty of her exterior, all the malicious words of the

Jews pierced her sorrowful heart like a two-edged sword.

But the voices of her unspoken sorrows resounded in the

ears of the eternal Father more pleasantly and sweetly

than the lamentation of the beautiful Rachel who, as

Jeremias says, was beweeping her children because they

cannot be restored (Jer. 31, 15). Our most beautiful

Rachel the purest Mary, sought not revenge, but pardon

for her enemies, who were depriving Her of the Only-

begotten of the Father and her only Son. She imitated

598 CITY OF GOD

all the actions of the most holy Soul of Christ and ac

companied Him in the works of most exalted holiness

and perfection; for neither could her torments hinder

her charity, nor her affliction diminish her fervor, nor

could the tumult distract her attention, nor the outrageous

injuries of the multitudes prevent her interior recollec

tion: under all circumstances She practiced the most

exalted virtues in the most eminent degree.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT MISTRESS OF HEAVEN,

MOST BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

620. My daughter, in what thou hast written and un

derstood, I see thee astonished to find, that Pilate and

Herod exhibited less unkindness and cruelty in the death

of my divine Son than the priests, highpriests and

pharisees; and thou dwellest much upon the fact that

those were secular and gentile judges, while these were

teachers of the law and priests of the people of Israel,

professing the true faith. In answer to thy thoughts I

will remind thee of a doctrine not new, which thou hast

understood on former occasions ; but I wish that thou re

fresh it in thy mind and remember it for the rest of thy

life. Know then, my dearest, that a fall from the highest

position is extremely dangerous and the damage done is

either irreparable, or very difficult of redress. Lucifer

held an eminent position in heaven, as regards both

natural gifts and gifts of grace ; for in beauty he excelled

all the creatures, and by his sin he fell to the deepest

abyss of loathsomeness and misery and into a more hard

ened obstinacy than all his followers. The first parents

of the human race, Adam and Eve, were exalted to the

highest dignity and raised to exquisite favor, as coming

forth from the hand of the Almighty: their fall caused

perdition to themselves and to all their posterity, and

THE TRANSFIXION 599

faith teaches what was the cost of their salvation. To

restore them and their posterity was the work of an

infinite mercy.

621. Many other souls have reached the heights of

perfection and have thence fallen most unfortunately,

arriving at a state in which they almost despaired or

found themselves incapable of rising. This sad state in

the creature originates from many causes. The first is

the dismay and boundless confusion of one who feels

that he has fallen from an exalted state of virtue; for

he knows that he has not only lost great blessings, but

he does not expect to obtain greater ones than those of

the past and those he has lost; nor does he promise

himself more firmness in keeping those he can obtain

through renewed efforts, than he has shown in those ac

quired and now lost through his ingratitude. From this

dangerous distrust originates lukewarmness, want of fer

vor and diligence, absence of zeal and devotion; since

diffidence extinguishes all these in the soul, just as the

sprightliness of ardent hope overcomes many difficulties,

strengthens and vivifies weak human creatures to under

take great works. Another obstacle there is, not less

formidable, namely: the souls accustomed to the bless

ings of God, either through their office, as the priests

and religious, or by the exercise of virtues and the abun

dance of divine favors, as spiritual-minded persons,

usually aggravate their sins by a certain contempt of

:hese very blessings and a certain abuse of the divine

:hings. For by the abundance of the divine favors they

fall into a dangerous dullness of mind. They begin to

hink little of the divine favors and become irreverent.

Thus failing to co-operate with God s grace, they hinder

ts effect. They lose the grace of holy fear of the Lord,

vhich arouses and stimulates the will to obey the divine

600 CITY OF GOD

commandments and to be alert in the avoidance of sin and

pursuit of eternal life in the friendship of God. This is

an evident danger for lukewarm priests, who frequent

the holy Eucharist and other Sacraments, without fear

and reverence; also for the learned and wise, and the

powerful of this world, who so reluctantly correct and

amend their lives. They have lost the appreciation and

veneration of the remedial helps of the Church, namely,

the Sacraments, preaching and instruction. Thus these

medicines, which for other sinners are so salutary and

counteract ignorance, weaken those who are the phy

sicians of the spiritual life.

622. There are other reasons for this kind of danger,

which must be referred to the Lord himself. For the

sins of those souls who, by their state or by their ad

vanced virtues, are more closely bound to their God, are I

weighed in the balance of God s justice in quite a dif- j

ferent way from the sins of those who have been less \

favored by his mercy. Although the sins of all are |

more or less essentially the same, yet the circumstances

of sin are very different. For the priests and teachers,

the powerful and the dignitaries, and those who, on ac

count of their station or by reputation, are supposed t&lt;

be advanced in a holy life, cause great scandal by thei

fall or by any sins they commit. There is much mor

of bold disrespect in their presumption and temeri

against God, whom they know better and to whom the

owe much more, but whom they offend with more deli

eration and knowledge than the ignorant. Hence, as

evident from the tenor of all the holy Scriptures, the si

of Catholics, and especially of those that are instruct

and enlightened, are so displeasing to God. As th

term of each man s life is preordained for each one a

the time in which he is to gain the eternal rewa

THE TRANSFIXION 601

so the measure or number of sins to be borne by the

patience or forbearance of the Lord is likewise pre

ordained. This measure of divine justice is determined

not only by the number and quantity of the sins, but

also by their quality and weight. Thus it may happen,

that in the souls favored by greater enlightenment and

graces of heaven, the grievousness supplies what is want

ing in the number of the sins, and that with fewer sins

they are forsaken sooner and chastised more severely than

others with many more sins. Nor can all expect for

themselves the same issue as David (II Reg. 12, 13) and

saint Peter; because not all of them have to their credit

as many good actions to be remembered by the Lord.

Besides the special privileges of some cannot be set up

as a rule for all others; because, according to the secret

judgments of the Lord, not all are destined for a special

office.

623. By this explanation, my dearest, thou wilt be

able to satisfy thy doubts and thou wilt understand what

a bitter evil so many souls incur, whom the Almighty

has redeemed by his blood, placed in the way of light

and drawn toward Himself; and how some persons can

fall from a more exalted state into more perverse ob

stinacy than others below them in station. This truth is

well illustrated in the mystery of my Son s Passion, in

which the priests, scribes and the whole people were

nuch more indebted to their God than the heathens, who

cnew not of the true religion. I desire that this truth, as

exhibited by their example, convince thee of this terrible

langer and excite in thee holy fear. And with this fear

oin humble thanks and an exalted esteem of the favors

&gt;f the Lord. In the days of abundance, be not unmind-

ul of the hour of want (Eccli. 13, 25). Ponder as well

he one as the other within thyself, and remember that

602

CITY OF GOD

thou earnest thy treasure in a fragile vessel, which thou

canst easily lose (II Cor. 4, 7). Know well, that the

reception of such blessings argues not merit, and the

possession of them is not due to thee in justice, but comes

to thee by liberality and kindness. That the Most High

has favored thee with so much familiar intercourse is no

assurance that thou canst not fall, and no license to

live carelessly and without reverence and fear. All things

happen to thee according to the number and greatness

of thy blessings; for the wrath of the serpent has in

creased toward thee in proportion, and is more alert

against thee than against other souls. He has become

aware that the Most High has not been so liberally loving

to men of many generations as toward thee, and if thou

meet so many blessings and mercies with ingratitude,

thou shalt be most wretched and worthy of a rigoroi

punishment, against which thou canst make no objectioi

CHAPTER XX.

OUR SAVIOR, BY ORDER OF PILATE, IS SCOURGED. CROWNED

WITH THORNS AND MOCKED. THE BEHAVIOR OF THE

MOST HOLY MARY DURING THIS TIME.

624. Pilate, aware of the obstinate hostility of the Jews

against Jesus of Nazareth, and unwilling- to condemn

Him to death, of which he knew Him to be innocent,

thought that a severe scourging of Jesus might placate

the fury of the ungrateful people and soothe the envy

of the priests and the scribes. If He should have failed

in anything pertaining to their ceremonies and rites, they

would probably consider Him sufficiently chastised and

cease in their persecutions and in their clamors for his

Death. Pilate was led to this belief by what they had

told him in the course of his trial; for they had vainly

and foolishly calumniated Christ of not observing tine

sabbath and other ceremonies, as is evident from his ser

mons reported by the Evangelists (John 9, 6). But

Pilate was entirely wrong in his judgment and acted like

an ignorant man ; for neither could the Master of all

holiness be guilty of any defect in the observance of that

Law, which He had come not to abolish but to fulfill

(Matth. 5, 7) ; nor even if the accusation had been true,

would He have deserved such an outrageous punishment.

For the laws of the Jews, far from demanding such an

inhuman and cruel scourging, contained other regula

tions for atonement of the more common faults. In still

greater error was this judge in expecting any mercy or

natural kindness and compassion from the Jews. Their

603

604 CITY OF GOD

anger and wrath against the most meek Master was not

human, not such as ordinarily is appeased by the over

throw and humiliation of the enemy. For men have

hearts of flesh, and the love of their own kind is natural

and the source of at least some compassion. But these

perfidious Jews were clothed in the guise of demons, or

rather transformed into demons, who exert the more

furious rage against those who are rendered more help

less and wretched; who, when they see any one most

helpless, say : let us pursue him now, since he has none to

defend nor free him from our hands.

625. Such was the implacable fury of the priests and

of their confederates, the pharisees, against the Author

of life. For Lucifer, despairing of being able to hinder

his murder by the Jews, inspired them with his own

dreadful malice and outrageous cruelty. Pilate, placed

between the known truth and his human and terrestrial

considerations, chose to follow the erroneous leading of

the latter, and order Jesus to be severely scourged, though

he had himself declared Him free from guilt (John 19,

1). Thereupon those ministers of satan, with many

others, brought Jesus our Savior to the place of punish

ment, which was a courtyard or enclosure attached to

the house and set apart for the torture of criminals in

order to force them to confess their crimes. It was

enclosed by a low, open building, surrounded by

columns, some of which supported the roof, while others

were lower and stood free. To one of these columns,

which was of marble, they bound Jesus very securely;

for they still thought Him a magician and feared his

escape.

626. They first took off the white garment with not

less ignominy than when they clothed Him therein in

the house of the adulterous homicide Herod. In loosen-

THE TRANSFIXION 605

ing the ropes and chains, which He had borne since his

capture in the garden, they cruelly widened the wounds

which his bonds had made in his arms and wrists. Hav

ing freed his hands, they commanded Him with infamous

blasphemies to despoil Himself of the seamless tunic

which He wore. This was the identical garment with

which his most blessed Mother had clothed Him in Egypt

when He first began to walk, as I have related in its

place. Our Lord at present had no other garment, since

they had taken from Him his mantle, or cloak, when they

seized Him in the garden. The Son of the eternal Father

obeyed the executioners and began to unclothe Himself,

ready to bear the shame o-f the exposure of his most

sacred and modest body before such a multitude of people.

But his tormentors, impatient at the delay which modesty

required, tore away the tunic with violence in order to

hasten his undressing and, as is said, flay the sheep with

the wool. With the exception of a strip of cloth for a

cincture, which He wore beneath the tunic and with

which his Mother likewise had clothed Him in Egypt, the

Lord stood now naked. These garments had grown with

his sacred body, nor had He ever taken them 1 off. The

same is to be said of his shoes, which his Mother had

placed on his feet. However, as I have said on a former

occasion, He had many times walked barefooted during

his preaching.

627. I understand that some of the doctors have said

or have persuaded themselves, that our Savior Jesus at

his scourging and at his crucifixion, for his greater humil

iation, permitted the executioners to despoil Him of all

his clothing. But having again been commanded under

holy obedience to ascertain the truth in this matter, I

was told that the divine Master was prepared to suffer

all the insults compatible with decency; that the execu-

3-40

606 CITY OF GOD

tioners attempted to subject his body to this shame of total

nakedness, seeking to despoil Him of the cincture, which

covered his loins ; but in that they failed ; because, on touch

ing it, their arms became paralyzed and stiff, as had hap

pened also in the house of Caiphas, when they attempted

to take off his clothes (Chapt. XVII). All the six of

his tormentors separately made the attempt with the same

result. Yet afterwards, these ministers of evil, in order

to scourge Him with greater effect, raised some of the

coverings ; for so much the Lord permitted, but not that

He should be uncovered and despoiled of his garments

entirely. The miracle of their being hindered and para

lyzed in their brutal attempts did not, however, move or

soften the hearts of these human beasts; but in their

diabolical insanity they attributed it all to the supposed

sorcery and witchcraft of the Author of truth and life.

628. Thus the Lord stood uncovered in the presence

of a great multitude and the six torturers bound Him

brutally to one of the columns in order to chastise Him

so much the more at their ease. Then, two and two at

a time, they began to scourge Him with such inhuman

cruelty, as was possible only in men possessed by Lucifer,

as were these executioners. The first two scourged the

innocent Savior with hard and thick cords, full of rough

knots, and in their sacrilegious fury strained all the powers

of their body to inflict the blows. This first scourging

raised in the deified body of the Lord great welts and

livid tumors, so that the sacred blood gathered beneath

the skin and disfigured his entire body. Already it began

to ooze through the wounds. The first two having at

length desisted, the second pair continued the scourging

in still greater emulation; with hardened leather thongs

they leveled their strokes upon the places already

sore and caused the discolored tumors to break open

THE TRANSFIXION 607

and shed forth the sacred blood until it bespattered and

drenched the garments of the sacrilegious torturers, run

ning down also in streams to the pavement. Those two

gave way to the third pair of scourgers, who com

menced to beat the Lord with extremely tough rawhides,

dried hard like osier twigs. They scourged Him still

more cruelly, because they were wounding, not so much

his virginal body, as cutting into the wounds already

produced by the previous scourging. Besides they had

been secretly incited to greater fury by the demons, who

were filled with new rage at the patience of Christ.

629. As the veins of the sacred body had now been

opened and his whole Person seemed but one continued

wound, the third pair found no more room for new

wounds. Their ceaseless blows inhumanly tore the im

maculate and virginal flesh of Christ our Redeemer and

scattered many pieces of it about the pavement ; so much

so that a large portion of the shoulder-bones were ex

posed and showed red through the flowing blood; in

other places also the bones were laid bare larger than

the palm of the hand. In order to wipe out entirely that

beauty, which exceeded that of all other men (Ps. 44, 3),

they beat Him in the face and in the feet and hands, thus

leaving unwounded not a single spot in which they could

exert their fury and wrath against the most innocent

Lamb. The divine blood flowed to the ground, gather

ing here and there in great abundance. The scourging

in the face, and in the hands and feet, was unspeakably

painful, because these parts are so full of sensitive and

delicate nerves. His venerable countenance became so

swollen and wounded that the blood and the swellings

blinded Him. In addition to their blows the executioners

spirted upon his Person their disgusting spittle and loaded

Him with insulting epithets (Thren. 3, 30). The exact

608 CITY OF GOD

number of blows dealt out to the Savior from head to

foot was 5,115. The great Lord and Author of all crea

tion who, by his divine nature was incapable of suffering,

was, in his human flesh and for our sake, reduced to a

man of sorrows as prophesied, and was made to expe

rience our infirmities, becoming the last of men (Is. 53,

3), a man of sorrows and the outcast of the people.

630. The multitudes who had followed the Lord, filled

up the courtyard of Pilate s house and the surrounding

streets ; for all of them waited for the issue of this event,

discussing and arguing about it according to each one s

views. Amid all this confusion the Virgin Mother en

dured unheard of insults, and She was deeply afflicted by

the injuries and blasphemies heaped upon her divine Son

by the Jews and gentiles. When they brought Jesus to

the scourging place She retired in the company of the

Marys and saint John to a corner of the courtyard.

Assisted by her divine visions, She there witnessed all

the scourging and the torments of our Savior. Although

She did not see it with the eyes of her body nothing was

hidden to Her, no more than if She had been standing

quite near. Human thoughts cannot comprehend how

great and how diverse were the afflictions and sorrows

of the great Queen and Mistress of the angels: together

with many other mysteries of the Divinity they shall

become manifest in the next life, for the glory of the

Son and Mother. I have already mentioned in other

places of this history, and especially in that of the Pas

sion, that the blessed Mother felt in her own body all

the torments of her Son. This was true also of the

scourging\*, which She felt in all the parts of her virginal

body, in the same intensity as they were felt by Christ

in his body. Although She shed no blood except what

flowed from her eyes with her tears, nor was lacerated

THE TRANSFIXION 609

in her flesh ; yet the bodily pains so changed and disfigured

Her, that saint John and the holy women failed to find

in Her any resemblance of Herself. Besides the tortures

of the body She suffered ineffable sorrows of the soul;

there sorrow was augmented in proportion to the im

mensity of her insight (Eccles. 1, 18). For her sorrows

flowed not only from the natural love of a mother and a

supreme love of Christ as her God, but it was propor

tioned to her power of judging more accurately than all

creatures of the innocence of Christ, the dignity of his

divine Person, the atrocity of the insults coming from

the perfidious Jews and the children of Adam, whom He

was freeing from eternal death.

631. Having at length executed the sentence of scourg

ing, the executioners unbound the Lord from the column,

and with imperious and blasphemous presumption com

manded Him immediately to put on his garment. But

while they had scourged the most meek Master, one of

his tormentors, instigated by the devil, had hidden his

clothes out of sight, in order to prolong the nakedness

and exposure of his divine Person for their derision and

sport. This evil purpose suggested by the devil, was well

known to the Mother of the Lord. She therefore, mak

ing use of her power as Queen, commanded Lucifer and

all his demons to leave the neighborhood, and imme

diately, compelled by her sovereign power and virtue,

they fled. She gave orders that the tunic be brought by

the holy angels within reach of her most holy Son, so

that He could again cover his sacred and lacerated body.

All this was immediately attended to, although the

sacrilegious executioners understood not the miracle, nor

how it had been wrought; they attributed it all to the

sorcery and magic of the demon. During this protracted

nakedness our Savior had, in addition to his wounds,

610 CITY OF GOD

suffered greatly from the cold of that morning as men

tioned by the Evangelists (Mark 14, 55; Luke 22, 35;

John 18, 18). His sacred blood had frozen and com

pressed the wounds, which had become inflamed and

extremely painful; the cold had diminished his powers

of resistance, although the fire of his infinite charity

strained them to the utmost in order to suffer more and

more. Though compassion is so natural in rational crea

tures, there was none for Him in his affliction and neces

sity, except that of his sorrowful Mother, who tearfully

bewailed and pitied Him in the name of the whole human

race.

632. Among other divine mysteries, hidden to the

wise of this world, this also causes great astonishment,

that the wrath of the Jews, who were men of flesh and

blood like ourselves, should not have been appeased at

their seeing Christ torn and wounded by 5,115 lashes;

that the sight of a person so lacerated should not have

moved their natural compassion, but should arouse their

envy to inflict new and unheard of tortures upon the

Victim. Their implacable fury at once planned another

outrageous cruelty. They went to Pilate and in the

presence of his counselors said: "This seducer and de

ceiver of the people, Jesus of Nazareth, in his boasting

and vanity, has sought to be recognized by all as the king

of the Jews. In order that his pride may be humbled

and his presumption be confounded, we desire your per

mission to place upon Him the royal insignia merited by

his fantastic pretensions." Pilate yielded to the unjust

demand of the Jews, permitting them to proceed accord

ing to their intentions.

633. Thereupon they took Jesus tb the pretorium,

where, with the same cruelty and contempt, they again

despoiled him of his garments and in order to deride

THE TRANSFIXION 611

Him before all the people as a counterfeit king, clothed

Him in a much torn and soiled mantle of purple color.

They placed also upon his sacred head a cap made of

woven thorns, to serve Him as a crown (John 19, 2).

This cap was woven of thorn branches and in such a

manner that many of the hard and sharp thorns would

penetrate into the skull, some of them to the ears and

others to the eyes. Hence one of the greatest tortures

suffered by the Lord was that of the crown of thorns.

Instead of a sceptre they placed into his hands a con

temptible reed. They also threw over His shoulders a

violet colored mantle, something of the style of capes

worn in churches; for such a garment belonged to the

vestiture of a king. In this array of a mock-king the

perfidious Jews decked out Him, who by his nature and

by every right was the King of kings and the Lord of

lords (Apoc. 19, 16). Then all the soldiers, in the pres

ence of the priests and pharisees, gathered around Him

and heaped upon Him their blasphemous mockery and

derision. Some of them bent their knees and mockingly

said to Him: God save Thee, King of the Jews. Others

buffeted Him; others snatched the cane from his hands

and struck Him on his crowned head ; others ejected their

disgusting spittle upon Him; all of them, instigated by

furious demons, insulted and affronted Him in different

manners.

634. O charity incomprehensible and exceeding all

measure! O patience never seen or imagined among

mortals ! Who, O my Lord and God, since Thou art the

true and mighty God both in essence and in thy works,

who could oblige Thee to suffer the humiliation of such

unheard of torments, insults and blasphemies? On the

contrary, O my God, who among men has not done many

things which offend Thee and which should have caused

612 CITY OF GOD

Thee to refuse suffering and to deny them thy favor?

Who could ever believe all this, if we knew not of thy

infinite goodness. But now, since we see it and in firm

faith look upon such admirable blessings and miracles of

love, where is our judgment? what effect upon us has

the light of truth? What enchantment is this that we

suffer, since at the very sight of thy sorrows, scourges,

thorns, insults and affronts, we seek for ourselves, with

out the least shame or fear, the delights, the riches, the

ease, the preferments and vanities of this world? Truly,

great is the number of fools (Eccles. 1, 15), since the

greatest foolishness and dishonesty is to recognize a debt

and be unwilling to pay it ; to receive blessings and never

give thanks for them ; to have before one s eyes the greater

good, and despise it; to claim it for ourselves and make

no use of it; to turn away and fly from life, and seek

eternal death. The most innocent Jesus opened not his

mouth in those great and many injuries. Nor was the

furious wrath of the Jews appeased, either by the mock

ery and derision of the divine Master, or by the torments

added to the contempt of his most exalted Person.

635. It seemed to Pilate that the spectacle of a man

so illtreated as Jesus of Nazareth would move and fill

with shame the hearts of that ungrateful people. He

therefore commanded Jesus to be brought from the pre-

torium to an open window, where all could see Him

crowned with thorns, disfigured by the scourging and

the ignominious vestiture of a mock-king. Pilate him

self spoke to the people, calling out to them: "Ecce

Homo," "Behold, what a man!" (John 19, 5). See

this Man, whom you hold as your enemy! What more

can I do with Him than to have punished Him in this

severe manner? You certainly have nothing more to

fear from Him. I do not find any cause of death in

THE TRANSFIXION 613

Him. What this judge said was certainly the full truth ;

but in his own words he condemned his outrageous in

justice, since, knowing and confessing that this Man

was just and not guilty of death, he had nevertheless

ordered Him to be tormented and punished in such a way

that, according to the natural course, he should have been

killed many times over. O blindness of self-love! O

hellish malice of estimating only the influence of those,

who can confer or take away mere earthly dignities!

How deeply do such motives obscure the reason, how

much do they twist the course of justice, how com

pletely do they pervert the greatest truths in judging of

the just by the standards of the unjust! Tremble, ye

judges of the earth (Ps. 2, 10), look to it that the sen

tences you render are not full of deceit; for you your

selves shall be judged and condemned by your unjust

judgments! As the priests and pharisees, in their eager

and insatiable hostility, were irrevocably bent upon tak

ing away the life of Christ our Savior, nothing but his

Death would content or satisfy them; therefore they

answered Pilate: "Crucify Him, Crucify Him!" (John

19, 6.)

636. When the Blessed among women, most holy

Mary, saw her divine Son as Pilate showed Him to the

people and heard him say : "Ecce homo !" She fell upon

her knees and openly adored Him as the true Godman.

The same was also done by saint John and the holy

women, together with all the holy angels of the Queen

and Lady; for they saw that not only Mary, as the

Mother of the Savior, but that God himself desired them

thus to act. The most prudent Lady spoke to the eternal

Father, to the angels and especially to her most beloved

Son precious words of sorrow, compassion and profound

reverence, possible to be conceived only in her chaste

614 CITY OF GOD

and love inflamed bosom. In her exalted wisdom She

pondered also the ways and means by which the evidences

of his innocence could be made most opportunely mani

fest at a time when He was so insulted, mocked and

despised by the Jews. With this most proper intention

She renewed the petitions above mentioned, namely,

that Pilate, in his quality of judge, continue to maintain

the innocence of Jesus our Redeemer and that all the

world should understand, that Jesus was not guilty of

death nor of any of the crimes imputed to Him by the

Jews.

637. On account of these prayers of the most blessed

Mother Pilate was made to feel great compassion at see

ing Jesus so horribly scourged and illtreated and regret

at having punished Him so severely. Although he was

naturally disposed to such emotions by his soft and com

passionate disposition ; yet they were principally caused

by the light he received through the intercession of the

Queen and Mother of grace. This same light moved the

unjust judge after the crowning of thorns to prolong

his parley with the Jews for the release of Christ, as is

recorded in the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel of saint

John. When they again asked him to crucify the Lord,

he answered : "Take Him yourselves and crucify Him,

for I do not find any cause for doing it." They replied :

"According to our law He is guilty of death, for He

claims to be the Son of God." This reply threw Pilate

into greater consternation, for he conceived it might be

true, that Jesus was the Son of God according to his

heathen notions of the Divinity. Therefore he withdrew

with Jesus into the pretorium, where, speaking with Him

alone, he asked whence He was? The Lord did not

answer this question; for Pilate was not in a state of

mind either to understand or to merit a reply. Never-

-

THE TRANSFIXION 615

theless he insisted and said to the King of heaven : "Dost

Thou then not speak to me ? Dost Thou not know, that

I have power to crucify Thee and power to dismiss

Thee?" Pilate sought to move Him to defend Himself

and tell what he wanted to know. It seemed to Pilate

that a man so wretched and tormented would gladly ac

cept any offer of favor from a judge.

638. But the Master of truth answered Pilate with

out defending Himself but with unexpected dignity; for

He said: "Thou shouldst not have any power against

Me, unless it were given thee from above. Therefore,

he that hath delivered Me to thee, hath the greater sin."

This answer by itself made the condemnation of Christ

inexcusable in Pilate; since he could have understood

therefrom, that neither he nor Caesar had any power of

jurisdiction over this man Jesus ; that by a much higher

decree He had been so unreasonably and unjustly de

livered over to his judgment; that therefore Judas and

the priests had committed a greater sin than he in not

releasing Him; and that nevertheless He too was guilty

of the same crime, though not in such high degree. Pilate

failed to arrive at these mysterious truths; but he was

struck with still greater consternation at the words of

Christ our Lord, and therefore made still more strenuous

efforts to liberate Him. The priests, who were now

Abundantly aware of his intentions, threatened him with

the displeasure of the emperor, which he would incur, if

fie permitted this One, who had aspired to be king, to

bscape death. They said : "If thou freest this Man, thou

|irt no friend of Caesar; since he who makes a king of

iiimself rises up against his orders and commands." They

kged this because the Roman emperors never permitted

[nyone in the whole empire to assume the title or insignia

f a King without their consent and order; if therefore

,

616 CITY OF GOD

Pilate should permit it, he would contravene the decrees

of Caesar. He was much disturbed at this malicious and

threatening intimation of the Jews, and seating himself

in his tribunal at the sixth hour in order to pass sentence

upon the Lord, he once more turned to plead with the

Jews, saying: "See there your King!" And all of them

answered: "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify

Him !" He replied : "Shall I crucify your King?" Where

upon they shouted unanimously: "We have no other

king than Caesar."

639. Pilate permitted himself to be overcome by the

obstinacy and malice of the Jews. On the day of

Parasceve then, seated in his tribunal, which in Greek

was called lithostratos, and in Hebrew gabatha, he pro

nounced the sentence of death against the Author of

life, as I shall relate in the following chapter. The

Jews departed from the hall in great exultation and joy,

proclaiming the sentence of the most innocent Lamb.

That they did not realize whom they thus sought to

annihilate was the occasion of our Redemption. All this

was well known to the sorrowful Mother, who, though

outside of the hall of judgment, saw all the proceedings

by exalted vision. When the priests and pharisees rushed

forth exulting in the condemnation of Christ to the death

of the Cross, the pure heart of this most blessed Mother

was filled with new sorrow and was pierced and trans

fixed with the sword of unalleviated bitterness. Since

the sorrow of most holy Mary on this occasion sur

passed all that can enter the thoughts of man, it is use-;

less to speak more of it, and it must be referred to the

pious meditation of Christians. Just as impossible is it

to enumerate her interior acts of adoration, worship,

reverence, love, compassion, sorrow and resignation.

THE TRANSFIXION 617

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN AND LADY OF

HEAVEN GAVE ME.

640. My daughter, thou reflectest with wonder upon

the hardness and malice of the Jews, the weakness of

Pilate, who knew of their evil dispositions and permit

ted himself to be overcome, though fully convinced of

the innocence of my Son and Lord. I wish to relieve

thee of this astonishment by furnishing thee with in

structions and warnings suitable for making thee care

ful on the path to eternal life. Know then that the an

cient prophecies concerning the mysteries of the Redemp

tion and all the holy Scriptures were to be infallibly

fulfilled ; for sooner shall heaven and earth fall to pieces,

than that their words fail of their effect as determined

in the divine Mind (Matth. 24, 35; Acts 3, 18). In

order that the most ignominious death foretold for my

Lord should be brought about (Sap. 2, 20; Jer. 11, 19)

it was necessary that He should be persecuted by men.

But that these men should happen to be the Jews, the

priests and the unjust Pilate, was their own misfortune,

not the choice of the Almighty, who wishes to save all

(I Tim. 2, 4) . Their own wickedness and malice brought

them to their ruin; for they resisted the great grace

i Df having in their midst their Redeemer and Master, of

| &lt;nowing Him, of conversing with Him, of hearing his

ioctrine and preaching, of witnessing his miracles; and

:hey had received such great favors, as none of the ancient

Patriarchs had attained by all their longings (Matth.

! 13, 7). Hence the cause of the Savior was justified. He

i nanifestly had cultivated his vineyard by his own hands

ind showered his favors upon it (Matth. 21, 33). But

i t brought Him only thorns and briars, and its keepers

ook away his life, refusing to recognize Him, as was

heir opportunity and their duty before all other men.

618 CITY OF GOD

641. This same, which happened in the head Christ

the Lord and Son of God, must happen to all the mem

bers of his mystical body, that is, to the just and pre

destined to the end of the world. For it would be

monstrous to see the members incongruous with the Head,

the children show no relation with the Father, or the

disciples unlike their Master. Although sinners must

always exist (Matth. 18, 7), since in this world the

just shall always be mingled with the unjust, the pre

destined with the reprobate, the persecutors with the

persecuted, the murderers with the murdered, the afflict

ing with the afflicted ; yet these lots are decided by the

malice and the goodness of men. Unhappy shall be he,

through whom scandal comes into the world and who

thus makes himself an instrument of the demon. This

kind of activity was begun in the new Church by t

priests and pharisees, and by Pilate, who all persecut

the Head of this mystic body and, in the further cour

of the world, by all those who persecute its membe

the saints and the predestined, imitating and followin

the Jews and the devil in their evil work.

642. Think well, then, my dearest, which of these 1

thou wishest to choose in the sight of my Son and

If thou seest thy Redeemer, thy Spouse and thy Chie

tormented, afflicted, crowned with thorns and saturat

with reproaches and at the same time desirest to have

part in Him and be a member of his mystical body, it i

not becoming, or even possible, that thou live steeped i

the pleasures of the flesh. Thou must be the persecuted

and not a persecutor, the oppressed and not the oppressor;

the one that bears the cross, that encounters the scandal,

and not that gives it ; the one that suffers, and at the sam

time makes none of the neighbors suffer. On the co

trary, thou must exert thyself for their conversion and

THE TRANSFIXION 619

salvation in as far as is compatible with the perfection

of thy state and vocation. This is the portion of the

friends of God and the inheritance of his children in

mortal life; in this consists the participation in grace and

glory, which by his torments and reproaches and by his

death of the Cross my Son and Lord has purchased for

them. I too have co-operated in this work and have paid

the sorrows and afflictions, which thou hast understood

and which I wish thou shalt never allow to be blotted

out from my inmost memory. The Almighty would in

deed have been powerful enough to exalt his predestined

in this world, to give them riches and favors beyond

those of others, to make them strong as lions for re

ducing the rest of mankind to their invincible power.

But it was inopportune to exalt them in this manner,

in order that men might not be led into the error of

thinking that greatness consists in what is visible and

happiness in earthly goods ; lest, being induced to forsake

virtues and obscure the glory of the Lord, they fail to

experience the efficacy of divine grace and cease to aspire

toward spiritual and eternal things. This is the science

which I wish thee to study continually and in which thou

must advance day by day, putting into practice all that

thou learnest to understand and know.

CHAPTER XXI.

PILATE PRONOUNCES THE SENTENCE OF DEATH AGAINST

THE AUTHOR OF LIFE; THE LORD TAKES UP THE

CROSS ON WHICH HE IS TO DIEJ HIS MOST HOLY

MOTHER FOLLOWS HIM; WHAT SHE DID ON THIS

OCCASION TO RESTRAIN THE DEVIL, AND OTHER

HAPPENINGS.

643. To the great satisfaction and joy of the priests

and pharisees Pilate then decreed the sentence of death

on the Cross against Life itself, Jesus our Savior. Hav

ing announced it to the One they had thus condemned

in spite of his innocence, they brought Him to another

part of the house of Pilate, where they stripped Him

of the purple mantle, in which they had derided Him as

mock-king. All happened by the mysterious dispensa

tion of God ; though on their part it was due to the con

certed malice of the Jews; for they wished to see Him

undergo the punishment of the Cross in his own clothes

so that in them He might be recognized by all.

Only by his garments could He now be recognized by

the people, since his face had been disfigured beyond

recognition by the scourging, the impure spittle, and the

crown of thorns. They again clothed Him with the

seamless tunic, which at the command of the Queen was

brought to Him by the angels ; for the executioners had

thrown it into a corner of another room in the house,

where they left it to place upon Him the mocking and

scandalous purple cloak. But the Jews neither under

stood nor noticed any of these circumstances, since they

620

THE TRANSFIXION 621

were too much taken up with the desire of hastening

his Death.

644. Through the diligence of the Jews in spreading

the news of the sentence decreed against Jesus of Naza

reth, the people hastened in multitudes to the house of

Pilate in order to see Him brought forth to execution.

Since the ordinary number of inhabitants was increased

by the gathering of numerous strangers from different

parts to celebrate the Pasch, the city was full of people.

All of them were stirred by the news and rilled the

streets up to the very palace of Pilate. It was a Friday,

the day of the Parasceve, which in Greek signifies prep

aration, or getting ready; for on that day the Jews pre

pared themselves, or got ready, for the ensuing Sabbath,

their greatest feast, on which no servile work was to

be performed, not even such as cooking meals; all this

had to be done on this Friday. In the sight of all these

multitudes they brought forth our Savior in his own

garments and with a countenance so disfigured by

wounds, blood and spittle, that no one would have again

recognized Him as the One they had seen or known

before. At the command of his afflicted Mother the

holy angels had a few times wiped off some of the

impure spittle; but his enemies had so persistently con

tinued in their disgusting insults, that now He appeared

altogether covered by their vile expectorations. At the

sight of such a sorrowful spectacle a confused shouting

and clamor arose from the people, so that nothing could

be understood, but all formed one uproar and confusion

of voices. But above all the rest were heard the shouts

of the priests and pharisees, who in their unrestrained

joy and exultation harangued the people to become

quiet and clear the streets through which the divine

Victim was to pass, in order that they might hear the

3-41

622 CITY OF GOD

sentence of death proclaimed against Him. The people

were divided and confused in their opinions, according

to the suggestions of their own hearts. At this spectacle

were present different kinds of people, who had been

benefited and succored by the miracles and the kindness

of Jesus, and such as had heard and accepted his teach

ings and had become his followers and friends. These

now showed their sympathy, some in bitter tears, others

by asking what this Man had done to deserve such pun

ishment; others were dumbfounded and began to be

troubled and confused by this universal confusion and

tumult.

645. Of the eleven Apostles saint John alone was

present. He with the sorrowful Mother and the three

Marys stood within sight of the Lord, though in a

retired corner. When the holy Apostle saw his divine

Master brought forth, the thought of whose love toward

himself now shot through his mind, he was so filled with

grief, that his blood congealed in his veins and his face

took on the appearance of death. The three Marys fell

away into a prolonged swoon. But the Queen of virtues

remained unconquered and her magnanimous heart,

though overwhelmed by a grief beyond all conception of

man, -never fainted or swooned; She did not share the

imperfections or weaknesses of the others. In all her

actions She was most prudent, courageous and admir

able; calmly She comforted saint John and the pious

women. She besought the Lord to strengthen them, in

order that She might have their company to the end

of the Passion. In virtue of this prayer the Apostle and

the holy women were consoled and encouraged, so that

they regained their senses and could speak to the Mis

tress of heaven. Amid all this bitterness and confusion

She did nothing unbecoming or inconsiderate, but shed

THE TRANSFIXION 623

forth incessant tears with the dignity of a Queen. Her

attention was riveted upon Her Son, the true God; She

prayed to the eternal Father and offered to Him his sor

rows and torments, imitating in her actions all that was

done by our Savior. She recognized the malice of sin,

penetrated the mysteries of the Redemption, appealed

to the angels and interceded for friends and enemies.

While giving way to her maternal love and to the sor

rows corresponding to it, She at the same time practiced

all the virtues, exciting the highest admiration of all

heaven and delighting in the highest degree the eternal

Godhead. Since it is not possible for me to describe

the sentiments filling the heart of this Mother of wis

dom, nor those at times also uttered by her lips, I leave

them to be imagined by Christian piety.

646. The servants and priests sought to quiet the mul

titudes, in order that they might be able to hear the

sentence pronounced against Jesus of Nazareth; for

after it had been made known to Him in person, they

desired to have it read before the people and in his pres

ence. When the people had quieted down, they began

to read it in a loud voice, so that all could hear it, while

Jesus was standing in full view as a criminal. The sen

tence was proclaimed also in the different streets and

at the foot of the Cross; and it was afterwards pub

lished and spread in many copies. According to the

understanding given to me, the copies were a faithful

reproduction, excepting some words which have been

added. I will not discuss them, for the exact words of

this sentence have been shown me and I give them here

without change.

624 CITY OF GOD

LITERAL RENDERING OF THE SENTENCE OF

DEATH PRONOUNCED AGAINST JESUS

OF NAZARETH, OUR SAVIOR.

647. "I Pontius Pilate, presiding over lower Galilee

and governing Jerusalem, in fealty to the Roman Em

pire, and being within the executive mansion, judge, de

cide, and proclaim, that I condemn to death, Jesus, of

the Nazarean people and a Galileean by birth, a man

seditious and opposed to our laws, to our senate, and

to the great emperor Tiberius Caesar. For the execu

tion of this sentence I decree, that his death be upon the

cross and that He shall be fastened thereto with nails as

is customary with criminals ; because, in this very place,

gathering around Him every day many men, poor and

rich, He has continued to raise tumults throughout

Judea, proclaiming Himself the Son of God and King

of Israel, at the same time threatening the ruin of this

renowned city of Jerusalem and its temple, and of the

sacred Empire, refusing tribute to Caesar; and because

He dared to enter in triumph this city of Jerusalem anc

the temple of Solomon, accompanied by a great multi

tude of the people carrying branches of palms. I com

mand the first centurion, called Quintus Cornelius, to

lead Him for his greater shame through the said city

of Jerusalem, bound as He is, and scourged by my

orders. Let Him also wear his own garments, that He

may be known to all, and let Him carry the Cross on

which He is to be crucified. Let Him walk through all

the public streets between two other thieves, who are

likewise condemned to death for their robberies and

murders, so that this punishment be an example to all

the people and to all malefactors."

THE TRANSFIXION 625

"I desire also and command in this my sentence,

that this malefactor, having been thus led through the

public streets, be brought outside the city through the

pagora gate, now called the Antonian portal, and under

the proclamations of the herald, who shall mention all

the crimes pointed out in my sentence, He shall be con

ducted to the summit of the mountain called Calvary,

where justice is wont to be executed upon wicked trans

gressors. There, fastened and crucified upon the Cross,

which He shall carry as decreed above, his body shall

remain between the aforesaid thieves. Above the Cross,

that is, at its top, He shall have placed for Him his

name and title in the three languages ; namely in Hebrew,

Greek and Latin; and in all and each one of them shall

be written: THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING

OF THE JEWS, so that it may be understood by all

and become universally known."

"At the same time I command, that no one, no matter

of what condition, under pain of the loss of his goods

and life, and under punishment for rebellion against the

Roman empire, presume audaciously to impede the exe

cution of this just sentence ordered by me to be exe

cuted with all rigor according to the decrees and laws

of the Romans and Hebrews. Year of the creation of

the world 5233, the twenty-fifth day of March."

Pontius Pilatus Judex et Gubernator Galilaeae inferioris

pro Romano Imperio qui supra propria manu.

(Pontius Pilate, Judge and Governor of lower Galilee

for the Roman Empire, who signed the above with

his own hand.)

648. According to the above reckoning the creation of

626 CITY OF GOD

the world happened in March; and from the day on

which Adam was created until the Incarnation of the

Word 5199 years; adding the nine months, during which

He remained in the virginal womb of his most holy

Mother, and the thirty- three years of his life, we com

plete the 5233 years and three months, which according

to the reckoning of the Romans intervened between the

anniversary of his birth and the 25th of March, the day

of his death. According to the reckoning of the Roman

Church there are not more than nine months and seven

days to the first year, since it begins its count of years

with the first of January of the second year of the world.

Of all the opinions of the teachers of the Church I have

understood the one which corresponds to the reckoning

of the Roman Church in the Roman martyrology to be

the correct one. This I have also stated in the chapter of

the Incarnation of Christ our Lord in the first book of

the second part, chapter eleventh.

649. The sentence of Pilate against our Savior having

been published in a loud voice before all the people, the

executioners loaded the heavy Cross, on which He was

to be crucified, upon his tender and wounded shoulders.

In order that He might carry it they loosened the bonds

holding his hands, but not the others, since they wished

to drag Him along by the loose ends of the ropes that

bound his body. In order to torment Him the more

they drew two loops around his throat. The Cross was

fifteen feet long, of thick and heavy timbers. The herald

began to proclaim the sentence and the whole confused

and turbulent multitude of the people, the executioners

and soldiers, with great noise, uproar and disorder began

to move from the house of Pilate to mount Calvary

through the streets of Jerusalem. The Master and Re

deemer of the world, Jesus, before receiving the Cross,

THE TRANSFIXION 627

looked upon it with a countenance full of extreme joy

and exultation such as would be shown by a bridegroom

looking at the rich adornments of his bride, and on

receiving it, He addressed it as follows :

650. "O Cross, beloved of my soul, now prepared and

ready to still my longings, come to Me, that I may be

received in thy arms, and that, attached to them as on

an altar, I may be accepted by the eternal Father as the

sacrifice of his everlasting reconciliation with the human

race. In order to die upon thee, I have descended from

heaven and assumed mortal and passible flesh ; for thou

art to be the sceptre with which I shall triumph over all

my enemies, the key with which I shall open the gates

of heaven for all the predestined (Is. 22, 22), the sanc

tuary in which the guilty sons of Adam shall find mercy,

and the treasurehouse for the enrichment of their pov

erty. Upon thee I desire to exalt and recommend dis

honor and reproach among men, in order that my friends

may embrace them with joy, seek them with anxious

longings, and follow Me on the path which I through

thee shall open up before them. My Father and eternal

God, I confess Thee as the Lord of heaven and earth

(Matth. 11, 25), subjecting Myself to thy power and to

thy divine wishes, I take upon my shoulders the wood

for the sacrifice of my innocent and passible humanity

and I accept it willingly for the salvation of men. Re

ceive Thou, eternal Father, this sacrifice as acceptable

to thy justice, in order that from today on they may

not any more be servants, but sons and heirs of thy

kingdom together with Me" (Rom. 8, 17).

651. None of these sacred mysteries and happenings

were hidden from the great Lady of the world, Mary;

for She had a most intimate knowledge and understand

ing of them, far beyond that of all the angels. The

628 CITY OF GOD

events, which She could not see with the eyes of her

body, She perceived by her intelligence and revealed

science, which manifested to Her the interior operation

of her most holy Son. By this divine light She recog

nized the infinite value of the wood of the Cross after

once it had come in contact with the deified humanity

of Jesus our Redeemer. Immediately She venerated and

adored it in a manner befitting it. The same was also

done by the heavenly spirits attending upon the Queen.

She imitated her divine Son in the tokens of affections,

with which He received the Cross, addressing it in the

words suited to her office as Coadjutrix of the Redeemer.

By her prayers to the eternal Father She followed Him

in his exalted sentiments as the living original and ex

emplar, without failing in the least point. When She

heard the voice of the herald publishing and rehearsing

the sentence through the streets, the heavenly Mother,

in protest against the accusations contained in the sen

tence and in the form of comments on the glory and

honor of the Lord, composed a canticle of praise and

worship of the innocence and sinlessness of her all-holy

Son and God. In the composing of this canticle the

holy angels helped Her, conjointly with them She ar

ranged and repeated it, while the inhabitants of Jeru

salem were blaspheming their own Creator and Savior.

652. As all the faith, knowledge and love of creatures,

during this time of the Passion, was enshrined in its

highest essence in the magnanimous soul of the Mother

of wisdom, She alone had the most proper conception

and correct judgment of the suffering and Death of God

for men. Without for a moment failing in the attention

necessary to exterior actions, her wisdom penetrated all

the mysteries of the Redemption and the manner in

which it was to be accomplished through the ignorance

THE TRANSFIXION 629

of the very men who were to be redeemed. She entered

into the deepest consideration of the dignity of the One,

who was suffering, of what He was suffering, from

and for whom He was suffering. Of the dignity of the

person of Christ our Redeemer, uniting within Himself

the divine and the human natures, of their perfections

and attributes, the most blessed Mary alone possessed

the highest and intuitive knowledge outside of the Lord

himself. On this account She alone among all mere

creatures attached sufficient importance to the Passion

and Death of her Son and of the true God. Of what

He suffered, She was not only an eye-witness, but She

experienced it personally within Herself, occasioning the

holy envy not only of men, but of the angels themselves,

who were not thus favored. But they well knew that

their great Queen and Mistress felt and suffered in soul

and body the same torments and sorrows as her most

holy Son and that the holy Trinity was inexpressibly

pleased with Her ; and therefore they sought to make up

by their praise and worship for the pains which they

could not share. Sometimes, when the sorrowful Mother

could not personally witness the sufferings of her Son,

She was made to feel in her virginal body and in her

spirit the effects of his torments before her intelligence

made Her aware of them. Thus surprised She would

say : "Ah ! what new martyrdom have they devised for

my sweetest Lord and Master?" And then She would

receive the clearest knowledge of what the Lord was

enduring. The most loving Mother was so admirably

faithful in her sufferings and in imitating the example

}f Christ our God, that She never permitted Herself

my easement either of her bodily pains, such as rest, or

lourishment, or sleep; nor any relaxation of the spirit,

&gt;uch as any consoling thoughts or considerations, except

630 CITY OF GOD

when She was visited from on high by divine influence.

Then only would She humbly and thankfully accept

relief, in order that She might recover strength to attend

still more fervently to the object of her sorrows and to

the cause of his sufferings. The same wise consideration

She applied to the malicious behavior of the Jews and

their servants, to the needs of the human race, to

their threatening ruin, and to the ingratitude of men,

for whom He suffered. Thus She perfectly and inti

mately knew of all these things and felt it more deeply

than all the creatures.

653. Another hidden and astonishing miracle was

wrought by the right hand of God through the instru

mentality of the blessed Mary against Lucifer and his

infernal spirits. It took place in the following manner :

The dragon and his associates, though they could not

understand the humiliation of the Lord, were most atten

tive to all that happened in the Passion of the Lord.

Now, when He took upon Himself the Cross, all these

enemies felt a new and mysterious tremor and weakness,

which caused in them great consternation and confused

distress. Conscious of these unwonted and invincible

feelings the prince of darkness feared, that in the Passion

and Death of Christ our Lord some dire and irreparable

destruction of his reign was imminent. In order not to

be overtaken by it in the presence of Christ our God,

the dragon resolved to retire and fly with all his fol

lowers to the caverns of hell. But when he sought to

execute this resolve, he was prevented by the great

Queen and Mistress of all creation; for the Most High,

enlightening Her and intimating to Her what She was

to do, at the same time invested Her with his power.

The heavenly Mother, turning toward Lucifer and his

squadrons, by her imperial command hindered them

THE TRANSFIXION 631

from flying; ordering them to await and witness the

Passion to the end on mount Calvary. The demons

could not resist the command of the mighty Queen;

for they recognized and felt the divine power operating

in Her. Subject to her sway they followed Christ as

so many prisoners dragged along in chains to Calvary,

where the eternal wisdom had decreed to triumph over

them from the throne of the Cross, as we shall see later

on. There is nothing which can exemplify the discour

agement and dismay, which from that moment began

to oppress Lucifer and his demons. According to our

way of speaking, they walked along to Calvary like

criminals condemned to a terrible death, and seized by

the dismay and consternation of an inevitable punish

ment. This punishment of the demon was in conformity

with his malicious nature and proportioned to the evil

committed by him in introducing death and sin into the

world, to remedy which, God himself was now under

going Death.

654. Our Savior proceeded on the way to Calvary

bearing upon his shoulders, according to the saying of

Isaias, his own government and principality (Is. 9, 6),

which was none else than his Cross, from whence He

was to subject and govern the world, meriting thereby

that his name should be exalted above all other names

and rescuing the human race from the tyrannical power

of the demon over the sons of Adam (Col. 2, 15). The

same Isaias calls it the yoke and sceptre of the op

pressor and executor, who was imperiously exacting the

tribute of the first guilt. In order to destroy this tyrant

and break the sceptre of his reign and the yoke of our

servitude, Christ our Savior placed the Cross upon his

shoulders; namely, upon that place, where are borne

both the yoke of slavery and the sceptre of royal power.

632 CITY OF GOD

He wished to intimate thereby, that He despoiled the

demon of this power and transferred it to his own

shoulders, in order that thenceforward the captive chil

dren of Adam should recognize Him for their legitimate

Lord and true King. All mortals were to follow Him in

the way of the Cross (Matth. 14, 24) and learn, that

by this Cross they were subjected to his power (John 12,

32) and now become his vassals and servants, bought

by his own life-blood (I Cor. 4, 20).

655. But alas, the pity of our most ungrateful forget-

fulness! That the Jews and ministers of the Passion

should be ignorant of this mystery hidden to princes of

this world, and that they should not dare touch the

Cross of the Savior, because they considered it the

wood of ignominy and shame, was their own fault and

a very great one. Yet not so great as our own, since

its mystery being already revealed to us, we spend our

indignation only on the blindness of those who were

persecuting our Lord and God. For, if we blame them

for being ignorant of what they ought to have known,

how much should we blame ourselves, who, knowing and

confessing Christ the Redeemer, persecute and crucify

Him by our offenses (Heb. 6, 6) ? O my sweetest Love,

Jesus, light of my intellect and glory of my soul! Do

not, O my Lord, trust in my sluggish torpidity to follow

Thee with my Cross on thy way! Take it upon Thee

to do me this favor; draw me after Thee, to run after

the fragrance of thy sweetest love (Cant. 1, 3) of thy

ineffable patience, of thy deepest humility, that I may

desire for contempt and anguish, and seek after partici

pation in thy ignominy, insults and sorrows. Let this

be my portion and my inheritance in this mortal and

oppressing life, let this be my glory and my repose;

and outside of the Cross and its ignominy, I desire not

THE TRANSFIXION 633

to live or be consoled or to partake of any rest or enjoy

ment. As the Jews and all of that blind multitude

avoided the touch of the Cross of Him, who was so

innocently sentenced to die upon it, He opened with it

a passage and cleared for Himself a way. His perfidious

persecutors looked upon his glorious dishonor as a con

tagion and they fled from its approach, though all the

rest of the streets were full of shouting and clamoring

people, who crowded aside as the herald advanced pro

claiming the sentence.

656. The executioners, bare of all human compassion

and kindness, dragged our Savior Jesus along with in

credible cruelty and insults. Some of them jerked Him

forward by the ropes in order to accelerate his passage,

while others pulled from behind in order to retard it.

On account of this jerking and the weight of the Cross

they caused Him to sway to and fro and often to fall

to the ground. By the hard knocks He thus received on

the rough stones great wounds were opened, especially

on the two knees and they were widened at each re

peated fall. The heavy Cross also inflicted a wound

on the shoulder on which it was carried. The unsteadi

ness caused the Cross sometimes to knock against his

sacred head, and sometimes the head against the Cross ;

thus the thorns of his crown penetrated deeper and

wounded the parts, which they had not yet reached. To

these torments of the body the ministers of evil added

many insulting words and execrable affronts, ejecting

their impure spittle and throwing the dirt of the pave

ment into his face so mercilessly, that they blinded the

eyes that looked upon them with such divine mercy.

Thus they of their own account condemned themselves

to the loss of the graces, with which his very looks were

fraught. By the haste with which they dragged Him

634 CITY OF GOD

along in their eagerness to see Him die, they did not

allow Him to catch his breath; for his most innocent

body, having been in so few hours overwhelmed with

such a storm of torments, was so weakened and bruised,

that to all appearances He was ready to yield up life

under his pains and sorrows.

657. From the house of Pilate the sorrowful and

stricken Mother followed with the multitudes on the

way of her divine Son, accompanied by saint John and

the pious women. As the surging crowds hindered Her

from getting very near to the Lord, She asked the

eternal Father to be permitted to stand at the foot of

the Cross of her blessed Son and see Him die with

her own eyes. With the divine consent She ordered her

holy angels to manage things in such a way as to make

it possible for Her to execute her wishes. The holy

angels obeyed Her with great reverence; and they

speedily led the Queen through some bystreet, in order j

that She might meet her Son. Thus it came that both ;

of Them met face to face in sweetest recognition of each ;

Other and in mutual renewal of each other s interior

sorrows. Yet They did not speak to one another, nor

would the fierce cruelty of the executioners have per- j

mitted such an intercourse. But the most prudent

Mother adored her divine Son and true God, laden

with the Cross ; and interiorly besought Him, that, sin

She could not relieve Him of the weight of the Cro

and since She was not permitted to command her holy

angels to lighten it, He would inspire these ministers of

cruelty to procure some one for his assistance. This

prayer was heard by the Lord Christ; and so it hap

pened, that Simon of Cyrene was afterwards impressed

to carry the Cross with the Lord (Matth. 27, 32). The

Pharisees and the executioners were moved to this meas-

THE TRANSFIXION 635

ure, some of them out of natural compassion, others for

fear lest Christ, the Author of life, should lose his life

by exhaustion before it could be taken from Him on

the Cross.

658. Beyond all human thought and estimation was

the sorrow of the most sincere Dove and Virgin Mother

while She thus witnessed with her own eyes her Son

carrying the Cross to Mount Calvary; for She alone

could fittingly know and love Him according to his true

worth. It would have been impossible for Her to live

through this ordeal, if the divine power had not strength

ened Her and preserved Her life. With bitterest sorrow

She addressed the Lord and spoke to Him in her heart :

"My Son and eternal God, light of my eyes and life of

my soul, receive, O Lord, the sacrifice of my not being

able to relieve Thee of the burden of the Cross and carry

it myself, who am a daughter of Adam; for it is I who

should die upon it in love of Thee, as Thou now wishest

to die in most ardent love of the human race. O most

loving Mediator between guilt and justice ! How dost

Thou cherish mercy in the midst of so great injuries

and such heinous offenses! O charity without measure

or bounds, which permits such torments and affronts

in order to afford it a wider scope for its ardor and

efficacy! O infinite and sweetest love, would that the

hearts and the wills of men were all mine, so that they

could give no such thankless return for all that Thou

endurest ! O who will speak to the hearts of the mortals

to teach them what they owe to Thee, since Thou hast

paid so dearly for their salvation from ruin!" Other

most prudent and exalted sentiments besides these were

conceived by the great Lady, so that I cannot express

them by words of mine.

659. As the Evangelist tells us, there were other

636 CITY OF GOD

women among the crowds, who followed the Savior in

bitter tears and lamentations (Luke 23, 27). The

sweetest Jesus turning toward them, addressed them and

said: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over Me; but

weep for yourselves and for your children. For behold,

the days shall come, wherein they shall say: Blessed

are the barren, and the wombs that have not borne,

and the paps that have not given suck. Then shall they

begin to say to the mountains: Fall upon us, and to

the hills : Cover us. For if in the green wood they do

these things, what shall be done in the dry?" By these

mysterious words the Lord acknowledged the tears shed

on account of his Passion, and to a certain extent, by

showing his appreciation of them, He approved of them.

In these women He wished to teach us for what purpose

our tears should be shed so that they may attain their

end. These compassionate disciples of the Lord were

at that time ignorant of the true reason for their teai

since they wept over his sufferings and injuries, anc

not over the cause of these sufferings; and therefore

they merited to be instructed and admonished of

truth. It was as if the Savior had said to them : Weep

over your sins and over the sins of your children, and

attribute what I suffer to those sins. I suffer not for

my sins, for I am guilty of none and it is not even possi

ble that I be guilty of any. If I approve of your com

passion for Me as good and just, much more do I

desire you to weep over your sins, for which I suffer,

and by this manner of weeping you shall acquire for

yourselves and your children the price of my blood and

of my Redemption, ignored by this blind people. For

there shall come days, namely the days of universal judg

ment and chastisement, in which those shall be held for

tunate, who have not begotten children; and the fore-

THE TRANSFIXION 637

known shall call upon the mountains and the hills to

shield them against my wrath. For if their sins, now

only assumed by Me, have such effects on me, who am

innocent, what horrible punishments will they draw upon

those, who are so barren and without any fruits of

grace and merits?

660. As a reward for their tears and their compassion

these women were enlightened so as to understand this

doctrine. In fulfillment of the prayerful wish of the

blessed Mother the pharisees and ministers were inspired

with the resolve to engage some man to help Jesus our

Savior in carrying the Cross to mount Calvary. At

this juncture, Simon, of Cyrene, the father of the dis

ciples Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15, 21), happened

to come along. He was called by this name because he

was a native of Cyrene, a city of Lybia, and had come

to Jerusalem. This Simon was now forced by the Jews

to carry the Cross a part of the way. They themselves

would not touch it, yea would not even come near it, as

being the instrument of punishment for One whom they

held to be a notorious malefactor. By this pretended

caution and avoidance of his Cross they sought to im

press the people with a horror for Jesus. The Cyrenean

took hold of the Cross and Jesus was made to follow

between the two thieves, in order that all might believe

Him to be a criminal and malefactor like to them. The

Virgin Mother walked very closely behind Jesus, as She

had desired and asked from the eternal Father. To his

divine will She so conformed Herself in all the labors

and torments of her Son that, witnessing with her

own eyes and partaking of all the sufferings of her Son

in her blessed soul and in her body, She never allowed

any sentiment or wish to arise interiorly or exteriorly,

which could be interpreted as regret for the sacrifice She

3-42

638 CITY OF GOD

had made in offering her Son for the death of the Cross

and its sufferings. Her charity and love of men, and

her grace and holiness, were so great, that She van

quished all these movements of her human nature.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN AND LADY

GAVE ME.

661. I desire that the fruit of the obedience with

which thou writest the history of my life shall be, that

thou become a true disciple of my most holy Son and

of myself. The main purpose of the exalted and ven

erable mysteries, which are made known to thee, and

of the teachings, which I so often repeat to thee, is that

thou deny and strip thyself, estranging thy heart from

all affection to creatures, neither wishing to possess

them nor accept them for other uses. By this precau

tion thou wilt overcome the impediments, which the

devils seek to place in the way of the dangerous softness

of thy nature. I who know thee, thus advise and lead

thee by the way of instruction and correction as thy

Mother and Instructress. By the divine teaching thou

knowest the mysteries of the Passion and Death of

Christ and the one true way of life, which is the Cross;

and thou knowest that not all who are called, are chosen.

Many there are who wish to follow Christ and very few

who truly dispose themselves to imitate Him ; for as soon

as they feel the sufferings of the Cross they cast it

aside. Laborious exertions are very painful and averse

to human nature according to the flesh; and the fruits

of the spirit are more hidden and few guide themselves

by the light. On this account there are so many among

mortals, who, forgetful of the eternal truths, seek the

flesh and the continual indulgence of its pleasures. They

ardently seek honors and fly from injuries: they strive

THE TRANSFIXION 639

after riches, and contemn poverty; they long after pleas

ure and dread mortification. All these are enemies of

the Cross of Christ (Phil. 3, 18), and with dreadful

aversion they fly from it, deeming it sheer ignominy,

just like those who crucified Christ, the Lord.

662. Another deceit has spread through the world:

many imagine that they are following Christ their Mas

ter, though they neither suffer affliction nor engage in any

exertion or labor. They are content with avoiding bold

ness in committing sins, and place all their perfection

in a certain prudence or hollow self-love, which prevents

them from denying anything to their will and from

practicing any virtues at the cost of their flesh. They

would easily escape this deception, if they would con

sider that my Son was not only the Redeemer, but their

Teacher; and that He left in this world the treasures

of his Redemption not only as a remedy against its

eternal ruin, but as a necessary medicine for the sick

ness of sin in human nature. No one knew so much

as my Son and Lord; no one could better understand

the quality of love than the divine Lord, who was and

is wisdom and charity itself ; and no one was more able

to fulfill all his wishes (I John 4, 16). Nevertheless,

although He well could do it, He chose not a life of

softness and ease for the flesh, but one full of labors

and pains; for He judged his instructions to be incom

plete and insufficient to redeem man, if He failed to

teach them how to overcome the demon, the flesh and

their own self. He wished to inculcate, that this magnifi

cent victory is gained by the Cross, by labors, pen

ances, mortifications and the acceptance of contempt:

all of which are the trade-marks and evidences of true

love and the special watchwords of the predestined.

663. Thou, my daughter, knowest the value of the

640 CITY OF GOD

holy Cross and the honor which it confers upon igno

minies and tribulations; do thou embrace the Cross and

bear it with joy in imitation of my Son and thy Master

(Matth. 16, 24). In this mortal life let thy glory be

in tribulations, persecutions (Rom. 5, 3), contempt, in

firmities, poverty, humiliation and in whatever is painful

and averse to mortal flesh. And in order that in all

thy exercises thou mayest imitate me and give me pleas

ure, I wish that thou seek no rest or consolation in any

earthly thing. Thou must not dwell in thy thoughts

upon what thou bearest, nor seek to relieve thyself by

enlisting the compassion of others. Much less must

thou make much of, or try to impress others with the

recital of the persecutions or molestations of creatures,

nor should it ever be heard from thy lips, how much

thou endurest, nor shouldst thou compare thy sufferings

with those of others. I do not wish to say, that it is a

sin to accept of some reasonable and moderate allevia

tion, or to mention thy afflictions. But in thee, my dear

est, much alleviation, if not a sin, would be an infidelity

to thy Spouse and Lord ; for He has put thee personally

under more obligation than many generations of men

and thy response in suffering and love will be defective

and wanting, if it is not complete and loyal in all respects.

So faithful does the Lord wish thy correspondence to be,

that thou must allow thy weak nature not even one sigh

for mere natural relief and consolation. If love alone

impels thee, thou wilt allow thyself to be carried along

by its sweet force and rest in it alone ; and the love of

the Cross would immediately dispense with such natural

relief, in the same way as thou knowest I have done in

my total self-sacrifice. Let this be to thee a general

rule : that all human consolation is an imperfection and

a danger, and that thou shouldst welcome only that

that,

THE TRANSFIXION 641

which the Most High sends to thee Himself or through

his holy angels. And even these favors of the divine

right hand thou must accept only in so far as they

strengthen thee to suffer more constantly and to with

draw thee from all that ministers to the senses.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW OUR SAVIOR JESUS WAS CRUCIFIED ON MOUNT

CALVARY; THE SEVEN WORDS SPOKEN BY HIM ON

THE CROSS AND THE ATTENDANCE OF HIS SORROW

FUL MOTHER AT HIS SUFFERINGS.

661 Our Savior then, the new and true Isaac, the

Son of the eternal Father, reached the mountain of

sacrifice, which is the same one to which his prototype

and figure, Isaac, was brought by the patriarch Abra

ham (Gen. 22, 9). Upon the most innocent Lamb of

God was to be executed the rigor of the sentence, which

had been suspended in favor of the son of the Patriarch.

Mount Calvary was held to be a place of defilement and

ignominy, as being reserved for the chastisement of con

demned criminals, whose cadavers spread around it their

stench and attached to it a still more evil fame. Our

most loving Jesus arrived at its summit so worn out,

wounded, torn and disfigured, that He seemed alto

gether transformed into an object of pain and sorrows.

The power of the Divinity, which deified his most holy

humanity by its hypostatical union, helped Him, not to

lighten his pains, but to strengthen Him against death;

so that, still retaining life until death should be permitted

to take it away on the Cross, He might satiate his love

to the fullest extent. The sorrowful and afflicted Mother,

in the bitterness of her soul, also arrived at the summit

of the mount and remained very close to her divine Son;

but in the sorrows of her soul She was as it were beside

Herself, being entirely transformed by her love and by

642

THE TRANSFIXION 643

the pains which She saw Jesus suffer. Near her were

saint John and the three Marys ; for they alone, through

her intercession and the favor of the eternal Father,

had obtained the privilege of remaining so constantly

near to the Savior and to his Cross.

665. When the most prudent Mother perceived that

now the mysteries of the Redemption were to be ful

filled and that the executioners were about to strip Jesus

of his clothes for crucifixion, She turned in spirit to

the eternal Father and prayed as follows : "My Lord

and eternal God, Thou art the Father of thy only-

begotten Son. By eternal generation He is engendered,

God of the true God, namely Thyself, and as man He

was born of my womb and received from me this

human nature, in which He now suffers. I have nursed

and sustained Him at my own breast; and as the best

of sons that ever can be born of any creature, I love

Him with maternal love. As his Mother I have a natural

right in the Person of his most holy humanity and thy

Providence will never infringe upon any rights held by

thy creatures. This right of a Mother then, I now yield

to Thee and once more place in thy hands thy and my

Son as a sacrifice for the Redemption of man. Accept,

my Lord, this pleasing offering, since this is more than

I can ever offer by submitting my own self as a victim

or to suffering. This sacrifice is greater, not only be

cause my Son is the true God and of thy own substance,

but because this sacrifice costs me a much greater sorrow

and pain. For if the lots were changed and I should

be permitted to die in order to preserve his most holy

life, I would consider it a great relief and the fulfillment

of my dearest wishes." The eternal Father received this

prayer of the exalted Queen with ineffable pleasure and

complacency. The patriarch Abraham was permitted

644 CITY OF GOD

to go no further than to prefigure and attempt the sacri

fice of a son, because the real execution of such a sacrifice

God reserved to Himself and to his Onlybegotten. Nor

was Sara, the mother of Isaac, informed of the mystical

ceremony, this being prevented not only by the prompt

ness of Abraham s obedience, but also because he mis

trusted, lest the maternal love of Sara, though she was

a just and holy woman, should impel her to prevent the

execution of the divine command. But not so was it

with most holy Mary, to whom the eternal Father could

fearlessly manifest his unchangeable will in order that

She might, as far as her powers were concerned, unite

with Him in the sacrifice of his Onlybegotten.

666. The invincible Mother finished her prayer and

She perceived that the impious ministers were preparing

to give to the Lord the drink of wine, myrrh and

gall, of which saint Matthew and saint Mark speak

(Matth. 27, 34; Mark 15, 23). Taking occasion from

the words of Solomon : Give strong drink to the sorrow

ful and wine to those that suffer bitterness of heart, the

Jews were accustomed to give to those about to be exe

cuted a drink of strong and aromatic wine in order to

raise their vital spirits and to help them to bear their

torments with greater fortitude. This custom they now

perverted in order to augment the sufferings of the

Savior (Prov. 3, 6). The drink, which was intended to

assist and strengthen other criminals, by the perfidy of

the Jews was now mixed with gall, so that it should

have no other effect than to torment his sense of taste

by its bitterness. The blessed Mother was aware of their

intentions and in her maternal tenderness and com

passion asked the Lord not to drink of it. Jesus in defer

ence to the petition of his Mother, without rejecting en

tirely this new suffering, tasted of the mixture, but would

not drink it entirely (Matth. 27, 34).

THE TRANSFIXION 645

667. It was already the sixth hour, which corresponds

to our noontime, and the executioners, intending to

crucify the Savior naked, despoiled Him of the seamless

tunic and of his garments. As the tunic was large and

without opening in front, they pulled it over the head of

Jesus without taking off the crown of thorns; but on

account of the rudeness with which they proceeded, they

inhumanly tore off the crown with the tunic. Thus they

opened anew all the wounds of his head, and in some of

them remained the thorns, which, in spite of their being

so hard and sharp, were wrenched off by the violence with

which the executioners despoiled Him of his tunic and,

with it, of the crown. With heartless cruelty they again

forced it down upon his sacred head, opening up wounds

upon wounds. By the rude tearing off of the tunic were

renewed also the wounds of his whole body, since the

tunic had dried into the open places and its removal was,

as David says, adding new pains to his wounds (Ps.

68, 27). Four times during the Passion did they despoil

Jesus of his garments and again vest Him. The first

time in order to scourge Him at the pillar; the second

time in order to clothe Him in the mock purple; the

third, when they took this off in order to clothe Him in

his tunic; the fourth, when they finally took away his

clothes. This last was the most painful, because his

wounds were more numerous, his holy humanity was

much weakened, and there was less shelter against the

sharp wind on mount Calvary ; for also this element was

permitted to increase the sufferings of his death-struggle

by sending its cold blasts across the mount.

668. To all these sufferings was added the confusion

&gt;f being bereft of his garments in the presence of his

nost blessed Mother, of her pious companions, and in

full sight of the multitudes gathered around. By his

646 CITY OF GOD

divine power He, however, reserved for Himself the

nether garment which his Mother had wound around

his loins in Egypt; for neither at the scourging, nor at

the crucifixion could the executioners remove it, and He

was laid in the sepulchre still covered with this cloth.

That this really happened, has been revealed to me

many times. Certainly, He desired to die in the great

est poverty and to take with Him nothing of all that He

created and possessed in this world. He would gladly

have died entirely despoiled and bereft of even this cov

ering 1 , if it had not been for the desires and the prayers

of his blessed Mother, to which Christ wished to yield.

On her account He substituted this most perfect obedience

of a Son toward his Mother for extreme poverty at his

Death. The holy Cross was lying\* on the ground and

the executioners were busy making the necessary prep

arations for crucifying Him and the two thieves. In

the meanwhile our Redeemer and Master prayed to the

Father in the following terms :

669. "Eternal Father and my Lord God, to the in

comprehensible Majesty of thy infinite goodness and

justice I offer my entire humanity and all that according

to thy will it has accomplished in descending from thy

bosom to assume passible and mortal flesh for the Re

demption of men, my brethren. I offer Thee, Uord, with

Myself, also my most loving Mother, her love, her most

perfect works, her sorrows, her sufferings, her anxious

and prudent solicitude in serving Me, imitating Me and

accompanying Me unto death. I offer Thee the little

flock of my Apostles, the holy Church and congregation

of the faithful, such as it is now and as it shall be to the

end of the world; and with it I offer to Thee all the

mortal children of Adam. All this I place in thy hands

as the true and almighty Lord and God. As far as my

THE TRANSFIXION 647

wishes are concerned, I suffer and die for all, and I de

sire that all shall be saved, under the condition that all

follow Me and profit of my Redemption. Thus may

they pass from the slavery of the devil to be thy children,

my brethren and co-heirs of the grace merited by Me.

Especially, O my Lord, do I offer to Thee the poor, the

despised and afflicted, who are my friends and who fol

low Me on the way to the Cross. I desire that the just

and the predestined be written in thy eternal memory.

I beseech Thee, my Father, to withhold thy chastisement

and not to raise the scourge of thy justice over men;

let them not be punished as they merit for their sins.

Be Thou from now on their Father as Thou art mine.

I beseech Thee also, that they may be helped to ponder

upon my Death in pious affection and be enlightened

from above; and I pray for those who are persecuting

Me, in order that they may be converted to the truth.

Above all do I ask Thee for the exaltation of thy in

effable and most holy name."

670. This prayer and supplication of our Savior Jesus

were known to the most blessed Mother, and She imi

tated Him and made the same petitions to the eternal

Father in as far as She was concerned. The most

prudent Virgin never forgot or disregarded the first word

which She had heard from the mouth of her divine Son

as an infant : "Become like unto Me, my Beloved." His

promise, that in return for the new human existence

which She had given Him in her virginal womb, He

would, by his almighty power, give Her a new existence

of divine and eminent grace above all other creatures,

was continually fulfilled. To this favor was due also her

deep science and enlightenment concerning all the opera

tions of the sacred humanity of her Son, none of which

ever escaped her knowledge and attention. Whatever

648 CITY OF GOD

She thus perceived She imitated ; so that She was always

anxious to study and penetrate them with deep under

standing 1 , to put them promptly into action, and to prac

tice them courageously and zealously during all her life.

In this neither sorrow could disturb Her, nor anguish

hinder Her, nor persecution detain Her, nor the bitter

ness of her suffering 1 weaken Her. If the great Queen

had assisted at the Passion with the same sentiments as

the rest of the just, it would indeed have been admirable;

but not so admirable as the way in which She suffered.

She was singular and extraordinary in all her sufferings ;

for, as I have said above, She felt in her own virginal

body all the torments of Christ our Lord, both interior

and exterior. On account of this conformity we can

say, that also the heavenly Mother was scourged,

crowned, spit upon, buffeted, laden with the Cross and

nailed upon it; for She felt these pains and all the rest

in her purest body. Although She felt them in a differ

ent manner, yet She felt them with such conformity that

the Mother was altogether a faithful likeness of her Son.

Besides the greatness of her dignity, which in most holy

Mary must, on this account, have corresponded in the

highest possible degree with that of Christ, there was

concealed therein another mystery. This was, that the

desire of Christ to see his exalted love and benignity

as exhibited in his Passion copied in all its magnitude in

a mere creature, was fulfilled in Her, and no one pos

sessed a greater right to this favor than his own Mother.

671. In order to find the places for the auger-holes on

the Cross, the executioners haughtily commanded the

Creator of the universe, (O dreadful temerity!), to

stretch Himself out upon it. The Teacher of humility

obeyed without hesitation. But they, following their in

human instinct of cruelty, marked the places for the holes,

THE TRANSFIXION 649

not according to the size of his body, but larger, having

in mind a new torture for their Victim. This inhuman

intent was known to the Mother of light, and the knowl

edge of it was one of the greatest afflictions of her chast

est heart during the whole Passion. She saw through the

intentions of these ministers of sin and She anticipated

the torments to be endured by her beloved Son when his

limbs should be wrenched from their sockets in being

nailed to the Cross. But She could not do anything to

prevent it, as it was the will of the Lord to suffer these

pains for men. When He rose from the Cross, and

they set about boring the holes, the great Lady approached

and took hold of one of his hands, adoring Him and

kissing it with greatest reverence. The executioners al

lowed this because they thought that the sight of his

Mother would cause so much the greater affliction to the

Lord ; for they wished to spare Him no sorrow they could

cause Him. But they were ignorant of the hidden mys

teries; for the Lord during his Passion had no greater

source of consolation and interior joy than to see in

the soul of his most blessed Mother, the beautiful likeness

of Himself and the full fruits of his Passion and Death.

This joy, to a certain extent, comforted Christ our Lord

also in that hour.

672. Having bored the three holes into the Cross, the

executioners again commanded Christ the Lord to

stretch Himself out upon it in order to be nailed to it.

The supreme and almighty King, as the Author of

patience, obeyed, and at the will of the hangmen, placed

Himself with outstretched arms upon the blessed wood.

The Lord was so weakened, disfigured and exhausted,

that if the ferocious cruelty of those men had left the

least room for natural reason and kindness, they could

not have brought themselves to inflict further torments

650 CITY OF GOD

upon the innocent and meek Lamb, humbly suffering such

nameless sorrows and pains. But not so with them; for

the judges and their executioners (O terrible and most

hidden judgments of the Lord!) were transformed in

their malice and deathly hatred into demons, void of the

feelings of sensible and earthly men and urged on only

by diabolical wrath and fury.

673. Presently one of the executioners seized the hand

of Jesus our Savior and placed it upon the auger-hole,

while another hammered a large and rough nail through

the palm. The veins and sinews were torn, and the

bones of the sacred hand, which made the heavens and

all that exists, were forced apart. When they stretched

out the other hand, they found that it did not reach

up to the auger-hole; for the sinews of the other arm

had been shortened and the executioners had maliciously

set the holes too far apart, as I have mentioned above.

In order to overcome the difficulty, they took the chain,

with which the Savior had been bound in the garden, and

looping one end through a ring around his wrist, they,

with unheard of cruelty, pulled the hand over the hole

and fastened it with another nail. Thereupon they seized

his feet, and placing them one above the other, they

tied the same chain around both and stretched them with

barbarous ferocity down to the third hole. Then they

drove through both feet a large nail into the Cross. Thus

the sacred body, in which dwelled the Divinity, was

nailed motionless to the holy Cross, and the handiwork

of his deified members, formed by the Holy Ghost, was

so stretched and torn asunder, that the bones of his

body, dislocated and forced from their natural position,

could all be counted. The bones of his breast, of his

shoulders and arms, and of his whole body yielded to

the cruel violence and were torn from their sinews.

I

THE TRANSFIXION 651

674. It is impossible for human tongue or words of

mouth to describe the torments of our Savior Jesus and

what He suffered on this occasion. On the last day alone

more will be known, in order that his cause may be

justified before sinners and the praise and exaltation of

the saints may be so much the greater. But at present,

while our faith in this truth gives us occasion and obliges

us to apply our reason (if such we possess), I ask, im

plore and beseech the children of the holy Church, each

one for Himself, to study this most venerable sacrament.

Let us contemplate it and weigh it with all its circum

stances, and we shall find powerful motives to abhor and

firmly resolve to avoid sin, as the cause of all this suffer

ing to the Author of life. Let us contemplate and look

upon his Virgin Mother, so afflicted in spirit and over

whelmed by the torments of her purest body, in order

that through this gate of light we may enter to see the

Sun that illumines our heart. O Mistress and Queen of

virtues! O true Mother of the immortal King of ages

become man! It is true, O my Lady, that the hardness

of our ungrateful hearts makes us very unfit and un

worthy of suffering thy pains and those of thy most

holy Son our Lord; but through thy clemency make us

partakers of this favor, which we do not deserve. Purify

and free us from this deadening lukewarmness and gross

neglect. If we are the cause of these sufferings, what

propriety or what justice can there be in visiting them

only on Thee and on thy Beloved? Let the chalice pass

from the lips of the Innocent, in order that it may be

tasted by the guilty who deserve it. But alas ! Where is

our good sense ? Where wisdom and knowledge ? Where

is the light of our eyes? Who has so entirely deprived

us of our understanding? Who has robbed us of our

human and sensible hearts? If I, O Lord, had not re-

652 CITY OF GOD

ceived from Thee this being according to thy image and

likeness; if Thou hadst not given me life and motion;

if all the elements and creatures, formed by thy hand for

my service (Eccli. 39, 30), were not giving me continual

notice of thy immense love: at least thy being nailed

so outrageously to the Cross, and all thy torments and

sorrows for my salvation, should have sufficed to draw

me to Thee with the bonds of compassion and gratitude,

of love and confidence in thy ineffable kindness. But

if so many voices cannot awaken me, if such love does

not enkindle mine, if thy Passion and Death do not move

me, if such great benefits cannot oblige me, what end

shall I expect as the result of my foolishness?

675. After the Savior was nailed to the Cross, the

executioners judged it necessary to bend the points of

the nails which projected through the back of the wood,

in order that they might not be loosened and drawn out

by the weight of the body. For this purpose they raised

up the Cross in order to turn, it over, so that the body

of the Lord would rest face downward upon the ground

with the weight of the Cross upon Him. This new

cruelty appalled all the bystanders and a shout of pity

arose in the crowd. But the sorrowful and compassionate

Mother intervened by her prayers, and asked the eternal

Father not to permit this boundless, outrage to happen

in the way the executioners had intended. She com

manded her holy angels to come to the assistance of their

Creator. When, therefore, the executioners raised up

the Cross to let it fall, with the crucified Lord face down

ward upon the ground, the holy angels supported Him

and the Cross above the stony and fetid ground, so that

his divine countenance did not come in contact with the

rocks and pebbles. Thus altogether ignorant of the

miracle the executioners bent over the points of the nails;

THE TRANSFIXION 653

for the sacred body was so near to the ground and the

Cross was so firmly held by the angels, that the Jews

thought it rested upon the hard rock.

676. Then they dragged the lower end of the Cross

with the crucified God near to the hole, wherein it was

to be planted. Some of them getting under the upper

part of the Cross with their shoulders, others pushing

upward with their halberds and lances, they raised the

Savior on his Cross and fastened its foot in the hole

they had drilled into the ground. Thus our true life and

salvation now hung in the air upon the sacred wood in

full view of the innumerable multitudes of different

nations and countries. I must not omit mentioning an

other barbarity inflicted upon the Lord as they raised

Him : for some of them placed the sharp points of their

lances and halberds to his body and fearfully lacerating

Him under the armpits in helping to push the Cross into

position. At this spectacle new cries of protest arose

with still more vehemence and confusion from the mul

titude of people. The Jews blasphemed, the kind-hearted

lamented, the strangers were astounded, some of them

called the attention of the bystanders to the proceedings,

others turned away their heads in horror and pity ; others

took to themselves a warning from this spectacle of suf

fering, and still others proclaimed Him a just Man. All

these different sentiments were like arrows piercing the

heart of the afflicted Mother. The sacred body now shed

much blood from the nail wounds, which, by its weight

and the shock of the Cross falling into the hole, had

widened. They were the fountains, now opened up, to

which Isaias invites us to hasten with joy to quench our

thirst and wash off the stains of our sins (Is. 12, 3).

No one shall be excused who does not quickly approach

to drink of them; since the waters are sold without ex-

3-43

654 CITY OF GOD

change of silver or gold, and they are given freely to

those who will but receive them ( Is. 54, 1 ) .

677. Then they crucified also the two thieves and

planted their crosses to the right and the left of the

Savior; for thereby they wished to indicate that He

deserved the most conspicuous place as being the greatest

malefactor. The pharisees and priests, forgetting the

two thieves, turned all the venom of their fury against

the sinless and holy One by nature. Wagging their heads

in scorn and mockery (Matth. 27, 39) they threw stones

and dirt at the Cross of the Lord and his royal Person,

saying: "Ah Thou, who destroy est the temple and in

three days rebuildest it, save now Thyself; others He

has made whole, Himself He cannot save; if this be the

Son of God let Him descend from the Cross, and we

will believe in Him" (Matth. 27, 42). The two thieves

in the beginning also mocked the Lord and said: "If

Thou art the Son of God, save Thyself and us." These

blasphemies of the two thieves caused special sorrow to

our Lord, since they were so near to death and were

losing the fruit of their death-pains, by which they

could have satisfied in part for their justly punished

crimes. Soon after, however, one of them availed him

self of the greatest opportunity that a sinner ever had

in this world, and was converted from his sins.

678. When the great Queen of the angels, most holy

Mary, perceived that the Jews in their perfidy and ob

stinate envy vied in dishonoring Him, in blaspheming"

Him as the most wicked of men and in desiring to blot

out his name from the land of the living, as Jeremias had

prophesied (Jer. 11, 19), She was inflamed with a new

zeal for the honor of her Son and true God. Prostrate

before the person of the Crucified, and adoring Him,

She besought the eternal Father to see to the honor of

THE TRANSFIXION 655

his Onlybegotten and manifest it by such evident signs

that the perfidy of the Jews might be confounded and

their malice frustrated of its intent. Having 1 presented

this petition to the Father, She, with the zeal and author

ity of the Queen of the universe, addressed all the irra

tional creatures and said: "Insensible creatures, created

by the hand of the Almighty, do you manifest your com

passion, which in deadly foolishness is denied to Him

by men capable of reason. Ye heavens, thou sun, moon

and ye stars and planets, stop in your course and suspend

your activity in regard to mortals. Ye elements, change

your condition, earth lose thy stability, let your rocks and

cliffs be rent. Ye sepulchres and monuments of the dead,

open and send forth your contents for the confusion of

the living. Thou mystical and figurative veil of the

temple, divide into two parts and by thy separation

threaten the unbelievers with chastisement, give witness

to the truth and to the glory of their Creator and Re

deemer, which they are trying to obscure."

679. In virtue of this prayer and of the commands of

Mary, the Mother of the Crucified, the Omnipotence of

God had provided for all that was to happen at the death

of his Onlybegotten. The Lord enlightened and moved

the hearts of many of the bystanders at the time of

these happenings on earth, and even before that time,

in order that they might confess Jesus crucified as holy,

just and as the true Son of God. This happened, for in

stance, with the centurion and many others mentioned in

the Gospels, who went away from Calvary striking their

breasts in sorrow. Among them were not only those who

previously had heard and believed his doctrine, but also

a great number of such as had never seen Him or wit

nessed his miracles. For the same reason Pilate was

also inspired not to change the title of the Cross which

656 CITY OF GOD

they had placed over the head of the Savior in Hebrew,

Greek and Latin. For when the Jews protested and asked

Him not to write : Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews ;

but: This one says, He is King of the Jews; Pilate an

swered : What is written, is written, and I do not wish

it to be changed. All the inanimate creatures, by divine

will, obeyed the command of the most holy Mary. From

the noon hour until three o clock in the afternoon, which

was called the ninth hour, when the Lord expired, they

exhibited the great disturbances and changes mentioned

in the Gospels. The sun hid its light, the planets showed

great alterations, the earth quaked, many mountains were

rent; the rocks shook one against the other, the graves

opened and sent forth some of the dead alive. The

changes in the elements and in the whole universe were

so notable and extraordinary that they were evident on

the whole earth. All the Jews of Jerusalem were dis

mayed and astonished ; although their outrageous perfidy

and malice made them unworthy of the truth and hin

dered them from accepting what all the insensible crea

tures preached to them.

680. The soldiers who had crucified Jesus our Savior,

according to a custom permitting the executioners to take

possession of the property of those whom they executed,

now proceeded to divide the garments of the innocent

Lamb. The cloak or outside mantle, which by divine dis

position they had brought to mount Calvary and which

was the one Christ had laid aside at the washing of the

feet, thev divided among themselves, cutting it into four

parts (John 19, 23). But the seamless tunic, by a mys

terious decree of Providence, they did not divide, but

they drew lots and assigned it entirely to the one who

drew the lot for it; thus fulfilling the prophecy in the

twenty-first Psalm. The mysterious signification of the

THE TRANSFIXION 657

undivided tunic is variously explained by the saints and

doctors; one of these explanations being, that though the

Jews lacerated and tore with wounds the sacred humanity

of Christ our Uord, yet they could not touch or injure

the Divinity which was enclosed in the sacred humanity;

and whoever should draw the lot of justification by par

taking of his Divinity, should thenceforward possess and

enjoy it entirely.

681. As the wood of the Cross was the throne of his

majesty and the chair of the doctrine of life, and as

He was now raised upon it, confirming his doctrine by

his example, Christ now uttered those words of highest

charity and perfection : "Father, forgive them, for they

know not what they do!" (Luke 23, 34.) This prin

ciple of charity and fraternal love the divine Teacher hacf

appropriated to Himself and proclaimed by his own lips

(John 15, 12; Matth. 15, 44). He now confirmed and

executed it upon the Cross, not only pardoning and lov

ing his enemies, but excusing those under the plea of

ignorance whose malice had reached the highest point

possible to men in persecuting, blaspheming and crucify

ing their God and Redeemer. Such was the difference

between the behavior of ungrateful men favored with

so great enlightenment, instruction and blessing; and the

behavior of Jesus in his most burning charity while suf

fering the crown of thorns, the nails, and the Cross and

unheard of blasphemy at the hands of men. O incom

prehensible love! O ineffable sweetness! O patience in

conceivable to man, admirable to the angels and fearful

to the devils! One of the two thieves, called Dismas.

Decame aware of some of the mysteries. Being assisted

it the same time by the prayers and intercession of most

holy Mary, he was interiorly enlightened concerning

lis Rescuer and Master by the first word on the Cross.

658 CITY OF GOD

Moved by true sorrow and contrition for his sins, he

turned to his companion and said : "Neither dost thou

fear God, seeing that thou art under the same condemna

tion? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due re

ward of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil."

And thereupon speaking to Jesus, he said: "Lord, re

member me when Thou shalt come into thy kingdom!"

(Luke 23, 40.)

682. In this happiest of thieves, in the centurion, and

in the others who confessed Jesus Christ on the Cross,

began to appear the results of the Redemption. But the

one most favored was this Dismas, who merited to hear

the second word of the Savior on the Cross: "Amen, I

say to thee, this day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

O fortunate thief, who, of all others, heard those words

so much desired by all the saints and just of the earth!

Such a word the ancient Patriarchs and Prophets did not

hear; they had judged themselves very happy to be al

lowed to descend into limbo and wait through the long

ages for paradise, which thou, in changing so happily thy

condition, didst acquire in one moment. Thou hast now

ceased to rob earthly possessions of thy neighbor, and

immediately snatchest heaven from the hands of thy

Master. Thou seizest it in justice and He yields it to

thee in grace, since thou wast the last disciple of his

doctrine on earth and the most alert of all in practicing

it after having heard it from his mouth. Thou hast lov

ingly corrected thy brother, confessed thy Creator, repre

hended those who blasphemed Him, imitated Him in

patient suffering, asked Him humbly as thy Redeemer

not to forget thy miseries; and He, as thy Exalter, has

at once fulfilled thy desires without delaying the guerdon

merited for thee and all the mortals.

683. Having thus justified the good thief, Jesus turned

THE TRANSFIXION 659

his loving gaze upon his afflicted Mother, who with

saint John was standing at the foot of the Cross. Speak

ing to both, he first addressed his Mother, saying:

"Woman, behold thy son!" and then to the Apostle:

"Behold thy Mother!" (John 19, 26.) The Lord called

Her Woman and not Mother, because this name of

Mother had in it something of sweetness and consola

tion, the very pronouncing of which would have been a

sensible relief. During his Passion He would admit

of no exterior consolation, having renounced for that

time all exterior alleviation and easement, as I have men

tioned above. By this word "woman" he tacitly and

by implication wished to say : Woman blessed among all

women, the most prudent among all the daughters of

Adam, Woman, strong and constant, unconquered by

any fault of thy own, unfailing in my service and most

faithful in thy love toward Me, which even the mighty

waters of my Passion could not extinguish or resist

(Cant. 8, 7), I am going to my Father and cannot

accompany Thee further ; my beloved disciple will attend

upon Thee and serve Thee as his Mother, and he will

be thy son. All this the heavenly Queen understood.

The holy Apostle on his part received Her as his own

from that hour on ; for he was enlightened anew in order

to understand and appreciate the greatest treasure of the

Divinity in the whole creation next to the humanity of

Christ our Savior. In this light He reverenced and

served Her for the rest of her life, as I will relate farther

on. Our Lady also accepted him as her son in humble

subjection and obedience. Always practicing the highest

possible perfection and holiness without failing on any

occasion, and not permitting even the immensity of her

present suffering to weigh down her magnanimous and

most prudent heart, She promised then and there that

660 CITY OF GOD

She would show him this obedience during her whole

life.

684. Already the ninth hour of the day was approach

ing, although the darkness and confusion of nature made

it appear to be rather a chaotic night. Our Savior spoke

the fourth word from the Cross in a loud and strong

voice, so that all the bystanders could hear it : "My God,

my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" (Matth. 27, 46.)

Although the Lord had uttered these words in his own

Hebrew language, they were not understood by all.

Since they began with : "Eli, eli," some of them thought

He was calling upon Elias, and a number of them mocked

Him saying: "Let us see whether Elias shall come to

free Him from our hands ?" But the mystery concealed

beneath these words was just as profound as it was un

intelligible to the Jews and gentiles ; and they have been

interpreted in many ways by the doctors of the Church.

I shall give the interpretation which has been manifested

to me. The dereliction of which Christ speaks, was not

one in which the Divinity separated from the humanity,

dissolving the hypostatic union, nor including a cessa

tion of the beatific vision in his soul ; for both of these

He enjoyed from the first moment of his conception by

the Holy Ghost in the virginal womb and could never

lose. But certainly the sacred humanity was in so far

forsaken by the Divinity as it did not ward off death or

the most bitter sorrows of his Passion; though, on the

other hand, the eternal Father did not forsake Him

entirely, since He showed his concern by causing the

changes in the visible creation in order to give witness

for his honor at his Death. Christ our Savior intimated

quite a different dereliction by these words of complaint,

one which originated from his immense love for men;

namely, from his love of the foreknown as lost and the

THE TRANSFIXION 661

reprobate, which during his last hour caused in Him the

same anguish as it did during his prayer in the garden.

He grieved that his copious and superabundant Redemp

tion, offered for the whole human race, should not be

efficacious in the reprobate and that He should find Him

self deprived of them in the eternal happiness, for which

He had created and redeemed them. As this was to hap

pen in consequence of the decree of his Father s eternal

will, He lovingly and sorrowfully complained of it in

the words: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken

Me?" that is, in so far as God deprived Him of the

salvation of the reprobate.

685. In confirmation of this sorrow the Lord added :

"I thirst!" The sufferings of the Lord and his anguish

could easily cause a natural thirst. But for Him this

was not a time to complain of this thirst or to quench

it; and therefore Jesus would not have spoken of it so

near to its expiration, unless in order to give expression

to a most exalted mystery. He was thirsting to see the

captive children of Adam make use of the liberty, which

He merited for them and offered to them, and which so

many were abusing. He was athirst with the anxious

desire that all should correspond with Him in the faith

and love due to Him, that they profit by his merits and

sufferings, accept his friendship and grace now acquired

for them, and that they should not lose the eternal hap

piness which He was to leave as an inheritance to those

that wished to merit and accept it. This was the thirst

of our Savior and Master; and the most blessed Mary

alone understood it perfectly and began, with ardent

affection and charity, to invite and interiorly to call upon

ill the poor, the afflicted, the humble, the despised and

downtrodden to approach their Savior and thus quench,

at least in part, his thirst which they could not quench

662 CITY OF GOD

entirely. But the perfidious Jews and the executioners,

evidencing their unhappy hard-heartedness, fastened a

sponge soaked in gall and vinegar to a reed and mock

ingly raised it to his mouth, in order that He might

drink of it. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of David:

"In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (John 16,

28; Ps. 68, 22). Our most patient Savior tasted of it,

partaking of this drink in mysterious submission to the

condemnation of the reprobate. But at the instance of

his blessed Mother He immediately desisted ; because the

Mother of grace was to be the portal and Mediatrix of

those who were to profit of the Passion and the Redemp

tion of mankind.

686. In connection with this same mystery the Savior

then pronounced the sixth word : "Consummatum est,"

"It is consummated" (John 19, 29). Now is consum

mated this work of my coming from heaven and I have

obeyed the command of my eternal Father, who sent Me

to suffer and die for the salvation of mankind. Now

are fulfilled the holy Scriptures, the prophecies and

figures of the old Testament, and the course of my

earthly and mortal life assumed in the womb of my

Mother. Now are established on earth my example, my

doctrines, my Sacraments and my remedies for the sick

ness of sin. Now is appeased the justice of my eternal

Father in regard to the debt of the children of Adam.

Now is my holy Church enriched with the remedies for

the sins committed by men ; the whole work of my com

ing into the world is perfected in so far as concerns Me,

its Restorer; the secure foundation of the triumphant 1

Church is now laid in the Church militant, so that noth

ing can overthrow or change it. These are the mys

teries contained in the few words : "Consummatum est."

687. Having finished and established the work of Re-

THE TRANSFIXION 663

demption in all its perfection, it was becoming 1 that the

incarnate Word, just as He came forth from the Father

to enter mortal life (John 16, 8), should enter into

immortal life of the Father through death. Therefore

Christ our Savior added the last words uttered by Him :

"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The

Lord spoke these words in a loud and strong voice, so

that the bystanders heard them. In pronouncing- them

He raised his eyes to heaven, as one speaking with the

eternal Father, and with the last accent He gave up his

spirit and inclined his head. By the divine force of these

words Lucifer with all his demons were hurled into the

deepest caverns of hell, there they lay motionless, as I

shall relate in the next chapter. The invincible Queen

and Mistress of all virtues understood these mysteries

beyond the understanding of all creatures, as She was the

Mother of the Savior and the Coadjutrix of his Passion.

In order that She might participate in it to the end, just

as She had felt in her own body the other torments of

her Son, She now, though remaining alive, felt and suf

fered the pangs and agony of his death. She did not die

in reality; but this was because God miraculously pre

served her life, when according to the natural course

death should have followed. This miraculous aid was

more wonderful than all the other favors She received

during the Passion. For this last pain was more intense

and penetrating; and all that the martyrs and the men

sentenced to death have suffered from the beginning of

the world cannot equal what the blessed Mary suffered

during the Passion. The great Lady remained at the

foot of the Cross until evening, when the sacred body

(as I shall relate) was interred. But in return for this

last anguish of death, all that was still of this mortal

life in the virginal body of the purest Mother, was more

than ever exalted and spiritualized.

664 CITY OF GOD

688. Of many of the sacraments and mysteries con

nected with the doings of Christ our Savior on the

Cross the Evangelists make no mention; and we as

Catholics can only form prudent conjectures founded

upon the infallible certainty of our faith. But among

those which have been manifested to me in this history,

and concerning this part of the Passion, is a prayer,

which Christ addressed to his eternal Father before

speaking the seven words on the Cross recorded by the

Evangelists. I call it a prayer because it was addressed

to the Father; but in reality it was a last bequest or

testament, which He made as a true and most wise

Father in order to consign his possessions to his family,

that is, to the whole human race. Even natural reason

teaches us, that he who is the head of a family or the

lord over many or few possessions, would not be a pru

dent dispenser of his goods, and inattentive to his office

or dignity, if at the hour of his death he would not make

known his will in regard to the disposition of his goods

and his estate, in order that each one of his family may

know what belongs to him and may possess it justly

and peacefully without recourse to lawsuits. For this

very reason, and in order that they may set their minds

at ease in preparation for the hour of death, men of

the world make their last testaments. And even the

religious resign the things permitted them for daily use,

because in that hour earthly matters are apt to fill the

mind with anxieties and prevent them from rising to

ward their Creator. Although earthly things could not

disturb our Savior, since He neither possessed them, nor,

if He had possessed any, could He be embarrassed by

them in his infinite power; yet it was fitting, that He

should in that hour dispose of the spiritual riches and

treasures which He had amassed for mankind in the

course of his pilgrimage.

THE TRANSFIXION 665

689. Of these eternal goods the Savior made his last

disposition on the Cross, distributing them and point

ing out those who should be legitimate heirs and those

who should be disinherited, and mentioning the reasons

for the one as well as the other. All this He did in

conference with his eternal Father, as the supreme Lord

and most just Judge of all creatures; for in this testa

ment are rehearsed the mysteries of the predestination

of the saints and of the reprobation of the wicked. It

was a testament hidden and sealed for mankind ; only

the blessed Mary understood it, because, in addition to

her being informed of the operations of the divine Soul

of Christ, She was also to be the universal Heiress of

all creation. As She was the Coadjutrix of salvation,

She was also to be the testamentary Executrix. For

the Son placed all things in her hands, just as the Father

had assigned the whole creation to Him. She was to

execute his will and she was to distribute all the treas

ures acquired and due to her Son as God on account of

his infinite merits. This understanding has been given

me as part of this history for the exaltation of our Queen

and in order that sinners might approach Her as the

Custodian of all the treasures gained by her Son and

our Redeemer in the sight of his eternal Father. All

help and assistance is in the hands of most holy Mary

and She is to distribute it according to her most sweet

kindness and liberality.

TESTAMENT MADE BY CHRIST OUR LORD ON THE CROSS

IN HIS PRAYER TO THE ETERNAL FATHER.

690. When the holy wood of the Cross had been

raised on mount Calvary, bearing aloft with it the in

carnate Word crucified before speaking any of the seven

666 CITY OF GOD

words, Christ prayed interiorly to his heavenly Father

and said: "My Father and eternal God, I confess and

magnify Thee from this tree of the Cross, and I offer

Thee a sacrifice of praise in my Passion and Death ; for,

by the hypostatic union with the divine nature, Thou

hast raised my humanity to the highest dignity, that of

Christ, the Godman, anointed with thy own Divinity.

I confess Thee on account of the plenitude of the high

est possible graces and glory, which from the first in

stant of my Incarnation Thou hast communicated to my

humanity, and because from all eternity up to this pres

ent hour Thou hast consigned to me full dominion of

the universe both in the order of grace and of nature.

Thou hast made Me the Lord of the heavens and of

the elements (Matth. 28, 18), of the sun, the moon and

the stars; of fire and air, of the earth and the sea, of

all the animate and inanimate creatures therein; Thou

hast made Me the Disposer of the seasons, of the days

and nights, with full lordship and possession according

to my free will, and Thou hast set Me as the Head,

the King and Lord of all angels and men (Ephes. 1, 21),

to govern and command them, to punish the wicked and

to reward the good (John 5, 22) ; Thou hast given Me

the dominion and power of disposing all things from

highest heavens to deepest abysses of hell (Apoc. 20, 1).

Thou hast placed in my hands the eternal justification

of men, the empires, kingdoms and principalities, the

great and the little, the rich and the poor; and of all

that are capable of thy grace and glory, Thou hast made

Me the Justifier, the Redeemer and Glorifier, the uni

versal Lord of all the human race, of life and death, of

the holy Church, its treasures, laws and blessings of

grace : all hast Thou, my Father, consigned to my hands,

subjected to my will and my decrees, and for this I con

fess, exalt and magnify thy holy name."

THE TRANSFIXION 667

691. "Now, at this moment, my Lord and eternal

Father, when I am returning from this world to thy

right hand through this death on the Cross, by which I

completed the task of the Redemption of men assigned

to Me, I desire that this same Cross shall be the tribunal

of our justice and mercy. Nailed to it, I desire to judge

those for whom I give my life. Having justified my

cause, I wish to dispense the treasures of my coming into

the world and of my Passion and Death to the just and

the reprobate according as each one merits by his works

of love or hatred. I have sought to gain all mortals

and invited them to partake of my friendship and grace ;

from the first moment of my Incarnation I have cease

lessly labored for them; I have borne inconveniences,

fatigues, insults, ignominies, reproaches, scourges, a

crown of thorns, and now suffer the bitter death of the

Cross; I have implored thy vast kindness upon all of

them; I have watched in prayer, fasted and wandered

about teaching them the way of eternal life. As far as

in Me lay I have sought to secure eternal happiness for

all men, just as I merited it for all, without excluding

any one. I have established and built up the law of

grace and have firmly and forever established the Church

in which all human beings can be saved."

692. "But in our knowledge and foresight We are

aware, my God and Father, that on account of their

malice and rebellious obstinacy not all men desire to

accept our eternal salvation, nor avail themselves of

Dur mercy and of the way I have opened to them by my

abors, life and death; but that many will prefer to

follow their sinful ways unto perdition. Thou art just,

ny Lord and Father, and most equitable are thy judg

ments (Ps. 68, 137) ; and therefore it is right, since

Thou hast made Me the Judge o-f the living and the dead,

668 CITY OF GOD

of the good and the bad (Act 10, 3), that I give to the

good the reward of having served and followed Me, and

to sinners the chastisement of their perverse obstinacy;

that the just should share in my goods, and the wicked

be deprived of the inheritance, which they refuse to ac

cept. Now then, my eternal Father, in my and thy

name and for thy glorification, I make my last bequest

according to my human will, which is conformable to

thy eternal and divine will. First shall be mentioned my

most pure Mother, who gave Me human existence ; Her

I constitute my sole and universal Heiress of all the

gifts of nature, of grace and of glory that are mine.

She shall be Mistress and Possessor of them all. The

gifts of grace, of which as a mere creature She is capa

ble, She shall actually receive now, while those of glory

I promise to confer upon Her in their time. I desire

that She shall be Mistress of angels and men, claim over

them full possession and dominion and command the

service and obedience of all. The demons shall fear

Her and be subject to Her. All the irrational crea

tures, the heavens, the stars, the planets, the elements

with all the living beings, the birds, the fishes and the

animals contained in them, shall likewise be subject to

Her and acknowledge Her as Mistress, exalting and

glorifying Her with Me. I wish also that She be the

Treasurer and Dispenser of all the goods in heaven and

on earth. Whatever She ordains and disposes in my

Church for my children, the sons of men, shall be con

firmed by the three divine Persons; and whatever She

shall ask for mortals now, afterwards and forever, We

shall concede according to her will and wishes."

693. "To the holy angels, who have obeyed thy holy

and just will, I assign as habitation the highest heavens

as their proper and eternal abode, and with it the joys

THE TRANSFIXION 669

of eternal vision and fruition of our Divinity. I desire

that they enjoy its everlasting possession together with

our company and friendship. I decree, that they recog

nize my Mother as their legitimate Queen and Lady, that

they serve Her, accompany and attend upon Her, bear

Her up in their hands in all places and times, obeying

Her in all that She wishes to ordain and command.

The demons, rebellious to our perfect and holy will, I

cast out and deprive of our vision and company; again

do I condemn them to our abhorrence, to eternal loss of

our friendship and glory, to privation of the vision of

my Mother, of the saints and of my friends, the just. I

appoint and assign to them as their eternal dwelling the

place most remote from our royal throne, namely the

infernal caverns, the centre of the earth, deprived of

light and full of the horrors of sensible darkness (Jude

6). I decree this to be their portion and inheritance,

as chosen by them in their pride and obstinacy against

the divine Being and decrees. In those eternal dun

geons of darkness they shall be tormented by everlasting

and inextinguishable lire."

694. "From the multitudes of men, in the fulness of

my good will, I call, select and separate all the just

and the predestined, who through my grace save them

selves by imitating Me, doing my will and obeying my

holy law. These, next to my most pure Mother, I

appoint as the inheritors of all my mysteries, my bless

ings, my sacramental treasures, of the mysteries con

cealed in the holy Scriptures; of my humility, meek

ness of heart; of the virtues of faith, hope, and charity;

of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance; of my

divine gifts and favors; of my Cross, labors, con

tempt, poverty and nakedness. This shall be their por

tion and inheritance in this present and mortal life.

3-44

670 CITY OF GOD

Since they must choose these in order to labor profitably,

I assign to them the trials I have chosen for Myself in

this life, as a pledge of my friendship, in order that

they may undergo them with joy. I offer them my pro

tection and defense, my holy inspirations, my favors

and powerful assistance, my blessings and my justifi

cation, according to each one s disposition and degree

of love. I promise to be to them a Father, a Brother

and a Friend, and they shall be my chosen and beloved

children, and as such I appoint them as the inheritors of

all my merits and treasures without limitation. I de

sire that all who dispose themselves, shall partake of

the goods of my holy Church and of the Sacraments;

that, if they should lose my friendship, they shall be

able to restore themselves and recover my graces and

blessings through my cleansing blood. For all of them

shall be open the intercession of my Mother and of the

saints, and She shall recognize them as her children,

shielding them and holding them as her own. My an

gels shall defend them, guide them, protect them and

bear them up in their hands lest they stumble, and if

they fall, they shall help them to rise" (Ps. 90, 11, 12).

695. "Likewise it is my will that my just and chosen

ones shall stand high above the reprobate and the de

mons, that they shall be feared and obeyed by my ene

mies; that all the rational and irrational creatures

shall serve them; that all the influences of the heavens,

the planets and the stars shall favor them and give them

life; that the earth, its elements and animals, shall sus

tain them; all the creatures, that are mine and serve

Me, shall be theirs, and shall serve also them as my

children and friends (I Cor. 3, 22; Wis. 16, 24), and

their blessing shall be in the dew of heaven and in the

fruits of the earth (Genes. 27, 28). I wish to hold

THE TRANSFIXION 671

with them my delights (Pros. 8, 31), communicate to

them my secrets, converse with them intimately and live

with them in the militant Church in the species of bread

and wine, as an earnest and an infallible pledge of the

eternal happiness and glory promised to them; of it, I

make them partakers and heirs, in order that they may

enjoy it with Me in heaven by perpetual right and in

unfailing beatitude."

696. "I consent that the foreknown and reprobate

(though they were created for another and much higher

end), shall be permitted to possess as their portion and

inheritance the concupiscence of the flesh and the eyes

(John 1, 2-16), pride in all its effects; that they eat

and be satisfied with the dust of the earth, namely, with

riches; with the fumes and the corruption of the flesh

and its delights, and with the vanity and presumption

of the world. For such possessions have they labored,

and applied all the diligence of their mind and body; in

such occupations have they consumed their powers, their

gifts and blessings bestowed upon them by Us, and they

have of their own free will chosen deceit, despising the

truth I have taught them in the holy law (Rom. 2, 8).

They have rejected the law which I have written in

their hearts and the one inspired by my grace; they

have despised my teachings and my blessings, and lis

tened to my and their own enemies ; they have accepted

their deceits, have loved vanity (Ps. 4, 3), wrought

injustice, followed their ambitions, sought their delight

in vengeance, persecuted the poor, humiliated the just,

mocked the simple and the innocent, strove to exalt

themselves and desired to be raised above all the cedars

of Lebanon in following the laws of injustice" (Ps. 36,

35).

697. "Since they have done all this in opposition to

672 CITY OF GOD

our divine goodness and remained obstinate in their

malice, and since they have renounced the rights of son-

ship merited for them by Me, I disinherit them of my

friendship and glory. Just as Abraham separated the

children of the slave, setting aside some possessions

for them and reserving the principal heritage for Isaac,

the son of the freedwoman Sarah (Gen. 25, 5), thus I

set aside their claims on my inheritance by giving them

the transitory goods, which they themselves have chosen.

Separating them from our company and from that of

my Mother, of the angels and saints, I condemn them

to the eternal dungeons and the fire of hell in the com

pany of Lucifer and his demons, whom they have freely

served, I deprive them forever of all hope of relief.

This is, O my Father, the sentence which I pronounce

as the Head and the Judge of men and angels (Eph. 4,

15; Col. 2, 10), and this is the testament made at my

Death, this is the effect of my Redemption, whereby

each one is rewarded with that which he has justly

merited according to his works and according to thy

incomprehensible wisdom in the equity of thy strictest

justice" (II Tim. 4, 8). Such was the prayer of

Christ our Savior on the Cross to his eternal Father.

It was sealed and deposited in the heart of the most holy

Mary as the mysterious and sacramental testament, in

order that through her intercession and solicitous care it

might at its time, and even from that moment, be exe

cuted in the Church, just as it had before this time

been prepared and perfected by the wise providence of

God, in whom all the past and the future is always one

with the present.

THE TRANSFIXION 673

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MARY,

GAVE ME.

698. My daughter, seek with all the powers of thy

mind during thy whole life to remember the mysteries

manifested to thee in this chapter. I, as thy Mother

and thy Instructress, shall ask the Lord by his divine

power to impress in thy heart the knowledge, which I

have vouchsafed thee, in order that it may remain fixed

and ever present to thee as long as thou livest. In virtue

of this blessing keep in thy memory Christ crucified,

who is my divine Son and thy Spouse, and never forget

the sufferings of the Cross and the doctrine taught by

Him upon it. This is the mirror by which thou must

arrange all thy adornments and the source from which

thou art to draw thy interior beauty, like a true daughter

of the Prince (Ps. 44, 14), in order that thou mayest

be prepared, proceed and reign as the spouse of the su

preme King. As this honorable title obliges thee to seek

with all thy power to imitate Him as far as is becoming

thy station and possible to thee by his grace, and as this

is to be the true fruit of my doctrine, I wish that from

today on thou live crucified with Christ, entirely assimi

lated to thy exemplar and model and dead to this earthly

life (II Cor. 5, 15). I desire that in thee shall vanish

the effects of the first sin, that thou live only for the

operations and movements of divine virtue, and that

:hou renounce thy inheritance as a daughter of the first

Adam, in order that in thee may bear fruit the inheri

tance of the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ, thy

Redeemer and Teacher.

699. Thy state of life must be for thee a most rigid

674 CITY OF GOD

cross on which thou must remain crucified, and thou

must not widen thy path by seeking for dispensation

and weakening interpretation of thy rules to make it

easy and comfortable, but at the same time, insecure

and full of imperfections. This is the deception into

which the children of Babylon and of Adam fall, that

each one according to his state seeks to find ease in the

work commanded by the law of God. They set aside

the salvation of their soul in their efforts to buy heaven

very cheaply, or risk losing it by dreading the restric

tions and entire subjection necessary to observe rigor

ously the divine law and its precepts. Hence arises the

desire to find explanations and opinions, which smooth

the paths and highways of eternal life, without heeding

the doctrine of my divine Son, that the path of life is

very narrow (Matth. 7, 14). They forget that the

Lord himself has walked these narrow paths, in order

that no one might imagine he can reach eternal life over

paths more spacious and comfortable to the flesh and

to the inclinations vitiated by sins. This danger is

greater for ecclesiastics and religious, who by their

very state must follow the Master and must accommo

date themselves to his life of poverty and must choose

for this purpose the way of the Cross. Some of them

however are apt to seek the dignities attached to the

religious state for their temporal advantage, for the

increase of their own honor and praise. In order to

secure it they lighten the Cross they have promised to

bear, so that they live a carnal life, little restricted and

much eased by deceptive dispensations and vain excuses.

In their time they shall recognize the truth and that

saying of the Holy Ghost: Each one thinks his path

secure, but the Lord weighs in his hands the hearts of

men (Prov. 21, 2).

THE TRANSFIXION 675

700. So far from this deceit, do I wish thee to be,

my daughter, that thou must live strictly up to the

most rigorous demands of thy profession; in such a way

that thou canst not stretch thyself in any way, being

nailed immovably to the Cross with Christ. Thou must

set aside all temporal advantages, for the least point

pertaining to the utmost perfection of thy state. Thy

right hand, my daughter, must be nailed to the Cross

by obedience, and reserve not for thyself the least move

ment, the least activity, or word, or thought not con

trolled by this virtue. Thou must not maintain any po

sition that is of thy own choice, but only such as is

willed by others ; thou must not appear wise in thy own

conceit in anything, but ignorant and blind, in order to

follow entirely the guidance of thy superiors (Prov.

3, 7). He that promises, says the wise man (Prov. 6,

1 ) , binds his hands, and by his words shall he be bound

and chained. Thou hast bound thy hand by the vow

of obedience and hast thereby lost thy liberty and thy

right of wishing or not wishing. Thy left hand thou

hast nailed to the Cross by the vow of poverty, depriv

ing thee of all right to follow any inclination toward

the objects usually coveted by the eyes ; for both in the

use and in the desire for such creatures thou must rigor

ously imitate Christ impoverished and despoiled upon

the Cross. By the third vow, that of chastity, thy feet

are nailed to the Cross, in order that all thy steps and

movements may be pure, chaste and beautiful. For

this thou must not permit in thy presence the least word

offensive to purity, nor, by looking upon or touching

any human creature, allow any sensual image or impres

sion within thee; thy eyes and all thy senses are to re

main consecrated to chastity, without making more use

of them than to fix them upon Jesus crucified. The

676 CITY OF GOD

fourth vow, of perpetual enclosure, thou wilt maintain

in the bosom of my divine Son, to which I consign thee.

In order that this doctrine may appear to thee sweet,

and this path less narrow, contemplate and consider

in thy heart the image of my Son and Lord full of

blood, torments, sorrows, and at last nailed to the Cross,

no part of his sacred body being exempt from wounds

and excruciating pains. The Lord and I were most so

licitous and compassionate toward all the children of

men; for them We suffered and endured such bitter

sorrows, in order that they might be encouraged not to

refuse less severe sufferings for their own eternal good

and in return for so obliging a love. Therefore let

mortals show themselves thankful, willingly entering

upon the rough and thorny path and accepting the Cross,

to bear it after Christ. Thus will they walk upon the

direct path toward heaven and gain an eternal happiness

(Matth. 16, 24).

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRIUMPH OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR OVER THE DEMON

ON THE CROSS; HIS DEATH AND THE PROPHECY OF

HABBACUC; THE COUNCIL OF THE DEMONS IN HELL.

701. The hidden and venerable mysteries of this

chapter correspond to many others scattered through the

whole extent of this history. One of them is, that Lucifer

and his demons in the course of the life and miracles of

our Savior, never could ascertain fully whether the Lord

was true God and Redeemer of the world, and conse

quently what was the dignity of the most holy Mary.

This was so disposed by divine Providence, in order

that the whole mystery of the Incarnation and the

Redemption of the human race might be more fittingly

accomplished. Lucifer, although knowing that God was

to assume human flesh, nevertheless knew nothing of

the manner and the circumstances of the Incarnation.

As he was permitted to form an opinion of this mystery

in accordance with his pride, he was full of hallucina

tions, sometimes believing Christ to be God on account

of his miracles, sometimes rejecting such an opinion on

account of seeing Him poor, humiliated, afflicted and

fatigued. Harassed by these contradicting evidences, he

remained in doubt and continued his inquiries until the

predestined hour of Christ s Death on the Cross, where, in

virtue of the Passion and Death of the sacred humanity,

which he had himself brought about, he was to be both

undeceived and vanquished by the full solution of these

mysteries.

677

678 CITY OF GOD

702. This triumph of Christ our Savior was accom

plished in such an exalted and miraculous manner, that

I feel the sluggishness and insufficiency of my powers to

describe it. It took place in a manner too spiritual and

too far removed from the perception of the senses, ac

cording to which I must describe its process. In order

to manifest it, I should wish we were able to speak and

understand one another by means of the simple inter

course and vision peculiar to the angels; for such would

be necessary in order to describe and understand cor

rectly this great miracle of the omnipotence of God.

I shall say what I can and leave the understanding of

it more to the enlightenment of faith than to the significa

tion of my words.

703. In the preceding chapter I have said that Lucifer

and his demons, as soon as they saw the Lord taking

the Cross upon his sacred shoulders, wished to fly and

cast themselves into hell ; for at that moment they began

to feel with greater force the operations of his divine

power. By divine intervention this new torment made

them aware that the Death of this innocent Man, whose

destruction they had plotted and who could not be a

mere man, threatened great ruin to themselves. They

therefore desired to withdraw and they ceased to incite

the Jews and the executioners, as they had done hitherto.

But the command of the most blessed Mary, enforced by

the divine power, detained them and, enchained like

fiercest dragons, compelled them to accompany Christ to

Calvary. The ends of the mysterious chain that bound

them were placed into the hands of Mary, the great

Queen, who, by the power of her divine Son, held them

all in subjection and bondage. Although they many

times sought to break away and raged in helpless fury,

they could not overcome the power of the heavenly

I

THE TRANSFIXION 679

Lady. She forced them to come to Calvary and stand

around the Cross, where She commanded them to re

main motionless and witness the end of the great mys

teries there enacted for the salvation of men and the

ruin of themselves.

704. Lucifer and his infernal hosts were so over

whelmed with pains and torments by the presence of

the Lord and his blessed Mother, and with the fear of

their impending 1 ruin, that they would have felt greatly

relieved to be allowed to cast themselves into the dark

ness of hell. As this was not permitted them, they fell

upon one another and furiously fought with each other

like hornets disturbed in their nest, or like a brood of

vermin confusedly seeking some dark shelter. But their

rabid fury was not that of animals, but that of demons

more cruel than dragons. Then the haughty pride of

Lucifer saw itself entirely vanquished and all his proud

thoughts of setting his throne above the stars of heaven

and drinking dry the waters of the Jordan put to shame

(Is. 14, 13; Job 40, 18). How weak and annihilated

was now he, who so often had presumed to overturn

the whole earth! How downcast and confounded he,

who had deceived so many souls by false promises and

vain threats! How dismayed this unhappy one at the

sight of the gibbet, where he had sought to place

Mardocheus! (Esther 7, 9). What horrid shame to see

the true Esther, most holy Mary, asking for the rescue

of her people and the downfall of the traitor and the

chastisement of his pride! There our invincible Judith

beheaded him (Judith 13, 10) ; there She trod upon his

haughty neck. From now on, O Lucifer, I know that

thy arrogance and pride is much greater than thy strength

(Is. 16, 6). Instead of splendor now worms clothe thee

about (Is. 14, 11), and rottenness envelops and consumes

680 CITY OF GOD

thy carrion corpse ! Thou, who hast afflicted the nations,

art now more wounded r bound and oppressed than all

the world. Thenceforward I do not fear thy counterfeit

threats; I will no longer listen to thy wiles; for I see

thee reduced, weakened and entirely helpless.

705. The time had now come for this ancient dragon

to be vanquished by the Master of life. As this was to

be the hour of his disillusionment, and as this poisonous

asp was not to escape it by stopping his ears to the voice

of the Enchanter (Ps. 57, 5), the Lord began to speak the

seven words from his Cross, at the same time providing

that Lucifer and his demons should understand the mys

teries therein contained. For it was by this disclosure

that the Lord wished to triumph over them, over sin

and death, and despoil them of their tyrannous power

over the human race. The Savior then pronounced the

first word: "Father, forgive them, for they know not

what they do!" (Luke 23, 34). By these words the

princes of darkness came to the full conviction, that

Christ our Lord was speaking to the eternal Father,

that He was his natural Son and the true God with Him

and the Holy Ghost, that He had permitted death in his

most sacred and perfect humanity, united to the Divinity

for the salvation of the whole human race ; that now He

offered his infinitely precious merits for the pardon of the

sins of all those children of Adam, who should avail

themselves thereof for their rescue, not excepting even

the wretches that crucified Him. At this discovery Lu

cifer and his demons were thrown into such fury and

despair that they instantly wished to hurl themselves

impetuously to the depths of hell and strained all their

powers to accomplish it in spite of the powerful Queen.

706. In the second word spoken by the Lord to the

fortunate thief: "Amen I say to thee, today thou shalt

THE TRANSFIXION 681

be with. Me in paradise," the demons understood that the

fruits of the Redemption in the justification of sinners

ended in the glorification of the just. They were made

aware that from this hour the merits of Christ would

commence to act with a new force and strength, that

through them should be opened the gates of Paradise,

which had been closed by the first sin, and that from

now on men would enter upon eternal happiness and

occupy their destined heavenly seats, which until now had

been impossible for them. They perceived the power

of Christ to call sinners, justify and beautify them, and

they felt the triumphs gained over themselves by the

exalted virtues, the humility, patience, meekness and all

the virtues of his life. The confusion and torment of

Lucifer at seeing this cannot be explained by human

tongue; but it was so great, that he humiliated himself

so far as to beg the most blessed Virgin to permit them

to descend into hell and be cast out from her presence ;

but the great Queen would not consent, as the time had

not yet arrived.

707. At the third word spoken by the Lord to his

Mother: "Woman, behold thy son!" the demons dis

covered that this heavenly Lady was the true Mother of

the Godman, the same Woman whose likeness and

prophetic sign had been shown to them in the heavens

at their creation, and who was to crush their head as

announced by the Lord in the terrestrial paradise. They

were informed of the dignity and excellence of this great

Lady over all creatures, and of her power which they

were even now experiencing. As they had from the

beginning of the world and from the creation of the

first woman, used all their astuteness to find out who

this great woman that was announced in the heavens

could be, and as they now discovered Her in Mary, whom

682 CITY OF GOD

they had until now overlooked, these dragons were seized

with inexpressible fury; their having been thus mistaken

crushed their arrogance beyond all their other torments,

and in their fury they raged against their own selves

like bloodthirsty lions, while their helpless wrath against

the heavenly Lady was increased a thousandfold. More

over, they discerned that saint John was appointed by

Christ our Lord as the angel guardian of his Mother,

endowed with the powers of the priesthood. This they

understood to be in the nature of a threat against their

own wrath, which was well known to saint John. Luci

fer saw not only the power of the Evangelist, but that

given to all the priests in virtue of their participation in

the dignity and power of our Redeemer; and that the

rest of the just, even though no priests, were placed

under the special protection of the Lord and made

powerful against hell. All this paralyzed the strength

of Lucifer and his demons.

708. The fourth word of Christ was addressed to

the eternal Father: "God, my God, why hast Thou for

saken Me?" The evil spirits discovered in these words

that the charity of God toward men was boundless and

everlasting; that, in order to satisfy it, He had myste

riously suspended the influence of the Divinity over his

most sacred humanity, thus permitting his sufferings to

reach the highest degree and drawing from them the

most abundant fruits; that He was aware and lovingly

complained of his being deprived of the salvation of a

part of the human race; how ready He was to suffer

more, if such would be ordained by the eternal Father.

Man s good fortune in being so beloved by God increased

the envy of Lucifer and his demons, and they foresaw

the divine Omnipotence following out this immense love

without limitation. This knowledge crushed the haughty

THE TRANSFIXION 683

malice of the enemies and they were made well aware

of their own weakness and helplessness in opposing- this

love, if men themselves should not choose to neglect

its influence.

709. The fifth word of Christ, "I thirst," confirmed

Christ s triumph over the devil and his followers; they

were filled with wrath and fury because the Lord clearly

let them see their total overthrow. By these words they

understood Him to say to them : If what I suffer for men

and my love for them seem great to you, be assured that

my love for them is still unsatiated, that it continues to

long 1 for their eternal salvation, and that the mighty

waters of torments and sufferings have not extinguished

it (Cant. 8, 7). Much more would I suffer for them, if

it were necessary, in order to deliver them from your

tyranny and make them powerful and strong against

your malice and pride.

710. In the sixth word of the Lord: "It is consum

mated!" Lucifer and his hordes were informed that the

mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption was now

accomplished and entirely perfected according to the

decree of divine wisdom. For they were made to feel

that Christ our Redeemer had obediently fulfilled the will

of the eternal Father; that He had accomplished all the

promises and prophecies made to the world by the ancient

Fathers; that his humility and obedience had compen

sated for their own pride and disobedience in heaven in

not having subjected themselves and acknowledged Him

as their Superior in human flesh ; and that they were now

through the wisdom of God justly humbled and van

quished by the very Lord whom they despised. The

great dignity and the infinite merits of Christ demanded

that in this very hour He should exercise his office and

power of Judge over angels and men, such as had been

684 CITY OF GOD

conceded to Him by the eternal Father. He now applied

this power by hurling this sentence at Lucifer and all

his followers, that, being condemned to eternal fire, they

instantly depart into the deepest dungeons of hell. This

very sentence was included in the pronouncing of the

seventh word : "Father, into thy hands I commend my

spirit!" (Luke 23, 46.) The mighty Queen and Mother

concurred with the will of her Son Jesus and united

with his her command that Lucifer and all demons de

part to the infernal depths. In virtue of these decrees

of the supreme King and of the Queen, the evil spirits

were routed from Calvary and precipitated to deepest

hell more violently and suddenly than a flash of light

through the riven clouds.

711. Christ our Savior, as the triumphant Conqueror

having vanquished the great enemy, now yielded up his

spirit to the Father and permitted death to approach by

inclining his head (John 19, 30). By this permission He

also vanquished death, which had been equally deceived

in Him with the demons. For death could not attack

men, or had any jurisdiction of them, except through the

first sin, of which it was a punishment. On this account

the Apostle says that the weapon or the sting of death is

sin, which opens up the wounds by which death enters

into the world of humanity (Rom. 5, 12) ; and as our

Savior paid the debt of sin which He could not commit,

therefore, when death took away his life without the

shadow of justice, it lost the power which it had over

the other sons of Adam (I Cor. 15, 55). Thenceforward

neither death nor the devil could attack men, unless they,

failing to avail themselves of the victory of Christ, should

again subject themselves of their own free will. If our

first Father Adam had not sinned and we ourselves in

him, we would not suffer the punishment of death, but

THE TRANSFIXION 685

merely pass over to the happiness of the eternal father

land. But sin has made us its subjects and slaves of the

devil. He avails himself of death to deprive us first of

the grace, the blessings and the friendship of God.

Thereby he also prevents us from reaching eternal life

and we remain in the slavery of sin and the devil, sub

ject to his tyrannous power (I John 3, 8). Our Savior

Christ despoiled the demon of all these advantages and,

in dying without sin and satisfying for our own,

merited that our death should be a death of the body only,

and not of the soul; that it should have power to take

away our temporal life, but not our eternal ; the natural,

not the spiritual; and that it should thenceforward be

merely the portal to the eternal happiness, if we ourselves

did not renounce that blessing. Thus the Lord satisfied

for the chastisements due to the first sin, at the same

time furnishing us a means of offering a compensation

in our own name by accepting our natural and bodily

death for the love of God. Christ absorbed death (I

Cor. 15, 51) and offered his own as a bait for deceiving

death (Osee. 13, 14). By his Death He put an end of

its power, overcame it, and was the Death of death itself.

712. In this triumph the Savior fulfilled the prophecy

contained in the canticle and prayer of Habbacuc, of

which I shall select some passages necessary for my pur

pose. The prophet was informed of the mystery and

the power of Christ over death and the devil. In

prophetic foresight he prayed that the Lord vivify the

work of his hands, that is, man; that in his greatest

wrath He remember his mercy. He prophesied that the

glory of this miracle should fill the heavens and the

praise of it, the earth ; that its splendor shall be as that

of light ; that in his hands He shall embrace the horns,

which are the arms of the Cross and wherein is hidden

3-45

686 CITY OF GOD

his strength; that death should fly from Him captive

and vanquished; that before his feet the devil should be

routed and measure the earth (Habac. 3, 2-5). All this

was fulfilled to the letter; for Lucifer departed having

his head crushed under the feet of Christ and his blessed

Mother, who subdued Him by their sufferings and by

their power. Since the devil was forced to case himself

to lowest hell, which is the middle of the earth and

farthest removed from its surface, he is said to measure

the earth. The rest of the canticle pertains to the

triumph of Christ our Lord in the succeeding ages of

the Church; but that need not be rehearsed here. It is,

however, proper for men to understand that Lucifer and

his demons were restricted, lamed and weakened in their

power of tempting the rational creatures, unless their

sins and their own free will do not again unbind them

and encourage them to return for the destruction of the

world. All this will be better understood from the pro

ceedings of the infernal council held in hell and from

what I shall say further in the course of this history.

COUNCIL HELD BY LUCIFER AND HIS DEMONS IN HELL

AFTER THE DEATH OF CHRIST OUR LORD.

713. The rout of Lucifer and his angels from Calvary

to the abyss of hell was more violent and disastrous than

their first expulsion from heaven. Though, as holy Job

says (Job 10, 21), that place is a land of darkness, cov

ered with the shades of death, full of gloomy disorder,

misery, torments and confusion; yet on this occasion

the chaos and disorder was a thousandfold increased;

because the damned were made to feel new horror and

additional punishments at the sudden meeting of the

ferocious demons in their rabid fury. It is certain that

THE TRANSFIXION 687

the devils have not the power of assigning- the damned

to a place of greater or lesser torment ; for all their tor

ments are decreed by divine justice according to the meas

ure of the demerits of each of the condemned. But,

besides this essential punishment, the just Judge allows

them to suffer other accidental punishments from time

to time according to occasion; for their sins have left

roots in the world and cause much damage to others,

who are damned on their account, and the new effects still

arising from former sins cause such accidental punish-

ments in the damned. Thus the demons devised new

torments for Judas, for having sold and brought about

the death of Christ. They also understood then that this

place of dreadful punishments, where they had thrown

him and of which I have spoken above, was destined for

the chastisement of those who damned themselves by

refusing to practice their faith in their lives and for those

who purposely refuse to believe and avail themselves of

the fruits of the Redemption. Against these the devils

execute a more furious wrath, similar to the one they

have conceived against Jesus and Mary.

714. As soon as Lucifer was permitted to proceed in

these matters and arise from the consternation in which

he remained for some time, he set about proposing to

his fellow-demons new plans of his pride. For this pur

pose he called them all together and placing himself in

an elevated position, he spoke to them: "To you, who

have for so many ages followed and still follow my

standards for the vengeance of my wrongs, is known the

injury which I have now sustained at the hands of this

Mangod, and how for thirty-three years He has led me

about in deceit, hiding his Divinity and concealing the

operations of his soul, and how He has now triumphed

over us by the very Death which we have brought upon

688 CITY OF GOD

Him. Before He assumed flesh I hated Him and re

fused to acknowledge Him as being more worthy than

I to be adored by the rest of creation. Although on ac

count of this resistance I was cast out from heaven with

you and was degraded to this abominable condition so

unworthy of my greatness and former beauty, I am even

more tormented to see myself thus vanquished and op

pressed by this Man and by his Mother. From the day

on which the first man was created I have sleeplessly

sought to find Them and destroy Them; or if I should

not be able to destroy Them, I at least wished to bring 1

destruction upon all his creatures and induce them not

to acknowledge Him as their God, and that none of them

should ever draw any benefit from his works. This has

been my intent, to this all my solicitude and efforts were

directed. But in vain, since He has overcome me by his

humility and poverty, crushed me by his patience, and

at last has despoiled me of the sovereignty of the world

by his Passion and frightful Death. This causes me

such an excruciating pain, that, even if I succeeded in

hurling Him from the right hand of his Father, where

He sits triumphant, and if I should draw all the souls

redeemed down into this hell, my wrath would not be

satiated or my fury placated."

715. "Is it possible that the human nature, so inferior

to my own, shall be exalted above all the creatures!

That it should be so loved and favored, as to be united

to the Creator in the person of the eternal Word ! That

He should first make war upon me before executing this

work, and afterwards overwhelm me with such confusion !

From the beginning I have held this humanity as my

greatest enemy; it has always filled me with intolerable

abhorrence. O men, so favored and gifted by your God,

whom I abhor, and so ardently loved by Him ! How shall

THE TRANSFIXION 689

I hinder your good fortune? How shall I bring upon

you my unhappiness, since I cannot destroy the existence

you have received ? What shall we now begin, O my fol

lowers ? How shall we restore our reign ? How shall we

recover our power over men? How shall we overcome

them ? For if men from now on shall not be most sense

less and ungrateful, if they are not worse disposed than

we ourselves toward this Godman, who has redeemed

them with so much love, it is clear that all of them will

eagerly follow Him ; none will take notice of our deceits ;

they will abhor the honors which we insidiously offer

them, and will love contempt; they will seek the mor

tification of the flesh and will discover the danger of

carnal pleasure and ease; they will despise riches and

treasures, and love the poverty so much honored by their

Master ; and all that we can offer to their appetites they

will abhor in imitation of their true Redeemer. Thus will

our reign be destroyed, since no one will be added to our

number in this place of confusion and torments ; all will

reach the happiness which we have lost, all will humiliate

themselves to the dust and suffer with patience ; and my

wrath and haughtiness will avail me nothing."

716. "Ah, woe is me, what torment does this mistake

cause me ! When I tempted Him in the desert, the only

result was to afford Him a chance to leave the example

of this victory, by following which men can overcome me

so much the more easily. My persecutions only brought

out more clearly his doctrine of humility and patience.

In persuading Judas to betray Him, and the Jews to

subject Him to the deadly torture of the Cross, I merely

hastened my ruin and the salvation of men, while the

doctrine I sought to blot out was only the more firmly

implanted. How could One who is God humiliate Him

self to such an extent? How could He bear so much

690 CITY OF GOD

from men who are evil? How could I myself have

been led to assist so much in making this salvation so

copious and wonderful ? O how godlike is the power of

that Man which could torment and weaken me so? And

how can this Woman, his Mother and my Enemy, be so

mighty and invincible in her opposition to me? New is

such power in a mere creature, and no doubt She derived

it from the divine Word, whom She clothed in human

flesh. Through this Woman the Almighty has cease

lessly waged war against me, though I have hated Her in

my pride from the moment I recognized Her in her image

or heavenly sign. But if my proud indignation is not to

be assuaged, I benefit nothing by my perpetual war

against this Redeemer, against his Mother and against

men. Now then, ye demons who follow me, now is the

time to give way to our wrath against God. Come all

of ye to take counsel what we are to do; for I desire

to hear your opinions."

717. Some of the principal demons gave their answers

to this dreadful proposal, encouraging Lucifer by sug

gesting diverse schemes for hindering the fruit of the

Redemption among men. They all agreed that it was

not possible to injure the person of Christ, to diminish

the immense value of his merits, to destroy the efficacy of

the Sacraments, to falsify or abolish the doctrine which

Christ had preached ; yet they resolved that, in accordance

with the new order of assistance and favor established by

God for the salvation of men, they should now seek new

ways of hindering and preventing the work of God by

so much the greater deceits and temptations. In ref

erence to these plans some of the astute and malicious

demons said : "It is true, that men now have at their

disposal a new and very powerful doctrine and law,

new and efficacious Sacraments, a new Model and In-

THE TRANSFIXION 691

structor of virtues, a powerful Intercessor and Advocate

in this Woman; yet the natural inclinations and pas

sions of the flesh remain just the same, and the sensible

and delectable creatures have not changed their nature.

Let us then, making- use of this situation with increased

astuteness, foil as far as in us lies the effects of what

this Godman has wrought for men. Let us begin stren

uous warfare against mankind by suggesting new attrac

tions, exciting them to follow their passions in forget-

fulness of all else. Thus men, being taken up with these

dangerous things, cannot attend to the contrary."

718. Acting upon this counsel they redistributed the

spheres of work among themselves, in order that each

squadron of demons might, with a specialized astuteness,

tempt men to different vices. They resolved to continue

to propagate idolatry in the world, so that men might not

come to the knowledge of the true God and the Redemp

tion. Wherever idolatry would fail, they concluded to

establish sects and heresies, for which they would select

the most perverse and depraved of the human race as

leaders and teachers of error. Then and there was con

cocted among these malignant spirits the sect of Ma

homet, the heresies of Arius, Pelagius, Nestorius, and

whatever other heresies have been started in the world

from the first ages of the Church until now, together

with those which they have in readiness, but which it is

neither neces ary nor proper to mention here. Lucifer

showed himi ilf content with these infernal counsels as

being oppos d to divine truth and destructive of the

very foundation of man s rescue, namely divine faith.

He lavished flattering praise and high offices upon those

demons, who showed themselves willing and who under

took to find the impious originators of these errors.

719. Some of the devils charged themselves with per

verting the inclinations of children at their conception

692 CITY OF GOD

and birth; others to induce parents to be negligent in

the education and instruction of their children, either

through an inordinate love or aversion, and to cause a

hatred of parents among the children. Some offered

to create hatred between husbands and wives, to place

them in the way of adultery, or to think little of the

fidelity promised to their conjugal partners. All agreed

to sow among men the seeds of discord, hatred and ven

geance, proud and sensual thoughts, desire of riches or

honors, and by suggesting sophistical reasons against all

the virtues Christ has taught; above all they intended

to weaken the remembrance of his Passion and Death,

of the means of salvation, and of the eternal pains of

hell. By these means the demons hoped to burden all

the powers and the faculties of men with solicitude for

earthly affairs and sensual pleasures, leaving them little

time for spiritual thoughts and their own salvation.

720. Lucifer heard these different suggestions of

the demons, and answering them, he said : "I am much

beholden to you for your opinions: I approve of them

and adopt them all; it will be easy to put them into

practice with those, who do not profess the law given

by this Redeemer to men, though with those who accept

and embrace these laws, it will be a difficult enterprise.

But against this law and against those that follow it, I

intend to direct all my wrath and fury and I shall most

bitterly persecute those who hear the doctrine of this

Redeemer and become his disciples; against these must

our most relentless battle be waged to the end of the

world. In this new Church I must strive to sow my

cockle (Matth. 14, 25), the ambitions, the avarice, the

sensuality, and the deadly hatreds, with all the other

vices, of which I am the head. For if once these sins

multiply and increase among the faithful, they will, with

THE TRANSFIXION 693

their concomitant malice and ingratitude, irritate God

and justly deprive men of the helps of grace left to them

by the merits of the Redeemer. If once they have thus

despoiled themselves of these means of salvation, we

shall have assured victory over them. We must also

exert ourselves to weaken piety and all that is spiritual

and divine; so that they do not realize the power of

the Sacraments and receive them in mortal sin, or at

least without fervor and devotion. For since these Sac

raments are spiritual, it is necessary to receive them with

well-disposed will, in order to reap their fruits. If

once they despise the medicine, they shall languish in

their sickness and be less able to withstand our tempta

tions; they will not see through our deceits, they will

let the memory of their Redeemer and of the interces

sion of his Mother slip from their minds. Thus will

their foul ingratitude make them unworthy of grace and

so irritate their God and Savior, as to deprive them of

his helps. In all this I wish, that all of you assist me

strenuously, losing neither time nor occasion for execut

ing my commands."

721. It is not possible to rehearse all the schemes

of this dragon and his allies concocted at that time

against the holy Church and her children, in order that

these waters of Jordan might be swallowed up in his

hroat (Job 40, 18). It is enough to state that they

pent nearly a full year after the Death of Christ in

conferring and considering among themselves the state

of the world up to that time and the changes wrought

by Christ our God and Master through his Death and

after having manifested the light of his faith by so

many miracles, blessings and examples of holy men.

If all these labors have not sufficed to draw all men to

the way of salvation, it can be easily understood, that

694 CITY OF GOD

Lucifer should have prevailed and that his wrath should

be so great, as to cause us justly to say with saint John:

"Woe to the earth, for satan is come down to you full

of wrath and fury!" But alas! that truths so infallible

and so much to be dreaded and avoided by men, should

in our days be blotted from the minds of mortals to

the irreparable danger of the whole world ! Our enemy

is astute, cruel and watchful : we sleepy, lukewarm and

careless! What wonder that Lucifer has intrenched

himself so firmly in the world, when so many listen to

him, accept and follow his deceits, so few resist him,

and entirely forget the eternal death, which he so furi

ously and maliciously seeks to draw upon them? I

beseech those, who read this, not to forget this dreadful

danger. If they are not convinced of this danger

through the evil condition of the world and through the

evils each one experiences himself, let them at least learn

of this danger by the vast and powerful remedies and

helps, which the Savior thought it necessary to leave be

hind in his Church. For He would not have provided

such antidotes if our ailment and danger of eternal

death were not so great and formidable.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

:

722. My daughter, by divine enlightenment thou hast

received a deep understanding of the glorious triumph of

my Son and Lord on the Cross over the demons and

of their rout and vanquishment. But thou must re

member that thou art yet ignorant of much more than

what thou knowest concerning these ineffable mysteries.

For in mortal flesh the creature cannot comprehend them

in their reality, and divine Providence reserves the full

understanding of them as a reward of the saints in

THE TRANSFIXION 695

heaven and for the beatific vision, in which these mys

teries will be comprehended clearly. This insight will

also be given to the reprobate, to each one according to

his degree, for their confusion and punishment at the

end of their career. But what thou hast learned will

suffice to apprise thee of the dangers of this mortal life

and to enliven thy hope of overcoming thy enemies. I

wish also to warn thee of the new wrath, which the

dragon has conceived especially against thee for what

thou hast written in this chapter. He has ceaselessly

pursued thee with his wrath and has sought to hinder

thee from writing my life, as thou hast experienced con

tinually in this work. But now his haughty pride is in

censed against thee especially, because thou hast revealed

his humiliation, his crushing ruin at the Death of my

most blessed Son, the condition in which it left him

and the secret counsels for revenging himself upon the

children of Adam and especially upon the members of

the holy church. All this has excited and disturbed

him anew, seeing that these secrets will be revealed to

those yet ignorant of them. Thou wilt feel his wrath

in the difficulties he will place in thy way, the tempta

tions and persecutions thou hast already encountered.

Therefore I warn thee to be wary and circumspect

against the rabid fury and cruelty of thy enemy.

723. Thou art astonished, and justly, to see, on the

one hand, the power of my Son s merits and of his Re

demption, the ruin and weakness caused by the demons

in men; and, on the other hand, to see the power of

the devil lording it over the world in haughty presump

tion. Although the light given to thee in writing this

history is equal to this astonishment, I wish to add still

another point of information, in order that thou mayest

guard thyself so much the more carefully against ene-

696 CITY OF GOD

mies so full of malice. It is certain, that when hell

came to the full knowledge of the sacrament of the In

carnation and Redemption, and of the poverty, humility

and lowliness of the birth of Jesus, of his life and

miracles, ending in the mysterious Passion and Death,

and of all the rest of his labors to draw men to Him,

Lucifer and his demons were weakened and disabled

and they saw that they could not tempt the faithful in

the same way as the rest of men and as they ceaselessly

desire to do. In the primitive Church this terror and

fear of the baptized, and of the followers of Christ our

Lord, continued many years; for the divine virtues

shone forth brightly in their imitation of Christ, in

their zeal in confessing the faith, in following the teach

ings of the Gospel, in practicing heroic virtues and most

fervent love, humility, patience and contempt of the

vanities and deceits of the world. Many shed their

blood and gave their life for Christ the Lord; they per

formed many admirable and exalted deeds for the glory

of his name. This invincible fortitude resulted from

their living at a time so near to the Passion and Death

of their Redeemer and so close to the prodigious ex

ample of his patience and humility; but also because

they were less tempted by the devils, who could not so

soon rise from the crushing defeat brought upon them

by the triumph of the crucified God.

724. This close imitation and living reproduction of

Christ, confronting the demons in the first children of

the Church, they feared so much, that they dared net

approach and they precipitously fled from the Apos

tles and the just ones imbued with the doctrines of my

divine Son. In them were offered up to the Almighty

the first fruits of grace, and of Redemption. What is

seen in the saints and in perfect Christians in those

THE TRANSFIXION 697

times, would happen in the present times with all the

Catholics if they would accept grace and work with it

instead of permitting it to go to waste, and if they would

seek the way of the Cross; for Lucifer fears it just

as much now as in the times thou hast been writing of.

But soon the charity, zeal and devotion in many of the

faithful began to grow cold and they forgot the bless

ings of the Redemption ; they yielded to their carnal in

clinations and desires, they loved vanity and avarice,

and permitted themselves to be fascinated and deceived

by the false pretenses of Lucifer, obscuring the glory

of their Savior and inveigling them into the meshes of

their mortal enemies. This foul ingratitude has thrown

the world into the present state and has encouraged the

demons to rise up in their pride against God, audaciously

presuming to possess themselves of all the children of

Adam on account of this forgetfulness and carelessness

of Catholics. They presume to plot the destruction of

the whole Church by the perversion of so many who

have fallen away from it; and by inducing those who

are in it, to think little of it, or by hindering them from

producing the fruits of the blood and death of their

Redeemer. The greatest misfortune is, that many Cath

olics fail to recognize this great damage and do not seri

ously think of a remedy, although they can presume that

the times, of which Jesus forewarned the women of Jeru

salem, have arrived; namely, those in which the sterile

should be happy, and in which many would call upon

the mountains and the hills to cover and fall upon them,

in order not to see the devastation of wickedness cutting

down the sons of perdition, the dried trees, barren of

all the fruits of virtue. In these evil times dost thou

live, my dearest; and in order that thou mayest not be

included in the perdition of so many souls, do thou be-

698

CITY OF GOD

wail it in the bitterness of thy heart, never forgetting

the mysteries of the Incarnation, Passion and Death of

my Divine Son. I desire thee to give thanks in compen

sation for the great number of those, who forget it, and

I assure thee that the mere memory and contemplation

of these mysteries are terrible to hell, torment and drive

away the demons, and that they avoid and fly those who

thankfully remember the life and passion of my divine

Son.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SIDE OF CHRIST IS OPENED WITH A LANCE, AS HIS

BODY HANGS ON THE CROSS; HE IS TAKEN DOWN

AND BURIED. THE DOINGS OF THE BLESSED MOTHER

ON THIS OCCASION, AND UNTIL SHE RETURNED TO

THE CENACLE.

725. The Evangelist saint John tells us that near

the Cross stood Mary, the most holy Mother of Jesus,

with Mary Cleophas and Mary Magdalen. Although

this is said of the time before Jesus expired, it must

be understood, that the unconquerable Queen remained

also afterwards, always standing beneath the Cross and

adoring her dead Jesus and his divinity inseparably

united to his sacred body. Amid the impetuous floods

of sorrow, that penetrated to the inmost recesses of her

chastest heart, the great Lady remained immovably con

stant in the exercise of ineffable virtues, while con

templating within Her the mysteries of man s Redemp

tion and the order in which divine Wisdom disposed of

all these sacraments. The greatest affliction of the

Mother of mercy was the traitorous ingratitude, which

men, to their own great loss, would show toward this

extraordinary blessing, so worthy of eternal thanksgiv

ing. But now She was especially solicitous for the

burial of the sacred body of her divine Son and how to

procure some one to take it down from the Cross.

Full of this sorrowful anxiety, keeping her heavenly

eyes riveted upon it, She turned to her holy angels

around Her and spoke to them : "Ministers of the Most

699

700 CITY OF GOD

High, my friends in tribulation, you know that there is

no sorrow like unto my sorrow; tell me then, how shall

I take down from the Cross, whom my soul loves; how

and where shall I give Him honorable burial, since this

duty pertains to me as his Mother? Tell me what to

do, and assist me on this occasion by your diligence."

726. The holy angels arfswered: "Our Queen and

Mistress, let thy afflicted heart be dilated for what is still

to be borne. The omnipotent Lord has concealed his

glory and power from mortals in order to subject Him

self to the cruelty of man s impious malice and has

always permitted the laws established for the course

of human events to be fulfilled. One of them is, that

the condemned shall not leave the cross without the

consent of the judge. We are ready and able to obey

Thee and to defend our true God and Creator, but his

will restrains us, because He wishes to justify his cause

to the end and to shed the rest of the blood still in

Him for the benefit of mankind and in order that He

may bind them still more firmly to make a return for

his copious and redeeming love (Ps. 79, 7). If they

do not avail themselves of this blessing as they ought,

their punishment shall be deplorable and its severity

shall make amends for the long-suffering of God in de

laying his vengeance." This answer of the angels in

creased the sorrow of the afflicted Mother; for it had

not been as yet revealed to Her, that her divine Son

should be wounded by the lance, and the fear of what

should happen to the sacred body renewed her tribula

tion and anxiety.

727. She soon saw an armed band approaching Cal

vary; and in her dread of some new outrage against

the deceased Savior, She spoke to saint John and the

pious women: "Alas, now shall my affliction reach its

THE TRANSFIXION 701

utmost and transfix my heart! Is it possible, that the

executioners and the Jews are not yet satisfied with

having put to death my Son and Lord ? Shall they now

heap more injury upon his dead body?" It was the

evening of the great Sabbath of the Jews, and in order

to celebrate it with unburdened minds, they had asked

Pilate for permission to shatter the limbs of the three

men sentenced, so that, their death being hastened, they

might be taken from the crosses and not left on them

for the following day. With this intent the company of

soldiers, which Mary now saw, had come to mount Cal

vary. As they perceived the two thieves still alive, they

broke their limbs and so hastened their end (John 19,

31). But when they examined Jesus they found Him

already dead, and therefore did not break his bones,

thus fulfilling the mysterious prophecy in Exodus (Ex.

12, 46), commanding that no bones be broken in the

figurative lamb to be eaten for the Pasch. But a sol

dier, by the name of Longinus, approaching the Cross

of Christ, thrust his lance through the side of the Sa

vior. Immediately water and blood flowed from the

wound, as saint John, who saw it and who gives testi

mony of the truth, assures us (John 19, 34).

728. This wounding of the lance, which could not

be felt by the sacred and dead body of the Lord, was

felt by the most blessed Mother in his stead and in the

same manner as if her chaste bosom had been pierced.

But even this pain was exceeded by the affliction of her

most holy soul, in witnessing the cruel laceration of

the breast of her dead Son. At the same time, moved

by compassion and love and in forgetfulness of her own

sorrow, She said to Longinus: "The Almighty look

upon thee with eyes of mercy for the pain thou hast

caused to rny soul!" So far and no farther went her

3-46

702 CITY OF GOD

indignation (or more properly, her most merciful meek

ness), for the instruction of all of us who are ever in

jured. For to the mind of this sincerest Dove, this

injury to the dead Christ weighed most heavily; and

the retribution sought by Her for the delinquent was

one of the greatest blessings, namely that God should

look upon him with eyes of mercy and return blessings

and gifts of grace for the offense. Thus it also hap

pened; for the Savior, moved by the prayer of his

blessed Mother, ordained that some of the blood and

water from his sacred side should drop upon the face

of Longinus and restore to him his eyesight, which he

had almost lost. At the same time sight was given

to his soul, so that he recognized in the Crucified his

Savior, whom he had so inhumanly mutilated. Through

this enlightenment Longinus was converted; weeping

over his sins and having washed them in the blood and

water of the side of Christ, he openly acknowledged

and confessed Him as the true God and Savior of the

world. He proclaimed Him as such in the presence

of the Jews, confounding by his testimony their perfidy

and hardness of heart.

729. The most prudent Queen then perceived the

mystery of this lance-thrust, namely, that in this last

pouring forth of the blood and water issued forth the

new Church, cleansed and washed by the Passion and

Death of Jesus, and that from his sacred side, as from

the roots, should now spread out through the whole

world the fruits of life eternal. She conferred within

Herself also upon the mystery of that rock struck by

the rod of divine justice (Exod. 17, 6), in order that

the living waters might issue forth, quenching the thirst

of all the human race and recreating and refreshing

all who betook themselves to drink therefrom. She con-

THE TRANSFIXION 703

sidered the coincidence of the five fountains from the

wounds of his hands, feet and sides, which opened up

the new paradise of the most holy humanity of our

Savior, and which were more copious and powerful to

fertilize the earth than those of the terrestrial paradise

divided into four streams over the surface of the globe

(Gen. 2, 10). These and other mysteries the great

Lady rehearsed in a canticle of praise, which She com

posed in honor of her divine Son after his being wound

ed by the lance. Together with this canticle She poured

forth a most fervent prayer, that all these mysteries

of the Redemption be verified in the blessings spread

over the whole human race.

730. The evening of that day of the parasceve was

already approaching, and the loving Mother had as yet

no solution of the difficulty of the burial of her dead

Son, which She desired so much ; but the Lord ordained,

that the tribulations of his tenderest Mother should be

relieved by Joseph of Arimathea and Nikodemus, whom

he had inspired with the thought of caring for the

burial of their Master. They were both just men and

disciples of the Lord, although not of the seventy-two;

for they had not as yet openly confessed themselves as

disciples for fear of the Jews, who suspected and hated

as enemies all those that followed Christ and acknowl

edged Him as Teacher. The dispositions of divine

Providence concerning the burial of her Son had not

been made known to the most prudent Virgin and thus

her painful anxiety increased to such an extent, that She

saw no way out of the difficulty. In her affliction She

raised her eyes to heaven and said: "Eternal Father

and my Lord, by the condescension of thy goodness and

infinite wisdom I was raised to the exalted dignity of

being the Mother of thy Son; and by that same bounty

704 CITY OF GOD

of an immense God Thou hast permitted me to nurse

Him at my breast, nourish Him and accompany Him to

his death. Now it behooves me as his Mother to give

honorable burial to his sacred body, though I can go no

farther than to desire it and deeply grieve, because I

am unable to fulfill my wishes. I beseech thy divine

Majesty to provide some way for accomplishing my

desires."

731. This prayer the loving Mother offered up after

the sacred body of the Lord was perforated by the

lance. Soon after She saw another group of men com

ing toward Calvary with ladders and other apparatus

seemingly for the purpose of taking from the Cross her

priceless Treasure ; but as She did not know their inten

tions, She was tortured by new fears of the cruelty of

the Jews, and turning to saint John, She said : "My Son,

what may be the object of these people in coming with

all these instruments?" The apostle answered: "Do

not fear them that are coming, my Lady; for they

are Joseph and Nikodemus with some of their servants,

all of them friends and servants of thy divine Son and

my Lord." Joseph was just in the eyes of the Most

High (John 19, 38), a noble decurion in the employ

ment of the government, a member of the council, who

as is given us to understand in the Gospel, had not con

sented to the resolves and the proceedings of the mur

derers of Christ and who had recognized Jesus as the

true Messias. Although Joseph had been a secret disci

ple of the Lord, yet at his death, in consequence of the

efficacious influence of the Redemption, he openly con

fessed his adherence. Setting aside all fear of the envy

of the Jews and caring nothing for the power of the

Romans, he went boldly to Pilate and asked for the

body of Jesus (Mark 15, 43), in order to take Him

THE TRANSFIXION 705

down from the Cross and give Him honorable burial.

He openly maintained that he was innocent and the true

Son of God, as witnessed by the miracles of his life

and death.

732. Pilate dared not refuse the request of Joseph, but

gave him full permission to dispose of the dead body of

Jesus as he thought fit. With this permission Joseph

left the house of the judge and called upon Nikodemus.

He too was a just man, learned in divine and human

letters and in the holy Scriptures, as is evident in what

saint John related of him when he visited Christ at Night

in order to hear the doctrine of Jesus Christ (John

3, 2). Joseph provided the winding sheets and burial

cloths for the body of Jesus, while Nikodemus bought

about one hundred pounds of the spices, which the

Jews were accustomed to use in the burial of distin

guished men (Matth. 27, 59). Provided with these and

with other necessaries they took their way to Calvary.

They were accompanied by their servants and some other

pious and devout persons, in whom likewise the blood

shed for all by the crucified God had produced its salu

tary effects.

733. They approached most Holy Mary, who, in the

company of saint John and the holy women, stood in

inconceivable sorrow at the foot of the Cross. Instead

of a salute, their sorrow at the sight of so painful a

spectacle as that of the divine Crucified, was roused to

such vehemence and bitterness, that Joseph and Niko

demus remained for a time prostrate at the feet of the

Queen and all of them at the foot of the Cross without

speaking a word. All of them wept and sighed most bit

terly until the invincible Queen raised them from the

ground and animated and consoled them; whereupon

they saluted Her in humble compassion. The most ob-

706 CITY OF GOD

servant Mother thanked them kindly, especially for the

service they were about to render to their God and

Savior, and promised them the reward in the name of

Him whose body they were to lay in the tomb. Joseph

of Arimathea answered: "Even now, our Lady, do we

feel in the secret of our hearts the sweet delight of

the divine Spirit, who has moved us to such love, that

we never could merit it or succeed in explaining it."

Then they divested themselves of their mantles and with

their own hands Joseph and Nikodemus placed the lad

ders to the holy Cross. On these they ascended in or

der to detach the sacred body, while the glorious Mother

stood closely by leaning on the arms of saint John and

Mary Magdalen. It seemed to Joseph, that the sorrow

of the heavenly Lady would be renewed, when the sacred

body should be lowered and She should touch it, and

therefore He advised the Apostle to take Her aside in

order to draw away her attention. But saint John,

who knew better the invincible heart of the Queen, an

swered that from the beginning She had stood by to wit

ness the torments of the Lord and that She would not

leave him whom She venerated as her God and loved

as the Son of her Womb.

734. Nevertheless they continued to urge the expe

diency of her retiring for a short time, until they should

lower their Master from the Cross. But the great Lady

responded: "My dearest masters, since I was present,

when my sweetest Son was nailed to the Cross, fear not

to allow me to be present at his taking down; for this

act of piety, though it shall affect my heart with new

sorrow, will, in its very performance, afford a great re

lief." Thereupon they began to arrange for the taking

down of the body. First they detached the crown from

the head, laying bare the lacerations and deep wounds

THE TRANSFIXION 707

it had caused. They handed it down with great rever

ence and amid abundant tears, placing it in the hands

of the sweetest Mother. She received it prostrate on

her knees, in deepest adoration bathed it with her tears,

permitting the sharp thorns to wound her virginal

countenance in pressing it to her face. She asked

the eternal Father to inspire due veneration toward

the sacred thorns in those Christians, who should obtain

possession of them in future times.

735. In imitation of the Mother, saint John with the

pious women and the other faithful there present, also

adored it ; and this they also did with the nails, handing

them first to most holy Mary for veneration and after

ward showing their own reverence. Then the great

Lady placed Herself on her knees and held the unfolded

cloth in her outstretched arms ready to receive the dead

body of her Son. In order to assist Joseph and Niko-

demus, saint John supported the head, and Mary Mag

dalen the feet, of Christ and thus they tearfully and

reverently placed Him into the arms of his sweetest

Mother. This was to Her an event of mixed sorrow

and consolation; for in seeing Him thus wounded and

all his beauty disfigured beyond all children of men

(Ps. 44, 3), the sorrows of her most chaste heart were

again renewed; and in holding Him in her arms and

at her breast, her incomparable sorrow was rejoiced and

her love satiated by the possession of her Treasure.

She looked upon Him with supreme worship and rev

erence, shedding tears of blood. In union with Her, as

He rested in her arms, all the multitude of her attend

ant angels worshipped Him, although unseen by all

others except Mary. Then saint John first, and after

him all those present in their turn, adored the sacred

Body. The most prudent Mother, seated on the ground,

708 CITY OF GOD

in the meanwhile held Him in her arms in order that

they might satisfy their devotion.

736. In all these proceedings our great Queen acted

with such heavenly wisdom and prudence, that She ex

cited the admiration of the angels and men; for all her

words were full of the deepest significance, the most

winning affection and compassion for her deceased Son,

full of tenderness in her lamenting, and full of mys

tery in sentiment and meaning. Her sorrow exceeded

all that could ever be felt by mortals. She moved the

hearts to compassion and tears. She enlightened all in

the understanding of the sacrament now transpiring

under their hands. Above all, without failing in the

least of her duties, She preserved her humble dignity

and serenity of countenance in the midst of her heart

rending affliction. With uniform adaptation to the cir

cumstances She spoke to her beloved Son, to the eternal

Father, to the angels, to the bystanders, and to the whole

human race, for whose Redemption the Lord had under

gone his Passion and Death. I will not detain myself

in particularizing the most prudent and sorrowful words

of the Lady on this occasion; for Christian piety will

be able to conceive many of them, and I cannot stay to

enumerate all these mysteries.

737. Some time passed during which the sorrowful

Mother held at her breast the dead Jesus, and as evening

was far advancing, saint John and Joseph besought Her

to allow the burial of her Son and God to proceed. The

most prudent Mother yielded; and they now embalmed

the sacred body, using all the hundred pounds of the

spices and the aromatic ointments brought by Niko-

demus. Thus anointed the deified body was placed on

a bier, in order to be carried to the sepulchre. The hea

venly Queen, most attentive in her zealous love, called

THE TRANSFIXION 709

from heaven many choirs of angels, who, together with

those of her guard, should accompany the burial of

their Creator. Immediately they descended from on

high in shapes visible to their Queen and Lady, though

not to the rest. A procession of heavenly spirits was

formed and another of men, and the sacred body was

borne along by saint John, Joseph, Nikodemus and the

centurion, who had confessed the Lord and now as

sisted at his burial. They were followed by the blessed

Mother, by Mary Magdalen and the rest of the women

disciples. Besides these a large number of the faithful

assisted, for many had been moved by the divine light

and had come to Calvary after the lance-thrust. All

of them, in silence and in tears, joined the procession.

They proceeded toward a nearby garden, where Joseph

had hewn into the rock a new grave, in which nobody

had as yet been buried or deposited (John 19, 41). In

this most blessed sepulchre they placed the sacred body

of Jesus. Before they closed it up with the heavy stone,

the devout and prudent Mother adored Christ anew,

causing the admiration of men and angels. They imi

tated Her, all of them adoring the crucified Savior now

resting in his grave; thereupon they closed the sepul

chre with the stone, which, according to the Evangelist,

was very heavy (Matth. 27, 60).

738. At the same time the graves, which had opened

at the Death of Christ, were again closed; for among

other mysteries of their opening up, was this, that these

graves as it were unsealed themselves in order to receive

Him, whom the Jews had repudiated, when He was

alive and their Benefactor. At the command of the

Queen many angels remained to guard the sepulchre,

where She had left her heart. In the same order and

silence, in which they had come, they now returned to

710 CITY OF GOD

Calvary. The heavenly Mistress of all virtues ap

proached the holy Cross and worshipped it in deepest

reverence. In this Joseph and all the rest of the mourn

ers followed Her. It was already late and the sun had

sunk, when the great Lady betook Herself from Calvary

to the house of the Cenacle in the company of the faith

ful. Having brought Her to the Cenacle, saint John,

the Marys and the others took leave of Her with many

tears and sighs and asked for her benediction. The

most humble and prudent Lady thanked them for their

service to her divine Son and the consolation afforded

Her; She permitted them to depart with many hidden

and interior favors and with the blessing of her most

amiable and kindest heart.

739. The Jews, confused and disturbed by the events,

went to Pilate on the morning of the sabbath and asked

him for soldiers to guard the sepulchre; for Christ, this

seducer, they said, had openly announced, that after

three days He would arise; hence his disciples might

steal the body and then say that He had arisen. Pilate

yielded to this malicious measure and gave them the

guard they desired, which they stationed at the sepul

chre (Matth. 28, 12). But the perfidious priests merely

wished to palliate &gt; the event, which they feared would

really happen, as was manifest afterwards, when they

bribed the soldiers of the guard to testify, that Jesus

had not arisen, but had been stolen by the disciples. As

no counsel will prevail against God (Prov. 21, 30), the

Resurrection of Christ became only so much the more

public and was the more fully confirmed.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

740. My daughter, the lance-thrust which my blessed

Son received in his side, was cruel and very painful only

THE TRANSFIXION 711

to me; but its effects and mysteries are most sweet to

those souls who know how to taste its sweetness. It

was a great affliction to me; but whoever meets with

this mysterious favor will find it a great relief and con

solation in his sorrows. In order that thou mayest un

derstand this and participate in it, thou must know, that

my Son and Lord, on account of his most ardent love

for men, in addition to the wounds of the feet and hands,

wished to open the wound of his heart, the seat of love,

in order that through this port the souls might enter

and there receive refuge and relief. This is the only

retreat which I wish thee to seek during the time of thy

banishment, and which thou must consider as thy habita

tion upon earth. There thou wilt find the conditions

and laws of love for imitating me and learn how for

injuries thou must return blessings to all who commit

them against thee and thine, just as thou hast seen me

do, when I was grieved by the wounding of the side

of my dead Son. I assure thee, my dearest, that thou

canst not do anything more adapted to the obtaining of

the efficacious graces from the Almighty. The prayer,

which thou offerest in a forgiving spirit, is powerful

not only for thy own good, but for the good of the

one that offends thee; for the kind heart of my Son is

easily moved, when He sees that creatures imitate Him

in pardoning offenders and in praying for them; for

they thereby participate in his most ardent charity

manifested on the Cross. Write this doctrine in thy

heart and in imitation of me practice this virtue, of

which I thought so highly. Through this wound look

upon the heart of Christ thy Spouse and upon me,

sweetly and ardently loving in it thy enemies and all

creatures.

741. Consider also the anxious and ever ready provi-

712 CITY OF GOD

dence of the Most High in coming to the aid of the

creatures, that call to Him in true confidence. This

thou hast seen in my behalf, when I found myself af

flicted and at a loss concerning the proper burial of

my divine Son. In order to come to my assistance in

this plight, the Lord showed his sweet love by moving

the hearts of Joseph and Nikodemus and of the other

faithful to assist me in burying Him. By their oppor

tune help I was so much consoled in this tribulation,

that on account of their behavior and my prayer the

Most High filled them with wonderful influences of the

Divinity, by which they were regaled during the time

of taking Jesus from the Cross and his burial; and

from that time on these faithful were enlightened and

filled with the mysteries of the Redemption. This is

the admirable disposition of the sweet and powerful

providence of God, that in order to bind Himself to do

good to some of his creatures, He sends affliction upon

others, thus giving an occasion for the practice of benevo

lence, so that at the same time those in necessity may be

benefited. Thus the benefactor, on account of the good

work he does and on account of the prayer of the poor, is

rewarded by receiving graces of which he otherwise would

not be worthy. The Father of mercies, who inspires

and assists the good work done, afterwards pays for it

as if it were due in justice. For we can correspond to

his inspirations merely according to our insignificant

abilities, while all that is really good, comes entirely

from his hands (James 1, 17).

742. Consider also the equity maintained by this

Providence in compensating the injuries received in pa

tient suffering. For after my divine Son had suffered

death amid the contempt, dishonor and blasphemies of

men, the Most High at once provided for an honorable

THE TRANSFIXION 713

burial and moved many to confess Him as the true God

and Redeemer, to proclaim Him as holy, innocent and

just, and, at the very time when they had finished their

frightful crucifixion, to adore Him as the Son of God.

Even his enemies were made to feel within themselves

the horror and confusion of their sin in persecuting Him.

Although these benefits availed not all men, yet all of

them were effects of the innocent Death of the Lord.

I also concurred in my prayers, in order that the Lord

might be acknowledged and honored by those known

to me.

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN CONSOLED SAINT PETER

AND THE OTHER APOSTLES; HOW PRUDENTLY SHE

ACTED AFTER THE BURIAL OF HER SON J HOW SHE SAW

HIS DIVINE SOUL DESCEND TO THE LIMBO OF THE HOLY

PATRIARCHS.

743. The fullness of wisdom in the soul of our great

Queen and Lady amid all her sorrows permitted no de

fect or remissness in noticing and attending to all the

duties of each occasion and at all times. By this heav

enly foresight She met her obligations and practiced

the highest and most eminent of all the virtues. As I

have said, the Queen retired, after the burial of Christ,

to the house of the Cenacle. Remaining in the hall of

the last Supper in the company of saint John, the

Marys, and the other women who had followed Christ

from Galilee, She spoke to them and the Apostle, thank

ing them in profound humility and abundant tears for

persevering with Her up to this time throughout the

Passion of her beloved Son and promising them in his

name the reward of having followed Him with so much

constancy and devotion. At the same time She offered

Herself as a servant and as a friend to those holy wo

men. All of them with Saint John acknowledged this

great favor, kissed her hands and asked for her blessing.

They also begged her to take some rest and some bodily

refreshment. But the Queen answered: "My rest and 1

my consolation shall be to see my Son and Lord arisen

from the dead. Do you, my dearest friends, satisfy

714

THE TRANSFIXION 715

your wants according to your necessities, while I retire

alone with my Son."

744. Thereupon She retired with saint John and being

with him alone, She fell upon her knees and said: "Do

thou not forget the words which my Son spoke to us on

the Cross. He condescended to call thee my son, and

me thy mother. Thou art my master, art priest of the

Most High; and on account of this dignity, it is meet

that I obey thee in all that I am to do; and from this

hour I wish that thou order and command me in all

things, remembering that I shall always be thy servant

and that all my joy shall be to serve thee as such until

my death." This the Lady said with many tears. And

among many other things, the Apostle said : "My Mis

tress and Mother of the Redeemer and Lord, I am the

one who should be subject to thy authority, for the name

of a son implies devotion and subjection to his mother.

He that has made me priest, has made Thee his Mother

and was subject to thy authority, though He was the

Creator of the universe (Luke 2, 51). It is reasonable

that I should likewise be so, and that I labor with all my

powers to make myself worthy of the office He has con

ferred upon me, to serve Thee as thy son, for which I

would desire to be rather an angel than a creature of

earth." This answer of the Apostle was most appropri

ate; but it did not avail to overcome the humility of

the Mother of virtues, who answered: "My son John,

my consolation shall be to obey thee as my superior,

since such thou art. In this life I must always have a

superior, to whom I can render my will in obedience :

for this purpose thou art the minister of the Most High,

and as my son thou owest me this as a consolation in

my solitude." "Let then thy will be done, my Mother,"

said saint John, "for m this lies my own security."

716 CITY OF GOD

Without further answer the heavenly Mother then asked

permission to remain alone in meditating on the mys

teries of her divine Son; and She asked him also to

provide some refreshment for the holy women, who

had accompanied Her, and that he assist them and con

sole them. She reserved only the Marys, because they

wished to persevere in their fast until they should see

the Lord arisen; and She asked saint John to allow

them to fulfill their pious desire.

745. Saint John then parted from Her in order to

console the Marys and to execute the commands of the

great Lady. Having attended to their wants, these pious

women all retired to spend that night in sorrowful and

mournful meditation concerning the mysteries of the

Lord s Passion. In such heavenly wisdom the blessed

Mary labored amid the floods of her anxieties and af

flictions, without ever forgetting the least point of the

most perfect obedience, humility, charity and prudent

foresight for all that was necessary. She did not for

get to attend to the necessities of these pious women,

nor did She on their account forget anything that was

necessary to the exercise of the highest perfection in

Herself. She approved of the fast of the Marys as be

ing strong and fervent in their love; and She took

heed of the weakness of the others. She instructed the

Apostle in his duties toward Herself and, proceeded in

all things as the Instructress of perfection and the Mis

tress of grace. All this She did when the waters of

tribulation had entered to her very soul (Ps. 68, 2).

Then, remaining alone in her retreat, She let loose the

impetuous floods of her afflicted love and permitted Her

self to be possessed interiorly and exteriorly by the bit

terness of her soul. She renewed in her mind the rec

ollection of her divine Son s frightful death; the mys-

THE TRANSFIXION 717

teries of his life, his preaching and his miracles, the

infinite value of the Redemption; the new Church

which He had founded and adorned with the riches of

the Sacraments and the treasures of grace; the happi

ness of the human race, now so copiously and gloriously

redeemed; the inestimable fortune of the predestined,

who should really obtain that happiness; the dreadful

misfortune of the reprobate, who by their own fault

would make themselves unworthy of the eternal glory,

merited for them by her Son.

746. In the deep consideration of these high and hid

den sacraments the great Lady passed that whole night,

weeping and sighing, praising and glorifying the works

of her divine Son, his Passion, his hidden judgments, and

the rest of the high mysteries of divine wisdom and un

searchable providence of the Lord. All of them, as

the Mother of true wisdom, She contemplated and un

derstood, conferring sometimes with the holy angels, at

others with the Lord himself concerning what the divine

influences caused Her to feel in her own purest heart.

On the following sabbath morning, after four o clock,

saint John entered to console the sorrowful Mother.

Falling on her knees before him, She asked him for his

blessing, as from her superior and a priest. Her new

son on his part asked it of Her with tears in his eyes,

and thus they gave their blessing one to the other. The

heavenly Queen begged saint John to meet saint Peter,

who was looking for him on the way to the city. She

ordered saint John to receive and console him kindly,

and bring him to her presence. The same he was to do

with the other Apostles, giving them hope of pardon and

offering them her friendship. Saint John issued from

the Cenacle and shortly met saint Peter, who, full of

shame and in tears, was timidly seeking the presence of

3-47

718 CITY OF GOD

the great Queen. He had just come from the cave,

where he had bewept his denials; but he was now con

soled by saint John and encouraged by the message

from the heavenly Mother. Then these two went in

search of the other Apostles. Having found some they

together betook themselves to the Cenacle, hoping for

pardon. Saint Peter entered first and alone to the pres

ence of the Mother of grace, and falling at her feet, he

said with great sorrow: "I have sinned, Lady, I have

sinned before my God, and have offended my Master

and Thee!" He could not speak another word, further

speech being stifled with tearful sobs and sighs which

came from the depths of his oppressed heart.

747. The most prudent Virgin, seeing Peter prostrate

on the ground and considering him on the one hand as

doing penance for sins so recently committed, and on

the other hand as the head of the church, chosen by her

divine Son as his vicar, did not deem it proper to pros

trate Herself before the pastor, who had just denied

his Master; but neither would her humility suffer Her

to withhold the reverence due to his office. In order to

conform her action to both these circumstances, She re

solved to show him proper reverence without disclosing

her motive. For this purpose, She fell on her knees to

do him reverence, at the same time concealing her inten

tion by saying: "Let us ask pardon for thy guilt from

my Son and thy Master." She prayed for him, revived

his hope by reminding him of the merciful behavior of

the Lord in regard to well-known sinners, and pointing

out his own obligation as head of the apostolic college

to give the example of constancy in the confession of

the faith. By these and other arguments of great force

and sweetness She confirmed Peter in the hope of par

don. Then also the other Apostles presented themselves,

THE TRANSFIXION 719

prostrating themselves before the most blessed Mary

and asking pardon for their cowardice in forsaking her

divine Son during his sufferings. They wept bitterly

over their sin, being moved to greater sorrow by the

presence of this Mother so full of sorrowful pity. Her

wonderfully sweet countenance caused in them divine

movements of contrition for their sins and of love of

their Master. The great Lady raised them up and en

couraged them, promising them the pardon they sought

and her intercession to obtain it. Then all of them in

their turn related what had happened to each in his

flight. Though the blessed Lady knew all even to the

last particulars concerning these events, She heard them

all kindly, taking occasion from what they said to touch

their hearts and confirm them in their faith in their

Redeemer and Master and of arousing in them divine

love. In this the heavenly Lady completely succeeded;

for they all went away from this conference burning

with new fervor and justified by new increase of graces.

748. These were the occupations of the heavenly

Queen during a part of the sabbath. At the approach

of evening She again retired, leaving the Apostles now

renewed in spirit and full of consolation and joy in the

Lord, yet also full of grief for the Passion of their

Master. In her retirement during this evening the great

Lady contemplated the doings of the most holy soul of

her Son after it left the sacred body. For from the

first the blessed Mother knew that the soul of Christ,

united to the Divinity, descended to limbo in order to

release the holy Fathers from the subterranean prison,

where they had been detained since the death of the

first just man that had died in expectance of the advent

of the Redeemer of the whole human race. In order

to speak about this mystery, which is one of the articles

720 CITY OF GOD

of faith pertaining to the most sacred humanity of

Christ our Lord, it seemed best to mention that which

has been given me to understand about this limbo and

its situation. I say then, that the diameter of the

earth s sphere, passing through the centre from one sur

face to the other, measures two thousand, five hundred

and two leagues; and from the surface to the centre,

one thousand, two hundred and fifty-one leagues; and

according to the diameter is to be calculated the cir

cumference of this globe. In the centre is the hell of

the damned, as in the heart of the earth. This hell is

a chaotic cavern, which contains many darksome dwell

ings for diverse punishments, all of them dreadful and

terrible. All of these together form a vast globe like

a huge round jar, with an opening or mouth of vast

expansion. In this horrible dungeon filled with con

fusion and torments were the demons and all the

damned, and shall be there for all eternity, as long as

God is God; for in hell there is no redemption (Matth.

25, 41).

749. To one side of hell is purgatory, where the

souls of the just are purged and where they cleanse

themselves, if they have not satisfied for their faults in

this life, or have not departed from this earthly life

entirely free from the defects incapacitating them for

the beatific vision. This cavern is also large, but not

so large as hell; and though there are severe punish

ments in purgatory, they have no connection with those

of hell. To the other side is limbo with two different

divisions : The one for the children, who die unbaptized

and tainted only with original sin, without either good

or bad works of their own election. The other served

as a retreat for the just, who had already satisfied for

their sins; for they could not enter heaven, nor enjoy

THE TRANSFIXION 721

the vision of God until the Redemption of man was

accomplished and until Christ our Savior should open

the gates of heaven closed by the sin of Adam (Ps.

23, 9). This cavern is likewise smaller than hell, and

has no connection with it, nor are there in it the pains

of the senses like in purgatory. For it was destined

for the souls already cleansed in purgatory and implied

only the absence of beatific vision or pain of privation;

there also stayed all those who died in the state of

grace until the death of the Redeemer. This is the

place to which Christ s soul descended with the Divinity

and which we refer to in saying that He descended into

hell. For the word "hell" may be used to signify any

of the infernal regions in the depths of the earth, though

commonly we apply it only to the hell of the demons

and the damned. This is the most notable meaning

of this word, just as "heaven" ordinarily signifies the

empyrean, the habitation of the saints, where they are

to dwell forever, while the damned remain forever in

hell. The other parts of hell have also the more par

ticular names of purgatory and limbo. After the final

judgment heaven and hell only are to be inhabited,

since purgatory shall become unnecessary and since even

the infants shall be transported to another dwelling-

place.

750. To this cavern of limbo then the most holy soul

of Christ our Lord betook itself in the company of

innumerable angels, who gave glory, fortitude and

Divinity to their victorious and triumphant King. In

accordance with his greatness and majesty they com

manded the portals of this ancient prison to be opened,

in order that the King of glory, powerful in battles

and Lord of virtues, might find them unlocked and

open at his entrance. At their command some of the

722

CITY OF GOD

rocks of the passage were rent and shattered; although

this was not really necessary, since the King and his

army were immaterial spirits. By the presence of the

most holy Soul this obscure cavern was converted into

a heaven and was filled with a wonderful splendor; and

to the souls therein contained was imparted the clear

vision of the Divinity. In one instant they passed from

the state of long-deferred hope to the possession of

glory, and from darkness to the inaccessible light, which

they now began to enjoy. All of them recognized their

true God and Redeemer, and gave him thanks and glory,

breaking forth in canticles of praise saying: "The Lamb

that was slain is worthy to receive power and Divinity,

and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory and

benediction. Thou hast redeemed us, Lord, in thy

blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and

nation; and hast made us to our God a kingdom and

priests, and we shall reign on the earth (Apoc. 59, 12).

Thine is, O Lord, the power, thine the reign, and thine

is the glory of thy works." Then the Lord commanded

the angels to bring all the souls in purgatory, and this

was immediately done. As if in earnest of the human

Redemption they were absolved then and there by the

Redeemer from the punishments still due to them, and

they were glorified with the other souls of the just by

the beatific vision. Thus on that day of the presence

of the King were depopulated the prisonhouses of both

limbo and purgatory.

751. But for the damned in hell this was a terrible

day; because by the disposition of the Most High all

of them were made to see and feel the descent of the

Redeemer into limbo, and also the holy Fathers and the

just were made witnesses of the terror caused by this

mystery to the demons and the damned. The demons

THE TRANSFIXION 723

were yet terrorized and oppressed by the ruin which

they had undergone on Mount Calvary, as related above ;

and when they heard (according to their manner of

hearing and speaking) the voices of the angels advanc

ing before their King to limbo, they were confounded

and terrified anew. Like serpents pursued, they hid

themselves and clung to the most remote caverns of

hell. The damned were seized with confusion upon

confusion, becoming still more deeply conscious of their

aberration and of the loss of salvation, now secured to

the just. As Judas and the impenitent thief had so

recently and signally shared this misfortune, so their

torments were greater; and the demons were the more

highly incensed against them. Then and there the in

fernal spirits resolved to persecute and torment more

grievously the Catholics, and chastise more severely those

who should deny or repudiate the Catholic faith. For

they concluded that these merited greater punishment

than the infidels, to whom it is not preached.

752. Of all these mysteries and of other secrets,

which I cannot mention, the great Lady of the world

had a clear knowledge and vision from her retreat.

Although this knowledge, in the higher parts of her

being or in her soul where this knowledge originated,

caused Her exquisite joy; yet She did not permit it

to overflow in her virginal body, in her senses or in

ferior faculties, to which it should naturally have been

communicated. On the contrary, when She felt that

some of this joy overflowed to the inferior parts of

her being, She besought the eternal Father to retard

this overflow; for She did not wish to permit such en

joyment to her body, as long as that of her divine Son

rested in the grave and was not yet glorified. Such a

careful and faithful love was that of the blessed Mother

724 CITY OF GOD

toward her Son and Lord, that She strove to be a

living, true and perfect image of the deified humanity

in all respects. Attending thus minutely to the smallest

particulars, She was rejoiced exceedingly in her soul,

while She still felt the sorrows and depression of her

body in imitation of the state of Christ our Savior.

During this vision She composed songs of praise mag

nifying the mysteries of this triumph and the most lov

ing and wise providence of the Redeemer, who as an

affectionate Father and omnipotent King wished, in his

own Person, to take possession of the new reign, given

to Him by the Father, and who now rescued his sub

jects by his own presence in order that they might com

mence immediately to enjoy the reward merited for

them. For these reasons, and others recognized by Her

in this sacrament, She rejoiced and glorified the Lord

as his Helper and as the Mother of the Conqueror.

INSTRUCTIO T WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

753. My daughter, attend to the teaching of this

chapter as being the most appropriate and necessary for

the state assigned to thee by the Most High and for

the correspondence in love which thou owest Him. This

requires of thee, that in the midst of thy labors and

intercourse with the creatures, whether in commanding

or governing as superior, or obeying as a subject,

thou do not permit thyself by any of these duties or

other exterior occupations to neglect the attention due

to the presence of thy Savior in the secret and higher

parts of thy soul; nor withdraw thyself from the light

of the holy Spirit and his constant communications.

For my divine Son seeks, in the secrets of thy heart,

THE TRANSFIXION 725

such ways as are hidden to the demon and to which

thy passions have no access; for they lead to the sanc

tuary, whither the Highpriest alone can enter (Heb.

9, 7) and where the soul enjoys the hidden embraces

of its King and Spouse, as soon as it prepares for Him

his chamber of rest with a single and eager mind. There

shalt thou find thy Lord propitious, the Most High,

liberal, thy Creator, merciful, thy sweet Spouse and

Redeemer, loving; then wilt thou not fear the powers

of darkness, nor the effects of sin, which are unknown

in that region of light and truth. But the soul dis

ordered by anxiety for the visible things, or careless

in the observance of the divine law will close up these

ways; it will be embarrassed by the disorderly attach

ments of the passions; it will be hindered by useless

cares, and much more by restlessness of mind and by

the want of serenity and interior peace; for the heart

must be untrammeled, pure and detached from all that

is not truth and light.

754. Thou hast well understood and experienced this

doctrine, and moreover I have shown it to thee in prac

tice as in the clearest mirror, namely in my behavior

amid the sorrows, sighs and afflictions of the Passion

of my divine Son, and amid the solicitous cares, occu

pations and watchings during his burial and during the

assistance rendered to the Apostles and the holy women.

During my whole life thou hast seen me act in the same

manner, uniting the works of the spirit with exterior

occupations without friction or hindrance. In order

then to imitate me in all this as I require, it is necessary,

that neither by the unavoidable intercourse with crea

tures, nor by the labors of thy state of life, nor by the

hardships of this life of exile, nor by the temptations

or malice of the demon, thou permit thy heart to desire

726 CITY OF GOD

anything that will hinder thee, or pay attention to any

thing which destroys thy recollection. And I warn

thee, my dearest, that if thou art not very vigilant and

careful in this matter, thou wilt lose much time, abuse

immense and extraordinary blessings, frustrate the high

and holy purposes of the Lord, and wilt grieve me and

the angels; since all of Us desire that thy conversation

be with Us. Thou wilt lose the quiet of thy spirit and

the interior consolations, many degrees of grace, the

desired increase of divine love, and finally the most

copious reward in heaven. So much does it concern

thee to listen to me and obey me in all that I teach thee

with a Mother s kindness. Consider it, my daughter,

ponder it, and bend upon it thy mind, so that through

my intercession and by divine grace thou mayest put

it into practice. Take heed also to imitate me in the

faithful love, by which I abstained from the sweets of

inferior delights in imitation of my Master. Do thou

praise Him for this and for the blessings He brought

to the saints in limbo, when his most holy soul de

scended to free them and fill them with joy at his sight,

all of which were operations of his infinite love.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR AND HIS

APPARITION TO HIS MOST BLESSED MOTHER IN COM

PANY WITH THE HOLY FATHERS OF LIMBO.

755. The divine soul of Christ our Redeemer re

mained in limbo from half past three of Friday after

noon, until after three of the Sunday morning following.

During this hour He returned to the Sepulchre as the

victorious Prince of the angels and of the saints, whom

He had delivered from those nether prisons as spoils

of his victory and as an earnest of his glorious triumph

over the chastised and prostrate rebels of hell. In the

sepulchre were many angels as its guard, venerating the

sacred body united to the Divinity. Some of them,

obeying the command of their Queen and Mistress, had

gathered the relics of the sacred blood shed by her

divine Son, the particles of flesh scattered about, the

hair torn from his divine face and head, and all else

that belonged to the perfection and integrity of his

most sacred humanity. On these the Mother of pru

dence lavished her solicitous care. The angels took

charge of these relics, each one filled with joy at being

privileged to hold the particles, which he was able to

secure. Before any change was made, the body of the

Redeemer was shown to the holy Fathers, in the same

wounded, lacerated and disfigured state in which it was

left by the cruelty of the Jews. Beholding Him thus

disfigured in death, the Patriarchs and Prophets and

other saints adored Him and again confessed Him as

727

728 CITY OF GOD

the incarnate Word, who had truly taken upon Himself

our infirmities and sorrows (Is. 53, 4) and paid abun

dantly our debts, satisfying in his innocence and guilt

lessness for what we ourselves owed to the justice of

the eternal Father. There did our first parents Adam

and Eve see the havoc wrought by their disobedience,

the priceless remedy it necessitated, the immense good

ness and mercy of the Redeemer. As they felt the

effects of his copious Redemption in the glory of their

souls, they praised anew the Omnipotent and Saint of

saints, who had with such marvelous wisdom wrought

such a salvation.

756. Then, in the presence of all those saints, through

the ministry of those angels, were united to the sacred

body all the relics, which they had gathered, restoring

it to its natural perfection and integrity. In the same

moment the most holy soul reunited with the body,

giving it immortal life and glory. Instead of the wind

ing-sheets and the ointments, in which it had been

buried, it was clothed with the four gifts of glory,

namely: with clearness, impassibility, agility and

subtility (John 19, 40). These gifts overflowed from

the immense glory of the soul of Christ into the sacred

body. Although these gifts were due to it as a natural

inheritance and participation from the instant of its con

ception, because from that very moment his soul was

glorified and his whole humanity was united to the

Divinity; yet they had been suspended in their effects

upon the purest body, in order to permit it to remain

passible and capable of meriting for us our own glory.

In the Resurrection these gifts were justly called into

activity in the proper degree corresponding to the glory

of his soul and to his union with the Divinity. As the

glory of the most holy soul of Christ our Savior is in-

THE TRANSFIXION 729

comprehensible and ineffable to man, it is also impossible

entirely to describe in our words or by our examples

the glorious gifts of his deified body; for in comparison

to its purity, crystal would be obscure. The light in

herent and shining forth from his body so far exceeds

that of the others, as the day does the night, or as

many suns the light of one star; and all the beauty of

creatures, if it were joined, would appear ugliness in

comparison with his, nothing else being comparable to

it in all creation.

757. The excellence of these gifts in the Resurrection

were far beyond the glory of his Transfiguration or

that manifested on other occasions of the kind men

tioned in this history. For on these occasions He re

ceived it transitorily and for special purposes, while

now He received it in plenitude and forever. Through

impassibility his body became invincible to all created

power, since no power can ever move or change Him.

By subtility the gross and earthly matter was so puri

fied, that it could now penetrate other matter like a pure

spirit. Accordingly He penetrated through the rocks

of the sepulchre without removing or displacing them,

just as He had issued forth from the womb of his most

blessed Mother. Agility so freed Him from the weight

and slowness of matter, that it exceeded the agility of

the immaterial angels, while He himself could move

about more quickly than they, as shown in his apparitions

to the Apostles and on other occasions. The sacred

wounds, which had disfigured his body, now shone forth

from his hands and feet and side so refulgent and

brilliant, that they added a most entrancing beauty and

charm. In all this glory and heavenly adornment the

Savior now arose from the grave; and in the presence

of the saints and Patriarchs He promised universal

730 CITY OF GOD

resurrection in their own flesh and body to all men,

and that they moreover, as an effect of his own Resur

rection, should be similarly glorified. As an earnest

and as a pledge of the universal resurrection, the Lord

commanded the souls of many saints there present to

reunite with their bodies and rise up to immortal life.

Immediately this divine command was executed, and

their bodies arose, as is mentioned by saint Matthew,

in anticipation of this mystery (Matthew 27, 52).

Among them was saint Anne, saint Joseph and saint

Joachim, and others of the ancient Fathers and Patri

archs, who had distinguished themselves in the faith

and hope of the Incarnation, and had desired and

prayed for it with greater earnestness to the Lord. As

a reward for their zeal, the resurrection and glory of

their bodies was now anticipated.

758. O how powerful and wonderful, how victorious

and strong, appeared even now this Lion of Juda, the

son of David! None ever woke from sleep so quickly

as Christ from death (Ps. 3, 4). At his imperious

voice the dry and scattered bones of the ancient dead

were joined together, and the flesh, which had long ago

turned to dust, was united to the bones, renewed their

former life, and adorned by the gifts of glory com

municated to it by the life-restoring soul. In one instant

all these saints gathered around their Savior, more

refulgent and brilliant than the sun, pure, transparent,

beauteous and agile, fit to follow Him everywhere and

by their own good fortune they now confirmed the

prophecy of Job, that, in our own flesh and with our

own eyes, and not with those of others, we shall see

our Redeemer for our consolation (Job 19, 26). Of

all these mysteries the great Queen of heaven was aware

and She participated in them from her retreat in the

THE TRANSFIXION 731

Cenacle. In the same instant in which the most holy

soul of Christ entered and gave life to his body the joy

of her immaculate soul, which I mentioned in the fore

going chapter as being restrained and, as it were, with

held, overflowed into her immaculate body. And this

overflow was so exquisite in its effects, that She was

transformed from sorrow to joy, from pain to delight,

from grief to ineffable jubilation and rest. It happened

that just at this time the Evangelist John, as he had

done on the previous morning, stepped in to visit Her

and console Her in her bitter solitude, and thus un

expectedly, in the midst of splendor and glory, met Her,

whom he had before scarcely recognized on account of

her overwhelming sorrow. The Apostle now beheld

Her with wonder and deepest reverence and concluded

that the Lord had risen, since his blessed Mother was

thus transfigured with joy.

759. In this new joy and under the divine influences

of her supernatural vision the great Lady began to pre

pare Herself for the visit of the Lord, which was near

at hand. While eliciting acts of praise, and in her

canticles and prayers, She immediately felt within Her

a new kind of jubilation and celestial delight, reaching

far beyond the first joy, and correspondng in a won

derful manner to the sorrows and tribulations She had

undergone in the Passion; and this new favor was dif

ferent and much more exalted than the joys overflowing

naturally from her soul into her body. Moreover She

perceived within Herself another, third and still more

different effect, implying new divine favors. Namely

She felt infused into her being the heavenly light

heralding the advent of beatific vision, which I will not

here explain, since I have descanted on it in the first

part (Part I, No. 620). I merely add here, that the

732 CITY OF GOD

Queen, on this occasion, received these divine influences

more abundantly and in a more exalted degree ; for now

the Passion of Christ had gone before and She had

acquired the merits of this Passion. Hence the conso

lations from the hands of her divine Son corresponded

to the multitude of her sorrows.

760. The blessed Mary being thus prepared, Christ

our Savior, arisen and glorious, in the company of all

the Saints and Patriarchs, made his appearance. The

ever humble Queen prostrated Herself upon the ground

and adored her divine Son; and the Lord raised Her

up and drew Her to Himself. In this contact, which

was more intimate than the contact with the humanity

and the wounds of the Savior sought by Magdalen, the

Virgin Mother participated in an extraordinary favor,

which She alone, as exempt from sin, could merit.

Although it was not the greatest of the favors She

attained on this occasion, yet She could not have re

ceived it without failing of her faculties, if She had not

been previously strengthened by the angels and by the

Lord himself. This favor was, that the glorious body

of the Son so closely united itself to that of his purest

Mother, that He penetrated into it or She into his, as

when, for instance, a crystal globe takes up within itself

the light of the sun and is saturated with the splendor

and beauty of its light. In the same way the body of the

most holy Mary entered into that of her divine Son

by this heavenly embrace; it was, as it were, the portal

of her intimate knowledge concerning the glory of the

most holy soul and body of her Lord. As a consequence

of these favors, constituting higher and higher degrees

of ineffable gifts, the spirit of the Virgin Mother rose

to the knowledge of the most hidden sacraments. In the

midst of them She heard a voice saying to Her: "My

.

THE TRANSFIXION 733

beloved, ascend higher!" (Luke 18, 10). By the power

of these words She was entirely transformed and saw

the Divinity clearly and intuitively, wherein She found

complete, though only temporary, rest and reward for

all her sorrows and labors. Silence alone here is proper,

since reason and language are entirely inadequate to

comprehend or express what passed in the blessed Mary

during this beatific vision, the highest She had until

then enjoyed. Let us celebrate this day in wonder and

praise, with congratulations and loving and humble

thanks for what She then merited for us, and for her

exaltation and joy.

761. For some hours the heavenly Princess continued

to enjoy the essence of God with her divine Son, partici

pating now in his triumph as She had in his torments.

Then by similar degrees She again descended from this

vision and found Herself in the end reclining on the

right arm of the most sacred humanity and regaled in

other ways by the right hand of his Divinity (Cant. 2, 6).

She held sweetest converse with her Son concerning the

mysteries of his Passion and of his glory. In these

conferences She was again inebriated with the wine of

love and charity, which now She drank unmeasured

from the original fount. All that a mere creature can

receive was conferred upon the blessed Mary on this

occasion; for, according to our way of conceiving such

things, the divine equity wished to compensate the in

jury (thus I must call it, because I cannot find a more

proper word), which a Creature so pure and immacu

late had undergone in suffering the sorrows and tor

ments of the Passion. For, as I have mentioned many

times before, She suffered the same pains as her Son,

and now in this mystery She was inundated with a pro

portionate joy and delight.

3-48

734

CITY OF GOD

762. Then, still remaining in her exalted state, the

great Lady turned to the holy Patriarchs and all the

just, recognizing them and speaking to each in suc

cession, praising the Almighty in his liberal mercy to

each one of them. She was filled with an especial de

light in speaking to her parents, saint Joachim and Anne,

with her spouse, saint Joseph, with saint John the Bap

tist, and with them She conversed more particularly

than with the Patriarchs and Prophets and with the

first parents, Adam and Eve. All of them prostrated

themselves before the heavenly Lady, acknowledging

Her as the Mother of the Redeemer of the world, as

the cause of their rescue and the Coadjutrix of their

Redemption. The divine wisdom impelled them thus to

venerate and honor Her. But the Queen of all virtues

and the Mistress of Humility prostrated Herself on the

ground and reverenced the saints according to their due.

This the Lord permitted because the saints, although

they were inferior in grace, were superior in their state

of blessedness, endowed with imperishable and eternal

glory, while the Mother of grace was yet in mortal

life and a pilgrim and had not as yet assumed the state

of fruition. The presence of Christ our Savior con

tinued during all the conference of Mary with the holy

Fathers. The most blessed Mary invited all the angels

and saints there present to praise the Victor over death,

sin and hell. Whereupon all sang new songs, psalms,

hymns of glory and magnificence, until the hour arrived,

when the risen Savior was to appear in other places,

as I shall relate in the following chapter.

THE TRANSFIXION 735

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT LADY, MOST HOLY

MARY, GAVE ME.

763. My daughter, rejoice in thy very anxiety of not

being able to explain in words what thy interior faculties

perceive concerning the exalted mysteries recorded in

thy writing. To acknowledge oneself conquered by such

sovereign sacraments as these must be looked upon as

a victory for creatures, and as redounding to the glory

of God; and in mortal flesh still more so. I felt the

pains of my divine Son, and, although I did not lose

my life, I endured the agonies of death mysteriously;

therefore I experienced in myself also this wonderful

and mystical resurrection to a most exalted state of

grace and activity. The essence of God is infinite; and

although the creature can participate in it so highly, yet

there remains much to understand, love and enjoy. In

order that now thou mayest by the help of thy under

standing trace something of the glory of Christ my Son,-

of my own and of the saints, I wish to give thee some

rules, by which thou canst pass on from the considera

tion of the gifts of the glorified body to those of the

soul. Thou already knowest that the gifts of the soul

are vision, comprehension and fruition, while thou hast

already mentioned those of the body as being: clearness,

impassibility, subtility and agility.

764. Each of these gifts are correspondingly aug

mented in him who in the state of grace performs the

least meritorious work, even if it be no more than re

moving a straw or giving a cup of water for the love

of God (Matth. 10, 42). For each of the most insig

nificant works the creature gains an increase of these

736 CITY OF GOD

gifts; an increase of clearness exceeding many times

the sunlight and added to its state of blessedness; an

increase of impassibility, by which man recedes from

human and earthly corruption farther than what all

created efforts and strength could ever effect in resisting

or separating itself from such infirmity or changeful-

ness; an increase of subtility, by which he advances

beyond all that could offer it resistance and gains new

power of penetration; an increase of agility, surpassing

all the activity of birds, of winds, and all other active

creatures, such as fire and the elements tending to their

centre. From this increase of the gifts of the body

merited by good works, thou wilt understand the aug

mentation of the gifts of the soul; for those of the

body are derived from those of the soul and correspond

with them. In the beatific vision each merit secures

greater clearness and insight into the divine attributes

and perfections than that acquired by all the doctors and

enlightened members of the Church. Likewise the gift

of apprehension, or possession of the divine Object, is

augmented; for the security of the possession of the

highest and infinite Good makes the tranquillity and rest

of its enjoyment more estimable than if the soul pos

sessed all that is precious and rich, desirable and worthy

of attainment in all creation, even if possessed all at

one time. Fruition, the third gift of the soul, on ac

count of the love with which man performs the smallest

acts, so exalts the degrees of fruitional love, that the

greatest love of men here on earth can never be com

pared thereto; nor can the delight resulting therefrom

ever be compared with all the delights of this mortal life.

765. Elevate therefore now thy thoughts, my daugh

ter, and from these wonderful rewards, gained by one

little deed done for God, consider what shall be the lot

THE TRANSFIXION 737

of the saints, who for the love of God have performed

such heroic and magnificent works, and have suffered

such cruel torments and martyrdom as are known in the

Church of Christ. And if these things happen in mere

men, subject to faults and imperfections that retard

merit, imagine, as far as thou canst, the exaltation of

my divine Son. Then thou wilt feel how limited is

human capacity, especially in mortal life, to comprehend

worthily this mystery and to conceive in a becoming

manner such greatness. The most holy soul of my Lord

was united substantially to the Divinity and on account

of this hypostatic union the ocean of his Divinity nec

essarily communicated Itself to his divine and human

personality, beatifying it as participating in the very

essence of God in an ineffable manner. Although his

glory depended not on merits, since it was given to

Him as consequent upon the hypostatical union from

the first instant of his conception in my womb; yet the

works of the thirty-three years of his life, his being

born in poverty, living in labor, loving as a pilgrim,

operating in all the virtues, redeeming the human race,

founding the Church and the doctrines of the faith: all

this demanded, that the glory of his body be measured

by that of his soul. And therefore his greatness is in

effable and immense, to be manifested only in eternal

life. In connection with the magnificent exaltation of

my divine Son, the right hand of the Almighty wrought

also in me effects proportionate to a mere creature, and

in them I forgot all the tribulations and sorrows of the

Passion. Similar was the lot of the Fathers of limbo

and the other saints, when they received their rewards.

I forgot the bitterness and labors I had suffered; for

the great joy drove out pain, though I never lost from

view what my Son had suffered for the human race.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SOME APPARITIONS OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR TO THE MARYS

AND TO THE APOSTLES; THE PRUDENCE OF THE QUEEN

IN LISTENING TO THEIR REPORTS CONCERNING THESE

APPARITIONS OF THE LORD.

766. After Jesus our Savior, arisen and glorified, had

visited and filled with glory his most blessed Mother, He

resolved, as the loving Father and Pastor, to gather the

sheep of his flock, which the scandal of his sufferings

had disturbed and scattered. The holy Patriarchs and

all whom He had rescued from limbo continually re

mained in his company, although they did not manifest

themselves and remained invisible during his apparitions ;

only our great Queen was privileged to see them, know

them and speak to them all during the time intervening

between the Resurrection and the Ascension of her

divine Son. Whenever the Lord did not appear to

others, He remained with his beloved Mother in the

Cenacle; nor did She ever leave this place during all the

forty days. There She enjoyed the presence of the

Redeemer of the world and of the choir of Prophets

and Saints, by whom the King and Queen were attended.

For the purpose of making his Resurrection known to

his Apostles, He began by showing Himself to the

women, not on account of their weakness, but because

they were stronger in their belief and in their hope

of the Resurrection; for this is the reason why they

merited the privilege of being the first to see Him arisen.

767. The Evangelist Mark (Mark 15, 47) mentions

738

THE TRANSFIXION 739

the special notice, which Mary Magdalen and Mary

Joseph took of the place where they had seen the body

of Jesus deposited. Accordingly they, with other holy

women, went forth on the evening of the sabbath from

the Cenacle to the city and bought additional ointments

and spices in order to return, early the following morn

ing, to the sepulchre, and show their veneration by

visiting and anointing the holy body once more. On

the Sunday, entirely ignorant of the grave s having

been sealed and placed under guard by order of Pilate

(Matth. 27, 65), they arose before dawn in order to

execute their pious design. On their way they thought

only of the difficulty of removing the large stone, which

they now remembered had been rolled before the open

ing of the sepulchre; but their love made light of this

hindrance, though they did not know how to remove it.

When they came forth from the house of the Cenacle,

it was yet dark, but before they arrived at the sepulchre

the sun had already dawned and risen; for on that day

the three hours of darkness which had intervened at

the Death of the Savior, were compensated by an earlier

sunrise. This miracle will harmonize the statements of

saint Mark and of saint John, of whom the one says,

that the Marys came after sunrise, and the other that

it was yet dark (Mark 16, 2; John 20, 1); for both

speak truly : That they went forth very early and before

dawn, and that the sun, by its more sudden and accel

erated flight, had already risen at their arrival at the

grave, though they tarried not on the short way. The

sepulchre was in an arched vault, as in a cave, the en

trance to which was covered by a large stone slab.

Within, somewhat to one side and raised from the

ground, was the hollow slab wherein the body of the

Savior rested.

740 CITY OF GOD

768. A little before the Marys thought and spoke

of the difficulty of removing the stone, a violent and

wonderful quaking or trembling of the earth took place;

at the same time an angel of the Lord opened the

sepulchre and cast aside the stone that covered and

obstructed the entrance (Matth. 28, 2). At this noise

and the earthquake the guards of the sepulchre fell pros

trate to the earth, struck motionless with fear and con

sternation, although they did not see the Lord. For the

body of the Lord was no more in the grave; He had

already arisen and issued from the monument before

the angel cast aside the stone. The Marys, though in

some fear, took heart and were encouraged by God to

approach and enter the vault. Near the entrance they

saw the angel who had thrown aside the stone, seated

upon it, refulgent in countenance and in snow-white

garments (Mark 16, 5). He spoke to them saying:

"Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who

was crucified: He is risen, He is not here; behold the

place where they laid Him." The holy women entered,

and seeing the sepulchre vacant they were filled with

grief; for as yet they were more deeply affected at

seeing the Lord absent, than by the words of the angel.

Then they saw two other angels seated at each end of

the slab, who said to them: "Why seek you the Living

with the dead? Remember how He spoke unto you,

when he was yet in Galilee (Luke 26, 4-5), that He

was to rise on the third day. But go, tell his disciples

and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee, there

shall you see Him" (Mark 16, 7).

769. Being thus reminded by the angels the Marys

remembered what their divine Master had said. Assured

of his Resurrection they hastened away from the

sepulchre and gave an account to the eleven Apostles

THE TRANSFIXION 741

and other followers of the Lord. But many of these

were so shaken in their faith and so forgetful of the

words of their Master and Redeemer, that they thought

this story of the holy women a mere hallucination (Luke

24, 11). While the holy women, full of trembling and

joy, related to the Apostles what they had seen, the

sentinels at the grave awoke from their stupor and re

gained the use of their senses. As they saw the sep

ulchre open and emptied of the sacred body, they fled

to give notice of the event to the princes and priests

(Matth. 11, 14). These were cast into great conster

nation and called a meeting in order to determine what

they could do in order to palliate the miracle, which

was so patent that it could not remain hidden. They

concluded to offer to the soldiers much money to induce

them to say that during their sleep the disciples of

Jesus had come and stolen the body from the grave.

The priests, having assured the guards of immunity and

protection, spread this lie among the Jews. Many were

so foolish as to believe it; and there are some in our own

day, who are obstinate and blind enough to give it

credit and who prefer to accept the testimony of wit

nesses, who acknowledged that they were asleep during

the time of which they testify.

770. Although the disciples and Apostles considered

the tale of the Marys mere preposterous talk, saint Peter

and saint John, desirous of convincing themselves with

their own eyes, departed in all haste to the sepulchre,

closely followed by the holy women (John 20, 3).

Saint John arrived first, and without entering saw the

winding-sheets laid to one side. He waited for the

arrival of saint Peter, who, passing the other Apostle,

entered first. Both of them saw that the sacred body

was not in the tomb. Saint John then was assured of

742 CITY OF GOD

what he had begun to believe, when he had seen the

great change in the Queen of heaven, as I have related

in the foregoing chapter, and he then professed his

belief. The two Apostles returned to give an account

of the wonder they had seen in the sepulchre. The Marys

remained in a place apart from the sepulchre and won-

deringly commented on the events. Mary Magdalen,

in great excitement and tears, re-entered the sepulchre

to reconnoitre. Although the Apostles had not seen the

angels, she saw them and they asked her: "Woman,

why dost thou weep?" (John 20, 5). She answered:

"Because they have taken away my Lord; and I know

not where they have laid Him." With this answer she

left the garden where the sepulchre was, and met the

Lord. She did not know Him, but thought it was the

gardener. And the Lord also asked her : "Woman, why

weepest thou ? Whom dost thou seek ?" (John 15). Mag

dalen, ignorant of his being the Lord, answered Him

as if He were the gardener and, without further re

flection, said: "Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell

me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him

away." Then the loving Master said: "Mary," and in

pronouncing her name He permitted Himself to be rec

ognized by the tone of his voice.

671. As soon as Magdalen recognized Jesus she was

aflame with joyous love and aswered saying: "Rabboni,

my Master!" Throwing herself at his feet, she was

about to touch and kiss them, as being used to that

favor. But the Lord prevented her and said: "Do not

touch Me, for I am not yet ascended to my Father

whence I came; but return and tell my brethren, the

Apostles, that I am going to my Father and theirs."

Then Magdalen left, filled with consolation and jubilee.

Shortly she met the other Marys. Scarcely had they

THE TRANSFIXION 743

heard what had happened to her and how she had seen

Jesus arisen from the grave, and while they were yet

standing together conferring with each other in wonder

and tears of joy, He appeared to them and said: "God

save you." They all recognized Him and, as saint

Matthew tells us, they worshipped his sacred feet. The

Lord again commanded them to go to the Apostles and

tell them, that they had seen Him and that they should

go to Galilee, where they should see Him arisen (Matth.

22, 9). Jesus then disappeared and the holy women

hastened to the Cenacle to tell the Apostles all that had

happened to them; but the Apostles continued to hesi

tate in their belief (Luke 24, 11). Then the women

sought the Queen of Heaven in order to tell Her of

the events. Although Mary knew all that had happened

by intellectual vision, She listened to them with admir

able tenderness and prudence. While listening to the

Marys, She took occasion to confirm their faith in the

mysteries and high sacraments of the Incarnation and

in the passages of holy Scriptures pertaining thereto.

But the heavenly Queen did not tell them what had

happened, although She was the Teacher of these faith

ful and devout disciples, just as the Lord was the

Teacher of the Apostles in holy faith.

772. The Evangelists do not state when the Lord

appeared to saint Peter, although saint Luke supposes it ;

but it was after He had appeared to the women. He

appeared to him in private as the head of the Church

and before He appeared to all of the Apostles together

or to any one of them. This happened on that same

day, after the holy women had informed him of his

apparition to them. Soon after also happened the ap

parition of the Lord to the two disciples going that

afternoon to Emmaus, which is related minutely by

744 CITY OF GOD

saint Luke (Luke 24, 13). This town is sixty stadia

from Jerusalem; four Palestinian miles and about two

Spanish leagues. The one of them was called Cleophas

and the other was saint Luke himself. It took place

in the following manner : The two disciples left Jerusa

lem, after they had heard the reports of the women.

On the way they continued to converse about the events

of the Passion, the holiness of their Master and the

cruelty of the Jews. They wondered that the Almighty

should permit so holy and innocent a Man to suffer

such wrongs and torments. The one said: "When was

ever such meekness and gentleness seen?" and the other

coincided, saying: "Who ever saw or heard of such

patience, without a word of complaint or the least sign

of perturbation in outward appearance or bearing? His

doctrine was holy, his life blameless, his words those

of eternal life, his doings for the welfare of all. What

then could the priests see in him to warrant such hatred?"

The other answered: "Truly He was wonderful in all

respects; and no one can deny, that He was a great

Prophet; He performed many miracles, gave sight to

the blind, health to the sick, life to the dead, and con

ferred wonderful benefits upon all. But He said He

would rise on the third day after his Death, which is

today, and this we do not see fulfilled." The other one

replied : "He also said that He would be crucified, and

it was fulfilled to the word" (Matth. 20, 19).

773. In the midst of this and similar conversation

Jesus appeared to them in the habit of a pilgrim and

as one who happened to meet them on the way. He

saluted them and said: "Of what do you speak, for it

seems to Me you are sad?" Cleophas answered: "Art

Thou the only stranger in Jerusalem, that Thou dost

not know what has happened during these days in the

THE TRANSFIXION 745

city?" The Lord said: What has happened, then?"

to which the disciple replied: "Dost thou not know

what the princes and priests have done to Jesus of Naza

reth, a Man holy and powerful in words and deeds ; how

they condemned and crucified him? We had hopes that

He would redeem Israel by rising from the dead; now

the third day has already come, and we do not know

what has happened. And some of the women of our

party have terrified us, since they went early this morn

ing to the sepulchre and did not find the body. They

maintain that they saw some angels who told them that

He had risen. Then some of our associates went to

the grave and found true, what the women had said.

We are going to Emmaus in order to await the drift of

these events." Then the Lord answered: "O foolish

and slow of heart to believe; since you do not under

stand, that it must be so, that Christ suffer all these

pains and so frightful a death in order to enter into his

glory!"

774. Following up these mysteries the divine Master

then explained to them his life and death for the Re

demption of the human race; He interpreted to them

different types of holy Scripture: of the lamb which

Moses commanded to be slain and eaten, after the thresh

olds should have been marked with its blood (Exod. 12,

7) ; the death of the highpriest Aaron (Numb. 20, 23),

the death of Samson through the amours of his spouse

Delila (Judges 16, 30), many psalms of David pointing

out the wicked council, the crucifixion and the division of

his garments (Ps. 21, 17, 19; 15, 10), and that his body

shall not see corruption; what is said in Wisdom (Wis

dom 2, 20) and more clearly in Isaias (Is. 53, 2) and

Jeremias (11, 19) concerning his Passion; namely, that

He should appear as a leper and a man of sorrows,

746 CITY OF GOD

that He should be borne to slaughter like a lamb without

opening his mouth; and in Zacharias, who saw Him

pierced with many wounds; and many other passages of

the holy Prophets, which clearly manifest the mysteries

of his life and death. By the fervor of these arguments

the disciples were gradually enkindled with love and

enlightened in the faith, which they had permitted to be

obscured. And when they were already near to the

castle of Emmaus, the divine Master gave them to

understand, that He was to pass on in his journey; but

they eagerly begged Him to stay with them, as it was

getting late in the evening. The Lord yielded and,

invited by the disciples, sat down to supper with them

according to the manner of the Jews. The Lord took

the bread, blessing it and breaking it as usual, He im

parted to them, with it, the certainty that He was their

Redeemer and Master.

775. They knew Him, because He opened the eyes

of their souls. In the same instant He disappeared from

their bodily eyes and they saw Him no more. But they

were left in a state of wonder and full of joy, conferring

with each other about the ardors of charity they had felt

on the way, when He had conversed with them and ex

plained to them the Scriptures. Without delay they

returned to Jerusalem (Luke 24, 33), although night

had already set in. They went to the house, where the

rest of the Apostles had secreted themselves for fear of

the Jews and they found them discussing the news of

the risen Savior and how He had already appeared to

Peter. To this the two disciples added all that had

happened to them on the way to Emmaus, and how they

had recognized the Savior at the breaking of the bread

in the castle of Emmaus. At this meeting was present

also saint Thomas, who, although hearing the argu-

THE TRANSFIXION 747

ments of the Apostles and the testimony of saint Peter

asserting that he had seen the Master risen, refused

credit to the three disciples and the -women, persevering

in doubt and unbelief. In a somewhat hasty manner,

caused by his incredulity, he left their company. Shortly

after, when Thomas had left and the doors had been

locked, the Lord entered and appeared to the others.

In their midst He saluted them, saying: "Peace be with

you. It is I; do not fear."

776. At this sudden apparition, the Apostles feared

lest what they saw was a ghost or phantasm, and the

Lord added: "Why are you troubled, and why do

thoughts arise in your hearts? See my hands and feet,

that it is I myself; handle and see: for a spirit hath no

flesh and bones, as you see Me have." The Apostles

were so excited and confused, that though they saw Him

and touched the wounded hands of the Savior, they

could not realize, that it was He to whom they spoke

and whom they touched. The loving Master in order

to assure them still more, said to them: "Give Me to

eat, if you have aught." Joyfully they offered Him

some fried fish and a comb of honey. He ate part of

these, and divided the rest among them, saying: "Do

you not know, that all that has happened with Me is

the same that has been written by Moses and the

Prophets, in the Psalms and holy Scriptures, and that

all must necessarily be fulfilled in Me as it was proph

esied?" And at these words He opened their minds,

and they knew Him, and understood the sayings of the

Scriptures concerning his Passion, Death and Resur

rection on the third day. Having thus instructed them,

He said again: "Peace be with you. As the Father

has sent me, so I send you, in order that you may teach

the world the knowledge of the truth, of God and of

748 CITY OF GOD

eternal life, preaching repentance for sins and forgive

ness of them in my name." Breathing upon them, He

added and said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, in order

that the sins which you forgive may be forgiven, and

those which you do not forgive, may not be forgiven.

Preach ye to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem." Then

the Savior, having thus consoled and confirmed them

in faith, and having given them and all priests the power

to forgive sins, disappeared from their midst.

777. All this took place in the absence of Thomas ; but

soon after, the Lord so disposing, he returned to the

assembly, and the Apostles told him what had happened

during his absence. Yet, though he found them so

changed in joyful exultation, he remained incredulous

and obstinate, maintaining, that he would not believe

what all of them affirmed, unless he himself should see

with his own eyes and touch with his own hands and

fingers the wounds of the Savior s side and those of the

nails (John 20, 25). In this obstinacy the incredulous

Thomas persevered for eight days, when the Savior

again returned through locked doors and appeared in

the midst of the Apostles including Thomas. He saluted

them as usual, saying: "Peace be with you," and then

calling Thomas, He sweetly reprimanded him. "Come,

Thomas, and with your hands touch the openings of

my hands and of my side, and be not so incredulous,

but convinced and believing." Thomas touched the divine

wounds and was interiorly enlightened to believe and

to acknowledge his ignorance. Prostrating himself to

the ground he said : "My Lord and my God !" to which

the Lord replied : "Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast

believed; but blessed are those who do not see Me and

believe Me." The Lord then disappeared, leaving the

Apostles and Thomas filled with light and joy. They

THE TRANSFIXION 749

immediately sought most holy Mary in order to relate

to Her what had happened, just as they had done after

the first apparition of the Lord.

778. The Apostles were at that time not yet able to

comprehend the great wisdom of the Queen of heaven

and earth, and much less to understand the knowledge

She had of all that happened to them and of all the

works of her divine Son; She therefore listened to them

with highest prudence and with the loving sweetness of

a Mother and Queen. After the first apparition some

of the Apostles told Her of the obstinacy of Thomas,

and that he would not believe their unanimous testimony

concerning the Resurrection of the Master. During

the eight days in which his incredulity continued, the

indignation of some of the Apostles against him grew

more intense. They went to the heavenly Lady and

accused him before Her of being an obstinate and stub

born transgressor, a man too dull to be enlightened. The

loving Princess listened to them sweetly, and seeing that

the anger of the Apostles, who were as yet all imperfect,

was still increasing, She spoke to those most indignant

and quieted them by arguing that the judgments of the

Lord were deeply hidden and that the incredulity of

Thomas would occasion great benefit to others and glory

to God; that they should wait and hope and not be

disturbed so easily. The heavenly Mother offered up

most fervent prayers and petitions for Thomas and on

that account the Lord hastened the cure of the incredu

lous Apostle. When He yielded and all of them brought

the news to Mary, their Mistress and Lady, She con

firmed them in their faith, at the same time admonishing

and correcting them. She told them to give thanks to

the Most High for this blessing, and to be constant in

temptation, since all were subject to the danger of falling.

3-49

750 CITY OF GOD

Many other sweet words of correction, instruction and

warning did She add, preparing them for what was yet

to be done in the establishment of the new Church.

779. There were other apparitions and doings of the

Lord, as the Evangelist saint John gives us to under

stand; but only those are mentioned, which suffice to

establish the fact of the Resurrection. The same Evan

gelist describes the apparition of the Lord at the sea of

Tiberias to saint Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of

Zebedee, and two other disciples, which, as it is so mys

terious, I thought I ought not pass over unmentioned in

this chapter. The apparition happened in the following

manner: the Apostles, after the above events in Jerusa

lem, betook themselves to Galilee; for the Lord had so

commanded them and had promised, that they should

there see Him. Saint Peter, happening to be with the

seven Apostles and disciples on the shores of that sea,

proposed that they pass the time in fishing, as that was

his trade. All of them accompanied him and they spent

the night in casting out their nets; but they caught not

a single fish. In the morning our Savior Jesus appeared

on the bank without making Himself known. He was

near the boat on which they were fishing and He asked

them : "Have you something to eat ?" They answered :

"We have nothing." The Lord replied: "Throw out

your net on the right side, and you shall make a catch."

They complied and their net became so filled, that they

could not lift it into the boat. This miracle caused saint

John to recognize the Lord Christ, and going nearer to

saint Peter, he said : "It is the Lord who speaks to us

from the bank." Then saint Peter likewise recognized

Jesus ; and immediately seized with his accustomed fervor,

he hastily girded himself with the tunic, which he had

laid off, and cast himself into the sea, walking on the

THE TRANSFIXION . 751

waters to the Master of life, while the others followed

in their boat.

780. They sprang ashore and found that the Lord had

already prepared for them a meal; for they saw a fire

and upon its glimmering ashes bread and a fish. The

Lord however told them to bring some of those they

had caught. Saint Peter then drew out the catch and

found, that they had secured one hundred and fifty-three

fishes; and that even with that great number the net

had not been torn. The Lord commanded them to eat.

Although He was so familiar and affable in his behavior

to them, no one ventured to ask who He was; for the

miracles and the majesty of the Lord filled them with

great reverence. He divided among them the fish and

the bread. As soon as they had finished eating, He

turned to saint Peter and said to him: "Simon, son of

John, dost thou love Me more than these do?" Saint

Peter answered: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love

Thee." The Lord replied: "Feed my lambs." Im

mediately He asked again: "Simon, son of John, dost

thou love me?" Saint Peter gave the same answer:

"Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." And the Lord

put the same question the third time: "Simon, son of

John, lovest thou me?" At this third repetition Peter

grieved and answered : "Lord, Thou knowest all things,

and also that I love Thee." Christ our Savior then

answered the third time: "Feed my sheep/\* By these

words he made Peter the sole head of his only and uni

versal Church, giving him the supreme vicarious au

thority over all men. On this account He had ques

tioned him so often concerning his love, as if that alone

could make him capable of the supreme dignity, and of

itself sufficed for its worthy exercise.

781. Then the Lord intimated to him the duties of

752 CITY OF GOD

the office He had given him and said: Truly I assure

thee, that when thou art old, thou shalt not gird thyself

as now, nor shalt thou go where thou listest ; for another

shall gird thee and lead thee where thou wouldst not."

Saint Peter understood, that the Lord held in store for

him the death of the cross in which he was to imitate

and follow his Lord. But as saint John was so beloved,

Peter was desirous of knowing what would become of

him, and he asked the Savior: "And what shalt Thou

do with this one so beloved by Thee?" The Lord an

swered: "What is it to thee to know this? If I desire

that he remain thus until I come again to the world, it

will be in my hands. Follow thou Me, and do not con

cern thyself with what I desire to do with him." On

account of these words a report was spread among the

Apostles, that John was not to die. But the Evangelist

himself remarks, that Christ had not said positively, he

should not die, as is plain from the words, but He seems

to have expressly desired to conceal his will concerning

the death of the Evangelist, reserving this secret to Him

self at that time. The most holy Mary, by her clear

intuition so often mentioned, had a full intelligence of

all these mysteries and apparitions of the Lord. Being

the archive of the works of the Lord and the treasure-

house of the mysteries of his Church, She preserved and

conferred them within her own most prudent and chaste

heart. The Apostles, and especially her new son John,

informed Her of all that happened to them. The great

Lady persevered in her retirement for the forty days

after the Resurrection and there enjoyed the sight of her

divine Son and of the angels and saints. They in turn

sang hymns to the Lord, which She composed ; and the

angels as it were gathered them from her mouth, cele

brating the glories and the virtues of the Lord.

THE TRANSFIXION 753

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN, MOST HOLY MARY,

GAVE ME.

782. My daughter, the instruction which I shall give

thee in this chapter shall be also an answer to thy desire

of knowing why my divine Son appeared at one time as

a gardener, at another as a stranger, and why He did

not always make Himself known at first sight. Know

then, my dearest, that the Marys and the Apostles, al

though they were followers of Christ and at that time

privileged and perfect in comparison with the rest of

men; yet they had withal arrived only at a low degree

of perfection and holiness and not far enough advanced

in the school of their Master. They were weak in faith

and in other virtues ; they were less constant and fervent

than was due to their vocation and to the graces they

had received. The little faults in souls favored and

chosen for the friendship and familiar intercourse with

God weigh more in the scales of his most righteous

equity, than some great ones in other souls not selected

for these privileges. Hence, although the Apostles and

the Marys were friends of the Savior, yet, on account of

their faults and their weaknesses, their lukewarm and

faltering love, they were not prepared for the immediate

effects of the full knowledge and presence of their Mas

ter. In this paternal love He therefore created in them

the proper dispositions by enlightening them and en

kindling them with words of eternal life before He

manifested Himself to them. When their hearts had

been thus prepared by faith and love, He made known

and communicated to them the abundance of his Divinity

together with other admirable gifts and graces by which

754 CITY OF GOD

they were renewed and raised above themselves. When

they had enjoyed his favors, He again disappeared, in

order that they might desire so much the more earnestly

the sweetness of his communications and intercourse.

This was the secret of his appearing in disguise to Mag

dalen, to the Apostles, and to the disciples at Emmaus.

The same course He pursues respectively with many

other souls, whom He chooses for intimate converse and

communication.

783. By the consideration of these admirable tactics of

divine Providence thou wilt be instructed and repre

hended for the doubts and incredulity with which thou

hast so often met the divine blessings and favors

of my Son. Thou wilt learn that it is time thou

moderate thy constant fears, lest thou pass from

doubt to obstinacy and to slowness of heart in giv

ing thanks. Thou wilt also draw a very useful

lesson if thou worthily contemplate, how quickly

the immense charity of the Most High responds

to those who are contrite and humble of heart (Ps. 33,

19), and how ready He is, immediately to assist those

who seek Him in love, who meditate and speak of his

Passion and Death (Wis. 6, 13). All this thou seest

well exemplified in saint Peter, Mary Magdalen and in

the disciples. Imitate then, my dearest, the fervor of

Magdalen in search for her Master, who did not permit

herself to be diverted even by the angels, or leave the

sepulchre with the others, or rest until she found Him

so full of sweetness and kindness. This she also earned

by having accompanied Me through all the Passion with

an ardent and unfaltering heart. Similar was also the

conduct of the other Marys, who thus merited before

so many others the joys of the Resurrection. Next to

them the humility and contrition of saint Peter in bewail-

THE TRANSFIXION 755

ing his denial, secured the same reward ; immediately the

Lord bent down to console him and commissioned the

women to tell especially him of his Resurrection and

shortly after, He visited him, confirmed him in faith

and filled him with joy and the gifts of grace. Then

before appearing to others, He showed Himself to the

two disciples, because, although in doubt, they were con

versing regretfully of his Death. I assure thee, my

daughter, that none of the works of men done with a

good intention and righteous heart, shall remain without

an immediate reward. For neither fire will in its greatest

intensity so quickly consume the driest tow, nor will a

stone, freed from hindrance, so quickly fall to its centre,

nor the waves of the sea rush on with so great an impulse

and force, as the goodness of the Most High and his

grace to those souls, who are well disposed and have

cleared away the hindrances of sin. This is a truth

which causes the greatest wonder in the saints, who are

made aware of it in heaven. Praise Him for this good

ness and also for his drawing vast good out of

evil, as He did out of the incredulity of the Apostles.

For through it He manifested his mercy to them and

has made his Resurrection plain to all men, and evident

his kindness in pardoning the Apostles. He showed his

willingness to forget their faults, his readiness to seek

them and appear to them, dealing humanely with them

as a father, enlightening them and instructing them

according to their needs and the weakness of their faith.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

SOME HIDDEN AND DIVINE MYSTERIES IN THE LIFE OF

MARY DURING THE DAYS AFTER THE RESURRECTION

OF THE LORD; SHE RECEIVES THE TITLE OF MOTHER

AND QUEEN OF THE CHURCH; THE APPARITION OF

CHRIST BEFORE AND IN PREPARATION FOR THE AS

CENSION.

784. During the whole course of this history the

abundance and vastness of its mysteries have made me

feel destitute of proper words. Vast is that which is

offered to the understanding in the divine light, and in

significant what can be expressed in language. On ac

count of this inequality and defect arising from the

fecundity of the intellect and the sterility of words, my

faculties have suffered a great strain; for the want of

correspondence between the results of the spoken word

and the conception of the mind continually causes a

mistrust and dissatisfaction with the words, as falling

short of the meaning and as making me hopelessly in

capable of correcting the deficiency or of filling up the

discrepancy between the things said and those perceived.

I find myself in this state just now, when I am to de

scribe what has been made known to me concerning the

hidden mysteries and exalted sacraments of the life

of Mary during the forty days after the Resurrection

of her Son and our Redeemer until the time He as

cended into heaven. The state in which the divine power

placed Her after the Passion and Resurrection was new

and more exalted : her operations were more mysterious,

756

THE TRANSFIXION 757

the favors conferred upon Her were proportionate to

her eminent holiness and to the will of Him who

wrought them ; for according to this rule He proceeded.

If I were obliged to describe all that has been mani

fested to me, it would be necessary to extend this his

tory into many large volumes. From what I shall say

something can be gathered concerning these most divine

mysteries for the glory of that great Queen and Lady.

785. It has already been said at the beginning

of the last chapter, that during the forty days after the

Resurrection the Lord remained in the Cenacle and in

the company of his most holy Mother whenever He

was not absent in appearing to some of his chosen

friends. All the rest of the time He spent in her

presence. Any one can prudently conjecture, that all

this time, in which these two Sovereigns of the world

were together, They spent in works altogether divine and

above all the conceptions of the human mind. What

has been made known to me of these works is ineffable ;

for often They would engage in sweetest colloquy of

inscrutable wisdom and this conversation was for the

loving Mother a joy, which though inferior to the

beatific vision, was consoling and delightful beyond all

that is imaginable. At other times the great Queen,

the Patriarchs and Saints, who there assisted in their

glorified state, occupied themselves in the praise and

exaltation of the Most High. Mary had a deep knowl

edge of all the works and merits of the saints; of the

blessings, favors and gifts each one had received from

the Omnipotent ; of the mysteries, figures and prophecies

which had gone before in the ancient Patriarchs. All

this She was Mistress of, and it was present to her mind

in contemplation more completely, than the Hail Mary

is known to us for recitation. The exalted Lady con-

758 CITY OF GOD

sidered all the great motives of these saints for praising

and blessing the Author of all good. Though they,

enjoying the beatific vision, fulfilled and are fulfilling

this duty without cessation, yet in their conversations

and intercourse with the heavenly Princess, they were

constantly urged by Her to magnify and praise the

divine Majesty for all these blessings and operations

so evident to the eyes of her soul.

786. All this sacred choir of the saints joined with

their Queen and began to engage in these divine exer

cises according to a stated order; so that all of them

formed a choir, in which each one of the blessed recited

a verse, while the Mother of wisdom answered with

another. In their frequent exercise of these sweet alter

nating songs, the great Lady by Herself produced as

many hymns and canticles of praise, as all the saints

and angels together; for also the angels entered into

this competition of new songs, admirable to them and to

all the blessed. For the wise worship of God practiced

by the heavenly Princess in this life exceeded that of

all other creatures, including those who already en

joyed the beatific vision. All that the blessed Mary

did during these days is beyond the capacity and esti

mation of men. But her exalted thoughts and motives

were prudently measured by her most faithful love;

for, knowing that her divine Son tarried in this world

principally in order to assist and console Her, She re

solved to compensate Him as far as it was possible.

Therefore She did all in her power to provide for the

Lord the same praises and honors as the saints furnish

Him in heaven. By concurring in these praises Herself

She at once raised them to the highest worth and changed

the house of the Cenacle into a heaven.

787. In such exercises She consumed the greater

THE TRANSFIXION 759

part of the forty days and during that time were com

posed more canticles and hymns than all the saints and

Prophets have left for our use. Sometimes this heavenly

gathering made use of the psalms of David or the

prophecies of the Scripture, commenting, as it were, or

expatiating on these so divine and profound mysteries;

and the holy fathers, who had been the authors of the

prophecies, when they recognized the gifts and favors

of the right hand of God and the revelations of such

numerous and great sacraments, referred them especially

to our Queen. Admirable was also the delight She drew

from her conversation with her holy mother, her father

Joachim, saint Joseph, saint John the Baptist, and the

great Patriarchs. In mortal flesh no state can be imag

ined, which approaches so close to the beatific fruition

as the one enjoyed at that time by the great Lady and

Queen. Another wonder happened during those days,

which was: that all the souls of the just who died in

grace within those forty days, gathered in the Cenacle,

and those who had no debt to pay, were there beatified.

But those who were subject to purgatory were obliged

to wait in the same place without seeing the Lord,

some three, some five days, others again for a shorter

or longer period. For the Mother of mercy satisfied

for their defects by genuflections, prostrations or some

work of satisfaction, but much more by the ardent

charity with which She wrought for them and applied

!to them the infinite merits of her divine Son. Thus She

helped to abbreviate their punishment and the pain of

not seeing the Lord (for they suffered no sensible

pains) and soon they were beatified and admitted to the

choir of the saints. For each one that thus joined

their ranks, the great Lady composed new hymns of

praise to the Lord.

760 CITY OF GOD

788. Amidst all these delights and jubilations the

kindest Mother, with ineffable generosity, did not for

get the misery and poverty of the children of Eve

deprived of this glory ; but like a true Mother of mercy,

turning her eyes upon the condition of mortals, She

offered for all of them her most fervent prayers. She

besought the eternal Father for the spreading of the

new Law through all the world; the multiplication of

the children of the Church; for its defense and pro

tection and for the extension of the fruits of the Re

demption to all men. The fulfillment of this petition

was regulated by the eternal decrees of the divine wis

dom ; but as far as the desires and affections of the most

loving Queen were concerned She wished the Redemp

tion and eternal life to be extended to the whole human

race. Besides these general petitions, She made special

ones for the Apostles, and particularly for saint John

and saint Peter: for the one, as her son; for the other,

as the head of the Church. She prayed also for Mag

dalen and the Marys, and all the other faithful then

belonging to the Church. Finally She prayed for the

exaltation of the faith and of the name of her divine

Son Jesus.

789. A few days before the Ascension of the Lord,

while the blessed Mary was engaged in the one of the

above-mentioned exercises, the eternal Father and the

Holy Ghost appeared in the Cenacle upon a throne of

ineffable splendor surrounded by the choirs of angels

and saints there present and other heavenly spirits,

which had now come with the divine Persons. Then

the incarnate Word ascended the throne and seated

Himself with the other Two. The ever humble Mother

of the Most High, prostrate in a corner of a room, in

deepest reverence adored the most blessed Trinity, and

THE TRANSFIXION 761

in it her own incarnate Son. The eternal Father com

manded two of the highest angels to call Mary, which

they did by approaching Her, and in sweetest voices in

timating to Her the divine will. She arose from the

dust with the most profound humility, modesty and

reverence. Accompanied by the angels She approached

the foot of the Throne, humbling herself anew. The

eternal Father said to Her: "Beloved, ascend higher!"

(Luke 14, 10). As these words at the same time ef

fected what they signified, She was raised up and placed

on the throne of royal Majesty with the three divine

Persons. New admiration was caused in the saints to

see a mere Creature exalted to such dignity. Being

made to understand the sanctity and equity of the works

of the Most High, they gave new glory and praise pro

claiming Him immense, Just, Holy and Admirable in

all his counsels.

790. The Father then spoke to the blessed Mary

saying : "My Daughter, to Thee do I entrust the Church

founded by my Onlybegotten, the new law of grace He

established in the world, and the people, which He re

deemed: to Thee do I consign them all." Thereupon

also the Holy Ghost spoke to Her : "My Spouse, chosen

from all creatures, I communicate to Thee my wisdom

and grace together with which shall be deposited in

thy heart the mysteries, the works and teachings and all

that the incarnate Word has accomplished in the world."

And the Son also said : "My most beloved Mother, I go

to my Father and in my stead I shall leave Thee and I

charge Thee with the care of my Church; to Thee do I

commend its children and my brethren, as the Father

has consigned them to Me." Then the three Divine

Persons, addressing the choir of holy angels and the

other saints, said: "This is the Queen of all created

762 CITY OF GOD

things in heaven and earth; She is the Protectress of

the Church, the Mistress of creatures, the Mother of

piety, the Intercessor of the faithful, the Advocate of

sinners, the Mother of beautiful love and holy hope

(Eccli. 24, 24) ; She is mighty in drawing our will to

mercy and clemency. In Her shall be deposited the

treasures of our grace and her most faithful heart shall

be the tablet whereon shall be written and engraved

our holy law. In Her are contained the mysteries of

our Omnipotence for the salvation of mankind. She

is the perfect work of our hands, through whom the

plenitude of our desires shall be communicated and sat

isfied without hindrance in the currents of our divine

perfections. Whoever shall call upon Her from his

heart shall not perish; whoever shall obtain her inter

cession shall secure for himself eternal life. What She

asks of Us, shall be granted, and We shall always hear

her requests and prayers and fulfill her will; for She

has consecrated Herself perfectly to what pleases Us."

The most blessed Mary, hearing Herself thus exalted,

humiliated Herself so much the deeper the more highly

She was raised by the right hand of the Most High

above all the human and angelic creatures. As if She

were the least of all, She adored the Lord and offered

Herself, in the most prudent terms and in the most ardent

love, to work as a faithful servant in the Church and to

obey promptly all the biddings of the divine will. From

that day on She took upon Herself anew the care of

the evangelical Church, as a loving Mother of all its

children; She renewed all the petitions She had until

then made, so that during the whole further course of her

life they were most fervent and incessant, as we shall see

in the third part, where will appear more clearly what the

Church owes to this great Queen and Lady, and what

THE TRANSFIXION 763

blessings She gained and merited for it. By the favor

now vouchsafed to Mary and by those conferred upon

Her later, She was raised to a participation in the being

of her Son beyond all possibility of words to explain;

for He communicated his attributes and perfections to

Her in correspondence to her ministry as Instructress

and Mother of the Church and as supplying his own

ministry. He elevated Her into a new state of knowl

edge and power, by means of which nothing was to be

hidden from Her either of the divine mysteries or of

the inmost secrets of the human heart. She was made

to understand and know when and how She was to use

this communicated power of the Divinity in her dealings

with men, with the demons and with all creatures. In

short, all that can possibly be conferred upon a mere

creature was received and given over in all its fulness

and excellence to our great Queen and Lady. Of these

sacramental operations saint John was to a certain extent

made aware, in order that he might form an estimate,

how much he was to esteem and appreciate the inestima

ble Treasure consigned to his care. From that day

on he venerated and served the great Lady with new

solicitude and reverence.

791. Other wonderful favors the Most High wrought

for Mary in those forty days, and there was none of

them, in which He did not show forth his beneficent

power and holiness toward his Mother and his solicitude

to enrich Her more and more before his Ascension into

heaven. When the pre-ordained time for the return

of the eternal Wisdom to his Father had arrived, after

having proved his Resurrection by many apparitions

and by many arguments (as saint Luke says, Acts 1, 3),

He resolved to appear and manifest Himself once more

to that whole gathering of Apostles and disciples, num-

764 CITY OF GOD

bering one hundred and twenty persons. This appari

tion took place in the Cenacle on the very day of the

Ascension and in addition to the one mentioned by saint

Mark in the last chapter (Mark 16, 14) ; for all this

happened on one and the same day. After the sojourn

of the Apostles in Galilee, whither the Lord had com

manded them to go and where He appeared to them

close to the sea of Tiberias, after they had seen and

adored Him on the mountain, as mentioned by Mark,

and after He had been seen by the five hundred according

to saint Paul, the disciples returned to Jerusalem in

order to be present according to the wishes of the Lord,

at his wonderful Ascension. While the eleven Apostles

were reclining at their meal, as is related by saint Mark

and saint Luke in the Acts, the Lord entered and ate

with them, moderating, with admirable affability and

condescension, the splendors of his beauty and glory

in order that He might be looked upon by all. Having

finished their meal He spoke to them in earnest yet

sweetly tempered majesty.

792. "Know ye, my disciples, that my eternal Father

has given Me all power in heaven and on earth, and

I wish to communicate it to you in order that you may

establish my new Church throughout the whole world.

You have been slow and tardy in believing my Resur

rection; but it is now time that as true and faithful

disciples, you be the teachers of the faith to all men.

Preaching my Gospel as you have heard it from my

lips, you shall baptize all that believe, giving them Bap

tism in the name of the Father, and of the Son (who

am I) and of the Holy Ghost. Those that shall believe

and be baptized, shall be saved, and those that shall

not believe, shall be damned. Teach the believers to

observe all that concerns my holy Law. In confirmation

THE TRANSFIXION 765

thereof the faithful shall perform signs and wonders;

they shall cast out the demons from their habitations;

they shall speak new tongues; they shall cure the bites

of serpents; if they drink aught poisonous, it shall not

hurt them; and they shall cure the sick by the laying

on of hands." Such miracles Christ our Savior prom

ised for the foundation of the Church in the preaching

of the Gospel; and all of them were verified in the first

ages of the Church. For the propagation of the faith

in the rest of the world and for the preservation of

the Church where it exists, He continues the same signs,

when and how his Providence deems it necessary; for

He never will forsake the holy Church, his most beloved

spouse.

793. On that same day, by divine dispensation, while

the Lord was at table with the eleven Apostles, other

disciples and pious women gathered at the Cenacle to

the number of one hundred and twenty; for the divine

Master wished them to be present at his Ascension.

Moreover, just as He had instructed the Apostles, so He

now wanted to instruct these faithful respectively in

what each was to know before his leaving them and as

cending into heaven. All of them being thus gathered

and united in peace and charity within those walls in the

hall of the last Supper, the Author of life manifested

Himself to them as a kind and loving Father and said

to them :

794. "My sweetest children, I am about to ascend to

my Father, from whose bosom I descended in order to

rescue and save men. I leave with you in my stead my

own Mother as your Protectress, Consoler and Advocate,

and as your Mother, whom you are to hear and obey in

all things. Just as I have told you, that he who sees

Me sees my Father, and he who knows Me, knows

3-50

766 CITY OF GOD

also Him; so I now tell you, that He who knows

my Mother, knows Me; he who hears Her, hears

Me; and who honors Her, honors Me. All of you shall

have Her as your Mother, as your Superior and Head,

and so shall also your successors. She shall answer

your doubts, solve your difficulties; in Her, those who

seek Me shall always find Me; for I shall remain in

Her until the end of the world, and I am in Her now,

although you do not understand how." This the Lord

said, because He was sacramentally present in the bosom

of his Mother; for the sacred species, which She had

received at the last Supper, were preserved in Her until

consecration of the first Mass, as I shall relate further

on. The Lord thus fulfilled that which He promised in

saint Matthew : "I am with you to the consummation of

the world" (Matth. 28, 20). The Lord added and said:

"You will have Peter as the supreme head of the Church,

for I leave him as my Vicar ; and you shall obey him as

the chief highpriest. Saint John you shall hold as the

son of my Mother; for I have chosen and appointed

him for this office on the Cross." The Lord then looked

upon his most beloved Mother, who was there present,

and intimated his desire of expressly commanding that

whole congregation to worship and reverence Her in a

manner suited to the dignity of Mother of God, and

of leaving this command under form of a precept for

the whole Church. But the most humble Lady besought

her Onlybegotten to be pleased not to secure Her more

honor than was absolutely necessary for executing all

that He had charged Her with; and that the new chil

dren of the Church should not be induced to show Her

greater honor than they had shown until then. On the

contrary, She desired to divert all the sacred worship

of the Church immediately upon the Lord himself and

THE TRANSFIXION 767

to make the propagation of the Gospel redound entirely

to the exaltation of his holy name. Christ our Savior

yielded to this most prudent petition of his Mother,

reserving to Himself the duty of spreading the knowl

edge of Her at a more convenient and opportune time;

yet in secret He conferred upon Her new extraordinary

favors, as shall appear in the rest of this history.

795. In considering the loving exhortations of their

divine Master, the mysteries which He had revealed to

them, and the prospect of his leaving them, that whole

congregation was moved to their inmost hearts; for

He had enkindled in them the divine love by the vivid

faith of his Divinity and humanity. Reviving within

them the memory of his words and his teachings of

eternal life, the delights of his most loving intercourse

and company, and sorrowfully realizing, that they were

now all at once to be deprived of these blessings, they

wept most tenderly and sighed from their inmost souls.

They longed to detain Him, although they could not,

because they saw it was not befitting; words of parting

rose to their lips, but they could not bring themselves

to utter them; each one felt sentiments of sorrow arising

amid feelings both of joy and yet also of pious regret.

How shall we live without such a Master ? they thought.

Who can ever speak to us such words of life and consola

tion as He ? Who will receive us so lovingly and kindly ?

Who shall be our Father and protector ? We shall be help

less children and orphans in this world. Some of them

broke their silence and exclaimed : "O most loving Lord

and Father! O joy and life of our souls! Now that

we know Thee as our Redeemer, Thou departest and

leavest us! Take us along with Thee, O Lord; banish

us not from thy sight. Our blessed Hope, what shall

we do without thy presence? Whither shall we turn,

768 CITY OF GOD

if Thou goest away? Whither shall we direct our steps,

if we cannot follow Thee, our Father, our Chief, and

our Teacher?" To these and other pleadings the Lord

answered by bidding them not to leave Jerusalem and

to persevere in prayer until He should send the Holy

Spirit, the Consoler, as promised by the Father and as

already foretold to the Apostles at the last Supper.

Thereupon happened, what I shall relate in the next

chapter.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

796. My daughter, it is just, that in thy admiration

of the hidden favors vouchsafed to me by the right

hand of the Almighty, thy love be awakened in eternal

benedictions and praise of his wonderful operations.

Although I withhold from thy knowledge many of them,

which thou shalt know after leaving mortal flesh; yet

I wish, that from now on thou consider it thy especial

duty to praise and magnify the Lord, because, in spite

of my being formed of the same material as Adam

(Luke 1, 51), He has raised me from the dust and has

manifested to me the power of his arm, operating in

me such great things as can never be merited. In order

to exercise thyself in these praises of the Most High,

repeat many times over the canticle of the Magnificat,

in which I have briefly comprehended them. When

thou art alone, say it prostrate and upon thy knees;

and above all, let it be done with the sincerest love

and veneration. This exercise shall be especially agree

able and pleasing in my eyes; and I shall present it to

the Lord, if thou perform it in the manner I tell thee.

797. As thou art now again astonished, that the

THE TRANSFIXION 769

Evangelists should not have made any mention of these

wonderful favors of the Lord toward me, I will repeat

what I have already told thee; for I wish that all

mortals should remember the reason for the reticence

of the Gospels. I myself have commanded the Evan

gelists not to write anything about my privileges except

what is contained in the articles of faith and in the

commandments of the divine law and what was nec

essary for the establishment of the Church. For, as

the Teacher of the Church, I knew by the infused science

of the Most High, what would then be proper for its

beginning. The manifestation of my prerogatives, being

included in the dignity of Mother of God and in my

being full of grace, was reserved by the divine Provi

dence for a more opportune and convenient time ; namely,

when the faith should be better known and established.

In the course of the centuries some mysteries pertaining

to me have been made plain; but the plenitude of light

has been given to thee, who art a poor and insignificant

creature; and this has been done on account of the

necessities and unhappy state of the world. God in his

kindness wishes to offer this opportune remedy to men,

in order that all of them may seek help and eternal sal

vation through my intercession. This thou hast always

understood, and thou shalt understand it still better.

But above all I desire, that thou occupy thyself en

tirely in the imitation of my life and in the continual

contemplation of my virtues and works, in order that

thou mayest gain the desired victory over my and thy

enemies.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CHRIST OUR REDEEMER ASCENDS INTO HEAVEN FOLLOWED

BY ALL THE SAINTS IN HIS COMPANY; HE ASSUMES

WITH HIM HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER AND PUTS HER

IN POSSESSION OF GLORY.

798. The most auspicious hour, in which the Only-

begotten of the eternal Father, after descending from

heaven in order to assume human flesh, was to ascend

by his own power and in a most wonderful manner to

the right hand of God, the Inheritor of his eternities,

one and equal with Him in nature and infinite glory.

He was to ascend, also, because He had previously

descended to the lowest regions of the earth, as the

Apostle says (Ephes. 4, 9), having fulfilled all that had

been written and prophesied concerning his coming into

the world, his Life, Death and the Redemption of man,

and having penetrated, as the Lord of all, to the very

centre of the earth. By this Ascension he sealed all the

mysteries and hastened the fulfillment of his promise,

according to which He was, with the Father, to send

the Paraclete upon his Church after He himself should

have ascended into heaven (John 16, 7). In order to

celebrate this festive and mysterious day, Christ our

Lord selected as witnesses the hundred and twenty per

sons, to whom, as related in the foregoing chapter,

He had spoken in the Cenacle. They were the most

holy Mary, the eleven Apostles, the seventy-two disciples,

Mary Magdalen, Lazarus their brother, the other Marys

and the faithful men and women making up the above-

mentioned number of one hundred and twenty.

770

THE TRANSFIXION 771

799. With this little flock our divine Shepherd Jesus

left the Cenacle, and, with his most blessed Mother

at his side, He conducted them all through the streets

of Jerusalem. The Apostles and all the rest in their

order, proceeded in the direction of Bethany, which was

less than half a league over the brow of mount Olivet.

The company of angels and saints from limbo and

purgatory followed the Victor with new songs of praise,

although Mary alone was privileged to see them. The

Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth was already divulged

throughout Jerusalem and Palestine. Although the per

fidious and malicious princes and priests had spread

about the false testimony of his being stolen by the

disciples, yet many would not accept their testimony,

nor give it any credit. It was divinely provided, that

none of the inhabitants of the city, and none of the

unbelievers or doubters, should pay any attention to

this holy procession, or hinder it on its way from the

Cenacle. All, except the one hundred and twenty just,

who were chosen by the Lord to witness his Ascension

into heaven, were justly punished by being pre

vented from noticing this wonderful mystery, and the

Chieftain and Head of this procession remained in

visible to them.

800. The Lord having thus secured them this privacy,

they all ascended mount Olivet to its highest point.

There they formed three choirs, one of the angels, an

other of the saints, and a third of the Apostles and

faithful, which again divided into two bands, while

Christ the Savior presided. Then the most prudent

Mother prostrated Herself at the feet of her Son

and, worshipping Him with admirable humility, She

adored Him as the true God and as the Redeemer

of the world, asking his last blessing. All the

772 CITY OF GOD

faithful there present imitated Her and did the same.

Weeping and sighing, they asked the Lord, whether He

was now to restore the kingdom of Israel (Acts 1, 6).

The Lord answered, that this was a secret of the eternal

Father and not to be made known to them; but, for

the present, it was necessary and befitting, that they

receive the Holy Ghost and preach, in Jerusalem, in

Samaria and in all the world, the mysteries of the

Redemption of the world.

801. Jesus, having taken leave of this holy and for

tunate gathering of the faithful, his countenance beaming

forth peace and majesty, joined his hands and, by his

own power, began to raise Himself from the earth,

leaving thereon the impression of his sacred feet. In

gentlest motion He was wafted toward the aerial regions,

drawing after Him the eyes and the hearts of those

first-born children, who amid sighs and tears vented

their affection. And as, at the moving of the first Cause

of all motion, it is proper that also the nether spheres

should be set in motion, so the Savior Jesus drew after

Him also the celestial choirs of the angels, the holy

Patriarchs and the rest of the glorified saints, some of

them with body and soul, others only as to their soul.

All of them in heavenly order were raised up together

from the earth, accompanying and following their King,

their Chief and Head. The new and mysterious sacra

ment, which the right hand of the Most High wrought

on this occasion for his most holy Mother, was that

He raised Her up with Him in order to put Her in pos

session of the glory, which He had assigned to Her

as his true Mother and which She had by her merits

prepared and earned for Herself. Of this favor the

great Queen was capable even before it happened; for

her divine Son had offered it to Her during the forty

THE TRANSFIXION 773

days which He spent in her company after his Resur

rection. In order that this sacrament might be kept

secret from all other living creatures at that time, and

in order that the heavenly Mistress might be present

in the gathering of the Apostles and the faithful in

their prayerful waiting upon the coming of the Holy

Ghost (Acts 1, 14),. the divine power enabled the blessed

Mother miraculously to be in two places at once; re

maining with the children of the Church for their com

fort during their stay in the Cenacle and at the same

time ascending with the Redeemer of the world to his

heavenly throne, where She remained for three days.

There She enjoyed the perfect use of all her powers and

faculties, whereas She was more restricted in the use

of them during that time in the Cenacle.

802. The most blessed Lady was raised up with

her divine Son and placed at the right hand in

fulfillment of what David said: "The Queen was

at his right hand in vestments gilded by the splen

dors of his glory and surrounded by the variety

of his gifts and graces in the sight of the as

cending angels and saints" (Ps. 44, 10). In order

that this astounding mystery may excite the de

votion and enliven the faith of the faithful, and that

it may draw them to magnify the Author of this ex

traordinary and inconceivable miracle, I again inform

those who read of it, that, from the time in which the

Most High commissioned me, and afterward repeatedly,

through many years, expressly commanded me to write

this history, He has revealed to me many diverse mys

teries and great sacraments, both already written and

yet to be written ; for the exalted nature of this history

demanded such a preparation and predisposition. I

have not received all these revelations at once; for the

774 CITY OF GOD

limitation of a creature is not capable of such abundance.

But in order that I might be enabled to write, new en

lightenment was given me for each mystery in par

ticular. The enlightenments concerning each were

usually given to me on the feasts of the Christ our

Lord and of the heavenly Lady. Especially the great

sacrament of Mary s being raised to heaven with her

divine Son at his Ascension and of her remaining at

the same time in the Cenacle in a wonderful manner,

was shown to me in several consecutive years on that

feastday.

803. When the divine truth is known and contem

plated in God himself, in whom there is all light without

mixture of darkness and where as well the object as

its cause is evident, it creates a certainty without a touch

of doubt (I John 1, 5). But those who hear these mys

teries told by others, must excite their piety in order to

ask for belief in what is obscure. On this account I

would feel a hesitation in writing of the hidden sacra

ment of this celestial visit of our Queen, if the omission

of such a great and important wonder and prerogative

were not so serious a defect in this history. This hesi

tation occurred to me, when I was made aware of this

mystery for the first time ; but now, after I have already

related in the first part, that the child Mary at its birth

was elevated to the empyrean heavens, and, in this

second part, that She was twice thus elevated during

the nine days of preparation for the incarnation of the

divine Word, I have no such hesitation in writing of

this miracle. If the divine power conferred such ad

mirable favors on the blessed Virgin before She became

the Mother of God in preparation for this dignity; it

is much more credible, that He should repeat it after

She had been consecrated by bearing Him in her vir-

THE TRANSFIXION 775

ginal womb, after giving Him human form from her

own purest blood, after nursing Him at her breast and

raising Him as a true Son, after serving Him for thirty-

three years, following Him and imitating Him in his

life, in his Passion and Death with a fidelity inexpressible

to human tongue.

804. In the investigation of these mysteries and special

favors of the blessed Mother the reason why the Most

High operated them, is quite a different thing from

the^ cause of their being kept secret for so many cen

turies in the Church. In inquiring into the first, we

must be guided by our knowledge of the divine power

and of the love of God for his Mother, as well as by

our knowledge of his desire of raising Her to a dignity

above all other creatures. As men in their mortal flesh

can never perfectly know the dignity of that Mother,

nor her love, nor the love of her Son, or of the blessed

Trinity, nor the merits and holiness conferred upon Her

by the Almighty, their ignorance tends to set limits to

the divine power in its operations. God did for Her

all He could, and that was as much as He wished. But

he communicated Himself to Her in such a special

manner, as to become her Son of her substance, hence

it necessarily follows, that in the order of grace He

dealt with Her in an extraordinary manner, and as

befitted no one else, not even the whole human race.

Hence to Her were due not only extraordinary favors,

benefits and blessings of the Almighty; but the rule of

judging about them must be, that, after his own most

holy humanity, nothing, that could in any manner re

dound to her glory and holiness, was denied Her.

805. But in regard to the revelation of these wonders

in his Church, the high providence of God, which gov

erns it and procures new splendors for it according to

776 CITY OF GOD

the circumstances of the times, is guided by other rea

sons. For the happy day of grace, which dawned upon

the world in the Incarnation of the Word and in the

Redemption of man, has its morning and its noontide

as also its eventide, and all this the divine Wisdom

disposes when and how it becomes opportune. Although

all the mysteries of Christ and his Mother are revealed

in the holy Scriptures; yet not all of them are mani

fested at the same time, but little by little the Lord

withdraws the veil of figures, metaphors and enigmas,

under which many of the sacraments have been hidden.

Like the rays of the sun under a passing cloud, they

were covered and concealed until some of the many

rays of divine light should fall upon men; since even

the angels, though they were made aware of the Incar

nation in a general way as being the end of all their

ministry to man, were not informed of all the conditions,

effects and circumstances of this mystery : they grad

ually came to know many of them during the five

thousand two hundred years from the creation to the

Incarnation. This acquisition of new knowledge gave

occasion for continued admiration and renewed praise

and glory to the Author of these mysteries, as I have

shown in the whole course of this history. I mention

this example in answer to any wonder, which might be

caused in those that hear of this mysterious exaltation

of the most blessed Mary, which, with many others

already described and to be described, was hidden until

the Most High was willing to make them manifest.

806. Before I was capable of these reasonings and

when I first came to know of this mystery of Christ s

having taken his blessed Mother to heaven with Him,

I was not a little astounded, not only on my own account,

but on account of those who should hear it. Among

THE TRANSFIXION 777

other things which I then heard the Lord tell me, was

that I should remember what saint Paul has left recorded

of himself in the Church, when he refers to his rapture

into the third heaven, which is that of the blessed, and

how he was in doubt whether he was taken up in the

body or out of the body, daring to affirm neither the

one or the other, but supposing that it could have hap

pened in either manner. This at once cleared up my

difficulties; for if such a thing as being taken bodily

to heaven could happen to the Apostle in the beginning

of his conversion and when he had no merits, but only

sins to his credit; and if the concession of such a privi

lege entailed no danger or inconvenience to God s

Church; how can any one doubt that the Lord showed

the same favor to his Mother, especially after her at

taining to such ineffable merit and holiness? The Lord

also added, that if some of the saints, who rose in their

body with the resurrected Christ, were privileged to

ascend in their body with the Savior, surely there was a

better reason for showing this favor to his purest

Mother. Even if none of the mortals ever should have

enjoyed this distinction, it was due to the most blessed

Mary, because She had suffered with the Lord. It was

reasonable that She should share with Him his triumph

and glory in taking possession of it at the right hand

of the Most High; since She, as his Mother, had, from

her own substance, given Him his human nature, in

which He now triumphantly ascended into heaven. And

just as it was befitting, that She should not be sepa

rated from her Son in glory, so it was also due to

Her that none of the human race should come body

and soul to the enjoyment of eternal glory before most

blessed Mary, not even excepted her mother or father,

or her spouse Joseph, or any of the rest. All of them,

778 CITY OF GOD

I

and the Savior himself, her Son Jesus, would have

been deprived of this accidental increase of their joy,

if the most blessed Mary, as the Mother of the Re

deemer and as the Queen of all creation, who merited

such a favor and blessing more than all the rest, had

not ascended with them into heaven on that day.

807. These arguments seem to me sufficient to estab

lish the knowledge and excite the pious joy and con

solation of this mystery and of others to be mentioned

in the third part in the further history of the life of

Mary. Returning now to my history, I say that the

Lord took with Him his blessed Mother in his Ascension

into heaven and, amid incredible rejoicing and admira

tion, rilled Her with splendor and glory in the sight of

the angels and saints. It was also very appropriate, that

the Apostles and the other faithful, for the time being,

should be ignorant of this mystery; for if they had

seen their Mother and Mistress ascend with Christ,

their affliction would have been beyond all bounds and

without recourse or relief. Nothing could ever console

them for the departure of Christ more fully than to

feel that they had still with them their most blessed

Lady and kindest Mother. Even then their sighs and

sobbing, and their tears welled up from their inmost

hearts, when they saw their beloved Master and Re

deemer disappearing through the aerial regions. And

when they had almost lost sight of Him, a most re

splendent cloud interposed itself between Him and those

He had left upon earth (Acts 1, 9), intercepting Him

altogether from their view. In it the Person of the

eternal Father descended from heaven to the regions

of the air in order to meet the Son and the Mother,

who had furnished the new mode of existence in which

He now returned. Coming to Them the eternal Father

THE TRANSFIXION 779

received Them in his embrace of infinite love, to the

joy of the angels, who had accompanied the Father in

innumerable choirs from his heavenly seat. In a short

space of time, penetrating the elements and the celestial

orbs, that whole divine procession arrived at the supreme

regions of the empyrean. At their entrance the angels,

who had ascended from the earth with their Sovereigns

Jesus and Mary, and those who had joined them in the

aerial regions, spoke to those who had remained in the

heavenly heights and repeated those words of David and

many others referring to this mystery, saying:

808. "Open, ye princes, open your gates eternal; let

them be raised and opened up, and receive into his

dwelling the great King of glory, the Lord of virtues,

the Powerful in battle, the Strong and Invincible, who

comes triumphant and victorious over all his enemies.

Open the gates of the heavenly paradise, and let them

remain open and free forever, since the new Adam is

coming, the Repairer of the whole human race, rich in

mercy, overflowing with the merits of his copious Re

demption wrought by his Death in the world. He has

restored our loss and has raised human nature to the

supreme dignity of his own immensity. He comes with

the reign of the elect and the redeemed, given to Him

by his eternal Father. Now his liberal mercy has given

to mortals the power of regaining in justice the right

lost by their sin, to merit, by the observance of his

law, as his brothers and co-inheritors of the goods of

his Father eternal life; and, for his greater glory and

to our greater rejoicing, He brings with Him and at

his side the Mother of piety, who gave Him the form

of man for overcoming the demon; She comes as our

charming and beautiful Queen delighting all that behold

Her. Come forth, come forth, ye heavenly courtiers,

780 CITY OF GOD

and you shall see our most beautiful King with the

crown given to Him by his Mother, and his Mother

crowned with the glory conferred upon Her by her Son."

809. Amidst this jubilee and other rejoicings exceed

ing all our conceptions that new divinely arranged pro

cession approached the empyrean heavens. Between the

two choirs of angels and saints, Christ and his most

blessed Mother made their entry. All in their order

gave supreme honor to Each respectively and to Both

together, breaking forth in hymns of praise in honor

of the Authors of grace and of life. Then the eternal

Father placed upon the throne of his Divinity at his

right hand, the incarnate Word, and in such glory and

majesty, that He filled with new admiration and rever

ential fear all the inhabitants of heaven. In clear and

intuitive vision they recognized the infinite glory and

perfection of the Divinity inseparably and substantially

united in one personality to the most holy humanity,

beautified and exalted by the pre-eminence and glory due

to this union, such as eyes have not seen, nor ears

heard, nor ever has entered into the thoughts of crea

tures (Is. 54, 4).

810. On this occasion the humility and wisdom of

our most prudent Queen reached their highest point; for,

overwhelmed by such divine and admirable favors, She

hovered at the footstool of the royal throne, annihilated

in the consciousness of being a mere earthly creature.

Prostrate She adored the Father and broke out in new

canticles of praise for the glory communicated to his Son

and for elevating in Him the deified humanity to such

greatness and splendor. Again the angels and saints

were filled with admiration and joy to see the most

prudent humility of their Queen, whose living example

of virtue, as exhibited on that occasion, they emulated

THE TRANSFIXION 781

among themselves in copying. Then the voice of the

eternal Father was heard saying : "My Daughter, ascend

higher !" Her divine Son also called Her, saying : "My

Mother, rise up and take possession of the place, which

I owe Thee for having followed and imitated Me."

The Holy Ghost said: "My Spouse and Beloved, come

to my eternal embraces!" Immediately was proclaimed

to all the blessed the decree of the most holy Trinity,

by which the most blessed Mother, for having furnished

her own life-blood toward the Incarnation and for

having nourished, served, imitated and followed Him

with all the perfection possible to a creature, was exalted

and placed at the right hand of her Son for all eternity.

None other of the human creatures should ever hold

that place or position, nor rival Her in the unfailing

glory connected with it; but it was to be reserved to

the Queen and to be her possession by right after her

earthly life, as of one who pre-eminently excelled all the

rest of the saints.

811. In fulfillment of this decree, the most blessed

Mary was raised to the throne of the holy Trinity at

the right hand of her Son. At the same time She,

with all the saints, was informed, that She was given

possession of this throne not only for all the ages of

eternity, but that it was left to her choice to remain

there even now and without returning to the earth.

For it was the conditional will of the divine Persons,

that as far as they were concerned, She should now

remain in that state. In order that She might make

her own choice, She was shown anew the state of the

Church upon earth, the orphaned and necessitous con

dition of the faithful, whom She was left free to assist.

This admirable proceeding of the divine Providence

was to affofd the Mother of mercy an occasion of going

3-51

782 CITY OF GOD

beyond, so to say, even her own Self in doing good

and in obliging the human race with an act of tenderest

love similar to that of her Son in assuming a passible

state and in suspending the glory due to his body during

and for our Redemption. The most blessed Mother

imitated Him also in this respect, so that She might be in

all things like the incarnate Word. The great Lady

therefore, having clearly before her eyes all the sacri

fices included in this proposition, left the throne and,

prostrating Herself at the feet of the Three Persons,

said: "Eternal and almighty God, my Lord, to accept

at once this reward, which thy condescending kindness

offers me, would be to secure my rest; but to return

to the world and continue to labor in mortal life for

the good of the children of Adam and the faithful of

thy holy Church, would be to the glory and according

to the pleasure of thy Majesty and would benefit my

sojourning and banished children on earth. I accept

this labor and renounce for the present the peace and

joy of thy presence. Well do I know, what I possess

and receive, but I will sacrifice it to further the love

Thou hast for men. Accept, Lord and Master of all

my being, this sacrifice and let thy divine strength govern

me in the undertaking confided to me. Let faith in

Thee be spread, let thy holy name be exalted, let thy

holy Church be enlarged, for Thou hast acquired it by

the blood of thy Onlybegotten and mine; I offer myself

anew to labor for thy glory and for the conquest of

the souls, as far as I am able."

812. Such was the sacrifice made by the most loving

Mother and Queen, one greater than ever was conceived

by creature, and it was so pleasing to the Lord, that

He immediately rewarded it by operating in Her those

purifications and enlightenments, which I have at other

THE TRANSFIXION 783

times mentioned as necessary to the intuitive vision of

the Divinity; for so far She had on this occasion seen

It only by abstractive vision. Thus elevated She par

took of the beatific vision and was filled with splendor

and celestial gifts, altogether beyond the power of man

to describe or conceive in mortal life.

813. The Most High renewed in Her all the gifts,

which until then He had communicated to Her and con

firmed and sealed them anew in the degree then befitting,

in order to send Her back as Mother and Instructress

of holy Church, confirming all the titles He had con

ferred upon Her as the Queen of all creation, as the

Advocate and Mistress of all the faithful; and just as

wax receives the form of the seal, so the blessed Mary,

by the divine Omnipotence, became the image of the

humanity of Christ, in order that She might thus return

to the militant Church and be the true garden, locked

and sealed to preserve the waters of grace (Cant. 4, 12).

O secrets of the highest Majesty, worthy of all rev

erence! O mysteries, as venerable as they are exalted!

O charity and kindness of the most holy Mary, never

comprehended by the ignorant children of Eve! The

choice made by God of this only and sweetest Mother

for a refuge of his faithful children was not without

its great mystery; it was a contrivance for manifesting

to us this maternal love, which perhaps in her other

great deeds we would not succeed in finding out. It

was in accordance with the divine decree, by which

neither She should be deprived of an occasion to attain

such excellence, nor we be deprived of the blessed obli

gation of imitating her example. To whom should it

now seem much in comparison with this excess of love,

when he sees the saints and the martyrs rejecting mo

mentary contentment in order to arrive at their eternal

784 CITY OF GOD

rest, since our most loving Mother has deprived Herself

of this complete beatitude in order to succour her little

children? How can we avoid direst confusion, when,

neither in gratitude for this favor, nor for the imitation

of her example, nor in order to please this Lady, nor

in order to secure us Her company or that of her Son,

we on our part will not deny ourselves of a slight and

deceitful pleasure, that brings us only their enmity and

death itself ? Blessed be that Woman, let all the heavens

praise Her, and let all generations call her fortunate

and happy (Luke 1, 48).

814. I finished up the first part of this history with

the thirty-first chapter of the parables of Solomon, set

ting forth in its explanation the exalted virtues of this

great Lady, the only strong Woman of the Church, and

by referring to the same chapter I close this second part.

For the Holy Ghost includes all concerning Her in the

mysterious fecundity of the words of that passage. The

great sacrament, of which I have here spoken that fe

cundity is verified more particularly in the supreme exal

tation of the most blessed Mary consequent upon this

blessing. But I will not tarry to repeat what I have

there said; for much of what I could say can be under

stood by the perusal of that portion. There I said, that

this Queen is the strong Woman, whose price and value

is as of things from afar (Prov. 31, 10), from the

farthest confines of the empyrean heavens, measured by

the esteem shown Her by the most blessed Trinity; and

the heart of her Man was not deceived, since She failed

in nothing that He had expected of Her. She was the

ship of the merchant, who brought from heaven the

sustenance of his Church ; She was the One who planted

it by the fruit of her hands; She, who girded Herself

with strength; it was She who put forth her arras to

THE TRANSFIXION 785

great things; She who extended her hands to the poor,

and opened her palms to the destitute; She, who tasted

and saw how good was this negotiation, seeing with her

own eyes the reward of eternal beatitude; She, who

clothed her servants in double garments; it was She,

whose light was not extinguished in the night of tribula

tion, and needed not to fear the rigor of temptation.

Before descending from the heavens, She, in order to

fulfill these offices, besought the eternal Father for his

power, the Son for his wisdom, and the Holy Ghost for

the fire of his love, and all the three divine Persons,

for their assistance and their blessing. This They gave

Her, as She prostrated Herself before the throne, and

They filled Her with new influences and communications

of the Divinity. Then They lovingly permitted Her to

depart with ineffable treasures of grace. The holy angels

and saints magnified Her in wonderful exaltation and

praise and She returned to the earth, as I will relate

in the third part. There I shall also relate all that She

did in the holy Church during the time of her stay;

and her doings were the admiration of heaven and of

exceeding benefit to men; for all her labors and suf

ferings were undergone to secure eternal felicitude for

her children. As She had come to know the excellence

of charity in its origin and source, namely in the eternal

God, who is charity (I John 4, 16), She continued to

be inflamed by its ardors, and her bread day and night,

was charity. Like a busy bee She descended from the

triumphant to the militant Church, charged with the

flower-dust of charity, to construct the honey-comb of

the love of God for the nourishment of the little chil

dren of the primitive Church. She raised them Up to

manhood, so robust and consummate in perfection that

they formed a foundation abundantly strong enough for

the high edifice of the holy Church (Ephes. 2, 20).

786 CITY OF GOD

815. In order to finish this chapter, and with it this

second part, I return to the congregation of the faithful,

whom we left so sorrowful on mount Olivet. The most

holy Mary did not forget them in the midst of her

glory; as they stood weeping and lost in grief and, as

it were, absorbed in looking into the aerial regions, into

which their Redeemer and Master had disappeared, She

turned her eyes upon them from the cloud on which

She had ascended, in order to send them her assistance.

Moved by their sorrow, She besought Jesus lovingly to

console these little children, whom He had left as orphans

upon the earth. Moved by the prayers of his Mother,

the Redeemer of the human race sent down two angels

in white and resplendent garments, who appeared to all

the disciples and the faithful and spoke to them: "Ye

men of Galilee, do not look up to heaven in so great

astonishment, for this Lord Jesus, who departed from

you and has ascended into heaven, shall again return

with the same glory and majesty in which you have

just seen Him" (Acts 1, 11). By such words and others

which they added they consoled the Apostles and dis

ciples and all the rest, so that they might not grow faint,

but in their retirement hope for the coming and the

consolation of the Holy Ghost promised by their divine

Master.

816. But I must remark, that these words of the

angels, though they consoled these men and women, at

the same time contained a reproach of their want of

faith. For if their faith had been well-founded and

permeated by the pure love and charity, it would not

have been necessary to remain there with their gaze

so intently fixed on the heavens, since they could not

see their Master, nor detain Him by the outward and

sensible demonstration of their love, which they showed

THE TRANSFIXION 787

in looking up in the air where they had seen Him dis

appear; but they should have enlivened their faith and

looked for Him and sought Him there, where He really

was and where they would certainly have found Him.

Theirs was a useless and imperfect manner of seeking

Him; for in order to obtain the presence and assistance

of his grace, it was not necessary that they should see

and converse with Him corporally. That they did not

understand this truth was a blamable defect in men

so enlightened and perfected. For a long time had the

Apostles and disciples attended the school of Christ our

God and they had drawn the doctrine of perfection from

its very fount, from a source so pure and exquisite,

that they should have been far advanced in spirituality

and highest perfection. But this is the misfortune of

our nature, that in its dependence upon the senses and

its satisfaction in exercising its lower faculties, it wishes

to love and enjoy even the most divine spiritual blessings

in a sensible manner. Accustomed to this grossness,

it is very dilatory in purifying and cleansing itself from

those lower elements; and sometimes it is thus deceived,

even when it firmly and eagerly pursues the highest aims.

This truth was well exemplified for our instruction in

the Apostles, who had been taught by the Lord that He

was the light and the truth, and at the same time the

way (John 14, 6), and that they were to come to the

knowledge of the eternal Father through Him, the true

way; since light shines not merely for its own self, and

a road is not made for the purpose of resting upon it.

817. This teaching, so often repeated in the Gospels,

heard from the lips of its Author, and confirmed by the

example of his life, should have raised the hearts and

the understanding of the Apostles to its comprehension

and practice. But the very pleasure which they found for

788 CITY OF GOD

their spirit and for their senses in the intercourse and

conversation with their Master, the security of their love,

and the assurance of the just love of their Master, kept

the forces of their will bound to their senses, so that

they did not know how to free themselves from the

encroachments of their lower faculties, nor ever became

aware how much of self-seeking there really was in their

piety and how much they were carried away by the

spiritual delight coming only from the senses. If their

divine Master had not left them by ascending into

heaven, they could not have separated from Him without

great bitterness and sorrow, and therefore would not

have been as fit to preach the Gospel; for this was to

be preached throughout the world at the cost of much

labors and difficulties, and at the risk of life itself.

This could not be the work of small-minded men, but

of men courageous and strong in love, men not ham

pered or softened by the sensible delights clinging to

the spirit, but ready to go through abundance or want,

infamy or renown, honors or dishonors, sorrows or

joys, preserving throughout it all their love and zeal

for the Lord, and a magnanimous heart, superior to

all prosperity and adversity (II Cor. 6, 8). After they

had therefore been admonished by the angels they left

mount Olivet and returned to the Cenacle with most

holy Mary, persevering in prayer and in their expectation

of the coming of the Holy Ghost, as \ve shall see in the

last part.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MOST HOLY MARY, THE QUEEN OF

HEAVEN, GAVE ME.

818. My daughter, thou wilt appropriately close this

second part of my life by remembering the lesson con

cerning the most efficacious sweetness of the divine love

THE TRANSFIXION 789

and the immense liberality of God with those souls, that

do not hinder its flowing. It is in conformity with the

inclinations of his holy and perfect will to regale rather

than afflict creatures, to console them rather than cause

them sorrow, to reward them rather than to chastise

them, to rejoice rather than grieve them. But mortals

ignore this divine science, because they desire from the

hands of the Most High such consolations, delights and

rewards, as are earthly and dangerous, and they prefer

them to the true and more secure blessings. The divine

Love then corrects this fault by the lessons conveyed in

tribulations and punishments. Human nature is slow,

coarse and uneducated; and if it is not cultivated and

softened, it gives no fruit in season, and on account of

its evil inclinations, will never of itself become fit for

the most loving and sweet intercourse with the highest

Good. Therefore it must be shaped and reduced by the

hammer of adversities, refined in the crucible of tribula

tion, in order that it may become fit and capable of the

divine gifts and favors and may learn to despise ter

restrial and fallacious goods, wherein death is concealed.

819. I counted for little all that I endured, when I saw

the reward which the divine Goodness had prepared for

me; and therefore He ordained, in his admirable Provi

dence, that I should return to the militant Church of

my own free will and choice. This I knew would

redound to my greater glory and to the exaltation of

his holy name, while it would provide assistance to his

Church and to his children in an admirable and holy

manner (I Tim. 1,17). It seemed to me a sacred duty,

that I deprive myself of the eternal felicity of which I

was in possession and, returning from heaven to earth,

gain new fruits of labor and love for the Almighty;

all this I owed to the divine Goodness, which had raised

790 CITY OF GOD

me up from the dust. Learn therefore, my beloved,

from my example, and excite thyself to imitate me most

eagerly during these times, in which the holy Church

is so disconsolate and overwhelmed by tribulations and

in which there are none of her children to console her.

In this cause I desire that thou labor strenuously, ready

to suffer in prayer and supplication, and crying from

the bottom of thy heart to the Omnipotent. And if it

were necessary thou shouldst be willing to give thy life.

I assure thee, my daughter, thy solicitude shall be very

pleasing in the eyes of my divine Son and in mine.

820. Let it all be for the glory and honor of the

Most High, the King of the ages, the Immortal and In

visible (I Tim. 1, 17), and for that of his Mother, the

most blessed Mary, through all the eternities !

END OF SECOND (NO THIRD!) PART

@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@ Volume 4 @@@@@@@@@@@@@@@@

REV. GEO. J. BLATTER.

"Dear Sir:

Twelve pears of labor in translation, and many more years of

expense and sacrifice, are not too great a price to pay for opening up

such a treasure as CIUDAD to the millions of English-speaking

people-" Respectfully,

FISCAR MARISON, Translator,

South Chicago, III.

CITY OF GOD

THE CORONATION

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE

OF THE

VIRGIN MOTHER OF GOD

MANIFESTED TO MARY OF AGREDA

FOR THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF MEN

Translated from the Original Spanish

EY

FISCAR MARISON

(Rev. Geo. J. Blatter)

FIRST COMPLETE EDITION

ADDRESS

THE THEOPOLITAN

SO. CHICAGO, ILL.

W. B. CONKEY COMPANY

HAMMOND, INDIANA

IMPRIMATUR

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father:

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your

English translation of the work entitled

"Ciudad de Dios." Wishing you every bless

ing, I remain

Devotedly in Domino,

H. J. AWARDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

COPYRIGHT, 1914

BY

REV. GEO. J. BLATTEB

All Rights Reserved.

MYSTICAL

CITY OF GOD

THE MIRACLE OF HIS OMNIPOTENCE

AND THE ABYSS OF HIS GRACE

THE DIVINE HISTORY AND LIFE OF THE VIRGIN

MOTHER OF GOD

OUR QUEEN AND OUR LADY, MOST HOLY MARY

EXPIATRIX OF THE FAULT OF EVE

AND MEDIATRIX OF GRACE

Manifested in these later ages by that Lady to her handmaid

SISTER MARY OF JESUS

Superioress of the convent of the Immaculate Conception of the town

of Agreda, of the province of Burgos in Spain, under

obedience to the regular observance

of the seraphic father

SAINT FRANCIS

For new enlightenment of the world, for rejoicing

of the Catholic Church, and encouragement of men.

Translation from the Original Authorized Spanish Edition

BY

FISCAR MARISON

Begun on the Feast of the Assumption

1902

APR 27

CONTENTS

BOOK ONE

INTRODUCTION

TO THE THIRD PART OF THIS DIVINE HISTORY, WHICH EMBRACES

THE LATTER PART OF THE MOST HOLY LIFE OF MARY, THE

MOTHER OF GOD 3

CHAPTER I.

OUR SAVIOR JESUS REMAINS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE

ETERNAL FATHER, WHILE THE MOST HOLY MARY DESCENDS

FROM HEAVEN TO THE EARTH, IN ORDER THAT, WITH HER AS

SISTANCE AND INSTRUCTION, THE NEW CHURCH MIGHT BE

FOUNDED 29

CHAPTER II.

SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST, IN CHAPTER THE TYENTY-FIRST OF

THE APOCALYPSE, GIVES A LITERAL DESCRIPTION OF HIS VISION

OF THE MOST HOLY MARY OUR LADY AS SHE DESCENDED FROM

HEAVEN 39

CHAPTER III.

COMPLETING THE EXPLANATION OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER OF

THE APOCALYPSE 53

CHAPTER IV.

THREE DAYS AFTER THE MOST BLESSED MARY DESCENDED FROM

HEAVEN, SHE MANIFESTS HERSELF AND SPEAKS IN PERSON TO

THE APOSTLES; CHRIST OUR LORD VISITS HER; OTHER MYSTERIES

UNTIL THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST 66

CHAPTER V.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST UPON THE APOSTLES AND THE

OTHER FAITHFUL; THE MOST BLESSED MARY SEES HIM INTUI

TIVELY; OTHER MOST HIDDEN MYSTERIES WHICH HAPPENED

ON THAT OCCASION 83

vi CONTENTS

CHAPTER VI.

THE APOSTLES LEAVE THE CENACLE TO PREACH TO THE GATHERING

MULTITUDE; THEY SPEAK IN VARIOUS TONGUES; AND ABOUT

THREE THOUSAND ARE CONVERTED ON THAT DAY; THE DOINGS

OF MOST HOLY MARY ON THIS OCCASION 96

CHAPTER VII.

THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES MEET IN ORDER TO SOLVE SOME

DOUBTS, IN PARTICULAR ABOUT THE FORM OF BAPTISM; THEY

ADMINISTER THAT SACRAMENT TO THE CATECHUMENS; SAINT

PETER CELEBRATES THE FIRST MASS; THE DOINGS OF MARY IN

THE MEANWHILE , 115

CHAPTER VIII.

EXPLANATION OF THE MIRACLE THROUGH WHICH THE SACRA

MENTAL SPECIES WERE PRESERVED IN THE MOST BLESSED MARY

FROM ONE COMMUNION TO THE NEXT; THE MANNER OF ITS

OPERATION AFTER SHE CAME DOWN TO THE CHURCH FROM

HEAVEN 133

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOST HOLY MARY SEES LUCIFER RISING UP TO PERSECUTE THE

CHURCH I WHAT MEASURES SHE TOOK TO DEFEND AND PROTECT

THE FAITHFUL AGAINST THIS ENEMY 148

CHAPTER X.

THE FAVORS WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY CONFERRED UPON THE

APOSTLES THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF HER ANGELS , THE

SALVATION OF A WOMAN PROCURED BY MARY IN THE LAST

HOUR, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO OTHERS THAT DAMNED THEM

SELVES 164

CHAPTER XL

OF THE PRUDENCE OF MARY IN GOVERNING THE NEW FAITHFUL;

HER DEALINGS WITH STEPHEN DURING HIS LIFE AND AT HIS

DEATH J AND OTHER EVENTS 183

CHAPTER XII.

THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH AFTER THE DEATH OF SAINT

STEPHEN; THE LABORS OF MARY, OUR QUEEN, WHILE IT

LASTED; AND HER SOLICITUDE IN URGING THE APOSTLES TO

COMPOSE THE SYMBOL OF THE CREED 200

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BLESSED MARY SENDS THE CREED TO THE DISCIPLES AND OTHERS

OF THE FAITHFUL; THEY WORK GREAT WONDERS WITH IT;

THE APOSTLES RESOLVE TO PARTITION THE EARTH AMONG

THEMSELVES J OTHER DOINGS OF THE GREAT QUEEN OF HEAVEN 216

CONTENTS vii

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONVERSION Of SAINT PAUL AND THE PART TAKEN THEREIN

BY MOST HOLY MARY ; OTHER HIDDEN MYSTERIES 237

CHAPTER XV.

THE HIDDEN COMBAT OF THE DEMONS AGAINST SOULS J HOW THE

MOST HIGH DEFENDS THEM THROUGH HIS HOLY ANGELS,

THROUGH THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN, AND BY HIS OWN POWER ;

THE CONSULTATION HELD BY THE HELLISH FOES AGAINST THE

QUEEN AND THE CHURCH AFTER THE CONVERSION OF SAINT

PAUL 261

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MOST HOLY MARY PERCEIVES THE INTENTIONS OF THE DEMON

TO PERSECUTE THE CHURCH ; SHE IMPLORES THE DIVINE AS

SISTANCE BEFORE THE THRONE OF THE MOST HIGH IN HEAVEN J

SHE FOREWARNS THE APOSTLES; SAINT JAMES ARRIVES IN

SPAIN TO PREACH THE GOSPEL AND IS VISITED THERE BY THE

MOST BLESSED LADY 288

CHAPTER XVII.

LUCIFER STIRS UP ANOTHER PERSECUTION AGAINST THE CHURCH

AND AGAINST THE MOST BLESSED MARY; SHE MAKES IT

KNOWN TO SAINT JOHN, AND AT HIS ADVICE RESOLVES TO GO

TO EPHESUS; HER DIVINE SON APPEARS TO HER AND COM

MANDS HER TO VISIT SAINT JAMES IN SARAGOSSA ; THE EVENTS

CONNECTED WITH THIS VISIT. 310

BOOK TWO

CHAPTER I.

THE MOST BLESSED MARY DEPARTS WITH SAINT JOHN FROM

JERUSALEM FOR EPHESUS ; SAINT PAUL GOES FROM DAMASCUS

TO JERUSALEM; SAINT JAMES ARRIVES THERE; HE VISITS THE

GREAT QUEEN IN EPHESUS J REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERIOUS

HAPPENINGS DURING ALL THESE JOURNEYS 337

CHAPTER II.

THE GLORIOUS MARTYRDOM OF SAINT JAMES ; THE MOST BLESSED

MARY ASSISTS HIM AND BEARS HIS SOUL TO HEAVEN ; HIS

BODY IS BROUGHT TO SPAIN ; THE IMPRISONMENT OF SAINT

PETER AND HIS LIBERATION FROM PRISON; THE MYSTERIES

CONNECTED WITH THESE EVENTS.. . 357

viii CONTENTS

CHAPTER III.

THE DOINGS OF THE MOST BLESSED MARY IN CONNECTION WITH

THE DEATH AND CHASTISEMENT OF HEROD; SAINT JOHN

PREACHES IN EPHESUS AND WORKS MANY MIRACLES I LUCIFER

RISES UP TO BATTLE WITH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN 371

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOST BLESSED MARY DESTROYS THE TEMPLE OF DIANA IN

EPHESUS J HER ANGELS BRING HER TO THE EMPYREAN HEAVENS,

WHERE THE LORD PREPARES HER FOR THE BATTLE AND VICTORY

OVER THE INFERNAL DRAGON J THIS CONFLICT BEGINS WITH

TEMPTATIONS TO PRIDE 386

CHAPTER V.

THE MOST HOLY MARY, CALLED BY THE APOSTLE SAINT PETER,

RETURNS FROM EPHESUS; SHE CONTINUES HER BATTLE WITH

THE DEMONS; is OVERTAKEN BY GREAT STORMS AT SEA; SOME

OTHER INTERVENING MYSTERIES 406

CHAPTER VI.

THE VISIT OF THE MOST BLESSED MARY TO THE HOLY PLACES J SHE

GAINS MYSTERIOUS TRIUMPHS OVER THE DEMONS; SHE SEES

THE DIVINITY IN HEAVEN BY A BEATIFIC VISION ; THE APOSTLES

CONVOKE A COUNCIL ;. THE HIDDEN MYSTERIES CONNECTED WITH

ALL THESE EVENTS 425

CHAPTER VII.

THE MOST HOLY MARY ENDS THE BATTLE WITH THE DEMONS,

GLORIOUSLY TRIUMPHING OVER THEM AS IS DESCRIBED BY SAINT

JOHN IN THE TWELFTH CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE 444

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STATE OF CONTINUAL ABSTRACTIVE VISION, IN WHICH GOD

PLACED THE MOST BLESSED MARY AFTER HER VICTORY OVER

THE DEMONS, AND HER BEHAVIOR THEREIN 464

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE GOSPELS WRITTEN BY THE EVANGELISTS J

THE PART WHICH THE MOST BLESSED MARY HAD IN THEIR

COMPOSITION ; SHE APPEARS TO SAINT PETER IN ANTIOCH AND

IN ROME; SIMILAR FAVORS SHOWN TO OTHER APOSTLES 481

CHAPTER X.

THE EXERCISES IN MEMORY OF THE PASSION PRACTICED BY THE

MOST HOLY MARY; THE REVERENCE WITH WHICH SHE RE

CEIVED HOLY COMMUNION, AND OTHER DOINGS OF HER MOST

HOLY LIFE . 496

CONTENTS ix

CHAPTER XI.

THE LORD, BY NEW FAVORS, RAISES THE MOST BLESSED MARY ABOVE

THE STATE DESCRIBED IN THE EIGHTH CHAPTER OF THIS BOOK 510

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE MOST BLESSED MARY CELEBRATED HER IMMACULATE CON

CEPTION AND NATIVITY; AND THE BLESSINGS WHICH SHE

RECEIVED ON THOSE DAYS FROM HER SON OUR SAVIOR JESUS.. 522

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOST BLESSED MARY COMMEMORATES OTHER BLESSINGS WITH

HER ANGELS, ESPECIALLY HER PRESENTATION AND THE FEAST

DAYS OF SAINT JOACHIM, SAINT ANNE AND SAINT JOSEPH.. 533

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WONDERFUL MANNER IN WHICH THE MOST BLESSED MARY

CELEBRATED THE MYSTERIES OF THE INCARNATION AND NA

TIVITY OF THE GODMAN, AND HOW SHE GAVE THANKS FOR

THESE IMMENSE BLESSINGS 546

CHAPTER XV.

OTHER FEASTDAYS CELEBRATED BY THE MOST BLESSED MARY IN

MEMORY OF THE CIRCUMCISION, THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS,

HER PURIFICATION, THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, HIS FAST, THE

INSTITUTION OF BLESSED SACRAMENT, HIS PASSION AND RESUR

RECTION 562

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE MOST BLESSED MARY CELEBRATED THE FEASTS OF THE

ASCENSION OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR, THE COMING OF THE HOLY

GHOST, THE FEAST OF THE HOLY ANGELS AND SAINTS AND

OTHER ANNIVERSARIES OF FAVORS RECEIVED BY HER 575

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ANGEL GABRIEL SENT AS AMBASSADOR TO THE MOST BLESSED

MARY TO INFORM HER THAT SHE STILL HAD THREE YEARS

OF LIFE, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO SAINT JOHN AND TO ALL

NATURE AT THIS NEWS 589

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE DESIRES AND LONGINGS OF MOST HOLY MARY TO SEE

GOD INCREASED DURING HER LAST DAYS ; SHE TAKES LEAVE OF

THE SACRED PLACES AND OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH J SHE

MAKES HER TESTAMENT IN THE PRESENCE OF THE MOST

BLESSED TRINITY . . 603

x CONTENTS

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GLORIOUS AND HAPPY TRANSITION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY.

HOW THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES ARRIVED PREVIOUSLY IN

JERUSALEM AND WERE PRESENT AT HER DEATH 620

CHAPTER XX.

THE BURIAL OF THE SACRED BODY OF THE MOST BLESSED MARY, AND

WHAT HAPPENED THEREAT . 632

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SOUL OF THE MOST HOLY MARY ENTERS THE EMPYREAN

HEAVEN AND, IN IMITATION OF CHRIST OUR REDEEMER, RE

TURNS TO RESUSCITATE HER SACRED BODY; IN IT SHE AGAIN

ASCENDS TO THE RIGHT HAND OF THE LORD ON THE THIRD DAY 641

CHAPTER XXII.

MOST HOLY MARY IS CROWNED AS QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND OF ALL

CREATURES ; ALL HER GREAT PRIVILEGES IN FAVOR OF MANKIND

ARE AGAIN CONFIRMED UPON HER 653

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN OFFERING OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING MADE BY ME, SISTER

MARY OF JESUS, THE LEAST OF THE MORTALS, TO THE LORD

AND TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER, FOR HAVING BEEN CHOSEN

TO WRITE THIS HEAVENLY HISTORY UNDER THE DIRECTION OF

THE QUEEN AND MISTRESS OF HEAVEN 664

A List of Noted Men in High Stations of Life

Who have Praised and Recommended

Ciudad de Dios of Agreda

Official approbation of Michael, Bishop of Tarazona,

in whose diocese the work was written and first pub

lished, given May 6, 1667.

The noted Jesuit Theologian, Andreas Mendo, S. J.,

at the College of Madrid, on Oct. 29, 1666, at the order

of the Bishop, closely examined Ciudad and confesses

that no praise can be equal to its merits, which statement

is officially endorsed on Nov. 6, 1666, by his superior,

Dr. D. Francisco Forteza.

Official approbation of Paulus de Halmale, censor of

the Antwerp diocese, June 12, 1686.

Imprimatur and recommendation of Constantius Cal-

donatius, Vicar General of Trent, Nov. 14, 1708.

High recommendation and approbation of the Ordi

nary of Augsburg through Johannes Michael Sembler,

D. D., specially for the German edition, June 18, 1714,

Jo. Casimirus Episc. Myclensis, for the Latin edition

April 2,1719, Jan. Jacob. Episcopus Pergamensis.

Diocesan approbation of the French edition in

Tournai, May 6, 1858, signed A. R. V. Descamps,

Vic. Gen.

Highest recommendation of Ciudad by Fr. Alfons

Salizanes, general of the Franciscan Order, Nov. 12,

1668, published in an official letter to Fr. Joseph Ximenes

Samaniego.

After fourteen years of closest scrutiny, the Inquisi

tion at Madrid, July 3, 1686, through Antonius Alvarez

de la Puente, Bishop and Inquisitor General, permits

the free publication of Ciudad, as containing nothing

objectionable.

Didacus de Silva, Theologian and General of the

xi

xii NOTABLE UPHOLDERS OF CIUDAD

Spanish Benedictines, unstintedly praises Ciudad as

ranking among the most excellent writings, Madrid,

Dec. 15, 1666.

The work is its own highest recommendation" words

occurring in an official approbation of the Portuguese

Jesuits, Lisbon, March 6, 1680, and signed P. Franciscus

de Almada, S. J.

More extended praise from Antonius de Moralez,

Theologian, ordinis SS. Trinitatis, March 18, 1680.

Official declaration of the University of Salamanca,

issued July 4, 1699, that Ciudad in all things harmonizes

with orthodox teachings of Catholic Theology, this dec

laration being signed by the theological faculties of prac

tically all the religious orders, namely the Augustinians,

Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Jesuits, Cister

cians, Basilians, Minims, Hieronymites, Premonstraten-

sians, Theatines, the Calced and Discalced Trinitarians,

the Calced and Discalced Mercedarians, the Reformed

Augustinians and the Canons Regular.

Official approbations of the Universities of Alcala,

June 17, 1699.

The University of Granada, in 1698, approves the

high encomiums of Ciudad published in a book by

Dr. Johannes de Leyba.

The University of Saragossa in the same year, that

of Philip Bezerra.

The Academy of Perpignan, in France, through the

Ordinary and through Anton de Camps, Jesuit professor

there, issues highest recommendations of Ciudad.

Even the University of Paris, the Sorbonne, although

many of its faculty were tainted with Jansenism, and

therefore adverse to giving proper honor to the Mother

of God, nevertheless, according to the records of votes

taken and the expressed sentiments of the greater and

NOTABLE UPHOLDERS OF CIUDAD xiii

saner part of its faculty at the time, was constrained

unofficially to approve of Ciudad de Dios. As prac

tically all adverse criticism originated from the Sorbonne,

above fact should be especially noted.

Another great French University, that of Toulouse,

endorsed the publication of Grenier s "Compendium" by

issuing an official commendation of Ciudad in highest

terms of praise, which document was signed for the

faculty by Casemajon, Rabii, and J. Gisbert, S. J., Theo

logians, on Nov. 25, 1694.

In Volume III, The Transfixion, is given in full the

official approbation of the great University of Louvain,

to which we refer the reader. The high recommenda

tions contained therein, placing the CITY OF GOD

among the greatest books of the world, are repeated in

nearly all the above mentioned documents.

It was necessary to confine ourselves merely to the

dates and signatures of a few documents, because if

these and many others were quoted in full, it would be

necessary to add hundreds of pages to this volume. If

all the writings of eminent and learned men in Chris

tianity, praising the CITY OF GOD as the most won

derful, the most useful, the most interesting, the most re

liable book in the world, were to be printed in con

nection with this translation, this book would probably

have to be extended to one hundred volumes instead of

being restricted to four.

Why multiply recommendations ?

All adverse criticism you may see written or hear

expressed, is absolutely without foundation and mere

waste of time in our day. The past three centuries have

more closely scrutinized every line of Ciudad to find a

flaw than you can ever hope to do. And there was no

flaw to be found. Read and be convinced!

FISCAR MARISON.

APPROBATIONS

THE first Pope officially to take notice of "Ciudad

de Dios" was Pope Innocent XI, who, on July 3,

1686, in response to a series of virulent attacks

and machinations of some members of the Sorbonne,

known to be Jansenists, issued a breve permitting- the

publication and reading\* of the "Ciudad de Dios/ Similar

decrees were afterward issued by Popes Alexander VIII,

Clement IX and Benedict XIII. These decrees were

followed by two decrees of the Congregation of Rites,

approved by Benedict XIV and Clement XIV, in which

the authenticity of "Ciudad de Dios" as extant and writ

ten by the Venerable Servant of God, Mary of Jesus, is

officially established. The great pope Benedict XIII,

when he was archbishop of Benevent, used these revela

tions as material for a series of sermons on the Blessed

Virgin. On Sept. 26, 1713, the bishop of Ceneda, Italy,

objecting to the publication of the "City of God," was

peremptorily ordered by the Holy Office to withdraw his

objections as interfering with the decree of pope

Innocent XI for the universal Church.

The process of canonization of Mary of Agreda was

promoted by the Spanish bishops and other eminent men

of the Church soon after her death in 1666. It has re

sulted so far in securing her the title of Venerabilis, thus

clearing the way to her beatification, for which, let us

hope, God will soon raise a promoter among the many

pious and eminent men who hold in esteem her writings

xv

xvi APPROBATIONS

and have learned of her holy life and of the miracles

wrought at her tomb.

The Redemptorist Fathers published a new German

translation in 1885, which was approved and highly

recommended by the Bishop of Ratisbon in the follow

ing terms:

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approba

tion to the annotated translation of the Spanish original

"Ciudad de Dios" of Mary of Jesus and recommend this

book, which will surely edify all readers and be the occa

sion of great spiritual blessings."

Ratisbon, September 29, 1885.

iji IGNATIUS, Bishop of Ratisbon.

Notable is the high recommendation of the Prince-

Archbishop of Salzburg, Apost. Legate, Primate of Ger

many, etc.

"According to the decrees of Pope Innocent XI and

Clement XI the book known as Ciudad de Dios written

by the Venerable Servant of God, Maria de Jesus, may

be read by all the faithful."

"A number of episcopal approbations, the recommen

dations of four renowned universities, namely, of Tou

louse, Salamanca, Alcala and Louvain, and of prominent

members of different orders, coincide in extolling the

above-named work. The learned and pious Cardinal

D Aguirre says that he considers all the studies of fifty

years of his previous life as of small consequence in com

parison with the doctrines he found in this book, which in

all things are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures, the

Holy Fathers and Councils of the Church. The Ven

erable Superior-General of St. Sulpice, Abbe Emery,

adds: "Only since I read the revelations of Mary of

Agreda do I properly know Jesus and his Holy Mother."

APPROBATIONS xvii

"We therefore do not hesitate in granting our epis

copal approbation to "Ciudad de D ios" and wish to

recommend it to the faithful and especially to our

clergy."

^ FRANZ ALBERT,

Archbishop.

Archiepiscopal Chancery, Salzburg.

September 12, 1885:

A more recent official approbation of "Ciudad de Dios"

is from the Bishop of Tarazona, prefacing the new edi

tion of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God

and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Admin

istrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo,

chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immacu

late Conception of Agreda, carefully and exactly to

compare the manuscript which is to serve as copy for

the printing of the new edition of the "City of God"

now about to be published by the religious of the above-

named convent, with the authenticated autograph

manuscript of that work there preserved, and hav

ing ascertained by a personal revision of a great part

of the manuscript that the said priest has diligently

and faithfully fulfilled this charge imposed upon him

by us:

We now therefore certify that this present edition

of Ciudad de Dios, with the exception of a few mere

orthographic modifications, is entirely conformable to

the autograph of that work as composed and written

by the Venerable Mother Mary of Jesus of Agreda.

Tarazona, April 7, 1911.

[Diocesan Seal] iji JAMES, Bishop of Tarazona.

xviii APPROBATIONS

Finally follows the official approbation of the Right

Reverend Bishop of the Fort Wayne Diocese, where this

English translation is published.

Rome City, Ind., Aug. 24, 1912.

The Rev. George J. Blatter,

Dear Rev. Father :

My Imprimatur is herewith granted to your English

translation of the work entitled Ciudad de Dios. Wish

ing you every blessing, I remain,

Devotedly in Domino,

. J. AWARDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

The author has made use of capital letters in the text slightly at

variance with common usage, in order to avoid complication and se

cure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the

newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridg

ment they vary slightly.

City of God is divided into three Parts and eight Books. Part I

contains Books 1 and 2. Part II contains Books 3, 4, 5 and 6. Part

III contains Books 7 and 8. As circumstances compel a serial publi

cation of the four volumes, the author judged it best to head these

divisions as follow :

THE CONCEPTION, Books 1 and 2.

THE INCARNATION, Books 3 and 4.

THE TRANSFIXION, Books 5 and 6.

THE CORONATION, Books 7 and 8.

Cfje Coronation

of tfje &lt;ueen of ^eatoen, mot

tontammg tl)e &lt;fibent0 of fter 3life

from tftc Coming of tf)e Dolp &lt;Dfto#t until

tf&gt;e Sl0;0uniption anb Coronation of

tfje Virgin ^totf^er of 4Bo& in

INTRODUCTION

TO THE THIRD PART OF THIS DIVINE HISTORY, WHICH

EMBRACES THE I^ATTER PART OF THE MOST HOLY LIFE

OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF GOD.

1. In navigating 1 a deep and dangerous sea, the naviga

tor is so much the more dangerously beset with its terrors

and the attacks of pirates, the farther he has penetrated

into its wide expanses. His cares are vastly increased on

account of his weakness and want of certainty; for he

does not know when or whence danger may come, and he

is powerless to avert its coming and unable to resist it

when at hand. This is just what is now happening to

me since I am engulfed in the immense ocean of the ex

cellence and magnificence of the works of the most holy

Mary. And yet it is a sea full of repose and tranquillity,

as I know and confess. Nor can the fact, that I have

advanced so far upon this sea of grace, and that I have

finished the first and second part of her life, give me

assurance; for in this work I have, as in a most clear

mirror, only so much the more clearly perceived my own

incapability and vileness, and the deepest conviction

forces itself upon me, that her history is most impene

trable and incomprehensible to all created understand

ing. Nor are the enemies, the princes of darkness, ever

at rest; for, like the most persistent pirates, they con

tinue to afflict and discourage me by false illusions and

temptations with a malice and astuteness beyond all cal

culation. The navigator has no other recourse than to fix

his sight upon the north-star, according to which, as his

4 INTRODUCTION

star of the sea, he must guide and direct his course amid

the waves. I am trying to do the same in the midst of

these multitudinous and tormenting temptations and

fears. Guided by my Star, the most holy Mary, in whom,

through obedience, I can ascertain and fix my will upon

the will of the Eternal, and being many times afflicted,

full of unquietness and fear, I cry out from the bottom

of my heart and say: "My Lord and most high God,

what shall I do in my doubts ? Shall I proceed, or shall

I desist, in writing this history? Do thou, O Mother

of grace and my Instructress, make known to me thy will

and that of thy divine Son."

2. I must confess truly, and as due to the divine con

descension, that God has always answered my clamors

and has never denied me his paternal kindness in making

known his will in many ways. Although this is suf

ficiently evident in the assistance rendered to me in

the writing of the first and second parts, yet besides

this proof, there are innumerable other assurances given

me by the Lord himself, by his most holy Mother, and

his angels, so that evidences have been heaped upon

evidences, and testimonies upon testimonies, to counter

act my cowardice and fear. What is more, the angels

themselves in visible shapes, being the prelates and min

isters of the Lord in his holy Church, have pointed out

and reiterated the divine commandment, bidding me to

believe and execute this commission, and to continue to

the end. Nor was there wanting to me the light of

infused science, which sweetly and forcefully called, en

lightened and moved my heart to the knowledge of the

highest perfection, the most immaculate holiness, the

most perfect virtue and the most desirable of what can

be sought by the will. It has at the same time referred

me to all this as enclosed and reserved, like a hidden

INTRODUCTION 5

manna, in that ark of the covenant, most holy Mary,

open for all that wish to approach and taste thereof.

3. Nevertheless, on entering upon the writing of this

third part, I was beset by new and harassing contradic

tions, not less formidable than those experienced in the

first two portions of this history. I can say without

fear, that I have not composed a sentence or a word, nor

have I brought myself to write the least part of it, without

experiencing more temptations than the letters of the

alphabet of which it is composed. Although the hindrances

caused by my own fear would have been sufficient ( since I

know who I am, and cannot help being cowardly, nor

ever can put less confidence in myself than what my own

weakness will warrant) ; yet neither this, nor the mag

nitude of the undertaking were the real impediments,

though these were at first unsuspected. I presented to

the Lord the second part, which I had written, in the

same way as I had presented the first. Under strict

obedience I was compelled to begin this third part, and,

by the strength which this virtue gives to all that prac

tice it, I allayed the fear and faintness of my heart in

executing what had been assigned to me. But fluctu

ating between my desire and fear of commencing, I was

cast about like a vessel, combated by violent and con

trary winds.

4. On the one hand, the Lord bade me proceed in

what I had begun, as such was his will; nor, in my

continual prayers, did I ever feel impelled to a different

course. It is true, for some time I paid no attention

to these directions of the Most High and did not mani

fest them immediately to my superior and to my con

fessor (not because I wished to conceal them, but in

order to act more securely and in order that they might

not suspect I followed only my own insight). But the

6 INTRODUCTION

Lord, who is so even and equable in all his works, inspired

them with a new energy in pressing their continual ex

hortations and commands. Yet on the other hand, the

envy and malice of the ancient serpent maligned all that

I did or was moved to undertake. He raised up against

me tormenting and alluring temptations, by which he

sometimes sought to inspire me with his own boundless

pride. At others, and very often, he sought to cast me

down to deepest dejection and involve me in darkest

and most disorderly fears, increasing his efforts as this

history progressed, and especially as it was coming to

a close. This enemy also availed himself of the judgment

of some persons, who justly could claim my respect and

who would not further this work. He caused also dis

turbances among the religious under my charge. It

seemed to me that I had no time to spare and was obliged

to attend to the welfare of the community, as the most

important duty of a superioress. With all these molesta

tions I came to no such interior peace, as is necessary

for and befitting the actual enlightenment and intelli

gence concerning the mysteries to be treated of. For this

light cannot be perceived, nor is it properly communi

cated, amid the spiritual storms of temptation, but will

shine only in the peace and serenity of the soul s fac

ulties.

5. Afflicted and harassed by such a variety of tempta

tions, I ceased not in my clamors. On one day in par

ticular I spoke to the Lord: "Highest Lord and Good

of my soul, to thy wisdom are not concealed my sighs

and my desire to please Thee and to avoid errors in

thy service (Ps. 37, 10). Lovingly I lament in thy

royal presence; for, either Thou commandest me, O

Lord, what I cannot fulfill, or Thou permittest thy and

my enemies to hinder by their malice what Thou com-

INTRODUCTION 7

mandest." The Lord answered my complaint and with

some severity, said : "Remember, soul, that thou canst

not continue what thou hast begun, nor wilt thou finish

the writings of my Mother s life, if thou wilt not become

altogether perfect and pleasing in my eyes. For I wish

that thou gather within thee the copious fruits of this

benefit, and that thou among the first, profit by it in

greatest abundance. In order that thou mayest share its

fruits as I wish, it is necessary, that all which is earthly

in thee and savoring of a daughter of Adam be con

sumed. Thou must be free from the effects of sin

with all its evil inclinations and habits." This answer

of the Lord excited in me new solicitudes and the most

burning desire of performing all that it implied ; namely,

not only a common mortification of all the inclinations

and passions, but an absolute death of the animal and

terrestrial life and its renovation and transformation into

a celestial and angelic state of existence.

6. Desiring to apply my powers to what was proposed

to me, I examined my inclinations and appetites, I

searched the bystreets and corners of my interior and

felt a most ardent wish to die to all that is visible and

earthly. For some days I suffered in these exercises

great affliction and melancholy; for, in proportion to

my anxiety, increased also the dangers and occasions

of being diverted by attention to creatures. The

more I sought to withdraw myself from all my sur

roundings, so much the more did I find myself bound

and oppressed by what I abhorred. Of all this the

enemy availed himself for my discouragement, repre

senting such a life as altogether impossible to me. To

this affliction was suddenly added another new, strange

disorder. I felt in my body a condition so sensitive

that the least exertion, even the most insignificant mor-

8 INTRODUCTION

tification, became more intolerable to me than until then

the most severe penances. Those that I was accustomed

to undergo most willingly, required now the most violent

exertion, and I found myself become so delicate that they

seemed to inflict upon me mortal wounds. To undergo

discipline was an excruciating pain, causing swoons, and

each stroke cut through my very heart. Without exag

geration I say, that merely to touch one hand with the

other forced out my tears, so that I felt great confusion

and grief at being so miserable. In forcing myself to

labor in spite of this infirmity, I found my blood oozing

from my fingernails.

7. I could not account for this new experience, and

in considering it, I impatiently exclaimed: "Ah me!

What misery is this? What change do I feel within

me? The Lord commands me to mortify myself and

die to all creatures, and I feel myself much more alive

to pain and much less mortified. " For some days I

suffered in great bitterness and impatience of my soul.

In order to moderate my disturbance, the Most High

consoled me, saying : "My Daughter and Spouse, let not

thy heart be afflicted at the vividness of thy sufferings.

I have sought by this means to distinguish in thee the

effects of sin and to restore thee to a new life and pre

pare thee for works more exalted and pleasing to Me.

Until thou shalt have attained this state, thou canst not

begin to write what remains of the life of my Mother

and thy Mistress." This answer of the Lord somewhat

encouraged me; for his words are words of life, vivifying

the heart (John 6, 69). Although my troubles and temp

tations were not abated, I prepared myself for labor and

battle; yet I continued to distrust my weakness and in

ability and despaired of finding a remedy. I sought

it in the Mother of life, and I resolved to ask for help

INTRODUCTION 9

in sincerity and constancy. For She is the only and

most certain refuge of the needy and afflicted and She

has continually heaped her many favors upon me, the

most useless creature of the world.

8. I prostrated myself at the feet of the great Lady

of heaven and earth, and pouring out my spirit in her

presence, I besought Her mercifully to remedy my im

perfections and defects. I represented to Her my desire

of pleasing Her and her divine Son and again offered

myself for her service, even if I should have to pass

through fire and torments and shed my blood. The

kind Mother answered my supplications by saying: "My

daughter, understand well, that these desires, which the

Most High again excites in thy heart, are pledges and

effects of his love, by which He calls thee to his inti

mate intercourse and familiarity. It is his most holy

will and mine, that thou on thy part correspond to them

in order that thou mayest not hinder thy vocation or

retard any longer the pleasure of his Majesty in what

He requires of thee. During all the writing of my life

I exhorted and reminded thee of thy obligations con

nected with this blessing, namely that thou imprint in

thyself the living image of its teachings and of my

example according to the graces thou receivest. Thou

hast now arrived at the third and last part of this his

tory; and it is time thou raise thyself to a perfect imita

tion of Me, clothing thyself with new strength and

extending thy hand to strong doings (Prov. 31, 17). By

such a life and behavior thou wilt be able to begin what

still remains to be written; for it must be written in

such a way, that thou put in practice the lessons it

inculcates. Without such a disposition thou wilt not be

able to write it; since it is the will of the Lord, that my

history shall be written more in thy heart than on paper,

10 INTRODUCTION

and that thou feel what thou writest, in order that thou

mayest write what thou feelest."

9. "Therefore I desire that thy interior be cleared

from all earthly images and inclinations (Ps. 44, 11);

so that, having put away and forgotten all visible things,

thou mayest center all thy conversation and intercourse

upon thy Lord (Phil. 3, 20), upon me, and upon his

angels; and let all other things be strange and foreign

to thee. In the strength of this virtue and purity, which

I require of thee, thou shalt crush the head of the

ancient serpent and conquer his opposition to thy writing

and laboring. Because thou art so tardy in responding

to the wishes of the Lord, in entering upon the path

He wishes thee to pursue, and in placing full confidence

in his blessed intentions, I tell thee truly : while attending

to these empty fears, thou art so tardy in responding to

the Lord, in entering upon the path He wishes thee to

pursue and in placing full confidence in his blessed in

tentions, that, precisely on this account, divine Provi

dence has permitted the dragon to be the minister of his

justice in punishing thy unbelief and thy want of

submission to his will. That same enemy has concocted

schemes to draw thee into some faults by setting before

thee his deceits in the garb of a good intention and of

virtuous ends, and by seeking falsely to persuade thee,

that thou art not destined for such high favors and

exalted blessings; and, in order that thou mayest not

merit them, he has made thee dull and tardy in rendering

thanks for them. Thou hast been taken in by the deceit

of deeming these works of the Most High due to thee

in justice, and not as works of grace; and so thou hast

neglected to co-operate to the fullest extent with the

divine graces and hast not corresponded to those thou

receivest without any merit of thy own. It is time,

INTRODUCTION 11

my dearest, that thou be assured, and that thou believe

the Lord and me ; for I teach thee the highest perfection,

namely the imitation of me. Thus shall be conquered

the pride and cruelty of the demon and his head crushed

by divine power. There is no reason why thou shouldst

impede its effects; but, forgetting all things, consign

thyself lovingly into the hands of my divine Son and

mine; for We desire of thee what is most holy, most

praiseworthy and pleasing in our eyes and estimation."

10. By this instruction of my heavenly Lady, Mother

and Teacher, my soul was replenished with new light

and with the desire of obeying Her in all things. I

renewed my good resolutions, I resolved to raise myself

by the help of divine grace, and I strove to prepare

myself for the fulfillment of the will of the Most High

without resistance. I availed myself of my bodily con

dition, by which, as mentioned above, my sensibility to

mortification had been so much enlivened and increased.

But the demon abated not in his strife and opposition.

He knew that the enterprise I was to assume was very

arduous and that the state to which the Lord raised

me was a refuge, but one far above human weakness

and earthly dullness. Gladly will I confess this truth

and the slowness caused by my frailty and sluggishness.

I acknowledge, that the Lord has labored with me during

my whole life in order to raise me from the dust and

from the dunghill of my vileness, multiplying his bless

ings and favors beyond all my comprehension. More

over He has seconded all these blessings by the aid of

his right hand in order to gain his end. I cannot at

present mention all that He did for me ; but at the same

time it seems unjust to pass it over in silence entirely,

since it will show to what misery sin has brought us

and what distance there is between the capacity of

12 INTRODUCTION

the reasoning creature and the summit of virtue and

perfection it can attain. It will also show what it costs

to restore man to that capacity.

11. Some years before writing this I was repeatedly

favored with an extraordinary blessing at the hands of

God. It was a sort of death to all the animal and

terrestrial operations, like that of civil death; and this

state was followed by another, which was one of new

enlightenment and of more exalted operations. But since

the soul always remains clothed in mortal and earthly

corruption, I continue to feel the heavy weight of the

flesh overwhelming and degrading the soul (Wis. 9, 15),

unless the Lord renews his wonders and favors me with

the assistance of divine grace. On that occasion this

renewal was wrought in me through the Mother of

piety, who, speaking to me in a vision, said : "Take heed,

my daughter, that now thou must begin to live not thy

own life, but the life of thy Spouse Christ in thee (Gal. 2,

20) ; He is to be the life of thy soul, and the soul of thy

life. For this purpose I wish to cause in thee the death

of thy old life, which has so far operated in thee, and

establish in thee the new life, which We ask of thee.

Let it then today be known to heaven and earth, that

sister Mary of Jesus, my daughter and servant, dies to

the world, and that the Most High works this change,

in order that this soul may live only to what faith teaches.

Just as in natural death all things are left behind; so

shall this, my daughter, thus freed, by her last will and

testament consign her soul to her Creator and Redeemer

and her body to the earth of self-knowledge and patient

suffering. Of this soul my divine Son and I shall take

charge, in order to fulfill entirely his holy will, if she

will obey Us promptly. We will celebrate her exequies

with our courtiers, in order to bury her in the bosom of

INTRODUCTION 13

the divine humanity of the Word, which is the sepulchre

of those that die to the world while still in mortal life.

From now on she must not live in her own self, nor

for herself, after the fashion of Adam ; but in all things

she is now to manifest in her the life of Christ, who

\*s her life. I shall beseech Him to look kindly upon this

deceased one and to receive her soul as his own; to

acknowledge her as a stranger and pilgrim, living not

on earth, but in the higher and divine regions. I shall

instruct the angels to accept her as a companion and to

treat and converse with her as if she were freed from

mortal flesh."

12. "I command the demons to let alone this dead

one, just as they must let alone the other dead, who are

not under their jurisdiction and in whom they have no

part; for from this day on she shall be more dead to

visible things than those who have passed from this

world. I conjure men to lose her out of sight and forget

her, as they forget the dead, in order that they may

thus allow her to remain in peace and tranquillity. And

thee I command and exhort, that thou consider thyself

as one who has finished life in this world and has entered

eternal life in the presence of the Most High. I desire

thee to imitate the life of the blessed in faith; since the

certainty and assurance of truth is the same for thee

as for them. Thy conversation is to be on high (Phil.

3, 20) ; thy intercourse, with the Lord of all creation and

thy Spouse ; thy conference shall be with the angels and

saints, and thou must rivet thy whole attention upon

me, thy Mother and Teacher. For all the rest that is

earthly and visible thou must have neither movement

of life, nor any activity; no more than a dead body,

which shows no feeling of life in response to anything

that may happen to it or may be done with it, Neither

14 INTRODUCTION

must difficulties inquiet thee, nor flattery or pleasures

affect thee; thou must not respond to injuries, nor be

elated by honors ; let neither presumption inflate thee,

nor mistrust cast thee down; thou must not give

consent to any feeling of concupiscence or anger;

because thy model in all these passions must be a dead

body, already freed from all of them. Nor must thou

have any more dealings with the world than the dead;

for the world immediately forgets those whom it has

praised in life, and to such an extent, that, though they

be father or brother, and the most intimate relatives,

it hastens to put them out of sight. All this the deceased

permit, without a murmur or a feeling of offense; nor

do the dead make any account of the living, much less

do they attend to them or to anything they may have left

among their survivors."

13. "Having thus died to thyself, it remains for thee

to consider thyself as the food of worms, fit only for

vilest corruption. Thus shalt thou bury thyself in the

earth of thy self-knowledge, in order that thy senses

and passions may not presume to give forth their bad

odor in the sight of the Lord, nor, like an ill-covered

and half -buried corpse, may not presume to give forth

its bad odor in the presence of the Lord and of those

that have entered the blessed life. Let thy horror of

showing any signs of life, or of not being entirely mor

tified in the sight of thy God and of the saints, be much

greater than that caused by unburied bodies among

men. The use of thy senses such as sight, hearing, touch

and others for the purpose of entertainment or delight,

should be a greater surprise and offense to thee, than

to see a corpse moving about. By this death thou shalt

be prepared and fit to be the only spouse of my divine

Son, and my true and most beloved disciple and daughter.

INTRODUCTION 15

Such is the state which I require of thee, and so high

is the wisdom, which I am to teach thee in following

my footsteps and in imitating my life, reproducing in

thyself, as far as is granted thee, all my virtues. This

should be the fruit of recording the wonders and sac

raments of my sanctity manifested to thee by the Lord.

I wish that they escape not the secrecy of thy bosom

and be made known without having moved thee to

the perfect fulfillment of the will of my divine Son

and of mine, which tends to nothing else than toward

thy own highest perfection. Drink then the waters

of wisdom from their fountainhead, the Savior: there

is no reason why thou shouldst remain void and un-

satiated of that, which thou art to administer to others,

nor that thou shouldst finish writing this history with

out deriving the fruits of this blessing. Prepare thy

heart then for this death, which I urge upon thee,

and thou shalt attain thy wishes and mine."

14. Such were the words of the great Lady of heaven

to me on this occasion, and on many others She has

repeated this teaching of the salutary and eternal life.

Of these teachings I have written much in the chap

ters of the first and second part, and shall continue to

do so in the third part. From all this my sluggish

ness and ingratitude toward such great benefits is very

apparent. For, though this great Queen and her divine

Son have so often promised to raise me to a most

exalted state and habitation, once I die to the earth

and to myself, and though in their divine kindness They

now promise it freely and anew; yet I find myself con

tinually backward in virtue and much entangled in

the pursuits of a daughter of Adam. This state is a

solitude and desert, created for the soul in the midst

of the surrounding creatures. In it my soul has no

16 INTRODUCTION

intercourse with the rest of visible creatures, but enjoys

the presence and the communications of the Lord, of

his holy Mother and the angels, at the same time per

mitting all its activity and all its dealings to be gov

erned by the promptings of the divine will for God s

greater glory and honor.

15. During the whole course of my life, from earliest

childhood, the Most High has exercised me in continual

infirmities, sorrows and other molestations of creatures.

But with the advance of years He increased also the

sufferings of another kind of trial, which made me

forget much of those already suffered in the past;

it was like a two-edged sword which divided my soul

and spirit, as the Apostle says (Heb. 4, 12). This

trial was that constant fear, of which I have so often

spoken, and for which I have been reprehended in this

history. Much of it I felt even from childhood, but it

developed and rose to the highest pitch since my en

trance into religion, where I applied myself entirely

to the spiritual life, and experienced the manifestations

of the Lord to my soul. Since that time God has placed

me upon this cross, or into this wine-press of the heart,

namely : permitting me to remain in the continual dread

of not being on the right path, of being deceived, or of

having lost the grace and the friendship of God. My

difficulties were much augmented by the publicity, which

some persons incautiously and to my great grief, gave

to my affairs, and by the terrors with which others

filled me at my danger. So deeply rooted in my heart

was this terror, that it has never ceased, and could

never be allayed by the satisfaction and complete as

surances of my confessor and superiors, nor by their

kind encouragement, nor by their corrections, nor by

the many other means they used for this purpose. What

INTRODUCTION 17

is more, although the angels and the Queen of heaven,

and the Lord himself continually reassured and soothed

me, and although I feel myself free in their presence;

yet, as soon as I issue from this sphere of divine light

I am again assailed with incredible violence. This

might easily be recognized as the cruel machination of

the infernal dragon, if my troubles, afflictions and fears

had not the appearance of arising from other sources

than the devil. This fiend especially assails me, when

ever I am about to open my heart to my confessors,

particularly to the superior, who directs me ; for nothing

does this prince of darkness fear more than the light

and the power possessed by the ministers of the Lord.

16. In the bitterness of this sorrow and the most

ardent desire of grace and of not losing God, I have

lived many years, and the various and numerous hap

penings amid this constant strife I cannot record. The

root of this fear, I believe, was holy, but many of its

branches have been fruitless, although the divine wis

dom knew how to use them all for his different ends.

On this account He permitted the enemy to avail him

self of the blessings of the Lord for my affliction. For

the inordinate fear, which hinders the good, though it

appear to imitate ever so much the good, is evil and of

the demon. My afflictions have at times reached such

a pass, that I considered it a great gain not to lose

the life of my body, and especially that of my soul.

But the Lord, whom the winds and the waves obey

(Matth. 8, 27) and whom all things serve (Ps. 118,

91), who gives nourishment to every creature in op

portune time (Ps. 144, 15), has now in his condescen

sion wished to give peace to my spirit in order that I

might enjoy more tranquillity in writing the rest of this

history. It is some years ago, that the Lord consoled

18 INTRODUCTION

me and promised me peace and interior quiet before I

should die; informing me at the same time, that the

dragon is so furious against me, because he suspects

there is little time left him for persecution.

17. In order to set about writing this third part the

Lord on a certain day, with singular condescension and

complacency, spoke to me as follows : "My dearest

Spouse, I wish to alleviate thy pains and moderate thy

afflictions ; quiet thyself, my dove, and rest securely in the

sweetness of my love and of my powerful and kingly

word; for I assure thee upon this word, that it is I,

who speak to thee and who have selected thy paths ac

cording to my pleasure. It is I, that lead thee along

these ways; it is I, the same One, that is at the right

hand of the eternal Father and present in the sacra

ment of the holy Eucharist in the species of bread. I

give thee this assurance, in order that thou quiet and

convince thyself. For I do not wish thee, my dearest,

to be my slave, but my daughter and spouse, and I de

sire thee to enjoy my gifts and delights. Enough of

fears and of bitterness hast thou suffered ; let peace and

tranquillity enter into thy afflicted heart." Such favors

and assurances of the Lord, often repeated, one would

think, should not be humiliating, but should afford only

the greatest joy; but they are of such a kind, that they

abase the heart to the lowest dust and fill me with solici

tude and anxiety. Those that think different, have

little experience and are only slightly capable of the

secret operations of the Most High. It is certain, that

I have been instructed in many new things interiorly

and was much alleviated in the troubles and temptations

caused by these disorderly fears. But the Lord is so

wise and powerful, that on the one hand He assures,

and on the other He stirs up the soul, injecting new fear

INTRODUCTION 19

of falling and thereby preserving it in the knowledge

and humiliation of self.

18. I must acknowledge that by these and other con

tinual favors, the Lord has not so much freed me from

fears, as confirmed me in them; for I live in continual

dread, lest I show myself ungrateful and fail to cor

respond by displeasing Him or losing Him; lest I be

wanting in the perfect love of Him, who is so good in

Himself; and lest I should not deserve to retain the

fullest possible love toward Him, or even that which

is not possible. Filled with these anxieties, and on ac

count of my great misery, solicitude and many faults,

I said on one occasion to the Most High : "My sweetest

Love, Lord and Master of my soul, although Thou

givest me so many assurances to quiet my troubled

heart, how can I do away with my fears amid the dan

gers of this laborious and dreadful life, full of tempta

tions and persecutions, during which I hold my treasure

in a vase more fragile and weak than that of any other

creature?" With paternal condescension He responded:

"My cherished spouse, I do not wish thee to lose the just

fear of offending Me; but it is my will, that thou be

not disturbed and grieved in a disorderly manner, nor

so as to hinder thee from rising to my exalted and perfect

love. Thou hast my Mother for a Teacher and a model,

for thy instruction and imitation. I shall assist thee

by my grace and support thee with my direction. Tell

Me then, what thou askest, or what thou desirest for

thy peace and security."

19. With the greatest resignation that I could muster

I replied : "Highest Lord and Father, much is that which

thou askest, although thy goodness and immense love

deserve that I fulfill it all. But I know my weakness

and inconstancy, and I shall be satisfied in no other

20 INTRODUCTION

way than by not offending Thee, neither by the slightest

thought, nor by the least movement of my faculties;

and I shall rest only when all my actions shall be ac

cording to thy pleasure and good will." The Lord an

swered : "My continual help and favors shall not fail

thee, if thou correspond to them. In order that thou

mayest do it so much the better, I wish to perform a

work, which is in keeping with the love I have for thee.

I will connect my immutable Being with thy insignifi

cance by an especial Providence, chaining and binding

thee in such a way, that, whenever thou shalt, in the

weakness of thy will, do anything less pleasing to Me,

thou shalt feel my influence detaining and recalling thee

to Me. The effect of this blessing Thou shalt know and

feel immediately within thyself, just like a slave, who

is bound by chains in order that she may not fly."

20. To the great joy and advantage of my soul the

Almighty fulfilled his promise and among many other

favors and blessings (which may not be mentioned and

which do not concern my purpose), none has been so

precious to me as this one. I perceive it not only in

great dangers, but in the smallest; and in such a way,

that if I neglect or carelessly omit any work or ceremony,

although it be no more than to humiliate myself or to

kiss the floor on entering the choir to adore the Lord,

as is customary in the convent, I at once feel a sweet

force, which draws me and calls my attention to the

defect, and which, on its part, permits not the least im

perfection. If sometimes in my weakness I fall into any,

this divine force is at once present, causing in me heart

rending pain. This pain serves as a check to the least

disorderly inclination and at the same time as a goad

toward seeking immediate remedy for the fault or im

perfection committed. As the gifts of the Lord are

INTRODUCTION 21

without regret (Rom. 11, 29), He has not only bound

me with this mysterious chain, but, in his divine con

descension, on a certain day, that of his holy Name and

Circumcision, I perceived that He tripled it, in order to

restrain me and bind me still more forcibly, since a

triple cord, as the wise man says, is difficult to break

(Eccles. 4, 12). All this was necessary on account of

my weakness, in order that I might not be overcome

by the importunate and astute temptations of the ancient

serpent.

21. In the meanwhile these temptations increased so

much, that in spite of the blessings and commandments

of the Lord mentioned above, in spite of the demands

of obedience and of others not to be mentioned here,

I nevertheless hesitated to begin the last part of this

history; for I felt again the fury of the powers of dark

ness, which tried to overwhelm me. I understood this

and I will explain it by what saint John says in the

twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse: That the great red

dragon shot forth from its maw a river of water against

that heavenly Woman (Apoc. 12, 15), whom he had

pursued from heaven, and that, since he could not touch

or destroy Her, he turned in great rage against the rem

nants and the seed of that great Lady, against those

who are sealed with the testimony of Jesus Christ (Apoc.

12, 17) in his Church. During the time of which I

am speaking this ancient serpent strained all his wrath

to disquiet me and, as far as he could, force me to

commit some faults, which retarded the purity and per

fection of life required of me and necessary for writing

what I was commanded. While this interior battle con

tinued, the feast of the holy Guardian Angel on the first

of March intervened. Reciting matins in the choir I

suddenly felt a noise or great disturbance, so that I

22 INTRODUCTION

shrank and humiliated myself to the very dust. Then

I saw a great multitude of angels, which filled the whole

choir, and from their midst proceeded a still greater re

fulgence or splendor as of a judge, seated upon a tribunal

or judgment-seat. I understood at once, that it was the

archangel saint Michael. Without delay, they intimated to

me, that they were sent by the Most High with especial

power and authority to arraign me for my negligence

and for my faults.

22. I desired to prostrate myself on the earth to

acknowledge my transgressions and humbly to weep be

fore those celestial judges, but as I was surrounded by

the nuns, I dared not make the presence of the angels

known by prostrating myself in body. I did what was

possible interiorly, bitterly weeping over my sins. In

the meantime I saw the holy angels speaking and con

ferring with each other, saying: "This creature is use

less, slow, and not at all fervent in fulfilling the com

mands of the Most High and of our Queen. She will

not come to a full trust in the blessings and the en

lightenments, which she continually receives at our hands.

Let us deprive her of all those blessings, since she does

not put them to use, nor earnestly strive to be so pure

and perfect as the Lord teaches her to be; neither does

she proceed to write the life of his most blessed Mother,

as He has commanded her so many times. If she does

not mend, it is not just that she should receive so many

and such great favors and instructions in holiness."

Hearing these words I was sadly afflicted at heart and I

wept the more. Full of confusion and grief I spoke

to the holy angels in the bitterness of my soul and I

promised amendment of my faults and obedience unto

death to the Lord and to his most holy Mother.

23. At my humiliation and my promises the angelic

INTRODUCTION 23

spirits relaxed somewhat in their severity and with

greater kindness they told me: that, if I would dili

gently fulfill what I had promised, they would assure

me of their continual favor and assistance, admit me as

their companion and friend, and hold intercourse with

me in the same way as they conversed with each other.

I thanked them for their kindness and besought them

to present my thanks also before the Most High. They

disappeared, warning me, that for the favors they would

show me, I must imitate them in purity, committing no

fault or imperfection wilfully; and this they intimated

as the condition upon which this promise depended.

24. After these and many other happenings, which

need not be mentioned, I was left in a state of greater

humiliation, as was natural with one who had been so

severely reprehended for ingratitude, unworthiness and

insensibility toward so many blessings, exhortations and

commandments. Full of confusion and sorrow I con

sidered within myself, what little excuse or pretext I

had for resisting the divine will, in view of all that I

had come to know and in view of its importance to my

welfare. I resolved firmly to execute the command or

die in the attempt, and I sought for some powerful and

tangible means which should rouse and urge me on to

combat my want of attention, and which should keep

me alert, if possible, against any imperfection in all my

operations and movements, so that I might always do

what is most holy and pleasing in the eyes of the Lord.

I betook myself to my confessor and superior and be

sought him, in all the sincerity and submission of my

heart, to reprehend me severely and force me to be per

fect and solicitous in the most exact fulfillment of the

divine will and in the execution of what the divine

Majesty required of me. Although he was most zealous

24 INTRODUCTION

and vigilant as one who took the place of God and one

who knew his will and my prescribed path ; yet he could

not always come to my assistance or be present on ac

count of the absentations required by his duties as a

religious and as a superior. I resolved therefore also

to engage one of the nuns to assist me, asking her to

reprehend and advise me often, or warn me and stir

me up by threats. All these means and others I sought

in the most ardent desire of pleasing the Lord, his most

holy Mother and my Teacher, the holy angels, all of

whom were of the same mind in regard to my advance

in perfection.

25. In the midst of these solicitudes it happened to

me one night, that my holy guardian angel showed him

self to me as being particularly pleased and said: "The

Most High wishes to condescend to thy desires and has

appointed me to serve thee as a guide to spur thee on.

I shall be thy faithful friend and companion in order

to advise thee and rouse thy attention; and thou shalt

find me present, just as now, whenever thou shalt turn

thy eyes toward me in the desire of pleasing and faith

fully serving thy Lord and Spouse. I will teach thee

how to praise Him continually and how to alternate with

me in canticles. I will manifest to thee new mysteries

and treasures of his greatness; I will give thee deeper

understandings of his immutable being and divine per

fections. And whenever thou art engaged in outward

works of obedience or charity, or when, through some

negligence, thou turnest to earthly and exterior things,

I shall call thee to fly to the Lord ; and for this purpose

I shall use some words of admonition, which often shall

be these : Who is like unto the God, that dwells on high

and in the hearts of the humble ? At other times I shall

call to thy mind the blessings thou hast received from

INTRODUCTION 25

God and thy duty to his love. At still others, I shall

remind thee to look upon Him and raise up to Him thy

heart. But to all these warnings thou must be punctual,

attentive and obedient."

26. "The Most High also desires me not to conceal

to thee any longer a favor, which until now thou hast

overlooked among the many conferred upon thee by his

most liberal bounty; and for this thou must now begin

to thank Him. It is this, that I am one of the thousand

angels, who served as a guard to our great Queen in this

world, and one of those, who bear the device of his

admirable and holy name. Look upon me and thou wilt

see it upon my breast." I looked and there recognized

the holy name in refulgent splendor, filling my soul with

new consolation and jubilee. The holy angel proceeded

and said : "He has also commanded me to call thy atten

tion to the fact, that of us thousand angels very rarely

any are appointed as guardian angels of souls and what

ever souls so far have been committed to our care, have

all been of the number of the saints and none of them

of the reprobate. Take heed then, O soul, of thy obliga

tion not to interrupt this series; for if in spite of this

blessing thou art lost, thy punishment and chastisement

shall be of the severest ever inflicted upon the damned

and thou shalt be known as the most unhappy and un

grateful of all the daughters of Adam. That thou

shouldst be favored by having me as thy guardian, who

was one of the guardians of our great Queen, most holy

Mary and the Mother of the Creator, was ordained by

the most high Providence and in view of thy being chosen

to write and imitate the life of his most blessed Mother.

I was appointed to instruct thee and assist thee, because

I was an eye-witness of her divine works and excellences."

27. "This office of a guide will be fulfilled principally

26 INTRODUCTION

by the great Lady herself; but I am to furnish thee

with the necessary images in order to elucidate what

the heavenly Mistress shall teach thee, and I am to give

thee other understandings ordained by the Most High,

for the clearer recording of the mysteries manifested to

thee. Thou shalt experience all of them although them

shalt not always know the connection and the sacraments

hidden under this providential guidance. Thou shalt also

perceive that the Lord himself, making use of this special

providence in thy regard, has commissioned me to com

pel thee, with sweetest urgency, to imitate the purest

Mary our Queen, and to follow Her and obey Her in her

doctrine. From now on I shall execute this mandate

of the Lord with greater insistence and force. Resolve

then to be most faithful and thankful in regard to these

blessings and seek to scale the highest summits of the

perfection taught thee and asked of thee. Remember,

that even if thou reach the perfection of the highest sera

phim, thou shalt still be in great debt to God s copious

and liberal mercy. The new mode of life, which the

Lord asks of thee, is contained and is made clear in the

instructions given to thee by our great Queen and Lady,

and in what thou shalt understand and write in this third

part of her life. Listen to Her with a submissive heart,

thank Her humbly, execute Her doctrine anxiously and

carefully; fcr if thou do this, thou shalt be fortunate

and eternally blessed."

28. Other things, which the angels told me, need not

be mentioned for my present purpose. But what is con

tained in this introduction, will manifest partly the provi

dence of the Most High toward me and it will also make

known the high purposes of divine Wisdom in the writing

of this history. These are, that not only I, but all who

desire, may reap the fruits of this blessing, and that

INTRODUCTION 27

each one for himself may use it as an efficacious means

of salvation. It will also become evident, that Christian

perfection cannot be attained without great battles with

the demon or without incessant labor in overcoming and

subjecting the passions and evil inclinations of our de

praved human nature. Finally, the heavenly Mother and

Instructress, that I might begin to write this third part

of her history, in sweetest kindness, said to me : "My

eternal blessing, and that of my most holy Son, come

over thee, in order that thou mayest write the rest of

my life and in order that thou mayest labor and strive

after the perfection We desire of thee. Amen."

BOOK ONE

PART III, BOOK VII

How the divine Right Hand showered upon the Queen of Heaven highest

Gifts, in order that She might labor in the holy Church; the Coming

of the Holy Ghost; the copious Fruit of the Redemption and the

Preaching of the Apostles; the first Persecution of the Church,

the Conversion of saint Paul and the arrival of saint James

in Spain; the Apparition of the Mother of God in Sara-

gossa, and the Founding of the Pilgrimage of our

Lady of the Pillar.

CHAPTER I.

OUR SAVIOR JESUS REMAINS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND

OF THE ETERNAL FATHER, WHILE THE MOST HOLY

MARY DESCENDS FROM HEAVEN TO THE EARTH, IN

ORDER THAT, WITH HER ASSISTANCE AND INSTRUC

TION, THE NEW CHURCH MIGHT BE FOUNDED.

1. In finishing the second part of this history I showed

how our great Queen and Lady, most holy Mary,

was privileged by God to be miraculously present in body

at two places, in the Cenacle as well as in the empyrean

heavens, where She was seated at the right hand of her

Son and eternal God (Ps. 44, 10) ; how, in order to make

his glorious Ascension more wonderful, the Son of God

and of the Virgin, took Her with Him for the purpose

of putting Her in possession of the ineffable rewards

She had until then merited and to assign Her the place,

which, for her past and future merits, He had prepared

for Her from all eternity. I said also, that the three

Persons of the most blessed Trinity left it to the free

29

30 CITY OF GOD

choice of the heavenly Mother either to return to the

world for the consolation of the first children of the

Church and for its foundation, or permanently to estab

lish Herself even then in the most blessed state and re

main in the possession of the glory They had conferred

upon Her. For, conditional to her choice and in pur

suance of the great love They had for this peerless

Creature, the will of the divine Persons inclined

toward retaining Her in the abyss of their glory and not

to restore Her to the banished children of Adam upon

earth. In a certain sense justice seemed to demand this ;

since the world was already redeemed by the Passion

and Death of her Son, toward which She had co-operated

in all plenitude and perfection. Death had in Her no

further claims, not only because She had suffered its

pains in that of Christ our Savior (as explained by me

in its place) ; but also because the great Lady never was

tributary to death, nor the demon, nor to sin, and there

fore was not subject to the common law of the children

of Adam (Heb. 9, 27). According to our mode of

thinking, the Lord desired that She, without dying like

the others, should pass by another kind of transition

from the state of pilgrimage to that of comprehension,

from mortality to immortality, and that She should not

suffer death upon the earth, who, while remaining upon

it, had committed no fault to merit death; for the Most

High could have passed Her from one state into the

other in another way.

2. Against this, however, stood the charity and hu

mility of this admirable and sweetest Mother; for her

love urged Her to come to the assistance of her children

and to seek the manifestation and exaltation of the name

of the Most High in the new evangelical Church. She

desired also to gather into the faith many faithful fol-

THE CORONATION 31

lowers by her solicitation and intercession and to imitate

her children and brethren by dying upon the earth;

though, by reason of her sinlessness, She owed no such

tribute (Rom. 6, 23). In her vast wisdom and admirable

prudence She knew how much more precious it is to

merit a reward and crown, than to possess them gratui

tously in advance, even if they happen to be those of

eternal glory. Her wisdom and humility were not with

out their present reward; for the eternal Father made

known to all the courtiers of heaven, at the same time

both his own desires and the choice of most holy Mary

for the good of the militant Church and for the succor

of the faithful. All the inhabitants of heaven then began

to know what is but just that we should know also on

earth; namely: that, as we are told by saint John, the

eternal Father so loved the world as to give not only

his Son for its Redemption (John 3, 16) ; but also his

Daughter, the most holy Mary, sending Her from her

glory to build up the Church, which Christ its Artificer

had established ; and in like manner and for the same pur

pose the Son delivered up his most loving and beloved

Mother, and the Holy Ghost his sweetest Spouse. To this

must be added another circumstance enhancing this bless

ing: namely that it followed closely upon the injuries

which Christ our Redeemer received in his Passion and

frightful Death, making the world altogether unworthy

of this benefit. O infinite love ! O immense charity !

How evident is it become, that the multitudinous waters

of our sins cannot extinguish thee! (Cant. 8, 7).

3. After most holy Mary had remained in heaven

for three entire days and had enjoyed in body and soul

the glory of the right hand of her Son and true God,

She departed with the benediction of the blessed Trinity

from the highest empyrean and returned, according to

32 CITY OF GOD

her desire, to this nether world of the earth. God or

dered an innumerable multitude of angels, selected from

all the choirs and from the highest seraphim nearest to

his throne, to accompany their Queen. She was enveloped

in a cloud or globe of the most resplendent light, which

served Her as a couch or reliquary and in which She

was borne downward by the seraphim. The beauty

and exterior splendor in which this heavenly Queen

came to the earth can never be compassed by the human

mind in mortal life; and it is certain that no living

creature could have looked upon Her in merely natural

powers without losing its life. On this account it was

necessary, that the Most High should hide her reful

gence from those that saw Her, until the splendors of

her beauty should have moderated. Saint John the

Evangelist alone was privileged to see the Queen in the

full redundance of the divine glory which She had en

joyed. The immense beauty of this magnificent Queen

and Mistress of the heavens, as She descended from the

throne of the blessed Trinity, can easily be understood,

when we consider how the face of Moses, after having

spoken with the Lord and received the law on the moun

tain, shone with such light that the Israelites could

not bear it or look upon his face. We are not informed

that the Prophet saw the Divinity face to face; and

if he saw It, his vision of God certainly did not ap

proach in the least to that enjoyed by the Mother of God.

4. The great Lady arrived at the Cenacle as a sub

stitute of her divine Son in the new evangelical Church.

In the gifts of grace, which She had received for this

ministry, She showed such a plenitude and abundance,

that She excited the wonder of the angels and the as

tonishment of the saints; for She was a living image

of Christ our Redeemer and Master. Beneath the

THE CORONATION 33

globe of light, in which, unseen, She arrived in the

Cenacle, She was restored to her natural existence, in

so far as to be thenceforward present only in that place.

Immediately the Mistress of holy humility prostrated

Herself to the ground and abasing Herself to the dust,

said : "Most high God and my Lord, behold this vile

worm of the earth, acknowledging itself formed from

it (Gen. 2, 7), and coming from nothingness to this

existence, which I hold through thy most liberal clem

ency. I acknowledge also, O highest Father, that thy

ineffable condescension, without any merits of mine, has

raised me from the dust, to the dignity of being the

Mother of thy Onlybegotten. From my whole heart I

praise and exalt thy immense goodness in so favoring

me. In gratitude for such great blessings I offer myself

to live and labor anew in this mortal life, according to

all the decrees of thy divine will. I consecrate myself

as thy faithful servant and as the servant of the children

of the Church. All of them I present before thy im

mense charity and implore Thee from my inmost heart

to look upon them as their kindest God and Father. For

them I offer up the sacrifice of being deprived of thy

glory and peace, and of having chosen of my own free

will suffering rather than joy, denying myself the vision

of Thee in order to perform what is so pleasing in

thy sight."

5. The holy angels that had come with the Queen took

leave of Her to return to heaven, congratulating the

earth for again possessing as its inhabitant their great

Queen and Lady. I wish to mention, that while I

wrote of this, the holy princes asked me, why I did not

more frequently call Mary the Queen and Mistress of

the angels, and they told me not to neglect the use of

that title in the balance of this history, since they derived

34 CITY OF GOD

such great delight therefrom. In order to obey and

please them I shall use it many times from now on.

But returning to our history, we must take notice, that

the heavenly Mother, during the first three days after

her descent from heaven, remained much withdrawn

from earthly things, still lingering in the overflow of

the joy and admirable influences of her triduum of

glory in the heavens. Of all mortals the Evangelist

saint John alone had cognizance of this mystery; for in

a vision he had seen the great Queen of heaven ascend

with her divine Son and had also seen Her descend in

her glory and graces for the enrichment of the Church.

Two days he remained as it were entranced and sus

pended in admiration at this extraordinary mystery.

Knowing that his most holy Mother had descended from

on high he desired to speak to Her, but dared not

presume.

6. Battling between the urgency of his love and the

restraint of his humility, the beloved Apostle hesitated

nearly a whole day. Conquered by his filial love, he

at last resolved to seek the presence of his heavenly

Mother in the Cenacle, and on his way thither, he

stopped to argue with himself. "How can I presume

to do what I desire, before knowing the will of the

Most High and of my Mistress? Yet my Redeemer

and Master has given Her to me as a Mother and

favored and bound me to Her as a son; hence it is my

duty to serve and assist Her. She is not ignorant of

my desire, and will not despise it; She is kind and

sweet, and will pardon me. I wish to prostrate myself

at her feet." Therewith saint John came to a resolve,

and he went to the place where the Queen was in prayer

with the rest of the faithful. At the instant in which

he raised his eyes to look upon Her, he fell down pros-

THE CORONATION 35

trate just as he and the other two Apostles had fallen

at seeing the transfigured Lord on mount Tabor (Matth.

17, 2). For the splendors which he now saw in the

countenance of most blessed Mary were very like to

those seen on our Savior Jesus at that time. As the

impression caused by the vision of her descent from

heaven was also still enduring, his human weakness was

so much the more completely overwhelmed and he fell

to the earth, without power of again rising to his feet

for the space of an hour. Nor were the Apostles and

disciples, who were present in the Cenacle, necessarily

astonished at this fall; because, in imitation of their

divine Master, and moved by the example and instruc

tions of the most holy Mary, they were frequently,

during the time they were expecting the Holy Ghost,

lying prostrate and in the form of a cross praying for

the coming of the Paraclete.

7. The kindest Mother then approached the humble

and blessed Apostle, and raised him from his prostrate

position, and, assuming a more natural appearance, fell

herself upon her knees, and said to him: "My master

and son, thou already knowest that I am to be governed

in all my actions by obedience to thee; for thou takest

the place of my divine Son and Master, in order to

command me in all that I am to do. I now ask thee

anew to be solicitous in commanding me, on account of

the consolation I derive from obeying in all things. \*

Hearing these words, saint John felt great confusion and

perplexity on account of what he had seen and experi

enced concerning Her, and he once more prostrated

himself before Her, offering himself as her slave and

begging Her to command and govern Him entirely. In

this urgent request saint John persevered for some time,

until, overcome by the humility of our Queen, he sub-

36 CITY OF GOD

jected himself to her will and was persuaded to yield

to Her, agreeing to command Her as She wished. For

this was of the greatest profit for his own advance

ment, and for us a unique and efficacious example, re

minding us of our pride and teaching us to crush it.

If we acknowledge ourselves devout children of this

heavenly Mother and Mistress of humility, we are justly

obliged to imitate and follow Her. The vision of the

great Queen of the angels in her state of glory was so

deeply impressed upon the understanding and the in

terior faculties of the Evangelist, that the image of it

remained within Him during all His life. At the moment

when he saw Her descend from heaven, he cried out

in great wonder. The intelligence he then received con

cerning Her he afterwards manifested in the Apocalypse,

and especially in the twelfth chapter, as I will explain

later on.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN AND MISTRESS

OF THE ANGELS GAVE ME.

8. My daughter, though I have until now so

many times urged thee to detach thyself from all visible

and earthly things and to die to thyself and to all that

savors of a child of Adam, and though I have fully

exhorted and instructed thee in the first and second part

of my life already written; yet I now call upon thee

anew, with the affection of a kind and loving Mother,

and I invite thee in the name of my divine Son, in

my own name and in that of the angels, who also love

thee so much, that, forgetting all else, thou raise thy

self to another life, more exalted and heavenly, approach

ing that of the eternal felicity. I desire that thou leave

entirely the ancient Babylon, thy enemies and all their

THE CORONATION 37

false and harassing vanities, and that thou approach

the holy and celestial Jerusalem, live in its porches,

where thou art to occupy thyself in the true and per

fect imitation of my life and thus arrive by the divine

grace at the intimate union of my Lord and thy most

faithful Spouse. Hear me then, my dearest; with a

joyful attention and alacrity of soul follow me fervently,

reproducing in thy life the image of what thou writest,

and study what works I performed after I came back

from the right hand of my divine Son to this world.

Meditate upon and penetrate into all my doings, in order

that, according to the graces thou receivest, thou mayest

continually copy, what thou understandest and writest.

Divine favor will not fail thee, for the Most High will

not deny it to those, who on their part exert themselves

according to their power, and He will not refuse thee his

assistance to attain what is pleasing and acceptable to

Him, if thou do not by thy negligence make thyself

unworthy. Prepare and expand thy heart, inflame thy

will, purify thy understanding, and cast out from thy

faculties every image and impression of visible crea

tures. For thus will none of them interfere with thee,

nor any of them draw thee into venial sin or imperfec

tions; the Most High will deposit in thee his hidden

wisdom and thus thou shalt be prepared and anxious

to execute all that is most pleasing in our eyes and en

joined upon thee by Us.

9. From now on thy life is to be like that of one

newly called from the grave. Just as such a one is apt

to turn to a new life, as if estranged and foreign to all

that he loved in his former life, changed in all his

desires, reformed and alienated from all his former in

clinations; so I desire, that thou, my daughter, be re

newed. For thou must live as if thou wert re-endowed

38 CITY OF GOD

with the highest possible gifts of the soul by the divine

power within thee. But for these divine operations it

is necessary that thou use thy own efforts and prepare

thy whole heart, so that thou mayest be entirely free

and become a blank tablet as it were, whereon the

Lord, with his own ringers, may write and stamp, as

in soft and yielding wax, the seal of my virtues. His

Majesty desires thee to be an instrument in his hands

wherewith to operate his own holy and perfect will ; and

thou knowest, that an instrument does not offer re

sistance to the artisan, and if it possesses free will, it uses

it only in order to permit itself to be freely moved.

Now then, my dearest, come, come whither I call thee;

and remember that if it is natural to the highest Good

to bestow favors and communicate Itself to the creatures

at all times, yet in the present age, this Lord and Father 1

of mercies seeks to manifest more abundantly his liberal

kindness toward mortals. For the times have advanced

toward their end and there are few, who are willing

to dispose themselves for the reception of his divine

gifts. Do not thou lose such a favorable occasion; fol

low me, and tread in my footsteps; and since I invite

thee to such a happiness in motherly love and by such

high and perfect doctrine, do not grieve the Holy Ghost

by thy tardiness.

CHAPTER II.

SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST, IN CHAPTER THE TWENTY-

FIRST OF THE APOCALYPSE, GIVES A LITERAL DESCRIP

TION OF HIS VISION OF THE MOST HOLY MARY OUR

LADY AS SHE DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN.

10. It befitted the exalted dignity of saint John as

being appointed the son of most holy Mary by Jesus

on the Cross, that he should be the secretary of the

ineffable sacraments and mysteries of the great Queen,

which were kept concealed from other persons. For

this reason many of her mysteries were revealed to him

before her excursion into heaven, and he was made an

eye-witness of the hidden mysteries on the day of the

Ascension, when this sacred Eagle saw the divine Sun,

Christ (Isaias 30, 26), ascend in seven-fold light, as

Isaias said, and with it, the moon Mary shining as the

sun, on account of her likeness to Christ. The most

fortunate Evangelist saw Her ascend and seated at the

right hand of her Son; he saw Her also descend, as I

have said, with renewed astonishment; because he rec

ognized the change and renovation at her return to the

earth after having experienced the influences of the divine

glory and godlike attributes. As is said in the second

part, our Savior Jesus had already promised the Apos

tles, that before going to heaven He would arrange for

the stay of his most blessed Mother for the consolation

and direction of his holy Church. But the Apostle saint

John, during his first joy and wonder at seeing the great

Queen seated at the right hand of Christ our Savior,

39

40 CITY OF GOD

forgot this promise and, absorbed in the consideration

of this unthought of event, he began to fear or get anx

ious, lest the heavenly Mother should remain in the glory

which She enjoyed. Agitated by this uncertainty, saint

John, amid the jubilee of his soul, felt also the afflicting

pangs of love at the loss ; and these lasted until he again

remembered the promises of his Master and Savior and

saw his most holy Mother descending to the earth.

11. The mysteries of this vision remained impressed

upon the memory of saint John, so that neither these, nor

all the others revealed to him by the Queen of the angels,

ever escaped his mind ; and the sacred Evangelist sought

to spread the knowledge of them in the holy Church. But

the humility of the most prudent Mary our Lady deterred

him as long as She lived and persuaded him to keep them

hidden within his bosom until the Most High should

command otherwise; for it was not opportune to mani

fest them to the world beforehand. The Apostle obeyed

the wishes of the heavenly Mother. Before his death,

at the time when God commissioned him to enrich the

Church with the hidden treasures of these sacraments, he

was instructed by the Holy Ghost to reveal them in

deeply metaphorical and enigmatic language, which, as

the Church itself confesses, is difficult to understand.

It was proper that they should not be open to all, but shut

up as the pearl is in nacre or in its shell, or as the gold is

hidden in the minerals of the earth. The holy Church,

gradually more enlightened and studying them diligently,

could draw upon these treasures as necessity required;

and in the meanwhile preserve them in deposit within the

obscurity, which the holy doctors have met with and ac

knowledge in the holy Scriptures, and especially in the

Apocalypse.

12. In the course of thisji%^y I have already spoken

THE CORONATION 41

of the providence of the Most High in concealing the

greatness of his most holy Mother in the primitive

Church, (Part II, 413) and I will offer no excuse for

pointing it out anew, because of the admiration it will

cause in those, who now come to know of it. In order to

moderate our doubts (if any should be entertained), we

need only consider what the various saints and doctors

have said anent the providential concealment of the body

and the burial of Moses (Deut. 34, 6). This was ordained

they say, in order that the people of the Jews, so given

to idolatry, might not be led astray into giving adoration

to the body of the Prophet, whom they esteemed so

highly, or that they might not begin to venerate him by

some superstitious and vain cult. For the same reason

they say, that Moses, writing of the creation of the world

and of all creatures, although the angels were the most

noble of all, did not expressly mention their creation, but

only indicated it by the words : "God created light ;" be

cause these words can be understood as well of the ma

terial light of this visible world, as also, by a hidden

metaphor, of those substantial and spiritual lights, the

holy angels, of whom a more open mention was at that

time not opportune.

13. If the Hebrews were subject to the danger of

idolatry because of the intercourse and vicinity of heath

enism and because of their blind inclination to attribute

Divinity to men or to whatever seemed great, powerful

or in any way superior; then, if, in the first preaching of

the Gospel and the faith of Christ our Savior, the great

excellences of his most holy Mother had been propounded

to them, the gentiles would have been in still greater

danger of this error. In corroboration of this we have

the saying of Dionysius the Areopagite, who, though

he was such a great philosopher that he had found out the

42 CITY OF GOD

existence of the true God even by his natural acumen of

mind, openly maintained, after he had become a Catholic,

that, when he had seen and conversed with the most holy

Mary, he would certainly have esteemed and adored Her

as a God, if faith had not taught him otherwise. In this

danger then would have fallen, much more easily, the

ignorant, and they would certainly have confounded the

Divinity of Christ the Redeemer, which they were obliged

to believe together with the greatness of his most pure

Mother, thinking that, since they were propounded at

the same time and showed such similarity in holiness, She

was a God just as her Son. But this danger vanished

after the faith and practice of the Church had taken such

deep roots and after it had been so clearly established by

the teachings of the holy doctors and by so many miracles

wrought by God in testimony of the Redeemer. Enlight

ened by these testimonies we know that He alone is God

and true man, full of truth and grace; and that his

Mother is a mere creature, full of grace without possess

ing the Divinity and next to God above all the rest of

creation. In our times then, so enlightened by the divine

truths, the Lord knows when and how it is proper to

spread the glory of his most holy Mother by opening up

the enigmas and secrets of the holy Scriptures wherein

He holds them enshrined.

14. The mystery of which I am about to speak, with

many others concerning our great Queen, was recorded

by the Evangelist in the metaphors of the twenty-first

chapter of the Apocalypse ; especially introducing the most

holy Mary under the type of the holy Jerusalem and de

scribing Her under cover of all the circumstances men

tioned in that chapter. Although in the first part I have

explained it at length in three chapters, applying it, as it

was then given me to understand, to the mystery of the

THE CORONATION 43

Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin Mother;

yet it is necessary now to interpret it in relation to the

mystery of the descent of the Queen of angels after the

Ascension of the Lord. Let it not be objected that there

is a contradiction or repugnance in these different appli

cations; for both of them are legitimately founded on

the literal text of the Scriptures, and there can be no

doubt, that the divine Wisdom can comprehend in the

same and identical words many mysteries and sacraments.

As David said : In one word we can include more than

one thing, and God certainly included a double meaning

in the same words without equivocation or contradiction

(Ps. 61, 12). This is one of the sources of the difficul

ties found in holy Scripture, and one that was necessary

in order to make it more pregnant and precious in its

meaning and in order that the faithful may study it with

greater humility and reverence. That it should be so full

of enigmas and metaphors is necessary, since in that

style and wording, the sacred mysteries, which would be

strained by the more proper terms, can be expressed much

more fully.

15. This will be better understood in the mysteries

now under consideration, for saint John says that "he

saw the holy city of the new Jerusalem, prepared and

adorned as a bride, descending from heaven," etc. There

is no doubt that this metaphor of a city refers truly to

the most holy Mary, and points out her descent after

having ascended with her most blessed Son. At the

same time it also refers to her descent in the divine mind

by her Immaculate Conception, in which She was formed

as the new earth and the new heaven, as explained on in

the first part. The Evangelist included both these sacra

ments, when he speaks of this event in the twenty-first

chapter. Therefore it will be necessary to explain it in

44 CITY OF GOD

this new sense, though this will imply a repetition of

the sacred text; but I will explain it more briefly on

account of what I have already said in the first part.

I will now speak in the name of the Evangelist, for the

sake of greater brevity.

16. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth. For

the first heaven and the first earth was gone, and the

sea is now no more" (Apoc. 21, 1). He calls the most

sacred humanity of the incarnate Word and that of his

heavenly Mother, a new heaven and a new earth : a

heaven, on account of the inhabitation of the Divinity in

humanity, and a new one, on account of the renovation of

mankind. In Christ Jesus our Savior lives the Divinity

(Col. 2, 9), in a oneness of personality following from

the indissoluble substantial union ; while in Mary another

kind of union is effected, an extraordinary union of

graces. These heavens are now new; the passible hu

manity, which the Evangelist had seen wounded and dead

in the sepulchre, he now saw elevated and placed at the

right hand of the eternal Father, crowned with glory and

with the gifts merited by his life and death. He saw

also the Mother, who had given to Christ this passible

nature and had co-operated in the Redemption of the

human race, seated at the right hand of her Son (Ps. 44,

10) and absorbed in the ocean of the inaccessible light of

the Divinity, participating in the glory of her Son as his

Mother and meriting it in justice and on account of her

ineffable works of charity. He called also the earth of

the living a new heaven and a new earth, as it was re

newed by the lamp of the Lamb (Apoc. 21, 23), replen

ished with the spoils of his triumph and newly illumined

by the presence of his Mother; renewed also because as

Sovereigns They had taken possession of their reign

through all the eternities. They renewed it also by hav-

THE CORONATION 45

ing afforded its inhabitants the opportunity to see Them

with their own eyes and to partake of their benefits, by

having populated this earth with the new children of

Adam as its citizens and their allies and by having turned

it over to them without any danger of loss. On account

of these different kinds of renewal he said that the first

heaven and the first earth had gone; not only because

the sacred humanity of Christ and that of most holy

Mary, in which He had lived as in the first heaven, had

betaken Themselves to the eternal habitations, bearing

with them also the earth of their human essence ; but also

because men themselves from the ancient heaven and

earth of their passible being, had passed to the state of

impassibility. Gone were the rigors of justice, and

blessed rest was attained. The winter of troubles had

fled (Cant. 2, 11) and the eternal springtime of joy and

delight had come. The first earth and heaven of all the

mortals had also vanished; for the celestial Jerusalem

had been barred and locked during five thousand two hun

dred years, so that none could enter and all the mortals

would have been confined to the old sin-stained earth, if

through the entrance of Christ and his most blessed

Mother these bars and locks had not been shattered and

the divine justice had not been satisfied.

17. In an especial sense the most blessed Mary was a

new heaven and earth and new earth by ascending with

her Son, the Savior Jesus, and by taking possession at his

right hand in the glory of body and soul without having

passed through the death common to all the sons of men.

Although even in her human condition upon earth She

was a heaven, whence She saw the Divinity; but this

condition of the great Lady passed away, to take the place

of another condition, making Her, by an admirable dis

position of the divine Providence, a new heaven, in

46 CITY OF GOD

which God might dwell among all creatures in the high

est glory. In this new order of things, in this new hea

ven, there was no sea; for through Her the bitterness

and sorrows of labor had come to an end, if She would

have consented to remain from that time on in that most

happy state. In regard to the other saints, who in body

and soul, or only in the soul, remained in glory, all storms

and dangers of the first earth in mortal life now really

had an end.

18. The Evangelist proceeds: "And I John saw the

holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven

from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband/

I, an unworthy Apostle of Jesus Christ, am the one to

whom this hidden sacrament was revealed in order that

it might become known to the world : and I saw the

Mother of the Incarnate Word, the true mystical city of

Jerusalem, the vision of peace, descending from the

throne of God himself to the earth, and I saw Her clothed

as it were with the Divinity and adorned with a new

participation in God s attributes, his wisdom, power, holi

ness, immutability, and amiability, and resembling his

Son in her actions and behavior. She came as an instru

ment of his Omnipotence and taking the place of God by

a new participation. Although She came to the earth

in order to labor upon it for the benefit of the faithful

and for this purpose deprived Herself voluntarily of the

vision of eternal glory, nevertheless the Most High re

solved to send Her adorned and furnished with the power

of his own arm and to compensate Her for the beatific

vision She relinquished. Instead of it She was favored

with another sort of vision and participation in his in

comprehensible Divinity, suited to her present state of pil

grimage, but yet so divine and exalted, that it exceeds all

the thoughts of angels and men. He adorned Her with

THE CORONATION 47

gifts limited only by Herself and has prepared Her as a

Bride for her Spouse, the incarnate Word, enriching Her

so that no grace or excellence was wanting in Her. Nor

should her absence from his right hand deprive Her of

the presence and intercourse of her Man, who was to re

main in Her, as in his proper heaven and throne. Just

as the sponge receives and soaks up the fluids into its

hollow spaces, so, according to our mode of understand

ing, this great Lady was filled with influences and com

munications of the Divinity.

19. The text further states: "And I heard a great

voice from the throne, saying: Behold the tabernacle of

God with men, and He will dwell with them. And they

shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be

their God." This voice proceeding from the throne, filled

all my mind with sweetness and joy. I understood how

the great Lady, before her death, attained possession of

the great reward merited as a singular favor and the

prerogative due only to Her among all the mortals.

None of these, after attaining possession of their glory,

had permission or authority to return to life; yet this

privilege was conceded to this only Bride for the increase

of her glory. She, in full possession of eternal beati

tudes and proclaimed by all the courtiers of heaven as

their legitimate Queen and Lady, wished of her own free

will to descend and become the Servant of her vassals,

educating and governing them as her children. On ac

count of this charity She deserved, to have all the mortals

as her subjects, and to be put in possession of the militant

Church, where She was to dwell, over which She was to

preside and draw the blessing, the mercy and forgiveness

of God; for in her bosom the Lord was sacramentally

present during the whole time in which She lived in the

primitive Church after her descent from heaven. If

48 CITY OF GOD

there had been no other reason, her Son would have in

stituted the most holy Sacrament in the world in order

thus to dwell in Her; and through her merits and peti

tions He remained among men with new graces and bene

fits ; wherefore the Evangelist adds :

20. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their

eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor

crying." This great Lady came as the Mother of grace,

of mercy, of joy, and of life. She it is, that fills the

world with joy, that dries away the tears brought on by

the sin of our mother Eve. She turned mourning into

rejoicing, tears into new jubilee, clamors into praise and

glory, the death of sin into life for all who seek it. Now

the death of sin is at an end, and all the clamors and the

pains of the wicked are at an end, if only, before their

damnation, they will flee to this sanctuary and there find

pardon, mercy and consolation. The first ages, which

were not blessed with the presence of Mary, the Queen

of the angels, have fled and passed with all the sorrows

and sighs of those that sought Her and could not see Her ;

for now the world possesses Her for a refuge and help,

and for a shield of mercy against the divine justice that

hangs over the sinner s head.

21. "And He that sat upon the throne, said: Behold

I make all things new." This was the voice of the eter

nal Father, who gave me to understand, how He would

make all things new : a new Church, a new Law, new

Sacraments. Having conferred upon men such new bless

ings as to give them his Onlybegotten Son, He added

to this blessing by sending them the most holy Mary thus

renewed, endowed with such wonderful gifts and power

as to enable Her to distribute the treasures of the Re

demption, and by placing them altogether into her hands

to be scattered broadcast according to her most prudent

THE CORONATION 49

will. For this purpose did He send Her from the royal

throne, a faithful reproduction of his Son, and, like a

faithful copy of the Original, sealed Her, in as far as is

possible in a mere creature, with the attributes of the

Divinity. Her holiness was also to be copied by the new

evangelical Church.

22. "And He said to me : Write, for these words are

most faithful and true. And He said to me : It is done.

I am Alpha and Omega ; the beginning and the end. To

him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of waters,

freely. He that overcometh shall possess these things,

and I will be his God; and he shall be my son." The

Lord from his throne (says saint John), commanded me

to write down this mystery, in order to give witness to

the fidelity and truth of his words and of the works of

the most holy Mary, into whose hands He has pawned his

Omnipotence. And because these sacraments are so ex

alted and hidden, I announce them in figures and riddles,

leaving it to the Lord to manifest them in the world at

his own time, and letting all understand, that whatever

is possible has been done for the restoration and welfare

of mortals. In saying "it is done," God reminds men of

their obligations toward Him for sending his Onlybegot-

ten to suffer and die for them and to teach them his doc

trine; and for sending his Mother to assist and succor

the Church ; and for sending the Holy Ghost to promote

and enlighten, to strengthen and comfort it with the gifts

He had promised. And since the eternal Father had

nothing more to give us, He says: "It is done." As if

he had said: "All that is possible to my Omnipotence

and proper to my equity and bounty, I have given, and the

One who is the beginning and end of all that has being.

As the beginning, I give it by the omnipotence of my

will ; and as the end of all, I receive all things, providing

50 CITY OF GOD

in my wisdom the means by which they attain their last

end. These means are all under the control of my most

divine Son and his Mother, my chosen and beloved One

among the children of Adam. In Her are the pure and

living waters of grace, from which all the mortals, who

thirst after their eternal salvation, may draw it as from

its fount and source (John 7, 37). For them these waters

are distributed gratis; since they could not merit them,

yet with his own life, my incarnate Son has merited them,

and his blessed Mother gains and merits them for those

that apply to Her. And whoever shall overcome the

hindrances to these waters of grace, that is: Whoever

overcomes himself, the world and the demon, shall find

Me a liberal, loving and mighty God; he shall possess

all my goods and whatever through my Son and his

Mother I have prepared for him; for I shall adopt him

as my child and as an inheritor of my eternal glory.

23. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable,

and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and

idolaters, and all liars, they shall have their portion in the

pool burning with fire and brimstone, which is the second

death." To all the sons of Adam I give my Onlybegot-

ten as a Master, Redeemer, and Brother and his Mother

as a Protectress, Mediatrix and Advocate powerful be

fore Me; and as such I send Her again into the world,

that all may understand how much I wish them to avail

themselves of her protection. But those that do not over

come the repugnance of their flesh to suffering, or do not

believe my testimonies and wonders wrought in their be

half, or those witnessed by my holy Scriptures; and

those who, having believed, have entangled themselves

in the base impurities of carnal delights, the sorcerers,

idolaters, who forsake my true power and Divinity, fol

lowing the demon; all those that work deceit and malice,

THE CORONATION 51

shall have no other inheritance than what they thus

choose for themselves. This will be the dreadful fire of

hell, which is a pool of burning sulphur, full of darkness

and stench, where for each of the damned there shall be

different pains and torments according to the abomina

tions committed by each one; but all of them shall be

eternal and connected with the loss of the divine and

beatific vision enjoyed by the saints. This shall be the

second death, from which there shall be no salvation;

because those overtaken by it have not availed themselves

of the Redemption from the first death of sin through

the Redeemer and his blessed Mother in grace. Still de

scribing his vision the Evangelist proceeds :

24. "And there came one of the seven angels, who

had the vials full of the seven last plagues, and spoke

with me, saying : Come and I will show thee the Bride,

the Wife of the Lamb." I saw that this angel and the

others were of the highest and closest to the throne of

the blessed Trinity; and that they were endowed with

special powers to chastise the presumption of men who

should commit the above-mentioned sins, after the mys

tery of the Redemption, the life, teaching and death of

the Savior had been proclaimed, and the excellence and

power of his most blessed Mother in assisting the sin

ners had become known. And as, in the course of time,

these sacraments, with their miracles and enlightenment,

with the example of the saints, and especially that of the

apostolic men, of the founders of religious communities,

and of the great number of martyrs and confessors, have

become more and more manifest: therefore the sins of

men in the last ages are more heinous and detestable,

their ingratitude toward such blessings is more abomi

nable and worthy of greater punishments. Consequently

they rouse so much the greater indignation and wrath of

52 CITY OF GOD

the divine justice. Thus in the future times (which are

the present ones for us), God shall punish men with

greater rigor, sending upon them the plagues reserved

for the rapidly approaching days of the final judgment.

Let the reader refer to paragraph 266 in the first part.

25. "And he took me up in spirit t,o a great and high

mountain ; and he showed me the holy city of Jerusalem

coming down out of heaven from God." I was raised by

the power of God to a high mountain of exalted intelli

gence and enlightenment concerning the hidden sacra

ments, and in this state I saw the Bride of the Lamb, his

Woman, like the city of Jerusalem; the Bride of the

Lamb, on account of her likeness in reciprocal love to

Him, who took away the sins of the world (John 1, 29) ;

his Woman, because She accompanied Him inseparably

through all his works and wonders, and because for Her

He came forth from the bosom of his eternal Father to

have his delight with the children of men, who were the

brethren of this Bride and, through Her, also his own

brethren. I saw Her also as the city of Jerusalem, who

enclosed Him within herself and afforded Him a spa

cious habitation, though He cannot be encompassed by

heaven or earth ; and because He placed in that City the

temple and the propitiatory, where He wished to be

sought and propitiated by mankind. And although on

earth She humiliated and prostrated Herself beneath the

feet of all, as if She had been the least of creatures, I

saw Her raised on high to the throne and the right hand

of her Onlybegotten, whence She again descended, pros

perous and bountiful, to enrich the faithful children of

the Church.

CHAPTER III.

COMPLETING THE EXPLANATION OF THE TWENTY-FIRST

CHAPTER OF THE APOCALYPSE.

26. This holy city of Jerusalem, Mary our Mistress,

according to the Evangelist, "Having the glory of God,

and the light thereof, was like to a precious stone, as to

the jasper stone, even as a crystal." From her very be

ginning, the soul of the most holy Mary was filled and,

as it were, bathed, in new participations of the Divinity,

such as was never seen or known of any other creature;

for She alone was the aurora sending forth the splendors

of the Sun, Christ, true God and man, to whom She was

to give birth. And this divine light and clearness went

on increasing until She reached the highest state, seated

at the right hand of her Son on the very throne of the

blessed Trinity and clothed in the variety of all the gifts,

graces, virtues, merits and glory beyond all creatures

(Ps. 44, 10). When I saw Her in this place of inacces

sible light, it seemed to me, that She possessed no other

splendor than that of God himself, who seemed to com

municate it to Her from the fount and origin of his im

mutable Being. Through the humanity of his Only-

begotten the same light and clearness seemed to be both

in the Mother and the Son, each according to their de

gree; yet in substance seeming one and the same, not

found in any of the other blessed, nor in all of them to

gether. In variety She seemed like jasper, in precious-

ness She was inestimable, and in beauty of body and soul

She was like translucent crystal, permeated by the very

substance of clearness and light.

53

54 CITY OF GOD

27. "And it had a wall great and high, having twelve

gates, and in the gates twelve angels, and names written

thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the

children of Israel. On the east, three gates; and on the

north, three gates; and on the south, three gates; and

on the west, three gates." The wall which defended and

enclosed this holy city of most holy Mary, was so great

and high as is God himself and all his omnipotence and

divine attributes; for all the power and greatness of

God, his immense wisdom, were called in requisition to

fortify, to secure and defend this great Lady from the

enemies that might assault Her. And this invincible de

fense was redoubled, when She descended to live alone in

the world, without the company of her divine Son, and

to establish the new Church of the Gospel. For this

purpose She held at the disposal of her will, in a new

manner, God s own power against all the enemies of the

Church, visible and invisible. Since, after the founda

tion of this new city of Mary, the Most High threw open

most liberally all his treasures, and since He wished to

call through Her all mortals to the knowledge of Him

self and to the eternal happiness, the gentiles, Jews, bar

barians, without distinction of nationality or estate : there

fore He built this holy City with twelve gates opening up

toward all directions of the world. In them He placed

the twelve angels, who were to call and invite all the

children of Adam; and especially rouse all men to devo

tion and piety toward their Queen. In these gates are

also the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, in order

that no one might think himself excluded from the sacred

refuge of this heavenly Jerusalem, and in order that all

might understand, that most holy Mary holds their names

written in her heart and intimately connected with the

favors She received of the Most High as the Mother of

clemency and mercy, and not of justice.

THE CORONATION 55

28. "And the wall of that city had twelve foundations,

and in them, the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of

the Lamb." When our great Mother and Mistress was

at the right hand of her Son and God in the throne of his

glory, She offered Herself to come back to the world to

plant the Church ; thereupon the Lord charged Her es

pecially with the care of the Apostles and wrote their

names in the inflamed and pure bosom of that heavenly

Instructress, where we would see them written, if that

were possible to our mortal eyes. Although at that time

there were only eleven names of the Apostles, that of

Mathias was selected beforehand to take the place of

Judas. And because upon the wisdom and love of this

great Lady depended the doctrine, the instruction, the

firmness and entire government, by which we twelve

Apostles and saint Paul were to found the Church, on this

account our names are written in the foundation of this

mystical city of Mary; for She is to be the mainstay and

the groundwork of the holy Church and of its founders,

the Apostles. By her doctrine She taught us, by her wis

dom She enlightened, by her charity She inflamed us, by

her patience She bore with us, by her meekness She drew

us on, by her counsel She governed us, by her advice She

prepared us for her work, and by the dispensation of her

heavenly powers She delivered us from dangers. To all

She rendered assistance as if there were but one that

needed it, and each one She helped as if each were a

multitude. To us twelve Apostles were these gates

opened up more widely than to all the children of Adam.

While our Mistress lived, She never failed in protecting

each one of us, but remained present with us at all times

and places, defending us and protecting us without fail

in all our necessities and labors. From this great and

powerful Queen, and through Her, we participated and

56 CITY OF GOD

received all the blessings, graces and gifts of the Most

High, in order that we might be fit ministers of the New

Testament (II Cor. 3, 6). For these reasons were our

names written in the foundations of the walls of this

mystical City, the most blessed Mary.

29. "And he that spoke to me, had a measure of a reed

of gold, to measure the city and the gates thereof, and

the wall. And the city lieth in a foursquare, and the

length thereof is as great as the breadth : and he meas

ured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand

furlongs, and the length and the height and the breadth

thereof are equal." In order that I might understand the

immensity of this holy City of God, the one that spoke

to me measured it in my presence. For measurement he

had a hollow cane or a reed of gold, which symbolized

the deified humanity of the Word, with its gifts, graces

and merits; and in which were united the frailty of the

human and terrestrial nature with the precious and ines

timable essence of God, exalting the humanity and its

merits. Although this measure so greatly exceeds that

which it was to measure, namely the blessed Mary; yet

in all the heavens and the earth nothing else could be

found to measure the most holy Mary and her greatness,

than her own Son and true God. For all the creatures,

human and angelical, were inferior and unsuited to the

measurement and exploration of this mystical and divine

City. But measured by her Son, She was found com

mensurate with Him, as a Mother worthy of Him, with

out failing in anything belonging to this dignity. Her

greatness was twelve thousand stadia, equal in all its di

mensions ; hence it forms a cube, proportionate in all its

parts. Such was also the proportion and immensity of

the gifts of the great Queen; so that if the saints each re

ceived five or two talents, She received in proportion

THE CORONATION 57

twelve thousand of each gift, reaching immense magni

tude. Though She was already measured thus when She

passed into existence by her Immaculate Conception and

prepared for the Mothership of God; yet She was

measured again on this occasion, when She returned from

the right hand of the eternal Son and her dimensions

were proportionate to take the place and office of her

Son and Redeemer of the world.

30. "And the building of the wall thereof was of

jasper stone : but the city itself pure gold, like to clear

glass. And the foundations of the walls of the city

were adorned with all manner of precious stones." The

doings and the outward behavior of most holy Mary,

which, like the walls surrounding a city, are visible to all,

were of such wondrous beauty and variety, that merely

by her example She conquered and attracted the hearts

of all that looked upon Her or conversed with Her. By

Her sole presence She routed the demons and all his fan

tastical illusions; and therefore the walls of this City

were of jasper. By her conduct and labors, as far as

they became known exteriorly, our Queen produced more

fruits and wrought greater wonders in the primitive

Church, than all the Apostles and saints of that age.

The interior of this city was of the finest gold of inex

plicable clearness, participated from her own Son and so

closely resembling the light of the infinite Being, that it

seemed but the reflex of it. And this City was not only

of the finest and most precious gold, but it seemed as of

the purest and transparent glass; for She was an im

maculate mirror of the Divinity, admitting no other

image. She was like a crystalline tablet on which was

written the evangelical law. In Her it should become

known to the whole world ; therefore this tablet was of

clear glass and not of opaque stone, as that of Moses,

58 CITY OF GOD

for one people only. All the foundations in the walls of

this great City were of precious stones; for it was

founded by the hand of the Most High, who, being rich

and powerful, built it without stint or measure, with

whatever was most precious, estimable and secure of all

his gifts, privileges and favors. These were typified by

the most solid, rich, beautiful and valuable stones known

among men. (Let the tenth chapter of the first book,

first part, be consulted.)

31. "And the twelve gates of the city are twelve

pearls, one to each : and every several gate was of one

several pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold,

as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple

therein. For the Lord Almighty is the temple thereof,

and the Lamb." He that comes to this holy city of Mary

and enters through faith, hope, veneration, piety and de

votion, will find it a precious pearl that will make him

fortunate, rich and prosperous in this life and blessed

through her intercession in the next. He will feel no re

pugnance in entering this City of refuge, because its gates

are lovely and desirable, like rich and precious gems.

Hence no mortal will have an excuse, if he does not avail

himself of the most blessed Mary and of her kindness

toward the sinners. For there is nothing in Her which

is not capable of attracting the soul to Her and to eter

nal salvation. If the gates then are so beautiful and

precious to all that approach them, much more beautiful

will be the square of this City; for it is of the purest

gold and translucent, which signifies her most ardent love

and desire to admit all and enrich them with the treasures

of eternal happiness. For this purpose She manifests

Herself to all in the clearest light; and no one will find

in Her the darkness of deceit or falsehood. And because

into this holy city of Mary came God himself and in an

THE CORONATION 59

especial manner, and the Lamb, her own Son in sacra

mental form, thus filling and occupying Her: therefore

I saw in Her no temple and no propitiatory except the

omnipotent God and the Lamb. Nor was it necessary to

build a temple in this City for the ceremonious offering

of prayers and petitions as in other cities. For God him

self and her divine Son were her temple and They were

attentive and propitious to all her petitions, prayers, and

requests offered for the faithful of the Church.

32. "And the city hath no need of the sun, nor of the

moon, to shine in it. For the glory of the Lord hath

enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." After

our Queen had returned to the world from the right

hand of her divine Son, her spirit was enlightened not

only in the manner common to the saints, nor only

in the manner She had been enlightened before her

ascension, but, in recompense for the clear vision and

fruition of which She deprived Herself in order to return

to the militant Church, another kind of vision, an ab

stractive and continual vision of the Divinity, was con

ferred upon Her, and with it was joined another kind of

fruition proportionate to it. Hence, in a manner pecu

liar to Her, She participated in the state of the compre-

hensors, though She was yet a pilgrim. Besides this

privilege She enjoyed also another: that her divine Son

in the sacramental species of bread remained continually

within her bosom, as in his proper tabernacle : for when

ever She received holy Communion, the sacred species

were not dissolved until She received them the next time ;

so that as long as She lived in the world after her de

scent from heaven, She bore with Her without inter

mission her divine Son and sacramental God. By a spe

cial kind of vision She also saw Him within Herself and

conversed with Him without the necessity of seeking his

60 CITY OF GOD

royal presence anywhere outside of Herself. She bore

Him within her bosom and could say with the Spouse:

I hold Him and will not let Him go (Cant. 3, 4). Hence

there could be no night in this holy City, where grace

shone as the moon, nor was there need of any other rays

than those of the Sun of justice, since She possessed them

in all plenitude, and not only in part, as the rest of the

saints.

33. "And the nations shall walk in the light of it : and

the kings of the earth shall bring their glory and honor

into it." No excuse or justification can the banished chil

dren of Eve have, if by the divine light, which Mary gave

to the world, they do not walk in the path of true happi

ness. In order that She might enlighten his Church in

the first age, her Son sent Her and made Her known to

the first children of his holy Church. In the course of

ages He has continued to manifest her holiness and great

ness by the wonders performed by this Queen and by in

numerable favors and blessings flowing from her hands

upon mankind. In these last ages, which are the pres

ent, He will spread her glory and make Her known in

new splendor, on account of the Church s great need of

her intercession and of her help against the world, the

demon and the flesh. For these, through men s own

fault, as we see even in our day, will assume greater

sway and strength to hinder the working of grace in men

and to make them more unworthy of glory. Against

this new malice of Lucifer and his followers the Lord

wishes to oppose the merits and intercession of purest

Mary and the light sent into this world by the example

of her life. She is to be the refuge and sanctuary of

sinners and the straight and secure way, full of splendor

for all that wish to walk upon it.

34. If the kings and princes of the earth would walk

THE CORONATION 61

in that light and seek their honor and glory in this city

of Mary and employ the greatness, power, riches of their

states in advancing the honor of her name and that of

her most holy Son, then they could rest assured, that

being directed by this Northstar, they will be assisted

in the exercise of their dignities and will govern their

states with great success. In order to renew this confi

dence in our Catholic princes, professors and defenders

of the faith, He discloses all that I now and in the course

of this history have been made to understand and record.

For this reason the highest King of kings and the Re

storer of monarchies has given the most holy Mary the

title of Patroness, Protectress and Advocate of these

Catholic kingdoms. Through this singular blessing the

Most High has resolved to remedy the calamities and

difficulties, which the Christians on account of their sins,

are to endure and suffer and which in our own times we

sorrowfully and tearfully are sustaining. The infernal

dragon has poured out his froth and fury against the holy

Church, because he sees the carelessness of its heads and

members and because he sees so many men in love with

vanity and delusive pleasures. The greater part of the

guilt and its punishment falls upon those who call them

selves Catholic, whose offenses, as being those of chil

dren, are more heinous ; for they know the will of their

heavenly Father, who dwells on high, and yet do not

strive to fulfill it more earnestly than the strangers.

Though knowing that the kingdom of heaven suffers vio

lence and must be gained by labors, they have neverthe

less given themselves over to idleness and pleasure, tem

porizing with the world and the flesh. This dangerous

deceit of the demon, the just Judge punishes by the

demon himself, giving him, in his just judgments, the

liberty to afflict the holy Church and scourge its children

with rigor.

62 CITY OF GOD

35. But the Father of Mercies, who is in heaven, does

not permit the works of his kindness to be entirely un

done; and in order to preserve them He offers us the

opportune protection of most holy Mary, in order

that through her prayers and intercession his divine jus

tice may find some pretext or excuse for the suspension of

the rigorous chastisements hanging over us. He wishes

to wait and see, whether we shall avail ourselves of the

intercession of this great Queen and Lady of Heaven for

pacifying the just indignation of her divine Son, and

whether we shall amend our lives, by which we make

ourselves unworthy of his mercy and provoke his justice.

Let not the Catholic princes and the inhabitants of these

kingdoms neglect this occasion, wherein the blessed Mary

offers the days of salvation and the acceptable time of

her protection. Let them exalt the glory and honor of

this Queen by devoting themselves entirely to the service

of her divine Son and of Her, in thankfulness of the

blessing of the Catholic faith, which has been preserved

until now so pure in these kingdoms. For both Mother

and Son have through this preservation of the faith

shown to the world their singular love toward these king

doms, and they now show it again, by vouchsafing this

salutary advice. Let them therefore zealously strive to

employ their power and their influence for spreading and

exalting the name of Christ and that of most blessed Mary

through all the nations. Let them believe, that in order

to oblige the Son, there can be no more efficacious means

than to exalt his Mother with due reverence and to

spread the knowledge and veneration of Her through

all the nations of the world.

36. For a still greater proof and testimony of the

clemency of the most blessed Mary, the Evangelist adds :

"And the gates thereof shall not be shut by day: for

THE CORONATION 63

there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the

glory and honor of the nations into it." Let no one,

even though he has been neglectful and a sinner, an in

fidel or a pagan, approach the Mother of mercy with

diffidence. She who deprived Herself of the glory of

the right hand of her Son in order to assist us, cannot

shut the portals of kindness to any one that seeks relief

with an humble heart. Whether he arrives in the night

of sinfulness or in the day of grace, at any hour of his

life, he shall be admitted and assisted. If he who calls

in the middle of the night at the door of a true friend,

will force him, either through his necessity or impor

tunity, to rise and help him with the desired bread,

what will not She do, who is so loving a Mother, who

calls us and earnestly invites us to the remedy? (Luke

11, 8). She will not wait until we ourselves importune

Her ; for She hastens to assist. She is eager to respond,

most sweet and delightful in her favors, and most liberal

in enriching us. She is the leaven of mercy, inducing

the Most High to grant it ; She is the portal of heaven,

opened up for our entering through her intercession and

prayers : "There shall not enter into it anything defiled,

nor deceitful." She is never roused to indignation or

hatred against men; in Her there is no deceit, no fault

or defect ; She cannot fail in anything that mortals may

need for their salvation. We have no excuse or pre

text for not going to Her with humble acknowledgment ;

since She, being pure and spotless Herself, will purify

and cleanse also us. She holds the keys to the foun

tains, from which, as Isaias says, we may draw the

waters of the Redeemer; her intercession, in response

to our petitions, will turn these keys, so that the waters

will gush forth to wash us and to make us worthy of her

most blessed company, and that of her divine Son for

all the eternities.

64 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE GREAT QUEEN AND

MISTRESS OF THE ANGELS.

37. My daughter, I wish to tell thee for thy comfort

and the comfort of my servants, that thou hast written

of these mysteries in these chapters to my great satisfac

tion and with the approbation of the Most High. He

wishes the world to know what I have done for the

Church in coming back from the empyrean heaven to

assist the faithful, and how much I desire to help the

Catholics who seek my aid in accordance with the com

mands of God and my own maternal affection. The

saints also, and especially saint John, were particularly

rejoiced, that thou hast made mention of their jubilee at

seeing me ascend with my Son and Lord ; for it is time

that the children of the Church should know this and

understand more fully the blessings to which the Omnip

otent has raised me. They are thereby to enliven their

hope and make themselves more capable of the favors I

can and will bestow upon them. Let them know that I,

as a loving Mother, am filled with pity at seeing them

so deceived and oppressed by the tyranny of satan, to

whom they have blindly fallen victims. Saint John my

servant has concealed many other sacraments in the

twenty-first and the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse

concerning the favors shown me by the Almighty. In

the course of this history thou hast revealed those which

the faithful can profitably know at present, and thou shalt

reveal still more.

38. But thou must without delay gather for thyself

the fruits of all thou hast understood and written. First

of all thou must advance in heartfelt love and devotion

toward me, and be convinced that I shall be thy help in

all tribulations, thy constant assistance in all thy works;

THE CORONATION 65

that the portals of my mercy are opened up for thee and

for all whom thou recommendest to me, if only thou

shalt make thyself such as I desire. Therefore I inform

thee, my dearest, and urgently remind thee, that, in the

same manner as I was fitted out in heaven for return

ing and engaging in a more perfect activity on this

earth, so the Lord desires thee to be renewed in the

heaven of thy interior, in the secret and superior parts

of thy spirit, in those private exercises by which thou

hast created the interior solitude for writing the rest of

this life. Understand that all this has not been brought

about without special providence of God, which thou wilt

easily see in pondering over and recording thy experi

ences before beginning this third part. Now that thou

art left alone and art freed from the government and daily

intercourse of this community, I give thee this advice;

and there is now especial reason, that with the divine

favor thou renew thyself in the imitation of my life and

in putting into practice, as far as possible, what thou

knowest of me. This is the will of my divine Son, and

is in harmony with thy own wishes. Hear then my

teaching and gird thyself with fortitude (Prov. 31, 17).

Resolve with all the powers of thy will to be attentive,

fervent, constant, eager and diligent in seeking to please

thy Spouse and Lord. Accustom thyself never to lose

Him out of sight, even when thou descendest to in

tercourse with creatures and engagest in the works of

Martha. I shall be thy Teacher. The angels shall stand

by thee, so that with them and by means of their enlight

enments thou continually praise the Lord. The Most

High will lend thee his strength, so that thou mayest

fight his battles with his and thy enemies. Do not make

thyself unworthy of such great blessings and favors.

CHAPTER IV.

THREE DAYS AFTER THE MOST BLESSED MARY DESCENDED

FROM HEAVEN, SHE MANIFESTS HERSELF AND SPEAKS

IN PERSON TO THE APOSTLES ; CHRIST OUR LORD VIS

ITS HER! OTHER MYSTERIES UNTIL THE COMING OF

THE HOLY GHOST.

39. I again remind those who shall read this history

not to be astonished at the hidden sacraments recorded

of the most blessed Mary therein, nor to hold them un

worthy of belief, because they have not been until now

revealed to the world. For, even setting aside the fact

that they are all worthy and befitting this great Queen,

we cannot deny, that, though we have until now no writ

ten record of her wonderful doings after the Ascension

of the Lord, yet we must suppose Her to have wrought

many and exceeding great wonders in her office as

Teacher, Protectress and Mother of the new evangelical

Church, which was to be introduced into the world under

her assistance and supervision. And if the Lord reno

vated Her in all her powers, as was stated, and if He ex

erted all his Omnipotence through Her, no favor or

blessing, no matter how great, can consistently with the

Catholic truth be disputed as pertaining justly to this

peerless and singular Creature.

40. Mary was three days in heaven enjoying the bea

tific vision (as I said in the first chapter) and She came

back from her heavenly seat on the day which corre

sponds to the Sunday after the day of the Ascension,

called in the holy Church the Sunday within the octave

66

THE CORONATION 67

of that feast. She remained in the Cenacle three suc

ceeding days enjoying the after-effects of the beatific

vision. During this time the heavenly splendors, which

still clothed Her, were tempered and only the Evangelist

saint John had full knowledge of the mystery; for it was

not opportune, that it should become known to the rest of

the Apostles at that time, because they were scarcely as

yet capable of such sacraments. Although She remained

in their company, it was necessary that her glory should

be hidden from them. For even the Evangelist, though

he was especially strengthened by grace for the privilege

of looking upon Her with that veil withdrawn, fell pros

trate upon the ground as soon as he came into her pres

ence. Nor, on the other hand, was it befitting that the

Lord should suddenly deprive our great Queen of her

refulgence and the other exterior and interior effects of

her admission into the glory of his throne. He ordained

in his infinite wisdom, that the effects of those divine

gifts and favors diminish by degrees and that her vir

ginal body return gradually to the more common visible

state for conversing with the Apostles and the rest of the

faithful of the holy Church.

41. I have also said above, that this miracle of Mary s

admission into heaven does not conflict with what is

written in the Acts of the Apostles, though we there read,

that the Apostles and the holy women persevered unani

mously in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and

with his brethren after the Lord had ascended into heav

en (Acts 1, 14). What I have said evidently agrees

with this passage; for saint Luke writes his history ac

cording to what he and the Apostles saw in the Cenacle

of Jerusalem, and irrespective of the mystery of which

they were ignorant. The sacred body of Mary was in

two places at the same time. Although the attention and

68 CITY OF GOD

use of the senses and faculties was more perfect and real

in heaven, nevertheless it could be truly said, that She

was in the company of the Apostles and that She was

seen by all. Moreover it was true that the most blessed

Mary persevered with them in prayer ; for She saw them

from her place in heaven and there She united her

prayers and petitions with those of all the holy refugees

of the Cenacle ; She presented them to her divine Son, at

whose right hand She was seated, and obtained for them

perseverance and many other great favors of the Most

High.

42. The three days in which the great Lady enjoyed

the after-effects of glory and while the redundance of

its splendors gradually lessened, She spent in most ardent

and divine sentiments of love, gratitude and ineffable

humility, beyond all the terms or words, which I can find

for manifesting what I have been made to understand of

this sacrament, for they fall far short of the truth. The

angels and seraphim, who attended upon Her, conferred

in new wonder with each other on these miracles, and

they discussed among themselves, which was the greatest

miracle : that the Most High should raise a mere Crea

ture to such favors and greatness, or that any one, after

having been raised to such heights of grace and glory,

should abase Herself beneath the lowest of creation and

deem Herself the most insignificant of all that is created.

I perceived that the highest seraphim stood, as it were,

with bated breath at beholding the doings of their Queen.

Speaking to each other they said: "If the demons before

their fall had been privileged to behold this example of

humility, it would have been impossible for them to yield

to their pride. This our great Lady is She, who, without

any defect, without any deficiency, not only in part, but

in all plenitude, has filled up the vast voidness of humil-

THE CORONATION 69

ity in all creatures. She alone has worthily conceived

the majesty and supereminent greatness of the Creator

and the littleness of all creation. She is the One, that

knows when and how He must be obeyed and reverenced ;

and She faithfully acts out her knowledge. Is it pos

sible, that among the thorns sown by sin among the chil

dren of Adam the earth should produce such a pure Lily,

emitting such fragrance for the delight of the Creator

and for mortals? (Cant. 2, 2), that from the desert of

the world, void of grace and full of earthliness, such a

heavenly Creature, affluent with the delights of the Al

mighty, should arise? (Cant. 8, 5). Let Him be eter

nally praised in his wisdom and goodness, who formed

such a Creature, so wonderfully appointed for our emu

lation in holiness and for an example and for the glory

of the human kind. And Thou, blessed among women,

distinguished and chosen among all creatures, be Thou

congratulated, known and praised by all generations!

(Luke 1, 48). Mayest Thou enjoy for all eternity the

excellence given to Thee by thy Son and Creator ! May

He find his pleasure and complaisance in Thee on ac

count of the beauty of thy works and gifts; may in Thee

be satiated his immense charity for the justification of

all men. Thou, for all of them dost render Him satisfac

tion, and looking upon Thee He shall not repent of hav

ing called into existence ungrateful man. If they grieve

and irritate Him, Thou appeasest Him and turnest Him

to mercy and kindness. We do not wonder that He

should favor men so much, since Thou, our Lady and

Queen, livest among them and callest them thy people."

43. With these praises and many other hymns the

holy angels celebrated the humility and the works of the

most blessed Mary after She descended from heaven;

and to some of these praises She herself joined her re-

70 CITY OF GOD

sponses. After dismissing the host of the angels, who

had accompanied Her from heaven, and after having re

mained in seclusion still filled with the splendors of

heaven perceived only by saint John, She knew that it was

time to deal and converse with the faithful. She there

fore left her retirement and, like a loving Mother, began

to hold tender intercourse with the Apostles and dis

ciples. With them She offered tearful prayers to her

divine Son, including them and all who in future ages

were to receive the grace of the holy Catholic faith.

From that day also, as long as She lived upon earth, She

asked the Lord to hasten the times, when the feasts of

the sacred mysteries should be celebrated on earth in the

same way as She knew they would be celebrated in

heaven. She also asked the Lord to send men of exalted

and distinguished holiness for the conversion of sinners,

having at the same time a foreknowledge of their send

ing. In these prayers her burning charity for men rose

to such a pitch, that according to the natural course it

would have destroyed her life. In order to sustain Her

and moderate the force of these desires, her divine Son

frequently sent one of his highest seraphim, who should

answer Her and promise Her the fulfillment of her de

sires and petitions, at the same time revealing to Her in

what order the divine Providence would arrange all this

for the greater advantage of mortals.

44. By the abstractive vision of the Divinity, which,

as I have said, She continued to enjoy, the conflagration

of love which swept through that purest and chastest of

hearts, became so ineffable, that beyond all comparison it

exceeded that of the most love-inflamed seraphim next

to the throne of the Godhead. If at times She permitted

these flames of divine love to abate somewhat, it was in

order to contemplate the humanity of her most holy Son ;

THE CORONATION 71

for no other image of visible things was ever allowed to

take up her interior faculties, except when She actually

employed her senses in dealing with creatures. At the

consciousness and memory of her absent Son She felt

some natural tenderness ; but this was always a moderate

and reasonable one, as She was the most prudent Mother.

But as the heart of the Son re-echoed to this love, He

permitted Himself to be wounded by the loving desires

of his Mother: and the words of the Canticle were lit

erally fulfilled, that the eyes of his beloved Spouse and

Mother drew Him down to the earth (Cant. 4, 4).

45. This happened many times, as will be said later

on, and it took place the first time during the few days

which passed between her descent from heaven and the

coming of the Holy Ghost, not more than six days after

She again began to converse with the Apostles. Christ

our Savior would not permit Himself a longer delay than

these few days before He again descended personally to

visit and fill Her with new gifts and ineffable consolation.

The purest Dove was fainting with love and with those

pangs, which She says, cause well ordered charity in the

wine-cellar of the King (Cant. 2, 4). The Lord then

coming to Her permitted Her to recline upon his breast

in the left arm of his humanity, and with the right arm

of his Divinity He illumined Her and enriched Her, filled

Her anew with vivifying and strengthening influences.

Then again were quieted the loving anxieties of this

wounded Deer, now drinking to her satisfaction from

the fountain of the Savior. She was refreshed and

strengthened anew, in order that She might be inflamed

still more by the fires of her inextinguishable love. She

was made whole by being so much the more deeply

wounded ; She was healed by a new sickness and vivified

by delivering Herself over so much the more completely

72 CITY OF GOD

to the agonies of her affection; for this kind of sickness

neither knows nor admits of any other kind of remedy.

When the sweetest Mother by these favors had regained

strength and when the presence of the Savior was re

vealed to her senses, She prostrated Herself before his

royal Majesty in order to ask Him humbly for his bless

ing and to give Him most fervent thanks for the favor

of his visit.

46. The most prudent Lady was surprised at this favor

not only because it was such a short time since She was

deprived of her divine Son, but also because the Lord had

not informed Her of the time of his visit, nor had her

most profound humility permitted Her to expect such a

divine condescension in affording Her relief. As this

was the first favor of this kind, She was so much the

more abashed and annihilated in her own mind. She

spent five hours with the Word enjoying his presence;

and none of the Apostles at that time knew of the favor,

although they knew, from what they noticed in the coun

tenance and in the bearing of their blessed Lady, that

something wonderful was transpiring. None of them,

however, on account of their timidity and reverence, pre

sumed to inquire further into the cause. In order to

take leave of her divine Son, when She became aware

that He wished to return to heaven, She prostrated Her

self again to the ground, asking Him for his blessing and

for his guidance in correcting any deficiency in her be

havior for the time when He should return to visit Her

in the future. She asked this favor, because the Lord

himself had offered to visit Her sometimes in her lone

liness. Moreover, often before his Ascension, She had

prostrated Herself at his feet in acknowledgment of her

unworthiness and of her want of fervor thanking Him

for his favors, as I have narrated in the first part. Al-

THE CORONATION 73

though She could accuse Herself of no fault, because as

the Mother of holiness, She never committed any; and

although She could not, as the Mother of wisdom, com

mit any fault; yet the Lord permitted full sway to her

humility and love in the worthy acknowledgment of her

debt to God as a mere creature. In her most exalted

knowledge and humility all that She did seemed small in

recompense for the supernatural blessings. This inequal

ity She attributed to Herself and although this could not

be called a fault, She wished to acknowledge the inferior

ity of earthly things in comparison with divine excellence.

47. But among the ineffable mysteries and favors

which She received since the day of the Ascension of her

divine Son our Savior, were those connected with the

worthy preparation of the Apostles and disciples for the

advent of the Holy Ghost. The great Queen well knew

how estimable and divine was to be the blessing which

was held in store for them by the Father of lights ; She

considered also the fleshly affection of the Apostles for

the humanity of their Master Jesus. For the purpose of

correcting this defect and perfecting them in all things,

as a tender Mother and powerful Queen, She, on arriving

in heaven with her divine Son, sent some of her angels

to the Cenacle as her messengers in order to intimate to

the faithful her own and her Son s will, that they should

raise themselves above themselves and henceforth live

more by faith and love of God, than in the operations of

their sensual nature ; that they should not be borne along

solely by the sight of God s humanity, but that they let it

serve them as a portal and a path to the Divinity, where

they would find adequate satisfaction and repose. Such

advice and exhortation the heavenly Queen ordered the

angel to give to the Apostles. Afterwards, when She

again descended from on high, She consoled them in their

74 CITY OF GOD

sorrow and soothed them in their dismay, speaking to

them for one hour every day and explaining to them the

mysteries of the faith taught Her by her divine Son.

She did this however not by any formal instruction, but

in the manner of a conference, exhorting them also to

spend another hour during the day in discussing among

themselves the admonitions, promises, doctrine and teach

ings of their divine Master Jesus and to occupy them

selves during some other part of the day in reciting vo

cally the Our Father and some psalms, while the rest of

the time they were to spend in mental prayer. Towards

evening they were to partake of bread and fish and then

indulge in moderate sleep. Through these prayers and

fasts they were to dispose themselves for the advent and

reception of the Holy Ghost.

48. The vigilant Mother, empowered by the right

hand of her divine Son, took care of that happy family

in order to bring all their works up to the highest per

fection. After her descent from heaven, She instructed

the Apostles, yet She never entered upon this duty with

out first being requested by saint Peter or saint John.

Through her prayers She moved her divine Son to in

spire them with these commands, in order that She might

obey them as his vicars and priests. Thus all things hap

pened as arranged by the Mother of humility and She

obeyed as a handmaid. Laying aside all pretense to her

dignity as Queen and Lady, and making no use of her

sovereignty and dominion, She obeyed as a servant and

conducted Herself as if She were an inferior, and in this

spirit She conferred with the Apostles and the other faith

ful. During those days She explained to them the mys

tery of the blessed Trinity in terms most exalted and

mysterious, yet suited to the understanding of all. She

explained also the mystery of the hypostatic union, and

THE CORONATION 75

those of the Incarnation, adding many others, which

they had already been taught by the Master ; telling them

at the same time that they would be enlightened by the

Holy Ghost for a deeper understanding of all these

things.

49. She taught them how to pray mentally, insisting

on the excellence and necessity of that kind of prayer;

how the principal duty and the most noble occupation

of the rational creature was to raise itself, by the under

standing and the will, above all that is created to the

knowledge and love of God; and that no other object or

occupation should ever be preferred or should ever inter

rupt this duty, so as not to deprive the soul of this su

preme benefit, the beginning of eternal life and happi

ness. She taught them also how to thank the eternal

Father for having given us his only Son for our Re

deemer and Master, and for the love with which the Lord

redeemed us at the cost of his Passion and Death. She

exhorted them to give thanks to God for having singled

them out as his Apostles, as his companions and as the

founders of his holy Church. Such were the exhorta

tions and teachings, with which the heavenly Mother at

that time enlightened the hearts of the eleven Apostles

and the other disciples and by which She prepared and

disposed them for the reception of the Holy Ghost and

his divine effects. As She saw into the inmost recesses

of their hearts and knew the natural condition and char

acter of each one, She accommodated Herself to the ne

cessities, the bent of mind and the graces of each in order

to fill them with joy, consolation and constancy in the

practice of virtue. She exhorted them to persevere in

humble prostrations and other actions of worship and

reverence in adoring the greatness and majesty of the

Most High.

76 CITY OF GOD

50. Every morning and evening She approached the

Apostles to receive their benediction, first that of saint

Peter, as their chief, then of saint John and of the rest

according to their age. At first they all shrank from

performing this ceremony, beholding in Her their Queen

and the Mother of their Master Jesus. But the most

prudent Lady insisted that all should bless Her as minis

ters and priests of the Most High, explaining to them

how the highest reverence and respect was due to them

on account of their supreme dignity and office. As this

was a contest of humility, it was certain that the Mother

of humility would be victorious and the disciples would

be overcome and instructed by her example. Besides,

the words of Mary were so sweet and persuasive for

moving the hearts of those first believers, that She urged

them on with a heavenly force and enlightened them to

practice the highest perfections of virtue and holiness.

Perceiving these wonderful effects upon themselves, they

wonderingly commented upon them among each other,

saying: "Truly in this pure Creature we have found

again the teaching and consoling doctrine, of which we

are deprived by the absence of her Son, our Master. Her

words and doings, her counsels, her sweet and gentle in

tercourse, teach us and draw us on in the same way as

the conversation of the Lord, when He lived in our

midst. Our hearts are inflamed by the teachings and

exhortations of this wonderful Being as with those of

Jesus our Savior. There is no doubt that He as the om

nipotent God, has deposited in the Mother of the Only-

begotten his own divine wisdom and grace. We can now

dry our tears, since for our instruction and consolation

He has given us such a Mother and Mistress, and since

He has left with us this living ark of the Testament,

wherein He has placed for us his law, his wonderful

THE CORONATION 77

staff, and the sweetest manna for our sustenance and

comfort" (Heb. 9, 4).

51. If the holy Apostles and the other firstborn chil

dren of the Church had recorded in writing what they

saw as eye-witnesses of her deeds of eminent wisdom;

what they heard and what passed in their intercourse

with Her for so long a time, then we might be filled with

higher conceptions of the holy and heroic works of the

sovereign lady. We would then see that as well in the

doctrine which She taught, as in the wonders which She

wrought, her most holy Son had communicated to Her

a virtue, which although coming from the Lord as from

its fountain, yet, in the heavenly Lady, was in a certain

manner divine and was distributed from Her as from an

aqueduct to all the mortals. The Apostles however had

the happiness and good fortune of drinking the waters

of the Savior and of the teachings of his purest Mother

in their very fount, receiving them in a sensible manner

and thus preparing them for their office and ministry in

founding the holy Church and planting the evangelic

faith throughout the world.

52. By the treason and death of that unhappy one

among all mortals, his episcopacy, as David says, had

become vacant and it was necessary to provide some other

one worthy of the apostolate (Ps. 108, 8). For it was

the will of the Most High, that the number twelve,

which had been determined upon by the Master of life

as the proper number when He chose his Apostles, should

also be their number at the coming of the Holy Ghost.

This decree of the Lord was explained to the Apostles

by the blessed Mary in one of her instructions; all of

them acceded to it and they asked Her as their Mother

and Mistress to choose one who should seem worthy

and most fit for the apostolate. The heavenly Lady knew

78 CITY OF GOD

beforehand who was to be chosen; for the names of

the twelve, including saint Mathias, were written in her

heart, as is said in the third chapter. But in her pro

found humility and wisdom She judged it right to leave

this to saint Peter in order that he might begin to ex

ercise in the new Church the office of pontiff and head,

as vicar of Jesus Christ, its Author and Master. She

therefore instructed the Apostle to hold this election in

the presence of all the disciples and other faithful so that

all might see him act as the supreme head of the Church.

Saint Peter thereupon arranged it all according to her

directions.

53. The proceedings of this first election in the Church

are related by saint Luke in the first chapter of the Acts

of the Apostles. He says, that in the days intervening

between the Ascension of Christ and the coming of the

Holy Ghost, the Apostle saint Peter, having called to

gether the one hundred and twenty, who had been present

at the Ascension, reminded them that the prophecy of

David concerning the treason of Judas in the fortieth

psalm must be fulfilled ; that Judas, having been chosen

as one of the twelve Apostles, had unhappily prevaricated

and made himself the leader of those that captured Jesus ;

that with the price of his treason had been bought the

field called Haceldama; that at the end, as unworthy of

divine mercy, he had hung himself, had burst in the

middle and his entrails had fallen out, as was known to

all who lived in Jerusalem; that therefore it was be

coming, another should be chosen to the apostolate in

his place in order to give testimony to the resurrection

of the Savior, in accordance with another prophecy of

David (Ps. 108, 8) ; and that the one to be chosen should

be from the number of those who had followed Christ

the Master in his preaching ever since his Baptism by

saint John.

THE CORONATION 79

54. Having 1 thus persuaded all the faithful of the

propriety of electing the twelfth Apostle, they left it

to saint Peter to determine the manner of this election.

The Apostle then ordained, that from the seventy-two

disciples two, Joseph, called the just, and Mathias, should

be selected. Between these two lots were to be drawn and

that one should be assigned to the apostleship, who would

draw the proper lot. All approved of this manner of

election, which at that time was a very secure way,

since the divine power wrought great miracles for the

foundation of the Church. They wrote the two names,

with the title of Disciple and Apostle of Christ, upon as

many cards and placed them in an urn, where they could

not be seen. All of them then fell to prayer, asking God

to choose the one pleasing to Him, since, as the Lord,

He knew the hearts of all (Acts 1, 25). Saint Peter

thereupon drew out one of the lots, on which was written

the name of Mathias as Apostle and Disciple of Christ;

joyfully Mathias was accepted and acknowledged as the

legitimate Apostle, and the eleven embraced him. The

most holy Mary, who was present at all these proceed

ings, asked his blessing and, in imitation of Her, all

the other faithful did the same. Then all of them con

tinued their prayers and fasting until the coming of the

Holy Ghost.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

55. My daughter, thou hast rightly wondered at the

hidden and supernal favors, which I received at the hands

of my Son, and at the humility and thankfulness, with

which I received them; likewise the loving attention

which I paid to the necessities of the Apostles and the

80 CITY OF GOD

faithful of the Church amid all my joy. It is time, my

dearest, that thou gather the fruits of this knowledge ; for

neither canst thou now comprehend more, nor do I desire

less of thee than that thou be to me a faithful daughter,

who imitates me fervently, and a disciple, who listens to

me and follows me with all her heart. Stir up thy faith

then in order to be convinced, that I am powerful to con

fer favors, and trust, that I will enrich thee in unstinted

liberality with gifts beyond all thy desires. But at the

same time do thou humiliate thyself to the very earth

and shrink to the very last place among creatures; for

of thyself thou art more useless than the most vile and

despicable dust and thou canst call nothing thy own

except misery and want. Consider well within thyself

how great and exquisite is the kindness and condescension

of the Most High in regard to thee, and what kind of

thanks thou owest Him. If the one who pays his debts,

even entirely, cannot take to himself special credit; then

it is just, that thou, who canst not satisfy thy debt,

shouldst remain humble, for though thou labor ever

so much and according to all thy powers, thou shalt

nevertheless remain a debtor. What shall then be thy

indebtedness, if thou remain remiss and negligent?

56. In this prudent alertness thou wilt understand, how

closely thou must imitate me in living faith, in confident

hope and in fervent love, in profound humility and in

the worship and reverence due to the infinite greatness

of the Lord. I warn thee again of the cunning vigilance

of the serpent, who seeks to induce mortals to neglect

the veneration and worship due to God and presump

tuously to despise this virtue and what it implies. Into

the minds of the worldly and of the vicious he instills a

most foolish forgetfulness of the Catholic truths, in

order that divine faith may not keep alive in them the

THE CORONATION 81

fear and veneration of the Most High ; and thus he suc

ceeds in making them like to the heathens, who do not

know the true God. Others, who strive after virtue and

perform some good works, the enemy leads into a dan

gerous lukewarmness and negligence, wherein they over

look what they are losing on account of their want of

fervor. Those that concern themselves more earnestly

about perfection, the dragon deceives with a certain

coarse over-confidence, so that on account of the favors

they receive and on account of the divine mercy which

they experience, they begin to consider themselves as

special favorites of the Lord, forgetting the humble fear

and veneration, which they ought to experience in the

presence of Him, before whom, according to the teaching

of the holy Church, the powers of heaven tremble. But

since I have on other occasion reminded and admonished

thee concerning this danger, let my mentioning it here

suffice.

57. In this manner I desire that thou be faithful and

punctual in the practice of this doctrine, exercising it in

all thy exterior actions without affectation or excess, and

teaching others by thy own example the holy fear and

veneration due from creatures to their Creator. I desire

that thou teach and impress this science especially upon

thy religious, so that they may not be ignorant of the

humility and reverence, with which they are to converse

with God. The most efficacious instruction thou canst

give, will be thy example in fulfilling all thy obligations ;

for these works thou must neither conceal, nor ever omit

for fear of vanity. This example is due in much greater

degree from those that govern others, since it is their

duty to exhort, move and accompany their subjects in

the holy fear of the Lord, which is done more effica

ciously by example than by words. Admonish them

82 CITY OF GOD

particularly to hold in veneration the priests as the

anointed of the Lord. In imitation of me do thou always

ask for their blessing, when thou approachest or leavest

them. The more thou seest thy own self favored by

the divine condescension, so much the more bear in mind

the necessities and the afflictions of thy neighbors and

the dangers of those in sin, praying for all in great faith

and confidence. For, thy love of God cannot be true, if

thou art content with enjoying only thyself, and in the

meanwhile f orgetest thy brethren. Thou must anxiously

solicit the highest goods, which thou knowest of and

participatest in, for all men, since no one is excluded

therefrom and since all need the help and communication

of God. In the love of me thou wilt understand, how

thou must imitate me in all things.

CHAPTER V.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY GHOST UPON THE APOSTLES

AND THE OTHER FAITHFUL ; THE MOST BLESSED MARY

SEES HIM INTUITIVELY; OTHER MOST HIDDEN MYS

TERIES WHICH HAPPENED ON THAT OCCASION.

58. In the company of the great Queen of heaven,

and encouraged by Her, the twelve Apostles and the rest

of the disciples and faithful joyfully waited for the ful

fillment of the promise of the Savior, that He would

send them the Holy Ghost, the Consoler, who should

instruct them and administer unto them all that they

had heard in the teaching of their Lord (John 14, 26).

They were so unanimous and united in charity, that

during all these days none of them had any thought,

affection or inclination contrary to those of the rest.

They were of one heart and soul in thought and action.

Although the election of saint Mathias had occurred,

not the least movement or sign of discord arose among

all those first-born children of the Church; yet this was

a transaction, which is otherwise apt to arouse differences

of opinion in the most excellently disposed; since each

one is apt to follow his own insight and does not easily

yield to the opinion of others. But into this holy con

gregation no discord found entrance, because they were

united in prayer, in fasting and in the expectation of the

Holy Ghost, who does not seek repose in discordant and

unyielding hearts. In order that it may be inferred, how

powerful was this union in charity, not only for disposing

them toward the reception of the Holy Ghost, but for

83

84 CITY OF GOD

overcoming and dispersing the evil spirits, I will say;

that the demons, who since the death of the Savior had

lain prostrate in hell, felt in themselves a new kind of

oppression and terror, resulting from the virtues of those

assembled in the Cenacle. Although they could not

explain it to themselves, they perceived a new terrifying

force, emanating from that place, and when they per

ceived the effects of the doctrine and example of Christ

in the behavior of the disciples, they feared the ruin of

their dominion.

59. The Queen of the angels, most holy Mary, in the

plenitude of her wisdom and grace, knew the time and

predestined hour for the sending of the Holy Ghost upon

the apostolic college. When the days of Pentecost were

about to be fulfilled (Act 2, 1), (which happened fifty

days after the Resurrection of the Lord our Redeemer),

the most blessed Mother saw, how in heaven the humanity

(John 14, ^6) of the Word conferred with the eternal

Father concerning the promised sending of the divine

Paraclete to the Apostles, and that the time predetermined

by his infinite wisdom for planting the faith and all his

gifts in his holy Church, was at hand. The Lord also

referred to the merits acquired by Him in the flesh

through his most holy Life, Passion and Death, to the

mysteries wrought by Him for the salvation of the human

race and to the fact, that He was the Mediator, Advocate

and Intercessor between the eternal Father and men, and

that among them lived his sweetest Mother, in whom the

divine Persons were so well pleased. He besought his

Father also, that, besides bringing grace and the invisible

gifts, the Holy Ghost appear in the world in visible form,

that so the evangelical law might be honored before all

the world; that the Apostles and faithful, who were to

spread the divine truth, might be encouraged, and that

THE CORONATION 85

the enemies of the Lord, who had in this life persecuted

and despised Him unto the death of the Cross, might be

filled with terror.

60. This petition of our Redeemer in heaven was sup

ported on earth by most holy Mary in a manner befitting

the merciful Mother of the faithful. Prostrate upon

the earth in the form of a cross and in profoundest hu

mility, She saw, how in that consistory of the blessed

Trinity, the request of the Savior was favorably ac

cepted, and how, to fulfill and execute it, the persons of

the Father and the Son, as the Principle from which the

Holy Ghost proceeded, decreed the active mission of

the Holy Spirit ; for to these Two is attributed the send

ing of the third Person, because He proceeds from Both ;

and the third Person passively took upon Himself this

mission and consented to come into the world. Although

all the three divine Persons and their operations spring

from the same infinite and eternal will without any in

equality; yet the same powers, which in all the Persons

are indivisible and equal, have certain operations ad intra

in each Person, which are not in the others and thus the

understanding engenders in the Father, not in the Son,

who is engendered; and the will breathes forth in the

Father and the Son, and not in the Holy Ghost, who is

breathed forth. On account of this reason the Father and

the Son, as the active Principle, are said to send the

Holy Ghost ad extra, while to the Latter is attributed

the being sent, as if in a passive manner.

61. On Pentecost morning the blessed Virgin Mary

exhorted the Apostles, the disciples and the pious women,

numbering about one hundred and twenty, to pray more

fervently and renew their hopes, since the hour was at

hand in which they were to be visited by the divine Spirit

from on high. At the third hour (nine o clock), when

86 CITY OF GOD

all of them were gathered around their heavenly Mistress

and engaged in fervent prayer, the air resounded with a

tremendous thunder and the blowing of a violent wind

mixed with the brightness of fire or lightning, all cen

tering upon the house of the Cenacle. The house was

enveloped in light and the divine fire was poured out

over all of that holy gathering (Acts 2, 2). Over the

head of each of the hundred and twenty persons ap

peared a tongue of that same fire, in which the Holy

Ghost had come, filling each one with divine influences

and heavenly gifts and causing at one and the same

time the most diverse and contrary effects in the Cenacle

and in the whole of Jerusalem, according to the diversity

of the persons affected.

62. In the most holy Mary these effects were alto

gether divine, and most wonderful in the sight of all

the heavenly courtiers; for as regard us men, we are

incapable of understanding and explaining them. The

purest Lady was transformed and exalted in God; for

She saw intuitively and clearly the Holy Ghost, and for

a short time enjoyed the beatific vision of the Divinity.

Of his gifts and divine influences She by Herself received

more than all the rest of the saints. Her glory for that

space of time, exceeded that of the angels and of the

blessed. She alone gave to the Lord more glory, praise

and thanksgiving than all the universe for the benefit

of the descent of his Holy Spirit upon his Church and

for his having pledged Himself so many times to send

Him and through Him to govern it to the end of the

world. The blessed Trinity was so pleased with the

conduct of Mary on this occasion, that It considered

Itself fully repaid and compensated for having created

the world; and not only compensated, but God acted

as if He were under a certain obligation for possessing

THE CORONATION 87

such a peerless Creature, whom the Father could look

upon as his Daughter, the Son as his Mother, and the

Holy Ghost as his Spouse; and whom (according to our

way of thinking) He was now obliged to visit and enrich

after having conferred upon. Her such high dignity. In

this exalted and blessed Spouse were renewed all the

gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, creating new effects

and operations altogether beyond our capacity to under

stand.

63. The Apostles, as saint Luke says (Acts 2, 2),

were also replenished and filled with the Holy Ghost;

for they received a wonderful increase of justifying

grace of a most exalted degree. The twelve Apostles

were confirmed in this sanctifying grace and were never

to lose it. In all of them, according to each one s con

dition, were infused the habits of the seven gifts : Wis

dom, Understanding, Science, Piety, Counsel, Fortitude

and Fear. In this magnificent blessing, as new as it was

admirable in the world, the twelve Apostles were created

fit ministers of the new Testament and founders of the

evangelical Church for the whole world: for this new

grace and blessing communicated to them a divine

strength most efficacious and sweet, which inclined them

to practice the most heroic virtue and the highest sanc

tity. Thus strengthened they prayed, they labored will

ingly and accomplished the most difficult and arduous

tasks, engaging in their labors not with sorrow or from

necessity, but with the greatest joy and alacrity.

64. In all the rest of the disciples and the faithful,

who received the Holy Ghost in the Cenacle, the Most

High wrought proportionally and respectively the same

effects, except that they were not confirmed in grace

like the Apostles. According to the disposition of each

the gifts of grace were communicated in greater or less

88 . CITY OF GOD

abundance in view of the ministry they were to hold in

the holy Church. The same proportion was maintained in

regard to the Apostles; yet saint Peter and saint John

were more singularly favored on account of the high

offices assigned to them : the one to govern the Church

as its head, and the other to attend upon and serve the

Queen and Mistress of heaven and of earth, most holy

Mary. The sacred text of saint Luke says, that the Holy

Ghost filled the whole house in which this happy congre

gation was gathered (Acts 2, 7), not only because all

of them were filled with the Holy Ghost and his admir

able gifts, but because the house itself was filled with

wonderful light and splendor. This plenitude of won

ders and prodigies overflowed and communicated itself

also to others outside of the Cenacle; for it caused

diverse and various effects of the Holy Spirit among

the inhabitants of Jerusalem and its vicinity. All those,

who with some piety had compassioned our Savior Jesus

in his Passion and Death, deprecating his most bitter

torments and reverencing his sacred Person, were inte

riorly visited with new light and grace, which disposed

them afterwards to accept the doctrine of the Apostles.

Those that were converted by the first sermon of saint

Peter, were to a great extent of the number of those

who, by their compassion and sorrow at the death of

the Lord, had merited for themselves such a great bless

ing. Others of the just who were in Jerusalem outside

of the Cenacle, also felt great interior consolations, by

which they were moved and predisposed by new effects

of grace wrought in each one proportionately by the

Holy Ghost.

65. Not less wonderful, although more hidden, were

some contrary effects produced on that day by the Holy

Ghost in Jerusalem. By the dreadful thunders and

THE CORONATION 89

violent commotion of the atmosphere and the lightnings

accompanying his advent, He disturbed and terrified

the enemies of the Lord in that city, each one according

to his own malice and perfidy. This chastisement was

particularly evident in those who had actively concurred

in procuring the death of Christ, and who had signalized

themselves in their rabid fury against Him. All these

fell to the ground on their faces and remained thus for

three hours. Those that had scourged the Lord were

suddenly choked in their own blood, which shot forth

from their veins in punishment for shedding that of

the Master. The audacious servant, who had buffeted

the Lord, not only suddenly died, but was hurled into hell

body and soul. Others of the Jews, although they did

not die, were chastised with intense pains and abominable

sicknesses. These disorders, consequent upon shedding

the blood of Christ, descended to their posterity and even

to this day continue to afflict their children with most

horrible impurities. This chastisement became notorious

in Jerusalem, although the priests and pharisees diligently

sought to cover it up, just as they had tried to conceal

the Resurrection of the Savior. As these events, how

ever, were not so important, neither the Apostles nor the

Evangelists wrote about them, and in the confusion of the

city the multitude soon forgot them.

66. The chastisement and terror extended also to the

depths of hell, where the demons felt themselves seized

with new confusion and oppression for three days, just

as the Jews lay on the earth for three hours. During

these three days Lucifer and his demons broke forth in

fearful howlings, communicating new terror and con

fusion of torments to all the damned. O ineffable and

powerful Spirit! The holy Church calls Thee the finger

of God, because Thou proceedest from the Father and

90 CITY OF GOD

the Son, as the finger from the arm and the body; but

on this occasion it was manifested to me, that Thou

holdest the same infinite power with the Father and the

Son. Through thy sovereign presence the heaven and the

earth are moved by such opposite effects in all its inhabi

tants at one and the same time; but they are similar to

those, that will happen at the last judgment. The saints

and the just Thou fillest with thy grace, thy gifts and thy

ineffable consolations; and the impious and the proud

Thou chastisest and overwhelmest with confusion and

pain. Truly I see here fulfilled what Thou sayest through

the mouth of David; that Thou art a God of vengeance

and workest freely, dealing out retribution to the wicked,

in order that they may not glory in their unjust malice

nor say in their heart that Thou failest in perception or

judgment while reproving and chastising their sins (Ps.

93, 1).

67. Let the insipid of this world then understand, and

let the foolish be warned, that the Most High knows

the vain thoughts of men ; that if He is liberal and most

kind to the just, He is also rigid in punishing the im

pious and the wicked (Ps. 93, 11). It was befitting

that the Holy Ghost should show Himself to be the one

as well as the other on this occasion; for He proceeded

from the incarnate Word, who had assumed human

nature for the sake of men, who had died for their sal

vation, and had suffered ignominies and torments without

opening his mouth or seeking retribution for those in

sults and offenses. In coming down into this world it

was just that the Spirit should be zealous for the honor

of that same incarnate Word ; though He did not punish

all his enemies, yet He indicated in the punishment of

the most wicked, what all the others deserved, who, in

their stubborn perfidy had despised Him, if by the respite

THE CORONATION 91

allowed them, they did not return to truth in heartfelt

penance. It was also befitting, that the few, who had

received the Word and had followed Him as their Master

and Redeemer, and those who were to preach his faith

and doctrine, be rewarded and furnished with the proper

means for establishing the Church and the evangelical

law. The Apostle says, that leaving one s father and

mother and uniting oneself with a wife (as also Moses

had said), is a great sacrament in Christ and the Church

(Gen. 2, 24; Ephes. 5, 32), because He descended from

the bosom of the Father in order to unite Himself with

it in his humanity. Since then Christ came down from

heaven in order to be with his spouse, the Church, it

follows that the Holy Ghost came down on account of the

most holy Mary, who was not less his Spouse than Christ

was of the Church, and who was not less beloved by Him

than the Church was beloved of Christ.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND

OUR LADY GAVE ME-

68. My daughter, in small esteem and thankfulness

do the children of the Church hold this blessing of the

Most High, by which, in addition to sending of his Son

as their Master and Redeemer, He sent also the Holy

Ghost into his Church. So great was the love, by which

He sought to draw them to tjimself, that, in order to

make them sharers of his divine perfections, He sent

them first the Son, who is wisdom (John 3, 16) and

afterwards the Holy Ghost, who is love, so that all

might be enriched in the manner in which they were

capable. The divine Spirit, in coming for the first time

upon the Apostles and the others gathered with them,

intended it as a pledge and testimony, that He would

92 CITY OF GOD

confer the same favor on the rest of the children of

the Church, of light and of the Gospel, and that He

was ready to communicate his gifts to all, if all will

dispose themselves toward receiving them. In witness

to this truth the Holy Ghost came upon many of the

faithful in visible form and with visible effects (Acts

8, 17; 10, 44; 11, 15), because they were truly faithful

servants, humble and sincere, pure and ready of heart

to receive Him. Also in our times He comes to many

just souls, although not with such open manifestations,

because it is neither necessary nor proper. The interior

effects and gifts are all of the same nature, acting ac

cording to the disposition and state of the one who re

ceives them.

69. Blessed is the soul which sighs and aspires after

this blessing and seeks to participate in this divine fire,

which enkindles, enlightens and consumes all that is ter

restrial and carnal, which purifies and raises it up to a

new existence, union and participation with God himself.

This happiness, as thy true and loving Mother, I desire

for thee, my daughter, and in order that thou mayest

attain it in its fullness, I again exhort thee to prepare

thy heart by seeking to preserve inviolable tranquillity

and peace in all that may happen to thee. The divine

clemency wishes to raise thee to a habitation very exalted

and secure, where the torments of thy spirit shall come

to an end and whither tfye assaults neither of the world

nor of hell can reach ; where in thy own repose the Lord

shall rest and find in thee a worthy dwelling-place and

a temple of his glory. Thou shalt not escape the attacks

and temptations, directed against thee by the dragon

with the most cunning astuteness ; but do thou live in con

tinued wariness, lest thou be disturbed or disquieted in the

interior of thy soul. Guard thy treasures in secret ; enjoy

THE CORONATION 93

the delights of the Lord, the sweet effects of his chaste

love, the influences of his holy science; for in this regard

He has singled thee out from many generations in utmost

liberality.

70. Take heed then of thy calling and assure thyself,

that the Most High offers thee anew the participation and

communication of his divine Spirit and his gifts. Re

member however, that when He confers them, He does

not take away the freedom of thy will ; for He ever leaves

the election of good or evil to its free arbitrament.

Hence, trusting in the divine favor, thou must effica

ciously resolve to imitate me in the works shown to thee

of my life and thou must never hinder the effects and the

operations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In order

that thou mayest understand better this my doctrine, I

will explain to thee the effects of all his seven gifts.

71. The first one, which is the gift of Wisdom, fills

the mind with the knowledge and the delight of divine

things and moves the heart to a sincere love toward

the practice and exercise of all that is good, all that is

best, most perfect and agreeable in the eyes of the Lord.

With this impulse thou must concur, yielding thyself

entirely to the pleasure of his divine will and despising

all that might hinder thee, no matter how pleasant it

may seem to thy inclinations or alluring to thy appetite.

Wisdom is aided by the second gift, that of Intellect,

which gives special light to penetrate profoundly into

the object presented to the understanding. With this

gift thou must co-operate by diverting and turning aside

thy attention and thoughts from all the bastard and

foreign objects of knowledge, which the demon either

by himself or through other creatures shall present to

thy mind in order to distract it and prevent it from

penetrating deeply into the truth of divine things. This

94 CITY OF GOD

kind of distraction greatly embarrasses the mind, for the

two kinds of knowledge are incompatible with each

other, and whenever the limited faculties of man are

divided into their attention to many objects, they enter

into them less and attend less, than if all their operations

were riveted on one alone. In this is evident the truth

of what the Gospel says : that no one can serve two mas

ters (Matth. 6, 24). When the whole attention of the

soul has thus been riveted on understanding the good,

Fortitude, the third gift, is necessary, in order to exe

cute resolutely all that the understanding has perceived

as most holy, perfect and agreeable before the Lord.

The difficulties and hindrances in the pursuit of the good

are to be overcome by Fortitude, making the creature

ready to suffer whatever labor or pain, in order not to

be deprived of the true and highest Good it has come

to know.

72. But it often happens, that natural ignorance and

doubt added to temptation withhold the creature from

following out the conclusions and consequences of the

divine truth, and thus create hindrances in the execution

of what is more perfect. Hence, against the false prudence

of the flesh, God furnishes the fourth gift, that of Science,

which gives light to distinguish between different kinds

of good, teaches the most certain and secure way, and de

cides upon it, when necessary. To this is joined the

gift of Piety, the fifth, which inclines the soul with

sweet urgency to all that is truly pleasing and acceptable

to the Lord and to what is of real spiritual benefit to the

one executing it. It inclines the creatures to these things

not through the natural passions, but by holy, perfect

and virtuous motives. Then, in order that man may be

guided by high prudence, the sixth gift, that of Counsel,

supports his understanding, in order that he may act with

THE CORONATION 95

precision and without temerity; weighing the means and

taking counsel with himself and with others discreetly for

gaining honest and holy ends by the selection of the

proper means. To all these is added Fear, the last, which

guards and sets the seal upon all of them. This gift

inclines the heart to fly and avoid all that is imperfect,

dangerous or alien to the virtues and perfections of the

soul, thus serving as a wall of defense. It is necessary

to understand the object and the manner of this holy

Fear, lest it grow excessive and cause the creature to

fear, where there is no occasion. Such has often hap

pened to thee through the astuteness of the serpent, when,

under guise of holy Fear, the devil entangled thee in

an inordinate liking for the blessings of the Lord. But

by this instruction thou art now informed how thou

must exercise in thee the gifts of the Most High and

prepare thyself for them. I remind and admonish thee,

that this science of holy Fear is the accompaniment

of the favors communicated to thee by the Most High,

and that it fills the soul with sweetness, peace and tran

quillity. It enables the creature properly to estimate and

appreciate the gifts, which come from the powerful hand

of the Almighty; neither are any of them unimportant,

nor does this Fear hinder a proper estimate of these

gifts. It induces the soul to give thanks with all its

powers and to humiliate itself to the dust. In under

standing these truths without error and in suppressing

the cowardly fear of slaves, thou shalt be filled with

filial Fear, which, as thy guiding star, will help thee to

navigate securely in this ocean of tears.

CHAPTER VI.

THE APOSTLES LEAVE THE CENACLE TO PREACH TO THE

GATHERING MULTITUDE; THEY SPEAK IN VARIOUS

TONGUES; AND ABOUT THREE THOUSAND ARE CON

VERTED ON THAT DAY; THE DOINGS OF MOST HOLY

MARY ON THIS OCCASION.

73. On account of the visible and open signs, by

which the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles, the

whole city of Jerusalem with its inhabitants was stirred

to wonder. When the news of the astounding events at

the house of the Cenacle spread about, the multitude of

the people gathered in crowds to know more of the hap

penings (Acts 2, 6). On that day was being celebrated

one of the paschs or feasts of the Jews; and as well

on this account, as on account of the special dispensation

of heaven, the city was crowded with foreigners and

strangers from all parts of the world. For to them the

Most High wished to manifest the wonders of the first

preaching and spreading of the new law of grace, which

the incarnate Word, our Redeemer and Master, had or

dained for the salvation of men.

74. The sacred Apostles, who were filled with charity

by the plenitude of the gifts of the Holy Ghost and who

knew that all Jerusalem was gathering at the doors of

the Cenacle, asked permission of their Mistress and

Queen to go forth and preach to them; in order that

such great graces might not even for a moment fail

to redound to the benefit of souls and to new glory

of their Author. They all left the house of the Cenacle

96

THE CORONATION 97

and, placing themselves before the multitudes, began

to preach the mysteries of the faith and of eternal life.

Though until then they had been so shy and seclusive,

they now stepped forth with unhesitating boldness and

poured forth burning words, that like a flashing fire

penetrated to the souls of their hearers. All the people

were filled with wonder and astonishment at these events,

the like of which had never before been heard or seen

in the world. They looked at each other and in conster

nation asked each other, saying : "What is this that we

witness ? Are not all these that speak Galileeans ? How

then do we hear them speaking in the language in which

we were born? We Jews and Proselytes, Romans,

Latins, Greeks, Cretans, Arabs, Parthians, Medes and

all the rest of us from different parts of the world, hear

them speak and we understand them in our own lan

guages ? O greatness of God ! How admirable is He in

all His works!"

75. This miracle, that all the men of so many dif

ferent tongues then assembled in Jerusalem should hear

the Apostles in their own language, joined to the doc

trine which they preached, caused great astonishment.

Yet I wish to remark, that though all the Apostles, on

account of the plenitude of science and of gifts gratui

tously received, were able to speak in the languages of

all nations, because that was necessary for the preaching

of the Gospel, yet on that occasion they all spoke the

language of Palestine. Using only this idiom they were

understood by all the different nationalities there present,

as if they had spoken in the several idioms. This mir

acle the Lord wrought at the time in order that they

might be understood and believed by those different na

tions, and in order that saint Peter might not be obliged

to repeat in the different languages of those present,

98 CITY OF GOD

what he preached to them concerning the mysteries of

faith. He preached only once and all heard and under

stood him, each in his own language, and so it happened

also with the other Apostles. For if each one had spoken

in the language of those who heard them, and which

they knew as their mother tongue, it -would have been

necessary for them to repeat what they said at least

seven or eight times according to the different nation

alities mentioned by saint Luke (Acts 2, 9). This would

have consumed a longer time than is intimated by the

sacred text, and it would have caused great confusion

and trouble to repeat the same doctrines over and over

again or to speak so many languages on one occasion;

nor would the miracle be so intelligible to us as the

one mentioned.

76. The people who heard the Apostles did not under

stand the miracle, although they wondered at hearing each

their own idiom. What saint Luke says about their

speaking different languages, must be understood as

meaning, that the Apostles were then and there able to

understand them, as I shall mention later on (Acts 2, 4),

and because on that day, those that came to the Cenacle

understood them all speaking in their own language.

But this miracle and wonderment caused in their hearers

different effects and opinions, according to the disposi

tions of each one. Those that listened piously received

a deep understanding of the Divinity and of the Re

demption of man, now so eloquently and fervently pro

pounded to them. They were moved eagerly to desire

the knowledge of the truth; by the divine light they

were filled with compunction and sorrow for their sins

and with desire of divine mercy and forgiveness. With

tears in their eyes they cried out to the Apostles and

asked what they must do to gain eternal life. Others,

THE CORONATION 99

who hardened their hearts, altogether untouched by the

divine truths preached by them, became indignant at the

Apostles, and instead of yielding to them, called them

innovators and adventurers. Many of the Jews, more

impious in their perfidy and envy, inveighed against the

Apostles, saying they were drunk and insane (Acts 2,

13). Among these were some of those who had again

come to their senses after having fallen to the ground

at the thunder caused by the coming of the Holy Ghost;

for they had risen still more obstinate and rebellious

against God.

77. In order to refute their blasphemies saint Peter,

as the head of the Church, stepped forth and, speaking

in a louder voice, said : "Ye men of Judea, and all ye that

dwell in Jerusalem, be this known to you and with your

ears receive my words. For these are not drunk as

you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day.

But this is that which was spoken of by the prophet

Joel: And it shall come to pass, in the last days, (saith

the Lord) I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and

your young ones shall see visions, and your old men shall

dream dreams. And upon my servants indeed, and upon

my handmaids I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall

prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heaven above,

and signs on the earth beneath : blood and fire, and vapor

and smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and

the moon into blood, before the great and manifest day

of the Lord arrives ; and it shall come to pass, that who

soever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be

saved. Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of

Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by mir

acles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him

in the midst of you, as you also know : This same, being

100 CITY OF GOD

delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowl

edge of God, you, by the hands of wicked men, have

crucified and slain. He was a holy Man, approved of

God in his virtues, by miracles and prodigies wrought in

the midst of your people, of which you know and are

witnesses. And God has raised Him from the dead,

according to the prophecies of David. For that holy

king could not speak of himself, since you have his

sepulchre in your midst, where lies his body. He spoke

as a prophet of Christ, and we are ourselves witnesses

as having seen Him risen and ascending into heaven by

his own power, to be seated at the right hand of the

Father, as likewise David has prophesied (Os. 15, 8;

Ps. 109, 1). Let the unbelievers understand these words

of truth, which they wish to deny in the perfidy of their

malice ; for against them stand the wonders of the Most

High which wrought in us as witnesses to the doctrine

of Christ and to his admirable Resurrection."

78. "Let then the whole house of Israel understand,

and let them be assured, that God hath made this Jesus,

whom you have crucified, his Anointed and the Lord of

all, and that He has raised Him from the dead on the

third day." On hearing these words the hearts of many,

that stood there, were moved to compunction and with

great wailing they asked saint Peter and the rest of the

Apostles, what they should do for their salvation (Acts

2, 37). Thereupon saint Peter said to them: "Do pen

ance and be baptized every one of you in the name of

Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins ; and you shall re

ceive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is

to you, and to your children, and to all that are far off,

whomsoever the Lord our God shall call. Seek there

fore now to make use of the remedy, and to save your

selves from this perverse and incredulous generation."

THE CORONATION 101

Many other words of life saint Peter and the other

Apostles spoke to them, by which the perfidious Jews

and the other unbelievers were much confounded; and

a s no one could answer, they withdrew and left the

C.enacle. But the number of those that received the

true faith of Jesus Christ amounted to about three

thousand (Acts 2, 41). They all attached themselves

to the Apostles and were baptized by them to the great

consternation and fear of all Jerusalem ; for the wonders

and prodigies performed by the Apostles filled with

terror and dismay all the unbelievers.

79. The three thousand, who were converted by the

first sermon of saint Peter, were from all the nations

then gathered in Jerusalem, so that forthwith all nations,

without excluding any, might partake of the fruits of

the Redemption, all might be gathered to the Church,

and all might experience the grace of the Holy Spirit;

for the holy Church was to be composed of all nations

and tribes. Many were Jews, who had followed Christ

our Savior with kindly feelings and witnessed his suf

ferings and Death with compassion, as I said above.

Some also of those, who had concurred in his Passion,

were converted, though these were few, because many

would not alter their disposition; for, if they had done

so, all of them would have been admitted to mercy and

received pardon for their error. After their preaching

the Apostles retired that evening within the Cenacle, in

order to give an account to the Mother of mercy, the

purest Mary. With them also entered a great number

of the new children of the Church, in order that they

might come to know and venerate the Mother of mercy.

80. But the great Queen of the angels was ignorant

of nothing that had happened; for from her retreat

She had heard the preaching of the .Apostles and She

102 CITY OF GOD

knew the secret hearts and thoughts of all the hearers.

The tenderest Mother remained prostrate with her face

upon the ground during the whole time, tearfully pray

ing for the conversion of all that subjected themselves

to the faith of the Savior, and for all the rest, if they

should consent to co-operate with the helps and the graces

of the Lord. In order to help the Apostles in their great

work of beginning to preach, and the bystanders in prop

erly listening to them, the most holy Mary sent many of

her accompanying angels with holy inspirations, encour

aging the sacred Apostles and giving them strength to

inquire and to manifest more explicitly the hidden mys

teries of the humanity and Divinity of Christ our Re

deemer. The angels fulfilled all the commands of their

Queen, while She Herself exercised her own power and

gifts according to the circumstances of the occasion.

When the Apostles came to Her with those copious first-

fruits of their preaching and of the Holy Ghost, She

received them with incredible joy and sweetness and with

the most loving kindness of a true Mother.

81. The Apostle saint Peter spoke to the recently

converted and said to them : "My brethren, and servants

of the Most High, this is the Mother of our Redeemer

and Master, Jesus Christ, whose faith you have received

in acknowledging Him as true God and man. She has

given Him the human form, conceiving Him in her

womb, and She bore Him, remaining a Virgin before,

during and after his birth. Receive Her as your Mother,

as your Refuge and Intercessor, for through Her you

and we shall receive light, direction, and release from

our sins and miseries." At these words of the Apostle

and at the sight of most holy Mary these new adherents

of the faith were filled with admirable light and consola

tion ; for this privilege of conferring great interior bless-

THE CORONATION 103

ings and of giving light to those who looked upon Her

with pious veneration, was renewed and extended in Her

at the time when She was at the right hand of her divine

Son in Heaven. As all of those faithful partook of these

blessings in the presence of their Queen, they prostrated

themselves at her feet and with tears besought her as

sistance and blessing. But the humble and prudent Queen

evaded this latter, because of the presence of the Apostles,

who were priests, and of saint Peter, the Vicar of Christ.

Then this Apostle said to Her: "Lady, do not refuse

to these faithful what they piously ask for the consolation

of their souls." The blessed Mary obeyed the head of

the Church and in humble serenity of a Queen She gave

her blessing to the newly converted.

82. The love which filled their hearts made them de

sire to hear from their heavenly Mother some words of

consolation; yet their humility and reverence prevented

them from asking for this favor. As they perceived how

obediently She had yielded to saint Peter, they turned

to him and begged him to ask Her not to send them away

without some word of encouragement. Saint Peter,

though he considered this favor very proper for these

souls who had been born again to Christ by his preaching

and that of the other Apostles, nevertheless, aware that

the Mother of Wisdom knew well what was to be done,

presumed to say no more than these words ; "Lady, listen

to the petitions of thy servants and children." Then

the great Lady obeyed and said to the converts: "My

dearest brethren in the Lord, give thanks and praise

with your whole hearts to the Almighty God, because

from among all men He has called and drawn you to the

sure path of eternal life in the knowledge of the holy

faith you have received. Be firm in your confession

of it from all your hearts and in hearing and believing

104 CITY OF GOD

all that the law of grace contains as preached and or

dained by its true Teacher Jesus, my Son and your Re

deemer. Be eager to hear and obey his Apostles, who

teach and instruct you, so that you may be signed and

marked by Baptism in the character of children of the

Most High. I offer myself as your handmaid to assist

you in all that serves toward your consolation, and I

shall ask Him to look upon you as a kind Father and to

manifest to you the true joy of his countenance, com

municating to you also his grace."

83. By this sweetest of exhortations those new children

of the Church were filled with consolation, light, venera

tion and admiration of what they saw of the Mistress

of the world ; asking again for her blessing, they for that

day left her presence, renewed and replete with the won

derful gifts of the Most High. The Apostles and dis

ciples from that day on continued without intermission

their preaching and their miracles, and through the entire

octave they instructed not only the three thousand, who

had been converted on Pentecost day, but multitudes of

others, who day by day accepted the faith. Since they

came from all parts of the world, they conversed and

spoke with each one in his own language; for as I have

said above, they spoke in various languages from that

time on. This grace was given not only to the Apostles,

although it was more complete and noticeable in them;

also the disciples and all the one hundred and twenty,

who were in the Cenacle at the time, and also the holy

women, who received the Holy Ghost, were thus favored.

This was really necessary at the time on account of the

great multitudes, who came to the faith. Although all

the men and many of the women came to the Apostles,

yet many, after having heard them, went to Magdalen

and her companions, who catechized, instructed and con-

THE CORONATION 105

verted them and others that came at the report of the

miracles they performed. For this gift was also con

ferred on the women, who, by the imposition of hands,

cured all the sicknesses, gave sight to the blind, tongue to

the mute, motion to the lame, and life to many of the

dead. These and other wonders were principally wrought

by the Apostles, nevertheless both their miracles and

those of the women excited the wonder and astonishment

of all Jerusalem; so that nothing else was talked about

except the prodigies and the preaching of the Apostles

of Jesus, of his disciples, and followers of his doctrine.

84. The fame of these events soon extended beyond

the city; for no one sought a cure in vain. Such mir

acles were at that time very necessary, not only for the

confirmation of the new law and doctrine of Christ our

Savior, but also because the natural desire of health and

life would stimulate men to seek the welfare of their

body and thus bring them within hearing and influence

of the divine word. Thus they returned cured as well

in body as in soul, which generally happened to those,

who came to the Apostles in their maladies. Hence

the number of the faithful daily increased, and their

fervor in faith and charity was so ardent, that all of

them began to imitate the poverty of Christ, despising

their riches and property and laying all their possessions

at the feet of the Apostles without reserving anything

for themselves as their own (Acts 2, 45). They wished

to possess all things in common and thus free themselves

from the dangers of riches, preferring to live in poverty,

sincerity, humility and continual prayer without any other

care than that of eternal life. All of them considered

themselves as brethren and children of one Father in

heaven (Matth. 23, 9). As faith, hope and charity, and

the sacraments were the common blessing of all, and as

106 CITY OF GOD

they were all seeking the same grace and eternal life, in

equality in other things seemed dangerous to these Chris

tian children of one Father, the inheritors of his goods

and professors of his law. It seemed to them inappro

priate, that, having such a bond of union in the principal

and essential things, some should be rich and others poor,

and that temporal things should not be communicated,

where each one enjoyed those of grace; for all gifts are

from one and the same Father for all of his children.

85. This was the happy beginning and the golden age

of the evangelical Church, where the rushing of the

stream rejoiced the city of God (Ps. 45, 5) and the cur

rent of grace and the gifts of the Holy Ghost fertilized

this new paradise recently planted by the hands of the

Savior Jesus, while in its midst stood the tree of life,

most holy Mary. Then was faith alive, hope firm, charity

ardent, sincerity pure, humility true, justice most equit

able, when the faithful neither knew avarice nor followed

vanity, when they trod under foot vain pomp, were free

from covetousness, pride, ambition, which later pre

vailed among the professors of the faith, who while con

fessing themselves followers of Christ, denied Him in

their works. We are inclined to object, that those were

the first-fruits of the Church, of the Spirit (Rom. 8, 23),

that the faithful were few; that now the times are dif

ferent, that in those times the Mother of wisdom and

grace lived in the Church, whose presence, prayers and

protection, defended and encouraged the faithful to bring

forth heroic works of the faith.

86. To this we answer by what will be said in the

course of this history, whence it will appear that none

other than the faithful have permitted so many vices to

creep into the fold of the Church; such as the demon

himself, with all his pride and malice, never expected

THE CORONATION 107

to see established among Christians. I content myself

with saying, that the power and grace of the Holy Spirit

were not exhausted in those first-fruits. His influence

is always the same and would be just as efficacious with

the many to the end of the Church, as it was with a few in

its beginnings, if those many were as faithful as those

few. It is true that the times have changed; but this

change from virtue to vice, from good to evil, consists

not in any change of the heavens and the stars, but in

a change of men, who have strayed from the straight

way of life eternal and walk the way of perdition. I

do not speak now of the pagans or of the heretics, who

have fallen away not only from the light of true faith,

but even from right reason. I speak of the faithful, who

pride themselves in being children of light, but content

themselves with only the name, and who sometimes use

it merely to cloak their vices and to cover up their crimes.

87. It will not be possible in this third part to describe

even the least part of the wonderful and great works

accomplished by the mighty Queen in the primitive

Church ; but from those which I will describe, and from

her life in this world after the Ascension, much can be

inferred. For She did not rest or lose one moment or

occasion of conferring some singular favor either upon

the whole Church or some of its members. For She con

sumed Herself either in praying and beseeching her

divine Son, without ever experiencing a refusal; or in

exhorting, instructing, counseling, and, as Treasurer and

Dispenser of the divine favors, distributing graces in

diverse manners among the children of the Gospel.

Among the hidden mysteries, which were made known

to me concerning this power of the blessed Mary, was

also this, that in those first ages, during which She lived

in the holy Church, the number of the damned was pro-

108 CITY OF GOD

portionately very small ; and that, comparatively, in those

few years a greater number were saved than in many

succeeding ages.

88. I acknowledge, that, if the lapse of time had de

creased the power, the charity and clemency of that high

est Sovereign, the good fortune of -those living in that

happy time might cause a holy envy in those living by

the light of faith in our more protracted and less favored

times. It is true we have not the happiness of seeing

Her, conversing with Her and listening to Her with

our bodily senses ; and in this respect those first children

of the Church were more fortunate. But let us all remem

ber, that in the heavenly knowledge and charity of this

most loving Mother we were all present to Her, also dur

ing those times (Vol. III., 78) ; for She saw and

knew us all in the order and succession in which we were

to be born in the Church ; and She prayed and interceded

for us no less than for those who lived in her times. Nor

is She at present less powerful in heaven, than She was

then upon earth; nor less our Mother, than of those

first children ; and She held us as her own, just as well

as them. But alas! that our faith and our fervor and

devotion should be so very different! Not She has

changed, nor is her love less ardent, nor would we

experience less of her intercession and protection, if in

these troubled times we would hasten to Her with the

same sentiments of humility and fervor, asking for her

prayers and trustfully relying upon Her for help, as was

the case with those devoted Christians in the first be

ginning. Without a doubt the whole Catholic Church

would then immediately experience the same assistance

of the Queen throughout the whole world.

89. Let us return to the solicitude of the kindest

Mother for the Apostles and for the recently converted,

THE CORONATION 109

attending to the consolation and necessities of all and

of each one in particular. She exhorted and animated the

Apostles and the ministers of the divine word, fixing

their attention upon the prodigious manifestation of the

divine power, by which her most holy Son began to plant

the faith of his Church; the virtue which the Holy Ghost

had communicated to them in order to make them fit

ministers; the ever present assistance of the divine right

hand. She exhorted them to acknowledge and praise Him

as the author of all these wonderful works and to render

Him humble thanks for all of them ; to follow up in secure

confidence their preaching and exhortation, the exaltation

of the name of the Lord, in order that He might be

known, extolled and loved by all the faithful. She

herself practiced what She taught and inculcated, by

prostrating and humiliating Herself before the Most

High and by breaking forth in canticles of praise and

exaltation. These duties She fulfilled with such pleni

tude, that for none of the converted did She ever omit

giving thanks and offering fervent prayers to the eternal

Father; all of them remained distinctly present in her

mind.

90. Not only did She do all these things for each one

of them; but She received all, listened to all, and en-

endeared Herself to them with words of light and life.

During those days following upon the coming of the

Holy Ghost many conversed with Her in private, open

ing up their inmost souls, and the same happened also

with those who were converted afterwards in Jerusalem.

Not that She was ignorant of their secrets ; for She knew

the hearts of all, their affections, inclinations and condi

tions, enabling her by this divine knowledge and wisdom

to accommodate Herself to the necessities and natural

character and to render salutary assistance against the

110 CITY OF GOD

maladies of each of her clients. Hence the most blessed

Mother conferred such exquisite blessings and vast favors

to innumerable souls, that they never can be known in

this world.

91. There were many who were privileged to be in

structed and catechized in the holy faith by the heavenly

Mother and not one of them was lost ; for at that time,

and as long as they lived, She continued to offer special

prayers for them, so that all of them were written in

the book of life. In order to bind her divine Son She

said to Him : "My Lord and life of my soul ! According

to thy will and pleasure have I returned to the world in

order to be the Mother of thy children, my brethren and

the faithful sons of the Church. Let not my heart be

torn by seeing the fruit of thy priceless blood fail in

any one of these that seek my intercession; and let

them not reap unhappiness from their having availed

themselves of me, the insignificant worm of the earth,

for obtaining thy clemency. Admit them, my Son, into

the number of thy friends, predestined for thy glory."

To these her prayers the Lord immediately responded,

promising that what She asked would be done. And I

believe the same happens in our day to all those that

merit her intercession and ask for it with all their hearts ;

for if this purest Mother comes to her Son with sim

ilar petitions, how can it be imagined, that He shall

deny to Her that little, to whom He has given his own

Self, in order that She might clothe it in human flesh

and nature, and then nurse Him at her own virginal

breast ?

92. Many of those new faithful, highly impressed with

her greatness by their conversation with the heavenly

Mistress, returned to present to Her jewels and the rich

est gifts; especially the women despoiled themselves of

THE CORONATION 111

fineries to lay them at her feet. But She would receive

or permit none of these gifts. When it seemed to Her

appropriate not to refuse entirely, She secretly inspired

the minds of the givers to bring them to the Apostles, in

order that they might be equitably and justly distributed

in charity among the most poor and needy of the faith

ful. But the humble Mother gratefully acknowledged

them as if they had been given to Her. The poor and

the sick She received with ineffable kindness, and many

of them she cured of inveterate and long-standing infirm

ities. Through the hands of saint John She supplied

many secret wants, never omitting the least point of vir

tue. As the Apostles and disciples were engaged all day

in preaching the faith and in converting those that came,

the great Queen busied Herself in preparing their food

and attending to their comfort ; and at stated times She

served the priests on her knees and with incredible hu

mility and reverence asked to kiss their hands. This She

observed especially with the Apostles, knowing and be

holding their souls confirmed in grace, endowed with

all that the Holy Ghost had wrought in them and exalted

by their dignity of being the highpriests and the found

ers of the Church (Eph. 2, 20). Sometimes She saw

them clothed in great splendor, which elicited from

Her increased reverence and veneration.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS

GAVE ME.

93. My daughter, in what thou hast come to know

of the events related in this chapter, thou wilt find a

great deal that points to the mystery of the predestina

tion of souls. Be convinced that, since the Redemption

was so overflowing and copious, it was sufficient for the

112 CITY OF GOD

salvation of all men (Rom. 5, 20). The divine truth

was made known to all, whoever heard its preaching or

who saw the effects of the coming of the Godman into

the world. Besides the outward preaching and knowl

edge of the remedy, all received interior inspirations and

helps in order to seek and accept the means. You are

surprised that, in spite of all this, only three thousand

were converted by the first sermon of the Apostle among

all that great multitude then in Jerusalem. It should

cause a greater surprise that in our times so few are con

verted to the way of eternal life, as the Gospel is more

widespread, its preaching is frequent, its ministers nu

merous, the light of the Church clearer and the knowl

edge of the divine mysteries more definite. With all this

men are blinder, the hearts more hardened, pride more

inflated, avarice more bold, and all the vices are practiced

without fear of God and without consideration.

94. In this most perverse and unhappy state mortals

cannot complain of the most high and equitable provi

dence of the Lord, who offers to all and every one his

fatherly mercy, and points out to them both the way of

life and the way of death; so that if any man hardens

his heart, God can permit it in strictest justice. The rep

robate will have none but themselves to blame, if after

wards, when there is no more time, they shall be uselessly

dismayed with what in opportune time they could and

should have known. If in the short and transient life,

which is given to them in order to merit the eternal, they

close their eyes and ears to the truth and to the light, and

if they listen to the demon, giving themselves up to all the

promptings of his malice; if they thus abuse the good

ness and clemency of the Lord, what can they then allege

as their excuse? If they do not know how to pardon an

injury and for the slightest offense meditate the direst

THE CORONATION 113

vengeance; if, for the sake of increasing their property,

they pervert the entire order of reason and of natural

brotherhood; if for a passing delight they forget the

eternal pains, and if, in addition to all this, they despise

the warnings, helps and admonitions sent to them by

God to inspire them with the fear of perdition and induce

them to avoid it, how shall they afterwards find fault

with the divine clemency? Let then mortals, who have

sinned against God, undeceive themselves : without pen

ance there shall be no grace, without reform no pardon,

without pardon no glory. But just as these are not con

ceded to those that are unworthy, so they are also never

denied to those that are worthy ; nor is ever the mercy

of God withheld from any one who seeks to obtain it.

95. From all these truths I desire, my daughter, that

thou collect for thyself what will be for thy welfare.

Let the first be, that thou receive attentively each holy

inspiration, each advice or instruction, although it come

from the most inferior minister of the Lord, or from

whatever creature. Thou must prudently consider, that

none comes to thy notice by chance and without divine

predisposition ; for there is no doubt that the Providence

of the Most High ordains all things for thy instruction,

and in this light must thou look upon them with humble

thanks, trying to find the virtue, which thou canst and

shouldst practice in accordance with the reminder and

to exercise it in the manner in which thou understandest

and knowest it. Do not despise any one of them, though

it may seem only a trifle; for by it thou must dispose

thyself for other works of greater virtue and merit.

Consider secondly, what a damage is wrought in souls

by the neglect of so many helps, inspirations, callings

and other blessings of the Lord; for their ingratitude

vindicates the justice of the Most High in allowing so

114 CITY OF GOD

many sinners to become hardened in their sins. If this

is such a formidable danger for all men, how much more

will it be a danger for thee, if thou abuse the abundant

graces and favors, which the kindness of the Lord has

showered upon thee in preference to many generations of

men ? And since my divine Son ordains all these things

for thy own good and for the good of other souls, I wish,

lastly, that in imitation of me, as has been shown thee,

thou impregnate thy heart with a most sincere determina

tion to assist all the children of the Church, and all other

men, as far as thou canst, clamoring to the Lord from

thy inmost heart and asking Him to look upon trie souls

with mercy for their salvation. And in order that they

may gain this blessing, offer to suffer for them as a

victim if necessary; remembering, that they cost my

divine Son and thy Spouse the shedding of his blood

and his life, and remembering my own labors in the

Church. Do thou continually implore the divine mercy

for the fruit of that Redemption, and this practice I com

mand thee under obedience.

CHAPTER VII.

THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES MEET IN ORDER TO SOLVE

SOME DOUBTS, IN PARTICULAR ABOUT THE FORM OF

BAPTISM; THEY ADMINISTER THAT SACRAMENT To

THE CATECHUMENS; SAINT PETER CELEBRATES THE

FIRST MASS; THE DOINGS OF MARY IN THE MEAN

WHILE.

96. It is not the object of this history to relate all the

doings of the Apostles in the order followed by saint

Luke, nor to record all that they did after the descent of

the Holy Ghost ; for, though the great Queen and Lady

certainly knew all that passed, yet many things happened

where She was not personally present. Of such it is not

necessary to speak here, nor would it be possible to de

scribe the manner in which the heavenly Queen co

operated in the works of the Apostles and disciples, and

in all else that happened; for in order to do this, there

were need of many large volumes. It is sufficient for my

purpose and for the sequence of this history to select

the salient points of the Acts of the Apostles written by

the Evangelist, and make intelligible much of what he

omits concerning our Queen, and what was not to his

purpose nor proper for him to write at that time.

97. As the Apostles continued their preaching and

wonders in Jerusalem the number of the faithful in

creased and. as saint Luke says in the fourth chapter of

the Acts, after seven days reached five thousand. All

of them were busy catechising the newcomers in prepara

tion for Baptism, though that work was done principally

115

116 CITY OF GOD

by the disciples; for the Apostles were preaching and

were conducting some controversies with the pharisees

and sadducees. On this seventh day the Queen of An

gels, being in the retirement of her oratory and consid

ering how the little flock of her divine Son was increas

ing, asked the Lord to give light to the Apostles in order

that they might begin to institute a government for the

better direction of those new children of the faith. Pros

trate upon the floor She adored the Lord and said : "Most

high and eternal God, as a vile worm of the earth I wish

to praise and exalt Thee for the immense love Thou hast

manifested for the human race ; and because Thou show-

est the mercy of a Father by calling so many to the

knowledge and faith of thy divine Son, glorifying and

spreading the honor of thy name through the world. I

beseech thy Majesty, O Lord, to enlighten and instruct

thy Apostles, my masters, to dispose and order all that

concerns the government, amplification and preservation

of thy holy Church."

98. Then the most prudent Mother, in the vision of

the Divinity She had at that time, perceived that the Lord

was very well pleased and answered Her: "Mary my

Spouse, what dost thou wish? and for what dost thou

ask Me? Thy voice and thy sighs have sounded sweetly

in my ears (Cant. 2, 14). Ask what thou. wishest, my

will is inclined toward thy petitions." The heavenly

Mary answered: "My Lord and my God, Master of all

my being, my desires and my sighs are not unknown to

thy infinite wisdom (Ps. 37, 10). I desire, seek and so

licit thy greater pleasure and satisfaction, thy greater

glory and the exaltation of thy name in the holy Church.

I present to Thee these new children, with whom Thou

hast so quickly befruited it and also my desire that they

receive holy Baptism, since they have already been in-

THE CORONATION 117

structed in the faith. And if it is according to thy will

and service, I desire also that the Apostles commence even

now to consecrate the body and the blood of thy and my

Son, in order that by this new and admirable sacrifice

they may give Thee praise and thanks for the blessing

of the Redemption and all the favors Thou hast through

it conferred upon the world, and also that according to

thy will the children of the Church may in it receive the

nourishment of eternal life. I am but dust and ashes,

the least handmaid of thy faithful, and a woman ; and on

that account I hesitate in proposing this to thy priests

and Apostles. But do Thou inspire, O Lord, the heart

of saint Peter, thy Vicar, to ordain what Thou wishest."

99. The Church therefore owes thanks to most holy

Mary for this special blessing : that by her most discreet

attention and intercession the body and blood of her

divine Son was consecrated for the first time after the

Ascension and after the coming of the Holy Ghost. It

was natural, that through her efforts the bread of life

should begin to be distributed among her children ( Prov.

31, 14), since She was the richly laden and prosperous

vessel, which brought it from heaven. The Lord then

answered Her : "My beloved Dove, let what thou wish

est, be done. My Apostles, with saint Peter and John,

shall speak to thee and thou shalt order through them

what thou wishest to be done." Immediately all of the

Apostles entered the presence of the great Queen, and She

received them as usual by reverently falling on her knees

before them and asking their blessing. This Saint Peter,

as the head of the Apostles, imparted. He spoke for all

of them and represented to Mary, how the newly con

verted had already been instructed in the mysteries of the

Lord s faith; how it was just, that they should receive

Baptism, and that they should be marked as the children

118 CITY OF GOD

of Christ and admitted to the bosom of the Church; he

therefore asked the heavenly Mistress to point out the

order to be followed as most appropriate and pleasing

to the Most High. The most prudent Lady answered:

"My master, thou art the head of the Church and the

vicar of my divine Son in it ; all that- shall be ordained

by thee in his name, shall be approved of Him and his

will with thine shall be mine."

100. Thereupon saint Peter ordained that on the fol

lowing day (which corresponds to the Sunday of the

most holy Trinity), Baptism should be given to those

who had been converted during that week ; this arrange

ment of saint Peter was satisfactory to our Queen and to

the other Apostles. Immediately there arose a doubt as

to what Baptism was to be given to them : the baptism

of saint John, or the Baptism of Christ our Savior. To

some it seemed that the baptism of saint John, which was

that of penance, should be given to them, and that through

it they were to enter into the faith and justification of

their souls. Others, on the contrary, said, that with the

Baptism and the Death of Christ the baptism of saint

John had expired, since it had served merely to prepare

the souls for the reception of Christ the Redeemer, and

that the Baptism of the Lord gives grace sufficient for

justifying the souls and for washing off all the sins from

those properly disposed; and that it was necessary to

introduce it immediately into the Church.

101. This opinion was approved of by saint John and

saint Peter, and was confirmed by the most holy Mary.

Hence they determined to institute at once the Baptism

of Christ our Lord and to confer it on the new converts

and the rest who came to the Church. In regard to the

material and form of that Baptism there was no doubt

among the Apostles; for all of them agreed that the

THE CORONATION

119

material should be natural and elementary water, and

the form should be: I baptize thee in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost; because

these were the matter and form designated by the Lord

our Savior and these words He had made use of in the

Baptism He had himself administered. This way of

baptizing was observed always from that day on. Wher

ever in the Acts of the Apostles it is said that they bap

tized in the name of Jesus, this saying does not refer to

the form, but to the Author of the Baptism, namely Jesus,

in contradistinction to the author of the other baptism,

that of saint John. To baptize in the name of Jesus was

the same as to baptize with the Baptism of Jesus; but

its form was that which the Lord himself had given and

contains the express mention of the three Persons of the

most holy Trinity (Math. 27, 19), as the foundation and

beginning of all the Catholic truth and faith. The Apos

tles therefore ordained, that all the catechumens should

gather in the house of the Cenacle in order to be bap

tized; and that the seventy-two disciples should have

charge of preparing them for that occasion.

102. Then the great Lady, having asked permission,

spoke to that whole congregation and said : "My masters,

the Redeemer of the world, the true God and my Son,

out of the love which He had for men, offered to the

eternal Father the sacrifice of his sacred body and blood,

consecrating Himself under the species of bread and wine.

Under these appearances He resolved to remain in his

Church, in order that its children might have in it the

sacrifice and food of eternal life they are to expect here

after. Through this sacrifice, which embodies the mys

teries of the life and death of the Son, the Father is to be

placated ; and in it and through it, the Church shall give

the thanks and praise which it owes to Him as its God

120 CITY OF GOD

and Benefactor. You are the priests and ministers, who

alone are to offer it. It is my desire, if such be your

will, that you begin to offer this unbloody sacrifice and

that you consecrate the body and blood of my divine

Son, in order that we may render fit thanks for the benefit

of his Redemption and of the sending of the Holy Ghost

into the Church; and in order that the faithful, by re

ceiving this Sacrament, may begin to enjoy this bread

of life in all its divine effects. All those may partake of

the sacred body, who shall have received Baptism and

who seem to be more fit and better prepared; but Bap

tism is the first requisite for its reception."

103. All the Apostles and disciples conformed to the

wish of the blessed Mary, and they thanked Her for Her

solicitude and her instruction. It was resolved, that on

the following day, after the Baptism of the catechumens,

the body and blood of Christ should be consecrated, and

that Saint Peter should be the celebrant, since he was the

head of the Church. The holy Apostle consented. But

before dismissing them he proposed another difficulty to

the consideration of all, namely, concerning the order to

be observed in receiving and distributing the alms and

the goods of the newly converted.

104. He therefore said: "My dearest brethren, you

already know, that our Redeemer and Master, Jesus, by

his example, his doctrines and commands ordained and

taught the true poverty (Matthew 8, 20) in which we

should live, abhorring and shunning the cares entailed

by riches and possessions, and neither desiring or amass

ing wealth in this life. Besides this salutary doctrine we

have before our eyes the recent and formidable example

of the perdition of Judas, who was an Apostle as we our

selves, and who, by his avarice and covetousness, went

astray and has fallen from the dignity of the apostolate

THE CORONATION 121

into the abyss of wickedness and eternal damnation.

This tremendous danger we must avoid, so that no one

may hold in possession or handle money and that all may

imitate and follow the strictest poverty of our Captain

and Master. I know that all of you desire this, well

understanding that in order to preserve us from this con

tagion the Lord has placed this risk and chastisement be

fore our eyes. Therefore that we all may be free from the

hindrances connected with the gifts and alms brought us

by the faithful, it is necessary to arrange some form of

administration. It is proper that you now determine

upon the manner and order to be maintained in the re

ception and the distribution of the moneys and gifts of

the faithful."

105. The whole gathering of the Apostles and disci

ples were somewhat at a loss to find the proper course to

be pursued; and several opinions were proposed. Some

of them suggested that a chief Stewart be chosen, who

should receive all the money and gifts, and who should

distribute it according to the necessities of all. But this

suggestion was not favored by this gathering of the poor

and of the disciples of the Master of poverty, on ac

count of the example of Judas so recently before their

eyes. To others it seemed good to make a deposit of all

the goods into the hands of a reliable person not belong

ing to the apostolic college, who should be master of it

and apply the profits or rents according to the needs of

the faithful; but also this seemed inappropriate, just as

other measures also proposed. The great Mistress of

humility, the blessed Mary, listened to all without say

ing a word; as well because She wished to show this

reverence to the Apostles, as because no one would have

advanced his own opinion, if She had first made known

her view. Although She was the Teacher of all, She

122 CITY OF GOD

always conducted Herself as a disciple anxious to listen

and learn. But saint Peter and saint John, perceiving

the diversity of opinion among the rest, besought the

heavenly Mother to show them the right way in their

doubts and to declare what should be most pleasing to

her divine Son.

106. She obeyed and speaking to the whole gathering,

She said : "My masters and brethren, I was in the school

of our true Teacher, my divine Son, from the time when

He was conceived in my womb, until He died and as

cended into heaven; I have never seen Him touch or

handle money, nor accept a gift of much value or price.

When, shortly after his birth, He accepted the presents

offered to Him by the Kings at their adoration (Matth.

2, 11), it was because of the mysterious signification

connected with them and in order that He might not

frustrate the pious intentions of those Kings, who were

the first-fruits among the heathens. But without delay,

while resting on my arms, He ordered me immediately

to distribute them among the poor and the temple, as I

also did. Many times during his life He told me, that

one of the high purposes of his coming into the world

was to raise up poverty and to teach it to mortals, who

stand in horror of it. In his conversations, his teachings

and his most holy life He manifested to me, and made

me understand, that the holiness and perfection, which

He had come to teach, was to be founded on the most

perfect voluntary poverty and the contempt of riches.

The more earnestly these were cultivated in the Church,

so much greater would be her sanctity in the course of

the ages; and this will be evident in the coming times."

107. "Since we are to follow the footsteps of our true

Master and practice his teachings, in order that we may

found his Church by imitating his example ; it is neces-

THE CORONATION 123

sary that we all embrace the most strict poverty and

that we honor and revere it as the mother of all virtues

and holiness. Hence I am of opinion that we all should

detach our hearts from the love of money and riches and

that all of us should refuse to handle it or to accept val

uable and precious gifts. In order that no one may be

defiled by avarice, six or seven persons of approved life

and established virtue might be appointed, who are to

receive the alms and offerings and whatever else the

faithful wish to deposit in their desire to live more se

curely and to follow Christ my divine Son without the

embarrassment of possessions. All this must be given in

the form of alms, not in the manner of rents, or income,

or capital. All of it should be used for supplying the

needs of the community and of our brethren and poor,

the needy and the infirm; and let none of the congre

gation, nor the Church, consider any of these goods as

belonging to themselves any more than to any of the

brethren. If the alms thus offered for the sake of God

should not suffice for the maintenance of all, let those

that are appointed for this work ask for more in the

name of God. Let all of us understand, that our lives

depend upon the most high Providence of my divine Son

and not upon the solicitude for acquiring money, nor

upon increasing our possessions under pretext of pro

viding for our sustenance. Let us rather have confidence

and if necessary, rely on the beneficence of almsgiving."

108. None of the Apostles nor the other faithful of

that gathering objected to the decision of their Great

Queen and Teacher; but all of them heartily embraced

her doctrine, knowing that She was the only and legiti

mate disciple of the Lord, and that She was the Teacher

of the Church. The most prudent Mother, by divine

disposition, would not delegate to one of the Apostles

124 CITY OF GOD

this instruction and the laying of this solid foundation

of evangelical and Christian perfection in the Church;

because such an arduous task required the authorship and

example of Christ and his most holy Mother. They

were the Inventors and Institutors of this most noble

poverty and They were the first to honor it by an open

profession of it. These two Leaders were followed by

the Apostles and by all the children of the primitive

Church. This kind of poverty flourished afterwards for

many years. Later on, through human frailty and

through human malice of the enemy, it decayed in some

of the Christians, so that finally it came to be restricted

to the ecclesiastical state. And because the course of

time made this form of poverty difficult or impossible

also for this state, God raised up the religious communi

ties, where, with some diversity, the primitive poverty

was renewed and kept alive in its entirety or in its main

intent. Thus it will be preserved in the Church to the

end, securing its privileges to its devotees according to

the degree in which they follow, honor and love this

virtue. None of the states of life approved by the Church

is excluded from its proportionate measure; and none

of those living in those states are excused from striving

after its highest perfection in their own lives. But as

in the house of God there are many mansions (John 14,

2), so there are also different orders and grades of in

habitants; let each one live up to the poverty which is

in accordance with his state. But let all of us under

stand, that the first step in the imitation and following of

Christ is voluntary poverty; and those that pursue it

more closely, can so much the more freely rejoice in

sharing with Christ its advantages and perfections.

109. With the decision of the blessed Mary the meet

ing of the apostolic college was closed, and six prudent

THE CORONATION 125

men were chosen to receive and dispense the alms. The

great Lady asked the blessing of the Apostles, who

again returned to their work of preparing the catechu

mens for Baptism on the following day. The Queen,

with the assistance of her angels and of the other Marys,

proceeded to prepare and adorn the hall, in which her

divine Son had celebrated the last Supper ; and with her

own hands She cleansed it and scrubbed it for his return

in the consecration to be performed on the next day.

She asked the owner to furnish it in the same way as I

have described for the Thursday of the Last Supper and

the devout host deferred to her wishes with deepest rev

erence. She also prepared the unleavened bread and the

wine necessary for the consecration, together with the

same paten and chalice in which the Savior had conse

crated. For the Baptism She provided pure water and

the basins for administering it with ease and reverence.

Then the loving Mother retired and passed the night in

most fervent aspirations, prostrations, thanksgiving and

other exercises of exalted prayer ; offering to the eternal

Father all that She, in her heavenly wisdom, knew would

help worthily to prepare Herself and all the rest for the

worthy administration of Baptism.

110. Early the next day, which was the octave of the

coming of the Holy Ghost, all the faithful and catechu

mens gathered with the Apostles and disciples in the

house of the Cenacle. Saint Peter preached to this

gathering instructing them in the nature and excellence

of Baptism, the need in which they stood of it and its

divine effects, how they would, through it, be made mem

bers of the mystical body of the Church, receive an in

terior character; be regenerated to a new existence as

children of God and inheritors of his glory through the

remission of sins and sanctifying grace. He exhorted

126 CITY OF GOD

them to the observance of the divine law, to which they

subjected themselves by their own free will, and to

humble thanksgiving for this benefit and for all the

others, which they received from the hands of the Most

High. He explained to them also the mysterious and

sacred truth of the holy Eucharist, which was to be cel

ebrated in the consecration of the true body and blood of

Jesus Christ, and he admonished all those especially,

who were to receive holy Communion after their Bap

tism.

111. Through this sermon all the converts were in

spired with additional fervor ; for their dispositions were

altogether sincere, the words of the Apostles full of life

and penetration, and the interior grace very abundant.

Then the Apostles themselves began to baptize amid the

most devout and orderly attention of the others. The

catechumens entered one door of the Cenacle and after

being baptized, they passed out through another, while the

disciples and others of the faithful acted as ushers. The

most holy Mary was present at the entire ceremony, al

though keeping to one side of the hall. She prayed for

all of them and broke forth in canticles of praise. She

recognized the effects of Baptism in each one, according

to the greater or less degree of virtues infused in their

souls. She beheld them renewed and washed in the blood

of the Lamb, and their souls restored to a divine purity

and spotlessness. In witness of these effects, a most clear

light, visible to all that were present, descended upon

each one that was baptized. By this miracle God wished

to authenticate the first beginnings of this Sacrament in

his holy Church, and to console both those first children

and us, who are made partakers of this blessing without

much adverting to it or giving thanks for it.

112. This administration of Baptism was continued

THE CORONATION 127

on that day until all were baptized, although there were

about five thousand to receive it. While the baptized

were making their thanksgiving for this admirable bless

ing, the Apostles with all the disciples and the faithful

spent some time in prayer. All of them prostrated them

selves on the ground adoring the infinite and immutable

God, and confessing their own unworthiness of receiv

ing Him in the most august sacrament of the Altar. In

this profound humility and adoration they prepared

themselves more immediately for Communion. And

then they recited the same psalms and prayers which

Christ had recited before consecrating, imitating faith

fully that sacred function just as they had seen it per

formed by their divine Master. Saint Peter took in his

hands the unleavened bread, and, after raising up his

eyes to heaven with admirable devotion, he pronounced

over the bread the words of consecration of the most

holy body of Christ, as had been done before by the Lord

Jesus (II Cor. 11, 24). Immediately the Cenacle was

filled with the visible splendor of innumerable angels;

and this light converged in a most singular manner on

the Queen of heaven and earth and was seen by all those

present. Then saint Peter consecrated the chalice and

performed all the ceremonies, which Christ had observed

with the consecrated body and blood, raising them up for

the adoration of all the faithful. The Apostle partook

himself of the Sacrament and communicated it to the

eleven Apostles as most holy Mary had instructed him.

Thereupon, at the hands of saint Peter, the heavenly

Mother partook of it, while the celestial spirits there

present attended with ineffable reverence. In approach

ing the altar the great Lady made three profound pros

trations, touching the ground with her face.

113. She returned to her place, and it is impossible

128 CITY OF GOD

to describe in words the effects of this participation of

the holy Eucharist in this most exalted of creatures. She

was entirely transformed and elevated, completely ab

sorbed in this divine conflagration of the love of her most

holy Son, whom She had now received bodily. She re

mained in a trance, elevated from the floor ; but the holy

angels shielded Her somewhat from view according to

her own wish, in order that the attention of those pres

ent might not be unduly attracted by the divine effects

apparent in Her. The disciples continued to distribute

holy Communion, first to the disciples and then to the

others who had been believers before the Ascension.

But of the five thousand newly baptized only one thou

sand received Communion on that day; because not all

were entirely prepared or furnished with the insight and

attention required for receiving the Lord in this great

sacrament and mystery of the Altar. With regard to the

manner of Communion in that day, the Apostles ob

served the distinction of giving to the most holy Mother

and the one hundred and twenty, upon whom the Holy

Ghost had come, both species, of bread and of wine; but

the recently baptized partook only of the species of

bread. But this difference was not made because the

new faithful were less worthy of the one species than of

the other; but because the Apostles knew, that in either

one of the species they received the same Object in its en

tirety, namely the sacramental God ; and that there was

no precept, and likewise no necessity that each one re

ceive both species. They considered, that there would

be great danger of irreverence and other very grave in

conveniences to permit the multitude to partake of the

species of the blood, while this was not to be feared in

the Communion of the few, who then partook of them at

that time. I have been made to understand, that, for all

THE CORONATION 129

those who were not consecrating or celebrating, the prac

tice of communicating only the specie of bread obtained

from the very beginning of the Church. Although some,

that were not priests, for some time partook of both

species ; yet, as soon as the Church increased and spread

over the whole world, she, being guided by the Holy

Ghost, very wisely ordained, that laymen and those not

celebrating Mass should communicate only in the specie

of the sacred body; and that it was to pertain to those

who were celebrating these divine mysteries, to partake

of both species. Such is the secure practice of the Roman

Catholic Church.

114. All having received holy Communion, saint Peter

ended the sacred mysteries by reciting some psalms and

prayers, which he and the other Apostles offered up in

thanksgiving; for at that time the other rites and cere

monies, which later on were added for the worthy cele

bration of Mass, as well before as after the Consecra

tion and Communion, had not yet been instituted. In our

times the most blessed and wise Roman Church has es

tablished all that is contained in the holy Mass as cele

brated by the priests of the Lord. The Apostles spent

some more time in prayer, and when the day had already

declined toward evening they proceeded to other busi

ness and to partake of the necessary nourishment. Our

great Queen and Lady gave thanks to the Most High

for all of them, and the Lord was pleased with her

thanksgiving, granting the petitions which his Beloved

offered up for the present and the absent in his holy

Church.

130 CITY OF GOD

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS,

THE BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

115. My daughter, although in the present life thou

canst not penetrate into the mystery of the love which

I had and still have for men; yet, in addition to that

which thou hast understood, I wish, for thy better in

formation, that thou consider again, how the Lord has

given me the title of Mother and Teacher of the Church.

With it He infused into my soul an ineffable participation

of charity and mercy for the children of Adam. As I

was a mere creature and since this blessing was so im

mense, its effects would have deprived me many times

of life, if the divine power had not miraculously sus

tained me. These effects I felt frequently in my thanks

giving, when souls were received into the Church or were

made partakers of the eternal glory; for I alone could

know and estimate this happiness in its entirety, and

since I realized it, I gave thanks for it to the Almighty

with intense fervor and deepest humility. But the oc

casions in which I was affected most deeply, was when I

asked for the conversion of sinners and when any of the

faithful fell into eternal perdition. At such and other

times, experiencing the extreme opposite of my joys, I

suffered much more than the martyrs in all their tor

ments. I exerted myself for each soul with an eminent

and supernatural force. For all this the children of

Adam stand in debt to me, since I offered up for them so

many times my own life. Though at present I am not

any more in a condition to offer it for them, yet my love,

which seeks their eternal salvation, is not diminished,

but is more exalted and perfect.

THE CORONATION 131

116. If such was the force of my love of God, when

my fellow-men were concerned, thou canst understand

what was my love toward the Lord himself, when re

ceiving Him in the blessed Sacrament. I will tell thee a

secret concerning what happened when I received holy

Communion for the first time from the hands of saint

Peter. On this occasion the Most High gave such sway

to the violence of my love, that my heart opened up in

fact and, as was my desire, permitted the sacramental

Lord to enter and take his rest there as in his legitimate

throne and tabernacle. From this thou wilt understand,

that, if in the glory which I now enjoy I could be sorrow

ful, one of the reasons for being so would be the dreadful

carelessness and presumption with which mortals ap

proach to receive the sacred body and blood of my di

vine Son; some of them unclean and abominable, others

without veneration and respect, and nearly all of them

without attention, without appreciation or consideration

for the value of that food, which is nothing less than

God himself for eternal life or eternal death.

117. Fear then, my daughter, this dreadful danger;

weep to see it in so many children of the Church and ask

the intervention of the Lord. In pondering over my

teachings make thyself worthy to understand profoundly

this mystery of love, and when thou art permitted to re

ceive Him, detach and cleanse thy interior from all

earthly things, attending only to the fact, that thou art

about to receive the infinite and incomprehensible God

himself. Surpass thyself in love, in humility, and

thanksgiving; since all that thou canst ever do, will be

less than is demanded by such an exalted mystery. For

thy better preparation, let that which I did on such oc

casions be thy model and example. I desire especially

that thou imitate me interiorly, as in the three bodily

132 CITY OF GOD

prostrations. Observe also that which thou hast added

thyself in order to do reverence to the sacramental flesh

and blood as coming from my womb and as having been

nourished and grown from my milk. Ever keep up this

devotion; for the truth thou hast perceived, that this

consecrated body contains part of my own blood and

substance, is in fact real. And if in thy love thou wouldst

deeply grieve to see the sacred body and blood ignomini-

ously and sacrilegiously trampled under foot; thou

shouldst feel the same grief and shed bitter tears at see

ing so many children of the Church treat it with irrever

ence and without any fear or decorum. Weep then over

this misfortune ; weep, because there are few who weep

over it, and weep, because the evident designs of the love

of my divine Son are thus frustrated. And in order that

thou mayest weep more bitterly, I tell thee, that, just as

in the primitive Church there were so many, who were

saved by it, now there are countless souls, who damn

themselves through it. I do not tell thee what happens

in this regard every day; lest, if thou knew it, and have

within thee any love, thou shouldst die of grief. This

damage is done, because the children of the faith are

following darkness, love vanity, covet riches, and nearly

all of them seek after vain and deceitful pleasure, which

blinds and obscures the understanding and covers up the

light with darkness, which knows no distinction between

the good and the bad and penetrates not the truths of the

evangelical doctrine.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXPLANATION OF THE MIRACLE THROUGH WHICH THE

SACRAMENTAL SPECIES WERE PRESERVED IN THE

MOST BLESSED MARY FROM ONE COMMUNION TO THE

NEXT; THE MANNER OF ITS OPERATION AFTER SHE

CAME DOWN TO THE CHURCH FROM HEAVEN.

118. Until now I have only very slightly touched upon

the miracle mentioned in the above heading, and, in order

that so great a miracle of the Lord in favor of his most

loving Mother may not be without the special mention

demanded by our piety, I have reserved it for this chap

ter. My own limited powers of explanation grieve me ;

for not only am I ignorant of infinitely more than what

I perceive concerning it, but even what I know, I can de

scribe only in most unsatisfactory and inadequate terms

and by language falling far short of my conceptions.

Nevertheless I dare not pass over in silence the benefits

conferred upon our great Queen by the right hand of her

divine Son, after She had descended from heaven to take

charge of his Church on earth; for if they were great

and ineffable before that time, they now increased in

eminent variety and exhibited at the same time the in

finite power of Him who conferred them, and the im

mense capacity of that singular and chosen Creature, who

received them.

119. To explain this rare and prodigious blessing, that

the sacramental body of Christ in the sacred species

should be preserved continually in the bosom of Mary, it

is not necessary to seek for another cause than that un-

133

134 CITY OF GOD

derlying all the other favors with which God dis

tinguished this great Lady, namely : that it was his holy

will and according to his infinite wisdom, by which He

performs according to measure and weight all that is

befitting (Wis. 11, 21). Christian prudence and piety

will be content to know as a reason, that God had singled

this mere Creature out to be his natural Mother, and

that therefore She alone, of all creatures, deserved this

distinction. As this miracle of her Mothership was

unique and without parallel, it would be shameful igno

rance to seek proofs of what the Lord did in Her by com

paring it with what He did or ever will do in other souls ;

since Mary alone rises supereminently above the com

mon order of all. Yet, though all this is true, the Lord

nevertheless wishes that by the light of faith and by

other enlightenment, we seek the reasons of the propriety

and equity, according to which the powerful arm of the

Almighty wrought these wonders in his most worthy

Mother, so that in them we may know and bless Him in

Her and through Her ; and so that we may understand,

how secure our salvation, all our hope, and our lot are

in the hands of that powerful Queen, toward whom her

Son has directed all the excess of his love. In accordance

with these truths I will explain what has been made

known to me of this mystery.

120. The heavenly Mother lived thirty-three years in

the company of her Son and true God; and from the

time when He was born of her virginal womb She never

left Him to the time of his death on the Cross. She

nursed Him, served Him, followed Him and imitated

Him, conducting Herself always as a Mother, Daughter

and Spouse, as a most faithful Servant and Friend ; She

enjoyed the sight of Him, his conversation, his doctrine

and the favors, which, by all these meritorious services,

THE CORONATION 135

She attained in this mortal life. Christ ascended into

heaven, and the force of love and right reason demanded,

that He should take to heaven with Him his most loving

Mother, in order that He should not be deprived of Her

there, nor She in this world of his presence and company.

But the most ardent love which both of Them had for

men, dissolved in a manner these bonds of union, in

ducing our kindest Mother to return to the world in or

der to establish the Church ; and moving the Son to give

his consent to her absence from Him during that time.

But as the Son of God was powerful enough to recom

pense Her for this privation to a certain extent, it be

came for Him an obligation of his love to make such a

recompense. And the fulfillment of this obligation would

not have been so publicly acknowledged or made so

manifest, if He denied his blessed Mother the favor of

accompanying Her upon earth, while He remained seated

at the glory of the right hand of his Father. Besides, the

most ardent love of the blessed Mother, having been

accustomed and nourished in the presence of the Lord

her Son, would have inflicted upon Her insufferable vio

lence, if for so many years She was to be deprived of

that kind of presence of Him, which was possible during

her stay in the Church.

121. For all this the Lord our Savior provided by con

tinuing his sacramental presence in the heart of the most

fortunate Mother as long as She lived in the Church after

his taking his seat in heaven. To a certain extent He abun

dantly recompensed Her by this sacramental presence

for that which She had enjoyed, when He had yet lived

with Her in this world ; for in those times He often ab

sented Himself in order to attend to the work of our

salvation and thus afflicted her heart with anxieties and

fears, roused by the works in which He had to engage;

136 CITY OF GOD

and even when He returned, He could not remain always

in her company; and when this was possible, his very

presence filled her mind with the terrors of his coming

passion and death on the Cross. This sorrow sometimes

cast a shadow on the joy of her possessing Him and at

tending upon Him. But when He was established at the

right hand of his eternal Father, having sustained the

torment of his Passion, and when this, her same Lord

and Son, took his rest sacramentally in her virginal

bosom, then the heavenly Mother enjoyed his presence

without fear or disturbance. In the Son She continually

enjoyed the presence of the entire Trinity by that man

ner of vision, which I have described before. Thus was

fulfilled and realized literally, what this great Queen says

in the Canticles: I shall hold Him, and will not leave

Him, until I bring Him to the house of my mother the

Church. There I will give Him to drink of the spiced

wine and of the juice of my pomegranates (Cant. 8, 2).

122. In this blessing the Lord fulfilled his promise made

to the Church in his Apostles, that He should be with

them to the end of time (Matth. 28, 20). He had already

anticipated the fulfillment of this promise even at that

time, when He resolved to ascend into heaven, for He

had remained sacramentally present in his Mother since

the last Supper, as related above. But it would not have

been entirely fulfilled after his Ascension, if He had not

wrought this new miracle in the Church; for in those

first years the Apostles had no temple or proper arrange

ment for preserving continually the sacred Eucharist,

and therefore they always consumed it entirely on the

day of its consecration. The most holy Mary alone was

the sanctuary and the temple, in which for some years

the most blessed Sacrament was preserved, in order that

the Church of Christ might not be deprived even for one

THE CORONATION 137

moment of the Word made flesh, from the time when He

ascended into heaven until the end of the world. Although

He was not there present in that Tabernacle for the use

of the faithful, yet He was there for their benefit and

for other more glorious ends ; since the great Queen of

fered up her prayers and intercessions for all Christians

in the temple of her own heart and She adored the

sacramental Christ in the name of the whole Church;

while by his indwelling in that virginal bosom, Christ

was present and united to the mystical body of the faith

ful. Above all, this great Lady was the cause of that

age s being supremely fortunate; for, by thus sheltering

within her bosom her sacramental Son and God, just

as He is now harbored within the sanctuaries and taber

nacles, He was continually adored with highest rever

ence and piety by the most blessed Mary, and was never

offended, as He is now in our churches. In Mary He

was satiated with the delights, which He desired to enjoy

for the eternal ages among the children of men (Prov.

8, 31), and since all the assistance rendered to the Church

was rendered with these delights as an object, the Lord

could not have gained this end more fully than by re

maining sacramentally present in the heart of his purest

Mother. She was the most legitimate sphere of the

divinity, and, as it were, the proper element and the

focusing point of its proper activity; and all the other

creatures outside of the heavenly Mary were in com

parison with Her, foreign to it, since this conflagration

of divine love, which continues to burn with infinite

charity, found no room or element for its flames.

123. From the understanding which has been given

me of the mystery of the love of Christ the Lord for his

most holy Mother and of the force with which He was

drawn toward Her, I would go so far as to say, that if

138 CITY OF GOD

He had not found this way of remaining with Her in the

sacramental species, He would have come down from the

right hand of the Father to the world in order to render

companionship to his Mother while She sojourned with

his Church. And if it had been necessary that the heav

enly mansions and the celestial courtiers should be de

prived of the presence of the most sacred humanity from

that time, He would have considered that of less im

portance than to be deprived of the company of his

Mother. It is no exaggeration to say this, when we all

must confess, that in the purest Mary the Lord found a

correspondence and a degree of love more conformable

to his will than in all the blessed combined; and conse

quently, his own love for Her exceeded his love for all

others. If the Shepherd of the Gospel leaves the ninety-

nine sheep in order to go in search of only one that is lost,

and if we nevertheless dare not say of Him that He

leaves the greater for the less ; it should not cause won

der in us that this divine Shepherd should leave all the

rest of the saints in order to be in the company of his

most sincere Sheep, who clothed Him with her own

nature and raised and nourished Him as a Mother. With

out a doubt the eyes of his beloved Spouse and Mother

would attract Him in swiftest flight from those heights

(Cant. 6, 4) to that earth, where He had lived, whither

He had before this come for the salvation of the children

of Adam, toward whom He was less attracted, yea

rather repelled by their sins and by the necessity of suf

fering for them. If now He descended to live with his

beloved Mother, it would not be to suffer and die; but

to enjoy the delights of her company. Fortunately it

was not necessary to rob heaven of his presence; since

by descending in sacramental form He could satisfy both

his own love and that of his most blessed Mother, in

THE CORONATION

139

whose heart, as in his couch, this true Solomon could

take up his rest without leaving the right hand of his

eternal Father (Cant. 3, 7).

124. The manner of operating this miracle was as fol

lows : at the Communion of the most blessed Mary, the

sacramental species, instead of entering the portion of

the stomach where the natural food is commingled and

rarified, and instead of being mixed up or digested with

even the little nourishment sometimes taken by the great

Lady, halted on their passage and lodged within the

heart of Mary, as if in repayment of the blood which it

had given up at the Incarnation of the Word and from

which was formed the sacred humanity for hypostatical

union with the Word, as has been explained in the second

part. The participation in the holy Eucharist is called

an extension of the Incarnation, and therefore it was

proper that the blessed Mother should share in this par

ticipation in a new and singular manner, since She also

concurred in the Incarnation of the Word in a miraculous

and extraordinary manner.

125. The heat of the heart in the perfectly healthy

beings is very great, and in man it is certainly not the

less on account of his greater excellence and nobility of

nature and of his prolonged life and activity; and the

providence of nature supplies it with air and ventilation

for its refreshment and for moderating that heat, which

is the source of all the other animal warmth. Yet, though

in the noble constitution of our Queen the ardors of her

heart were intense, and though the affections and opera

tions of her inflamed love still more increased them,

nevertheless the sacred species, while lodged in her heart,

were not changed or consumed. Moreover, although mul

tiplied miracles were required in order to preserve them,

they are not to be attributed sparingly in this singular Be-

140 CITY OF GOD

ing : a Creature, who was altogether a prodigy and a sum

mary of wonders. This favor began at the first Com

munion and through the preservation of the species con

tinued until the second Communion received at the hands

of saint Peter on the octave of Pentecost. Then, as the

new species took their place in her heart, the former

ones were consumed. By this miraculous exchange, the

previous sacramental species continued to yield their

place to those She received in her Communions until the

end of her life, so that She was never deprived of the

presence of her Son and God in sacramental form.

126. Through this privilege, and that of the continual

and abstractive vision of the Divinity mentioned before,

the most blessed Mary was made so godlike, and her

operations and faculties were raised so far above human

conception, that it will be impossible to understand them in

this mortal life, or to attain of them a proportionate idea

as is possible for us concerning other things. Nor can I

find words to explain the little which could be made clear

to me. After She returned from heaven She was en

tirely renewed and transformed in regard to the use of

her senses ; for on the one hand, She was absent from her

divine Son, in whom She had worthily employed them,

when He was sensibly present; on the other hand, She

felt and perceived Him resting in her heart, whereon all

her attention was centered. From the day on which She

descended She made a new treaty with her eyes and ex

ercised a new dominion and sway over them of not per

mitting any terrestrial and visible images to enter ex

cept those that were necessary for the government of the

Church and for the discharge of her duties. She made

no use of these images, nor were they necessary to Her,

for conversing or meditating interiorly, and they were

merely stored in her memory and understanding ; her in-

THE CORONATION 141

terior meditations and contemplations were actuated by

infused images and by the science connected with the ab

stract vision of the Divinity, after the manner in which

the saints know and see in God, or through vision, or

knowledge of the creature in themselves. In this manner

our Queen understood the will of God in all her works,

and She did not make use of her sight in knowing or

learning any of these things, although She used her eyes

to see where She was going or with whom She was con

versing in all the sincerity of heart.

127. The sense of hearing She made use of somewhat

more frequently; for it was necessary to listen to the

faithful and to the Apostles in what they reported of the

state of souls, of the Church, and of its needs and spir

itual advancement, in order to answer them, and give

them her instruction and counsels. But She governed her

sense of hearing so completely, that it was affected by no

sound or word, which disagreed in the least with the holi

ness and perfection of her state, or which were not neces

sary for the advance of charity toward her fellow-men.

Of her sense of smell She made no use for terrestrial

odors, or of the common objects of that sense; but by the

intervention of the angels She was regaled by the celestial

perfumes, which were perceived by Her in praise of the

Creator. She experienced a great change also in the

sense of taste; for She was made aware, that, after her

sojourn in heaven, She could live without earthly

nourishment, though that was not commanded Her, but

left to her own free will. Therefore She ate very sel

dom and sparingly, and this only at times, when saint

Peter or saint John asked Her, or in order to avoid as

tonishment in others at not seeing Her eat. But when

She thus in obedience or in humility tasted food, She per

ceived not the common taste or savor of it, so that her

142 CITY OF GOD

sense reacted not upon it any more than if She had eaten

some apparent or glorified substance. Her touch like

wise conformed to this kind of change, for through it

She perceived little of that which She touched and had

in it no sensible delight ; but She felt the contact of the

sacramental species in her heart, to which She ordinarily

attended with feelings of admirable sweetness and joy.

128. All these privileges in regard to the senses were

granted Her at her petition; for She consecrated all of

them and her faculties anew to the greater glory of the

Most High and for producing in Her the plenitude of

virtue, holiness and the most eminent perfection: And

though through her whole life, from the first instant of

her Immaculate Conception, She had complied with all

the requirements of a faithful servant (Matth. 25, 20)

and of a prudent dispenser of the plenitude of her graces

and gifts (as appears from the whole course of this his

tory), yet after She ascended to heaven with her Son,

She was perfected in all things and was furnished by the

divine Omnipotence with new faculties of operating.

Though She was yet a pilgrim, since She did not yet en

joy the beatific vision as a comprehensor, nevertheless the

operations of her senses partook of and were rather

similar to those of the saints glorified in body and soul

than to the operations of the other viators. There is no

other way of comparing this state so singular, so blessed

and divine, in which our great Queen and Lady returned

from heaven to govern the holy Church.

129. To this exalted activity of the sensible faculties

corresponded her interior wisdom and knowledge; for

She knew the decrees of the most high Will in all that

She wished and was obliged to do ; in what time, in what

manner, in what order and circumstance each work was

to be accomplished ; with what words and under what ar-

THE CORONATION 143

rangements; so that in this She was not excelled even

by the angels, who assist us without ever losing sight of

the Lord. The great Queen practiced the virtues with

such high wisdom, that She excited their admiration;

for they saw that no other mere creature could exceed

Her or could arrive at that summit of perfection and

holiness, which they saw Her attain. One of the things

that filled Her with highest joy was the adoration and

reverence exhibited by the supernal spirits to the Lord

sacramentally present in her bosom. The same was also

shown by the saints, whenever She ascended into heaven

bearing her most divine Son with Her in her heart ; and

this was a sight furnishing new joy and jubilee for all

the blessed. The joy of seeing the blessed Sacrament

thus honored by the angels was a recompense for the

gross negligence of mortals in venerating the sacred body

of the Lord. And as such the blessed Lady also offered

up the worship and reverence of the celestial spirits, who

knew how to estimate this mystery and venerated it with

out fail or negligence.

130. Sometimes the body of her Son manifested itself

to Her openly within Her; at other times with all the

beauty of his most holy humanity; at other times, and

almost continually, were made known to Her all the

miracles contained in the most august Sacrament. All

these wonders, and many others, which we cannot un

derstand in this corruptible life, most holy Mary enjoyed,

sometimes becoming manifest to Her in themselves,

sometimes in the abstractive vision of the Divinity; and

with the images of the Divinity were presented to Her

also all that She was to do for Herself and for all the

Church. What was most consoling to Her, was to per

ceive the joy and pleasure of her divine Son in remaining

sacramentally present in her sincerest heart, which with-

144 CITY OF GOD

out a doubt (according to what was made known to me)

was greater than to be in the company of the saints. O

extraordinary, singular and exalted privilege! Thou by

Thyself wert more pleasing to the Creator than the high

heavens He had made for his habitation (Ps. 113, 16).

He who cannot be contained in those illimitable spaces,

measured and enclosed Himself in Thee alone, and found

a pleasant throne and resting-place, not only in thy vir

ginal womb, but in the immensity of thy capacious love.

Thou alone wast a heaven from the first of thy existence,

so that God lived in Thee after He gave Thee being and

shall rest in Thee in fullest delight through all the ages of

his eternity. Let all the nations know Thee; for in Thee

they know and praise their true God and Redeemer, since

through Thee alone He has visited us and repaired our

unfortunate fall (Luke 1, 68).

131. Who of mortals, or even of the angels, can de

scribe the conflagration of love burning in the purest

heart of this great Queen so full of wisdom? Who can

comprehend the impetus of the river of the Divinity,

which inundated and absorbed this City of God? (Ps.

44, 5). What aspirations and acts of virtue did She not

enter into while exercising the measureless gifts of grace

showered upon Her! What prayers and petitions did

She not send forth for the holy Church ! What entrance-

ments of love for us did not overwhelm Her! What gifts

did She not merit and obtain for us ! Only the Author of

this prodigy could know them. But let us on our part

raise our hopes, enliven our faith, and incite our love in

union with this kind Mother; let us solicit her interces

sion and assistance, since He, who is her Son and our

Brother, will deny nothing to Her whom He has so

singled out for his love, as I have described, and will de

scribe further on.

THE CORONATION 145

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS, MOST

HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

132. My daughter, thou hast so far been well in

formed of my life and activity, considering that thou art

a mere creature. Besides me, there is no other created

being, which thou canst Better use as thy model and

original for thy greater holiness and perfection. But

now thou hast entered upon the description of the su

preme state of virtue reached by me in mortal life. This

favor should oblige thee to renew thy desires and direct

all the attention of thy faculties toward the perfect

imitation of all that I teach thee. It is time, my dearest,

and there is reason, that thou deliver thyself entirely over

to my will in what I seek of thee. In order that thou

mayest animate thyself to the attainment of this blessing,

I wish thee to take notice, that, though the species of the

Sacrament are consumed, my divine Son, whenever souls

receive Him with reverence and fervor and prepare for

Him a pure and ardent heart, remains with them with

special graces, by which He assists them, enriches and

directs them in return for their hospitality. Few are the

souls, who partake of this blessing, because many know

ing of it, approach the holy Sacrament without the

proper disposition, as if by haphazard or habit, and with

out being solicitous for the reverence and holy fear due

to it. But as thou art now informed of this secret, I de

sire that, since by the orders of thy superiors thou re-

ceivest it every day, thou prepare thyself worthily each

time and thus partake of this great blessing.

133. For this end thou must avail thyself of the re

membrance of what I did, and by it regulate thy aspira

tions, thy fervor, thy love, and all that is necessary to

prepare thy heart as a temple and habitation of thy

146 CITY OF GOD

Spouse and highest King. Labor then to collect all thy

powers within thyself; before and after receiving ob

serve all that pertains to the fidelity of a Spouse, and

especially must thou place a guard over thy eyes and a

watch over all thy senses, in order that no profane or

foreign image may enter into the temple of the Lord.

Keep thy heart entirely pure and unspotted; for when

it is impure or preoccupied, the plenitude of divine light

and wisdom cannot enter (Wis. 1, 4). All this thou

wilt know from what God has shown thee, if thou hast

attended to it with an upright purpose. Even supposing

that thou canst not exempt thyself from all intercourse

with creatures, it is befitting that thou hold thy senses

in great subjection, and that thou do not permit them

to introduce the image of any sensible thing, by which

thou wouldst not be assisted in striving after the most

holy and pure of virtue. Separate the precious from the

worthless, the truth from deceit. In order that thou

mayest imitate me perfectly, I wish that from now on

thou attend to the choice thou art to make in all things

great or small, so that thou err in none, perverting the

order of divine light.

134. Consider attentively the common deception of

mortals and the woeful damage they suffer. For in the

decisions of their will they ordinarily are moved solely

by what they perceive through the senses, and they im

mediately proceed to act upon their choice without fur

ther consideration or counsel. Since the sensible

impressions immediately move the animal passions and

inclinations, it is evident that men do not act according to

right reason, but according to the impulse of passion, ex

cited by the senses and their objects. Hence, he that

considers only the injury and pain caused, is straightway

moved to vengeance ; he that follows only his hankering

THE CORONATION 147

after strange property, as soon as he lays his eyes upon

it, is impelled to injustice. In the same manner act so

many unfortunates, who follow the concupiscence of the

eyes, the movements of the flesh, and the pride of life,

because these are the only things offered by the world

and the devil. In their blind deception they follow dark

ness as their light, taste the bitter as sweet, take deadly

poison for remedy of their souls, and hold that for wis

dom which is nothing but diabolical and earthly ignor

ance. Do thou guard thyself against these pernicious

errors, and never resolve on anything, or govern thyself

by anything that is merely sensible or arising from sensi

ble impressions, nor pursue the advantages held out

through them. In thy actions take counsel first of all

from the interior knowledge and light communicated to

thee by God, in order that thou mayest not go blindly

forward; and He shall always grant thee sufficient

guidance. Immediately seek the advice of thy superiors

and teachers, if thou canst do so before making thy

choice. And if thy superior or teacher is not at hand,

seek counsel of others, even inferiors; for this is more

secure than to follow thy own will, which may be dis

turbed and blinded by passion. This is the rule to be fol

lowed especially in the exterior works, pursuing them

with recollection, with secrecy, and according to the de

mands of circumstances and fraternal charity as they

occur. In all of them it is necessary not to lose out of

sight the north-star of interior light, while moving in the

profound gulf of the intercourse with creatures, where

there is continual danger of perishing.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MOST HOLY MARY SEES LUCIFER RISING UP TO PER

SECUTE THE CHURCH I WHAT MEASURES SHE TOOK

TO DEFEND AND PROTECT THE FAITHFUL AGAINST

THIS ENEMY.

135. Elevated to the highest degree of grace and holi

ness possible in a mere creature, the great Lady of the

world saw with eyes of divine knowledge the little flock

of the Church increasing day by day. As a most watch

ful Mother and Shepherdess, from the heights in which

She was placed by the right hand of her omnipotent Son,

She watched with deepest insight lest any assault or at

tack from the ravenous wolves of hell threatened the lit

tle sheep of her fold; for She well knew their hatred

against the new-born children of the Gospel. The watch

fulness of the Mother of light served as a wall of de

fense to this holy family, which the loving Queen had

accepted as her own and which She looked upon as the

portion and inheritance of her divine Son, selected from

the rest of men and chosen by the Most High. For some

days the little ship of the Church, governed by this

heavenly Commandress, proceeded prosperously on

ward ; being assisted as well by her counsels, her teach

ings and warnings, as by her incessant prayers and peti

tions. Not for one moment did She remit her diligence

in attending to all that was necessary for consolation of

the Apostles and the other faithful.

136. A few days after the coming of the Holy Ghost,

while at her prayers, She spoke to the Lord : "My Son,

148

THE CORONATION 149

the God of true love, I know, my Lord, that the little

flock of thy Church, of which Thou hast made me the

Mother and Defender, is of no less price to Thee than

thy own life and blood, by which Thou hast redeemed

it from the powers of darkness (Col. 1, 13). It is there

fore reasonable that I also offer my life and all my being

for the preservation and increase of what is so highly es

teemed by Thee. Let me die, my God, if it is necessary

for the enhancement of Thy name and for the spread of

Thy glory throughout the world. Receive, my Son, the

offering of my lips and of my entire will in union with

thy own merits. Look kindly upon thy faithful ; receive

those who hope solely in Thee and give themselves to

Thee in faith. Govern thy vicar Peter, that he may

rightly direct the sheep Thou hast given him in charge.

Watch over all thy Apostles, thy ministers and my mas

ters; meet them with the blessings of thy sweetness, so

that we all may execute thy perfect and holy will."

137. The Most High answered the petition of our

Queen : "My Spouse and Beloved, I am attentive to thy

desires and petitions. But Thou already knowest, that

my Church is to follow in my footsteps and my teach

ings, imitating Me in the way of my suffering and the

Cross, which my Apostles and disciples and all my inti

mate friends and followers are to embrace ; for such they

cannot be, without this condition of labor and sufferings

(Matth. 10, 38). It is also necessary that my Church

should bear the ballast of persecutions, by which it will

pass securely through the prosperity of the world and

its dangers. Such is my high Providence in regard to the

faithful and the predestined. Attend therefore, and be

hold the manner in which this is to be brought about."

138. Immediately the great Queen in a vision saw

Lucifer and a great multitude of hellish followers rising

150 CITY OF GOD

out of the depths of the infernal caverns, where they

had lain oppressed since the time they had been van

quished on mount Calvary and hurled to hell, as I have

described above. She saw that dragon with seven heads

coming up as it were from the depths of the sea, followed

by the rest. Although he came forth very much weak

ened, in the manner of convalescents, unable, after a long

and grievous sickness, to drag themselves along; yet in

his pride and chagrin he was lashed to implacable fury

and arrogance, having on that occasion experienced that

these passions in him are greater than his power, as Isaias

says (Is. 14, 9). For on the one hand he exhibited the

effects of the crushing defeat which he had undergone in

the victory and triumph of the Savior on the Cross ; and

on the other hand he exhibited his wrath and fury, which

now was bursting forth like the fires of a volcano against

the holy Church and her children. Having come upon

the earth, he roamed all over it and reconnoitred; then

he hastened to Jerusalem in order to strain all his rabid

fury in persecuting the sheep of Christ. He began to spy

from afar, gradually approaching and veering around

that fold, which was so humble and yet so formidable to

his arrogant malice.

139. The dragon saw what a multitude had subjected

themselves to the faith, and how many were hourly re

ceiving holy Baptism; how the Apostles continued to

preach and to perform such great miracles for the good

of souls ; how the new converts renounced and abhorred

riches ; how the holy Church was founded with all the

principles of invincible sanctity. At such astonishing

changes the wrath of the demon increased and his con

centrated malice and wrath vented itself in fearful howls.

Lashing himself into fury on account of his being so

powerless against God, and, thirsting to drink up the

THE CORONATION 151

pure waters of Jordan (Is. 16, 6), he sought to approach

nearer to the congregation of the faithful; but in this he

could not succeed, because they were all united in perfect

charity. This virtue, together with faith, hope and hu

mility, rose like an unapproachable fortification against

the dragon and his ministers of malice. He roamed

about in the vicinity to find some little sheep, that might

have carelessly strayed from the fold of Christ, in order

to attack and devour it. He schemed and plotted in many

ways to attract some one of them, who should give him an

opportunity of entering the fortress of virtue, by which

all were protected ; but everywhere he found his entrance

forestalled and prevented by the vigilance of the Apostles

and the power of grace, and especially by the protection

of most Holy Mary.

140. When the great Mother saw Lucifer and such an

army of demons rising up with malicious wrath against

the evangelical Church, her loving heart was pierced by

a dart of compassion and sorrow; for She knew on the

one hand the weakness and ignorance of men, and on

the other hand the malicious and cunning hatred of the

ancient serpent. In order to restrain and check his pride,

the heavenly Mother turned upon them and said : "Who

is like God, that dwells in the highest? (Ps. 112, 5). O

foolish and vainglorious enemy of the Omnipotent! The

same One who vanquished thee on the Cross and crushed

thy arrogance, redeeming the human race from thy

cruel tyranny, commands thee now ; this power annihilates

thee, his wisdom confounds thee, and hurls thee back to

hell. In his name now shall I do this, so as to deprive

thee of the power to hinder the exaltation and glory due

to Him from all men as their God and Redeemer." Then

the solicitous Mother continued her prayers and spoke

to the Lord: "Supreme God and Father, if the power

152 CITY OF GOD

of thy arm do not restrain and quench the fury, which

I see in the infernal dragon and his hosts, I doubt not

that he will cover the whole face of the earth with the

ruin of its inhabitants. Be Thou a God of kindness and

mercy to thy creatures : do not permit, O Lord, that this

venomous serpent pour out its poison upon the souls re

deemed and washed in the blood of the Lamb (Apoc.

7, 14), thy Son and the true God. Is it possible, that

the souls themselves should ever deliver themselves over

to such a bloodthirsty beast, their mortal enemy ? How is

my heart constrained with fear, lest any of the souls, en

riched with the fruit of this blood, fall into such a de

plorable misfortune? O that the wrath of this dragon

might be turned upon me alone, and that thy redeemed

be placed in safety! Let me, eternal Lord, fight the

battles against thy enemies. Clothe me with thy power

in order that I may humiliate them and crush their pride

and haughtiness."

141. In virtue of this prayer and the resistance of

the powerful Queen, Lucifer was struck with great fear,

and for the time being he dared not approach any of the

congregation of the faithful. Yet his fury was not al

layed on that account, but he plotted to enlist the scribes

and pharisees, and all of the Jews, whom he perceived

still clinging to their obstinate perfidy. He betook him

self to them and by many suggestions filled them with

envy and hatred against the Apostles and the faithful of

the Church ; thus, through the unbelievers, he roused the

persecution, which he could not begin himself. He filled

them with dread, lest by the preaching of the Apostles

and disciples a like or greater damage would arise, than

from the preaching of Jesus the Nazarene. He suggested

to them, how evidently the followers of Christ intended

to spread the glory of his name; how, since they them-

THE CORONATION 153

selves had crucified Him as a malefactor, his glory would

redound to their dishonor. And, as there were so many

disciples and as so many miracles were wrought in his

name, how all the people would be drawn toward them;

the teachers and the learned in the law would be de

spised, and lose the accustomed perquisites, as the new

believers would donate all their goods to the new

teachers; and how inevitably this damage would very

soon overtake the teachers of the law, on account of the

great multitudes following the Apostles.

142. These malicious suggestions appealed very

strongly to the avarice and ambition of the Jews and

therefore they accepted them readily as sane and as very

conformable to their own desires. Hence arose the

many meetings and cabals of the pharisees, sadducees,

magistrates, and priests against the Apostles, as men

tioned by saint Luke in the Acts. The first occasion arose

at the miracle wrought by saint Peter and saint John in

healing the paralytic, who had suffered under his mal

ady for forty years from the time of his birth and who

was known throughout the city. As this miracle was

so evident and remarkable, the inhabitants gathered in

great multitudes, all astonished and excited beyond con

trol. Saint Peter preached them a great sermon, proving

that they could not be saved except by the name of Jesus,

in virtue of which he and saint John had cured this pa

ralytic of forty years standing. In reference to this event

the priests held a meeting, in which they called the two

Apostles to account. But as the miracle was so notorious

and as the people glorified God in it, the iniquitous judges

were too much confused to attempt to punish the Apos

tles, although they commanded them not to preach or

teach in the name of Jesus the Nazarene for the future.

But saint Peter with invincible courage told them, that

154 CITY OF GOD

they could not obey this command; because God com

manded them the contrary, and it was not right to obey

men in opposition to God (Acts 4, 19.) With this warn

ing they were dismissed and the two Apostles immediate

ly repaired to the most holy Queen to report their ex

perience, although She, by a special vision, had been in

formed of it all. Then they engaged in most exalted

prayer, in which the Holy Ghost again came upon all of

them with visible signs.

143. A few days afterwards happened the miraculous

chastisement of Ananias and Saphira, who, tempted by

their avarice, tried to deceive saint Peter. They lied to

the Apostle in bringing to him a portion of the price of

an inheritance they had sold and secreting the other part.

Shortly before, Barnabas, also called Joseph, a levite and

a native of Cyprus, had likewise sold his inheritance and

brought all the proceeds of it to the Apostles. In order

that it might be impressed upon all, that each one should

act with the same integrity, Ananias and Saphira were

punished, falling dead at the feet of saint Peter one after

the other. Through this formidable wonder all in Jeru

salem were struck with fear and the Apostles preached

with greater freedom. But the magistrates and saddu-

cees were roused to anger and had them seized and cast

into the public prison. There they remained but a short

time, because the Queen liberated them, as I shall soon

relate.

144. I will not pass over in silence the mystery con

nected with the fall of Ananias and Saphira, his wife.

When the great Mistress of heaven and earth perceived,

that Lucifer and his demons incited the priests and mag

istrates against the preaching of the Apostles, and that

through his suggestions, they had dragged saint Peter

and saint John before their tribunals after the miracle of

THE CORONATION 155

the paralytic, this loving Mother feared lest the con

version of other souls might be prevented and therefore,

as her divine Son had enjoined Her, She, with greater

courage than that of Judith, took up their cause as her

own and addressed that cruel tyrant: "Enemy of the

Most High, how dost thou dare, and how shalt thou

be able to rise up against his creatures, when by the

passion and death of my Son and the true God thou art

so completely vanquished, subjected and despoiled of

thy tyrannous empire? What canst thou do, O venom

ous basilisk, chained and imprisoned in hellish torments

for all eternity by the Almighty? Dost thou not know,

that thou art subjected to his infinite power, and that

thou canst not resist his invincible will? He commands

thee, and I in his name and power command thee, imme

diately to descend with thy hordes to the depths, from

which thou hast risen to persecute the children of the

Church/

145. The infernal dragon could not resist the mandate

of the powerful Queen ; for her divine Son, to the greater

terror of the demons, permitted them all to see Him

sacramentally present in the bosom of the invincible

Mother, as in the throne of his omnipotence and majesty.

This happened also on other occasions, whenever Mary

put Lucifer to confusion, as I shall relate farther on. This

time he hurled himself into the abysses with all that had

accompanied him, and they fell oppressed and annihilat

ed by the divine strength of that peerless Woman. For

some time the demons remained there in consternation

and lashed themselves to fury on account of their woeful

state, which they could not escape, and because they de

spaired of overcoming this powerful Queen or all those

who should come under her protection. In this furious

dismay Lucifer conferred with his demons and said : "In

156 CITY OF GOD

what calamity do I see myself plunged! Tell me, what

can I do against this my Enemy, who thus torments and

overwhelms me? She alone battles against me more

strenuously than all the creatures together. Shall I then

give up persecuting Her, in order that She may not suc

ceed in destroying me? Ever have I come forth from

battle with Her vanquished, while She remains victorious.

I must acknowledge, that She is continually diminishing

my powers and that step by step She will succeed in an

nihilating me, so that I shall be powerless against the

followers of her Son. Yet how am I to suffer such an

unjust oppression? Where is my exalted sovereignty?

Am I then to subject myself to a Woman of a condition

and nature so inferior and vile in comparison with mine ?

But I dare not at present battle with Her. Let us seek

to overthrow some of her followers, so that in some

measure my confusion may be allayed and my revenge

satisfied."

146. The Lord permitted the dragon and his hordes

to return and tempt the faithful for their probation. But

on becoming acquainted with the state of their souls and

the great virtues, with which they were adorned, they

found no approach open, nor any of the faithful that

would listen to their insane deceits and illusions. Yet

on searching the dispositions and natural inclinations of

each one, through which unfortunately they always carry

on their fierce war against us, the demons found that

Ananias and Saphira were attached to money and had

always sought after it with a certain amount of avarice.

Of this weakness they availed themselves for their at

tack and they suggested to their imagination the ex

pediency of reserving a part of the price of a heritage,

which they had sold in order to give its proceeds to the

Apostles in thankful acknowledgment of the faith and

THE CORONATION 157

Baptism received at their hands. They permitted them

selves to be entrapped by this low deceit, because they

found it harmonizing with their base inclination, and

they sought to deceive saint Peter. The Apostle knew

of their sin through a revelation and he chastised them

by permitting them both, first Ananias then Saphira,

suddenly to fall dead at his feet. Saphira, without know

ing what had happened to her husband, shortly after

wards practiced the same deceit and expired in the same

way in the presence of the Apostles.

147. Our Queen knew from the very beginning what

Lucifer was plotting and that Ananias and Saphira were

listening to his wily suggestions. Full of compassion and

sorrow the loving Mother prostrated Herself in the

divine presence and called out from the bottom of her

soul: "Alas, my Son and Lord, that this bloodthirsty

dragon should snatch these simple sheep of our flock!

How does my heart suffer, O my God, to see the con

tagion of avarice and deceit infect the souls, who have

tasted life and thy blood! If this most cruel enemy

scathlessly thus mixes up with them, the evil example of

sin will do great damage on account of the weakness of

men, and one will follow the other in their fall. I shall

lose my life, O Lord, for grief, since I know what an

evil sin is in thy eyes, and especially the sin, not of

strangers, but of thy children. Do Thou, my Beloved,

provide some remedy of this evil, which Thou hast made

known to me." The Lord answered Her : "My Beloved

Mother, let not thy heart, in which I reside, be afflicted ;

for I shall draw much good out of this evil for my

Church, and it is for this end that my Providence shall

permit it. In chastising these sins I shall teach the other

faithful, by a visible example, to fear such sins in the

Church; and thus shall caution them against the deceit

158 CITY OF GOD

and the covetousness of money. For the same chastise

ment, or my anger, impends over all that shall commit

the same fault; since my justice shall always remain the

same against all that are rebellious to my will as taught

by my holy law."

148. With this answer the most holy Mary consoled

Herself, although She continued to pity those two en

snared ones, Ananias and Saphira, on account of the

divine vengeance about to fall upon them in chastisement.

In the meanwhile She offered up most exalted prayers

for the rest of the faithful, in order that they might not

fall into the snares of satan; and She again turned upon

him, to frighten and repel him from irritating the Jews

against the Apostles. Prevented by her power he desist

ed, and the first children of the Church enjoyed much

peace and tranquillity. This happiness under the pro

tection of the great Queen and Lady would have con

tinued forever, if men had not thought little of it, giving

themselves up to the same and worse deceits than Ananias

and Saphira. O that the faithful would fear this ex

ample and imitate that of the Apostles !

149. When the Apostles were taken prisoners as re

lated above, they called upon the divine mercy and the

protection of their heavenly Queen and Mother; and

when She by divine enlightenment became aware of their

condition, She prostrated Herself in the form of a cross

before the throne of God and made for them the follow

ing petition: "My supreme Lord, Creator of the uni

verse! From my whole heart I subject myself to thy

divine will, and I know it is according to the dispositions

and ordainment of thy infinite wisdom, that the disciples

follow Thee as their Master, the true light and guide of

thy chosen ones. This I confess, my Son, because Thou

earnest upon this world in the appearance and habit of

THE CORONATION 159

humility, in order to give it credit and destroy pride and

in order to teach the way of the cross by patience in

labor and in the contempt coming from men. I know al

so that thy Apostles and disciples must follow this doc

trine and establish it in thy Church. But if it is possible,

God of my soul, that they at present retain their freedom

and their life in order to found the Church, preach thy

holy name and bring the world to the true faith, I be

seech Thee, my Lord, to permit me to favor thy vicar

Peter, and my son, thy beloved disciple John, and all

those who by the cunning of Lucifer, are imprisoned.

Let not that enemy glory in having now triumphed over

thy servants, nor let him raise his head over the other

children of the Church. Crush his haughtiness, my Lord,

and let him be confounded in thy presence."

150. To her petition the Most High answered: "My

Spouse, let what thou desirest be done, for this is also

my will. Send thy angels to undo the work of Lucifer,

for my power is with thee." With this loving consent

the Queen of angels immediately sent one of her guard,

of a very high hierarchy, to the prison of the Apostles

in order to free them from their fetters and draw them

from their dungeon. This was the angel of whom saint

Luke speaks in the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apos

tles, freeing the Apostles at night at the order of the

heavenly Mother; although the Evangelist makes no

mention of the secret connected with this miracle. But

he was seen by the Apostles, appearing to them full of

light and glory and telling them, that he was sent by his

Queen to liberate them from prison. He commanded

them to preach, as they also did. Besides this angel

She sent also others to the magistrates and priests in

order to drive away from them Lucifer and his demons,

who were irritating and inciting them against the Apos-

160 CITY OF GOD

ties. They were to inspire them instead with holy

thoughts, and instill into them the fear of injuring these

men or hindering their preaching. The heavenly spirits

obeyed, and they fulfilled their mission so well, that

the venerable Gamaliel delivered himself of the opinion

recorded by saint Luke (Act 5, 34). For when the other

judges were thrown into consternation at the news, that

the Apostles, whom they had cast into prison, were freely

preaching in the temple without its being known through

whom and how they had been freed from the prison,

Gamaliel counseled the priests not to trouble these men,

but to let them continue their preaching; since if this was

the work of God they could not hinder it, and if it was

not, it would soon come to naught of itself. For the

same would happen as what had happened some time

before with the false prophets, Theodas and Judas of

Galilee, who had risen in Jerusalem and Palestine and

who had both perished with all their followers.

151. This counsel was inspired by the holy angels of

the Queen and through their influence the judges acted

upon it, though their own reputation and worldly inter

est induced them to forbid the Apostles to preach any

more in the name of Jesus of Nazareth. When therefore

they had again brought the Apostles before their tribunal

after their liberation from prison, they dismissed them

with a punishment. The Apostles immediately reported

all their undertakings and experiences to the most blessed

Mary as to their Mother and Teacher ; and the most pru

dent Queen received them with maternal affection and

joy to see them so constant in suffering and so zealous

for the welfare of souls. "Now, my masters," she said,

"you appear to me true imitators and disciples of your

Master, since you suffer affronts and injury for his name

and with a joyous heart help Him to bear the cross. You

THE CORONATION 161

become his worthy ministers and assistants in applying

the fruit of the blood He has shed for the salvation of

men. May his right hand bless you and strengthen you

with divine virtue." This she said to them on her knees

and kissing their hands; whereupon She ministered to

their wants, as described above.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS,

MOST BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

152. My daughter, in what thou hast understood and

written in this chapter, thou possessest many and impor

tant admonitions for thy salvation and for the salvation

of the faithful in the Church. First of all thou must

meditate upon the solicitude and watchfulness with which

I sought after the eternal salvation of all the faithful

without overlooking the least of their necessities and

dangers. I taught them the truth, prayed incessantly,

encouraged them in their labors, urged the Lord to assist

them; and above all I defended them from the demons

and their cunning and furious wrath. All these bless

ings I procure for Christians from heaven in our times ;

and if not all experience them, it is not because I do not

solicit them, but because there are very few of the faithful

who call to me with all their heart and who dispose

themselves toward meriting and reaping the fruit of my

maternal love. I would defend them all from the dragon,

if all would call upon me and if all would fear his per

nicious deceits, by which they are ensnared and entrapped

to eternal damnation. In order that all may wake up to

this frightful danger, I now give them this new remind

er. I assure thee, my daughter, that all those, who damn

themselves after the death of my Son and in spite of the

benefits and favors procured by my intercession, will suf

fer greater torments in hell than those who were lost be-

162 CITY OF GOD

fore his coming and before I was in the world. Thus

those who from now on understand these mysteries and

despise them to their loss, shall be subject to new and

greater punishments.

153. They must also remember in what estimation

they should hold their souls, since I did and am doing so

much every day for them, after they have been redeemed

by the passion and death of my divine Son. This forget-

fulness among men is very blameworthy and deserves a

fearful chastisement. How unreasonable and how dam

nable is the conduct of a man, who for a momentary sen

sible pleasure, which at most must end with life and

generally lasts only for a short time, labors so much and

still claims to have the faith, while at the same time he

takes no account of his immortal soul, and forgets it, as

if it ended and were consumed with the visible things?

They consider not, that when all comes to an end, the

soul begins to suffer or enjoy the eternal and everlasting

things. As thou knowest this truth and the perversity of

mortals, thou wilt not be astonished at the power of the

dragon in our days ; for where there is continual combat,

he that comes out victorious will gain the strength, which

the vanquished loses. This is especially true of the cruel

and incessant conflict of the demons, where the souls will

gain in strength by victory and the devils will be weak

ened, as happened when my Son conquered them and I

afterwards. But when this serpent finds itself victorious

over men, then it will raise its proud head, gain new

strength from its weakness and a greater sway, as it does

now in the world ; for the lovers of its vanity have sub

jected themselves and are following the standard and the

fabulations of the devil. In the midst of this ruin hell

has opened its maw and the more it is glutted, the more

insatiable becomes its hunger, seeking to bury in its in

fernal caverns all the rest of mankind.

THE CORONATION 163

154. Fear, my dearest, this danger as thou knowest

it, and do thou live in a continual watchfulness not to

open the gate of thy heart to the wiles of this bloodthirsty

beast Thou hast a warning in Ananias and Saphira, in

to whose soul the demon entered as soon as he had found

out their desire of money and could assault them through

this portal. I do not wish thee to strive after anything

pertaining to this mortal life; and I wish thee so to

suppress and extinguish within thyself all the passions

and inclinations of weak nature, that not even the evil

spirits, with all their watchfulness, shall find in thee the

least disorderly movement of pride, covetousness, van

ity, anger or any other passion. This is the science of

the saints, and without it no one can live secure in mortal

flesh. On account of ignoring it, innumerable souls per

ish. Do thou learn it diligently, and teach it thy religious,

in order that each one may be vigilant over her own self.

With it they shall live in true peace and charity without

deception; each one, and all of them together, united in

the peaceful tranquillity of the divine Spirit and adorned

by the exercise of all virtues, will be an impregnable for

tress for their enemies. Remind thyself and thy religious

of the chastisement of Ananias and Saphira, exhort them

to be very solicitous in the observance of their rules and

constitutions ; for thus shall they merit my protection and

special assistance.

CHAPTER X.

THE FAVORS WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY CONFERRED

UPON THE APOSTLES THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF HER

ANGELS; THE SALVATION OF A WOMAN PROCURED BY

MARY IN THE LAST HOUR, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO

OTHERS THAT DAMNED THEMSELVES.

155. As the new law of grace continued to spread in

Jerusalem so the number of the faithful increased and

the new evangelical Church was augmented day by day

(Acts 5, 14). In like manner did the solicitude and at

tention of its great Queen and Teacher, Mary, expand

toward the new children engendered by the Apostles

through their preaching. As they were the foundation-

stones of the Church, on which the security of that build

ing was to depend, the most prudent Lady lavished

especial care upon the apostolic college. Her heavenly

solicitude augmented in proportion to the wrath of

Lucifer against the followers of Christ and especially

against the Apostles, as the ministers of eternal salvation

to the other faithful. It will never be possible to describe

or to estimate in this life the blessings and favors con

ferred by Her upon the Church and upon each of its

mystical members. This happened especially in regard

to the Apostles and disciples ; for as has been revealed to

me not a day or hour passed, in which she did not work

for them many wonders. I will relate in this chapter

some of the events, which are very instructive on account

of the secrets of divine Providence therein contained.

From them we can form an estimate of the most vigilant

charity and zeal of the blessed Mary for souls.

164

THE CORONATION 165

156. All the Apostles She loved and served with in

credible affection and reverence, both on account of their

great holiness and on account of their dignity as priests,

as ministers, preachers and founders of the Gospel. Dur

ing all their stay in Jerusalem She attended upon them,

counseled and directed them in the manner noted above.

With the increase of the Church they were obliged to go

outside of Jerusalem in order to baptize and admit to

the faith many of the inhabitants of the neighboring

places ; but they always returned to the city, because they

had purposely delayed separating from each other, or

leaving Jerusalem, until they should receive orders to

do so. From the Acts we learn that saint Peter went

to Lydda and Jaffa, where he raised Tabitha from the

dead and performed other miracles, returning again to

Jerusalem. Although saint Luke relates these excursions

after speaking of the death of saint Stephen (of which

I shall treat in the following chapter), yet during these

events, many were converted throughout Palestine, and

it was necessary, that the Apostles go forth to preach

to them and to confirm them in the faith, always return

ing in order to give an account of their doings to their

heavenly Mistress.

157. During all their journeys and preachings the

common enemy of all sought to hinder the spread of the

divine Word, or its fruit, by rousing the unbelievers to

many contradictions and altercations with the Apostles

and their listeners or converts; for it seemed to the

infernal dragon more easy to assault them, when he saw

them removed and far from the protection of their Mis

tress. So formidable the great Queen of the angels ap

peared to the hellish hosts, that in spite of the eminent

holiness of the Apostles, Lucifer imagined them disarmed

and at his mercy, easily approachable to his temptations,

166 CITY OF GOD

as soon as they left the presence of Mary. The furious

pride of this dragon, as is written in Job (Job 41, 18),

esteems the toughest steel as weak straw, and the hardest

bronze as a stick of rotten wood. He fears not the dart

nor the sling; but he dreaded the protection of the most

blessed Mary, and in tempting the Apostles, he waited

until they should have left her presence.

158. But her protection failed them not on that ac

count; for the great Lady, from the watch-tower of her

exalted knowledge, reached out in every direction. Like

a most vigilant sentinel She discovered the assaults of

Lucifer and hastened to the relief of her sons and minis

ters of her Lord. When in her absence She could not

speak to the Apostles in any of their afflictions, She im

mediately sent her holy angels to their assistance in order

to encourage, forewarn and console them ; and sometimes

also to drive away the assaulting demons. All this the

celestial spirits executed promptly in compliance with the

orders of their Queen. At times they would do it se

cretly by inspirations and interior consolations ; at others,

and more frequently, they manifested themselves visibly,

assuming most beautiful and refulgent bodies and in

forming the Apostles of what was proper for the oc

casion, or what had been ordered by their Mistress. This

happened very often on account of their purity and holi

ness and on account of the necessity of favoring them

with such an abundance of consolation and encourage

ment. In all their difficulties and labors the most loving

Mother thus assisted them, besides offering up for them

her continual prayers and thanksgiving. She was the

strong Woman, whose domestics were sheltered by dou

ble garments ; the Mother of the family, who supplied all

with nourishment and who by the labors of her hands

planted the vineyard of the Lord.

THE CORONATION 167

159. With all the other faithful She proportionately

exhibited the same care; and although there were many

converts in Jerusalem and in Palestine, She remembered

them all in thir necessities and tribulations. And She

thought not only of the needs of their souls, but of those

of the body, and many She cured of most grave sick

nesses. Others, whom She knew were not to be cured

miraculously, She visited and assisted in person. Of the

poor She took a still greater care, with her own hand

administering to them food on their beds of sickness, and

seeing to their being kept clean, as if She were the ser

vant of all, infirm with the infirm. So great was the hu

mility, the charity and solicitude of the great Queen of

the world, that She refused no service or lowliest minis

try to the faithful, no matter how humble and insignifi

cant the condition of those applying for her assistance.

She filled each one with joy and consolation and lightened

all their labors. Those upon whom on account of their

absence She could not personally attend, She assisted

secretly through her holy angels or by her prayers and

petitions.

160. In an especial manner her maternal kindness ex

hibited itself to those who were in the agony of death;

for she attended many of the dying and would not leave

them, until they had secured their eternal salvation. For

those who went to purgatory She offered up most fervent

prayers and performed some works of penance, such as

prostrations in the form of a cross, genuflections and

other exercises, by which She satisfied for their faults.

Then She sent one of her angels in order to draw them

from purgatory and present them to her Son in heaven

as his own and as the fruits of his blood and Redemp

tion. This happiness the Queen of heaven procured to

many souls during her stay upon earth. And, as far as

168 CITY OF GOD

was made known to me, this favor is not denied in our

days to those, who during their earthly life dispose them

selves properly for meriting her presence, as I have writ

ten in another place. But, since it would be necessary to

extend the scope of this history very much, if I were to

describe how the most blessed Mary assisted many in the

hour of death, I cannot dilate upon this matter. I will

recount only one incident, in which She freed a girl from

the jaws of the infernal dragon. It is one which is so

extraordinary and worthy of the attention of us all, that

it would not be right to omit it in this history, or deprive

ourselves of the lesson it contains.

161. Among the five thousand who were first con

verted and who received Baptism in Jerusalem, there was

also a young girl of poor and humble parentage. This

young woman, busying herself with her household du

ties, took ill and for many days She dragged on in her

sickness without improvement. As happens to many

other souls, she on that account fell from her first fervor

and in her neglect committed some sins endangering her

baptismal grace. Lucifer, who never relaxed in his thirst

for the ruin of souls, approached this woman and attack

ed her with fiercest cruelty, being thus permitted by God

to do so for his greater glory and that of his most blessed

Mother. The demon appeared to her in the form of an

other woman and with much cajolery told her to with

draw from those people, who were preaching the Cruci

fied, and not to believe anything they said, because it was

all falsehood; that, if she would not follow this advice,

she would be punished by the priests and judges who

had crucified the Teacher of that new and counterfeit

religion; whereas, if she obeyed, she would live peace

fully and free from danger. The girl answered : "I will

do what thou sayest; but what shall I do in regard to

THE CORONATION 169

that Lady, whom I have seen with these men and women

and who appears to be so kind and peaceful? I desire

her good will very much." The demon replied: "This

One, whom thou mentionest, is worse than all the rest,

and Her thou must shun before all. It is most impor

tant, that thou withdraw from her snares."

162. Infested with this deadly poison of the ancient

serpent, the soul of this simple dove was brought near

to eternal death and her body, instead of being relieved,

dropped into more serious illness and was in danger

of a premature end. One of the seventy-two disciples,

who visited the faithful, was informed of the dangerous

illness of the girl; for from her neighbors he heard that

one of his sect living in that house, was on the point of

expiring. The disciple entered in order to visit her and

encourage her according to her necessities. But the

sick girl was so ensnared by the demons, that she did not

receive him or answer him one word, although he zeal

ously sought to exhort and instruct her ; she on the con

trary sought to hide and stop her ears in order not to

hear him. From these signs the Apostle saw the immi

nent peril of this soul, although he did not know the

cause. Eagerly he hastened to report to the Apostle saint

John, who without delay visited the patient, admonishing

her and speaking to her words of eternal life, if she

would only listen. But she treated him in the same way

as the disciple, obstinately resisting the efforts of both.

The Apostle saw many legions of devils surrounding the

girl, and, though they retired at his approach, they failed

not immediately afterward to renew the illusion with

which they had filled the unhappy girl.

163. Seeing her obstinacy, the Apostle betook himself

in great affliction to the most blessed Mary in order to

ask for help. Immediately the great Queen turned her

170 CITY OF GOD

interior vision upon the sick one and She recognized the

unhappy and dangerous condition, in which the enemy

had drawn that soul. The kind Mother bewailed this

simple sheep, thus deceived by the bloodthirsty infernal

wolf; and prostrate upon the floor She prayed for her

rescue. But the Lord answered not a word to the pe

tition of his blessed Mother; not because her petition

was disagreeable to Him, but for the contrary reason and

because He was pleased with her clamors, pretending

deafness in order to hear them so much the longer ; also

in order to teach us how great was the prudence and char

ity of our Mother on these occasions. The Lord left

Her for this purpose to the common and ordinary state

without favoring Her with a new inspiration in regard to

what She was asking. She however did not cease on that

account, nor did She permit her ardent charity to relax ;

for She knew that She was not to be wanting in her office

as Mother on account of the silence of the Lord as long

as She did not know expressly the divine will. Proceed

ing thus prudently She dispatched one of her angels to

bring aid to that soul by defending it against the devil and

exhorting it by holy inspirations to forsake his deceits

and return to God. The holy angel fulfilled this com

mission with the speed in which they are wont to obey

the Most High ; but, even though he made a diligent use

of all his powers as an angel, he could not overcome the

girl s obstinacy in clinging to her illusions. To such a

state can a soul be reduced by delivering itself over to the

devil.

164. The holy angel returned to his Queen and said:

"My Mistress, I return from the task of assisting this

girl in her mortal danger, as Thou, the Mother of mercy,

hast imposed upon me ; but her hardness of heart is such,

that she will not receive or listen to the holy inspirations

THE CORONATION 171

I have given her. I have fought against the demons in

her defense, but they resisted, standing on the rights

which this soul has freely yielded and continues to yield

to them. The power of divine justice has not co-operated

with me as I desired in trying to fulfill thy will; and I

cannot, O Lady, give Thee the consolation Thou ex-

pectest." The loving Mother was much afflicted at this

answer; but as She is the Mother of love, of knowledge

and holy hope, She would not yield in what She had

merited for all of us and what She teaches. Retiring

once more to pray for the salvation of that erring soul,

She prostrated Herself upon the ground and said: "My

Lord and God of mercy, behold here this vile wormlet of

the earth ; chastise and afflict me, but let me not see this

soul, which was marked as one of the first-fruits of thy

blood and is now deceived by the serpent, become the

spoil of his malice and of his hatred against thy faithful."

165. The most blessed Mary continued for some time

in this petition; but she received no answer from the

Lord, in order that her invincible heart and her charity

toward her neighbor might be put to the proof. The

most prudent Virgin bethought Herself of what had

happened to the prophet Eliseus (IV Kings 4, 34), who

had vainly sent his staff with his servant Giezi to resus

citate the boy and had found that he himself must touch

and stretch himself over his body in order to restore him

to life. Neither the angel nor the Apostle were power

ful enough to awaken from sin and from the stupor of

satan that unfortunate girl; therefore the great Lady

resolved to go and heal her in person. This resolve She

recommended to the Lord in her prayer, and, although

She received no answer, She considered that the work it

self was a sufficient warranty to proceed. She arose

therefore to leave her room and to walk with saint John

172 CITY OF GOD

to the dwelling of the sick woman, which was at some

distance from the Cenacle. But no sooner had She taken

the first steps than the holy angels, at the command of

the Lord, approached to bear Her up on the way. As

God had not manifested his intention, She asked them,

why they thus detained Her ; to which they answered :

"There is no reason why we should consent to thy walk

ing through the city, when we can bear Thee along with

greater propriety." Immediately they placed her upon a

throne of resplendent clouds, on which they bore Her

along and placed Her in the sick-room. The dying girl,

being poor and now speechless, had been forsaken by all

and was surrounded only by the demons, who waited to

snatch off her soul.

166. But as soon as the Queen of angels made her

appearance all the evil spirits vanished like flashes of

lightning and as if falling over each other in their dis

may. The powerful Queen commanded them to descend

into hell and remain there until She should permit them to

come forth, and this they were forced to do without the

least power of resistance. The kindest Mother then ap

proached the sick woman and taking her by the hand

and calling her by her name, spoke sweetest words of life.

Instantly a complete change came over the girl, and she

began to breathe more freely and recover herself. Then

she said to the heavenly Mary: "My Lady, a woman

came to me, who persuaded me to believe, that the dis

ciples of Jesus were deceiving me and that I had better

immediately separate myself from them and from Thee;

otherwise, if I should accept their way of life, I should

fall into great misfortune." The Queen answered : "My

daughter, she, who seemed to thee a woman, was thy

enemy, the devil. I come in the name of the Most High

to give thee eternal life; return then to his true faith,

THE CORONATION 173

which thou hast received, and confess Him with all thy

heart as thy God and Redeemer, who, for thy salvation

and that of all the world, has died upon the Cross. Adore

and call upon Him, and ask Him for the pardon of

thy sins."

167. "All this," the patient answered, "I have believed

before; but they told me, it was very bad, and that they

would punish me, if I should ever confess it." The

heavenly Teacher replied : "My friend, do not fear this

deceit; but remember that the chastisement and pains

which are really to be feared are those of hell, to which

the demons wish to bring thee. Thou art now very near

death and thou canst avail thyself of the remedy I now

offer thee, if thou wilt only believe me; and thou shalt

thus free thyself of the eternal fire, which threatens thee

on account of thy mistake." Through this exhortation

and the graces procured for this poor woman by Mary,

she was moved to abundant tears of compunction and

implored the blessed Lady further to assist her in this

danger, declaring herself ready to obey all her commands.

Then the loving Mother made her openly profess her

faith in Jesus Christ and elicit an act of contrition in

preparation for confession. At the same time She sent

for the Apostles to administer the Sacraments to her.

The sick girl, repeating the acts of contrition and love,

and invoking Jesus and Mary, who was directing her,

happily expired in the arms of her Protectress. The

blessed Mary had remained with her two hours, in order

to prevent the demons from again renewing their as

saults. Her assistance was so effectual, that She not only

brought back the young woman to the path of eternal

life, but delivered her soul from all guilt and punishment.

She sent her immediately to heaven accompanied by some

of the twelve angels that bore on their breasts the sign of

174 CITY OF GOD

the Redemption and palms and crowns in their hands as

special guardians of the devotees of the great Queen. Of

these angels I have spoken on a former occasion, and

it is not necessary to describe them here. I will only re

mark, that the heavenly Queen chose the angels for dif

ferent offices in the service of men, in accordance with the

graces and virtues, of which they were possessed.

168. After the rescue of that soul, the rest of the

angels brought back their Queen, seated on the same

cloud, to her oratory. She immediately humiliated Her

self, prostrating Herself and adoring the Lord, and giv

ing Him thanks for having snatched that soul from the

jaws of the infernal dragon. She composed thereon a

hymn of praise in his honor. This wonder was wrought

by the wisdom of God, in order that the angels, the saints

of heaven, the Apostles and also the demons might know

the resistless power of most holy Mary and in order that

they might learn, that, as She was the Mistress of all, so

not all of them together could equal Her in power; that

nothing would ever be denied to her prayers in favor of

those who loved Her, served Her or called upon Her.

For this fortunate girl, having loved this heavenly Lady,

secured salvation through Her; while the demons, op

pressed and confounded, were left in despair of ever

prevailing against the power of Mary when exerted in

favor of her clients. Other lessons might be drawn from

this example, which I leave to the prudent meditation of

the faithful.

169. The same blessing was not attained by two other

converts, who failed to merit the efficacious intercession

of the blessed Virgin. Since their fate may serve as a

lesson and as a warning, like that of Ananias and Sa-

phira, against the astuteness of Lucifer in tempting and

ruining human souls, I shall relate it likewise, as far as

THE CORONATION 175

it was made known to me. May the instruction it con

veys inculcate the fear of the just judgments of the Most

High (Ps. 118, 120). After the miracle just related the

demon was permitted to return with his host to the world

in order to test the constancy of the faithful; for thus

must the just and the predestined gain their crowns. He

came forth filled with still greater wrath and began to

seek entrance into the hearts of the faithful by searching

out the evil inclinations of each one, as he does even now.

For experience has given him confidence, that we chil

dren of Adam usually follow our inclinations and pas

sions more than the dictates of reason and of virtue. A

multitude cannot be perfect in all its components, and as

the Church went on increasing in number, so also the fer

vor of charity began to cool in some, thus affording a

greater field for the sowing of his hellish cockle. Among

the faithful saint John found two, who were beset with

evil inclinations and habits before their conversion and

who sought favor and alliance with some of the Jewish

princes in the hope of worldly gain and honor. Infect

ed by this covetousness (which always was the root of

all evils), they temporized with the powerful and flattered

them in order to retain their friendship.

170. On account of these dealings the demon judged

them to be weak in their faith and virtue. He thought

he might be able to pervert them through the influence

of the Jewish priests, upon whom they depended. Fol

lowing up his plot, the serpent suggested to those priests

many ways of reprehending and intimidating the two

converts for having accepted the faith in Christ and re

ceived Baptism. Yielding to the instigations of satan the

priests pressed their threats with great show of authority

and severity. As the anger of those in authority is apt

to frighten weak subjects, such as these two in their at-

176 CITY OF GOD

tachment to their own interest happened to be, they pro

ceeded from weakness to apostasy from the faith of

Christ in order not to incur the displeasure of those pow

erful Jews. They moreover still retained a certain un

happy and deceitful confidence in their patrons and

therefore soon dropped away from the gathering and the

other faithful, ceasing to attend the preaching and the

other holy exercises of the converts and thus making ap

parent their treasonable falling away.

171. The Apostles were much aggrieved at the ruin

of these converts and at the scandal, which would be

occasioned by such a pernicious example in the begin

nings of the Church. They conferred among themselves,

whether they should notify the blessed Mary of this

event, but they hesitated to cause Her this sorrow and

pain. Saint John told them, that the great Lady knew

all the affairs of the Church and that therefore also this

one could not have escaped her most vigilant attention

and charity. Thereupon all went to give Her an account

of those two apostates, whom they had already exhorted

and tried to lead back to the faith. The loving and pru

dent Mother saw no occasion for hiding her sorrow at

the threatened loss of souls already aggregated to the

Church. It was also proper, that the Apostles should

learn from the sorrow of the great Lady, how they must

esteem the children of the Church and with what zeal

they were to preserve them in the faith and bring them

to eternal life. Our Queen returned immediately to her

chamber and, prostrate on the floor as usual, She poured

out a most fervent prayer for the two apostates, shedding

copious and bloody tears.

172. In order to lessen somewhat her grief by the

knowledge of his hidden judgments, the Lord answered :

"My Spouse, chosen among all the creatures, I wish thee

THE CORONATION

177

to understand my just decrees concerning those two

souls, for whom thou prayest, and concerning others,

who are to enter my Church. These two, who have

apostatized from my true faith, might do more harm than

good among the other faithful, if they continue their in

tercourse with them ; for they have very depraved habits

and have become still more hardened in their evil inclina

tions. Hence in my infinite knowledge I foresee that they

will be reprobates and that it will be better to separate

them from the flock of the faithful and cut them off

from the mystical body of the Church. Thus they shall

be prevented from infecting others by their contagion.

It has already become necessary, my beloved One, that, in

conformity with my most high Providence, both the pre

destined and of the foreknown should join my Church :

some, who by their sins shall incur damnation, and others,

who, through my grace, are to save themselves by good

works. My teachings and my Gospel are to be as the

net, which gathers in all kinds of fish, good and bad, the

wise and the foolish, and the enemy is to sow his cockle

among the pure grain of truth (Matth. 13, 28), in order

that the just may justify themselves so much the more,

and the impure, if so they choose in their malice, may de

file themselves still more."

173. This was the answer given by the Lord to this

prayer of the most holy Mary. At the same time He re

newed within Her the participation in his knowledge, in

order that She, perceiving the equity of the Most High

in condemning those unworthy of his friendship and

glory, might dilate her afflicted heart. But as the heaven

ly Mother alone held the measure of the sanctuary in her

most eminent wisdom, knowledge and charity, She alone

also, among all creatures, estimated and pondered fully

what it meant to lose God eternally and to be condemned

178 CITY OF GOD

to eternal torments in the company of the demons; and

so her sorrow was in proportion. We are aware, that the

angels and the saints of heaven, who know this mystery

in God, cannot feel sorrow or pain-, because that would

be inappropriate to their happy state. If it would be

compatible with their state of glory, their sorrow would

be in proportion to the loss caused by the eternal per

dition to those, whom they love with perfect charity and

whom they desire to have with them in glory.

174. Hence, the sorrow and pain for the perdition of

souls, which was impossible to them, the blessed Mary

felt in a degree so much the greater as She exceeded

them in wisdom and charity. For She was in the state

of pilgrimage, in which She could feel this pain; She

was endowed with the knowledge of the blessed by which

She understood its cause; for when She enjoyed the

beatific vision, She saw in the essence of God, his love

and infinite goodness for the salvation of men, together

with the sorrow which He would have for the perdition

of souls, if such sorrow were possible. She knew the

horrible character of the demons, their wrath against

men, the terrors of the infernal torments and of the end

less company of the devils and the damned. As the most

holy Mary saw, that these two souls and an almost in

finite number of others in the church were to draw upon

themselves eternal damnation, what a sorrow, what pains

and commiseration were caused in that tender, kind and

loving heart at these evils and many others far beyond

my power of describing? Many times did She lament

such misfortunes and exclaim : "Is it possible, that any

soul, of its own free will, should ever deprive itself eter

nally of seeing the face of God, and should chose rather

to look upon so many demons in hell?"

175. The secret of the reprobation of these first apos-

THE CORONATION 179

tates the most prudent Queen reserved to Herself without

manifesting it to the Apostles. But while she was thus

retired in her affliction, saint John the Evangelist entered

to visit Her and to inquire as to her wishes and how to

serve Her. When he saw Her so afflicted and sorrow

ful, he was filled with consternation and asked permis

sion to speak, saying : "My Lady and Mother of my Lord

Jesus Christ, since our Master died I have never seen

on thy countenance such grief and sorrow as now, when

thy face and thy eyes are bathed in tears of blood. Tell

me, Lady, if possible, the cause of this new affliction,

and whether I can alleviate it at the cost of my life." The

most blessed Mary answered : "My Son, weep now for

this very reason." Saint John conceived that the memory

of the Passion had renewed in the loving Mother this

bitter grief and under that impression he said : "My Lady,

as thy Son and our Redeemer is now glorious and tri

umphant in heaven at the right hand of the eternal Father,

Thou canst moderate thy tears. Although it is not just,

that we forget what He suffered for men, yet it is also

right that we rejoice in the blessings following upon his

Passion and Death."

176. She answered : "It is also just that I weep when

I see, that after He died, some are seeking to crucify

Him anew by their sins and their apostasy and by the

abuse of the fruits of his precious blood; for I know that

in his most ardent love for men, He has suffered for the

salvation of each one in particular whatever He suffered

for all together. I see this immense love so little requit

ed and so many lost who should know Him, that I can

not constrain my sorrow, nor continue to live, unless the

Lord preserves my life. O children of Adam, formed

according to the image of my Son and Lord, what are

you thinking of? Where is your judgment and your

180 CITY OF GOD

justification for thus incurring the calamity of losing God

forever?" Saint John replied: "My Mother and Mis

tress, if thy sorrow is occasioned by those two apostates,

thou must know that among so many there must be un

faithful servants; for even in our apostolate itself was

numbered Judas, a disciple in the school of our Redeem

er and Teacher." "O John," answered the queen, "if God

himself wished the perdition of some souls, I should be

able to restrain my sorrow; but, though He permits the

damnation of the reprobate since they themselves seek it,

this is not the absolute will of the divine goodness; He

wishes all to attain salvation, if only they would not of

their own free will resist. That not all should be predes

tined and gain the fruit of the blood shed for them, has

cost my Son the sweating of blood. And if even now He

could be aggrieved for a soul that damns itself, He would

doubtlessly be more aggrieved than if He had again to

suffer for it. Hence I, who know this truth and am still

living in the flesh, rightfully feel what my Son desires

to feel if it were possible." By these and other words of

the Mother of mercy saint John was moved to tears and

lamentations, in which he joined with Her for a con

siderable time.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

177. My daughter, since in this chapter thou hast par

ticularly learnt of the matchless and bitter sorrow, with

which I bewailed the perdition of souls, thou thyself must

learn also what thou must do for the salvation of thy

own and that of others in order to imitate me in the per

fection which I require of thee. No torment, nor death

itself, would I have refused, if such had been neces-

THE CORONATION 181

sary to save any of the damned, and to save them, I

would have esteemed all sufferings a sweet alleviation in

my most ardent charity. Hence, if thou dost not die of

this kind of sorrow, thou art at least not excused from

willingness to suffer all that the Lord sends thee for ad

vancing this cause, or from praying and laboring all in

thy power to prevent any sin in thy neighbor ; and when

thou canst not all at once obtain thy object, or dost not

know whether the Lord has heard thee, do not lose con

fidence, but enliven it and persevere in thy efforts; for

such a solicitude can never displease Him, who desires the

salvation of all his redeemed more than thou. If never

theless thou art not heard in thy prayers, make use of the

means, which prudence and charity require, and return

anew to thy prayers. The Most High is always attract

ed by this sort of charity for the neighbor and by the love

which seeks to hinder sin. He desires not the death of

the sinner (Ezech. 33, 11) ; and, as thou hast written, He

does not entertain an absolute and antecedent decree of

damning his creatures, but seeks to save them all, if they

do not pursue perdition of their own free will. Although

He permits this in his justice as being inseparable from

the free will of man, it is against his inclination. Do not

restrict thyself in these petitions, and in those concerning

temporal things, pray that his holy will be done in all

that is proper.

178. If I desire that thou labor with such fervor of

charity for the salvation of thy brethren, consider what

thou must do to save thyself, and in what estimation

thou must hold thy own soul, for which an infinite price

was offered. I wish to admonish thee as a Mother, that

when temptations and passions incline thee toward the

commission of any sin, no matter how small, remember

the sorrows and the tears which the knowledge of the

182 CITY OF GOD

sins of men and the desire to prevent them has caused

me. Do not thou cause the like in me, my dearest; for

although I am now incapable of that pain, yet thou de-

privest me of the accidental joy of seeing thee, to whom

I condescended to become a Mother and Teacher, really

endowed with the perfection taught in my school. If

thou art unfaithful in this, thou wilt frustrate my great

desire of seeing thee please my divine Son and accom

plish his holy will in all its plenitude. By the infused light

which thou receivest, do thou ponder how great are any

faults thou mayest commit after being so favored and

bound in duty to the Lord and to myself. Dangers and

temptations will not be wanting to thee during the rest

of thy earthly life ; but in all of them remember my teach

ing, my sorrows and my tears, and above all what thou

owest to my divine Son, who is so liberal toward thee

in applying to thee the fruit of his blood for the purpose

of eliciting thy grateful correspondence.

CHAPTER XL

OF THE PRUDENCE OF MARY IN GOVERNING THE NEW

FAITHFUL; HER DEALINGS WITH STEPHEN DURING HIS

LIFE AND AT HIS DEATH; AND OTHER EVENTS.

179. The office of Mother and Teacher of the holy

Church, which the Lord had conferred upon most holy

Mary, was necessarily accompanied by a knowledge and

light proportionate to those high offices. For she was to

know all the members of this mystical body which She

governed, so that She might apply her teachings and her

ministrations according to each one s station, condition

and necessity. This blessing our Queen received with

the plenitude and abundance of wisdom and knowledge

as is clear from all that I am writing. She knew all the

faithful that joined the Church, was informed of the

natural inclinations, of the degree of virtue and grace

they possessed, the merit of their works, their beginning

and end. She was ignorant of nothing pertaining to the

Church, except when sometimes the Lord concealed from

Her some affair, which afterwards was made known

to Her at its conclusion. Her knowledge was not bar

ren or profitless, but was inspired with the charity of her

divine Son toward all She saw and knew. As She at

the same time was aware of the sacraments of divine

Providence, She used all her wisdom according to the

measure and weight of her interior charity ; for She gave

neither more nor less than was proper according to the

deserts of love and estimation due to each one; and this is

a defect which we children of Adam ordinarily incur,

even if we think we have used the nicest equity.

183

184 CITY OF GOD

180. But the Mother of beautiful love and knowledge

did not pervert the order of distributive justice, mixing

up her affections; She dispensed it by the light of the

Lamb, who enlightened and governed Her, dealing out

her heartfelt love to each according to his merits, neither

more nor less. Nevertheless She conducted Herself as

a most loving Mother, without niggardliness or forget-

fulness. But in her exterior manifestations of this love

She governed Herself according to other rules of highest

prudence, carefully avoiding special predilections in her

intercourse with others and the slightest grounds of envy

or emulation. For these are very apt to disrupt commu

nities and families, where many eyes are always watch

ing the public proceedings. It is a common and natural

passion in men to seek estimation and distinction,

especially in the eyes of those who are powerful; and

there is scarcely any one, who does not presume on pos

sessing equal merits with all the rest and deserving equal,

or even greater favors. This kind of emulation is not

wanting even among those who are in the highest po

sition, or have attained high virtue, as is seen in the

apostolic college, where, on account of some distinction

shown to one, the question of precedence and dignity was

immediately raised and broached before the Lord (Matth.

18, 1)..

181. In order to prevent and forestall these heartburn

ings the great Queen was most solicitous to show un

biased and uniform favor to all the members of the

Church in public. This conduct was not only worthy of

such a Mistress, but most necessary in the beginnings of

her government. For the principles upon which her be

havior was founded, were to be well established for the

guidance of prelates in the future government of the

Church. Moreover in those happy beginnings all the

THE CORONATION 185

Apostles and disciples, and others of the faithful, ex

celled in the working of miracles and in divine gifts, while

in the latter times many were to signalize themselves in

holy science and learning. It was proper to teach all,

that neither on account of great gifts, nor for lesser ones,

should any one exalt himself in vain presumption, or

deem himself worthy of great honors, or of being favored

more highly, especially by God or by his most holy Moth

er, as far as outward appearances are concerned. Let

the just be satisfied with being loved by the Lord and

favored by his friendship; and whoever is not satisfied

with this, will not be benefited by exterior honor and es

timation.

182. But^the great Queen did not, on account of this

restraint, fail in the veneration and honor which She

knew to be due to the dignity or office of the Apostles or

the other faithful. For just as She taught moderation in

all that was to be rendered to each one freely and gra

tuitously, so She was also an example in all that was due

under obligation to each one. Our admirable Queen was

so prudent in all her intercourse, that not one of the

faithful ever left Her dissatisfied, nor could any one with

any show of reason, even if it were only apparent, deny

Her esteem and respect; all of them loved and blessed

Her, and were filled with joy and gratitude for her loving

and maternal kindness. No one ever suspected Her of

forsaking Him in his necessity, or denying him her con

solation. No one perceived himself to be less esteemed,

or that She favored or loved some more than others;

nor did She give any one an occasion of making a com

parison in this regard. Moreover She did not wish to

assign, on her own responsibility, any of the offices or

dignities, which were to be filled among the faithful;

nor would She use her influence in favor of any one in

186 CITY OF GOD

this matter. All such appointments She left to the well-

seeming and the wishes of the Apostles, and relied upon

her secret prayer for guiding them aright.

183. She was led also to this wise disposition of her

actions by her profoundest humility. In this She was

an example to all, since they knew that She was the Moth

er of wisdom, who knew all things and could not err

in her conduct. She wished to leave this shining example

in the Church, in order that no one may presume on his

own knowledge, prudence or virtue, especially not in

serious matters; but that all may understand, that true

insight is conditioned by humility and good counsel, and

that, in all matters that are not to be decided merely by

private judgment, such private judgment implies pre

sumption. She likewise took into consideration, that to

intercede and favor others in temporal matters, has the

appearance of superiority, and still more does it expose

one to desire thankful returns from those so favored. All

these inequalities and defects in the practice of virtue

were far removed from the supreme sanctity of our

heavenly Queen ; and therefore She taught us by her liv

ing example the rules of our exterior conduct, which ex

clude as well the loss of merit as the hindrance of the

greatest perfection. Thus in her modesty She never re

fused to give counsel to the Apostles when they so fre

quently applied to Her for direction in the exercise of

their office and in their undertakings; and the same line

of conduct She observed with the other disciples and

faithful of the Church, because She conducted Herself in

all things according to the plenitude of wisdom and

charity.

184. Among the saints who were especially fortunate

in meriting the greater love of the Queen of heaven, there

was one by the name of Stephen, who belonged to the

THE CORONATION 187

seventy-two disciples; for from the very beginning of

his following Christ our Savior, She looked upon him

with an especial love, placing him first, or among the first,

in her estimation. She immediately saw, that this saint

was chosen by the Master of life for the defense of his

honor and his holy name, and that he was to give up his

life for him. Moreover this courageous saint was of a

sweet and peaceful disposition; and he was rendered

much more amiable and docile to all holiness by the work

ings of grace. Such dispositions made him very pleas

ing to the sweetest Mother ; and whenever She found any

persons naturally of a peaceful and meek character, She

was wont to say, that they resembled her divine Son.

On this account and on account of many heroic virtues

of saint Stephen She loved him tenderly, procured him

many blessings, and thanked the Lord for having created,

called and chosen such a one for the first-fruits of his

martyrs. In consideration of his coming martyrdom, re

vealed to Her by her divine Son, her heart was filled

with additional affection for this great saint.

185. The blessed saint corresponded in most faithful

attention and deepest reverence with the benefits con

ferred upon him by Christ our Savior and his heavenly

Mother; for he was not only of a peaceful, but of an

humble heart, and those that are so disposed in truth, are

thankful for all benefits, even though they may not be

so great as those conferred on saint Stephen. He always

entertained the highest conceptions concerning the Mother

of mercy, and in his high esteem and fervent devotion he

continued to seek her favor. He asked information on

many mysterious matters; for he was very wise, full of

the Holy Spirit and of faith, as is told us by saint Luke.

The great Lady answered all his inquiries, encouraged

and exhorted him zealously to work for the honor of

188 CITY OF GOD

Christ. In order to confirm him more in his strong faith,

Mary forewarned him of his coming martyrdom and

said : "Thou, Stephen, shalt be the first-born of the

martyrs, engendered by my divine Son and Lord by the

example of his death; thou shalt follow his footsteps,

like a privileged disciple his master, and like a courageous

soldier his captain; and at the head of the army of

martyrs, thou shalt carry his banner of the Cross. Hence

it is meet thou arm thyself with fortitude under the

shield of faith, and be assured, that the strength of the

Most High shall be with thee in the conflict."

186. This warning of the Queen of the angels inflamed

the heart of saint Stephen with the desire of martyrdom.

As is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, he was filled

with grace and fortitude and wrought great wonders in

Jerusalem. Besides the Apostles saint Peter and saint

John, no one except he dared to dispute with the Jews.

His wisdom and spirit they could not resist, because he

preached to them with an intrepid heart, refuted and

accused them oftener and more courageously than the

other disciples (Acts 6, 9). All this saint Stephen did

with burning desire of attaining the martyrdom of which

he had been assured by the great Lady. As if he were

afraid of any one gaining this crown in advance of him,

he offered himself before all others to engage in the dis

putes with the rabbis and teachers of the law of Moses,

so eager was he to defend the honor of Christ, for whom

he knew he would lay down his life. The infernal dragon,

gradually becoming observant of the ambitions of saint

Stephen, directed his malignant attention toward him and

strove to hinder his attaining public martyrdom in testi

mony of the faith of Christ. In order to destroy him, he

incited the most incredulous of the Jews to kill sainl

Stephen in secret. Lucifer was tormented by the virtue

THE CORONATION 189

and courage of saint Stephen and he feared lest great

things should be accomplished by him alive or in dying

for the confirmation of the faith and teachings of his

Master. On account of the hatred of the Jews against

this disciple, the devils easily persuaded them to make

away with him in secret.

187. They attempted it often during the short time,

which intervened between the coming of the Holy Ghost

and his martyrdom. But the great Mistress of the world,

who knew the cunning and malicious attempts of Lucifer

and of the Jews, protected the saint from all their as

saults, until the proper time for his being stoned to death

should have arrived. Three times the Queen sent one of

her angels to lead him from a house, in which his enemies

had made arrangements to choke him to death. The holy

angel, while remaining invisible to the assassins, was seen

by saint Stephen, when he was delivered from their hands

and carried to the Cenacle into the presence of his Queen.

At other times She warned him by the same angel not to

go to a certain street or house, where his enemies were

lying in ambush ; and sometimes She detained him in the

Cenacle, because She knew they were waylaying to kill

him. They not only surrounded the Cenacle to murder

him on his way to his lodging, but they made the same

attempts at other houses. For saint Stephen, as I have

mentioned, in his ardent zeal hastened about to bring

help and consolation to many of the faithful, and not

only was without fear in all these mortal dangers, but

sought them out and welcomed them. As he did not

know how long the Lord would let him wait for this

happiness and saw how many times the blessed Mother

freed him from dangers, he was wont lovingly to com

plain to Her, saying: "My Lady and Protectress, when

shall the day arrive, in which I shall pay to my God and

190 CITY OF GOD

Master the debt of my life, by sacrificing it for the honor

and glory of his holy name ?"

188. To the heavenly Mother these loving complaints

of her servant Stephen afforded incomparable joy; and

with maternal and sweetest affection She would answer :

"My son and most faithful servant of the Lord, the time

appointed by his infinite wisdom is drawing near and thy

hopes shall not be frustrated. Do thou at present fulfill

the rest of thy task in the holy Church, so that thou may-

est secure for thyself thy crown; give thanks continually

to the Lord, who has it in store for thee." The purity

and holiness of saint Stephen were most exalted and per

fect, so that the demons could not approach within a

great distance of him ; and he was much beloved by Christ

and his blessed Mother. The Apostles ordained him a dea

con. Even before he was martyred, his virtues reached

a heroic degree, meriting for him the distinction of being

the first one after the Passion to receive the palm of

martyrdom. I will add here what was made known to

me in explanation of what saint Luke wrote in the sixth

chapter of the Acts.

189. A difference arose among the newly converted in

Jerusalem. The Greek complained of the Hebrew con

verts, that in the daily service and work of relief, the

widows of the Greeks were not admitted in the same

way to office as those of the Jews (Acts 6, 1). Both the

ones as well as the others were Israelites, though the

Jews born in Greece were called Greeks, and those born

in Palestine, Hebrews ; and in this distinction was found

ed the complaint of the Greeks. The daily administra

tion consisted in the distribution of the alms and offerings

for the support of the faithful, as has been described in

the seventh chapter. This duty had been assigned to six

approved men with the consent of all, according to the

THE CORONATION 191

direction of the blessed Mary. But as the number of

the faithful increased it became necessary to appoint also

some widows of a mature age, to help along in the same

work of providing for the wants of the faithful, espe

cially of the women and the sick ; these widows were to

distribute, whatever they received from the six almoners.

They were of Hebrew birth, and as the Greek Jews saw,

that none of theirs were admitted to this office they com

plained to the Apostles of this want of confidence in

their own widows.

190. In order to compose this difference, the Apostles

called together the faithful and spoke to them: "It is

not meet, that we should leave the word of God and

serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among

you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy

Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this

business. But we ourselves will give all our time to

prayer and to the ministry of the word, while these men

may solve your doubts and difficulties in regard to the

support of the faithful" (Acts 6, 2). All approved of

this expedient, and without regard to nationality they

elected the seven men mentioned by saint Luke. The

first and principal one was saint Stephen, whose faith and

wisdom was universally known. These seven were su

perintendents over the six first ones and over the widows

without excluding the Greeks ; for they looked to virtue

rather than nationality. It was saint Stephen who by his

admirable wisdom and holiness extinguished the resent

ment of the Greeks and smoothed over their differences

with the Hebrews, so that at least during the months in

which he lived, all again united like children of Christ in

sincere charity without partiality or distinction of per

sons.

191. But saint Stephen did not on that account neg-

192 CITY OF GOD

lect preaching or arguing with the unbelieving Jews. As

these Jews could not murder him in secret, nor over

come his wisdom in public, they vented their mortal

hatred in seeking false testimony against him (Acts 6, 1).

They accused him of blasphemy against God and against

Moses, of inveighing continually against the holy tem

ple and the Law, and of asserting that Jesus would de

stroy as well the one, as the other. As the witnesses

loudly proclaimed their slander and the people were being

roused by their falsehoods, they brought him into the

hall where the priests were gathered as the judges of

these accusations. The presiding judge first took the

deposition of saint Stephen before the court. The saint

took occasion to prove with highest wisdom, that Christ

was the true Messiah promised to them in the holy

Scriptures; and in conclusion he reprehended them for

their unbelief and hardness of heart so strongly, that they

could find no answer and, gnashing their teeth, they

stopped their ears, in order not to be obliged to hear his

words.

192. The Queen of heaven knew of the seizure of

saint Stephen ; and, in order to animate him in her name

for the approaching conflict, She immediately sent him

one of her angels, even before He entered into dispute

with the priests. Through the holy angel saint Stephen

sent Her answer, that he went with joy to confess his

Master and with unflinching heart to give his life for

Him, as he had always desired. Through the same mes

senger, he begged Her, as his kindest Teacher and

Mother, to assist him and, from her retirement, to send

him her blessing, since his not having been able to obtain

her parting benediction was the only regret he felt now,

when he was about to lay down his life according to Her

wishes. These last words of saint Stephen moved the

THE CORONATION

193

maternal bosom of Mary to even greater love and esteem

than hitherto; and She desired to attend upon him in

person, at this hour, when her beloved disciple was to

give up his life for the honor and defense of his God

and Redeemer. But the blessed Mother hesitated at the

difficulties, which would arise in her passing through the

streets of Jerusalem at a time of popular excitement and

also in finding an opportunity of speaking publicly to

saint Stephen.

193. She prostrated Herself in prayer, begging the

divine favor for her beloved disciple ; and She presented

to the Lord her desire of helping him in the last hour.

The clemency of the Most High, which is always at the

beck of his Spouse and Mother and which was anxious

to enhance the death of his faithful disciple and servant

Stephen, sent from heaven a multitude of angels, who,

with those of her guard, should carry their Queen to

the place where the saint then was. And immediately

the mandate of the Lord was executed : the angels placed

Her upon a refulgent cloud and bore Her to the tribunal,

where the highpriest was examining into the charges

against saint Stephen. The vision of the Queen of

heaven was hidden from all except the saint. He how

ever saw Her before him, supported in the air by the holy

angels in a cloud of heavenly splendor and glory. This

extraordinary favor inflamed anew the divine love and

the ardent zeal of this champion of the honor of God.

In addition to the joy of seeing Mary, the splendors of

the Queen shone from the countenance of saint Stephen,

so that it gleamed with wonderful beauty and light.

194. On account of this unwonted spectacle the Jews

listened with great attention to his words, as is evident

from the sixth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

Those that were in that hall looked upon saint Stephen

194 CITY OF GOD

and saw his countenance shining as that of an angei;

and without a doubt he seemed to them more than man.

God did not wish to hide that much of the effects of the

presence of the great Queen, in order that the perfidious

Jews might be so much the more confounded for not ac

cepting the truth preached in such a miraculous way.

They did not know the cause of this supernatural beauty

of saint Stephen ; for they were not worthy to know it,

nor was it a proper occasion to make it known, and there

fore saint Luke did not speak of it at that time. The

most blessed Mary spoke to Stephen words of life and

of wonderful consolation; She assisted him with the

blessings of sweetness and asked the eternal Father to

fill him anew with the Holy Spirit. All happened accord

ing to the prayers of the Queen and he manifested his

invincible courage and wisdom to the princes of the Jews,

proving by the unanswerable testimony of all the ancient

Scriptures, from the calling of Abraham to the Kings

and Prophets, that Christ was their Messiah and Savior.

195. At the end of this discourse, through the inter

cession of the Queen and as a reward of the unconquered

zeal of saint Stephen, the heavens opened and the Savior

appeared to him standing at the right hand of the Father

in the act of assisting him in the conflict. Saint Stephen

raised his eyes and said: "Behold I see the heavens

opened and its glory, and in it I see Jesus at the right

hand of God himself" (Acts 7, 55). But the obdurate

perfidy of the Jews esteemed these words as blasphemy

and they stopped their ears in order not to hear them.

As the punishment of blasphemers according to the law,

was death by stoning, they passed upon him that sen

tence. Then they all surrounded him like wolves and

dragged him from the city with great haste and noise.

At this juncture the blessed Mother gave him her bene-

THE CORONATION

195

diction; and speaking to him words of encouragement

and endearment, She left him in charge of her angels,

whom She ordered to accompany him and to remain

with him until they should present his soul to the Most

High. Only one of the guardian angels, in company

with those that had descended from heaven as her escort

to saint Stephen, now returned with Her to the Cenacle.

196. From her retirement the great Lady by an es

pecial vision saw all that happened in the martyrdom of

saint Stephen : how they led him forth from the city with

great haste and violence, shouting that he was a blas

phemer worthy of death; how Saul was among them,

more zealous than the rest, guarding the vestments of

those who had taken them off to stone saint Stephen;

how the shower of stones fell upon the saint and wounded

him, some of them remaining fixed in his head and

stained by his blood. Great and tender was the com

passion of our Queen at such cruel martyrdom ; but still

greater her joy in seeing saint Stephen meeting it so

gloriously. The kindest Mother failed him not in her

tearful prayers from her oratory. When the invincible

martyr saw himself near to death, he prayed : "Lord re

ceive my spirit !" Then, on his knees, he exclaimed with

a loud voice: "Lord lay not this sin to their charge!"

(Acts 7, 59). In these prayers he was supported by

those of the blessed Mary, who was filled with incredible

joy to see the faithful disciple imitating so closely his

divine Master by praying for his enemies and persecutors

and commending his spirit into the hands of his Creator

and Redeemer.

197. Covered with wounds from the shower of stones

thrown by the Jews, saint Stephen expired, while they

became still more hardened in their perfidy. Imme

diately the angels of the Queen bore his pure soul to the

196 CITY OF GOD

presence of God in order to be crowned with eternal

honor and glory. Christ our Savior received him with

those words of the Gospel : "Friend, ascend higher ; come

to Me, thou faithful servant; for, since thou hast been

faithful in small things and for a short time, I shall re

ward thee with abundance, and I shall confess thee before

my Father as my faithful servant and friend, just as thou

hast confessed Me before men." All the Angels, Pa

triarchs, Prophets and all the Saints were filled with an

especial accidental joy on that day and welcomed the

invincible martyr as the first fruits of the Passion of

the Lord and as the captain of all those that should follow

him in martyrdom. This most fortunate soul was placed

very high in glory and close to the most sacred humanity

of Christ our Savior. The most blessed Mother partici

pated in the joy through a vision granted to Her; and

in praise of the Most High, She composed hymns and

canticles with her angels. Those that returned after

leaving saint Stephen in heaven, gave thanks to Her for

the favor shown to the saint in securing him his eternal

happiness.

198. Saint Stephen died about nine months after the

passion and death of Christ, our Redeemer, on the

twenty-sixth of December, the same date on which the

Church celebrates his feast. On that day he had com

pleted his thirty-fourth year, which, with the addition

of one day, was also the thirty-fourth year of the birth

of the Savior. Hence saint Stephen was born one day

later than Jesus, being only twelve months older, and his

birth and death happened on the same day of the year,

as was clearly shown to me. The prayer of the blessed

Virgin and of saint Stephen merited the conversion of

Saul, as we will see later on. In order that this con

version might be so much the more glorious the Lord

THE CORONATION 197

permitted Saul, from that day on, to take upon himself

the task of persecuting and destroying the Church of

God; for he began to signalize himself above all other

Jews in the persecution, which the wrath of the Jews,

highly inflamed by the death of saint Stephen, now began

to stir up against the new believers. The desciples

secured the body of the invincible martyr and buried it

with great mourning, because they had now lost such a

wise and strong defender of the law of grace. I have

dilated upon his history, because I have been shown the

great holiness of this first martyr, and because he was

such a devout and highly favored disciple of the most

holy Mary.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS

GAVE ME.

199. My daughter, the divine mysteries, when they are

presented and explained to such men as are accustomed

only to the perception of earthly and sensible things, ap

pear to be insignificant, especially if at the same time

their souls are not purified from sin and cleared of the

darkness of guilt. For the human faculties, which, be

sides being of limited capacity, are embarrassed by their

attention and affection to what is apparent, draw away

from the truth, and, being accustomed to obscurity, are

dazzled by the light. On this account the earthly and

animal men conceive such distorted and low ideas of the

wonderful works of the Most High (1 Cor. 2, 14), and

also of the works which I do for them day after day.

They tread under foot the gems, and they do not dis

tinguish the bread of the children from the gross food

of irrational brutes. All that is heavenly and divine

seems to them insipid, because they fail to perceive the

198 CITY OF GOD

savor of the senses; thus they become incapable of at

tending to the high things and of profiting from the

science of life and the understanding contained in them.

200. But the Most High, my dearest, has sought to

preserve thee from this danger and has given thee knowl

edge and light, improving thy senses and faculties, in

order that thou, being made capable and enlivened by

the force of divine grace, mayest perceive and distinguish

without error the mysteries and sacraments, which I

manifest to thee. Although I have many times told

thee, that in this mortal life, thou shalt never penetrate or

value them in their entirety, yet thou canst and thou must,

according to thy powers, show thy appreciation of them

by learning and imitating my works. From the variety

and bitterness of my pains and sorrows, with which my

whole life was interwoven, even after I had returned from

the right hand of my Son in heaven to the earth, thou

wilt understand, that thy own life must be of the same

texture, if thou wishest to follow me as my faithful dis

ciple. In the prudent and impartial humility, with which

I governed the Apostles and all the faithful, thou hast

an example of how thou must proceed in the government

of thy subjects, in meekness, in modesty, with humble

dignity, and especially without acceptation of persons and

without making a distinction in favor of any person in

those things that can and ought to be common to all.

This facilitates the true charity and humility of those

that govern; for if they show these virtues, they will not

be so dictatory in their commands, nor so presumptuous

in their own opinion, nor will they pervert the order of

justice, as is nowadays done with so much damage

throughout Christianity. Pride, vanity, self-interest, self-

love and the love of their own relations have infected

nearly all the course and conduct of government; and

THE CORONATION 199

hence all has gone wrong, and all the governments have

been filled with injustice and thrown into frightful con

fusion.

201. In the most ardent zeal, which I had for the

honor of my Son and true God and for the preaching

and defense of his holy name; in my joy at seeing the

divine will fulfilled and at seeing the fruit of the passion

and death of Christ spreading with the Church among

souls in the favors which I procured for the glorious

martyr Stephen as the first who offered his life for that

object; in all this, my daughter, thou wilt find great

motives for praising the Most High in his divine works,

so worthy of veneration and glory; and thou wilt like

wise find cause for imitating me, and blessing his im

mense goodness for the wisdom He gave me, in order to

fulfill all his holy will and pleasure.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHURCH AFTER THE DEATH

OF SAINT STEPHEN ; THE LABORS OF MARY, OUR

QUEEN, WHILE IT LASTED; AND HER SOLICITUDE IN

URGING THE APOSTLES TO COMPOSE THE SYMBOL OF

THE CREED.

202. Saint Luke says, that on the same day on which

saint Stephen was stoned to death, a great persecution

arose against the Church in Jerusalem. He mentions

especially that Saul devastated it, searching through the

whole city for the followers of Christ in order to seize

and denounce them before the magistrates. This he did

to many of the believers, who were arrested, illtreated,

and killed in this persecution. Although it was very

severe on account of the hatred, which the princes and

priests had conceived against the Christians, and on ac

count of the zealous efforts of Saul in his jealous de

fense of the law of Moses (of which he himself speaks in

the letter to the Galatians 1, 13) ; yet there was another

cause for this severity, the effects of which they felt,

though they knew not its origin.

203. This secret cause was the dismay of Lucifer and

his demons, who were much disturbed by the death of

saint Stephen and began to stir up and excite themselves

to diabolical wrath against the faithful, especially against

the Queen and Mistress of the Church, the most holy

Mary. For their greater confusion the Lord had per

mitted them to see, how the angels had carried Her to

saint Stephen. From this instance of her extraordinary

200

THE CORONATION 201

solicitude and from the constancy and wisdom of saint

Stephen, Lucifer concluded, that the powerful Queen

would do the same with other martyrs, who were to die

for Christ ; or at least, that She would aid and encourage

them to despise torments or death and meet such per

secutions with invincible courage. In his diabolical as

tuteness he had calculated on torments and sorrows as

a means of disheartening the faithful and drawing them

from the following of Christ; for it seemed to him, that

men love their life so much and are so afraid especially

of violent death and pain, that they would be deterred

and fall away from the faith rather than encounter such

a fate. On this expectation the devil continued to set his

hopes, though through the ages his own malice deceived

him, just as it had deceived him in the first attempt at

the death of Christ, the Leader of all the saints.

204. But in this first beginning of the Church the

dragon found himself quite disturbed and confused in

his eagerness to irritate the Jews against saint Stephen.

When he saw the martyr die so gloriously, he called to

gether his demons and said to them : "I am much dis

turbed by the death of this disciple and by the favors he

has received at the hands of this Woman, our Enemy;

for if She thus succors the other disciples and followers

of her Son, we shall not be able to overcome or mislead

any of them by the threat of torments or death. They

will on the contrary all be animated by mutual example

to suffer and die like their Master and, instead of suc

ceeding in destroying them, we ourselves shall be over

come and humbled; for our greatest torment and the

signal triumph, which they can bring over us, will be

their dying for the faith, which we wish to wipe out. We

shall ruin ourselves by following this course; yet I do

not find any other, nor can I discover the proper mode of

202 CITY OF GOD

fighting against this incarnate God, his Mother and his

followers. Is it possible, that men, who cling so much

to life, should be so prodigal of it, and, being so sensitive

in regard to suffering, should deliver themselves up to

torments to imitate their Master? But nevertheless my

just wrath will not be placated on this account. I will

persuade others to give up their lives in support of my

fallacies, just as they do it for God. Nor will all men

merit the protection of that invincible Woman, or be so

courageous as to undergo such inhuman torments as I

shall devise. Let us go and excite the Jews our friends, so

that they may destroy this people and blot out from the

face of the earth the name of their Master."

205. Then Lucifer proceeded to put into execution his

accursed designs and with the innumerable multitudes of

the demons he approached the princes and magistrates

of the Jews and all the rabid unbelievers among the

people, filling them with ungoverned fury and envy

against the followers of Christ and, by his deceitful sug

gestions, inflaming them with a false zeal for the law of

Moses and the ancient traditions. It was not difficult

to sow this cockle in hearts so perfidious and ravaged

by sins; they therefore readily embraced the infernal

suggestions. Immediately, in many gatherings and con

ferences, they consulted about putting a sudden end to all

the disciples and followers of Christ. Some were for

banishing them from Jerusalem ; others, from Palestine ;

and still others, killing them all, so that this sect might

be stamped out at once; some of them again were of the

opinion, that they should be subjected to rigorous tor

ments, so as to deter others from joining, and that they

should be immediately dispossessed of their goods before

they should have given all to the Apostles. This perse

cution was so severe, as saint Luke tells us, that the

THE CORONATION 203

seventy-two disciples fled from Jerusalem, scattering

through Judea and Samaria, but at the same time they be

gan to preach through all the land with unfaltering cour

age. The Apostles, with Mary and many of the faithful,

remained in Jerusalem although they kept under cover

and in fear, hiding themselves from the diligent search,

which Saul instituted for their arrest.

206. The most blessed Mary, amid all this trouble, re

mained watchful, and first of all, after the death of saint

Stephen, ordered his body to be secured and buried. She

asked those that attended to this duty, to bring Her a

cross, which saint Stephen had habitually carried with

him. He had made it in imitation of the one which the

Lady herself had borne about with Her since the coming

of the Holy Ghost. In this She was imitated also by the

other faithful. She received the cross of saint Stephen

with especial veneration, not only on its own account, but

on account of its having been in possession of the martyr.

She called him a saint, and requested, that as far as could

be, all his blood should be gathered and preserved rever

ently as of a martyr already glorified. She extolled his

holiness and constancy in the presence of the Apostles

and many of the faithful, in order to console and en

courage them in their tribulation.

207. In order to understand, at least in part, the mag

nanimity of heart manifested by the Queen in this and

the other persecutions during her earthly life, it is neces

sary to have in mind a summary of her gifts, which were

such that the heart of her Man could rely entirely upon

Her (Prov. 31, 11) and entrust Her with all the works

ad extra of his Omnipotence. For in her manner of op

erating the most blessed Mary transcended all the powers

of mere creatures and approached to that of God, whose

especial image She was. No act or thought of men was

204 CITY OF GOD

hidden from Her; and She penetrated all the schemes

and machinations of the demons. She was ignorant of

nothing that was to be done through the holy Church.

Yet, though all this was in her mind; She was not con

fused in the disposition of so many different matters; nor

did She ever mix up one with the other; nor was She

ever flurried in their management; nor tired of the diffi

culties; nor oppressed by their multitude; nor was She

forgetful of the more remote on account of the more

proximate affairs; nor was her prudence ever deficient,

because it appeared to be immense and without limit.

Hence She attended to all as if She had only one affair,

and to each matter as if She had nothing else to attend

to. Just as the sun, without trouble, without rest and

without intermittence, illumines, vivifies and warms all

without diminution of itself ; so our great Queen, chosen

as the Sun of the Church, governed, vivified and encour

aged all its children, without excluding any one of them.

208. When She therefore saw the Church disturbed,

persecuted and afflicted by the persecution of the demons

and of the men instigated by them, She turned upon the

originators of this evil and imperiously commanded Luci

fer and his ministers to descend into hell, and they fell

howling into the abyss without power of resistance ; thus

they remained bound and imprisoned for eight entire

days, until they were again permitted to rise. Thereupon

She called the Apostles and with consoling words en

couraged them to remain firm and hope for the divine

assistance in this tribulation. Strengthened by this ex

hortation none of them left Jerusalem. The disciples,

who on account of their great number could not conceal

themselves properly, took leave of their Mother and Mis

tress and departed from Jerusalem with her benediction.

All of them She exhorted and encouraged, admonishing

THE CORONATION 205

them not to be disheartened on account of persecutions,

nor to give up preaching Christ crucified ; and they faith

fully continued their preaching in Judea, Samaria and

other provinces. In their labors She comforted and as

sisted them through her holy angels, inspiring them with

courage and bearing them to different localities, when

ever necessary. The latter according to saint Luke, hap

pened to Philip on the way to Gaza, when he baptized

the Aethiopian, the servant of Queen Candace. In order

to assist the faithful in the hour of death, She likewise

was wont to send her angels, and after death She took

care to assist the souls, who went to purgatory.

209. The cares and labors of the Apostles in this per

secution were much greater than those of the other faith

ful; for as the founders and masters of the Church it

behooved them to extend their solicitude to all as well in

as outside of Jerusalem. Although they were full of

knowledge and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, yet the

work was so arduous and the opposition so powerful,

that without the counsel and direction of their Mistress

they would often have felt dejected and oppressed. On

this account they frequently consulted Her, and She

called them to the meetings and conferences which she

arranged for transacting the necessary business. For

She alone fully understood the present affairs and fore

saw clearly those of the future. By her orders they went

forth to attend upon matters wherever necessary outside

of Jerusalem, as when saint Peter and saint John went

to Samaria on hearing that it had accepted the word of

God (Acts 8, 14). Amid all these occupations of her own

and the tribulations of the faithful, whom She loved as

her children, the great Lady retained all the serenity and

tranquil peace of her spirit, without falling away in the

least point from utmost perfection.

206 CITY OF GOD

210. She so disposed of things, that She could fre

quently retire ; for, although the exterior actions did not

hinder her continued prayer, She reserved many secret

and special works for times of solitude. She prostrated

Herself, humbled Herself to the dust, sighed and wept

for the salvation of mortals and bewailed the fall of so

many, whom She recognized as reprobates. As She held

written in her heart the evangelical law and stamped

therein the image of the Church, She deeply pondered

within Herself all that concerned it : the trials and tribu

lations of its members. In Her conferences with the

Lord and with Herself, She sought to dispose and order

all its affairs with heavenly knowledge and insight ac

cording to the holy will of the Most High. At such times

She would renew her participation with the essence and

the perfections of God to capacitate Her for such a

divine work as the governing of his Church. This there

fore She did, without failing in anything and with such

a fullness of wisdom and holiness, as made Her seem

more than a mere creature, though in truth She was one.

In all her thoughts, She was most exalted ; in wisdom She

was beyond comparison; in counsel, most prudent;

in her decisions most equitable and clear-sighted;

in her works, most holy; in her words, true and

sincere; in all goodness, lovable. Toward the weak, She

was most kind ; toward the humble, sweet and loving ;

toward the proud, reserved and majestic. Neither did her

own excellence inflate Her, nor adversity disturb Her,

nor labors cast Her down : in all her activities She was a

faithful copy of her divine Son.

211. The most prudent Mother bore in mind, that the

disciples, having dispersed to preach the name and faith

of Christ the Savior, had as yet no formula or express

creed to guide themselves uniformly and without differ-

THE CORONATION 207

ences, so that all the faithful might believe one and the

same express truths. Moreover She knew that the

Apostles would soon have to go forth over the whole

world in order to spread and establish the Church through

their preaching, and that it was proper that all should be

united in their doctrine, upon which was to be founded

all the perfection of a Christian life. Therefore the most

prudent Mother of wisdom wished to see all the divine

mysteries, which the Apostles were to preach and the

faithful to believe, reduced to a short formula. For if

those truths were moulded into a few articles, they could

more conveniently be brought to the mind of all, the

whole Church would be united in one belief without any

essential difference, and the whole spiritual edifice of the

Gospel would thus rest and be built up on the same firm

columns of one foundation.

212. In order to prepare for this work, the impor

tance of which She recognized, She presented her wishes

to the Lord, who had inspired them, and for more than

forty days She persevered in this prayer with fasting,

prostrations and other exercises. Thus, in the same way

as it was proper for the giving of the written law that

Moses, as mediator between God and the people, should

fast and pray for forty days on mount Sinai; so also,

for the new law of grace (Christ our Savior being its

Author and the Mediator between the eternal Father

and men), it was proper that the most blessed Mary

should mediate between men and her divine Son. The

Church was to have this new law written into the hearts,

reduced to articles of faith, which should never change

and never show any deficiency, because they are divine

and indefectible truths. One day, while persevering in

these petitions, She spoke to the Lord thus : "Most High

Lord and eternal God, Creator and Ruler of all the uni-

208 CITY OF GOD

verse, in thy ineffable kindness Thou hast begun the

magnificent work of thy holy Church. It is not accord

ing to thy wisdom to leave imperfect any works of thy

divine right hand; raise then to its high perfection this

work, which Thou hast so gloriously commenced. Let not

the sins of mortals, O my God, hinder Thee, since the

blood and death of thy and my Onlybegotten out-clamor

their malice; for they do not call out for vengeance,

as the blood of Abel (Gen. 4, 11), but ask pardon for all

that are guilty. Look upon the new children which the

blood of Christ has engendered for Thee, and upon those

who are to be engendered in the Church during the fu

ture ages. Give then thy holy Spirit to Peter thy vicar,

and to the rest of the Apostles, in order that they may

arrange into a convenient form the truths, upon which

thy Church is to be founded, and in order that its chil

dren may know what to believe without differences of

opinion."

213. In order to answer in person to these prayers of

his Mother, Her divine Son descended from heaven with

immense glory and spoke to Her : "My beloved Mother,

be relieved of thy affectionate anxiety and let thy ardent

thirst for my glory and for the increase of the Church

be satiated in my presence and converse. It is in my

power to fulfill thy desires and thou art the one to oblige

Me to do it, since I will deny nothing to thy desires and

prayers." During these words the blessed Mary was

prostrate on the ground in adoration of the Divinity and

humanity of her Son and true God. But the Lord raised

Her up and filled Her with ineffable joy and jubilee, by

giving Her his benediction and enriching Her with new

favors and gifts of his right hand. She remained in this

ecstasy of delight enjoying the most exalted and

mysterious converse of her Son and Lord, and her

THE CORONATION 209

anxiety for the welfare of the Church was appeased;

for He promised Her great gifts and favors for the

Church.

214. In answer to her prayer for the Apostles, besides

promising to assist them in preparing the symbol of the

faith, the Lord informed his Mother of the very word

ing of the propositions or articles, of which the Creed

was to be composed. Of all this the most prudent Lady

was well capable, as was explained more fully in the

second part of this history; but now, when the time had

arrived for executing what had been intended so long

before, He wished to renew it all in the purest heart of

his virgin Mother, in order that the fundamental truths

of the Church might flow from the lips of Christ him

self. It was also proper to counteract again the humility

of the great Lady, so that She might consent to be called

by those with whom She yet lived in mortal flesh and

who were to preach and believe in this symbol, the

Mother of God and a Virgin before and after his birth.

For it was not to be expected, that She, who had been

chosen by God for her humility in order to work the

greatest of his wonders, would be willing of Herself to

publish this prerogative; although it was greater to be

the Mother and Virgin in the sight of God, than to be

so called in the Church of God (Luke 1, 48).

215. Christ our Lord took leave of his blessed Mother

and returned to the right hand of the Father. Immedi

ately He inspired saint Peter his vicar and the rest with

the desire of setting up a symbol of the universal faith

of the Church. Accordingly they sought conference with

the heavenly Mistress concerning its opportuneness and

the measures to be taken for this purpose. They resolved

to fast and persevere in prayer for ten continuous days,

in order to receive the inspiration of the Holy Ghost in

210 CITY OF GOD

this arduous affair. Having completed these ten days,

which were also the last ten of the forty, in which the

Queen had treated with the Lord about this matter, the

twelve Apostles met in the presence of Mary, and saint

Peter spoke to them as follows :

216. "My dear brethren, the divine mercy, in its in

finite goodness and through the merits of our Savior and

Master Jesus, has favored his holy Church by gloriously

multiplying its children, as we have seen and experienced

in this short time. For this purpose the Almighty has

multiplied miracles and prodigies and daily renews them

through our ministry, having chosen us (though un

worthy) as the instruments of his divine will in this

work and for the glory and honor of his holy name. To

gether with these favors He has sent us tribulations and

persecutions of the devil and of the world, in order that

we may imitate our Savior and Captain, and in order

that the Church, evenly ballasted, might reach more se

curely the port of rest and eternal felicity. The disciples

have evaded the wrath of the chief priest and spread

through the neighboring cities, preaching the faith of

Christ our Redeemer and Lord. We must also soon de

part and preach throughout the globe, according to the

command of the Lord before ascending into heaven

(Matth. 28, 19). Just as there is but one Baptism in

which men are to receive this faith, so there must be

but one doctrine, which the faithful are to believe. Hence

it is meet that we, who are as yet gathered harmoniously

in the Lord, define the truths and mysteries which we are

to propound expressly to all the nations of the world,

and thus, without difference of opinions, believe the same

doctrines. It is the infallible promise of the Lord, that

where two or three shall be gathered in his name, He

shall be in their midst (Matth. 18, 20). Confiding in

THE CORONATION 211

his word we firmly hope, that He will now assist us with

his divine Spirit to understand and define, in his name

and by an unchangeable decree, the articles to be estab

lished in his holy Church as long as it shall last, to

the end of the world."

217. All the Apostles consented to this proposal of

saint Peter. Then he celebrated a Mass, in which he

gave Communion to the most holy Mary and the Apos

tles, whereupon they all, including the blessed Mother,

prostrated themselves in prayer calling upon the Holy

Ghost. After continuing their prayers for some time,

they heard the rumbling of thunder, as on the first

coming down of the Holy Ghost upon the gathering of

the faithful ; at the same time the Cenacle was filled with

light and splendor and all were enlightened by the Holy

Spirit. Then the most blessed Mary asked each of the

Apostles to define a mystery, according as the divine

Spirit should inspire them. Thereupon saint Peter be

gan, and was followed by the rest in the following order :

1. Saint Peter: I believe in God, the Father almighty,

Creator of heaven and earth.

2. Saint Andrew : And in Jesus Christ, his only Son,

our Lord.

3 and 4. Saint James the Greater : Who was conceived

through operation of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin

Mary.

5. Saint John : Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was

crucified, died and was buried.

6 and 7. Saint Thomas: Descended into hell, arose

from the dead on the third day.

8. Saint James the Less: Ascended into heaven, is

seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

9. Saint Philip: From thence He shall come to judge

the living and the dead.

212 CITY OF GOD

10. Saint Bartholomew: I believe in the Holy Ghost.

11. Saint Matthew: In the holy Catholic Church, the

Communion of saints.

12. Saint Simon: Forgiveness of sins.

13. Saint Thaddeus: The resurrection of the flesh.

14. Saint Mathias: Life everlasting. Amen.

218. This symbol, which we ordinarily call the Creed,

the Apostles established after the martyrdom of saint

Stephen and before the end of the first year after the

death of the Savior. Afterwards, in order to refute the

Arian and other heresies, the Church, in the councils

held on their account, explained more fully the mysteries

contained in the Apostles Creed and composed the one

now chanted in the Mass. But in substance both are one

and the same and contain the fourteen articles, which are

the basis for the catechetical teaching of the Christian

faith and which we are all bound to believe in order to

be saved. As soon as the Apostles had finished pro

nouncing this Creed, the Holy Ghost approved of it by

permitting a voice to be heard in their midst saying:

"You have decided well." Then the great Queen and

Lady of heaven with all the Apostles gave thanks to the

Most High; and She thanked also them for having

merited the assistance of the divine Spirit, so as to be

his apt instruments in promoting the glory of the Lord

and the good of the Church. In confirmation of her faith

and as an example to the faithful, the most prudent

Mistress fell at the feet of saint Peter, loudly proclaimed

her belief in the Catholic doctrine as contained in the

symbol they had just now composed and formulated.

This She did for Herself and in the name of all the faith

ful, saying to saint Peter : "My lord, whom I recognize

as the vicar of my most holy Son, in thy hands, I, a vile

wormlet, in my name and in the name of all the faithful

THE CORONATION 213

of the Church, confess and proclaim all that them hast

.set down as the divine and infallible truth of the Catho

lic Church; and in it I bless and exalt the Most High,

from whom it proceeds." She kissed the hands of the

vicar of Christ and of the rest of the Apostles. Thus

She was the first one thus openly to profess the Catholic

faith after it had been formulated into articles.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

219. My daughter, besides the mysteries thou hast re

corded in this chapter, I wish for thy greater informa

tion and consolation, to manifest to thee other secrets of

my activity. After the Apostles had formulated the

Creed, thou must know that I repeated it many times

during the day on my knees and with the profoundest

reverence. And whenever the words "born of the Vir

gin Mary" occurred, I prostrated myself upon the earth

with such humility, gratitude and praise of the Most

High, as no creature can comprehend. In these acts of

devotion I had present in my mind all the mortals in

order to make up for the irreverence with which they

pronounce these sacred words. Through my interces

sion the Lord was induced to inspire the Church to re

peat so many times the Credo, the Ave Maria, and Pater

Noster in the divine office; to accustom the religious to

humiliate themselves in reciting them, and to genuflect

in the Credo of the Mass at the words: "Et incarnatus

est." Thus the Church, at least partially, seeks to pay the

debt it owes to the Lord for having vouchsafed such

knowledge, and for the mysteries, so worthy of rever

ence and gratitude, contained in the Creed.

220. Many times the holy angels sang to me the

214 CITY OF GOD

Credo with wonderful harmony and sweetness, rejoicing

my spirit. Sometimes they would sing the Ave Maria,

including those words : "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb

Jesus." Whenever they pronounced this most holy name,

or the name Mary, they made a most profound bow,

causing in me new effects of loving humility, abasing me

to the very earth at the thought of how far exalted is

the being of God above my own terrestrial existence. O

my daughter, bear in mind the reverence with which thou

shouldst recite the Credo, Pater and Ave, and do not

make thyself guilty of the thoughtless rudeness of many

of the faithful in this matter. The frequency with

which these prayers and divine words are repeated in the

Church should not infringe upon the proper reverence

due to them. This presumption arises from pronouncing

them merely by the lips without meditating upon their

meaning. I desire that they be to thee a subject of con

tinuous meditation; and for this purpose the Most High

has given thee a taste for studying the catechism; and

thou wilt please the Lord and me, if thou carry it with

thee and read it many times, as thou hast been accustomed

to and as I again charge thee to do from now on. Recom

mend it also to thy religious, for this kind of knowledge

is the jewel which should adorn the spouses of Christ

and which all Christians should bear about with them.

221. It should also impress thee, that I was so anxious

to see the Creed written as soon as it was necessary for

the welfare of the Church. To know what will advance

the glory and service of God and benefit one s own con

science, and not to execute it, or at least to make no effort

toward it, is a very reprehensible lukewarmness. And it

is especially shameful in those men, who, whenever they

are in want of any temporal good, brook no delay and

clamorously ask God to satisfy their wishes; as for in-

THE CORONATION 215

stance, when they fail in health or fear bad crops, or

when they dread being deprived of much less necessary,

or even superfluous and dangerous things. At the same

time, although they recognize their deep obligations to

God, they pretend not to understand them, or delay their

fulfillment out of negligence and want of love. Do thou

guard thyself against and never permit this disorder.

Just as I was most anxious in that which pertained to

the service of the children of the Church, so do thou be

punctual in all that thou perceivest to be the will of God,

whether it is for the benefit of thy soul or for the

benefit of thy neighbor; and thus thou wilt imitate my

example.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BIASSED MARY SENDS THE CREED TO THE DISCIPLES

AND OTHERS OF THE FAITHFUL; THEY WORK GREAT

WONDERS WITH IT; THE APOSTLES RESOLVE TO PAR

TITION THE EARTH AMONG THEMSELVES; OTHER DO

INGS OF THE GREAT QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

222. In the diligence, watchfulness and solicitude,

which the most prudent Mother devoted to the govern

ment of her family, the Church, She was like a mother

and like to the strong woman, of whom Solomon says,

that she considered the paths and the ways of her house

hold in order not to eat her bread in idleness (Prov. 31,

27). The great Lady knew and considered them with

the plenitude and knowledge; and as She was clothed in

the purple of her charity and in the spotless white of her

peerless purity, therefore, in the fulness of her insight,

She forgot nothing that was needed by her children and

domestics, the faithful. As soon as the symbol of the

faith was established, She, both with her own hands and

with the assistance of the holy angels serving as her sec

retaries, provided innumerable copies of the Creed, which

were sent without delay to all the disciples preaching in

different parts of Palestine. She sent several copies to

each one for distribution together with a special letter,

in which She informed them of the measures taken by

the Apostles and of their orders, that it should be accept

ed and professed by all the faithful.

223. As the disciples were scattered through different

cities, some near and others far, She sent the symbol and

216

THE CORONATION 217

letter to those in the neighborhood by some of the faithful,

and to those farther off, by her angels. To some of the

disciples, in fact to the greater number of them, the

angels appeared visibly; while to others they did not

appear, but they placed these documents into their hands

in an invisible manner, at the same time admirably mov

ing their hearts. As well through these inspirations, as

from the letter of the Queen, the disciples knew whence

these messages had come. Moreover She exhorted

the Apostles to distribute the written Creed in Jerusalem

and in other places and to instruct the faithful, how the

Lord had sent the Holy Ghost to inspire and approve it

in such a signal manner and thereby imposed its venera

tion upon all. She told them to omit no means of mak

ing it well understood, that this was the only, invariable

and secure doctrine, which was to be believed, confessed

and preached throughout the Church as the sole means

of obtaining grace and life everlasting.

224. The written copies of the Creed of the Apostles

were distributed in a very few days among the faithful

to their incredible benefit and consolation; for in their

fervor they received them with highest reverence and

devotion. The Holy Ghost, who had ordained this Creed

for the security of the Church, immediately began to

confirm it by new miracles and prodigies, operating not

only through the hands of the Apostles and disciples, but

also through many of the believers. Many who received

it with special veneration and love, were suddenly en

veloped in divine splendor, filled with heavenly science

and celestial manifestations of the Holy Ghost. By these

miracles others were in their turn moved to a desire of

possessing and reverencing these documents. Others re

stored the sick to health, raised the dead or expelled the

demons from the possessed by merely placing the Credo

218 CITY OF GOD

upon them. Among other marvels it happened one day

that a Jew, who was roused to anger at hearing a

Christian devoutly reading the Creed and was about to

tear it from his hands, fell dead before he could execute

his design. From that time on, those that were baptized,

being adults, were required to profess the faith accord

ing to the apostolic Creed ; and while they pronounced it,

the Holy Ghost visibly appeared above them.

225. The gift of tongues likewise continued; for the

Holy Spirit gave it not only on the day of Pentecost, but

to many of the faithful afterwards, who assisted in

preaching or in giving instruction to the new believers;

and whenever they spoke or preached to many together

of different nationalities, they were understood by each

nationality, though they spoke only in the Hebrew

language. In like manner they were able to speak in

other languages, when they happened upon a gathering

of people all speaking the same foreign language. Thus

was renewed all that had happened at the first coming

down of the Holy Ghost. Besides these miracles the

Apostles wrought many others, and whenever they laid

their hands upon the believers, or confirmed them, the

divine Spirit descended. So many miracles and prodi

gies were dispensed by the hands of the Almighty, that

if they were all recorded, they would fill many volumes.

Saint Luke in the Acts describes those in particular,

which in justice should not be altogether left unnoticed

in the Church of God. He adds in a general way, that

they were very numerous, and therefore could not be in

cluded in his short history.

226. In pondering and writing of these things I was

greatly astonished at the liberal bounty of the Almighty

in thus often sending the Holy Ghost upon the believers

in the primitive Church. In response to my wonder I

THE CORONATION 219

was informed of two reasons for this liberality: first,

just as the wisdom, goodness and power of God so ar

dently desired men to participate in his Divinity by shar

ing with Him his eternal happiness and glory, that He

induced the eternal Word to appear in this world in

visible and passible flesh, so also the third Person de

scended many times in visible and appropriate form upon

his Church, in order to establish it and confirm it with

like and equally secure demonstrations of his omnipo

tence and love. Secondly, in the beginnings of the

Church the merits of the passion and death of Christ,

together with the prayers and intercession of his most

holy Mother, were in a certain sense more acceptable and

therefore (according to our way of understanding) more

powerful with the eternal Father. For the children of

the Church had not yet interposed the many and grievous

sins, which have been committed since then and which

have placed such great obstacles to the benefits of the

Lord and to his Holy Spirit. Hence He does not now

manifest Himself so familiarly to men as in the primitive

Church.

227. Already a full year had passed since the death of

the Savior, and now the Apostles, by divine impulse, be

gan to consider about going forth to preach the faith

throughout the world; for it was time that the name of

God be preached also to the heathens and that they be

taught the way of eternal salvation. In order to consult

the will of God in the assignment of the kingdoms and

provinces in which each one was to preach, they, upon

the advice of their Queen, resolved to fast and pray for

ten successive days. This practice of fasting and praying

for ten days, which they had observed immediately after

the Ascension in disposing themselves for the coming of

the Holy Ghost, they afterwards also retained in pre-

220 CITY OF GOD

paring themselves for the more important undertakings.

Having completed these exercises, the vicar of Christ

celebrated Mass and communicated the most blessed Mary

and the eleven Apostles, as they had, done in preparing

the Creed and as is mentioned in the last chapter. After

Mass they all persevered with their Queen for some time

in most exalted prayer, ardently invoking the assistance

of the Holy Ghost for the manifestation of his will in

this matter.

228. Having done this, s?int Peter spoke to them as

follows : "My dearest brethren, let us prostrate our

selves all together before the throne of God and with all

our heart and with deepest reverence let us confess our

Lord Jesus Christ as the true God, the Lord and Re

deemer of the world, professing his holy faith in the

Creed which He has given us by the Holy Ghost and our

subjection to his divine will." This they did and there

upon uttered aloud with saint Peter the following prayer :

"Most high and eternal God, we, vile and insignificant

men, worms of the earth, whom the Lord Jesus Christ

in his clemency condescended to choose as ministers

of his holy doctrine and law and founders of his Church

through the whole world, with one heart and soul pros

trate ourselves to suffer and die for the confession and

spread of the holy faith in the world according to the

commands of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. We

wish to be spared no labors, difficulties or tribulations in

the performance of this work, even unto death. But

distrusting our weakness, we beseech Thee, Lord God

most High, send upon us thy divine Spirit to govern and

direct our footsteps in the imitation of our Master and

to visit us with his strength. Do Thou manifest and in

struct us to which kingdoms and provinces each of us

shall depart according to thy good pleasure for the

preaching of thy holy name."

THE CORONATION 221

229. At the ending of this prayer a wonderful light

descended upon the Cenacle surrounding them all and

a voice was heard saying: "My vicar Peter shall point

out the province, which falls to each one. I shall govern

and direct him by my light and spirit/ The appoint

ments themselves the Holy Ghost left to saint Peter in

order to confirm anew his power as head and universal

pastor of the Church, and in order that the Apostles

might understand, that it was to be founded throughout

the world under the direction of saint Peter and his suc

cessors, to whom they were to be subject as the vicars of

Christ. In this sense the Apostles understood it, and I

was given to understand, that such was the will of the

Most High. Saint Peter hearing this voice, proceeded

to partition out the provinces. He began with himself,

and said: "I, my Lord, offer myself to suffer and die

in imitation of my Lord and Redeemer, preaching the

faith at present in Jerusalem, and afterwards in Pontus,

Galatia, Bythinia and Cappadocia, provinces of Asia ; and

I shall take up my residence at first in Antioch and after

wards in Rome, where I will establish my seat and found

the Cathedra of Christ our Redeemer and Master, and

where the head of his Church shall have his residence."

These words of saint Peter were spoken in obedience to

a positive command of the Lord, pointing out the Roman

Church as the centre and capital of the universal Church.

Without such a command of the Lord, saint Peter would

not have decided this difficult and important matter.

230. Saint Peter then continued : "The servant of

Christ, our dearest brother Andrew, will follow his

Master preaching his faith in the Scythian provinces of

Europe, Epirus and Thrace ; and from the city of Patras

in Achaia he will govern all that province, and the others

of his lot, as far as possible."

222 CITY OF GOD

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother James the

greater, will follow his Master preaching the faith in

Judea, in Samaria and in Spain; thence he shall return

in order to preach the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ

in this city of Jerusalem."

The most dear brother John shall obey the will of our

Savior and Master as made known to him from the

Cross, discharging the duties of a son toward our great

Mother and Mistress. He shall serve Her and assist

Her with filial reverence and fidelity ; he shall administer

to Her the sacred mysteries of the Eucharist and shall

also take care of the faithful in Jerusalem during our

absence. And when our God and Redeemer shall have

taken into heaven his most blessed Mother, he shall follow

his Master in the preaching of the faith in Asia Minor,

governing the churches there established, from the island

of Patmos, whither he shall retire on account of perse

cution."

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Thomas,

will follow his Master preaching in India, in Persia and

among the Parthians, Medes, Hircanians, Brahmans,

Bactrians. He shall baptize the three Magi Kings and,

as they shall be attracted by the rumor of his preaching

and his miracles, he shall instruct them fully in all things

according to their expectations."

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother James,

shall follow his Master in his office of pastor and bishop

of Jerusalem, where he shall preach to all the Jews and

shall assist John in the attendance and service of the

great Mother of our Savior."

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Philip,

shall follow his Master preaching and teaching in the

provinces Phrygia and Scythia of Asia, and in the city

called Hieropolis in Phrygia."

THE CORONATION 223

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Bartholo

mew, shall follow his Master preaching in Lycaonia,

part of Cappadocia in Asia; and he shall go to further

India and afterwards to Armenia Minor."

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Matthew,

shall first teach the Hebrews, and then shall follow his

Master, preaching in Egypt and Ethiopia."

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Simon,

shall follow his Master preaching in Babylon, Persia and

also in the kingdom of Ethiopia."

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Judas

Thaddeus, shall follow our Master, preaching in Meso

potamia, and afterwards shall join Simon to preach in

Babylon and in Persia."

"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Mathias,

shall follow our Master, preaching his holy faith in the

interior of Ethiopia and in Arabia, and afterwards He

shall return to Palestine. And may the Spirit of God

accompany us all, govern and assist us, so that in all

places we fulfill his holy and perfect will, and may He

give us his benediction, in whose name I now give it to

all."

231. These were the words of saint Peter. When he

ceased speaking a loud thunder was heard and the

Cenacle was filled with splendor and refulgence in witness

of the presence of the Holy Ghost. From the midst of

this splendor was heard a sweet and soft voice saying:

"Let each one accept his allotment." They prostrated

themselves upon the ground and with one voice said :

"Most High Lord, thy word and the word of thy vicar

we obey with a prompt and joyous heart, and our souls

rejoice and are filled with thy sweetness in the abun

dance of thy wonderful works." This entire and ready

obedience of the Apostles to the vicar of Christ our

224 CITY OF GOD

Savior, since it was the effect of their ardent and

loving desire to die for his holy faith, disposed them on

that occasion for the grace of once more receiving the

Holy Ghost, who confirmed and augmented the favors

they had already received. They were filled with a new

light and knowledge concerning the peoples and provinces

assigned to them by saint Peter, and each one recognized

the conditions, nature and customs of the kingdoms

singled out for him, being furnished interiorly with the

most distinct and abundant information concerning each.

The Most High gave them new fortitude to encounter

labors ; agility for overcoming distances, although in this

regard they were afterwards to be frequently assisted

by the holy angels; and the fire of divine love, so that

they became inflamed like seraphim lifted far beyond

the condition and sphere of mere human creatures.

232. The most blessed Queen was present at all these

events, and the workings of the divine power in the

Apostles and in Herself, were very clear to Her; for on

this occasion, She experienced more of the divine in

fluences than all of them together. As She was exalted

supereminently above all creatures, so the increase of her

gifts was in like proportion, transcending immeasurably

those of others. The Most High renewed in the purest

spirit of his Mother the infused knowledge concerning

all creatures, and especially concerning the kingdoms and

nations assigned to the Apostles. She knew all that each

one knew, and more than they all together, because She

received a personal and individual knowledge of each

person to whom the faith of Christ was to be preached ;

and She was made relatively just as familiar with all the

earth and its inhabitants, as She was with Her oratory

and all those that entered therein.

233. As I have said above and shall often repeat far-

THE CORONATION 225

ther on, the knowledge of Mary was the knowledge of a

supreme Mistress, Mother, Governess and Sovereign of

the Church, which the Almighty had placed in her hands.

She was to take care of all, from the highest to the

lowest of the saints, and also of the sinners as the chil

dren of Eve. As no one was to receive any blessing or

favor from the hands of her Son except through that of

his Mother, it was necessary that this most faithful Dis-

pensatrix of grace should know all of her family, whom

She was to guard as a Mother, and such a Mother ! The

great Lady therefore had not only infused images and

knowledge of all this, but She actually experienced it

according as the disciples and Apostles proceeded in

their work of preaching. Before Her lay open all their

labors and dangers, and the attacks of the demons against

them; the petitions and prayers of these and of all the

faithful, so that She might be able to support them with

her own, or aid them through her angels or by Herself

in person; for in all these different ways did She render

her assistance, as we shall see in many events yet to be

described.

234. I wish merely to state here, that besides the

knowledge derived by our Queen from infused images

She had also in God himself another knowledge of things

through her abstractive vision, by which She continually

saw the Divinity. But there was a difference between

these two different kinds of knowledge : since, when she

saw in God the labors of the Apostles and of all the faith

ful of the Church, enjoying at the same time through

this vision a certain participation of the eternal beatitude,

the most loving Mother was not affected with the sensible

sorrow and compassion, which filled Her when perceiving

these tribulations themselves through images. In this

latter kind of vision She felt and bewailed them with

226 CITY OF GOD

maternal compassion. In order that this merit might not

be wanting in Her, the Lord conferred this second kind

of knowledge upon Her for all the time of her pilgrimage

here below. Joined with this plenitude, of infused species

and knowledge, She held also absolute command of her

faculties, as I said above, so that She admitted no images

or ideas except those that were absolutely necessary for

sustaining life, or for some work of charity or perfec

tion. With this adornment and beauty, which was patent

to the angels and saints, the heavenly Lady was an ob

ject of admiration, inducing them to praise and glorify

the Most High for the worthy exercise of all his attri

butes in Mary, his most holy instrument.

235. On this occasion She offered a most profound

prayer for the perseverance and courage of the Apostles

in their preaching throughout the world. And the Lord

promised Her, that He would guard and assist them to

manifest the glory of his name, and that He would at

the end worthily reward them for their labors and merits.

By this promise most holy Mary was filled with grateful

jubilee and She exhorted the Apostles to give themselves

up to this work with all their heart, to set out joyfully

and confidently for the conversion of the world. Speak

ing to them many other words of sweetness and life, She

congratulated them on her knees in the name of her di

vine Son for the obedience they had shown, and in her

own name, She thanked them for the zeal they had mani

fested for the honor of the Lord and for the blessings

they had brought to souls by their sacrifice. She kissed

the hands of each of the Apostles, offering her prayers

and her services and asking them for their blessing, which

they, as priests of God, gave Her.

236. A few days after the partition of the earth among

the Apostles, they began to leave Jerusalem, especially

THE CORONATION 227

those that were allotted the provinces of Palestine, and

first among them was saint James the greater. Others

stayed longer in Jerusalem, because the Lord wished the

faith to be preached there more abundantly and the Jews

to be called before all others, if they chose to come and

accept the invitation to the marriage-feast of the Gospel ;

for in the blessing of the Redemption this people, al

though more ungrateful than the heathens, was especial

ly favored. Afterwards all the Apostles gradually de

parted for the regions assigned to them, according as

time and season demanded and as obedience to the divine

Spirit, the counsel of the most holy Mary, and the order

of saint Peter dictated. But before leaving Jerusalem

each one visited the holy places, such as the garden, Cal

vary, the holy Sepulchre, the place of the Ascension,

Bethany and the other memorable spots as far as possi

ble. All of them showed their veneration, moved even

to tears and regarding with loving wonder the very earth,

which the Savior had touched. Then they visited the

Cenacle, reverencing the spot where so many mysteries

had taken place. There, again commending themselves

to her protection, they took leave of the great Queen of

heaven. The blessed Mother dismissed them with words

full of sweetness and divine virtue.

237. But admirable was the solicitude and care of the

most prudent Lady in showing Herself as the true Moth

er of the Apostles at their departure. For each of the

twelve She made a woven tunic similar to that of Christ

our Savior, of a color between brown and ash-gray ; and

in order to weave these garments She called to aid her

holy angels. She furnished each of the Apostles garments

of the same kind and like to that formerly worn by their

Master Jesus : for She wished that they should imitate

Him even in their garments and thereby be known ex-

228 CITY OF GOD

teriorly as his disciples. The great Lady procured also

twelve crosses of the height and size of each of the

Apostles and gave one to each, so that, as a witness of

their doctrine and for their consolation, they might carry

it along in their wanderings and their preaching. Each

of the Apostles preserved and carried this cross with him

to his death; and as they were so loud in praise of the

Cross, some of the tyrants made use of this very instru

ment to torment them happily to death.

238. Moreover the devout Mother furnished each

one of them with a small metal case, in which She placed

three of the thorns from the crown of her divine Son,

some pieces of the cloths in which She had wrapped the

infant Savior, and of the linen with which She had

wiped and caught the most precious blood of the Circum

cision and Passion of the Lord. All these sacred pledges

She had preserved with the greatest care and veneration,

as the Mother and the Treasure-keeper of heaven. In

order to consign them to the Apostles She called them

together and, with the majesty of a Queen and the ten

derness of a Mother, She told them that these remem

brances, with which She would enrich them on their

departure, were the greatest treasures in her possession;

for in them they would carry with them vivid remem

brances of her divine Son and the certain assurance,

that the Lord loved them as his children and as ministers

of the Most High. Then She handed them those relics,

which they received with tears of consolation and joy.

They thanked the great Queen for these favors and pros

trated themselves in adoration of the sacred relics. Em

bracing they bade farewell to each other, saint James

being the first to depart and commence his mission.

239. I was given to understand, that the Apostles

preached not only in the countries assigned to them by

THE CORONATION 229

saint Peter, but in many other neighboring and more re

mote regions. This is not difficult to understand; be

cause many times they were carried from one country to

another by the angels, not only in order to preach, but

in order to consult with each other, especially with the

vicar of Christ saint Peter, and still much more frequent

ly were they brought in the presence of their Queen,

whose sympathy and counsel they needed in the arduous

enterprise of planting the faith in so many different

and barbarous nations. If, in order to bring nourish

ment to Daniel, the angel took Habbacuc to Babylon

(Dan. 14, 35), it is nothing strange, that such miracles

should be performed for the Apostles in order that they

might preach Christ, make known the Divinity, and plant

the universal Church for the salvation of the human

race. Above I have made mention of the angel, who

carried Philip, one of the seventy-two disciples, from the

road of Gaza to Azotus, as related by saint Luke (Acts

8, 40). All these miracles, and innumerable others un

known to us, were necessary to these men, who were to

be sent to so many kingdoms, provinces, and peoples yet

in possession of the devil, full of idolatries, errors and

abominations, which was the condition of the world at

the time the incarnate Word came to save the human

race.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF THE

ANGELS.

240. My daughter, by the lessons contained in this

chapter I wish to draw thee to deplore, with inmost

groaning and sighing and, if possible, with tears of blood,

the difference between the state of the holy Church in

our times and that of those primitive times; how its

purest gold of holiness has been obscured (Thren. 4, 1),

230 CITY OF GOD

and the ancient beauty in which the Apostles have found

ed it, is lost; how it has sought foreign and deceitful

powders and paints to cover the horrid and distorted

ugliness of vice. In order that thou mayest penetrate

into this truth, thou must renew in thyself the considera

tion of the force and eagerness, with which the Divinity

seeks to communicate his goodness and perfection to

creatures. So great is the impetus of the river of God s

goodness overflowing on mankind, that only the free will

of man, which He has given to him in order to receive

its benefits, can raise a dam against it; and whenever,

through this free will, man resists the influence and force

of the divine Goodness, he (according to thy mode of

understanding), violates and grieves this immense love

in its very essence. But if creatures would place no ob

stacle and permit its operations, the whole soul would

be inundated and satiated with participation in its divine

essence and attributes. It would raise the fallen from

the dust, enrich the indigent children of Adam, place

them above all their miseries and seat them with the

princes of his glory (I Kings 2, 8).

241. From this, my daughter, thou wilt understand

two things unknown to human wisdom. First, how

pleasing to the highest Goodness is the service of those

who, with an ardent zeal for God s glory, devote their

labor and solicitude toward removing the obstacles, which

men place to their own justification and the communica

tion of his favors. The satisfaction of the Most High,

arising from this work in others, cannot be estimated in

this mortal life. On this account the ministry of the

Apostles, the prelates, the priests and preachers of the

divine word are so highly exalted; for they succeed in

office those, who founded the Church and who labored

in its preservation and extension; all of them are to be

THE CORONATION 231

co-operators and executors of the immense love of God

for the souls created to be sharers in his Divinity. Sec

ondly, thou must ponder the greatness and abundance of

the gifts and favors, which the infinite power communi

cates to those souls, who do not hinder his most liberal

bounty. The Lord manifested this truth immediately in

the beginnings of the evangelical Church, when, to all

those who were to enter into it, He showed his bounty by

such great prodigies and wonders, frequently sending the

Holy Ghost in a visible manner, working miracles in

those who accepted the Creed, and showering forth other

hidden favors on the faithful.

242. But most of all shone forth his almighty power

and munificence in the Apostles and disciples, because in

them there was no hindrance to his eternal and holy will

and they were true instruments and executors of the

divine love, imitators and successors of Christ and fol

lowers of truth. Hence they were elevated to an in

effable participation in the attributes of God, especially

as regards his science, holiness and power, working for

themselves and for the souls such great miracles, as

mortal man cannot ever sufficiently extol. After the

Apostles, other children were born to the Church, in

which, from generation to generation, this divine wisdom

and its effects were transplanted (Ps. 44, 17). Leaving

aside at present the innumerable martyrs who shed their

blood for Christ and gave their lives for the holy faith,

consider the founders of religions, the great saints, who

flourished in them, the doctors, the bishops, the prelates

and apostolical men, through whom the bounty and om

nipotence of God was so abundantly manifested. They

are so great, that others, who are ministers of God for

the welfare of souls, and all the faithful, can have no

excuse, even if God does not work similar ones in those

He finds fit for his operations.

232 CITY OF GOD

243. And to the greater confusion of the negligent

ministers of the Church in our days, I desire thee to un

derstand, that in his eternal decrees the Most High dis

penses his infinite treasures of the souls through the

ministry of the prelates, priests, preachers, and teachers

of his divine word. As far as his will is concerned, they

might all be angelic rather than human in their holiness

and perfection; they might enjoy many privileges and

exemptions of nature and grace, and thus become fit

ministers of the Most High, if only they would not per

vert the order of his infinite wisdom and if they lived up

to the dignity to which they are called and chosen before

all others. This infinite kindness of God is just as great

now, as in the first ages of the Church; the inclination of

the highest Goodness to enrich souls is not changed, nor

can it be ; his condescending liberality has not diminished ;

the love of his Church is always at its height; his mercy

is just as much concerned at the miseries of men, which

in our times are become innumerable; the clamor of the

sheep of Christ is louder than ever; the prelates, priests

and ministers are more numerous than heretofore. If

this is so, to what is to be attributed the loss of so many

souls and the ruin of the Christian people? Why is it,

that the infidels not only do not enter the Church, but

subject it to so much affliction and sorrow? that the prel

ates and ministers do not shine before the world, ex

hibiting the splendors of Christ, as in the ages gone

by and in the primitive Church ?

244. O my daughter, I invite thee to let thy tears flow

over this loss and ruin. Consider how the stones of the

sanctuary are scattered about in streets of the city

(Thren. 4, 1). See how the priests of the Lord have

assimilated themselves to the people (Is. 24, 2), when,

on the contrary, they should raise the people to the holi-

THE CORONATION

233

ness, which is due to priesthood. The sacerdotal dignity

and the precious vestments of virtue are soiled by con

tagion with the worldly ; the anointed of the Lord, conse

crated solely to his worship and intercourse, have lapsed

from their noble and godlike station ; they have lost their

beauty in debasing themselves to vile actions, unworthy

of their exalted position among men. They affect vanity;

they indulge greed and avarice ; they serve their own in

terest; they love money, they place their hopes in treas

ures of silver and gold; they submit to the flatteries and

to the slavery of the worldly and powerful ; and, to their

still lower degradation, they subject themselves to the pet

ty whims of women, and sometimes make themselves par

ticipants in their counsels of malice and wickedness.

There is hardly a sheep in the fold of Christ, which rec

ognizes in them the voice of its Pastor, or finds from

them the nourishment of that redeeming virtue and holi

ness, which they should show forth. The little ones ask

for bread, and there is none to distribute (Thren. 4, 4).

And if it is dealt out in self-interest or as a compliment,

how can it afford wholesome nourishment to the neces

sitous and infirm from such leprous hands? How shall

the heavenly Physician confide to such administrators the

medicine of life? Or how can the guilty ones intercede

and mediate mercy for those who are less, or even equal

ly, guilty?

245. These are the reasons why the prelates and priests

of our times do not perform the miracles of the Apostles

and disciples, and of those who in the primitive Church

imitated their lives by an ardent zeal for the honor of the

Lord and the conversion of souls. On this account the

treasures of the blood and death of Christ in the Church

do not bear the same fruits, either in his priests and

ministers, nor in the other mortals; for if they neglect

234 CITY OF GOD

and forget to make them fruitful in themselves, how

can they expect them to flow over on the rest of the hu

man family? On this account the infidels are not con

verted on learning of the true faith, although they live

within sight of the princes of the Church, the ministers

and preachers of the Gospel. The Church in our times

is richer in temporal goods, rents and possessions; it

abounds with learned men, great prelacies, and multiplied

dignities. As all these advantages are due to the blood

of Christ, they ought all to be used in his honor and ser

vice, promoting the conversion of souls, supporting his

poor and enhancing the worship and veneration of his

holy name.

246. Is this the use made of the temporal riches of

the Church? Let the captives answer, whether they are

ransomed by the rents of the Church; let the infi

dels testify, whether they are converted, whether here

sies are extirpated at the expense of the ecclesiastical

treasures. But the public voice will loudly proclaim, that

from these same treasures palaces were built, primogeni

tures established, the airy nothingness of noble titles

bought; and, what is most deplorable, it is known to

what profane and vile uses those that succeed in the ec

clesiastical office put the treasures of the Church, how

they dishonor the High-priest Christ and in their lives

depart just as far from the imitation of Christ and the

Apostles, as the most profane men of the world. If the

preaching of the divine word by these ministers is so dead

and without power of vivifying the hearers, it is not the

fault of truth or of the holy Scriptures ; but it is because

of the abuse and of the distorted intentions of those that

preach it. They seek to compromise the glory of Christ

with their own selfish honor and vain esteem, the spirit

ual goods, with base acquisition of stipends; and if those

THE CORONATION 235

two selfish ends are reached, they care not for other re

sults of their preaching. Therefore they wander away

from the pure and sincere doctrine, and sometimes even

from the truth, which the sacred authors have recorded

in the Scriptures and according to which the holy teach

ers have explained them; they slime it over with their

own ingenious subtleties, seeking to cause rather the

pleasure and admiration of their hearers than their ad

vancement. As the divine truths reach the ears of the

sinners so adulterated, they impress upon the mind rath

er the ingenious sophistry of the preacher, than the

charity of Christ; they bring with it no force or efficacy

for penetrating the hearts, although full of ingenious arti

fice to delight the ears.

247. Let not the chastisement of these vanities and

abuses, and of others unknown to the world, astonish

thee, my dearest, and be not surprised, that divine justice

has so much forsaken the prelates, ministers and preach

ers of his word, or that the Catholic Church, having

such an exalted position in its beginnings, should now be

brought to such low estate. And if there are some priests

and ministers, who are not infected with these lamentable

vices, the Church owes so much the more to my divine

Son in these times, when He is so deeply offended and

outraged. With those that are zealous, He is most liber

al; but they are few in number, as is evident from the

ruin of the Christian people and from the contempt into

which the priests and preachers of the Gospel have fallen.

For if the number of the perfect and the zealous workers

were great, without a doubt sinners would reform and

amend their lives ; many infidels would be converted ; all

would look upon and hear with reverence and fear such

preachers, priests and prelates, they would respect them

for their dignity and holiness, and not for their usurped

236 CITY OF GOD

authority and outward show, which induces a reverence

too much like worldly applause and altogether without

fruit. Do not be afraid or abashed for having written all

this for they themselves know that it is the truth and thou

dost not write of thy own choice, but at my command.

Hence bewail such a sad state, and invite heaven and

earth to help thee in thy weeping ; for there are few who

sorrow on account of it, and this is the greatest of all the

injuries committed against the Lord by the children of

the Church.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL AND THE PART TAKEN

THEREIN BY MOST HOLY MARY; OTHER HIDDEN

MYSTERIES.

248. Our mother the Church, governed by the divine

Spirit, celebrates the conversion of saint Paul as one of

the greatest miracles of grace for the consolation of sin

ners ; for, from a virulent and blasphemous persecutor of

the name of Christ, as saint Paul calls himself (1 Tim. 1,

13), he was changed to an Apostle obtaining mercy

through divine grace. As in obtaining it our great Queen

bore such a prominent part, this rare miracle of the Om

nipotent must not be passed over in this history. But its

greatness can be better understood if the state of saint

Paul as a persecutor of the Church at the time of his

calling is explained, and when the causes, which induced

him to signalize himself as such a strong champion of the

law of Moses and bitter persecutor of Christ, are known.

249. Saint Paul was distinguished in Judaism for two

reasons. The one was his own character, and the other

was the diligence of the demon in availing himself of his

naturally good qualities. Saint Paul was of a disposition

generous, magnanimous, most noble, kind, active, cour

ageous and constant. He had acquired many of the

moral virtues. He glorified in being a staunch professor

of the law of Moses, and in being studious and learned

in it ; although in truth he was ignorant of its essence, as

he himself confesses to Timothy, because all his learning

was human and terrestrial ; like many Jews, he knew

237

238 CITY OF GOD

the law merely from the outside, without its spirit and

without the divine insight, which was necessary to under

stand it rightly and to penetrate its mysteries. But as his

ignorance seemed to him real knowledge and as he was

gifted with a retentive memory and keen understanding,

he was a great zealot for the traditions of the rabbis

(Gal. 1, 14). He judged it an outrage and absurdity,

that (as he thought), a new law, invented by a Man

crucified as a criminal, should be published in opposition

to them and to that law, which was given by God himself

and received by Moses on the mount (Exod. 24). Hence

he conceived a great hatred and contempt for Christ, his

law and his disciples. Steeped in this error he called into

activity all his moral virtues, (if that can be called virtue

which was devoid of true chanty), and prided himself

much in combating the errors of others. For that is a

common fault with the children of Adam, that they please

themselves in some good work without making the much

more important effort to reform some of their vices. In

this self-deception lived and acted Saul, deeply con

vinced that he was zealously promoting the honor of God

in upholding the ancient law of Moses and its divine or-

dainments. It appeared to him that in acting thus he

was defending God s honor ; for he had not really under

stood this law, which in its ceremonies and figures was

but temporal and not eternal and which was necessarily

to be abrogated by a more wise and powerful Legislator,

as Moses himself foretold (Deut. 18, 15).

250. This indiscreet zeal and vehemence was fanned

by the malice of Lucifer and his ministers, who irritated

and roused him to even greater hatred against the law

of our Savior Jesus Christ. Many times have I in the

course of this history mentioned the malicious attempts

and infernal schemes of this dragon against the holy

THE CORONATION 239

Church. Among them was his anxious search for men,

who should serve as apt and efficient instruments and

executors of his malice. Lucifer by himself or his

demons, although they are able to tempt men singly, are

yet unable to raise up their rebellious banners in public

or become leaders in any sect or sedition against God,

unless it be through the assistance of some human being

in leading on the blind and unenlightened. This cruel

enemy was infuriated by the happy beginnings of the

holy Church; he feared its progress, and burned with

envy to see beings of a lower nature than himself raised

to the participation of the Divinity and glory, which he

himself had lost. He recognized the inclinations of

Saul, his habits and the state of his interior, and all

seemed to harmonize well with his own designs of de

stroying the Church of Christ through the willing hands

of unbelievers.

251. Lucifer consulted the other demons concerning

this wicked plan in a meeting held especially for this

purpose. With common accord the dragon and others

of the demons resolved ceaselessly to urge on Saul by

stirring up his anger against the Apostles and the whole

flock of Christ, using suggestions and reasonings adapted

to his state of mind; and, in order that he might be the

sooner influenced by them, they were to represent his in

dignation as a virtue to be gloried in. The demons exe

cuted this resolve to the letter and without losing any

occasion. Although Paul was dissatisfied and opposed to

the teaching of our Lord even before his death on the

Cross; yet he had not yet declared himself so zealous

a defender of the law of Moses and adversary of the

Lord. It was only at the death of saint Stephen, that

he showed the wrath, which the infernal dragon had

roused against the followers of Christ. As that enemy had

240 CITY OF GOD

found the heart of Saul on that occasion so ready to exe

cute all his malicious suggestions, he became so arrogant

in his malice, that it seemed to him he need not desire

more, and that this man would offer no resistance to any

malice he ever could propose.

252. In his impious presumption Lucifer tried to in

duce Saul to attempt single-handed the life of all the

Apostles, and, with still greater presumption, even the

life of the most blessed Mary. To such a point of in

sanity rose the pride of this most bloodthirsty dragon.

But he deceived himself. The disposition of Saul was

most noble and generous, and therefore it appeared to

him beneath his dignity and honor to stoop to such crimes

and act the part of an assassin, when he could, as it

seemed to him, destroy the law of Christ by the power of

reasoning and open justice. He felt a still greater horror

at the thought of killing the most blessed Mother, on ac

count of the regard due to Her as a woman; and because

he had seen Her so composed and constant in the labors

and in the Passion of Christ. On this account She

seemed to him a magnanimous Woman and worthy of

veneration. She had indeed won his respect, together

with some compassion for her sorrows and afflictions,

the magnitude of which had become publicly known.

Hence he gave no admittance to the inhuman suggestions

of the demon against the life of the most blessed Mary.

This compassion for Her hastened not a little the con

version of Saul. Neither did he further entertain the

treacherous designs against the apostles, although Luci

fer sought to make their assassination appear as a deed

worthy of his courageous spirit. Rejecting all these wick

ed thoughts, he resolved to incite all the Jews to perse

cute the Church, until it should be destroyed together

with the name of Christ.

THE CORONATION 241

253. As the dragon and his cohorts could not attain

more, they contented themselves with having brought

Saul at least to this resolve. The dreadful wrath of

these demons against God and his creatures can be esti

mated from the fact, that on that very day they held

another meeting in order to consult how they could pre

serve the life of this man, whom they had found so well

adapted to execute their malice. These deadly enemies

well know, that they have no jurisdiction over the lives

of men, and that they can neither give nor take life, un

less permitted by God on some particular occasion ; never

theless they wished to make themselves the guardians and

the physicians of the life and health of Saul as far as

their power extended, namely, by keeping active his fore

thought against whatever was harmful and suggesting

the use of what was naturally beneficial to the welfare

of life and limb. Yet with all their efforts they were

unable to hinder the work of grace, when God so wished

it. Far were they from suspecting, that Saul would

ever accept the faith of Christ, and that the life, which

they were trying to preserve and lengthen, was to re

dound to their own ruin and torment. Such events are

provided by the wisdom of the Most High, in order that

the devil, being deceived by his evil counsels, may fall in

to his own pits and snares, and in order that all his

machinations may serve for the fulfillment of the divine

and irresistible will.

254. Such were the decrees of the highest Wisdom in

order that the conversion of Saul might be more wonder

ful and glorious. With this intention God permitted

Satan, after the death of saint Stephen, to instigate Saul

to go to the chief priests with fierce threats against the

disciples of Christ, who had left Jerusalem, and to solicit

permission for bringing them as prisoners to Jerusalem

242 CITY OF GOD

from wherever he should find them (Acts 9, 1). For

this enterprise Saul offered his person and possessions,

and even his life ; at his own cost and without salary he

made this journey in order that the new Law, preached

by the disciples of the Crucified, might not prevail

against the Law of his ancestors. This offer was readily

favored by the high-priest and his counselors; they im

mediately gave to Saul the commission he asked, especial

ly to go to Damascus, whither, according to report, some

of the disciples had retired after leaving Jerusalem. He

prepared for the journey, hiring officers of justice and

some soldiers to accompany him. But his by far most

numerous escort were the many legions of demons, who

in order to assist him in this enterprise, came forth from

hell, hoping that with all this show of force and through

Saul, they might be able to make an end of the Church

and entirely devastate it with fire and blood. This was

really the intention of Saul, and the one with which Luci

fer and his demons sought to inspire him and his com

panions. But let us leave him for the present on his

journey to Damascus, anxious to seize all the disciples

of Christ, whom he should find in the synagogues of that

city.

255. Nothing of all this was unknown to the Queen

of heaven ; for in addition to her science and vision pene

trating to the inmost thoughts of men and demons, the

Apostles were solicitous in keeping Her informed of all

that befell the followers of her Son. Long before this

time She had known that Saul was to be an Apostle of

Christ, a preacher to the gentiles, and a man distinguished

and wonderful in the Church ; for of all these things her

Son informed Her, as I said in the second part of this

history. But as She saw the persecution becoming more

violent and the glorious fruits and results of the con-

THE CORONATION 243

version of Saul delayed, and as She moreover saw how

the disciples of Christ, who knew nothing of the secret

intentions of the Most High, were afflicted and some

what discouraged at the fury and persistence of his per

secution, the kindest Mother was filled with great sorrow.

Considering, in her heavenly prudence, how im

portant was this affair, She roused Herself to new cour

age and confidence in her prayers for the welfare of the

Church and the conversion of Saul. Prostrate in the

presence of her Son, She poured forth the following

prayer :

256. "Most high Lord, Son of the eternal Father, true

God of the true God, engendered of his own and indivisi

ble substance and, by the ineffable condescension of thy

infinite goodness, become my Son and the life of my

soul, how shall I, thy slave, continue to live, if the per

secution of the beloved Church Thou hast commended to

my care shall prevail and be not put down by thy al

mighty power? How shall my heart behold the fruit

of thy precious blood despised and trodden under foot?

If Thou, my Lord, givest to me the children begotten by

Thee in the Church and if I am to love them and look

upon them as a Mother, how shall I be consoled, when

I see them thus oppressed and destroyed for confessing

thy holy name and loving Thee with a sincere heart?

Thine is the power and the wisdom ; and it is not proper

that he should glory against Thee, who is the dragon of

hell, the enemy of thy name, and the slanderer of my

children and thy brethren. My Son, confound the pride

of this ancient serpent, which in its pride rises up anew

to vent its fury against the simple sheep of thy flock.

Behold how Lucifer has drawn into his deceits Saul,

whom Thou hast chosen and set apart as thy Apostle. It

is time, O my God, that Thou show thy Omnipotence and

244 CITY OF GOD

save this soul, through whom and in whom thy name is

to be so highly exalted, and so much good to be secured

for all the world."

257. The most blessed Lady persevered in this prayer

for a long time, offering to suffer and die, if necessary,

for the welfare of the holy Church and the conversion of

Saul. As in his infinite wisdom her divine Son had fore

seen this mediation of his beloved Mother, He descended

from Heaven and appeared to Her in person, while She

was praying in the retirement of her oratory. He said

to Her: "My beloved Mother, in whom I find the ful

fillment of all my will and pleasure, what are thy re

quests? Tell Me what thou wishest?" As usual She

prostrated Herself in the presence of her divine Son and

adoring Him as the true God, said : "My highest Lord,

far in advance dost Thou know the hearts and the

thoughts of thy creatures, and my desires are open to

thy eyes. My petitions are those of one knowing thy in

finite charity for men, of the mother of thy Church, the

advocate of sinners and thy slave. If I have received all

from Thee without my merit, I cannot fear to be un

heard in my desires for thy glory. I ask, O my Son, that

Thou look upon the affliction of thy Church and that,

like a loving Father, Thou hasten the relief of thy chil

dren engendered by thy most precious blood."

258. The Lord delighted in the voice and clamors of

his most loving Mother and Spouse; and therefore He

asked more particularly, as if ignorant of what She de

sired Him to grant and what beforehand could not be

denied to her great merits and love. In these ruses of

love Christ our Lord continued for some time con

versing with his sweetest Mother, while She pleaded

for the end of persecution and the conversion of Saul.

Among other things He said: "My Mother, if in my

THE CORONATION 245

mercy I show clemency to Saul, how shall my justice be

satisfied, since Saul persists in the deepest unbelief and

malice and with all his heart serves my enemies for the

destruction of my Church and the blotting out of my

name from the face of the earth, thus meriting my wrath

and chastisement ?" To this argument, which was so con

clusive on the side of justice, the Mother of mercy and

wisdom was not at a loss for response, and She answered :

"My Lord and eternal God, my Son, the turgid floods of

guilt in Saul were not sufficient to extinguish the fire of

thy divine love, when, as Thou hast thyself manifested

to me, Thou didst choose Paul as thy Apostle and as a

vase of election, acceptable to thy divine mind and worthy

to be written in thy memory. More powerful and effica

cious were thy infinite mercies, by which Thou hast

founded thy beloved Church, and therefore I do not ask

anything, which Thou thyself hast not resolved upon

beforehand; but I grieve, my Son, that this soul should

proceed to greater length for the ruin and perdition of

itself and of others (if it can be like that of others), and

that a hindrance should be placed to the glory of thy

name, to the joy of the angels and saints, to the consola

tion of the just, to the confidence afforded to sinners,

and to the confusion of thy enemies. Do not then, my

Son and Lord, despise the prayers of thy Mother; let

thy divine decrees be executed and let me see thy name

magnified; for the time and the occasion are opportune

and my heart cannot suffer such a blessing to be

delayed."

259. During this appeal the charity in the bosom of the

most chaste Virgin Queen broke out into such a flame,

that without a doubt it would have consumed her nat

ural life, if the Lord had not preserved Her by the miracu

lous interference of his almighty power. Although in

246 CITY OF GOD

order to enjoy the delight of the excessive love of this

Creature, He permitted his blessed Mother to suffer some

sensible pain and, as it were, to fall into a kind of swoon,

yet her Son, who according to our way of understanding,

could not longer resist the love which wounded his heart,

consoled and restored Her by yielding to her prayers.

He said: "My Mother, chosen among all creatures, let

thy will be done without delay. I will do with Saul as

Thou askest, and will so change him, that from this mo

ment he will be a defender of the Church which he per

secutes, and a preacher of my name and glory. I shall

now proceed to receive him immediately into my friend

ship and grace."

260. Thereupon Jesus Christ our Lord disappeared

from the presence of his most blessed Mother leaving

Her still engaged in prayer and furnished with a clear

insight into what was to happen. Shortly afterward the

Lord appeared to Saul on the road near Damascus,

whither, in his ever increasing fury against Jesus, his

accelerated journey had already brought him. The Lord

showed himself to Saul in a resplendent cloud amid im

mense glory, and at the same time Saul was flooded with

divine light without and within, and his heart and senses

were overwhelmed beyond power of resistance (Acts 9,

4). He fell suddenly from his horse to the ground and

at the same time he heard a voice from on high saying:

"Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute Me?" Full of fear

and consternation he answered : "Who art Thou, Lord?"

The voice replied : "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest ;

it is hard for thee to kick against the goad of my omnip

otence." Again Saul answered with greater fear and

trembling: "Lord, what dost Thou command and de

sire to do with me?" The companions of Saul heard

these questions and answers, though they did not see the

THE CORONATION

247

Savior. They saw the splendor surrounding him and all

of them were filled with dread and astonishment at this

sudden and unthought of event, and they were for some

time dumbfounded.

261. This new wonder, surpassing all that had been

seen in the world before, was greater and more far-reach

ing than what could be taken in by the senses. For Saul

was not only prostrated in body, blinded and bereft of

his strength so that, if the divine power had not sustained

him, he would have immediately expired; but also as to

his interior he suffered more of a change than when

he passed from nothingness into existence at his con

ception, farther removed from what he was before than

light from darkness, or the highest heaven from the

lowest earth; for he was changed from an image of the

demon to that of one of the highest and most ardent

seraphim. This triumph over Lucifer and his demons

had been especially reserved by God for his divine Wis

dom and Omnipotence ; so that, in virtue of the Passion

and Death of Christ this dragon and his malice might be

vanquished by the human nature of one man, in whom

the effects of grace and Redemption were set in oppo

sition to the sin of Lucifer and all its effects. Thus it

happened that in the same short time, in which Lucifer

through pride was changed from an angel to a devil, the

power of Christ changed Saul from a demon into an

angel in grace. In the angelic nature the highest beauty

turned into the deepest ugliness ; and in the human nature

the greatest perversity into the highest moral perfection.

Lucifer descended as the enemy of God from heaven to

the deepest abyss of the earth, and a man ascended as a

friend of God from the earth to the highest heaven.

262. And since this triumph would not have been suf

ficiently glorious, if the Lord had not given more than

248 CITY OF GOD

Lucifer had lost, the Omnipotent wished to add in saint

Paul an additional triumph to his victory over the demon.

For Lucifer, although he fell from that exceedingly high

grace which he had received, had never possessed beatific

vision, nor had he made himself worthy of it, and hence

could not lose what he did not possess. But Paul, im

mediately on disposing himself for justification and on

gaining grace, began to partake of glory and clearly saw

the Divinity, though this vision was gradual. O invin

cible virtue of the divine power! O infinite efficacy of

the merits of the life and death of Christ! It was cer

tainly reasonable and just, that if the malice of sin in one

instant changed the angel into a demon, that the grace

of the Redeemer should be more powerful and abound

more than sin (Rom. 5, 20), raising up from it a man,

not only to place him into original grace, but into glory.

Greater is this wonder than the creation of heaven and

earth with all the creatures; greater than to give sight

to the blind, health to the sick, life to the dead. Let us

congratulate the sinners on the hope inspired by this won

derful justification, since we have for our Restorer, for

our Father, and for our Brother the same Lord, who

justified Paul; and He is not less powerful nor less holy

for us, than for saint Paul.

263. During the time in which Paul lay prostrate up

on the earth, he was entirely renewed by sanctifying

grace and other infused gifts, restored and illumined pro

portionately in all his interior faculties, and thus he was

prepared to be elevated to the empyrean heaven, which is

called the third heaven. He himself confesses, that he

did not know whether he was thus elevated in body or only

in spirit (I Cor. 12, 4). But there, by more than ordi

nary vision, though in a transient manner, he saw the

Divinity clearly and intuitively. Besides the being of

THE CORONATION 249

God and his attributes of infinite perfection, he recog

nized the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption,

and all the secrets of the law of grace and of the state

of the Church. He saw the peerless blessing of his justi

fication and of the prayer of saint Stephen for him ; and

still more clearly was he made aware of the prayers of

the most holy Mary and how his conversion had been

hastened through Her; and that, after Christ, her merits

had made him acceptable in the sight of God. From

that hour on he was filled with gratitude and with deep

est veneration and devotion to the great Queen of heaven,

whose dignity was now manifest to him and whom he

thenceforth acknowledged as his Restorer. At the same

time he recognized the office of Apostle to which he was

called, and that in it he was to labor and suffer unto

death. In conjunction with these mysteries were re

vealed to him many others, of which he himself says

that they are not to be disclosed (II Cor. 7, 4). He

offered himself in sacrifice to the will of God in all

things, as he showed afterwards in the course of his life.

The most blessed Trinity accepted this sacrifice and offer

ing of his lips and in the presence of the whole court of

heaven named and designated him as the preacher and

teacher of the gentiles, and as a vase of election for

carrying through the world the name of the Most High.

264. For the blessed in heaven this day was one of

great accidental joy and jubilee, and all of them com

posed new songs of praise and exaltation of the divine

power for such a rare and extraordinary miracle. If at

the conversion of any sinner they are filled with joy

(Luke 15, 7), with what joy were they not filled at see

ing the greatness of the Lord s mercy thus manifested and

such an immense blessing conferred upon all the mortals

for the glory of his holy Church? Saul came out of his

250 CITY OF GOD

rapture changed into Paul; and rising from the ground

he seemed to be blind and could not see the light of the

sun. His companions brought him to Damascus to the

house of one of his acquaintances and there to the ad

miration of all, he remained three days without eating

or drinking engaged in earnest prayer. He prostrated

himself on the ground and, as he was now in a state to

deplore his sins, with deepest sorrow and detestation

of his past life, he prayed : "Woe is me, in what dark

ness and blindness have I lived, and how far have I

hastened on the way of eternal perdition. O infinite

love ! O charity without measure ! O infinite sweetness

of the eternal bounty ! Who, O my Lord and God, has

induced Thee to act thus toward me the vile worm of the

earth, thy enemy and blasphemer? But who could in

duce Thee except thyself and the prayers of thy Mother

and Spouse? When I in blindness and darkness perse

cuted Thee, Thou, most kind Lord, earnest to meet me.

While I was busy shedding the innocent blood which shall

always cry out against me, Thou, the God of mercies,

didst wash and purify me with thy own and make me

a partaker of thy ineffable Divinity. How shall I praise

eternally such unheard of mercies? How shall I suffi

ciently bewail a life so hateful in thy eyes ? The heavens

and the earth proclaim thy glory. I shall preach thy

holy name and shall defend it in the midst of thy ene

mies." Such and other aspirations saint Paul repeated

with matchless sorrow and with acts of the most ardent

charity and with the deepest and most humble gratitude.

265. On tHe third day after the disablement and con

version of Saul the Lord spoke in a vision to one of the

disciples, Ananias, living in Damascus (Acts 9, 10).

Calling him by name as his servant and friend, the Lord

told him to go to the house of a man named Judas in a

THE CORONATION 251

certain district of the city and there to find Saul of

Tarsus, whom he would find engaged in prayer. At the

same time Saul had also a vision, in which he saw and

recognized the disciple Ananias coming to him and re

storing sight to him by the imposition of hands. But of

this vision of Saul, Ananias at that time had no knowl

edge. Therefore he answered: "Lord, I have informa

tion of this man having persecuted thy saints in Jerusa

lem and caused a great slaughter of them in Jerusalem;

and not satisfied with this, he has now come with war

rants from the high-priests in order to seize whomever

he can find invoking thy holy name. Dost thou then

send a simple sheep like myself to go in search of the

wolf, that desires to devour it?" The Lord replied : "Go,

for the one thou judgest to be my enemy, is for Me a

vase of election, in order that he may carry my name

through all the nations and kingdoms, and to the children

of Israel. And I can, as I shall, assign to him what he

is to suffer for my name." And the disciple was at once

informed of all that had happened.

266. Relying on this word of the Lord, Ananias

obeyed and betook himself at once to the house, in which

saint Paul then was. He found him in prayer and said

to him : "Brother Saul, our Lord Jesus, who appeared

to thee on thy journey, sends me in order that thou mayest

receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." He

received holy Communion at the hands of Ananias

and was strengthened and made whole, giving thanks to

the Author of all these blessings. Then he partook of

some corporal nourishment, of which he had not tasted

for three days. He remained for some time in Damas

cus, conferring and conversing with the disciples in that

city. He prostrated himself at their feet asking their

pardon and begging them to receive him as their servant

252 CITY OF GOD

and brother, even as the least and most unworthy of

them all. At their approval and counsel he went forth

publicly to preach Christ as the Messias and Redeemer

of the world and with such fervor, wisdom and zeal, that

he brought confusion to the unbelieving Jews in the

numerous synagogues of Damascus. All wondered at

this unexpected change and, in great astonishment, said :

Is not this the man, who in Jerusalem has persecuted with

fire and sword all who invoke that name? And has he

not come to bring them prisoners to the chief priests of

that city? What change then is this, which we see in

him?

267. Saint Paul grew stronger each day and with in

creasing force continued his preaching to the gathering

of the Jews and gentiles. Accordingly they schemed to

take away his life and then happened, what we shall

touch upon later. The miraculous conversion of saint

Paul took place one year and one month after the

martyrdom of saint Stephen, on the twenty-fifth of

January, the same day on which the Church celebrates

that feast; and it was in the year thirty-six of the birth

of our Lord; because saint Stephen, as is said in chapter

the twelfth, died completing his thirty-fourth year and

one day of his thirty-fifth; whereas the conversion of

saint Paul took place after he had completed one month

of the thirty-sixth; and then saint James departed on his

missionary journey, as I will say in its place.

268. Let us return to our great Queen and Lady of

the angels, who by means of her vision knew all that was

happening to Saul; his first and most unhappy state of

mind, his fury against the name of Christ, his sudden

casting down and its cause, his conversion, and above all

his extraordinary and miraculous elevation to the

empyrean heaven and vision of God, besides all the rest,

THE CORONATION 253

that happened to him in Damascus. This knowledge was

not only proper and due to Her, because She was the

Mother of the Lord and of his holy Church and the in

strument of this great wonder; but also because She

alone could properly estimate this miracle, even more so

than saint Paul and more than the whole mystical body

of the Church; for it was not just, that such an unheard

of blessing and such a prodigious work of the Omnipo

tent should . remain without recognition and gratitude

among mortals. This the most blessed Mary rendered in

all plenitude and She was the first One, who celebrated

this solemn event with the acknowledgment due to it

from the whole human race. The holy Mother invited

all her holy angels and many others from heaven, who,

forming into alternate choirs, sang with Her canticles

of praise in exaltation of the power, wisdom and liberal

mercy of the Almighty toward Paul; and others on the

merits of her most holy Son, in virtue of which this con

version, so full of prodigies and miracles, had been

wrought. By this thanksgiving and fidelity of most

holy Mary the Most High (according to our way of

understanding such things), as it were, compensated

Himself for having so highly favored the Church in this

conversion of saint Paul.

269. But let us not pass over in silence the reflections

of the new Apostle concerning what the kindest Mother

might think of him now, and must have thought of him

as such an enemy and persecutor of her most holy Son

and his disciples, intent on the destruction of the Church.

The loving conjectures of saint Paul in this matter arose

not so much from ignorance, as from his humility and

veneration toward the Mother of Jesus. But he did not

know that the great Lady was cognizant of all that had

happened in connection with him. Although from this

254 CITY OF GOD

newly acquired knowledge of heavenly things in God he

had recognized Her as his most kind Helper in his con

version and salvation; yet the wickedness\* of his past life

abashed, humiliated and somewhat frightened him, as

one un worthy of the favor of such a Mother, whose Son

he had persecuted so furiously and blindly. It seemed

to him that for the pardoning of such grave sins an in

finite mercy was necessary, and Mary was a mere

creature. On the other hand, he was encouraged by the

thought, that She, in imitation of her Son, had pardoned

his executioners. The disciples also told him, how kind

and sweet She was with sinners and the needy ; and then

he was inflamed with the ardent desire of seeing Her

and he resolved in his mind to throw himself at her feet

and to kiss the ground whereon She walked. But im

mediately he was again overcome by shame at the thought

of appearing before Her, who was the true Mother of

Jesus, still in mortal flesh and so deeply wronged by his

conduct. He discussed within himself, whether he

should not ask Her to punish him, because that would

be some sort of satisfaction; yet again this vengeance

seemed foreign to her gentleness, since She had ob

tained for him through her prayers such immense mercy.

270. Amid these and other disquieting\* thoughts the

Lord permitted saint Paul to suffer a harrowing, yet

sweet sorrow; and at last he said to himself: "Take

heart, vile and sinful man, for without a doubt She will

receive and pardon thee, since She has interceded for

thee as the true Mother of Him who died for thy salva

tion, and She will act as the Mother of such a Son, since

both of Them are all mercy and kindness and will not

despise the contrite and humble heart" (Ps. 50, 19). The

fears and doubts of saint Paul were not hidden from the

heavenly Mother; for She knew all through her exalted

THE CORONATION 255

science. She knew also that the Apostle would not find

an occasion to see Her for a long time. Moved by her

maternal love and compassion, She would not permit this

consolation to be postponed to such a distant period.

Therefore, in order to bring- it to him from Jerusalem,

She called one of her angels and said to him : "Heavenly

spirit and minister of my Son and Lord, I am moved

to compassion at the sorrow and trouble in the humble

heart of Paul. I beg thee, my angel, go immediately to

Damascus and console and comfort him in his fears.

Congratulate him on his good fortune and remind him

of the thanks he owes eternally to my Son and Lord for

the clemency with which He has drawn him to his friend

ship and chosen him as his Apostle. Tell him, that never

has such mercy been shown to any man as to him. And

in my own name tell him, that I shall aid him as a Mother

in all his labors and serve him as the Handmaid of all

the Apostles and ministers of the name and doctrine of

my Son. Give him my blessing in the name of Him, who

condescended to assume flesh in my womb and to be

nursed at my breast."

271. The holy angel immediately fulfilled the com

mission of his Queen and quickly appeared to saint Paul,

who had remained in continued prayer ; for this happened

on the day after his Baptism and on the fourth after his

conversion. The angel manifested himself in human

form, wonderfully beautiful and resplendent, and ful

filled all the orders of Mary. Saint Paul listened to his

message with incomparable humility, reverence, and joy

of spirit, and thus replied to the angel : "Minister of the

omnipotent and eternal God, I, the most vile of men, be

seech thee, sweetest heavenly spirit, do thou, according

as thou seest me indebted to the condescending mercy of

the infinite God, give Him thanks and due praise, for

256 CITY OF GOD

having so undeservedly marked me with the character and

divine light of his children. The more I flew from his

immense bounty, the more He followed me and advanced

to meet me; when I delivered myself over to death, He

gave me life; when I persecuted Him as an enemy, He

raised me to his grace and friendship, recompensing the

greatest injuries with the most extraordinary blessings.

No one ever rendered himself so hateful and abominable

as I; yet no one was so freely pardoned and favored

(I Tim. 1, 13). He snatched me from the mouth of the

lion in order that I might be one of the sheep of his

flock. Thou art a witness of it all, my lord; help me

to be eternally grateful. And I beseech thee, tell the

Mother of mercy and my Lady, that this her unworthy

slave lies prostrate at her feet, adoring the ground on

which they tread and with a contrite heart asking Her

to pardon him for having so daringly sought to destroy

the honor and name of her Son and true God. Beseech

Her to forget my offense and deal with this blasphemous

sinner as the Mother who as a Virgin conceived, brought

forth and nursed the Lord, who had given Her life and

had chosen Her for this purpose from amongst all

creatures. I am deserving of chastisement and retribu

tion for so many sins and I am prepared to suffer all;

but I am aware of the clemency of her heart and I shall

not declare myself undesirous of her favor and protec

tion. Let Her receive me as a child of the Church which

She loves so much. All the days of my life I shall de

vote myself entirely to its increase and defense and to

the service of Her, whom I recognize as my salvation

and as the Mother of grace."

272. The holy angel returned with this answer to the

most blessed Mary ; and although in her wisdom She well

knew it, he repeated it to Her, She heard it with an

THE CORONATION 257

especial joy and again gave thanks and praise to the Most

High for the works of his divine right hand in the new

Apostle saint Paul, and for the benefits which would re

sult therefrom to his holy Church and the faithful. Of

the confusion and rout of the demons at the conversion

of saint Paul, and of many other secrets made known to

me concerning the malice of the devils I shall speak, as

far as possible, in the next chapter.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF THE

ANGELS, MOST HOLY MARY.

273. My daughter, none of the faithful should be ig

norant of the fact, that the Most High could have drawn

and converted saint Paul without resorting to such

miracles of his infinite power. But He made use of

them in order to show men, how much his bounty is in

clined to pardon them and raise them to his friendship

and grace, and in order to teach them, by the example of

this great Apostle, how they, on their part, should co

operate and respond to his calls. Many souls the Lord

wakes up and urges on by his inspiration and help. Many

do respond and justify themselves through the Sacra

ments of the Church; but not all persevere in their justi

fication and still a fewer number follow it up or strive

after perfection : beginning in spirit, they relax, and finish

in the flesh. The cause of their want of perseverance in

grace and relapse into their sins is their not imitating

the spirit of saint Paul at his conversion, when he ex

claimed : "Lord, what is it Thou wishest with me, and

what shall I do for Thee?" If some of them proclaim

this sentiment with their lips, it is not from their whole

heart, and they always retain some love of themselves, of

honor, of possessions, of sensual pleasure or of some

258 CITY OF GOD

occasion of sin, and thus they soon again stumble and

fall.

274. But the Apostle was a true and living example of

one converted by the light of grace, not only because he

passed from an extreme of sin into that of wonder

ful grace and friendship of God ; but also because he co

operated to his utmost with the call of God, departing at

once and entirely from all his evil dispositions and self-

seeking and placing himself entirely at the disposal of the

divine will and pleasure. This total denegation of self

and surrender to the will of God is contained in those

words: "Lord, what dost Thou wish to do with me?"

and in it consisted, as far as depended upon him, all his

salvation. As he pronounced them with all the sincerity

of a contrite and humbled heart, he renounced his own

will and delivered himself over to that of the Lord, re

solved from that moment forward to permit none of his

faculties of mind or sense to serve the animal or sensual

life into which he had strayed. He delivered himself over

to the service of the Almighty in whatever manner or

direction should become known to him as being the divine

will, ready to execute it without delay or questioning.

And this he immediately set about by entering the city

and obeying the command of the Lord given through

the disciple Ananias. As the Most High searches the

secrets of the human heart, He saw the sincerity, with

which saint Paul corresponded to his vocation and yield

ed to his divine will and disposition. He not only

received him with great pleasure, but multiplied exceed

ingly his graces, gifts and wonderful favors, which even

Paul would not have received or ever have merited with

out this entire submission to the wishes of the Lord.

275. Conformably to these truths, my daughter, I de

sire thee to execute fully my oft-repeated commands and

THE CORONATION 259

exhortations, that thou forget the visible, the apparent

and deceitful. Repeat very often, and more with the

heart than with the lips those words of saint Paul : "Lord,

what dost Thou wish to do with me?" For as soon as

thou beginnest to do anything of thy own choice, it

will not be true, that thou seekest solely the will of the

Lord. The instrument has no motion or action except

that imparted to it by the artisan; and if it had its own

will, it would be able to resist and act contrary to the

will of the one using it. The same holds true between

God and the soul : for, if it entertains any desire of its

own independently of God, it will militate against the

pleasure of the Lord. As He keeps inviolate the liberty

of action conceded to man, He will permit it to lead man

astray, as soon as he decides for himself without refer

ence to the direction of his Maker.

276. And since it is not proper that the doings of

creatures in this mortal life should be miraculously gov

erned by the divine power, God, in order that men might

not advance false excuses, has implanted a law into their

hearts and also constituted his holy Church, in order

that they might know the divine will and regulate their

conduct in the fulfilling of it. Moreover, for additional

security, He has appointed superiors and ministers in his

Church, in order that hearing and obeying them, men

might obey the Lord in them. All this security thou, my

dearest, possessest in fullness, so that thou shouldst

neither admit of any movement, thought, desire of thy

own, nor fulfill thy own will in anything independently

of the will and direction of him who has charge of thy

soul; for him the Lord sends to thee, just as He sent

Ananias to saint Paul. Moreover thou art in a particu

lar manner obliged to this obedience, because the Most

High looks upon thee with an especial love and grace and

260 CITY OF GOD

desires to use thee as an instrument in his hands, as

sists thee, governs thee, and moves thee directly as wel/

as indirectly through me and his holy angels ; and all this

He continues to do faithfully, as is well known to thee.

Consider then, how much reason thou hast to die to thy

own desires and live only for the will of God, and that

it alone should give life to all thy actions and operations.

Cut short therefore all thy reflections and self-reliance

and remember, that, even if thou shouldst have the wis

dom of the most learned, the counsel of the most pru

dent, and the natural intelligence of the angels, thou

couldst, with all this, know how to execute his will far

less perfectly than by resigning and leaving all to his

divine pleasure. He alone knows what is suitable to thee

and seeks it with an eternal love ; He chose thy ways and

governs thee in them. Permit thyself to be guided by his

divine light, without losing time in doing thy duty; for

in this delay lurks the danger of erring, and in my doc

trine lie all security and success. Write it in thy heart

and fulfill it with all thy strength, in order that thou

mayest merit my intercession and, through it, to be

brought near to the Most High.

CHAPTER XV.

THE HIDDEN COMBAT OF THE DEMONS AGAINST SOULS ;

HOW THE MOST HIGH DEFENDS THEM THROUGH HIS

HOLY ANGELS, THROUGH THE MOST BLESSED VIRGIN,

AND BY HIS OWN POWER; THE CONSULTATION HELD

BY THE HELLISH FOES AGAINST THE QUEEN AND THE

CHURCH AFTER THE CONVERSION OF SAINT PAUL.

277. By the abundant testimony of holy Scriptures

and later, by the teaching of the holy doctors and masters

of the spiritual life, the whole Catholic Church and all

its children are informed of the malice and most vigilant

cruelty of hell against all men in seeking to draw them

to the eternal .torments. From the same sources we

know also how the infinite power of God defends us, so

that, if we wish to avail ourselves of his invincible friend

ship and protection, and if we on our part make ourselves

worthy of the merits of Christ our Savior, we shall walk

securely on the path of eternal salvation. In order to

assure us in this hope and to console us, all the holy

Scriptures, as saint Paul assures us, were written. But

at the same time we must exert ourselves, lest our hopes

be made vain through want of our co-operation. Hence

saint Paul joins one with the other; for, having admon

ished us to throw all our care upon the Lord who is so

licitous for us, he adds immediately: Be sober and

watch, because your adversary the devil goes about like

a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.

278. These and other advices of the sacred Scripture

are given both in general and for each one in particular.

And although from them and from continued experience

261

262 CITY OF GOD

the children of the Church might arrive at a more definite

and particular knowledge of the attacks and persecutions

of the devils against all men ; yet, because in their earth-

liness and gross sensuality they are accustomed to attend

only to what they perceive by the senses and never lift

their thoughts to higher things, they live in a false se

curity, ignoring the inhuman and hidden cruelty with

which the devils solicit and draw them to perdition and

therein succeed. Men are ignorant also of the divine pro

tection by which they are surrounded and defended; and

like ignorant persons, they neither give thanks for this

blessing, nor pay any attention to their danger. Woe is

to the earth, says saint John in the Apocalypse (Apoc.

12, 12), because satan has come down to you with great

indignation of his wrath. This lamenting voice the

Evangelist heard in heaven, where, if the saints could feel

sorrow, they certainly would feel it for us on account of

the hidden war, which our powerful, and mortally en

raged enemy wages against men. But although the

saints cannot feel sorrow, they pity us for this danger;

while we, sunk in a formidable lethargy and forgetful-

ness, have neither sorrow nor compassion for ourselves.

In order to rouse from their torpor those that read this

history, I understand, that throughout the course of these

revelations I have been enlightened concerning the hid

den schemes of malice concocted by the demons against

the mysteries of Christ, against the Church and her chil

dren. These I have described in many passages, particu

larly dilating upon some of the secrets of this terrible

war against men, which the devils wage in order to draw

us to their side. On this present occasion of the con

version of saint Paul, the Lord has shown to me this

truth more openly, enabling 1 me to describe and make

known the continual combat and strife, which goes on,

THE CORONATION 263

unperceived by our senses, between our angels and the

demons, and to make known the manner in which we are

defended by the divine power, either through our angels,

or through the most blessed Mary, or directly by Christ

or the omnipotence of God.

279. Of the altercations and contentions of the holy

angels in defending us against the hellish envy and malice

of the demons the holy Scriptures contain the most clear

testimony, to which, for my purpose, it will suffice mere

ly to refer. Well known is what the holy Apostle Judas

Thaddeus says in his canonical letter : that saint Michael

contended with the devil against his design of making

known the resting-place of the body of Moses, whom the

holy archangel, at the command of God, had buried in a

place concealed from the Jews. Lucifer wished to make

it known, in order to tempt the Jews to fall away from

the lawful worship into idolatry by inducing them to

offer sacrifices at his sepulchre; but saint Michael op

posed the attempt of satan to reveal it. The enmity of

Lucifer and his demons against man is as old as their

disobedience against God; and, as said in the first part,

their fury and cruelty, after they had come to know that

the eternal Word was to take flesh and to be born of that

Woman clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12, 1), are pro

portionate to their rebellious pride against God. Because

the proud angel rejected these decrees of God and would

not bow his neck in obedience, he conceived this hatred

against God and his creatures. As he cannot vent it upon

the Omnipotent, he executes it upon the works of his

right hand. Besides this, possessing the nature of an

angel, he resolves irrevocably and never ceases to strive

after what he has once determined to attain; hence, al

though changing the means to attain his end, he never

changes his will in regard to persecuting mankind. On

264 CITY OF GOD

the contrary his hatred has increased and will increase in

proportion to the favors lavished by God upon the just

and upon the holy children of his Church, and in pro

portion to the victories gained by ,the seed of that

Woman, his Enemy, in whom God had threatened to

crush his head, while he should be able to do no more

than lie in ambush at her heels (Gen. 3, 15).

280. Moreover, this fiend is a pure spirit and is not

fatigued or ever in need of rest. Therefore he is so vigi

lant in persecuting us, that he commences the conibat

from the very first instant of our existence in the

mother s womb and he does not abate his fury and strife

against the soul until it leaves the body. The saying of

Job is verified : that the life of man on earth is a war

fare (Job 7, 1). This battle does not consist merely in

our being born in original sin and therefore subject to

the "fomes peccati" and the disorderly passions inclining

us to evil; but, besides fomenting the continual battle

within our own selves, the demon wages war against us on

his own account, availing himself of all his own astute

ness and malice, and, as far as his power goes, of our

own senses, faculties, inclinations and passions. Above

all he seeks to make use of other natural causes to de

prive us of salvation together with our life. And if he

does not succeed in this, he misses no chance of causing

us damage or leading us into sin and robbing us of grace,

even from the moment of our conception until that of

our death. Hence so long must last also our defense.

281. All this, especially with the children of the Church,

happens in the following manner. As soon as the demons

suspect that the conception of a human body is to take

place, he first notes the intention of the parents, and

whether they are in the state of grace or not, or whether

they have committed any excess in the act of generation;

THE CORONATION 265

he studies also the complexion of the humors of their

bodies, for ordinarily these humors influence also those

of the body generated. The demons also take note of the

particular as well as of the general natural causes and

conditions of nature, which unite in bringing about the

generation and the organization of the human body.

From these different concurring elements of generation,

the demons, with their vast experience, judge as much as

possible of the complexion or inclinations of the one con

ceived and they are wont to lay out great plans for future

action. If they fear good results, they seek to hinder as

much as possible the last generation or infusion of the

soul, waylaying the mother with dangers or temptations

to bring about an abortion before the creation of the

soul, which is ordinarily delayed forty or eighty days.

But as soon as they see God create or infuse the soul, the

wrath of these dragons exerts itself in furious activity

to prevent the creature from issuing to light, and from

attaining Baptism, if it is to be born where this Sacra

ment can easily be administered. For this purpose they

suggest and tempt the mothers to many disorders and ex

cesses, whereby the parturition is forced and a premature

birth or the death of the child in the womb might be

caused; for among Catholics and heretics, who still ad

minister Baptism, the demons content themselves with

depriving children of Baptism and thus withholding

them in limbo from the vision of God. Among pagans

and idolaters they are not so solicitous, because among

them damnation is in certain prospect.

282. Against their malign influence the Most High

provides defense and protection in various ways. The

most common is that of his vast and universal Provi

dence, which insures the proper effects of natural causes

in their time, independently of the perversion or hin-

266 CITY OF GOD

drance of the demons. For this is the limit set to their

power. Otherwise, if God would give free scope to their

implacable malice, they would overturn the whole world.

The goodness of the Creator will not allow this, nor does

He wish to deliver over his works or the government of

inferior matters, much less that of men, to his sworn

and mortal enemies. For the demons, in his scheme of

the universe, hold the places merely of vile executioners;

and even in this office they do no more than what is com

manded or permitted them. If depraved men would not

join hands with these enemies, entertaining their deceits

and by their sins meriting punishment, all nature would

preserve the common order of cause and effect both in

general and in particular ; and there would be no occasion

for such great misfortunes and losses among the faith

ful, in the diminution of crops, in contagious diseases, in

sudden deaths, and in other devastations invented by the

devil. All these and many other evils, happening even

at the birth of children through vices and disorders, we

merit ourselves by uniting with the demons for our own

chastisement and by delivering ourselves over to their

malice.

283. Besides this general providence of God for the

protection of his creatures must be mentioned the par

ticular protection of the angels, whom, according to

David, the Most High has commanded to bear us up in

their hands, lest we stumble into the slings of satan (Ps.

40, 12) ; and in another place of holy Scripture, it is

said, that He sends his angels to surround us with his

defense and free us from evils (Ps. 33, 8). This de

fense, like the persecution of the devil, commences from

the womb in which we receive being, and continues until

our souls are presented at the tribunal of God to be

adjudged to the state merited by each one. At the moment

THE CORONATION 267

in which a human being is conceived, the Lord com

mands the angels to stand guard over it and its mother.

Afterwards, at the right time, He assigns a particular

angel as its guardian, as I said in the first part of this

history (Part I, 114). From the very beginning the

angels enter into violent combat with the demons for the

protection of the souls committed to their care. The

demons contend that they have jurisdiction over the

creature, because it is conceived in sin, a child of male

diction, unworthy of grace and divine favor, and a slave

of hell. The angel refutes them by maintaining that it

was conceived according to the laws of nature, over

which hell has no power; that, if it is conceived in sin,

it was due to its human nature, by default of the first

parents and not of its own free will; and that, even if

conceived in sin, God has created it to know, praise and

serve Him, and, by virtue of his Passion, to merit eternal

glory; and that these high ends are not to be frustrated

by the mere will of the demons.

284. These enemies also argue, that in the begetting

of the human being its parents had not the proper inten

tion or rightful purpose, that they committed excess and

sin in the act of generation. This is the strongest argu

ment which the devils can advance for their right over

human creatures yet in the womb; for without a doubt,

sins make the child unworthy of divine protection and

justly hinder its conception. Yet, although this latter

often happens and a number of human beings are con

ceived without ever seeing the light, ordinarily the holy

angels prevent such a sad result. If they are legitimate

children, the angels allege, that the parents have received

the Sacraments and blessings of the Church; likewise,

that they have some virtues, such as having given alms,

being kind, having practised some devotions or good

268 CITY OF GOD

works. The holy angels avail themselves of these things

as powerful arms to ward off the devils and defend their

charges. Over illegitimate children the combat waxes

more difficult; the enemy exercises a greater right, be

cause in the begetting of such children, wherein God has

been so grievously offended, the enemies obtain a greater

right and the parents justly deserve rigorous chastise

ment. Hence, in defending and preserving illegitimate

children, God manifests his most liberal mercy in a

special manner. The angels base their arguments against

the demon on this mercy, and that, after all, the children

are the results of natural causes, as I have said above. If

the parents have no merits of their own, neither any

virtues, but are sullied by sins and vices, then the holy

angels refer to the merits found in the forefathers of the

child, in its brothers or relations; to the prayers of its

friends and acquaintances, and that it is no fault of the

child if the parents are sinners or have committed ex

cess in its generation. They also contend, that those

children, if they live, may reach a high degree of virtue

and holiness, and that the demon has no right to hinder

them from arriving at the knowledge and love of their

Creator. Sometimes God manifests to them his design

of choosing them for some great work in the service of

the Church; and then the defense of the angels is most

vigilant and powerful; but also the demons exercise

greater fury in their persecution, being incited thereto by

the greater solicitude of the angels.

285. All these combats, and those we shall yet speak

of, are spiritual, for they take place between pure spirits,

the angels and the demons, and are conducted by weapons

appropriate to the angels and to the Lord. The most ef

fective arms against the malign spirits are the divine

truths and mysteries of the Divinity and of the most holy

THE CORONATION 269

Trinity, of Christ the Savior, of the hypostatic union,

of the Redemption, and of the immense love with which

the Lord, as God and man, seeks our eternal salvation;

likewise the holiness and purity of most holy Mary, her

mysteries and merits. All these sacraments they present

in ever new aspects to the view of the demons, so that

they are forced to understand and take notice of them

through the activity of the holy angels and of God him

self. And then happens, what saint James says, that the

devils believe and tremble (Jas. 2, 19), for these truths

terrify and torment them so much, that in order not to

be obliged to take notice of them, they take refuge in

deepest hell; and they are so tormented by their horror

of the mysteries of Christ, that they are wont to ask God

to take away the knowledge and remembrance of the

hypostatic union and other great wonders of divine love.

Hence the angels in their contentions with them often re

peat those words: "Who is like to God? Who is equal

to Christ, the true God and man, who died for the human

race? Who is to be compared to the most holy Mary,

our Queen, who was exempt from all sin, and gave flesh

and bodily form to the eternal Word in her womb, a

Virgin before and after?"

286. The persecutions of the demons and the defense

of the angels continue at the birth of the child. At that

hour the mortal hatred of this serpent exceeds itself,

especially with those children who might receive Bap

tism ; because he strives to hinder it by any means in his

power. Hence the innocence of the infant cries loudly

to the Lord in the words of Ezechias: "Lord, I suffer

violence, answer Thou for me" (Isaias 38, 14). For it

seems, that the angels, after the child has left the shelter

of its mother s womb and is unable either to protect itself

or to secure from its elders sufficient protection against

270 CITY OF GOD

so many perils, are filled with great anxiety and thus be

gin to solicit for it direct interference of God. Hence

the care of the elders is very often supplemented by that

of the holy angels, shielding the child in its sleep, when

alone, and in other situations, in which many children

would perish, if they were not protected by their angels.

All of us, that attain the happiness of receiving Baptism

and Confirmation, possess in these Sacraments a most

powerful defense against the attacks of hell; because

through them we are marked as children of the holy

Church, being regenerated to justification as children of

God and heirs of glory. The virtues of faith, hope and

charity, and other virtues, adorn and strengthen us to

good works, and we participate in the other sacraments

and suffrages of the Church, wherein the merits of Christ

and his saints, and all the other great blessings are ap

plied to us. If we would avail ourselves of these ad

vantages, we would vanquish the demon, and hell would

have no part in any of the children of the Church.

287. But, O sad misfortune, that there should be so

few who on arriving at the use of reason do not lose the

grace of Baptism and join hands with the demon against

their God! In view of this it would seem just, that we

should be deprived and cut off from the protection of his

Providence and of his holy angels. He however does not

act thus : on the contrary, at the time when we begin to

be unworthy of it, He meets us with greater kindness in

order to manifest in us the riches of his infinite bounty.

Words cannot describe what and how great are the as

tuteness and diligence of the demon in order to ruin man

by inducing him to commit some sin, as soon as he comes

to the years of discretion and the use of reason. For

this they prepare from afar, seeking to accustom them to

vicious actions during the years of their infancy; to pre-

THE CORONATION 271

sent to their ears and eyes the example of evil conduct

in their parents, their nurses, and older companions; to

make the parents neglectful in counteracting this bad ex

ample. For in this tender age, like in soft wax on the

unwritten tablet, all sensible impressions are deeply en

graved and thus afford the demons an opportunity to

move the inclinations and passions of the children; and

it is well known, that men ordinarily follow these incli

nations and passions, unless prevented by special in

fluences. Hence these children, coming to the use of

reason, will follow the bent of the inclinations and pas

sions in regard to sensible pleasures, with which their

imagination and phantasy are filled. As soon as they

fall into some sin, the demon immediately takes pos

session of their souls,- acquiring new right and power

for drawing them into other sins.

288. Not less active is the diligence and care of the

holy angels to prevent such damage and defend us from

the devil. They frequently inspire the parents with holy

thoughts, urging them to watch over the education of

their children, to catechize them in the law of God, to

enjoin upon them pious works and devotions, to with

draw from evil and exercise themselves in the virtues.

The same good thoughts they instil into the children as

they grow up, or according to the light given them by

God as to his intentions with the souls. In conducting

this defense they enter into great disputes with the de

mons; because those malign spirits allege all the sins of

the parents against the children and likewise the wrong

ful doings of the children themselves; for if they are

not guilty, the demons claim that their actions are the

result of his own activity and therefore that he has a

right to continue them in their souls. If the child, on

coming to the use of reason, commences to sin, they put

272 CITY OF GOD

up a great fight to prevent the good angels from with

drawing them from evil. The good angels on their part

allege the virtues of the parents and forefathers, and the

good actions of the children themselves. Even if it were

no more than that of having pronounced the name of

Jesus or Mary as taught them by their parents, they bring

this as a defense as their having begun to honor the name

of their Lord and of their Mother; and likewise, if they

practice other devotions, or know the Christian prayers

and recite them. Of all this the angels avail themselves

as serviceable arms in our defense against the demon ; for

with each good action we rob the devils of some of the

right acquired over us by original sin, and still more by

actual sin.

289. As soon as man enters into the use of his reason

the battle between the demons and the angels becomes

still more bitter; for whenever we commit some sin, the

dragon exerts all his powers to deprive us of our lives

before we have time to do penance and thus to seal our

eternal damnation. In order that we may commit new

crimes, he besets all our ways with slings and dangers

peculiar to each one s state of life, and he overlooks none

of us, although he does not tempt one as dangerously as

the other. But if men would see into these secret work

ings of the demons just as they happen, and if they could

perceive the traps and pitfalls, which of their own fault

they permit the demon to prepare for them, all would live

in trembling and fear, many would change their state

of life, or would refuse to enter upon it, others would

forsake the positions, offices and dignities, which they

now esteem so highly. But in ignorance of their risk,

they live on in pernicious security; they do not know

enough to understand or believe more than is evident to

their senses and therefore they do not fear the hellish

THE CORONATION 273

traps and pitfalls set for their ruin. Hence the number

of fools is so great, and that of the truly prudent and

wise so small; many are called and few are chosen; the

wicked and the sinners are countless, while the virtuous

and the perfect are very scarce. In proportion as any

one multiplies his sins, in that proportion the devil

acquires positive rights over his soul, and if he cannot

put an end to the life of his victim, he at least seeks to

treat him as his vile slave. For he claims, that each day

this soul becomes more his own, and that of its own will

it so chooses; that therefore it cannot justly be snatched

from his hands, nor deserve the assistance which it will

not accept; that the merits of Christ should not be ap

plied to it, when it spurns them ; that it should not bene

fit from the intercession of the saints, when it entirely

forgets them.

290. By these and other pretenses, which cannot be all

mentioned here, the devil tries to cut short the time of

penance for those whom he claims as his own. If he

does not succeed in this, he tries to block the way of their

justification; and his attempts are successful with many

souls. But the protection of God and of the holy angels

is wanting to none of us and thus we are delivered from

dangers of death by innumerable ways; and this is so

certain that there is scarcely any one, who could not

verify it in the course of his life. They furnish us with

ceaseless inspirations and warnings ; they make us of all

occasions and means available for our admonishment and

exhortation. What is still more valuable, they defend us

against the rabid fury of the demons and set in motion

against them all that the intellect of an angel or of a

blessed spirit can devise, and all that their power and

their most ardent charity can command for our safety.

All this is necessary many times for some souls and at

274 CITY OF GOD

times for all the souls, who have delivered themselves

over to the jurisdiction of the demons and who use their

liberty and their faculties only for such temerity. I do

not speak of the pagans, the idolaters and heretics.

These indeed, the angels likewise defend and inspire to

the practice of the moral virtues, which they afterwards

use as arguments against the devils; but ordinarily the

most they do for them is to protect their lives, in order

that God, having allowed them so much time for their

conversion, may be justified in his behavior toward them.

The angels also labor to prevent them from committing

such great sins as the demons incite them to; for the

charity of the angels exerts itself, so that at least they

may not incur such great punishments, as the malice of

the demons seeks to fasten upon them.

291. Within the mystical communion of the Church

however are fought the hardest battles between the angels

and the demons, according to the different state of souls.

All its members they commonly defend with the ordi

nary weapons furnished them by the sacramental char

acter impressed upon the soul in Baptism, by grace, by

virtues, by the performance of good and meritorious

works, by devotions to the saints, by the prayers of the

just, and by all the good movements Catholics may have

during their life. This defense of the just is most power

ful; for since they are in grace and friendship of God,

the angels obtain a greater right against the demons, and

thus they rout them by showing up the holiness and per

fection of these souls, which are so formidable to the

powers of hell ; and therefore this by itself ought to cause

us to esteem grace beyond all creation. There are other

lukewarm and imperfect souls who fall into sin and

occasionally rise again. Against these the demons obtain

more power to persecute them with their cruelty. But

THE CORONATION 275

the holy angels strenuously exert themselves in their

defense, so that, as Isaias tells us (Is. 42, 3) ; the brok

en reed may not be crushed, and the smoking flax be not

entirely extinguished.

292. There are other souls so unhappy and depraved,

that during their whole life after their Baptism they

have not performed one good work ; or if they have ever

risen from sin, they have returned to it with such eager

ness, that they seemed to have renounced their God, liv

ing and acting as if they had no hope of another life,

no fear of hell, no repentance for any of their sins. In

these souls there is no vitality of grace, no attempt at

true virtue, nor have the holy angels any good or avail

able grounds for their defense. The demons cry out:

This soul at least is altogether ours, subject to our com

mands, and has no part in grace. They point out to the

good angels all the sins, wickedness and vices of such

souls, which of their own free will serve such evil mas

ters. What then passes between the angels and the demons

is incredible and indescribable ; because the demons exert

all their fury to prevent such souls from receiving in

spirations and helps. As they cannot resist the divine

power, they seek at least with all their power to hinder

them from attending or yielding to the call of heaven.

With such souls ordinarily it happens, that whenever

God himself or through his holy angels sends them a

holy inspiration or movement, these demons must first

be put to flight and the soul snatched from their midst,

lest these birds of prey immediately pounce upon and

destroy the holy seed. This defense the angels usually

conduct with the words, which I have quoted above:

"Who is like unto God, that dwells on high? Who like

Christ, at the right hand of the eternal Father? Who is

like to the most holy Mary?" together with other sayings,

276 CITY OF GOD

before which the infernal dragons take flight; sometimes

they are thereby hurled back into hell, although, not

abating in their fury, they again return to the conflict.

293. The hellish foes also strive with all their force

to induce men to multiply their sins, in order that the

measure of their sins may so much the sooner be com

plete and their time of penance and of life may come to

an end ; for then the demons would be enabled to carry

them off to eternal torments. But the angels, who are

rejoiced by the repentance of sinners (Luke 8, 12),

even though they may not be able to bring them to re

pentance, labor diligently to do away with occasions of

sin and to lessen the number of sins or prevent them

altogether. And when, with all their efforts, unknown

to mortals, they cannot bring back the souls from sin,

they resort to the intercession of the most holy Mother of

God, asking Her to be their Mediatrix with the Lord

and lend her aid in confounding the demons. In order

to move her merciful kindness the sooner, they induce

the souls of sinners to practice some special devotion or

perform some service in honor of the great Lady. Al

though it is true, that all good works performed in the

state of sin are dead and very weak weapons against

the devil, yet they always retain some remote appro

priateness, on account of the good end in view; and thus

the sinner is less indisposed toward grace than without

them. Moreover these good works, when presented by

the angels and especially by the heavenly Mother, possess,

in the eyes of the Lord, a certain life, or the resemblance

of it, altogether different from that given to them by

the sinners; and therefore though He does not bind

Himself to respond to them He nevertheless does it on

account of the One so asking.

294. In these different ways an infinite number of

THE CORONATION 277

souls come out of their sinful ways and are snatched

from the claws of the dragon; and as there are innum

erable souls who fall into such a dreadful state, that they

need a powerful aid, the most holy Queen interposes

hers, whenever the angels fail in their defense. The

demons are fiercely tormented by their own fury when

ever they perceive any sinner calling upon or remember

ing his Queen; since they know by experience how

kindly She receives sinners and how readily She makes

their cause her own. Without hope or spirit of resist

ance the devils immediately give themselves up as foiled

and vanquished. It often happens, when God desires

to bring about some special conversion, that the great

Queen herself peremptorily commands the demons to

withdraw from that soul and sink into the abyss, and her

commands are always obeyed. At other times, without

such peremptory orders, God permits them to see the mys

teries, the power, and holiness of his Mother, and this

new knowledge, filling them with consternation and con

fusion, puts them to flight. If the souls respond and

co-operate with the grace obtained for them by the

heavenly Sovereign, they are freed from the attacks of

the demons.

295. Yet though the intercession of the great Queen

and her power is so formidable to the devils and though

the Most High confers no favor upon the Church or

upon the souls without Her, there are nevertheless many

occasions in which the humanity of the incarnate Word

itself battles for us and defends us against Lucifer de

claring Himself openly with his Mother in our favor

and annihilating and vanquishing the demons. So great

is his love for men and for all that pertains to their

welfare, that this happens not only when the demons

are made to feel directly the virtues of Christ and his

278 CITY OF GOD

merits through the operation of the Sacraments in the

souls, but also when, in other miraculous conversions,

He fills them with particular knowledge of one or more

mysteries to their confusion and rout. Of such a kind

was the conversion of saint Paul, of Mary Magdalen

and other saints; or whenever it is necessary to protect

some Catholic kingdom, or the Church, from the treach

ery and malice of hell for their destruction. On such

occasions not only his sacred humanity, but even the

infinite Divinity, armed with the omnipotence of the

Father, advances upon the demoniacal hosts, filling them

in the above-mentioned manner with the knowledge of

the mysteries and of his Omnipotence, by which He

overwhelms them and forestalls them in their real or

intended conquests.

296. Whenever the Lord thus interposes such power

ful aid the whole infernal reign of confusion is terror

ized and stricken down into the hellish abysses for many

days, giving forth howls of mournful despair and totally

unable to move from their places until the Lord again

gives them permission to rise. But as soon as they receive

permission, they again issue forth with their former fury

for the ruin of souls. Although it may not seem in har

mony with their pride and arrogance to enter into a new

contest with the One, by whom they have been over

thrown and vanquished, nevertheless their jealous fear

lest we come to the enjoyment of God and their furious

desire to prevent it, again prevail and urge them to con

tinue their persecutions to the end of our lives. I was

made to understand, that if God were not so outra

geously misused in his mercy, He would often interpose,

even miraculously, his divine Omnipotence in our be

half. Especially would He do this in defense of the

mystical body of the Church and of some Catholic gov-

THE CORONATION 279

ernments, bringing to naught the counsels of hell for

the destruction of Christianity in our times. We do not

merit this protection of the infinite power, because all

are united in rousing the divine wrath and the whole

world has joined hands with the infernal fiends, into

whose power it has fallen on account of the blind and

insane pursuit of evil rampant among men.

297. In the conversion of saint Paul this assistance

of the Most High is openly manifest; for He had set

him apart even in the womb of his mother, and chosen

him as an Apostle and as a vase of election. Although

his life before the persecution of the Church was a series

of events, which deceived the demons just as he is de

ceived in many other souls, yet God watched him from

the moment of his conception and regulated his natural

character and the care of the angels in his defense and

protection. Hence the hatred of the devil and their de

sire of causing his death in the first years of his life

increased. As they failed in this, and as they later saw

him become a persecutor of the Church, they were solici

tous to preserve his life. When the holy angels found

themselves powerless to withdraw Paul from the error,

to which he had entirely dedicated himself, the powerful

Queen entered the combat and made his cause her own.

Through Her, Christ and the eternal Father interposed

his divine assistance and snatched him from the grasp of

the dragon. In one instant at the apparition of the Lord,

all the demons that accompanied saint Paul on the way

to Damascus, were hurled to the abyss.

298. On that occasion Lucifer and his cohorts felt

the lash of the divine Omnipotence ; filled with fear and

consternation they for some days lay lifeless in the

depths of the infernal caverns. But as soon as the Lord

took away from their minds the remembrance of the

280 CITY OF GOD

divine mysteries, they began to breathe forth new wrath.

The great dragon called together the rest and spoke to

them : "How is it possible to rest, when every day I see

new injuries heaped upon me by this incarnate Word and

by this Woman, who conceived and bore Him as man?

Where is my strength? Where is my power, and of

what use is my fury and the triumphs which I gained

over Him among mortals ever since God without reason

cast me from the heavens to this abyss? It seems, my

friends, that the Omnipotent intends to seal up the

portals of these infernal regions and open up those of

heaven, which would be the destruction of our reign and

of all my coveted designs to drag to these torments the

rest of mankind. If God, besides having redeemed men,

works for them such miracles, if he shows them such

love and seeks to draw them to his friendship by such

powerful works of his right hand, they will permit them

selves to be overcome, even if they have the disposition

of wild beasts and hearts of adamant. All will love and

serve Him, if they are not more obstinate and rebellious

than we ourselves. What soul can be so callous as not

to be drawn to this Godman, who with such a tender love

seeks its eternal glory? Saul was our friend, a willing

instrument of my designs, subject to my will and com

mand, an enemy of the Crucified, and I had destined

him for most cruel torments in this hell. In the midst

of all this God suddenly snatches him from my hands,

and by his divine power raises this insignificant creature

of the earth to such high grace and favors, that we, his

enemies, are astounded. What has Paul done to deserve

such an exceeding good fortune? Was he not in my

service offending his God? If God has been so liberal

with him, what protection will He not lavish upon other

less grievous sinners? And even if He does not convert

THE CORONATION 281

them by such great miracles, He will gain them through

Baptism and the other Sacraments, by which they can jus

tify themselves day by day. This example of God s mighty

defense of the Church, at the time when I attempted to

destroy it through Saul, will draw all the world to his

service. Is it possible that I should see vile human kind

raised to the grace and happiness which I have lost, and

that it should occupy the heaven from which I have been

hurled ? This thought torments me more furiously than

the fires of hell. I am filled with a powerless rage

against myself for not being able to destroy myself in

my wrath. Would that God himself would do it, instead

of preserving me in these torments. But since this is

not to be, tell me, my vassals, what shall we do against

this so powerful God? Him we cannot injure; but

in those whom he loves so much, we can avenge ourselves,

because in them we can oppose his will. And since

my majesty is most offended and incensed against

this Woman, our Enemy, who gave him human

being. I wish to inaugurate new ways of destroying Her

and avenging ourselves for having robbed us of Saul and

cast us into these Abysses. I shall not rest until I shall

have vanquished Her. For this purpose I resolve to

execute all the plans formed against God and man after

my fall from heaven. Come, all of you, to help me in

my designs and to execute my will."

299. Such were the words of exhortation addressed to

the demons by Lucifer. Some of them answered : "Our

captain and leader, we are ready to obey thee, knowing

how much this Woman, our Foe, oppresses and torments

us; but it is possible that She by Herself without other

aid may resist us, despising all our efforts and attacks,

as we have seen on other occasions, when She showed

Herself altogether our superior in strength. What She

282 CITY OF GOD

feels most, is to see us attack the followers of her Son;

because She loves them and is solicitous about them as a

Mother. Let us raise a general persecution against the

faithful, for we have at our service the whole of Juda

ism, now incensed against the new Church of the Cruci

fied; through the priests and pharisees we may succeed

in all our attempts against the faithful and thus vent our

wrath against this hostile Woman." Lucifer approved

of this counsel and showed favors to the demons, who

had given it. Thus agreed, they issued forth to destroy

the Church by the hands of others, just as they had at

tempted it through Saul. Thence resulted what I shall

relate further on, and also the battle of the most holy

Mary against the dragon and his hosts, wherein She

gained such great victories for the holy Church. To

this battle I referred in the sixth chapter of the first part,

and there stated, that I had reserved it for this place.

Of it I shall" speak in the next chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT MISTRESS OF THE

ANGELS GAVE ME.

300. My daughter, by no power of human words wilt

thou in this mortal life ever succeed in describing the

envy of Lucifer and his demons against men, or the

malice, astuteness, deceits and ruses, with which in his

wrath he seeks to bring them into sin and later on to the

eternal torments. He tries to hinder all good works,

and such as are performed he tries to minimize, or to

destroy and pervert as to their merits. All the malice of

which his own mind is capable, he attempts to inject

into the souls. Against these attacks God provides ad

mirable protection if men will only co-operate and corres

pond on their part. Hence the Apostle admonishes them

to walk carefully amid all these dangers and conflicts;

THE CORONATION 283

not like the foolish, but as wise, redeeming their time;

because the days of mortal life are evil and full of

dangers (Ephes. 5, 15). Again he exhorts them to be

fixed and constant in good works, because their labor

shall not be in vain before the Lord (I Cor 15, 58). The

truth of this our enemy knows and dreads, hence he

seeks with deepest malice to cause dismay in the souls

at the commission of one sin, in order that they may

ruin themselves by despair and leave off all good works ;

for thus would they throw aside the weapons with which

the angels can defend them and do battle with the

demons. Although these works in the sinner have not

the life of charity or of merit for grace or glory yet

they are very useful. Sometime it happens, that on account

of the habit of doing good the divine clemency furnishes

efficacious help for performing these works with greater

fervor, or with sorrow for sins and true charity, by

which the soul regains justification.

301. By all our good deeds as creatures we open up

ways to the blessed for defending us and for asking the

divine mercy to look upon us and snatch us from sin.

The saints also feel obliged to come to the assistance of

those that sincerely invoke them in danger and that show

them a special devotion. If the saints in their charity

are so inclined to favor men in the dangerous conflicts

with the devils, thou must not be surprised, my dearest,

that I am so merciful with the sinners who take refuge

in my clemency; for I desire their salvation infinitely

more than they themselves. Innumerable are those whom

I have saved from the infernal dragon because of their

devotion to me, even though they have recited only one

Ave, or have said only one word in my honor and in

vocation. So great is my love for them, that if they

would call upon me in time and with sincerity, none of

284 CITY OF GOD

them would perish. But the sinners and the reprobate

do no such thing; because the wounds of sin, not being

of the body, do not distress them, and the oftener they

are committed, the less regret or sorrow do they cause.

The second sin is already like wounding a dead body

which knows neither fear, nor defense, nor sensation.

302. The result of this torpid insensibility to eternal

damnation, and to the deceits of the devils in fastening

it upon men, is dreadful. Without knowing upon what

they rest their false security, the sinners are asleep and

perfectly at ease as to their ruin, when they ought justly

to fear and take heed of the swiftly approaching eternal

death ; or at least seek help by praying to the Lord, or to

me, or the saints. But even this, which costs them so

little, they do not know how to begin, until the time, in

which the conditions of their salvation can be realized,

has, for many of them, passed away. If for some of

them I still procure salvation in the last agony, this

privilege cannot be common to all. Hence are lost so

many children of the Church, who in their ingratitude

and foolishness despise the many and powerful helps

given by the divine clemency in most opportune time.

Therefore also it will increase their confusion, when they

shall see, that, with the mercy of their God, my own

kindest wishes to save them, and the charity of the

saints before their eyes, they have robbed God of the

glory of their conversion; and not afforded me or to

the angels or saints the joy of saving them in answer to

their heartfelt invocation.

303. I wish, my daughter, to manifest to thee still

another secret. Thou already knowest, that my Son and

Lord in the Gospel says : That the angels have joy in

heaven whenever any sinner does penance and is con

verted to the way of life through his justification (Luke

THE CORONATION 285

15, 10). The same happens when the just perform

works of true virtue and merit new degrees of glory.

Now that which happens among the heavenly inhab

itants in the conversion of sinners and in the increase of

merit of the just, has a counterpart in what happens with

the demons at the sins of the just and the deeper falls

of sinners; for no sin is committed by men, however

small, in which the demons do not take pleasure; and

those that attend to the business of tempting mortals im-

mediately give notice to the demons in the eternal dun

geons of their successes. There they enjoy them and

record them for further use, both in order to press their

claims before the divine Judge, and in order that their

greater dominion and jurisdiction over sinners according

to the measure of the offense may be publicly known.

In this manner they show their treacherous hate of men,

whenever they succeed in deceiving them into sin by some

momentary and apparent pleasure. But the Most High,

who is just in all his works, ordained that also the con

version of sinners and the good works of the just should

redound to the torment of the envious demons, since

they rejoice so much at the perdition of man.

304. This sort of chastisement therefore causes great

torments to all the demons; because by it they are not

only confounded and oppressed in their mortal hatred of

men, but by the victories of the saints and the conversion

of sinners they are deprived of a great part of their

power over those, whom they have drawn into sin by

their plots. The new torments thus caused to them they

seek to vent upon the damned in hell; and just as there

is new joy in heaven at the penance and good works of

sinners, so, for the same reason, there arise new con

fusion and misfortune in hell at the good works of the

just. On such occasions, amid howls of despair, the

286 CITY OF GOD

demons inflict new accidental torments upon all that

live in those dungeons of dismay and horror. Thus

heaven and hell are affected at the same time in contrary

ways by the conversion and justification of the sinner.

Whenever the souls justify themselves through the Sac

raments, especially by a truly sorrowful confession, it

often happens that the devils for a long time dare not

appear before the penitent, nor for many hours even

presume to look at him, if he himself does not again

encourage them by losing the divine favor and returning

again to the dangers and occasions of sin; for then the

demons quickly cast off the fear inspired by true peni

tence and justification.

305. In heaven there can be no sorrow or pain; but if

there could be, then the saints would feel it on account

of nothing in the world so much as to see the justified

souls falling back and losing grace, and the sinner

drawing away further or making it impossible for him

to regain divine favor. Sin of its own nature is just as

powerful to move heaven to sorrow and pain as penance

and virtue are to torment hell. Consider then, my dear

est, in what dangerous ignorance mortals ordinarily live,

depriving heaven of its joy in the justification of souls,

hindering the external glory connected therewith, hold

ing up the punishment due to the demons, and affording

them on the contrary the joyful triumph of the fall and

perdition of men. I desire that thou, as a faithful and

prudent handmaid, be guided by thy higher knowledge,

labor in compensating these evils. See that thou always

approach the sacrament of Confession with fervor,

esteem and veneration, and with a heartfelt sorrow for

thy sins; for this Sacrament inspires the dragon with

great terror and he exerts himself diligently to hinder

souls by his deceits, in order to cause them to receive

THE CORONATION 287

this Sacrament lukewarmly, out of mere habit, without

sorrow, and without proper disposition. He is so eager

in this matter not only because he wishes to cause the

loss of souls, but also to avoid the fierce torments of

being oppressed and confounded in his malignity by the

true penance and justification of his escaped victims.

306. Besides all this, my friend, I wish to remind thee,

that, although the infernal dragons are indeed the au

thors and masters of lies and although they deal with

men only in order to mislead and ruin them by their de

ceits, yet these enemies, whenever in their meetings they

confer among themselves in regard to misleading men,

are forced to admit certain truths, which they know and

cannot deny. They understand them, yet they communi

cate them to men, not in good faith, but obscured and

mixed with\* their own errors and falsehoods for the

promotion of their own malicious designs. Since thou

hast in this chapter, and in the whole course of this

history, laid bare so many of their counsels, meetings and

secrets, they are highly enraged against thee; for they

flattered themselves, that these secrets and all their

machinations would never come to the knowledge of men.

Therefore they are furious to take vengeance upon thee ;

but the Most High will protect thee, if thou call upon Him

to crush the head of the dragon. Do thou also beseech

the divine clemency, that these advices and instructions

may help to undeceive mortals, and by the divine light

redound to their benefit. On thy own part do thou seek

faithfully to correspond, as being under greater obliga

tions to Him than all others living in the present age.

For if, understanding their malice, thou dost not exert

thyself to vanquish them with the assistance of the Most

High and of his holy angels, thy ingratitude and the

triumph of hell will grow in proportion to the favors thou

hast received.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE MOST HOLY MARY PERCEIVES THE INTENTIONS OF

THE DEMON TO PERSECUTE THE CHURCH; SHE IM

PLORES THE DIVINE ASSISTANCE BEFORE THE THRONE

OF THE MOST HIGH IN HEAVEN ; SHE FOREWARNS THE

APOSTLES; SAINT JAMES ARRIVES IN SPAIN TO PREACH

THE GOSPEL AND IS VISITED THERE BY THE MOST

BLESSED LADY.

307. When Lucifer and the infernal chiefs, after the

conversion of saint Paul, were plotting vengeance on the

most holy Mary and the children of the Church, as de

scribed in the last chapter, they did not apprehend that

the knowledge of this great Queen and Mistress of the

world penetrated into those obscure and profound abysses

of hell and extended to the most hidden secrets of their

evil counsels. Thus deceived, the blood-thirsty dragons

esteemed their victory and the full execution of their

schemes against Her and the disciples of her Son as most

certain. But from her retreat, the blessed Mother with

the clearness of her heavenly science, knew of all their

conferences and understood all the intrigues of these

enemies of the light. She perceived all their aims and

the means which they intended to use; their wrath

against God and against Her, and their mortal hatred

against the Apostles and the rest of the faithful. Al

though the most prudent Lady was well aware that the

demons could execute none of their fury without the

permission of the Lord, yet, as this conflict in mortal life

is unavoidable and as She knew the weakness of men

288

THE CORONATION 289

and their only too common ignorance of the demoniacal

astuteness and malice intent on their perdition, She was

filled with great solicitude and sorrow at the unanimous

resolve of those jealous enemies for the destruction of

the faithful.

308. In addition to this knowledge and to the charity

directly drawn from the Lord, She was endowed with

another kind of tireless activity, similar to that of the

Divinity, which continues without interruption as one

pure act The most diligent Mother was ceaselessly

actuated by her love and solicitude for the glory of the

Most High and the consolation and protection of her

children. At the same time She pondered in her most

chaste bosom upon the supernal mysteries, conferring

the past with the present, and both with the future, and

preparing for it with a more than human discretion and

foresight. Her most ardent desire of the salvation of all

the faithful and her maternal compassion for their labors

and dangers, compelled Her to estimate all their tribu

lations and perils as her own and, as far as her love was

concerned, She desired to suffer them all Herself, if pos

sible, while the rest of the followers of Christ should

labor in the Church without molestation, meriting in

joyful peace grace and life eternal for themselves and

leaving to Her alone all sorrows and tribulations. Al

though this was not possible according to the equitable

providence of God, yet we stand indebted to the most

holy Mary for this extraordinary and wonderful token

of love, and not unfrequently her anxious and restless

love merits for us great blessings, which the Omnipotent

concedes in order to satisfy her yearnings for our sal

vation.

309. She did not know on this occasion, what in

particular were the resolves of the hellish foes in their

290 CITY OF GOD

conference; for She understood only in general, that

their fury was directed against Her in an especial man

ner. Divine Providence concealed from Her some of

their designs, in order that the triumph She would gain

over hell might afterwards be so much the more glorious.

Nor was it necessary to prepare Her for temptations

and persecutions, as was conceded to other faithful,

whom She so excelled in high and magnanimous spirit,

and of whose trials and tribulations She had a clearer

knowledge. According to her wont in all affairs, she

resorted to prayer, consulting about them with God in

pursuance of the example and teaching of the Lord. For

this purpose She retired and, prostrating Herself in ad

mirable reverence and fervor upon the ground, thus be

sought Him :

310. "Most high Lord and eternal God, holy and in

comprehensible, behold here prostrate before Thee thy

humble handmaid and vile wormlet of the earth, suppli

cating Thee, eternal Father, through thy onlybegotten

Son and my Lord Jesus Christ. Do not despise my peti

tions and sighs, which from my inmost soul I present to

thy immense charity in union with that which, derived

from the furnace of thy own love, Thou hast communi

cated to thy slave. In the name of all thy holy Church, of

thy Apostles and thy faithful servants, I present to Thee,

O Lord, the sacrifice of the passion and death of thy

Onlybegotten; that of his sacramental body, the most

acceptable petitions and prayers He offered to Thee dur

ing the time of his mortal and passible life, the love

with which He assumed flesh for the Redemption of the

world in my womb, his imprisonment there and his rear

ing at my breast ; all this I offer in order to be permitted

to ask Thee for that which Thou seest in the desire of

my heart."

THE CORONATION 291

311. During this prayer the great Queen was raised

in divine ecstasy, in which She saw her Onlybegotten at

the right hand of the eternal Father, asking Him to

concede to his most blessed Mother all her petitions and

representing to Him, that She was his true Mother, en

tirely pleasing to the Divinity and worthy of being re

ceived and heard in all her prayers. She saw also, that

the eternal Father assented and was pleased with his

request, and that looking upon Her, He said: "Mary,

my daughter, ascend higher." At this bidding of the

Most High, an innumerable multitude of angels of dif

ferent hierarchies descended from heaven, who surround

ed Her and raised Her from the earth on which She lay

prostrate. They then bore Her up body and soul to the

empyrean heaven and placed Her before the throne of

the most holy Trinity, which manifested Itself to Her by

a most exalted, not intuitive, but imaginary vision. She

prostrated Herself before the throne and adored God

in the three Persons with the most profound humility and

reverence, at the same time thanking her divine Son for

having presented her petition to the eternal Father and

asking Him again to do so. The divine Lord, at the

right hand of his Father, acknowledging Her as his

worthy Mother and the Queen of heaven, would not

forget the obedience He had shown Her on earth (Luke

2, 51) ; but, in the presence of all the courtiers of heaven,

renewed the acknowledgment of his filial obligations and

again presented to the Father the wishes and prayers of

his most blessed Mother. And the eternal Father

answered in these words :

312. "My Son, in whom my will finds the plenitude of

satisfaction, my ears are attentive to clamors of thy

Mother and my clemency is inclined toward all her de

sires and petitions." Then turning to the most blessed

292 CITY OF GOD

Mary, he said: "My beloved Daughter, chosen from

myriads according to my pleasure, thou shalt be the in

strument of my Omnipotence and the Treasure of my

love. Let thy anxiety rest and tell Me, my Daughter,

what thou askest; for, toward thy desires and petitions,

which are holy in my eyes, my will inclines." Thus

favored the blessed Mary answered. "My eternal Father

and most high God, who art the Author and Preserver of

the whole world, thy holy Church is the object of my

solicitude and prayer. Remember in thy kindness, that

it is the work of thy Onlybegotten, who became man and

acquired and planted it by his own blood (Act 20, 28).

Anew the infernal dragon and all thy enemies, his allies,

are raising up against it and are attempting the ruin and

perdition of all thy faithful, who are the fruit of the

Redemption of thy Son. Confound the evil councils of

the ancient serpent and defend thy servants, the Apostles,

and the other faithful of the Church. In order that

they may be freed from the attacks and fury of these

enemies, let them all direct their assaults against me, if

possible. I, my Lord, am only one poor creature, and

thy servants are many: let them enjoy thy favors and

thy peace, by which they advance thy exaltation and

glory, and let me suffer the tribulations, which threaten

them. Let me battle against thy enemies and Thou, by

the power of thy arm, shalt overcome and confound

their malice."

313. "My spouse and my Beloved," answered the

eternal Father, "thy desires are acceptable in my eyes and

I will grant thy petition as far as is possible. I shall

defend my servants in what is proper and conducive to

my glory, and permit them to suffer in what is necessary

for their crown. In order that thou mayest understand

the secret of my wisdom, by which these mysteries are

THE CORONATION 293

to be fulfilled, I wish to raise thee to my throne, where

thy ardent charity merits thee a place in the consistory

of our great counsels and in the participation of our

divine attributes. Come, my Beloved, and thou shalt

understand our secrets for the government of the Church,

its increase and progress ; and thou shalt follow thy will,

which is ours, now about to be manifested to thee." By

the force of these most sweet words Mary felt Herself

raised to the throne of the Divinity and placed at the

right hand of her Son to the admiration and joy of all

the blessed, who recognized the voice and the will of

the Almighty. And truly it was wonderful and new to

all the angels and saints to see a Woman, in mortal flesh,

called and elevated to the throne and council of the most

blessed Trinity in order to be informed of the mysteries

hidden to the rest and enshrined in the bosom of God

for the government of the Church.

314. It would seem astounding, if in some city of

this world some woman were called to the councils of

the government, and still more surprising to introduce her

into the select and close circles, where the more difficult

the important matters of the whole government are dis

cussed and transacted. Such a course would of right

seem hazardous, since Solomon says, that in seeking

truth and reason among men he found but one out of a

thousand who followed it, and among women not one.

On account of their natural frailty, there are so few of

them who possess constancy and integrity of judgment,

that ordinarily it is presumed in none, and if there are

any, they are scarcely capable of managing affairs that

are difficult of understanding and require deep insight,

unless they are aided by other light beyond the ordinary

and natural. This common law did not extend to our

great Queen and Lady; for if on the one hand our

294 CITY OF GOD

mother Eve, in her ignorance, began by destroying the

palace of this world built by God, on the other hand the

most blessed Mary, who was most wise and the Mother

of wisdom, rebuilt it and restored ,it by her peerless

prudence ; and therefore She was worthy to enter into the

councils of the most holy Trinity where its restoration

was to be planned.

315. There She was again asked what favors She

requested and desired for Herself and for the whole

Church, in particular for the Apostles and disciples

of the Lord. The most prudent Mother repeated

her most fervent desires for the glory and exalta

tion of God s holy name, and for restriction of the

persecution designed by the enemies of the Lord against

the faithful. Although the three Persons of the most

holy Trinity well knew all her desires, yet they com

manded the great Lady to propose them, in order to elicit

their approbation and delight and in order to make Her

more capable of new mysteries of their divine Wisdom

and the predestination of the elect. To explain what has

been shown me of this sacrament, I will say, that, be

cause the will of the most holy Mary was most just, holy,

and in all things pleasing and conformable to the most

blessed Trinity, it seems (according to our way of under

standing such things) God could not will anything con

trary to this most pure Lady; for He was bent in the

direction of her holiness and was wounded by the hair

and eyes of so beloved a Spouse (Cant. 4, 9), and One so

singular among all creatures ; and since the Father looked

upon Her as his Daughter, the Son as his Mother, and

the Holy Ghost as his Spouse, and since all Three had

entrusted to Her the Church in fullest confidence, there

fore the three Persons did not wish to decree the exe

cution of anything without, as it were, consulting the

wisdom and the pleasure of the Queen of all Creation.

THE CORONATION 295

316. In order that the will of the Most High and of

the most blessed Mary might coincide in these decrees,

it was necessary that the great Lady should first receive

a new measure of science and insight into the most

hidden counsels of his providence, by which all the

affairs of his creatures are arranged in weight and mea

sure (Wis. 11, 21) and all their means and ends in high

est equity and propriety. For this purpose the most

holy Mary received on this occasion a most clear insight

in all that was to be done and preordained by the divine

power in the Church militant. She saw the most hidden

reason for all that was to be done ; how many and which

of the Apostles were to die before She should pass from

this life; the labors they were to undertake for the name

of the Lord; the reason why all this should be so

according to the secret judgments of God, and the pre

destination of saints ; and why they should thus shed their

blood for the planting of the Church, just as the Lord

and Redeemer had shed his for its foundation in his

Passion and Death. She understood also how, through

her own compassion and sorrow at seeing the sufferings

of the Apostles and followers of Christ, She could com

pensate Herself for not being allowed to take upon Her

self their sufferings as She desired ; for this momentary

labor could not be spared them, if they were to reach

the eternal reward in store for them (II Cor. 4, 17). To

afford the great Lady an opportunity for this kind of

merit, She was informed of the near death of saint

James and the imprisonment of saint Peter, but not of

his liberation by an angel. She understood also, that

the Lord portioned out to the Apostles and the faithful

that kind of suffering or martyrdom, which corresponded

with each one s grace and strength of soul.

317. In order to satisfy in all things the most ardent

296 CITY OF GOD

charity of this purest Mother, the Lord permitted Her

to fight anew all the battles with the dragons of hell and

gain over them victories and triumphs, which the rest of

the mortals shall never attain. By this means She was

to crush their head and humble their pride, weakening

their forces and breaking their strength, which they were

mustering against the faithful. God renewed in Her all

his gifts and participations in his divine attributes, and

each of the three Persons gave Her his blessings. The

holy angels brought Her back to the Cenacle in the

way as they had brought Her to the empyrean heaven.

As soon as She found Herself recovered from her ec

stasy, She prostrated Herself with her face upon the

ground in the form of a cross and with most tender

tears and incredible humility thanked the Almighty for

this new blessing conferred upon Her in answer to her

most humble petitions. For some time She conferred

with her holy angels concerning the mysteries and neces

sities of the Church in order to attend to its most press

ing needs. It seemed advisable to prepare and encourage

the Apostles for coming trouble, since the common

enemy was to direct his main battle against them. For

this purpose She spoke to saint Peter, saint John and

the rest in Jerusalem, advising them of many particulars,

that were to happen to them and to the whole Church,

confirming the report of the conversion of saint Paul

and telling them of the zeal, with which he was preach

ing the name of his Master and Lord.

318. To those Apostles and disciples, who were not

in Jerusalem, She sent angels, in order to notify them of

the conversion of saint Paul and in order to prepare and

encourage them with the same good counsels as those in

Jerusalem. She sent an especial angelic messenger to warn

saint Paul of the intended assaults of the devil and to

THE CORONATION 297

animate and confirm him with the hope of divine assist

ance in his tribulations. Obediently the angels fulfilled

all these errands with their accustomed celerity, mani

festing themselves in visible forms to the Apostles and

disciples. All of them were exceedingly consoled and en

couraged by these favors of the most blessed Mary; and

each one answered through the same envoys, sending

humble acknowledgment and offering themselves to die

for the honor of their Redeemer and Master. Saint

Paul especially showed his gratitude in his answer; for

his desire of seeing and thanking his Protectress urged

him to demonstrate his devotion in a more fervent man

ner. He was at that time in Damascus preaching and

disputing in the synagogues, although soon after he went

to Arabia to preach ; but from there he afterwards came

to Damascus a second time, as I shall relate further

on.

319. Saint James the great was farther away than

any of the others. He was the first one to leave Jerusa

lem, and, having preached some days in Judea, he de

parted for Spain. For this journey he embarked at

Joppe, which is now called Jaffa, in the year thirty-five

in the month of August, called Sextilis, one year and five

months after the passion of the Lord, eight months after

the martyrdom of saint Stephen and five months before

the conversion of saint Paul, all according to what I said

in the eleventh and fourteenth chapters of this last part.

Sailing from Jaffa, saint James touched at Sardinia and

shortly afterwards arrived in Spain, disembarking at the

port of Carthagena where he began his preaching. He

tarried but a short time in Carthagena, and guided by

the Spirit of the Lord, He took his way to Granada,

where he was made aware that the harvest was bountiful

and the occasion opportune for beginning his labors for

his Master; and so it really turned out.

298 CITY OF GOD

320. Before going farther I will state, that saint James

was one of the most intimate and beloved disciples of the

great Mistress of the world. Though he was related to

Her, as was also saint John, his brother, not much of

this predilection could be seen in her exterior conduct,

on account of the impartiality of the most prudent Lady,

already referred to in chapter the eleventh. With regard

to saint John the whole apostolic college knew that the

Lord had appointed him as the Son of his most pure

Mother; therefore the most prudent Lady was not under

such restrictions in regard to exterior tokens of love with

saint John as She was with saint James and the other

Apostles. But interiorly the blessed Lady loved saintjames

with special tenderness, as I have already stated in the

second part, and She manifested it in extraordinary

favors, conferred upon him during his life until his

martyrdom. Saint James deserved these favors on ac

count of his special piety and affection toward Mary,

distinguishing himself therein from all the rest. He

needed the protection of the great Queen, because he was

of a generous and magnanimous heart, and of a most

fervent spirit, being resistlessly drawn on to offer him

self for labors and dangers. Hence he was the first one

to go forth preaching the faith and the first of all the

Apostles to suffer martyrdom. While on his missionary

journeys he was indeed like the lightning flash, like the

son of thunder, as he was called and designated by his

brethren upon entering into the apostolate (Marc. 3, 17).

321. During his labors in Spain the demons raised up

incredible persecutions through the unbelieving Jews. Nor

were those of small import which he afterwards met

in Italy and Asia Minor, whither he had returned to

preach and to suffer his martyrdom. This he under

went in Jerusalem, having in the few years of his apos-

THE CORONATION 299

tolate traveled in many distant countries. As it cannot

be my purpose to relate all that saint James suffered in

his extensive journeys, I will record only what concerns

more closely this history. In general I have understood

that the great Queen of heaven watched over him with

an especial love, for reasons already stated, and that

through her angels She defended and rescued him from

many and great dangers, consoled him and comforted

him many times, sending information and advice, such

as he needed more particularly and oftener than the other

Apostles during his short life. Many times also Christ

our Savior sent angels from heaven to defend his great

Apostle and to carry him from one region to another

during his missionary travels.

322. During the time of his preaching in these Spanish

kingdoms, the great Queen, besides many other tokens of

her love, twice favored saint James by a personal visit

in order to defend him in his tribulations and dangers.

In Saragossa happened one of these visits or apparitions,

which is no less certain than celebrated in the world and

which cannot be denied without doing violence to a well-

known fact, corroborated and witnessed by great mir

acles and the traditions of sixteen hundred and more

years. Of this I will speak in the next chapter. Of the

other miraculous visit I do not know whether there is

any record in Spain ; for it happened not so publicly. As

was revealed to me, it took place in Granada, and in the

following manner. The Jews had in that city some

synagogues, maintained there ever since the time of

their first coming from Palestine to Spain; for, on ac

count of the fertility of the soil and the facility of com

munication with Palestine by sea, they could live there

more comfortably. When saint James came to preach in

Granada, they were already informed of what concerned

300 CITY OF GOD

Christ our Redeemer. Although some of them desired

to become acquainted with his doctrine and the grounds

upon which it rested, yet others, the greater number, hav

ing been influenced by the devil not to believe, and to

reject his teaching, would not permit his doctrines to be

preached even to the heathens, as being contrary to the

rites of the Jews and of Moses and as endangering

Judaism, if once received by the gentiles. Stirred on by

this diabolical deceit the Jews hindered the faith from

spreading among heathens, who knowing Christ to be a

Jew and seeing his own countrymen and co-religionists

persecuting Him as a false deceiver, hesitated in becoming

his adherents in the beginnings of the Church.

323. When saint James therefore came to preach in

Granada, the Jews commenced their opposition, proclaim

ing him as an adventurer, a deceiver, the author of false

sects, a legerdemain and enchanter. Saint James brought

twelve disciples with him, in imitation of his Master.

As all of them persisted in preaching, the hatred of the

Jews and of their followers increased, so that they wished

to assassinate the disciples; and they really killed one

of them, who in his ardent zeal had opposed the Jews.

But as the holy Apostle and his disciples not only not

feared death, but courted suffering for the name of

Christ, they continued to preach the faith with still greater

zeal. Having thus labored for many days and converted

many of the infidels of that city and province, the fury

of the Jews rose to a higher pitch. They seized them all

and led them forth bound and fettered beyond the city

walls and there likewise chained their feet, for they

considered them to be magicians and sorcerers who might

otherwise escape. As their enemies made preparations

to decapitate them all immediately, the holy Apostle

ceased not to call upon the Most High and

?i \

^(LIBRARY)

THE CORONATION 301

Virgin Mother, praying as follows : "Most holy

Mary, Mother of my Lord the Redeemer Jesus Christ,

extend thy favor in this hour to thy humble servant.

Pray for me, sweetest and kindest Mother, and for these

faithful professors of the faith. If it is the will of the

Most High, that we here give our lives for the glory of

his holy name, do Thou ask, O Lady, that my soul may

be received in his presence. Remember me, most clement

Mother, and bless me in the name of Him who chose

Thee among all creatures. Receive in sacrifice my resig

nation to the misfortune of not seeing Thee, if this is

to be the last day of my life. O Mary ! O Mary !"

324. These last words saint James repeated many

times. But from her oratory in the Cenacle, where She

was favored by an especially clear vision, the great Queen

heard all and saw what was passing with her most be

loved apostle saint James. Thus informed She was

moved with tender est compassion at the tribulation of her

servant and at his clamors. She felt still more sorrow

at being so far away, and, as She knew that nothing is

difficult to the divine power, She entertained the loving

desire of helping and defending the Apostle in his dan

ger. As She knew moreover that this Apostle was to

be the first to shed his blood for her divine Son, her

compassion became more vehement. But She did not ask

the Lord or the angels to bring Her to the place where

saint James then was; because her admirable prudence

prevented Her from making such a petition. For She

knew that divine Providence would need no such re

minder on her part, nor fail in anything that was neces

sary. In asking such miracles, as long as She lived in

the flesh, She exercised highest discretion and restraint

always subjecting her desires to the will of the Lord.

325. But her Son and true God, who took notice of

302 CITY OF GOD

the wishes of such a Mother, knowing that they were

holy, just and full of piety, immediately commanded the

thousand angels of her guard to assist Her and fulfill

the will of their Queen and Lady. They all manifested

themselves to Her in human shape and told Her what

the Most High had commanded. Without delay they

placed Her upon a throne made of a beautiful cloud and

carried Her to the field in Spain, where saint James and

his companions were awaiting martyrdom in their

fetters. Their enemies had already bared their scimitars

or swords to strike off their heads. The Apostle alone

saw the Queen of heaven in the clouds from which She

spoke to him in most endearing terms, saying: "James,

my son and dearest friend of my Lord Jesus Christ, be

of good heart and be blessed eternally by Him who called

and brought thee to his divine light. Rise then, faithful

servant of the Most High, and be free of thy bonds."

The Apostle, as far as he had been able in his fetters,

had prostrated himself upon the ground. At the words

of the powerful Queen his fetters and those of his dis

ciples instantly fell and they found themselves free. The

Jews, on the contrary, who stood with drawn weapons,

all fell to the earth where they remained for some hours

deprived of their senses. The demons, who had ac

companied them and stirred them on, were hurled to the

profound abysses, thus leaving saint James and his dis

ciples at liberty and giving thanks to the Almighty

for this blessing. The Apostle most fervently thanked

the heavenly Mother with exceeding humility and in the

jubilee of his soul. His disciples, although they did not

see the Queen or her angels, understood the miracle and

were informed by the Apostle of some of the particulars,

by which they might be confirmed in faith, hope and

devotion toward the most blessed Mary.

THE CORONATION 303

326. The heavenly Queen still more extended this

favor; for She not only freed saint James from imminent

death, but wished all Spain to benefit from his preaching

and instruction. From Granada She ordered him to

continue his journeys, commanding hundreds of her

guardian angels to accompany him and show him the

way from one place to another, to defend him and his

disciples from all dangers, and finally, after having trav

ersed all the provinces of Spain, to bring him to

Saragossa. All this the hundred angels set about doing

according to the orders of their Queen, while the rest

brought Her back to Jerusalem. In such celestial company

and guardianship saint James traveled through all the

Spanish realm, more securely than the Israelites through

the desert. In Granada he left some of his disciples, who

afterwards suffered martyrdom, and with the others and

those he afterwards gathered, he continued his mission

ary tours in many parts of Andalusia. Then he

came to Toledo, Portugal Galicia and Asturia. Af

terwards, making digressions to different places,

he arrived in Rioja, thence, passing through Lograno,

he went to Tudela and Saragossa, where happened

what I shall relate in the next chapter. During

his peregrinations saint James left disciples as bishops

in the different cities of Spain, planting the faith and

divine worship. So great and prodigious were the mir

acles he performed in this kingdom, that those of which

we know must not appear extraordinary in comparison

with those we know nothing of, since these are much

more astonishing. The fruit of his preaching in Spain

was immense in proportion to the shortness of his stay ;

and it would be a great error to say or think, that the

conversions he made were few, for in all the places

reached by him, he established the faith and ordained

304 CITY OF GOD

many bishops for the government of the children he en

gendered to Christ in this kingdom.

327. In concluding this chapter I wish to state, that

by different means I was made acquainted with the many

contrary opinions of ecclesiastical historians concerning

the things which I am describing; as for instance, con

cerning the departure of the Apostles from Jerusalem

for the purpose of preaching the faith, the partition

among them of the world by lot, the establishing of the

Creed, the departure of saint James and his death. About

all these and other events, I understand, writers differ

very much in assigning the years or dates of their hap

pening and in harmonizing them with the text of the

canonical writings. But I have no commission from

the Lord to clear up these and other doubts, or decide

the controversies. From the very beginning I have said,

that the Lord commanded me to write this history with

out regard to opinions, and without mixing up my certain

knowledge with opinions. If what I write follows nat

urally and does not contradict in any way the sacred text,

and at the same time maintains the dignity corresponding

to the matter, I cannot undertake to add to the authen

ticity of this history, and Christian piety will ask for no

more. It is also possible that, by proceeding in this

manner, some of the differences of historians may be

made to harmonize, and to this the well-read and the

learned will attend.

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY.

328. My daughter, the miracle of my being raised by

the divine power to the sovereign throne of God in order

that I might be consulted in the decrees of his divine

THE CORONATION 305

wisdom and will, as described by thee in this chapter, is

so great and extraordinary, that it exceeds all the ca

pacity of man in this mortal life, and only in eternal

glory and in beatific vision men shall recognize this

sacrament with a most special joy of accidental glory.

As this blessing and wonderful privilege was the effect

and the reward of the most ardent charity with which I

loved and do love the highest Good, and of the humility

by which I considered myself as his slave, and as these

virtues truly raised me to the throne of the Divinity and

established me there even while yet in mortal flesh, I wish

thee to have a more intimate knowledge of this mystery,

which without a doubt was one of the most exalted

wrought in me by the divine Omnipotence and which

excited the greatest wonder in the angels and saints.

Thy own admiration I wish thee to turn into a most vigi

lant care and into a most lively desire of imitating me and

in following me in the virtues, by which I merited such

favors.

329. Remember then, my dearest, that not only once,

but many times was I raised to the throne of the most

holy Trinity in mortal flesh during the time which inter

vened from the descent of the Holy Ghost to my Assump

tion to eternal glory. In what still remains for thee to

write of my life, thou wilt understand many other

secrets connected with this privilege. And every time

the puissant right hand of the Most High showed me

this favor I experienced most copious effects of graces

and gifts, according to the different ways of the divine

Omnipotence and according to my, as it were, ineffable

and boundless capacity of participating in the divine per

fections. Sometimes in conferring upon me these favors

the eternal Father said to me : "My Daughter and Spouse,

thy love and fidelity bind Us to thee more than to any

306 CITY OF GOD

other creature and fill Us with the plenitude of satisfac

tion. Ascend to our throne, so that thou mayest be

absorbed in the abyss of our Divinity and hold in this

Trinity the fourth place, as far as is possible to a mere

creature. Take possession of our glory, the treasures of

which We place in thy hands. Thine are the heavens,

the earth and all the abysses. Enjoy in this mortal life all

the privileges of the blessed more fully than all the

saints. Let all the nations and creatures, whom: We

have called into existence, serve thee; let the powers of

heaven obey thee, let the supreme seraphim be subject to

thee and let all blessings be thine own in our divine

consistory. Be thou enlightened as to the great counsels

of our wisdom and divine will and do thou take part, in

our decrees, since thy will is most equitous and faithful.

Penetrate into the reasons for whatever We resolve in

justice and holiness; and let thy will and thy motives

be one with ours in whatever We provide for our holy

Church."

330. In such ineffable condescension the Most High

governed my will, that He conformed it entirely to his

own and that nothing was done in the Church without

my decision, which was to be conformable to that of

the Lord himself, since He knew the appropriate reasons

and motives for each of the decrees of his eternal coun

sels. I saw that it was not possible for me according

to the common law to suffer all the labors and tribulations

of the Church and especially not of the Apostles, as I

had desired. This charitable desire, though it was im

possible of execution, was not a deviation from the

divine will, but was given to me by God as a token and

witness of the boundless love with which I loved Him;

for it was on account of the love of the Lord toward

men, that I desired to take upon myself the labors and

THE CORONATION 307

sufferings of all men. And because on my part this love

was true and my heart was prepared to fulfill this charity,

and as I truly grieved not to be able to suffer for all,

therefore it was so acceptable in the eyes of the Lord and

He rewarded it as if I had really fulfilled it in deed.

Hence arose my compassion for the martyrdom and tor

ments of the Apostles and the others persecuted for

Christ; in all of them and with all of them I was afflicted

and tormented, and in some measure died their death.

Such was the love I had for my faithful children; and,

with the exception of suffering), it is the same now,

although Christians do not suspect or know how much

my charity deserves their gratitude.

331. I received these ineffable blessings from the

right hand of my divine Son at the time when I was

raised from the world and placed at his side, partaking of

his exaltation and glory in the full measure possible to a

mere creature. The hidden decrees and sacraments of

the infinite Wisdom were first made manifest to the

most holy humanity of my Lord, which, being united

to the eternal Word, was the admirable medium of the

Divinity. Through this humanity in another manner, they

were communicated to me ; for the union of his humanity

with the Word is immediate and substantial and hence it

participates intrinsically of the Divinity and of its de

crees, in a manner corresponding to the substantial

and personal union. I however partook of this favor by

another wonderful and unexampled process, considering

that I was a mere creature and not having the divine

nature ; in a manner similar to the most holy humanity

and as one, who, next to the Mangod, was closest to the

Divinity. Thou canst not at present understand more

or penetrate deeper into this mystery. But the blessed

understood it, each one according to his degree of heav-

308 CITY OF GOD

enly science; and all of them understood this con

formity and similitude of myself with my divine son,

as well as the difference between me and Him. All of

this was, and is now, to them a motive for new canticles

of glory and praise of the Omnipotent; for this was one

of the great wonders wrought in me by the powerful

right hand of God.

332. In order that thou mayest increase the force of

thy holy affections and desires as well of nature as of

grace, although they may not be within the possibility

of execution, I will reveal to thee another secret. It is

this : when I perceived the effects of the Redemption in

the justification of souls by the operation of grace through

contrition, or through Baptism and the other Sacraments,

I conceived such an esteem for them, that I was filled

with a holy emulation and desire to participate in their

effects. As I had no sins of which I could be cleansed and

justified, I could not partake of their effects in the same

degree as the sinners who received them. But because I

wept over their sins more than they all, and as I thanked

the Lord .for these blessings so liberally conferred upon

them, I gained more graces than were necessary to justify

all the children of Adam. So much the Most High per

mitted Himself to be indebted to my works and such was

their merit of grace in the eyes of God.

333. And now, my daughter, consider under what ob

ligations thou art after being informed and enlightened

concerning these great and venerable secrets. Let not

these talents lie idle, nor waste or despise such great

blessings of the Lord; follow me in perfect imitation

of all my doings manifested to thee. In order that thou

mayest nourish the flame of divine love, ceaselessly bear

in mind how my most holy Son and I in this mortal life

sighed and ardently yearned for the salvation of all the

THE CORONATION 309

children of Adam and wept over the eternal perdition

incurred by so many in their deceitful and counterfeit

pleasures. In this charitable zeal I wish thee to distin

guish thyself very much, as my daughter and disciple,

and as a most faithful spouse of my Son, who delivered

Himself to the death of the Cross on this very account.

For if the force of this love did not take away my

life, it was because the Lord miraculously preserved it;

and this is the love which placed me upon the throne of

God and made me partaker of the counsels of the most

blessed Trinity. If thou, my dear, shalt be as diligent and

fervent in imitating me and as anxious to obey me, as

I expect of thee, I asure thee of a participation in the fa

vors shown to my servant James ; I will hasten to thy aid

in thy tribulations; I will govern thee, as I have so often

promised thee; and more than this, the Most High will

be more liberal with thee than all thy highest wishes

can ever hope to compass.

CHAPTER XVII.

LUCIFER STIRS UP ANOTHER PERSECUTION AGAINST THE

CHURCH AND AGAINST THE MOST BLESSED MARY J SHE

MAKES IT KNOWN TO SAINT JOHN, AND AT HIS AD

VICE RESOLVES TO GO TO EPHESUS; HER DIVINE SON

APPEARS TO HER AND COMMANDS HER TO VISIT SAINT

JAMES IN SARAGOSSA; THE EVENTS CONNECTED WITH

THIS VISIT.

334. In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles

saint Luke narrates the persecution incited by hell against

the Church after the death of saint Stephen. He calls

it a great persecution, because, through the zealous

efforts of saint Paul before his conversion, the infernal

dragon succeeded in raising it to highest pitch. Of this

persecution I have spoken in the twelfth and fourteenth

chapter of this part. But from what I have said there,

it will be understood that this enemy of God did not rest

or consider himself so completely overcome, as not to

venture new battles against the Church and the most

blessed Lady. From what saint Luke himself says in his

twelfth chapter concerning the imprisonment of saint

Peter and James by Herod, it is clear that this perse

cution began anew after the conversion of saint Paul, not

even considering his express statement, that Herod sent

soldiers to afflict some of the faithful of the Church (Acts

8, 1). In order that what I said and will say may be

better understood, I repeat, that these persecutions were

all plotted and set in motion through the demons, by incit

ing certain malicious men. And because divine Provi-

310

THE CORONATION 311

dence at times gave the demons this permission, and at

others withdrew it, casting them into hell, as at the

conversion of saint Paul and at other occasions, it

naturally happened, that the primitive Church sometimes

enjoyed peace and tranquillity, at other times, when this

truce was again broken, it was molested and afflicted;

and this is the lot of the Church in all ages.

335. Peace was favorable to the conversion of the

faithful, and persecution increased their merit and prac

tice of virtues; and this kind of variation was ordained,

and will always be maintained, by the divine Providence.

Hence, after the conversion of saint Paul the Church en

joyed some months of peace, namely, from the time when

Lucifer and his companions were hurled vanquished into

hell until their return to the earth, of which I will speak

directly. Of this time of tranquillity saint Luke speaks in

the ninth chapter where, after relating the conversion of

saint Paul, he says, that the Church had peace throughout

Judea, Galilee and Samaria, and that it increased and

walked the way of the Lord in consolation of the Spirit.

Although the Evangelist mentions this after speaking of

the coming of saint Paul to Jerusalem, yet it occurred long

before; for saint Paul s coming to Jerusalem happened

more than five years after his conversion and saint Luke,

in writing his history, mentions this coming of saint

Paul to Jerusalem before mentioning his conversion, as

is the case with many events in the Evangelists, who were

in the habit of anticipating historical facts in order to

finish and illustrate their present point ; for they did not

intend to write the history of all the events, although in

the main they did follow the course of events according

as they happened.

336. This being understood and following up what I

said in the fifteenth chapter concerning the hellish meet-

312 CITY OF GOD

ing called by Lucifer after the conversion of saint Paul,

I wish to say, that this conference lasted for some time

and the infernal dragon with his demons evolved diverse

schemes and resolved on different measures for the de

struction of the Church and for the possible debasement

of the great Queen from her high state of reputed holi

ness. But the serpent s ignorance about Her was incom

parably greater than his knowledge. The days of peace

enjoyed by the Church being past, the princes of darkness

issued forth from, the abysses in order to execute their

malicious designs fabricated in the infernal dungeons,

and at the head of them all came forth Lucifer. It is

worthy of attention, that so great was the fury and indig

nation of this blood-thirsty beast against the Church and

the most blessed Mary, that he brought with him from

hell more than two thirds of his demons for this enter

prise and without doubt he would have emptied hell of all

its demons, if a part had not been necessary for the

torture of the damned souls. For not only are the

damned ceaselessly burning in the fires lighted by divine

justice, but this dragon never permits the absence of all

the demons to relieve them of the sight and companion

ship of their tormentors. Though Lucifer is so ravenous

for the destruction of mortals on earth, he is just as

unwilling to grant any relief to the damned in hell, and

therefore he will never entirely empty it of the demons.

Such an impious, cruel and inhuman master the un

fortunate sinners on earth continue to serve !

337. The holiness of the blessed Mother, their divine

favor and protection lavished on the faithful as exhibited

in saint Stephen and saint Paul, and all the other events

after the death of the Savior, which all came to the

knowledge of the dragon, had raised his wrath to the

highest and to inconceivable pitch. Therefore he took

THE CORONATION 313

up his seat in Jerusalem personally to erect his batteries

against the very stronghold of the faith and in order to

direct the operation of all the infernal squadrons; for

the demons preserve order among themselves only for the

purpose of warfare against men, while in all the rest

they are full of discord and confusion. The Most High

has never permitted full sway to their envy, for in one

moment they would overturn and destroy the whole

world; but He gave them a limited freedom, in order

that by affliction the Church might take deep roots in the

blood and the merits of the saints and so that in persecu

tion and torments might be manifested the wisdom and

power of the Pilot directing this little ship of the Church.

Immediately Lucifer commanded his satellites to scour

the whole earth in order to find out where the Apostles

and disciples were preaching the name of the Lord. The

dragon in Jerusalem sought the localities most remote

from the places consecrated by the mysteries and the blood

of the Lord; for he and all the demons dreaded these

spots and the nearer they approached, the more they

felt themselves weakened and oppressed by the divine

power. These effects they feel to this day, and will

feel to the end of the world. Sorrowful it is indeed,

that this sanctuary of the faithful, on account of the

sins of men, is now in the hands of pagans; and happy

are the few children of the Church who are within its

precincts, such as the sons of our great father and re

storer of the Church, saint Francis !

338. Through the information brought by his demons

Lucifer learnt the condition of the faithful in all the

places where the faith of Christ was being preached. He

issued new orders for the persecution of Christians,

assigning more or less powerful demons according as he

thought it necessary against the different Apostles, dis-

314 CITY OF GOD

ciples or followers of the faith. Others he appointed as

messengers to furnish him with accounts of what was

happening, or to transmit his orders for conducting the

warfare against the Church. Lucifer also pointed out

to his demons unbelieving, perfidious, evil-minded and

depraved men, whom they were to excite and provoke to

envious wrath against the followers of Christ. Among

these were Herod and many Jews, who abhored the Cruci

fied and wished to blot out his very name from the land

of the living (Jer. 11, 19). They also availed themselves

of the gentiles that were most depraved and most given to

idolatry. They selected, both from the ones as from the

others, the worst and most perfidious to act as helpers

and instruments of their malice. In this way they began

the persecution of the Church, and they continued in

succeeding ages to use similar diabolical arts for the ruin

of virtue, of the fruits of the Redemption and the blood

of Christ. In the primitive Church the infernal dragon

caused great havoc among the faithful, overwhelming

them with diverse kinds of tribulation, not recorded or

known to us ; although we know, that what saint Paul in

his epistle to the Hebrews says of the persecution of

the ancient saints, was repeated in the saints of the new

Testament. In addition to these exterior persecutions

the demons afflicted all the just, the Apostles, disciples

and believers with hidden temptations, suggestions, illu

sions and malicious promptings, as he continues to do

now with all those who desire to walk in the divine law

and follow Christ our Redeemer and Master.

339. But nothing of all this was hidden to the great

Mother of wisdom, because in the clearness of her emi

nent science She perceived all the secrets of hell, that were

hidden to the rest of mortals. Although blows and

wounds, when they find us prepared, are wont to cause

THE CORONATION 315

us less damage, and although the most prudent Virgin

was so well fortified against the coming troubles of the

holy Church that She could not be surprised by them, yet,

as they concerned the Apostles and the faithful whom

She loved from her inmost soul, the prospect of these

afflictions wounded her most tender heart and filled Her

with sorrow in proportion to her almost boundless char

ity. It would have deprived Her of life many times, if,

as I have often said, the Lord had not wonderfully pre

served it. And in truth, all just souls, who are perfected

in divine love, would be moved at seeing the wrath and

fury of such a host of demons, so vigilant and astute,

exerted against the few faithful in their needy and frail

condition and burdened with so many miseries of their

own. In consideration of their danger, the most blessed

Mary forgot all that concerned Herself and was ready

to undergo any possible suffering for the protection and

consolation of her children. She multiplied her sighs and

tears, her exertions and prayers, for their safety. Espe

cially the Apostles and disciples She sought to fortify and

encourage by renewing her counsels and exhortations.

Many times She restrained the demons by her sovereign

commands as Queen, and snatched from their claws in

numerable souls, whom they were deceiving and pervert

ing, and thus She rescued them from eternal death. At

other times She prevented great cruelties intended for the

ministers of Christ; for Lucifer sought the life of the

Apostles, as he had already done before through Saul.

All this happened likewise to the disciples, who were

preaching the faith.

340. Though the heavenly Mistress preserved her in

terior peace and tranquillity and her exterior

equanimity and serenity, yet her compassionate anxiety

and maternal solicitude failed not to reveal, in

316 CITY OF GOD

some measure, the sorrow of her heart in her coun

tenance. And as saint John attended upon Her with

the watchful devotion of a son, the slight change in her

appearance could not remain concealed from the eagle

eyes of this seer. He was deeply afflicted, and having in

vain battled with his anxiety, he betook himself to the

Lord seeking enlightenment and saying : "My Lord and

God, Savior of the world, I acknowledge my indebtedness

to Thee for having, without my merits and out of pure

condescension, given me Her as a Mother, who is thy

own; who conceived Thee, bore and nursed Thee at her

bosom. Through this blessing I am made rich and pros

perous in the possession of the greatest Treasure of

heaven and earth. But without thy royal presence thy

Mother, my Mistress, is forsaken and alone, and for

it neither men nor angels can compensate, much less I,

a vile worm and a slave. My God and Savior of the

world, I now see Her sorrowful, who gave Thee human

form and who is the joy of thy people. I desire to con

sole Her and alleviate her grief, but I find myself in

capable of doing it. Reason and love urge me on; but

reverence and my frailty prohibits it. Give me, O Lord,

light and spirit for doing what will please Thee and serve

thy Mother."

341. After this prayer the saint debated with himself

for some time, whether he should ask the great Mistress

of heaven concerning her sorrow or not. On the one

side his love urged him thereto, on the other he was

restrained by his holy fear and reverence for Her. Three

times he approached the door of Her oratory, and was

as many times withheld by his reverence from asking

the question. The heavenly Mother knew all that saint

John was doing and what passed through his heart. Out

of respect for him as a priest and minister of the Lord,

THE CORONATION 317

She thereupon rose from her prayer and sought him out

saying: "Master, tell me what thou asketh of thy serv

ant." I have already stated, that the Lady called the

priests and ministers of her Son "masters." The Evan

gelist was consoled and encouraged by this advance and

with some hesitation answered : "My Lady, my office

and desire of serving Thee has caused me to notice thy

sorrow and I am troubled at thy suffering, which I am

anxious to alleviate."

342. Saint John added no more words ; but the Queen

knew his desire to be informed of her trouble, and in

promptest obedience She fulfilled his wishes as those of

her superior, even before he should express them. Most

holy Mary turned to the Lord and said : "My God and

Son, Thou hast wished thy servant John to take thy

place as my companion and attendant, and I have re

ceived him as my prelate and superior, whose will and

desire, as soon as they become known to me, I wish to

obe}^ in order that I, thy humble servant, may live and

be governed by thy obedience. Give me permission to

tell him of my anxiety according to his wish." She felt

at once the fiat of the divine will and falling on her knees

at the feet of saint John, She asked his blessing and

kissed his hands. Having asked his permission to speak,

She said : "My master, lord, the sorrow of my heart

is well founded, for the Most High has shown to me the

tribulations which are to come over the Church, and the

persecutions, which all its children, especially the Apos

tles, shall suffer. In preparation and for the execution

of this wickedness in the world, I have seen the infernal

dragon with innumerable hosts of evil spirits issuing

forth from the caverns of the abyss, all filled with im

placable wrath and fury for the destruction of the

Church. This city of Jerusalem will be the first and fore-

318 CITY OF GOD

most in their assault. In it one of the Apostles will meet

his death, and others will be imprisoned and afflicted at

the instigation of the demon. My heart is filled with

compassion and sorrow at the opposition of these enemies

to the exaltation of the holy name of God and to the

salvation of souls."

343. Thus informed the Apostle was likewise aggrieved

and somewhat troubled. But in the strength of divine

grace he answered the Queen saying: "My Mother and

Lady, thy wisdom cannot ignore that the Most High will

draw great fruits for his Church and for his faithful chil

dren from these trials and tribulations, and that He will

assist them in their affliction. We Apostles are prepared to

sacrifice our lives for the Lord, who has offered his own

for the whole human race. We have received great

blessings and it is not just that they remain idle and

useless. When we were little ones in the school of our

Teacher and Lord, we behaved like children. But since

He has enriched us with the Holy Ghost and enkindled

in us the fire of love, we have lost our cowardice and

desire to walk the way of the Cross, taught us by his

doctrine and example. We know that the Church is

to be established and preserved by the blood of its min

isters and children. Pray Thou for us, my Lady, that

by the divine power and thy protection we gain the

victory over our enemies and that, for the glory of the

Most High, we triumph over all of them. But if this

city of Jerusalem is to bear the brunt of the persecution,

it seems to me, my Lady, that Thou shouldst not await

it here, lest the fury of hell, by inciting the malice of

men, attempt some indignity to the tabernacle of God."

344. The great Queen and Lady of heaven, full of

love and compassion for the Apostles and all the other

faithful, and spurning all fear, would rather have stayed

THE CORONATION 319

in Jerusalem, in order to visit, console and encourage all

in their impending tribulation. But this preference,

though so holy, She did not make known to saint John ;

for, as it was the choice of her heart, She preferred to

disregard it and yield in humble obedience to the wishes

of the Apostle, whom She held as her prelate and su

perior. In this subjection, giving no direct answer, She

thanked the Evangelist for his courageous desire of

suffering and dying for Christ; and, as for departing

from Jerusalem, She told him to command and dispose

as he thought fit; for She would obey him in all as

his subject and would ask the Lord to guide him by his

divine light according to his glory and pleasure. On

getting this consent of the blessed Mother, (affording

us such a great example and reprehending so much our

disobedience), the Evangelist proposed to go to Ephesus,

as the confines of Asia Minor. In suggesting this jour

ney to the most holy Mary, he said: "My Lady and

Mother, in order to leave Jerusalem and seek occasion

to labor for the exaltation of the name of the Most

High, it seems best for us to retire to the city of Ephesus,

where Thou canst bring forth the fruits of faith, which

are not to be expected in Jerusalem. Would I were

one of the angels, who assist at the throne of the blessed

Trinity, so as to serve Thee worthily in this journey;

but I am only a vile worm of the earth. The Lord

however will be with us, and Thou shalt have Him a

propitious Helper as thy God and thy Son."

345. Having resolved upon this journey, the necessary

notice and advice was yet to be given to the faithful in

Jerusalem. The great Lady therefore retired to her

oratory and prayed as follows : "Most high and eternal

God, this humble handmaid prostrates herself before

thy royal presence and from my inmost heart I beseech

320 CITY OF GOD

Thee to direct and guide me in thy greater pleasure and

good will. I will make this journey in obedience to

thy servant John, whose will shall be as thy own. It

is not just that thy handmaid and Mother, who has been

so favored by the right hand, should take any step which

is not for the greater glory and exaltation of thy holy

name. Attend, O Lord to my desires and prayers, in

order that I may act most appropriately and justly."

Then the Lord answered Her and said : "My Dove and

dearest Spouse, I have ordained this journey for my

greater pleasure. Obey John, and go to Ephesus; for

there in due time I wish to manifest my clemency to

some souls through thy mediation and presence." By

this answer of the Lord the most blessed Mary was con

soled in the knowledge of the divine will, and She asked

the Lord for his blessing and for permission to prepare

for her departure at the time set by the Apostle. Full

of the fire of charity She was inflamed with the desire

of promoting the good of souls in Ephesus, of which

the Lord had given Her hopes. I will now relate, how

the most blessed Mary, in obedience to her Son s, our

Savior s, will, came to Saragossa in Spain to visit saint

James, in what year and day this happened, and what

took place on this occasion.

346. All the solicitude of our great Mother and Lady

was centered upon the increase and spread of the holy

Church, the consolation of the Apostles, disciples and

the other faithful, and in defending them from the

persecutions and assaults prepared by the infernal dragon

and his hosts. In her matchless charity, before She

departed from Jerusalem to take up her abode in

Ephesus, She ordered and arranged many things, both

by Herself and through her holy angels, in order, as

much as possible, to provide all that seemed proper

THE CORONATION 321

for the needs of the Church in her absence; for at that

time She had no knowledge of the duration of her so

journ or of her return to Jerusalem. The most effec

tual service She could render to the faithful was her

continual prayer to secure the assistance of the infinite

power of her Son for the defense of the Apostles and

the faithful against the proud and vaunting schemes of

Lucifer s wickedness. The most prudent Mother knew,

that among the Apostles James would be the first one

to shed his blood for Christ our Savior, and because She

loved him in a special manner, as I have stated above,

She offered up more particular prayers for him than for

the other Apostles.

347. While the heavenly Mother continued in these

prayers, on one of the days, the fourth before leaving

for Ephesus, She felt in her chastest heart new and

sweetest affections, as was usual, when She was about

to receive some signal favor. They are called words of

the Lord in the language of holy Scriptures. Respond

ing to them as the Mistress of holy science, the most

blessed Lady said: "Lord, what dost Thou command

me to do? What dost Thou desire of me? Speak, O

Lord, for thy handmaid heareth." Repeating these

words She saw her divine Son, descending in person to

visit Her, seated upon a throne of ineffable majesty

and accompanied by innumerable angels of all the heav

enly choirs and hierarchies. With all his court the Lord

entered the oratory of his most blessed Mother, and the

humble and devout Virgin worshipped Him in deepest

reverence from the inmost of her purest soul. Then the

Lord spoke to her saying: "My most beloved Mother,

of whom I have received human being for the salvation

of the world, I am attentive to thy petitions and holy

desires and they are pleasing to Me. I shall defend my

322 CITY OF GOD

Apostles and my Church, and I shall be their Father

and Protector, so that it shall not be overcome nor the

gates of hell prevail against it (Matth. 18, 18). As

thou already knowest, it is necessary for my glory, that

the Apostles labor with my grace, and that at the end

they must follow Me to the cross and to the death I

have suffered for the whole human race. The first one

who is to imitate Me therein is my faithful servant

James, and I wish that he suffer martyrdom in this city

of Jerusalem. In order that he come hither, and for

other purposes of my glory and thine, I desire thee to

visit him in Spain, where he is preaching my name. I

desire my Mother, that thou go to Saragossa where he

now is, and command him to return to Jerusalem. But

before he leaves that city, he is to build a temple in

thy name and title, where thou shalt be venerated and

invoked for the welfare of that country, for my glory

and pleasure, and that of the most blessed Trinity."

348. The great Queen of heaven accepted this com

mission from her divine Son with new jubilee of her

soul. And with sincerest gratitude She answered : "My

Lord and true God, let thy holy will be done in thy

servant and Mother for all eternity, and let all the

creatures praise Thee for the admirable works of kind

ness done to thy servants. I, O Lord, bless and magnify

Thee in them and give humble thanks for them in the

name of the entire Church and in my own name. Grant

me, my Son, that in the temple Thou commandest to be

built by thy servant James, I may be permitted to promise

the special protection of thy almighty arm, and that this

sacred place shall be part of my inheritance for the use

of all those that call with devotion upon thy holy name

and ask me to intercede for them with thy clemency."

349. Christ our Redeemer answered Her: "My

THE CORONATION 323

Mother, in whom I am well pleased, I give thee

my royal word, that I shall look with especial clemency

and fill with blessings all those who with devotion and

humility call upon Me through thy intercession in that

temple. In thy hands have I deposited and consigned

all my treasures; as my Mother, who holds my place

and power, thou canst signalize that place by depositing

therein thy riches and promising in it thy favors ; for all

will be fulfilled according to thy will and pleasure."

Again the most blessed Mary thanked her Son and God

for this promise. Then, at the command of the Lord,

a great number of the angels that accompanied Her

formed a royal throne of a most resplendent cloud and

placed Her thereon as the Queen and Mistress of all crea

tion. Christ the Savior gave them his blessing and as

cended with the rest of the angels to heaven. The purest

Mother, borne by the hands of the seraphim and accom

panied by her thousand angels and the rest, departed

body and soul for Saragossa in Spain. Although this

journey could have been made in the shortest moment

of time, the Lord ordered the angels to move along

singing hymns of praise and jubilee to their Queen in

choirs of sweetest harmony.

350. Some of them sang the "Ave Maria," others

the "Salve sancta Parens" and "Salve Regina"; others

the "Regina coeli laetare," etc., choir answering choir

in such harmony and concord of sounds, as no human

art could ever attain. The great lady also, with a heart

as humble as this favor was exalted, opportunely re

sponded, referring all this glory to the Most High. She

repeated many times : "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God

Sabaoth (Is. 6, 3), have pity on the poor children of

Eve. Thine is the glory, thine the power and majesty.

Thou alone art holy, the most High and the Lord of

324 CITY OF GOD

all the celestial armies and of all creation." The angels

then would respond also to these songs of the Virgin,

so sweet in the hearing of the Lord. Proceeding in this

manner till about midnight, they arrived in Saragossa.

351. The most fortunate Apostle saint James was

encamped with his disciples outside of the wall running

along the banks of the river Ebro. In order to engage

in prayer, he had separated some distance from his

companions. Some of his disciples had fallen asleep

and others were absorbed in prayer, all of them far

from expecting the strange event. The procession of

the angels spread out somewhat and sang still louder,

so that not only saint James, but also his disciples could

hear them from afar. Those that were asleep awoke and

all of them were filled with interior sweetness and won

der, with heavenly consolation, which caused them to re

main speechless with admiration and to shed tears of joy.

They saw in the sky a most brilliant light, brighter than

that of the sun ; but it was not diffused beyond a certain

space and seemed like a large luminous globe. Lost

in admiration and joy they stood motionless until called

by their teacher. Through the miraculous effects, which

they felt within them, the Lord wished to prepare them

for what would be manifested to them concerning this

great mystery. The holy angels placed the throne of

their Queen and Lady within sight of the Apostle, who

was still wrapt in most exalted prayer and heard much

more plainly the celestial music and saw more of the

light than his disciples. The angels bore with them a

small column hewn of marble or jasper ; and a not very

large image of their Queen, made of some other ma

terial. This image was carried by the angels with great

veneration. During that night, the angels, exerting their

skill in fashioning the things of nature, had prepared

all this for the occasion.

THE CORONATION 325

352. Seated on her throne in the cloud and surrounded

by the angelic choirs the Queen of heaven manifested

Herself to saint James. In wonderful beauty and reful

gence the great Lady far outshone all the angels. The

blessed Apostle prostrated himself upon the earth and

in deepest reverence venerated the Mother of his Creator

and Redeemer. He was shown at the same time the

image and the pillar or column in the hands of some of

the angels. The loving Queen gave him her blessing

in the name of her divine Son and said : "James, servant

of the Most High, be thou blest by his right hand : may

He raise thee up and show thee the light of his divine

countenance." All the angels answered : "Amen." The

Queen of heaven continued: "My son James, this place

the most high and omnipotent God of heaven has des

tined to be consecrated by thee upon earth for the erec

tion of a temple and house of prayer, where, under my

patronage and name He wishes to be glorified and mag

nified, where the treasures of his right hand shall be

distributed, and v all his ancient mercies shall be

opened up for the faithful through my intercession, if

they ask for them in true faith and sincere piety. In

the name of the Almighty I promise them great favors

and blessings of sweetness, and my protection and assist

ance ; for this is to be my house and temple, my inher

itance and possession. A pledge of this truth and of

my promise shall be this column with my image placed

upon it. In the temple which thou shalt build for me,

it shall remain and be preserved, together with the holy

faith, until the end of the world. Thou shalt imme

diately begin to build this temple of God, and after thou

hast completed it, thou shalt depart for Jerusalem; fpr

my divine Son wishes thee to offer the sacrifice of thy

life in the same place where He offered his for the sal

vation of the human race."

326 CITY OF GOD

353. The great Queen finished speaking and ordered

the holy angels to set up the column, and upon it the

sacred image, in the same place where they now stand;

and the angels fulfilled her command in one moment.

As soon as the column and the image were in place, the

angels and the holy Apostles recognized that spot as a

house and portal of God, as holy ground, consecrated

as a temple to the glory of the Most High and the invo

cation of his holy Mother. As witness to this fact they

immediately worshipped and reverenced the Divinity.

Saint James prostrated himself upon the ground and

with the holy angels celebrated with new canticles the

first dedication of a temple instituted in this world under

the name and title of the great Mistress of heaven and

earth. This was the happy origin of the sanctuary of

our Lady of the Pillar in Saragossa, which is justly

called the angelic chamber, the house of God and of

his purest Mother, worthy of the veneration of the whole

world and a secure pledge and earnest of the favors and

benefits not prevented by our sins. It seems to me, that

our great patron and Apostle, the second Jacob, gave

a more glorious beginning to this temple, than the first

Jacob to his in Bethel, when he journeyed to Mesopo

tamia, although in that name and on that rock was

built the temple of Solomon. There Jacob saw in his

sleep the mystical and figurative representation of the

ladder with the accompanying angels ; but here our Jacob

saw the true Stair of Heaven with his bodily eyes, and

accompanied by many more angels. There the stone

was consecrated as a temple, which was to be destroyed

many times and after some centuries was to cease to

exist; but here, in the firmness of this truly consecrated

pillar, was established the temple, the faith and the wor

ship of the Most High until the end of the world, where

THE CORONATION 327

the angels were to ascend with the prayers of the faith

ful and to descend with incomparable blessings and

favors to be distributed to all htose that in this place

devoutly call upon and venerate this great Queen and

Lady.

354. Our apostle gave most humble thanks to the most

blessed Mary and asked Her for the special protection

of this Spanish kingdom and particularly of this place

consecrated to her devotion and name. The heavenly

Mother granted him all his requests; and having again

given him her blessing", She was carried back to Jeru

salem in the same order by the holy angels. At her

petition the Most High charged an angel with the care

and defense of this sanctuary, and from that day until

now this angel fulfills this office and will continue it as

long as the sacred image and column shall remain there.

All the faithful Catholics may see with their own eyes

the wonderful preservation of this sanctuary, since it

has remained intact and uninjured for more than sixteen

hundred years\* amid all the perfidy of the Jews, the

idolatry of the Romans, the heresy of the Arians, and

the savage fury of the Moors and pagans; and still

greater would the astonishment of Catholics be, if they

could know of the plots and schemes which all hell has

fabricated in different ages through the hands of these

infidel nations for the destruction of this sanctuary. I

will not detain myself in relating these events, because

it is not necessary and does not belong to my purpose.

It is enough to say, that Lucifer has set all these ene

mies to attack it many times and the guardian angel

of this sanctuary has foiled all his attempts.

355. But I wish to mention two points which have been

made known to me for record here. First, that in regard

to the promises of Jesus Christ and of his most blessed

\*Now 1900.

328 CITY OF GOD

Mother, although they seem absolutely to assure the

preservation of this temple and sanctuary, yet they con

tain an implicit condition, as is the case with many other

promises of holy Scripture in regard to particular bless

ings of divine grace. This implicit condition here is,

that we on our part conduct ourselves in such a way

as not to oblige God to deprive us of this merciful privi

lege, thus promised and offered to us. Because the

Lord, beneath the mysterious decrees of his justice, hides

this compelling measure of sins, therefore this condition

is not declared or made manifest to us; and moreover,

we know from the teachings of holy Church, that his

favors and promises are not to be used by us against

the Lord and that we must not sin in reliance upon his

liberal mercy, since this, more than aught else, will make

us unworthy of it. So many and so great may become

the sins of these kingdoms and of that devout city of

Saragossa, that we justly draw upon ourselves the loss

of this wonderful blessing and of the protection of the

great Queen and Lady of the angels.

356. The second point which I will touch upon and

which is not less worthy of our consideration, is, that

Lucifer and his demons, since they know of these facts

and of the promises of the Lord, have attempted and

are still attempting to introduce into this illustrious city,

with a more refined malice than elsewhere, heinous vices

and sins, especially such as may offend against the purity

of the most blessed Mary. The purpose of the ancient

serpent is to bring about two most execrable effects:

first, either to induce the inhabitants of that city, if

possible, so to offend God, as to cause Him to abolish

the sanctuary, thus reaching the end which he could not

otherwise attain; or, if that is not possible, at least to

hinder souls from showing proper reverence and devo-

THE CORONATION 329

tion to the sacred temple and to the great blessings prom

ised through Mary to all her devout supplicants. Lu

cifer and his demons know very well that the inhabitants

of Saragossa and its neighborhood are much more

heavily indebted to the great Queen of heaven than many

other cities and provinces of Christianity. For it holds

within its walls the storehouse and fountainhead of

the favors and blessings, to draw which, others must

come from afar; therefore if its inhabitants, while pos

sessing these advantages, would lead a more wicked

life and consequently treat with contempt this conde

scending clemency, which no one can ever merit, then

certainly their ingratitude to God and his most blessed

Mother would provoke a greater indignation and pun

ishment in divine Justice. Joyfully I will confess to

all that shall read this history, that I consider myself

extremely fortunate in being permitted to write it in a

place which is only two days foot-journey from the city

of Saragossa and I look upon that sanctuary with inmost

affection of soul, in acknowledgment of the debt, which,

as all know, I owe to the great Mistress of the world.

I acknowledge also my obligations and my gratitude

toward the piety of that city. In return I desire urgently

to bring to the remembrance of its inhabitants the sin

cere and ardent devotion they owe to the most blessed

Mary, the favors they can obtain for themselves by it,

and the blessings they may lose by forgetfulness and

inattention. Let them consider themselves as more fa

vored and indebted than other faithful. Let them es

teem their treasure, happily enjoy it, and let them not

make the propitiatory of their God a useless and com

mon dwelling, converting it into a court of justice; for

the most holy Mary has appointed it as a workhouse or

councilhouse of her mercies.

330 CITY OF GOD

357. The vision of the most blessed Mary having

faded away, saint James called his disciples, who were

absorbed in the music and in wonder at the brightness,

though they did not hear or see anything else. Their

great teacher revealed to them as much as was calculated

to animate them toward helping to build the temple, with

which he had been commissioned; and, with the assist

ance of the holy angels, before he left Saragossa, com

pleted the little chapel, in which now the image and

the column are still preserved. Afterwards the Catho

lics erected the sumptuous temple and whatever else sur

rounds and adorns that celebrated sanctuary. The

evangelist saint John at the time knew nothing of this

excursion of the heavenly Mother to Spain, nor did

She tell him about it; for these privileges and favors

did not concern the faith of the universal Church,

wherefore she kept the secret of them to Herself. Other

greater ones however She made known to saint John

and the other Evangelists, because they were necessary

for the common instruction and faith of the Christians.

But when saint James arrived from Spain and saw his

brother John in Jerusalem, He related what had hap

pened to him in his preaching-tours through Spain. He

told him also of the two visions of the most blessed

Mary and of what had happened in Saragossa in con

nection with the temple he had erected in that city.

Through the Evangelist many of the other Apostles and

disciples learnt of this miracle, for he afterwards told

them of it in Jerusalem in order to confirm them in their

faith and devotion to the Mistress of heaven and awaken

their confidence in her protection. Hence, those that

knew of these favors to saint James, from that time

called upon Her in their labors and necessities; and the

loving Mother helped some of them often, and all of

THE CORONATION 331

them at different times in certain difficulties and dangers.

358. The miraculous appearance of the most blessed

Mary in Saragossa took place in the beginning of the

fortieth year of the birth of the Lord, during the night

of the second of January. Four years, four months

and ten days had passed from the time when saint James

left Jerusalem on his missionary tour up to this event;

for he had left in the year thirty-five, on the twentieth

of August, as I mentioned above (No. 319) ; and after

the apparition he spent, in building the temple, in return

ing to Jerusalem and in preaching, one year, two months

and twenty-three days. He died on the twenty-fifth of

March in the year forty-one. The great Queen of the

angels, at the time She appeared to him in Saragossa,

was fifty- four years, three months and twenty-four days

of age. For immediately on coming back to Jerusalem,

She prepared to depart for Ephesus, as I will relate in

the next book and chapter ; and She left four days after

wards. Thus this temple was dedicated many years

before her glorious transition, as will be evident, when

I shall mention her age at her death; for from this ap

parition to her death intervened a longer time than is

ordinarily assumed. During all these years She was

already publicly venerated in Spain and had temples

built in her honor; for in imitation of that in Saragossa

others were soon erected, where altars were raised in

her honor and solemn veneration.

359. This wonderful distinction without a doubt

exalts Spain beyond all that can be said in its praise;

since thereby it signalized itself before all nations and

kingdoms in the public veneration, reverence and devo

tion due to the great Queen and Mistress of heaven and

earth, and was more zealous to worship and invoke Her

even while She was yet living, than other nations were

332 CITY OF GOD

after her death and transition to heaven. In return

for this ancient and universal devotion, the most blessed

Mary, as I was given to understand, has enriched these

realms more than the other kingdoms of the earth by

spreading the public veneration of so many miraculous

images, and sanctuaries dedicated in Spain to her honor.

By multiplying these favors the heavenly Mother has

sought to familiarize intercourse with Her throughout

the kingdoms, offering her protection in so many temples

and sanctuaries and meeting the devotions of the faithful

in so many places throughout the provinces. This

should induce us to acknowledge Her as our Mother

and Patroness and give us to understand, that the de

fense and the spreading of her honor through the whole

world is a special privilege of this nation.

360. Therefore I pray and humbly beseech all the

subjects and inhabitants of Spain, and, in the name of

this great Lady, exhort all of them to refresh their

memory, enliven their faith, renew and excite their an

cient devotion toward the most blessed Mary, and con

sider themselves more bound and obliged to her service

than other nations. Let them hold especially the sanc

tuary of Saragossa in highest veneration, as excelling

all the others and as being the starting-place of the piety

and devotion toward this Queen in Spain. And let all

those who read this history believe, that the former hap

piness and greatness of Spain was a gift of the most

blessed Mary and a reward for the service rendered to

Her by the Spanish people. If we in our days see the

glory and happiness of Spain so much diminished, it is

the fault of our negligence by which we oblige Her to

withdraw her protection. If we desire a remedy for

so many calamities, we can obtain it only through this

powerful Queen, gaining her favor by new and extraor-

THE CORONATION 333

dinary proofs of our devotion. And as the admirable

blessing of the Catholic faith and the other benefits I

have mentioned, have come to us through our great

patron and Apostle saint James, let our devotion and

confidence toward him likewise be renewed, in order that

the Almighty through his intercession may renew his

wonders.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

361. My daughter, thou knowest, that not without

some mysterious reason I have in the course of this

history so many times shown thee the secret machina

tions and treacherous counsels of hell for the ruin of

mankind, and the furious and restless wrath with which

Lucifer seeks to encompass it. In this assault hell

misses no opening, no occasion, and lets no stone un

turned, nor forgets any path, any state or person in

laying snares for their fall and in trying to find ways so

much the more dangerous and deceitful, the more they

find their victims desirous of eternal life and of the

friendship of God. Besides these general warnings thou

hast often been shown the council-meetings and the plots

laid against thee. It is important for all the children of

the Church to escape the ignorance in which they live

concerning the dangers besetting their eternal salvation;

for they do not know or take notice, that their igno

rance of these secrets is the chastisement of the sin of

Adam, and how, after being enlightened, they again

lose it and become more unworthy of it than before

through their own sins. Many of the faithful are as

oblivious and careless, as if there were no demons to

persecute and deceive them; and if they sometimes think

of them, it is superficially and lightly, falling immedi-

334 CITY OF GOD

ately back into their forget fulness, which for many of

them means no less than eternal punishment. If at all

times and in all places, in all their works and on all oc

casions the demons set their snares, it is but just and

proper that Christians on their part take not one step

without asking divine light to see and avoid the danger.

But as the children of Adam are so torpid in regard to

this matter, they perform scarcely one work without

being assailed by the infernal serpent and infected by

his poison. Thus they accumulate sins upon sins, evil

upon evil, irritating the divine justice and shutting

out mercy.

362. In these dangers I exhort thee, my daughter,

that just as the fury and watchfulness of hell against

thee is greater, so also, with the divine grace, thy watch

fulness be more earnest and continual in order to van

quish those astute enemies. Consider what I did, when

I saw the designs of Lucifer to persecute me and the

holy Church : I multiplied my prayers, tears, sighs and

supplications; and when the demons tried to avail them

selves of the help of Herod and the Jews of Jerusalem,

although I needed not fear the least for myself in the

city and desired to remain there, I nevertheless gave up

my desire of staying in order to furnish an example of

caution and of obedience by flying from danger and

by yielding to the will of saint John. Thou art not

strong and art in great danger from creatures ; and, what

is still more, thou art my disciple, and hast my life and

works for thy model. Therefore I desire thee to fly

from danger as soon as thou seest it; and if necessary,

avoid it at the cost of the greatest sensible pain, always

acting under obedience, which thou must look upon as

thy guiding-star and as thy support against the danger

of a fall. Cautiously examine, whether beneath some

THE CORONATION 335

apparent work of piety there lurk not the snares of the

demon and see that thou do not suffer evil in doing good

to others. Do not trust to thy own judgment, although

it may seem good and secure to thee; never hesitate to

obey in all things, seeing that I by obedience safely

passed through many labors and difficulties,

363. Renew also the loving desire of following my

footsteps and of imitating me perfectly, so as to finish

what still remains of my history, at the same time writ

ing it in thy heart. Run on the way of humility and

obedience after the order of my life and virtues, and if

thou obey me (as I have wished and so often asked of

thee) I will assist thee as my daughter in thy necessities

and tribulations. My divine Son shall execute his de

signs in regard to thee, as thou hast desired before begin

ning this work; his promises so often repeated to thee

will be fulfilled and thou wilt be blessed by his powerful

right hand. Praise and magnify the Most High for

the favor shown to my servant James in Saragossa, for

the temple there erected before my Assumption into

heaven, and for all the wonders concerning it. Remem

ber that this was the first temple of the evangelical law

and was most pleasing to the will of the most blessed

Trinity.

BOOK TWO

PART III, BOOK VIII.

Describes the Journey of the Most Blessed Mary with Saint John to Eph-

esusjthe Death and Chastisement of Herod; the Destruction of the

Temple of Diana; the Return of the Most Blessed Mary from

Ephesus to Jerusalem; the Instructions She gave to

the Evangelists; the exalted State of Her purest

Soul before Her death; Her most bless

ed Transition, Assumption and

Coronation in heaven.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOST BLESSED MARY DEPARTS WITH SAINT JOHN

FROM JERUSALEM FOR EPHESUS; SAINT PAUL GOES

FROM DAMASCUS TO JERUSALEM; SAINT JAMES AR

RIVES THERE; HE VISITS THE GREAT QUEEN IN

EPHESUS ; REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERIOUS HAPPEN

INGS DURING ALL THESE JOURNEYS.

365. The most blessed Mary, having- enriched and

blessed Saragossa and the kingdom of Spain by her pres

ence, and her promises of protection, and having estab

lished through saint James and her angels the temple as a

monument to her sacred name, was borne by the hands

of the seraphim back to Jerusalem. As soon as the great

Lady of heaven and Queen of the angels had left the

cloud-throne, on which She had been borne, and set her

foot upon the floor of the Cenacle, She prostrated Herself

upon it, humbling Herself to the dust in order to praise

the Most High for the favors conferred upon Her, upon

saint James and upon the kingdom of Spain in this

miraculous journey. At the thought of a temple built in

her honor and for her invocation, She, in her ineffable

337

338 CITY OF GOD

humility, so annihilated Herself in her own estimation, as

seemingly to have entirely forgotten that She was the

Mother of God, a sinless Creature and without measure

superior to all the highest seraphim. She humbled Herself

and gave thanks for these benefits, as if She were a mere

worm of the earth, of less value and guilty of more sins

than all the creatures. This new debt seemed to Her so

great, that She felt obliged to aspire to new and more

exalted degrees of holiness in recompense. This She re

solved to do and really accomplished, arriving at a degree

of wisdom and humility beyond all our capacity to

conceive.

366. In these exercises, and in praying with great fer

vor for the defense and increase of the Church, She spent

the greater part of the four days after her return to Jeru

salem. In the meanwhile the evangelist saint John made

preparations for the journey and embarkation for

Ephesus, and on the fourth day, which was the fifth of

January of the year forty, saint John notified Her that it

was time to leave ; for there would be a ship and all things

had been arranged for the journey. The great Mistress

of obedience, without answer or delay, knelt down and

asked permission of the Lord to leave the Cenacle and

Jerusalem ; and then She proceeded to take leave of the

owner of the house and its inhabitants. It can easily be

imagined, how sorrowful they were at this leave-taking;

for on account of her most sweet conversation, and be

cause of the favors and blessings received at her liberal

hands, all were held captives and prisoners in love and

veneration of Her, whereas now all at once they were to

be deprived of her consoling presence and of this rich

Treasure, the well spring of so many blessings. All of

them offered to follow and accompany Her; but as this

was not opportune, they asked Her to hasten her return

THE CORONATION 339

and not to forsake forever this house, which was entirely

at her disposal. The heavenly Mother thanked them for

these pious and loving wishes by expressing her own

humble love, and She somewhat allayed their grief by

giving them hope of her return.

367. Then She asked permission of saint John to visit

the holy places of our Redemption and there to worship

and adore the Lord, who had consecrated them by his

presence and his precious blood. With the Apostle She

made these sacred stations, exhibiting incredible devotion

and tears of reverent love, and saint John, deeply con

soled at being permitted to accompany Her, exercised

himself in heroic acts of virtue. The most blessed Mother

saw at each of the holy places the angels, who had been

deputed to guard and defend them ; and anew She charged

them to resist Lucifer and his demons, lest they destroy or

profane by irreverence those sacred spots, as they desired

and intended to do through the unbelieving Jews. She

told the angels to drive away by holy inspirations the bad

thoughts and diabolical suggestions, by which the infernal

dragon sought to excite the Jews and other mortals to blot

out the memory of Christ our Savior in those holy places,

and She charged them with this duty for all the future

times, since the wrath of the evil spirits against the places

and the works of the Redemption endures through all

the ages. The holy angels obeyed their Queen and Mis

tress in all that She ordained.

368. Having satisfied her piety, She asked saint John

on her knees to bless Her for the journey, just as She had

been wont to do with her divine Son; for She continued

to exercise the same great virtues of obedience and hu

mility toward the beloved disciple, his substitute. Many

of the faithful of Jerusalem offered Her money, jewels,

vehicles and all things necessary for her journey to the

340 CITY OF GOD

sea and to Ephesus. The most prudent Lady humbly

showed her appreciation to all, but accepted nothing. For

her journey to the sea She made use of an unpretentious

beast of burden, on which She was carried along as the

Queen of the virtues and of the poor. She recollected the

journeys and pilgrimages She had made with her divine

Son and with her spouse Joseph, and these recollections,

together with the heavenly love, which had induced Her

once more to travel, awakened in her dove-like heart

tender and devout affections. In order to be in all things

most perfect, She excited new acts of resignation to the

divine will in being deprived, for the glory and exaltation

of his name, of the company of her Son and of her spouse,

whose consoling presence She had enjoyed on her former

journeys. She also resigned Herself to the divine will

in regard to leaving the quiet of the Cenacle, the neighbor

hood of the sacred places, and the intercourse with so

many of the faithful and devout children of the Church,

and praised the Most High, because He had given Her

the beloved disciple as a companion in her banishment.

369. For her greater alleviation and comfort during

this journey all her holy angels on her leaving the Cenacle,

appeared to Her in visible and corporeal forms surround

ing Her and protecting Her in their midst. With this

escort of the celestial host and the human company of

saint John She journeyed to the port, where the vessel

was ready to sail for Ephesus. She spent her time in oft-

repeated and sweet colloquies and canticles with the celes

tial spirits, sounding the praises of the Most High. At

other times She conversed with saint John, who with

admirable reverence was tenderly solicitous to serve Her

in all that occurred and seemed opportune. This solici

tude of saint John was met by the heavenly Mother with

incredible humility and gratitude; for these two virtues,

THE CORONATION 341

gratitude and humility, made all the favors She received

appear to Her very great, and although all service was

due Her in justice, She nevertheless acknowledged it as

the most voluntary favor.

370. They came to the harbor and immediately em

barked in the ship with other passengers. The great

Queen of the world was now for the first time upon the

sea. She saw and comprehended with clearness the vast

Mediterranean and its communication with the great

ocean. She beheld its height and depth, its length and

breadth, its caverns and secret recesses, its sands and

minerals, its ebb and tide, its animals, its whales and fishes

of all sizes, and whatever other, portentous animals it

enclosed. She knew how many men had drowned and

perished in voyaging it and She remembered the saying

of Ecclesiasticus : That those who navigate the sea, nar

rate its dangers (Ecclus 43, 26), and that of David:

Wonderful are the surges and pride of the swollen waves

(Ps. 92, 4). The heavenly Mother could easily know all

this, as well because of an especial dispensation of her

divine Son, as on account of her supreme angelic privilege

and grace, and of her singular participation in the divine

attributes, which resembled those of the most sacred hu

manity of Christ our Savior. In virtue of these gifts and

privileges, her knowledge extended to all these things not

only as they are in themselves and without deceit, but far

beyond the sphere of angelic knowledge.

371. When this great panorama of creatures, in which

were reflected, as from a most clear mirror, the greatness

and omnipotence of the Creator, was presented to her

faculties filled with heavenly wisdom, her spirit winged

its ardent flight to the very being of God, so wonderfully

reflected in those creatures, and for all of them, and in all

of them, She gave praise and glory and magnificence to

342 CITY OF GOD

the Most High. With the compassion of a most loving

Mother for those who trusted their lives to the indomitable

fury of the sea in navigating over its waves, She most

fervently besought the Almighty to .protect from its

dangers all who should call upon her name and ask for her

intercession. The Lord immediately granted this petition

and promised to favor whoever upon the sea should carry

some image of Her and should sincerely look upon this

Star of the sea, most blessed Mary, for help in its perils.

Accordingly it will be understood, that, if the Catholics

and the faithful encounter ill success and perish in navi

gation, it is because they ignore the favors to be obtained

from the Queen of the angels, or because on account of

their sins they fail to remember Her in the raging storms,

or fail to seek her favors with sincere faith and devotion ;

for neither can the word of the Lord ever fail, nor will

the great Mother ever deny assistance to those endangered

by the perils of the sea.

372. Another wonder also happened ; for when the

most blessed Mary saw the sea with the fishes and other

maritime animals, She gave them all her blessing and

commanded them to acknowledge and praise their Creator

in the manner they were capable of. Then it was wonder

ful to see all the fishes of the sea obeying her command

and with incredible swiftness placing themselves in front

of the ship. None of the species of sea-animals was miss

ing\*, each being represented by an innumerable multitude.

All of them surrounded the ship and showed their heads

above the water and with unwonted motions and signs

of pleasure for a long time acknowledged Her as the

Queen and Mistress of creatures and showed themselves

grateful to Her for coming upon the waters and visiting

them in their place of habitation. This strange event

astonished all the passengers as something never before

THE CORONATION 343

seen. The multitudes of large and small fishes, so crowded

and packed together, somewhat impeded the progress

of the vessel, and the passengers gazed upon this spectacle

and wonderingly discussed it, for they did not know the

cause of this miracle. Saint John alone understood it,

and for a while he could not restrain his tears of devoted

joy. After some time he asked the heavenly Mother to

give them her blessing and her permission to depart since

they had so promptly obeyed Her when asked to praise the

Most High. The sweetest Mother complied, and im

mediately that army of fishes disappeared and churned

the sea into foam by their quick motion. Thereupon the

ship pursued its way over the tranquil and serene bosom

of the waters, arriving at Ephesus in a few days.

373. When they landed the great Queen continued to

work miracles equal to those wrought upon the sea. She

cured the sick and the possessed, who, as soon as they

came into her presence, were set free. I will not tarry to

relate all these wonders ; for many books would be neces

sary and much time to describe all the doings of the most

blessed Mary and the favors of heaven, which She dis

pensed as the instrument and medium of the omnipotence

of the Most High. I will record only those, which are

necessary for this history and which shall suffice to mani

fest in some measure the unknown and wonderful works

of our great Queen and Lady. In Ephesus lived some

Christians, who had come from Jerusalem. There were

not many, but on learning of the arrival of the Mother of

Christ the Redeemer, they hastened to pay Her a visit and

offer their dwellings and their possessions for her use. But

the great Queen of virtues, who sought neither ostentation

nor temporal commodities, chose for her dwelling the

house of a few retired and poor women, who were living

by themselves free from intercourse with men. By the in-

344 CITY OF GOD

tervention of the angels, they lovingly and generously

placed their home at the disposition of the Lady. In it

they selected a very retired room for the Queen and

another for saint John, which these Two occupied during

their stay in Ephesus.

374. The most blessed Mary thanked the owners, who

were to live with Her. Then She retired to her room and,

prostrate upon the ground as was usual in her prayers,

She adored the immutable essence of God, offering to

sacrifice Herself in his service in this city and saying:

"Lord God omnipotent, by the immensity of thy Divinity

Thou fillest all the heavens and the earth ( Jer. 23, 24) . I,

thy humble handmaid, desire to fulfill entirely thy holy

will, on all occasions, in all places, and at all times, in

which thy Providence shall deign to place me; for Thou

art my only Good, my being and my life, and toward thy

pleasure and satisfaction tend all my thoughts, words and

actions." The most prudent Mother perceived that the

Lord accepted her prayer and her offering, and that He

responded to her desires with divine power, ready to

assist and govern Her always.

375. She continued her prayer for the holy Church

and laid out her plans for the assistance of all the faith

ful. She called her angels and sent some of them to aid

the Apostles and disciples, whom She knew to be much

pressed in the persecutions, raised by the demons through

infidel men. In those days saint Paul fled from Damascus

before the attacks of the Jews, as he himself mentions in

the second epistle to the Corinthians, where he says, that

he was let down from the walls of the city in a basket (II

Cor. 11, 23). To defend him from these perils and those

with which Lucifer threatened him on his way to Jeru

salem, the great Queen of angels sent her angels to be his

guard and protection ; for the wrath and fury of hell was

THE CORONATION 345

roused against saint Paul more than against any of the

other Apostles. This is the journey the Apostle himself

refers to in his letter to the Galatians (Gal. 1, 18), where

he says, that after three years he went to Jerusalem to

visit saint Peter. These three years are not to be counted

from the time of his conversion, but from the time he had

returned from Arabia to Damascus. This is to be inferred

from the text itself, for after stating that he returned from

Arabia to Damascus, he immediately adds, that after

three years, he went up to Jerusalem. If those three years

are counted from the time before his sojourn in Arabia,

the text would occasion much confusion.

376. With greater clearness this may be proved by

computing the time of the death of saint Stephen and

the journey of the most blessed Virgin to Ephesus. For

counting from the day of his Nativity, saint Stephen died

at the end of the thirty-fourth year of Christ, but counting

them from the day of the Circumcision, as the Church

does now, saint Stephen died seven days before the com

pletion of the thirty-four years, being the seven days be

fore the first of January. The conversion of saint Paul

happened in the year thirty-six, on the twenty-fifth of

January. If he had come to Jerusalem three years after

wards, he would have found there the most holy Mary

and saint John, while he himself says, that he had not

seen any one of the Apostles there, except saint Peter

and saint James the less, who was called Alpheus. If the

holy Queen and saint John had at that time been in Jeru

salem saint Paul would certainly not have missed seeing

them, and he would have mentioned at least saint John;

yet he says, that he had not seen him. The explanation is,

that saint Paul came to Jerusalem in the year forty, four

years after his conversion, and a little less than a month

after the most blessed Mary had departed for Ephesus.

3 46 CITY OF GOD

Saint Paul had entered the fifth year of his conversion

and the other Apostles, except the two he saw, had already

left Jerusalem and were preaching- the Gospel of Christ,

each one in his appointed province.

377. Conformably with this reckoning we must as

sume, that saint Paul spent the first year after his conver

sion, or the greater part of it, in journeying to Arabia

and preaching the Gospel there ; then, the three following

years, in Damascus. Hence the evangelist Luke, in the

ninth chapter of his Acts of the Apostles, although he

says nothing of Paul s journey to Arabia, nevertheless

says that for many days after his conversion the Jews

of Damascus plotted to take his life, these many days re

ferring to the four years thus passed. Then he adds, that

his disciples, aware of the plots of the Jews, on a certain

night lowered him in a basket from the city walls and thus

despatched him on his journey to Jerusalem. There, al

though knowing of his miraculous conversion, the Apostles

and the new disciples, nevertheless retained a certain fear

and suspicion of his not persevering, because he had been

such a professed enemy of Christ, our Savior. Hence

they at first held themselves aloof from saint Paul, until

saint Barnaby spoke to them and introduced him to saint

Peter, saint James and other disciples (Acts 26, 27).

Saint Paul prostrated himself at the feet of the vicar of

Christ, kissed them in acknowledgment of his errors and

sins, and begging to be admitted as one of his subjects and

as a follower of his Master, whose holy name and faith he

desired to preach at the cost of his blood.

378. From the fear and suspicion of saint Peter and

James concerning the perseverance of saint Paul we can

likewise deduct that he arrived in Jerusalem in the absence

of the most blessed Mary and saint John; for he would

have presented himself first of all to Her to allay suspicion

THE CORONATION 347

against him; and the two Apostles would likewise have

first asked Her, whether they could trust saint Paul. All

of them would have been set at ease by the most prudent

Lady, as She was so solicitous and attentive in consoling

and instructing the Apostles, especially saint Peter. But

since the great Lady had already left for Ephesus, they

had no one to assure them of the constancy of saint Paul,

until saint Peter reassured himself of it at seeing him thus

prostrate at his feet. Thereupon he was received with

great joy of soul by saint Peter and the other disciples.

All of them gave humble and fervent thanks to the Most

High, and commissioned saint Paul to preach in Jeru

salem. This he gladly did, to the astonishment of all the

Jews who knew him. As his words were like burning

arrows, that penetrated into the hearts of all that heard

him, they were struck with terror; and in two days all

Jerusalem was roused by the news of his arrival, flocking

to see him with their own eyes.

379. Lucifer and his demons were not asleep on this

occasion, for they were visited by the Almighty with an

increase of torment at the arrival of saint Paul. The

divine power, so evident in him, oppressed and paralyzed

the infernal dragons. But as their pride and malice shall

never be extinguished through all the eternity of their ex

istence (Ps. 73, 23), they were roused to fury, as soon

as they recognized this divine virtue as flowing from Paul.

Lucifer, with incredible rage, called together many legions

of the demons and exhorted them anew to rouse them

selves and exert all the forces of their malice for the entire

destruction of saint Paul, and not to leave any stone un

turned in Jerusalem and in all the world for the attain

ment of this object The demons without delay set about

this work, exciting Herod and the Jews against the Apos

tle, and directing their attention to the burning zeal with

which he began to preach in Jerusalem.

348 CITY OF GOD

380. The great Mistress of heaven perceived all this

from her retirement in Ephesus; for in addition to the

knowledge of all things through her heavenly science, She

received information of all that happened to saint Paul

from the angels She had sent for his defense. As the

most blessed Mother expected the disturbance about to be

raised by the malice of Herod and the Jews, especially

against saint Paul, and as, on the other hand, She knew

the importance of preserving his life for the exaltation of

God s name and the spread of the Gospel, the great Queen

was filled with new solicitude and regret at being absent

from Palestine, where She could have rendered more im

mediate assistance to the Apostles. Therefore She sought

to furnish it so much the more abundantly from Ephesus

by multiplying her prayers and petitions, her ceaseless

tears and sighs, and by other measures through the hands

of her holy angels. In order to allay her anxieties, the

Lord, one day in her prayer, assured Her, that He would

fulfill her petitions and protect the life of saint Paul in

this danger and in these assaults of the devil. And so He

did : for one day saint Paul, while praying in the temple,

was raised to an ecstatic rapture and filled with most ex

alted enlightenment and understanding, wherein the Lord

commanded him immediately to leave Jerusalem and save

his life from the hatred of the unbelieving Jews.

381. Hence saint Paul sojourned in Jerusalem at that

time not more than fifteen days, as he himself says in his

epistle to Galatians (Gal. 1, 18). After some years he

returned thither from Miletus and Ephesus and was taken

prisoner, and he refers to this ecstasy in the temple and to

the command of the Lord to leave Jerusalem in the twenty-

second chapter of the Acts. Of this vision and command

he informed saint Peter, as the head of the apostolic

college; and after consultation concerning his mortal

THE CORONATION 349

danger, he was secretly sent to Caesarea and Tarsus with

orders to preach indiscriminately to the gentiles, which he

did. The most blessed Mary was the instrument and

Mediatrix of all these miraculous favors. It was through

Her that her Divine Son operated them, and from Her,

God received the proper thanks for the graces distributed

to the whole Church.

382. Having thus been reassured in regard to the life

of saint Paul, the most blessed Mother entertained the

hope that through the assistance of divine Providence

She might save the life of her cousin James, who was

very dear to Her and who was still in Saragossa, pro

tected by the hundred angels She had appointed for his

guardians and companions at Granada. These holy angels

frequently went back and forth, bringing the petitions of

the Apostles to the most blessed Mary and her counsels

back to him. In this way saint James learned of the so

journ of the great Queen in Ephesus. When he had

brought the chapel or small temple of the Pillar in Sara

gossa to a sufficient state of completion, he consigned it

to the care of the bishop and the disciples appointed by him

here as in other cities in Spain. Some months after the

apparition of the Queen, he departed from Saragossa,

continuing to preach through different provinces. Having

come to Catalonia, he embarked for Italy, where without

much delay, he pursued his journey overland always

preaching until he again embarked for Asia, and ardently

desiring to see there the most blessed Mary, his Mistress

and Protectress.

383. Saint James happily attained his object and

reached Ephesus. There he prostrated himself at the feet

of the Mother of his Creator, shedding copious tears of

joy and veneration. From his inmost heart he thanked

Her for the peerless favors obtained at her hands from

350 CITY OF GOD

the Most High during his travels and his preaching in

Spain, and especially for her having visited him and con

ferred such blessings upon him during her visits. The

heavenly Mother, as Mistress of humility, immediately

raised him from the ground and said to him: "My

Master, remember thou art the anointed of the Lord and

his minister, and that I am an humble wormlet." With

these words the great Lady fell on her knees and asked the

blessing of saint James as a priest of the Most High. He

remained for some days in Ephesus in the company of

the most blessed Mary and of his brother John, to whom

he gave an account of all that had happened to him in

Spain. With the most prudent Mother during those days

he held most exalted colloquies and conferences, of which

it will suffice to record the following.

384. In order to prepare saint James for his leave-

taking the blessed Mary one day said to him : "James,

my son, these will be the last few days of thy life. Thou

knowest how deeply I love thee in the Lord, and how I

desire to raise thee to his intimate love and eternal friend

ship, for which He has created thee, redeemed and called

thee. In the few days that still remain of thy life, I desire

to demonstrate to thee my love and I offer thee all that

by the divine grace I can do for thee as a true Mother."

To this exceedingly great favor saint James responded

with deepest veneration : "My Mistress and Mother of my

God and Redeemer, from the bottom of my soul I thank

Thee for this new benefit, possible only to thy unbounded

charity. My Lady, I beseech Thee, give me thy blessing

that I may suffer martyrdom for thy Son, my true God

and Savior. If it is his will and for his glory, I beseech

Thee from my soul, not to forsake me in the sacrifice of

my life, but that I may see Thee with my own eyes in my

passage and that Thou offer me as an acceptable victim

in his divine presence."

THE CORONATION 351

385. The most holy Mary promised to present his pe

tition to the Lord and that She would fulfill it, if the divine

will and condescension should so permit. Thus inspiring

him with the hope of her assistance and with other con

solations of eternal life, She comforted the Apostle and

strengthened him for his expected martyrdom. Among

other words She spoke to him also as follows : "My son

James, what torments or suffering shall ever seem great

at the prospect of entering the eternal joys of the Lord?

The most bitter shall seem sweet and the most terrible,

welcome and desirable to him who knows the infinite and

highest Good, which he shall possess in return for a mo

mentary sorrow (II Cor. 4, 17). I congratulate thee, my

master, for thy most happy lot and that thou art so soon

to leave the tribulations of this mortal life in order to en

joy the infinite Good as a comprehensor in the gladness of

his divine countenance. In this my heart is lightened

that thou art so shortly to obtain what my soul desires

for thee; and that thou givest thy temporal life for the

unending possession of eternal rest. I give thee the bless

ing of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, in

order that all the three Persons, in the oneness of their

essence, assist thee in tribulation and lead thee to the de

sired end ; and my own blessing shall be with thee in thy

glorious martyrdom."

386. The great Queen added other words of admirable

wisdom and highest consolation in parting from saint

James. She asked him, in her name and in the name of

all the creatures to praise God, and to intercede for the

holy Church, as soon as He should come to the vision of

the blessed Trinity. Saint James offered to do all She

desired and again asked her favor and protection in the

hour of his martyrdom. This She once more promised,

and taking leave of Her, saint James said : "My Mistress,

352 CITY OF GOD

blessed among women, thy life and intercession is the prop

on which the holy Church, now and during the ages in

which it is to exist, shall rest securely in the midst of the

persecutions and temptations of the enemies of the Lord.

Thy charity shall be to Thee the instrument of thy martyr

dom. Keep in mind always, as our sweetest Mother, the

kingdom of Spain, where the holy Church and the faith

of thy divine Son and Redeemer has now been planted.

Receive it under thy special protection and preserve in it

thy sacred temple and the faith, which I unworthily have

preached; and give me thy holy blessing." The most

holy Mary promised to fulfill his petition and desires, and

She parted from him, bestowing upon him her reiterated

blessing.

387. Saint James took leave also of his brother saint

John, who shed abundant tears, not so much of sorrow as

of joy, on account of the happy lot of the elder brother,

since he was to be the first of the Apostles to attain eternal

happiness and the palm of martyrdom. Thereupon saint

James journeyed without much delay to Jerusalem, where

he preached for some days before he died, as I shall show

in the next chapter. The great Lady of the world remained

in Ephesus, attentive to all that happened to saint James

and all the other Apostles, without losing them from her

interior vision or intermitting her prayers for them and

for all the faithful of the Church. At the thought of the

martyrdom of saint James for the name of Christ, such

conflagrations of love and desires of giving her life for

the Lord welled up in the purest heart of Mary, that She

merited, many times over, the crowns gained by the Apos

tle and by all others together; for with each one of the

martyrs She suffered many martyrdoms of love, more

excruciating to her chaste and burning heart than the

torments of sword and fire to the bodies of the martyrs.

THE CORONATION 353

.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST HOI.Y

MARY GAVE ME.

388. My daughter, in the events of this chapter thou

wilt find much guidance for a perfect life. Consider then,

that just as God is the beginning and origin of all the be

ing and faculties of creatures, so also, according to right

reason, He is to be their sole last end ; for if man has re

ceived all without meriting it, then he likewise owes all to

Him who has given it gratis; and if men have received

all in order to produce results, then all the results belong

to the Creator and not to the creatures. This truth, which

I understood fully and pondered in my heart, urged me

to prostrate myself and lower myself to the very dust in

adoring the immutable being of God. I reflected how I

was created out of nothing, formed of earth, and in the

presence of God I annihilated myself, acknowledging Him

as the Creator, to whom I owed my life, being and motion

(Acts 17, 28), and protesting that without Him I was

nothing, and that all was due to Him as the one beginning

and end of all creation. In the light of this truth, all that

I did and suffered seemed little; and although I ceased

not to do good, I continually longed and sighed to do and

suffer still more. Never was my heart satisfied, because

I still found myself a debtor, getting poorer and ever

more indebted. This state of mind is very well founded

in right reason and still more on faith, and this debt is

manifest and common to all men, if they would only direct

their attention toward it. But amid the universal forget-

fulness of men I wish, my daughter, that thou solicitously

imitate me in the practices and exercises described to thee,

and especially that thou humble thyself to the dust and

abase thyself in proportion as the Most High raises thee

up by the favors and blessings of his right hand. The ex-

354 CITY OF GOD

ample of my humility thou wilt see clearly evident in the

special favors, as for instance, when He commanded a

temple to be built, in which I was to be honored and in

voked even during my mortal life. This, and other favors

humbled me beyond all human imagination. Therefore, if

I thus humbled myself after performing such great things,

consider how much more thou must do it in response to

such great liberality of the Lord toward thee and after

such niggardly correspondence on thy part.

389. I wish also, my daughter, that thou imitate me

in being very careful to practice poverty of spirit con

cerning the use of necessities and comforts, offered thee by

thy sister-nuns or by thy well-wishers. Choose and accept

only the most poor and most ordinary, the most undesir

able and humble things for thy use; for otherwise thou

canst not imitate me in the spirit, in which without ostenta

tion I refused all comforts and good things of this life

offered to me by the faithful of Jerusalem, and of which

I accepted only what was absolutely necessary during my

sojourn in Ephesus. In the exercise of this virtue is con

tained much that will make human beings happy, while

the deceived and blind worldlings please themselves in

pursuing what is entirely opposed to this virtue and truth.

390. Seek also to guard thyself from another very

common mistake : namely that by which men, instead of

acknowledging that all the goods of body and soul be

long to the Lord, nevertheless appropriate all of them to

themselves and consider them so much their own, that

they not only refuse to offer them freely to their Creator,

but even, if at any time they must part with them, lament

and are aggrieved over their loss, as if they had been in

jured or as if God had treated them unjustly. With such

a disorderly affection parents are wont to love their chil

dren, and children their parents, married men their wives,

THE CORONATION 355

and wives their husbands, and all of them, their posses

sions, honor, health and other temporal goods, while many

souls thus love even the spiritual goods; and they go so

far in this disorderly love, that they have no measure in

their sorrow, when they lose them. Though it be im

possible to recover them, they live in unrest and dejection,

passing from the disorder of their sensible affection to the

disorder of their reason and to unjust complaint. Hence

they dare not only condemn the rulings of divine Provi

dence and lose the merit of sacrificing what is the Lord s,

but they wish to have it understood, that they esteem the

possession of these transitory goods as their highest aim,

and that, if they were permitted, they would live many

ages content with these apparent and perishing things.

391. None of the children of Adam can have a love

greater, or one equal to that, with which I loved my divine

Son and my spouse saint Joseph; yet this love was so

well ordered while I lived in their company, that I will

ingly sacrificed their conversation and intercourse during

all the time in which I was deprived of their presence.

This conformity and resignation I desire thee to imitate,

whenever something is wanting to thee, which thou

shouldst love in God; for outside of God thou art per

mitted to love nothing. The anxious desire of seeing the

supreme Good and of lovmg God eternally and forever

in heaven must alone be perpetual in thee. For this hap

piness thou must sigh in tears from thy inmost heart ; for

it thou must gladly suffer all the hardships and afflictions

of this mortal life. Thou must live in these aspirations

in such a way, that from now on in trying to make thyself

worthy of God thou be anxious to suffer all that thou

hearest or understandest as having been suffered by the

saints. But remember these desires of suffering and these

aspirations and attempts to see God are to be of such a

356 CITY OF GOD

kind, that thy suffering becomes real through thy sorrow

at not being able actually to encounter actual torments and

at not being found worthy of bearing all the martyrdom

thou thus desirest. In thy flights of desire to arrive at the

beatific vision thou must permit no other lower motive

to intermingle, such as the relief afforded by the joy of

God s vision against the hardships of this life; for to

desire the vision of the highest Good, is not love of God,

but love of self and of one s own comfort, and cannot

merit reward in the eyes of the all-penetrating and all-

weighing omnipotent God. But if thou do all these

things sincerely and in all perfection, as a faithful servant

and spouse of my divine Son, desiring to see Him in order

to love Him, praise Him, and never to offend Him

eternally, and if thou covet all labors and sufferings only

for these ends, believe me and assure thyself, that thou

wilt draw Us to thee and that thou wilt arrive at the kind

of love thou continually desirest ; since precisely for this

purpose, We are so liberal with thee.

CHAPTER II.

THE GLORIOUS MARTYRDOM OF SAINT JAMES; THE MOST

BLESSED MARY ASSISTS HIM AND BEARS HIS SOUL TO

HEAVEN ; HIS BODY IS BROUGHT TO SPAIN ; THE IM

PRISONMENT OF SAINT PETER AND HIS LIBERATION

FROM PRISON; THE MYSTERIES CONNECTED WITH

THESE EVENTS.

392. Our great apostle saint James came to Jerusalem

at a time when that whole city was very much incensed

against the disciples and followers of Christ our Lord.

This new fury the demons had secretly roused by stirring

up the zeal of the Jews for the old Law and their jealousy

against the new evangelical Law. The immediate cause

of these movements was the preaching of saint Paul, who,

although he remained not more than fifteen days in Jeru

salem, nevertheless in that short time, by the divine

power, had converted many and excited the wonder and

admiration of all the people. Although the unbelieving

Jews felt relieved somewhat by the news of his having

left Jerusalem, yet they were again thrown into conster

nation by the speedy arrival of saint James, who showed

no less zeal and heavenly wisdom in proclaiming the

name of Christ our Redeemer. Lucifer, who was not ig

norant of his coming, availed himself of it as a new means

of exciting the spleen and rousing the wrath of the high-

priests, priests and scribes. Saint James began to preach

most fervently the name of the Crucified, his mysterious

Death and Resurrection. In the first few days he con

verted to the faith some of the Jews, among whom were

especially Hermogenes and Philetus, both of them ma

gicians and sorcerers, who had a pact with the devil. Her

mogenes was deeply versed in magic and Philetus was

357

358 CITY OF GOD

his disciple; the Jews wanted to engage the services of

these two in order either to overcome saint James in dis

pute, or if that was impossible, to take away his life by

their magic arts.

393. This wickedness the devils had intended to exe

cute through the instrumentality of the unbelieving Jews;

for they themselves could not come near saint James

on account of the terrors of the divine grace emanating

from the Apostle. Philetus first began the dispute with

saint James, so that, if he should gain no advantage, Her-

mogenes, as the more skillful master in the magic art,

might enter the combat. Philetus brought forth his

sophistical and false arguments, but the holy Apostle

spoke with such wisdom and force, that all his sophism

yielded as the darkness before the light: Philetus was

overcome and converted to the truth of Christ, becoming

from that time on a defender of the Apostle, and his doc

trine. But fearing the diabolical arts of his master Her-

mogenes, he sought the protection of saint James. The

holy Apostle gave him a piece of cloth or linen, which he

had received from Mary, and with this relic Philetus

protected himself against the power of Hermogenes for

some days, until the latter himself entered the dispute.

394. Although Hermogenes feared saint James, he

could not evade the meeting, because he had pledged him

self to the Jews to enter the discussion and convince saint

James. Accordingly he tried to enforce his errors by more

cogent arguments than his disciple. But all that he could

do was unavailing against the heavenly force and wisdom

of the Apostle, which was like an impetuous torrent. He

brought Hermogenes to silence and obliged him to confess

his belief in the mysteries of the faith of Christ, just as

he had done with Philetus : both of them accepted the

faith and doctrine preached by the Apostle. The demons

were roused to fury against Hermogenes and, through the

power they had acquired over him, began to maltreat him

on account of his conversion. As he learned how Philetus

THE CORONATION 359

had defended himself by the relic obtained from the

Apostle, he sought a like favor against his enemies. Saint

James gave him the scarf he had used in his travels and

with it Hermogenes put to flight the demons and made

them powerless to approach or afflict him further.

395. These conversions and others made by saint James

in Jerusalem were hastened by the tearful sighs and

prayers of the great Queen in her retreat at Ephesus,

where (as I have often said) She knew by vision all that

was done by the Apostles and the other faithful of the

Church ; and particularly what happened with the beloved

Apostle James for whom She was especially solicitous as

being so near his martyrdom. Hermogenes and Philetus

persevered for some time in the faith of Christ ; but after

wards they fell away and lost it in Asia, as is evident from

the second epistle to Timothy, where saint Paul says that

Figelus, or Philetus, and Hermogenes had left him. Al

though the seed of the faith had sprung up in the hearts

of these men, it took no sufficient root to resist the tempta

tions of the demon, whom they had served and familiarly

entertained for so long a time. The evil and perverse in

clinations of their vices still remained and again prevailed,

withdrawing them from the faith they had accepted.

396. When the Jews, through the conviction and con

version of Philetus and Hermogenes, saw their hopes

frustrated, they were rilled with new anger against the

apostle saint James and they determined to put an end to

his life. For this purpose they bribed Democritus and

Lysias, centurions of the Roman militia, to furnish them

with soldiers for the arrest of the Apostle. In order to

hide their treachery they were to raise a feigned quarrel

or disturbance on a certain day during his preaching and

thus get him within their power. The execution of this

wicked design was left to Abiator, the high-priest of that

year, and to Josias, a scribe of the same mind as the high-

priest. As they had planned, so they executed their

scheme ; for, while the saint was preaching to the people

360 CITY OF GOD

about the mystery of the Redemption, proving it to them

with admirable wisdom from the testimonies of the an

cient writings and moving his audience to tears of com

punction, the priest and the scribe were roused to dia

bolical fury. Giving the signal to the Roman soldiers,

the priest sent Josias to throw a rope around the neck

of saint James and fell upon him, proclaiming him a dis

turber of the people and the author of a new religion in

opposition to the Roman empire.

397. Democritus and Lysias thereupon rushed up with

their soldiers and brought the Apostle bound to Herod,

the son of Archelaus, whose malice had been roused in

teriorly through the astuteness of Lucifer and exteriorly

by the evil-minded and hateful Jews. Thus doubly incited,

Herod began against the disciples of the Lord, whom he

abhorred, the persecution mentioned by saint Luke in

the twelfth chapter of the Acts and sent his soldiers to

afflict and imprison them. He instantly commanded saint

James to be beheaded, as the Jews had asked. Incredible

was the joy of the holy Apostle at being seized and bound

like his Master and at seeing himself conducted to the

place, where he was to pass from this mortal life to the

eternal through martyrdom, as he had been informed by

the Queen of heaven. He offered most humble thanks for

this benefit and publicly reiterated the open profession of

his faith in Christ our Lord. Remembering the petition

he had made in Ephesus, that She be present at his death,

he called upon Her from his inmost Soul.

398. The most holy Mary from her oratory heard

these prayers of her beloved Apostle and cousin; for

She was attentive to all that happened to him and She

helped and favored him with her own efficacious peti

tions. During this her prayer, She saw a great multi

tude of angels and heavenly spirits of all hierarchies

descending from heaven, part of them surrounding the

Apostle in Jerusalem as he was led to the place of execu

tion, while numerous others approached their Queen at

THE CORONATION

361

Ephesus. Presently one of them addressed Her saying:

"Empress of heaven and our Lady, the most high Lord

and God bids you immediately to hasten to Jerusalem to

console his great servant James, to assist him in his

death and to grant all his loving and holy desires." This

favor the most blessed Mary joyfully and gratefully

acknowledged. She praised the Most High for the pro

tection granted to those who trust .in his mercy and put

their lives in his hands. In the meanwhile the Apostle

was led to execution and on the way thereto he wrought

great miracles upon the sick and ailing and on some pos

sessed by the demons. There were a great number of

them, because the rumor of his execution by Herod had

spread about and many of the unfortunates hastened to

receive his last ministrations and counsels. All that

applied were healed by the great Apostle.

399. In the meanwhile the holy angels placed their

Queen and Mistress upon a most refulgent throne, as they

had done on other occasions, and on it bore Her to Jeru

salem and to the place of the execution of saint James.

The holy Apostle fell upon his knees in order to offer his

life to the Most High in sacrifice, and when he raised his

eyes toward heaven, he saw in the air near him the Queen

of heaven, whom he had been invoking in his heart. He

beheld Her clothed in divine splendors and great beauty,

surrounded by multitudes of the angels. At this heavenly

spectacle the soul of James was moved to new jubilee and

his heart was seized with the ardors of a divine love. He

wished to proclaim the most blessed Mary as the Mother

of God and the Mistress of all creation. But one of the

sovereign spirits restrained him in this fervent desire and

said : "James, servant of our Creator, restrain within

thy own bosom these precious sentiments and do not mani

fest to the Jews the presence and assistance of our Queen ;

for they are not worthy or capable of knowing Her, but

instead of reverencing Her will only harden themselves

in their hatred." Thus advised the Apostle forebore and

362 CITY OF GOD

moving his lips in silence, he spoke to the heavenly Queen

as follows :

400. "Mother of my Lord Jesus Christ, my Mistress

and Protectress, Thou consolation of the afflicted and

refuge of the needy, in this hour bestow upon me, my

Lady, thy so much desired blessing. Offer for me to thy

Son and Redeemer of the world, the sacrifice of my life,

since I am burning with desire to be a holocaust for the

glory of his name. Let today thy most pure and spotless

hands be the altar of my sacrifice, in order that it may

become acceptable in the eyes of Him, who died for me

upon the cross. Into thy hands, and through them into

the hands of my Creator, I commend my spirit." Having

said these words, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the most

holy Mary, who spoke to his heart, the holy Apostle was

beheaded by the executioner. The great Lady and Queen

of the world (O wonderful condescension!) received the

soul of her beloved Apostle and placing it at her side on

the throne, ascended with it to the empyrean heavens and

presented it to her divine Son. As the most blessed Mary

entered the heavenly court with this offering, She caused

new joy and accidental glory to all the heavenly inhabi

tants and was received with songs of praise. The Most

High received the soul of James and placed it in eminent

glory among the princes of his people. The most blessed

Mary, prostrate before the throne of the Almighty, com

posed a song of praise and thanksgiving for the triumphal

martyrdom first gained by one of his Apostles. On this

occasion the great Lady did not see the Divinity by in

tuitive vision, but by an abstractive one, such as I have

described before this. But the blessed Trinity filled Her

with new blessings and favors for Herself and for the

holy Church, for which She had made great preparations.

All the saints likewise blessed her and then the holy

angels brought Her back to her oratory in Ephesus, where

in the meanwhile an angel had impersonated Her. On

arriving the heavenly Mother of virtues prostrated Her-

THE CORONATION 363

self as usual in order to give thanks to the Most High for

all that had happened.

401. The disciples of saint James during the following

night secured his sacred body and secretly brought it to

Jaffa, where by divine disposition they embarked with it

for Galicia in Spain. The heavenly Lady sent an angel

to guide and accompany them to the port, where according

to the divine will they were to disembark. Although they

did not see the angel, they felt his protection during the

whole voyage and often in a miraculous manner. Thus

Spain, just as it owed its first instruction in the faith so

deeply rooted in the hearts of its people, to the protec

tion lavished by most holy Mary upon the Apostle, now

also owes to Her the possession of his sacred body for its

consolation and defense. Saint James died in the year

forty-one of our Lord, on the twenty-fifth of March, five

years and seven months after his setting out to preach in

Spain. According to this count and that which I gave

above, the martyrdom of saint James happened seven full

years after the death of our Savior Jesus Christ.

402. That his martyrdom was at the end of March is

clear from the twelfth chapter of the Acts, where saint

Luke says, that because of the rejoicings of the Jews in

the death of saint James, Herod imprisoned also saint

Peter with the intention of beheading him after the feast

of the Pasch, which was that of the paschal lamb, or of

unleavened bread. This the Jews celebrated on the four

teenth of the moon of March. From this passage it ap

pears that the seizure of saint Peter was during this Pasch

or very near it ; and that the death of James had preceded

it a few days, the fourteenth of the moon of March in the

year forty-one, according to our present computation of

the years and months, occurred in the last days of March.

Accordingly the death of saint James happened on the

twenty-fifth, before the fourteenth of the moon, and soon

thereupon took place the imprisonment of Peter and the

Pasch of the Jews. The holy Church does not celebrate

the feast of saint James on the day of his death, because

364 CITY OF GOD

it falls on the same day as the Incarnation and ordinarily

also in the time of the Lord s passion. It was therefore

transferred to the twenty-fifth of July, which is the day on

which the body of the Apostle was brought to Spain.

403. The death of saint James and the haste of Herod

in inflicting it, greatly increased the most impious cruelty

of the Jews; for in the savage brutality of the wicked king

they saw a valuable means of pursuing their vengeance

against the followers of Christ the Lord. Lucifer and his

demons were of like opinion; they, by their suggestions,

and the Jews, by their insistent flatteries, persuaded him

to seize upon saint Peter, which he readily did in order to

gain the good will of the Jews for his own temporal ends.

The demons stood in great awe of the vicar of Christ on

account of the power emanating from him against them ;

and therefore they secretly sought to hasten his imprison

ment. Saint Peter, bound with many chains, lay in the

dungeon awaiting his execution after the holidays of the

P asch. (Acts 12, 4). Although the undaunted heart

of the Apostle was as free from anxiety or solicitude as

if he had been at liberty, yet the whole body of the

Church of Jerusalem was in consternation, and all the

disciples and the faithful were greatly afflicted at the news

that Herod was to execute him without delay. In their

affliction they multiplied their prayers and petitions to

the Lord for the preservation of saint Peter, whose death

threatened the whole Church with great havoc and tribu

lation. They invoked also the protection and powerful

intercession of the most blessed Mary, from whom they

all expected deliverance.

404. The dangerous crisis impending over the Church

was not unknown to the heavenly Mother, for, from her

retreat in Ephesus, by her clearest interior vision of all

things, She saw all things that passed in Jerusalem. She

likewise increased her ardent requests, her sighs, prostra

tions and bloody tears, supplicating the Lord for the lib

eration of saint Peter and the protection of the holy

Church. These prayers of the blessed Mother penetrated

THE CORONATION 365

the heavens and wounded the heart of her Son Jesus, our

Savior. In response the Lord descended in person to her

oratory, where She was lying prostrate with her virginal

face upon the ground mingling with the dust. The sover

eign King entered and raised Her lovingly from the

ground, saying : "My Mother, moderate thy sorrow and

ask whatever thou wishest; for I shall grant it all and

thou shalt find grace in my eyes to obtain it."

405. By the presence and loving caresses of her Son

the heavenly Mother was reanimated and filled with glad

consolation; for the tribulations of the Church were the

sole cause of her martyrdom, and to see saint Peter in

prison condemned to death, and the dangers thus threaten

ing the primitive Church, afflicted Her more than can be

conceived. She renewed her petition in the presence of

Christ the Redeemer, and said: "Lord and true God,

my Son, Thou knowest the tribulations of thy holy Church

and her clamors sound in thy ears, while they penetrate

to the inmost of my afflicted heart. Thy enemies are re

solved to take away the life of her Pastor, thy vicar;

and if Thou, my Lord permit it now, they will scatter thy

little flock and the infernal wolves will triumph over thy

name in seeing their wishes fulfilled. Issue then, my

Lord God and life of my soul, thy sovereign command

over this sea of tribulation, and the winds and waves,

that batter this little ship, shall be quieted and I shall live.

Protect thy vicar and confound thy enemies. And if it

is to thy glory and according to thy will let these tribula

tions come over me, so that I may suffer for thy faithful

children and be the aid of thy right arm I may battle with

the invisible enemies in the defense of thy holy Church."

406. Her divine Son answered: "I desire that thou

act according to thy wishes, using the powers I have

given Thee: do or undo whatever is necessary for the

366 CITY OF GOD

welfare of my Church, and Thou mayest be sure, that all

the fury of the demons will be turned toward Thee." She

thanked him for this new favor and offered to undertake

the battles of the Lord for his faithful, saying: "Most

High Lord, hope and life of my soul, prepared is the heart

and spirit of thy servant to labor for the souls bought

with thy blood and life. Although I am but useless dust, I

know Thee to be infinite in power and wisdom ; with the

favor of thy assistance I fear not the infernal dragon. As

Thou wishest me to dispose and act in thy name for the

welfare of the Church, I now command Lucifer and all

his ministers of wickedness, who are disturbing the

Church, to descend to the abyss and there be silenced

until it shall please thy Providence to permit their return

to the earth/ This command of the Queen of the world

in Ephesus was so powerful, that at the very moment

of her issuing it, all the demons in Jerusalem were pre

cipitated into hell, the whole multitude descending into

the eternal caverns without power of resisting the divine

force exerted through the most blessed Mary.

407. Lucifer and his companions knew that this chas

tisement proceeded from our Queen, whom they called

their enemy because they dared not pronounce her name.

They remained in hell, confounded and dismayed as on

other occasions, until they were permitted to rise in order

to battle against Mary, as will be related further on.

During that time they consulted anew about the means

of attaining this end. Having obtained this triumph over

the demons the most blessed Mary bethought Herself of

overcoming likewise the opposition of Herod and the

Jews, and therefore She said to her divine Son : "Now,

my Son and Lord, if it is thy will, let one of thy holy

angels be sent to deliver thy servant Peter from prison."

Christ our Lord approved of her wish and, at the orders

THE CORONATION 367

of both these Sovereigns, one of the heavenly spirits there

present hastened to liberate saint Peter from his prison in

Jerusalem.

408. The angel executed these orders very swiftly.

Coming to the dungeon, he found saint Peter fastened

with two chains, guarded by two soldiers at his side and

by a number of other soldiers at the entrance of the prison.

The Pasch had already been celebrated and it was the

night before he was to be executed according to the

sentence passed upon him. But the Apostle was so little

disturbed that he was sleeping with as much unconcern

as his guards (Acts 12, 6). When the angel arrived, he

was obliged to wake him by force and while saint Peter

was still drowsy, said to him : "Arise quickly ; put on thy

girdle and thy shoes, take thy mantle and follow me."

Saint Peter found himself free of the chains and, without

understanding what was happening to him and ignorant

of what this vision could mean, followed the angel. Having

conducted him through some streets, the angel told him,

that the Almighty had freed him from prison through

the intercession of his most blessed Mother, and thereupon

disappeared. Saint Peter, coming to himself understood

the mystery and gave thanks to the Lord for this favor.

409. Saint Peter thought it best first to give an account

of his liberation and consult with James the Less and

others of the faithful, before seeking safety in flight.

Hastening his steps he came to the house of Mary, the

mother of John, who was also called Mark. This was

the house of the Cenacle, where many of the disciples had

gathered in their affliction. Saint Peter called to them

from the street, and a servant-maid, by the name of Rhode,

descended to see who was calling. As she recognized the

voice of Peter, she left him standing at the door outside

and fled excitedly to the disciples, telling them that it was

368 CITY OF GOD

Peter. They thought it some foolish misunderstanding of

the servant ; but she maintained, that it was Peter ; so they,

far from guessing the liberation of Peter, concluded that

it might be his angel. During these questions and answers

saint Peter was in the street clamoring at the door, until

they opened it and with incredible joy and gladness saw

the holy Apostle and head of the Church freed from the

sorrows of prison and death. He gave them an account of

all that had happened to him through aid of the angel,

in order that they might in strict secrecy notify saint James

and all his brethren. Foreseeing that Herod would search

for him with great diligence, they unanimously decided

that he leave Jerusalem that very night and not return,

lest he should be taken in some future search. Saint Peter

therefore fled, and Herod, having instituted a search in

vain, chastised the guards, and was roused to new fury

against the disciples. But on account of his pride and

impious designs, God cut short his activity by a severe

punishment, of which I shall speak in the following

chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS GAVE

ME.

410. My daughter, thy astonishment at the singular

favor conferred by me on my servant James at his death,

affords me an occasion to tell thee of a privilege confirmed

to me by the Almighty at the time when I bore the soul of

the Apostle to heaven. Although I have already on other

occasions revealed to thee something of this secret, thou

shalt now understand it more fully in order to increase thy

filial devotion toward me. When I brought to heaven the

happy soul of James, the eternal Father spoke to me in

the hearing of all the blessed : "My Daughter and Dove,

chosen for my acceptation from all the creatures, let my

THE CORONATION 369

courtiers, angels and saints understand that, for the exal

tation of my holy name, for thy glory and for the benefit

of mortals, I now give thee my royal word, that if men,

in the hour of their death invoke thee and call upon thee

with affection in imitation of my servant James, soliciting

thy intercession with me, I will bend to them in clemency

and look upon them with eyes of fatherly mercy ; I will de

fend and guard them against the dangers of that last

hour ; I will ward off the cruel enemies that seek the per

dition of souls in that hour ; I will furnish them through

thee with great helps for resisting these enemies and

gaining grace, if they wish to avail themselves of this

help; and thou shalt present to Me their souls to be re

warded by my liberal hands."

411. For this privilege the whole triumphant Church,

and I with it, sang hymns of thanks and praise to the Most

High. Although the angels have the office of presenting

the souls when they issue from the captivity of mortal

life, to the tribunal of the just Judge, yet I have this same

privilege in a more exalted degree than is granted to any

other creature by the Omnipotent ; for I possess it by an

other title and by a particular and supereminent right.

Many times I make use of this privilege and I have done

so with some of the Apostles. Since I see thee desirous of

knowing how thou canst obtain from me this favor so

precious to the soul, I answer thy pious wish by exhorting

thee to take care lest thou make thyself unworthy by

ingratitude and forgetf ulness ; and before all, to gain for

thyself that inviolate purity, which I expect of thee and of

the other souls. For the great love which I owe and cherish

toward God, obliges me, with sincerest affection and char

ity to demand of all men the observance of his holy law

and the preservation of their friendship and grace with

God. This thou must prefer before thy life and be willing

to die rather than offend thy God and highest Good.

370 CITY OF GOD

412. I wish that thou set about obeying me, act out

my instructions, and work with all thy might to imitate

what thou seest and writest of me ; that thou permit no

intermission in thy love, nor forget for one moment the

heartfelt affection thou owest to the liberal mercy of thy

Lord; that thou be thankful for all his blessings and to

me, since thy obligations are far beyond the power of ful

fillment by thee in this mortal life. Be faithful in thy

correspondence, fervent in thy devotion, ready to do what

is most holy and perfect. Let thy heart expand and do not

narrow it in pusillanimity, following the instigations of

the devil. Extend thy hand to strong and powerful deeds,

filled with confidence in the Lord; be not oppressed by

adversities, thus impeding the will of the Lord in thee, and

the high ends of his glory. Retain vivid faith and hope,

even in the greatest assaults and temptations. In all this

let the example of my servants James and Peter assist

thee, and the certain knowledge of possessing through me

the happy security of those who live under the protection

of the Most High. In this confidence and in devotion to

me James obtained the singular favor I showed him in

his martyrdom; trusting in me he undertook immense

labors in order to reach that crown. In this confidence

saint Peter remained so tranquil and content in his prison-

chains, nor lost for a moment the serenity of his soul.

Thus he merited at the same time, that my divine Son and

myself should plan his liberation. Of such favors the chil

dren of darkness make themselves unworthy, because they

build all their hopes on that which is visible and on their

diabolical earthly astuteness. Raise up thy heart, my

daughter, and withdraw it from these deceits; aspire to

that which is most pure and holy, since with thee shall be

the arm of the Almighty, who wrought such great

wonders in Me.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOINGS otf THE; MOST BLESSED MARY IN CONNECTION

WITH THE DEATH AND CHASTISEMENT OF HEROD;

SAINT JOHN PREACHES IN EPHESUS AND WORKS MANY

MIRACLES; LUCIFER RISES UP TO BATTLE WITH THE

QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

413. In the rational creature love produces on the heart

effects similar to those of the force of gravity on the stone.

The stone tends to move whithersoever its own weight

draws it, that is to its centre of attraction; love is the

weight of the heart, drawing it to its centre, namely, to

that which it loves. If at any time the heart is diverted

by necessity or inadvertence, love will immediately make

it recoil like a liberated spring returning again to its nor

mal position. This weight or sway of love in a manner

seems to take away the liberty of the heart, in so far as

it becomes subject and subservient to what it loves, and

prevents the will from commanding any other course of

action than that sought and ordered by the urgency of

this love. The happiness or unhappiness of a creature

arises from the good or evil use it makes of love, for what

man loves that he makes his master; if this master is evil

and vile, so will also the man be tyrannized and degraded ;

if good, then will he be ennobled and made happy, and

so much the more, the more noble and excellent the good

is, that he loves. By these principles I hope to be able to

explain in part, what has been made known to me con

cerning the exalted state in which the most holy Mary

lived never having dropped from it but rising higher

371

372 CITY OF GOD

and higher from the first instant of her Conception with

out interruption or relaxation, until She entered the state

of a comprehensor in the beatific vision.

414. If all the love of the holy angels and of men

could be united in one person, it would be less than that

of the most holy Mary ; yet, if we could unite the love of

all the other creatures into one whole, it is certain that

such a conflagration of love would result, that, without

being infinite, it would seem so to us, on account of its

surpassing all our comprehension. If then the charity of

our great Queen exceeded all this, only the infinite Wis

dom could measure the love of this Creature and estimate

the intensity, with which it inclined and tended toward the

Divinity. We however can at least understand that in this

chastest, purest and most inflamed heart there could be

no other mastery or sway, no other movement or liberty,

except that of loving supremely the highest Good; and

this in such an exalted degree, that with our limited

capacity we can much sooner believe than understand it,

confess than penetrate it. This charity of the most pure

Virgin filled Her at the same time with the most ardent

desires of seeing the face of God, who was absent, and

assisting the holy Church, which was present to Her. Thus

She was consumed by two opposite tendencies; but She

governed them with such wisdom, that there arose from

them no conflict within Her, nor did She give Herself up

to the one to the neglect of the other ; but She attended to

both, exciting wonder in all the saints and fullest compla

cency in the Lord of the saints.

415. In this exalted and eminent state of holiness the

most holy Mary often consulted within her heart about

the condition of the primitive Church left in her charge ;

and how She could exert Herself for its peace and prog

ress. In these aspirations the liberation of saint Peter,

THE CORONATION 373

which made it possible for him to continue the govern

ment of the faithful, and also the casting forth of Lucifer

and his demons from Jerusalem, which freed the faithful

from their tyranny and allowed them some respite, afford

ed the most holy Mary some relief and consolation in her

anxiety. The divine Wisdom, which dispenses labors and

consolations with weight and measure (Wis. 11, 21), or

dained that the most blessed Mother should at that time

have a very intimate knowledge of the evil disposition of

Herod. She perceived the abominable ugliness of that

most unfortunate soul brought on by his boundless vices

and oft-repeated crimes, which had roused the wrath of

the just and almighty Judge. She knew how greatly

Herod and the Jews were enraged against Jesus and his

disciples after the escape of saint Peter. She saw, also,

how the seed of rage, sown by the demons in the hearts

of Herod and the Jews, had grown, and how furious their

hatred against Jesus our Redeemer and his disciples had

become; how the iniquitous ruler had conceived the pur

pose of exterminating all the faithful within the confines

of Judea and Galilee and how he would employ in this

work all his forces and means. Although the most blessed

Mary was aware of this design of Herod, She was not

informed at that time of his horrid death. But as She

knew his power and the depravity of his soul, She was

horrified at his evil state, and deeply grieved at his wrath

against the followers of the faith.

416. In her anxieties and in her reliance upon the divine

help our Queen labored incessantly in prayers and tears,

travailing in her clamors as I have shown on other

occasions. Ever governed by her most exalted prudence,

She spoke to one of the highest angels of her guard, say

ing: "Minister of the Most High and creature of his

hands, my solicitude for the holy Church strongly urges

374 CITY OF GOD

me to seek its welfare and progress. I beseech thee to

ascend to the throne of the Most High, represent to Him

my affliction; ask Him in my name, that I may be per

mitted to suffer instead of his faithful servants and that

Herod be prevented from executing his designs for the

destruction of the Church." Immediately the angel be

took himself to the Lord with this message, while the

Queen of heaven, like another Esther, remained in prayer

for the liberty and salvation of her people and of Herself.

(Eph. 4, 16). The heavenly ambassador was sent back

by the blessed Trinity with the answer: "Princess of

heaven, the Lord of hosts says, that Thou art the Mother,

the Mistress and the Governess of the Church, and that

Thou boldest his power while Thou art upon earth ; and

He desires Thee, as the Queen and Mistress of the heaven

and earth, to execute sentence upon Herod."

417. In her humility the most blessed Virgin was some

what disturbed by this answer, and urged by her charity,

She replied to the angel : "Am I then to pronounce

sentence against a creature who is the image of the Lord ?

Since I came forth from his hands I have known many

reprobates among men and I have never called for ven

geance against them; but as far as I was concerned,

always desired their salvation if possible, and never has

tened their punishment. Return to the Lord, angel, and

tell Him that my tribunal and power is inferior to and de

pendent upon his, and that I cannot sentence any one to

death without consulting my Superior ; and if it is possible

to bring Herod to the way of Salvation, I am willing to

suffer all the travails of the world according to the dis

position of his divine Providence in order that this soul

may not be lost." The angel hastened back with this sec

ond message of his Queen and having presented it before

the throne of the most blessed Trinity, was sent back to

THE CORONATION 375

Her with the following answer: "Our Mistress and

Queen, the Most High says, that Herod is of the number

of the foreknown, since he is so obstinate in his malice,

that he will take no admonition or instruction ; he will not

co-operate with the helps given to him ; nor will he avail

himself of the fruits of the Redemption, nor of the inter

cession of the saints, nor of thy own efforts, O Queen and

Lady, in his behalf."

418. For the third time the most holy Mary despatched

the heavenly prince with still another message to the Most

High, saying : "If it must be that Herod die in order to

hinder him from persecuting the Church, do thou, O angel,

represent to the Almighty, how in the infinite con

descension of his charity, He has granted me in mortal

life to be the Refuge of the children of Adam, the Advo

cate and Intercessor of sinners; that my tribunal should

be that of kindness and clemency for the refuge and assist

ance of all that seek my intercession ; and that all should

leave it with the assurance of pardon in the name of my

divine Son. If then I am to be a loving Mother to men,

who are the creatures of his hands and the price of his

life-blood, how can I now be a severe judge against one

of them? Never was I charged with dealing out justice,

always mercy, to which all my heart inclines ; and now it

is troubled by this conflict of love with obedience to rigor

ous justice. Present anew, O angel, this my anxiety to

the Lord, and learn whether it is not his pleasure that

Herod die without my condemning him."

419. The holy messenger ascended for the third time

and the most blessed Trinity listened to his message with

the plenitude of pleasure and complacency at the pitying

love of his Spouse. Returning, the angel thus informed

the loving Mistress : "Our Queen, Mother of our Creator

and my Lady, the almighty Majesty says that thy mercy

376 CITY OF GOD

is for those mortals who wish to avail themselves of thy

powerful intercession, not for those who despise and abhor

it like Herod ; that Thou art the Mistress of the Church

invested with all the divine power, and that therefore it

is meet Thou use it as is opportune : that Herod must die ;

but it shall be through thy sentence and according to thy

order." The most blessed Mary answered : "Just 1S tne

Lord and equitable are his judgments (Ps. 118, 137).

Many times would I suffer death to rescue this soul of

Herod, if he himself would not by his own free will make

himself unworthy of mercy and choose perdition. He is

a work of the Most High (Job. 10, 8), formed according

to his image and likeness (Gen. 1, 27) ; he was redeemed

by the blood of the Lamb, which taketh away the sins of

the world (Apoc. 1, 5). But I set aside all this and, con

sidering only his having become an obstinate enemy of

God, unworthy of his eternal friendship, by the most

equitable justice of God, I condemn him to the death he

has merited, in order that he may not incur greater tor

ments by executing the evil he has planned."

420. This wonder the Lord wrought for the glory of

his most blessed Mother and in witness of his having

constituted Her as the Mistress of all creatures with

supreme power to act as their Sovereign like her divine

Son. I cannot explain this mystery better than in the

words of the Lord in the fifth chapter of saint John,

where He says of Himself: "The son cannot do any

thing that the Father does not; but He does the same,

because the Father loves Him; and if the Father raises

the dead, the son also raises whom he pleases, and the

Father has given to the Son to judge all, in order that

just as all honor the Father, they may also honor the

Son ; for no one can honor the Father without honoring

the Son." And immediately He adds: that He has

THE CORONATION

377

given Him the power of judging, because He is the Son

of man, which He is through his most blessed mother.

On account of the likeness of the heavenly Mother to

her Son (of which I have often spoken) the relation or

proportion of the Mother with the Son in this power of

judgment must be transferred to the Mother in the same

manner as that of the Son from the Father. Mary is

the Mother of mercy and clemency to all the children of

Adam that call upon Her; but in addition to this the

Almighty wishes it to be understood that She possesses

full power of judging all men and that all should honor

Her, just as they honor her Son and true God. As his

true Mother He has given Her the same power with him

in the degree and proportion due to Her as his Mother

and a mere creature.

421. Making use of this power the great Lady sent

the angel to Csesarea, where Herod then was, to take

away his life as the minister of divine justice. The

angel executed the sentence without delay. The evan

gelist saint Luke says, that the angel of the Lord struck

Herod and, eaten up by worms, the unhappy man died

the temporal and eternal death. The wound of this

stroke was interior and from it sprang the corruption

and the worms that so miserably finished him. From

the same text it appears that, after having beheaded saint

James and after saint Peter had escaped, Herod de

scended to Csesarea in order to compose some differences

that had arisen between him and the inhabitants of Sidon

and Tyre (Acts 12, 23). Within a few days, vested in

the royal purple and seated upon a throne, he harangued

the people with great show of words. The people, full

of vain flattery, proclaimed him as a victor and as a

god ; and Herod, in foolish vanity, was pleased with this

adulation of the people. Because he had not given honor

378 CITY OF GOD

to God, but usurped to himself divine honor in vain pride,

as saint Luke says, the angel of the Lord struck him.

Although this was his last crime, which filled the measure

of his iniquity, he merited the chastisement not only for

this, but for so many other crimes committed by him

in persecuting the Apostles, mocking the Lord our Sa

vior (Luke 23, 11), beheading the Baptist (Mark 6, 27),

committing adultery with his sister-in-law Herodias, and

for many other abominations.

422. Immediately the angel returned to Ephesus and

gave an account of the execution of the sentence against

Herod. The merciful Mother wept over the loss of

this soul; but praised the judgments of the Lord and

gave him thanks for the benefit, which the Church would

derive from his chastisement; for, as saint Luke says

(Acts 12, 24), the Church grew and increased by the

word of God. This was true not only in Galilee and

Judea, where the persecutor Herod was removed, but,

through saint John and the help of the most holy Mother,

the Church was taking root in Ephesus. The science of

the blessed Apostle was full as that of the cherubim, and

the love of his heart was inflamed like that of the sera

phim ; and he had with him as his Mother and Teacher,

the Mistress of wisdom and grace. On account of these

precious advantages the Evangelist could undertake

great and wonderful works for the foundation of the

law of grace, not only in Ephesus, but in all neighboring

regions of Asia and in the borderlands of Europe.

423. Arriving at Ephesus the Evangelist began to

preach in the city, baptizing those whom he converted to

the faith of Christ our Savior and confirming the faith

by great miracles and prodigies, such as had never been

witnessed by those gentiles. Since the Greek schools in

those countries turned out many philosophers and men

THE CORONATION

379

learned in what, notwithstanding the admixture of many

errors, could be called human sciences, the blessed

Apostle convincingly taught them the true science, mak

ing use not only of miracles and signs, but of argumenta

tion for the credibility of the Christian faith. All his

catechumens he immediately sent to the most holy Mary

and She instructed many; as She knew the interior

inclinations of all, She spoke to the heart of each one

and filled it with heavenly light. She wrought prodi

gies and miracles for the benefit of the unfortunate,

curing the possessed and the infirm, succored the poor

and the needy and, by the labor of her own hands, gave

assistance to the sick in the infirmaries, attending upon

them in person. In her house the kindest Queen had a

supply of clothes for the most poor and forsaken of her

fellowmen. She helped many in the hour of their death,

gaining these souls in their last agony and bringing them

safely through all the assaults of the demon to their Cre

ator. So many souls did She draw to the path of truth

and life eternal, and so numerous were the wonders She

wrought for this end, that they could not be recorded

in many books ; for no day passed in which She did not

increase the possessions of the Lord by the copious and

abundant fruit of souls.

424. On account of the growth of the primitive

Church through the holiness, solicitude and labors of the

Queen of Heaven, the demons were filled with confusion

and furious disappointment. Although they rejoiced in

the condemnation of all souls because it swelled the

numbers of the damned in hell yet they were grievously

put out at the death of Herod; for on account of his

obstinacy they had expected from him no amendment of

his vile and abominable life and therefore had consid

ered him a powerful instrument for the persecution of

380 CITY OF GOD

the followers of Christ our Lord. The divine Provi

dence permitted Lucifer and the other infernal dragons

to emerge from the depths of hell, whither they had been

cast forth from Jerusalem by the most blessed Mother,

as I have related in the last chapter. After having

spent their time in hell in planning and preparing tempta

tions for their conflict with the invincible Queen of the

angels, Lucifer resolved to make complaint against Her

to the Lord himself, as he had done against holy Job

(Job 1, 9) ; although he now did it with greater wrath.

With this intent, before issuing from the abyss, he spoke

to his ministers as follows :

425. "If we do not vanquish this Woman, our Enemy,

I fear that without a doubt She will destroy my sov

ereignty; for we all find in Her a strength more than

human, which annihilates and oppresses us, whenever

and in whatsoever manner She pleases to exercise it.

This is what makes Her intolerable to me; for if She

were God, who is offended by my high aspirations and

hostility and who has infinite power to destroy us, I

would not feel so much confusion at being overcome;

but this Woman, though She is the Mother of God, of the

incarnate Word, is not God ; She is a mere creature of

a nature inferior to ours. I shall not further endure

to be treated by Her in such an imperious manner and

be ruined by her opposition to me. Let us all go forth

to destroy Her and let us make our complaint to the

Omnipotent as we have now concluded to do." In

reliance upon his pretended rights the dragon executed

his resolve; for he alleged, that God, instead of

leaving Her in her humble condition exposed to the

persecutions and temptations of the demons, had by his

graces and gifts unjustly raised this Woman above him,

though She was but dust of the earth while he was an

THE CORONATION 381

angel of such superior essence. But I must remark,

that these hellish foes did not present themselves before

the Lord so as to see Him, being entirely incapable

thereof; but through their knowledge and belief in the

supernatural mysteries, which is conceded to them in a

curtailed yet by them unavoidable measure, they are per

mitted to speak to God. This is what is meant, when

they are mentioned as being in the presence of God to

make complaint or to have converse with Him.

426. The Almighty gave Lucifer permission to go

forth in battle against the most blessed Mother; but the

conditions asked by Satan were unjust, and therefore

many of them were not conceded. The divine Wisdom

furnished those weapons, which were appropriate to each

combatant, in order that the victory of his Mother might

be so much the more glorious and crush the head of this

ancient and poisonous serpent (Gen 3, 15). This battle

was mysterious, no less than its triumphant issue, as we

shall see in the following chapters; moreover its myste

rious character is plainly evident in the twelfth chapter

of the Apocalypse and from the other mysteries of which

I have spoken in my explanations of the first part of this

history (Part 1, No. 94). I wish only to state here, that

the divine Providence foreordained all this, not only for

the greater glory of his most holy Mother and for the ex

altation of the divine power and wisdom, but also in order

to bring relief to the Church from the persecutions roused

against it by the demons; and also to bind Himself with

some show of justice to the bestowal of the infinite favors

and blessings which the most holy Mary alone and no

other souls could ever merit for the whole Church. The

Lord continually works in this manner in his Church :

preparing and fortifying some chosen souls, against

which, as members and parts of his holy Church, the

382 CITY OF GOD

dragon may exert all his wrath and fury. If they over

come him by the help of divine grace, their victories

redound to the benefit of the whole mystical body of the

faithful and the enemy loses some of his right and power

over them.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

427. My daughter, when in the course of this history

I so often call thy attention to the lamentable state of

the world and to that of the holy Church in which thou

livest, and when I so often express my maternal solici

tude that thou imitate me, remember, my dearest, that I

have great reasons for obliging thee to lament with me

and for wishing thee to weep over that which I bewailed

in my mortal life ; and which would afflict me in my pres

ent state, if in it I were capable of sorrow. I assure

thee, soul, thou hast reached times, in which thou

oughtest to shed tears of blood because of the calamities

coming over the children of Adam. Since thou canst

not at one and the same time attain a full knowledge

of them all, I remind thee of what from my place in

heaven I see going on in the whole world among the be

lievers of the holy faith. Turn then thy eyes upon those

multitudes and behold the greater part of the children

of Adam in the darkness and errors of unbelief, rushing

without hope of salvation to eternal perdition. Behold

also the children of the faith and of the Church, how

heedless and forgetful of this damage they continue to

be, so that there are none who seem to deplore it. For in

contempt of their own salvation, they care not about

that of others and, their faith being dead and their love

extinct, they sorrow not for the loss of souls created by

God and redeemed by the blood of the incarnate Word.

THE CORONATION

383

428. All are the children of the eternal Father who is

in heaven (Matth 23, 9) and all are obliged to have a

care of their brethren according to each one s condition.

This obligation rests more especially upon the children of

the Church, who can live up to it by their prayers and

supplications. But this duty lies still more directly upon

those who have influence, upon those who are nourished

by the Christian faith, and who enjoy more of the bene

fits of the liberal hand of the Almighty. Those who

through the law of Christ are favored with temporal

advantages and who make use of them for the service

and the delights of the flesh, are they who, as the power

ful, are to be more powerfully tormented (Matth 23, 9).

If the pastors and the chiefs of the house of the Lord

seek only a life of ease, without caring to engage in true

earnest labor, they will make themselves accountable for

the ruin of the flock of Christ and for the carnage brought

on by the infernal wolves. O my daughter, into what a

lamentable state has the Christian people been cast by

the powerful, by the pastors, and by the wicked ministers,

whom God has given them in his secret judgments ! O

what confusion and chastisements await them! Before

the tribunal of the just Judge they will have no excuse;

since the Catholic truth undeceives them, their conscience

loudly protests, while they wilfully remain deaf to all

warnings.

429. The cause of God remains neglected and without

a champion ; his possessions, which are the souls, are left

without increase; all as it were look but to their own

interest and preservation, each one according to his own

diabolical cunning and according to his state of life.

Truth is obscured, flattery raises its voice, avarice is un

bridled, the blood of Christ is trodden under foot, the

fruits of the Redemption are held in contempt; no one

384 CITY OF GOD

wishes to risk his own comfort or interest in order to

save what has cost the Savior his blood and life. Even

the friends of God are influenced by the evils ; for they do

not make use of their charity and its holy liberty as they

ought; and most of them allow themselves to be over

come by their cowardice and content themselves with

working for themselves alone, forsaking the common

cause of the souls of others. Hence thou mayest under

stand, my daughter, that now, after the evangelical

Church has been established by my divine Son and fertil

ized by his own blood, those unhappy times have come,

of which the Lord himself complains through his holy

Prophets, saying : what the palmer worm hath left the

locust has eaten, and what the locust left the bruchus

consumed, and the residue is destroyed by the mildew;

(Joel 1, 4) and in order to gather some fruits from his

vineyard, the Lord goes about like the gleaner after the

vintage, who seeks some remaining grape, or some olive,

which is not dried up, or carried away by the demons

(Is. 24, 13).

430. Tell me now, my daughter, how is it possible, if

thou still hast a true love for my divine Son and for me,

that thou find consolation or rest in thy heart at the sight

of the loss of souls, which He redeemed by his blood and

I have sought with blood-mingled tears? Even today,

if I could shed them, I would begin to do so with new

weeping and compassion ; and since it is not possible for

me now to weep over the dangers threatening the Church,

I wish that thou do it and that thou spurn consolation in

a misfortune so calamitous and so worthy of lament.

Weep bitterly then, and lose not the merit of such a

sorrow; and let it be so deep, that thou findst no relief

except in affliction for the sake of the Lord whom thou

lovest Think of what I did, in order to stave off the

THE CORONATION 385

damnation of Herod and to prevent it for those who wish

to avail themselves of my intercession. In the beatific

vision I pray without ceasing for the salvation of my

clients. Let not the labors and tribulations sent to thee

by my divine Son intimidate thee from helping they breth

ren and acquiring them for the possession of Christ

Amidst the injuries done to Him by the children of

Adam, do thou labor to recompense them in some meas

ure by the purity of thy soul, which I desire shall be

rather that of an angel than of an earthborn woman.

Fight the battles of the Lord against his enemies and in

his name and mine, crush their head, reign over their

pride and cast them into hell. Do thou also counsel the

ministers of Christ with whom thou conversest, to use

their power in doing the same, to defend the souls in

lively faith and, in them, the honor and glory of the

Lord; for thus shall they repress and vanquish them

with divine power.

CHAPTER IV. "

THE MOST BLESSED MARY DESTROYS THE TEMPLE OF DIANA

IN EPHESUS; HER ANGELS BRING HER TO THE EMPY

REAN HEAVENS, WHERE THE LORD PREPARES HER FOR

THE BATTLE AND VICTORY OVER THE INFERNAL

DRAGON; THIS CONFLICT BEGINS WITH TEMPTATIONS

TO PRIDE.

431. Most celebrated is the history of the city of

Ephesus, situated on the western confines of Asia; for

many renowned events of past ages made that city famous

and illustrious throughout the globe. But its greatest

privilege and excellence consists in having entertained

and harbored within its walls the supreme Queen of

heaven and earth for the space of some months, the

number of which I will state later on. This privilege

was a most fortunate one for Ephesus; since the other

things which are mentioned for its renown made it truly

unhappy and infamous, because through them the prince

of darkness had permanently set up his throne in that

city. But as our great Lady and Mother of grace found

Herself hospitably entertained and thus considered Her

self under obligation to its inhabitants, who received Her

liberally and offered her gifts, it naturally followed, that

She, in accordance with her most perfectly ordered and

burning charity deeming Herself brought nearer to these

her benefactors, should repay their hospitality with great

er blessings. For if She was liberal to all, even strangers,

She would certainly be much more free with her gifts

and favors to the inhabitants of Ephesus. Her own

386

THE CORONATION 387

gratitude moved Her to this, since She considered Herself

indebted to the whole commonwealth. She offered up

for it special prayers, asking her divine Son to pour out

over its inhabitants his blessings and as a kind Father

to illumine and bring it to the knowledge of the true

faith.

432. The Lady received answer that, as the Mistress

and Queen of the whole Church, She was free to do as

She pleased; that, however, She should take notice of

the obstacles, which this city placed in the way of the

divine clemency by its ancient and still existing abomina

tions; that its inhabitants had thereby locked the gates

of mercy and merited the rigors of justice, which would

have already been executed upon them, if the Lord had

not ordained Her to live among them just at the time,

when their wickedness had reached the highest point and

called the loudest for punishment. Together with this

answer the most blessed Mother perceived, that the

divine Justice, as it were, asked her permission and con

sent to the destruction of that idolatrous people of

Ephesus and its neighborhood. At this answer and what

it implied the kind heart of the sweetest Mother was much

afflicted; but her immense charity was not intimidated,

and multiplying her prayers, She answered the Lord :

433. "Most High, just and merciful King! I know

well that the rigor of thy justice will be executed, if thy

mercy is excluded; but for thy mercy any motive found

by thy wisdom is sufficient, although small may be the

inducement presented on the part of sinners. Consider

therefore, O Lord, how this city has afforded me a dwell

ing according to thy will and how its inhabitants have

helped me and offered me and thy servant John their

goods. Temper thy rigor, my God, and let it be exer

cised on me, for I am willing to suffer for the salvation of

388 CITY OF GOD

these unfortunates. Thou, O Allpowerful, whose infinite

goodness and mercy forever conquers in good or evil,

canst take away the obstacle, which prevents their profit

ing of thy blessings; let not my eyes behold the destruc

tion of so many souls, the works of thy hands, purchased

by thy blood." The Lord replied: "My Mother, I

desire that thou see for thyself the cause of my just in

dignation and how much these men, for whom thou

pleadest, have merited it. Attend, and thou shalt see."

And immediately, by a most clear vision, She saw what

follows.

434. She perceived that many centuries before the in

carnation of the Word in her virginal womb, among the

many councils held by Lucifer for the destruction of

men, one was held in which he thus spoke to his demons :

"From the delights of my former state in heaven, from

the prophecies made by God to man and from the favors

shown to many of his friends, I conjecture how much

God shall be beholden to men and women for abstaining

from certain vices, which I desire to maintain upon the

world. These vices are especially those connected with

the delights of the flesh and with the pleasures of posses

sion or avarice ; in these He seeks to induce them to re

nounce even what is allowed. In order that they may

be so induced, He shall furnish them with many helps,

so that they may be chaste and poor of their own accord,

and subject their free will to that of others. If through

these virtues they overcome us, they will merit great

reward before God, as I have spied out in some who

were chaste, poor and obedient. My plans will be seriously

frustrated, if we do not take measures to counteract this

damage and seek to compensate for it in all the ways

open to our astuteness. I take into consideration also,

that, if the divine Word is to assume human flesh, as I

THE CORONATION 389

have been given to understand, He will be very chaste

and pure, and that He will teach chastity to others, not

only men, but women, who, though they are weaker, yet

usually are more tenacious. If they, whom I overcame

in the first woman, shall thus vanquish me, it will be so

much the more tormenting to me. Besides all this, the

Scriptures of the ancients speak much of the favors,

which men shall enjoy through the incarnate Word. For

the human nature of the Son of God is to enrich and

raise up earthborn men by his power."

435. "In order to oppose all this" Lucifer continued,

"I desire your counsel and your diligent help; and we

must begin even now to hinder mien from attaining such

great benefits." Thus the hateful plotting of hell

against evangelical perfection was far in advance of its

profession in the religious orders. This matter was

thoroughly considered by the demons and the result of

their deliberations was, that a great many demons should

be appointed as heads of hellish legions, who were to

tempt those desirous of living a life of chastity, poverty

and obedience. In derision of chastity especially, they

were to institute a sort of false and apparent state of

virginity, in which counterfeit and hypocritical virgins

were to consecrate themselves to Lucifer and all the

demons. The enemies hoped thereby to gain over these

persons to themselves not only for their own triumph,

but also to cast discredit upon the chaste life of religious

orders, which they presumed would be instituted by the

incarnate Word and his Mother in the world. In order

that this false religion might be propagated so much the

better in the world, they resolved to found it upon worldly

abundance and on whatever is most pleasing to nature,

as in reality it was ; for in secret those interested agreed

to live licentiously under the name of chastity in honor

of false gods.

390 CITY OF GOD

436. But immediately the question arose, whether this

religion was to be for men or for women. Some of the

demons wanted it to be for men only, in order that

through their greater constancy those religious orders

might be more permanent ; others again thought that men

are not so easily deceived as women, since they reason

more deeply and could more easily detect error; while

there was not so much of this risk in women, who were

of weak judgment, ready to believe earnestly in what they

like and have once settled upon, and inclined to persevere

in their error. This argument prevailed and was ap

proved by Lucifer, although he did not entirely exclude

men; for he judged, that some would be found, who

would embrace the fallacy on account of the influence

they would thereby gain over others. This could be ex

pected especially if the demons would help along by

nourishing their fear of losing the estimation of their

fellowmen and by astutely making use of public opinion

to keep alive the fallacies in those who would engage in

this service.

437. Following up their infernal schemes the demons

set about instituting a counterfeit and false religious

order or congregation of virgins ; for Lucifer said to the

other demons: "Although it would be a great pleasure

to me to have real virgins consecrated and dedicated to

my worship and adoration in the same way as God wishes

them for Himself; yet chastity and purity of the body

so offends me, that I cannot endure this virtue, even if

practiced entirely in honor of my greatness. Therefore

we must see to it, that these virgins be the object of our

basest attempts. If any of them should remain chaste

in body, we shall fill her with bad thoughts and desires,

so that in reality none of them will be chaste, though

they may strive to contain themselves out of vain pride ;

THE CORONATION 391

and as they are to be impure in their thoughts, we will

seek to maintain them in the vainglorious conceit of their

virginity."

438. In order to start these false religious orders the

demons scoured through the whole earth, and it seemed

to them, that among all the nations, certain women called

Amazons were best suited for the execution of their

devilish plans. These Amazons had come from Scythia

to Asia Minor where they now lived. They were warlike,

covering up by their arrogance and pride the weakness

of their sex. By force of arms they had possessed them

selves of extended provinces, and had constituted Ephesus

as the centre of their power. For a long time they gov

erned themselves, disdaining subjection to men and life

in their company, for such a life, they in their presump

tuous pride, called slavery or servitude. Since much is

said of them in histories, though with many contradic

tions, I will not dilate upon this matter. For my purpose

it is sufficient to state, that, since these Amazons were

proud, vainglorious and averse to mien, Lucifer found

them predisposed toward his counterfeit virginity. He

filled them with vain hopes of gaining great veneration

and renown in the world by being known as pledged to

virginity and stirred them with the desire of becoming

famous and admired of men and perhaps of one of them

reaching the position and worship of a goddess. In their

unbridled desire of this worldy honor they gathered

around them many Amazons, both true and counterfeit

virgins, and instituted their spurious congregation of

virgins at Ephesus, the place of their origin.

439. In a short time these more than foolish virgins

grew very numerous and through the instigations of the

demons were much admired and applauded by the world.

Among them one signalized herself and became very cele-

392 CITY OF GOD

brated for her beauty, nobility, high intellect, chastity and

other allurements. She was called Diana and the fame

and admiration of her became widespread. The venera

tion of her and the multitude of her companions were

the occasion of the building of the renowned temple of

Ephesus, which the world estimated as one of its marvels

and which took many years to construct. As Diana

gradually gained the worship and title of goddess among

the blind multitude, this rich and sumptuous temple was

finally dedicated to her, and was called the temple of

Diana. In imitation of it and under the same title, many

others were built in other parts of the world. In order

to spread the renown of this counterfeit virgin during

her lifetime in Ephesus, the demon communicated with

her and filled her with diabolical illusions; many times

he surrounded her with a false splendor and manifested

to her secrets to be promulgated. He taught her also

some ceremonies and forms of worship similar to those

of the people of God ; by which she and the people might

worship the devil. The rest of the virgins venerated

her as a goddess ; which was also done by the other heath

ens, who were as prodigal as they were blind in attribut

ing divinity to all that seemed to them wonderful.

440. These diabolical frauds had thus been established

when the neighboring kings defeated the Amazons and

assumed the government of Ephesus. They preserved

this temple of Ephesus as something sacred and divine,

and they permitted the continuance of that gathering of

foolish virgins. Although some man of the people burned

this temple, the city and the government authorities re

built it, being especially helped by the contributions of

women. This was a little more or less than thirty years

before the Redemption of the human race. Hence at the

time when the most blessed Mother was in Ephesus not

THE CORONATION 393

the old temple stood, but the second one, built later. In

this temple the virgins occupied different apartments.

But as, during the time of the Incarnation and death of

Christ, idolatry was so firmly established in the world,

those diabolical women not only had not improved in

their customs, but deteriorated, and nearly all of them

held abominable intercourse with the demons. In connec

tion therewith they committed other most loathsome

crimes and deceived the world by their humbugging

prophecies, by which the devil filled both them and their

dupes with their insanities.

441. This and much more did the most blessed Mary

behold around Her in Ephesus and on account of it She

was struck with a sorrow certainly mortal, if She had

not been preserved by the Lord. But having seen that

Lucifer had appropriated the statute of Diana as a seat

or throne of his wickedness, She prostrated Herself upon

the ground before her divine Son and said: "Lord God

Most High, worthy of all reverence and praise! It is

proper that these abominations, which have lasted for so

many ages, should cease. My heart cannot bear to see that

an unhappy and abominable woman receive the worship

due to the true God, such as Thou alone as the Infinite de-

servest; nor can I endure to see the name of chastity

so profaned and prostituted in honor of the demons. Thy

infinite condescension has made me the guide and the

mother of virgins, as a most noble part of thy Church,

the most precious fruit of thy Redemption, most pleasing

to Thee. The title of chastity must be consecrated to

Thee in the souls, which shall be my children, and I

cannot consent to leave it any longer to these adulterous

women. I make complaint against Lucifer and against

hell, for their presumption in unjustly appropriating

such a right. I beseech Thee, my Son, to chastise them

394 CITY OF GOD

by rescuing these souls from his tyranny and conferring

on them the liberty of thy faith and true light."

442. The Lord answered: "My Mother, I grant thy

petition, for it is not just that, even were it only in name,

this virtue of chastity, which was so ennobled in Thee

and is so pleasing to Me, should be ascribed to my ene

mies. But many of those counterfeit virgins are fore

known as reprobates on account of their abominations

and their obstinacy, and all of them will not embrace

the way of eternal life. Some few of them will accept

the faith, which shall be taught them." At this juncture

saint John came to the oratory of the most blessed Moth

er ; but he did not then know of the mystery She was then

engaged in, nor of the presence of her divine Son. But

the true Mother of the humble wished to join to her

prayers those of his beloved disciple. She therefos-e

secretly asked permission of her Son to speak to

him and said to him : "John, my Son, my heart is

grieved on acount of the abominable crimes committed

against the Most High in the temple of Diana and my

soul desires to see them ended and atoned." The holy

Apostle answered : "My Lady, I have seen something

of what passes in that abominable place. I cannot re

strain my sorrow and my tears, that the demon should

be there venerated and worshipped as is due to God

alone ; and no one can put a stop to such great evils, unless

Thou, my Mother, wilt take this matter in hand."

443. The most blessed Mary then ordered the Apostle

to join Her in prayer for a remedy of these evils. Saint

John betook himself to his chamber, while the most

blessed Lady remained with the Savior in hers. Prostrate

before the Lord and shedding copious tears, She resumed

her prayers and petitions. She persevered therein with

most burning fervor and as it were in agonizing sorrow.

THE CORONATION 395

Appealing to her divine Son for comfort and consolation,

She received the following response to her petitions and

prayers : "My Mother and my Dove, let what thou askest

be done without delay ; give thy orders and commands ac

cording to thy heart s wishes as the powerful Mistress."

By this favor the love of the most blessed Virgin was

inflamed with zeal for the honor of the Divinity. As

Queen She imperiously commanded all the demons in the

temple of Diana to descend immediately to the depths of

hell and to leave the place, which they had infested as

their own for so many years. Many legions of them

inhabited that temple, deceiving men by their supersti

tions and profaning the souls; but in the shortest twin

kling of an eye, in virtue of the powerful command of the

Queen, most holy Mary, all of them were hurled into

hell. So great was the terror by which She struck them

down, that as soon as She opened her lips to pronounce

the first word they waited not for the second; for they

were then already in hell and the swiftness of an angel,

proper to them as pure spirits, seemed to them tardy in

their flight from the Mother of the Omnipotent.

444. They were unable to leave the abyssmal caverns

until, as I shall soon relate, they received permission to

come forth with the great dragon to do battle with the

Queen of heaven; and in hell itself they sought the lo

calities farthest removed from the place where She

was upon earth, I must remark, that by these triumphs

the most holy Mary so vanquished the demon, that he

could not return to reassume the same position or juris

diction in those places of which he was dispossessed. But

this infernal serpent was and is so venomous, that new

heads grow upon him where the former are cut off, con

tinually evolving new schemes of malice and wickedness

against God and his Church. Following up her victory

396 CITY OF GOD

the great Mistress of the world, with the consent of Christ

our Savior, immediately ordered one of her holy angels

to repair to the temple of Diana and destroy it without

leaving a stone upon a stone. Of all the women that

dwelt there he was to save only nine designated by Her,

while all the rest should die and be buried in the ruins

of the building. These were reprobates, whose souls,

before they could increase their punishment by more

sins, should be buried in hell with the demons, whom they

had obeyed and worshipped.

445. The angel of the Lord executed the mandate of

his Queen and Mistress, and in the shortest space of

time the rich and famous temple of Diana, the establish

ment of which had consumed many ages, was shattered to

the dust : so sudden was the destruction and ruin of it,

that it roused the astonishment and fear of the inhabi

tants of Ephesus. He saved the nine women designated

by the most holy Mary in pursuance of the command of

Christ our Savior ; for these alone accepted the faith, as

I shall relate. All the others perished in the ruins, not

leaving even a remembrance of themselves. Although the

inhabitants of Ephesus instituted an inquiry, they could

find no one upon whom to put the blame, as they had been

able to do in the burning of the first temple when, for

the sake of the fame attached to his crime, the incendiary

delivered himself up of his own accord. The evangelist

saint John took occasion from this event to preach with

still greater fervor the divine truth and to free the

Ephesians from the deceits and errors of the demons. The

Evangelist joined the Queen of heaven in giving thanks to

the Most High for this triumph over Lucifer and over

idolatry.

446. But it is necessary here to explain, that this event

must not be connected with that mentioned in the nine-

THE CORONATION 397

teenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles concerning

the temple of Diana, which saint Luke relates, that a re

nowned artificer of Ephesus, called Demetrius, who man

ufactured silver images of the goddess Diana, conspired

with others, who were interested in his art or trade,

against saint Paul ; for the Apostle preached all through

Asia, that those were no gods, which were manufactured

by the hands of men. On account of this new doctrine

Demetrius persuaded his associates, that saint Paul was

not only ruining their trade, but causing the tempk of

Diana, so greatly venerated in Asia and the whole world,

to be despised. This conspiracy roused the artisans, and

they, the whole city, so that the cry went up : "Great is

the Diana of the Ephesians," bringing on what saint Luke

relates in that chapter. In order to make intelligible what

I have said above, I will add, that this temple, of which

saint Luke speaks, was another, less costly and more or

dinary temple, which the Ephesians began to build after

the most blessed Virgin had returned to Jerusalem. When

saint Paul came to preach in Ephesus this temple had

already been completed. From what saint Luke says,

we can gather how deeply ingrown idolatry and the cult

of Diana was in the Ephesians and in the whole of Asia.

This was natural not only on account of the length of

the time in which this error had held sway, but also

because that city had made itself illustrious and famous

throughout the world by the worship of Diana and by

its great temple. The inhabitants of Ephesus having been

delivered from this deceit and vanity by the Blessed

Virgin, and their city being the seat and source of this

worldwide superstition, imagined that they could not

live without their goddess or without their building tem

ples in her honor. So ingrained was the ignorance of the

true God among the heathens, that many Apostles and

398 CITY OF GOD

many years were required for making known the truth

and rooting out the cockle of idolatry, especially among

the Romans and the Greeks, who esteemed themselves the

most wise and civilized of all the nations of the earth.

447. Having destroyed the temple of Diana the most

holy Mary conceived still greater desires of laboring for

the exaltation of the name of Christ and for the spread

of the holy Church, in order that the triumph gained over

the enemies might bring its proper fruit. While She was

thus multiplying her prayers and petitions for this pur

pose, it happened one day that the holy angels manifested

themselves to Her in visible forms and said to Her:

"Our Queen and Mistress, the great God of celestial

hosts commands us to bring Thee to heaven before his

royal throne to which He calls Thee." The most holy

Mother answered: "Behold here the handmaid of the

Lord; let his holy will be done in me." Then the angels

received Her on a throne of light, such as I have described

on other occasions, and bore Her to the empyrean heavens

and to the presence of the most holy Trinity, which mani

fested Itself not by an intuitive, but by an abstractive vi

sion. She prostrated Herself before the sovereign throne,

adored the immutable being of God in profound hu

mility and reverence. Then the eternal Father spoke

to Her and said : "My Daughter and meekest Dove, the

cries of thy inflamed heart for the exaltation of my holy

name have come to my ears, and thy petitions for the holy

Church are acceptable in my eyes, inclining me to mercy

and clemency. In response to thy love I wish to renew

in thee my power, in order that thou mayest defend my

honor and glory, triumph over rny enemies and their

ancient pride, bind and crush their necks, and in order

that through thy victories thou mayest assist my Church

and acquire new blessings and favors for its members,

thy brethren."

THE CORONATION 399

448. The most holy Mary replied : "Behold, O Lord,

I am the least of thy creatures ; my heart is prepared for

all that shall be thy pleasure and for all that shall pro

mote the exaltation of thy ineffable name and thy greater

glory; let thy divine will be done in me." The eternal

Father added: "Let all my courtiers of heaven under

stand, that I appoint Mary as the chief and leader of all

my hosts, and as the conqueror of all my enemies glori

ously to triumph over them." The other two divine Per

sons, the Son and the Holy Ghost, added their approval ;

and all the blessed with the angels answered : "Thy holy

will be done, O Lord, in heaven and on earth." Thereupon

the Lord ordered eighteen of the highest seraphim to

adorn, strengthen, and arm their Queen for battle against

the infernal dragon. On that occasion were mysteriously

fulfilled the promise in the book of Wisdom: that the

Lord armed the creatures for vengeance upon his enemies,

and the other sayings there recorded (Wis. 5, 18). Six

of the seraphim first came forward to adorn the most

blessed Lady with a sort of light as with an impenetrable

armor, which at the same time manifested the holiness

and justice of the Queen, so invincible and impenetrable

to the demons, that in an ineffable manner She was made

godlike in strength. For this wonder the seraphim and

the saints gave thanks to God.

449. Immediately another six of the seraphim ap

proached and, in obedience to the command of the Lord,

they furnished Her with another new enlightenment. It

was a sort of reflection of the Divinity in her counte

nance, unbearable to the sight of the demons. In virtue

of this gift, the enemies, although, as we shall see, they

came to tempt Her, could not look upon her godlike face,

not being deemed worthy of this privilege by the Lord.

Then came also the last six seraphim and at the command

400 CITY OF GOD

of the Lord they furnished Her with offensive weapons,

since She was to take upon Herself the defense of the

Divinity and its honor. In pursuance of their divine

commission the angels added to all the faculties of the

great Lady new qualities of divine virtue, corresponding

to the gifts with which the Most High had endowed Her.

In virtue of this privilege the great Mistress received the

power to impede, restrain and counteract at her will the

mst secret schemes and attempts of all the demons, so

that all of them became subject to the will and mandate

of the most holy Mary, without liberty to hinder her

decrees; and of this power She availed Herself frequently

in favor of the faithful and of her clients. All these

special powers, and whatever they implied, the three

divine Persons confirmed, each One separately conferring

upon her gifts corresponding to his divine attributes and

bidding Her return to the Church and by them triumph

over the enemies of the Lord.

450. In parting the three divine Persons gave their

blessing to the most blessed Mary and She adored Them

in deepest reverence. Then the angels, full of wonder

at the works of the Most High, brought Her back to her

oratory, exclaiming: "Who is She, that so godlike, rich

and prosperous, descends from the highest heaven to

the world to defend the honor of God s name? How

well appointed and how beautiful does She advance to

battle for the Lord? O Queen, O most exalted Lady,

proceed prosperous in thy beauty, go forth and reign

over all the creatures, and let all of them praise and mag

nify Thee; because He has shown Himself so liberal and

powerful in thy blessings. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord

God Sabbaoth, the Lord of the celestial hosts (Is. 6, 3)

and in Thee shall bless Him all the generations of men."

Arriving at her oratory the most blessed Mary

THE CORONATION 401

humblest thanks to the Almighty, prostrating Herself to

the dust as She was wont to do on such occasions.

451. The most prudent Mary conferred within Her

self for some time, in order to prepare for her conflict

with the demons. While thus meditating She saw issu

ing upon the earth, as from the abyss, a fearful red

dragon with seven heads, from each of which came

forth the smoke and fire of vast wrath and fury, while

many other demons followed him in similar shapes. This

vision was so horrible that no other living being could

have looked upon it without losing its life; and it was

indeed necessary, that the most blessed Mary should be

forewarned and made so invincible in order to enter into

battle with these blood-thirsty beasts of hell. They

gathered around the great Queen in furious howlings and

began to vaunt their threats, saying; "Come, come let

us destroy this our enemy; we have the permission of the

Almighty to tempt Her and make war upon Her. This

time we shall make an end of Her, we shall take ven

geance for the injuries She has continually inflicted on us

and for the destruction of our temple of Diana. Let

us destroy Her likewise; She is but a Woman, a mere

Creature, whereas we are knowing, astute and powerful

spirits ; we need not fear this earthly creature."

452. That entire host of infernal dragons advanced

upon the invincible Queen, Lucifer leading them on and

challenging Her to battle. As the most deadly poison of

this serpent is his pride, by which he usually instills his

vices for the destruction of innumerable souls, it seemed

to him proper to begin with this vice, outwardly con

cealing it in accordance with the state of sancity, which

he attributed to the most holy Mary. For this purpose

the dragon and his followers transformed themselves

into angels of light and thus manifested themselves to

402 CITY OF GOD

Her, imagining that She had not yet seen and recognized

them as demons and dragons of hell. They began with

praise and flattery saying : "Powerful art Thou, Mary,

great and valorous among women; all the world honors

and celebrates Thee for the virtues it sees in Thee and

for the prodigies and wonders Thou performest through

them. Thou art worthy of glory, since no one equals

Thee in holiness. We know this better than all the rest,

and therefore we proclaim it and sing to Thee in festive

joy at thy doings." By these counterfeit acknowledg

ments Lucifer sought to excite in the mind of the humble

Queen, haughty thoughts of pride and presumption. But

instead of moving or persuading Her to any pleasure

or consent in them, he drew forth in Her living darts

of pain, that transfixed her sincerest heart. Not all the

torments of the martyrs were to Her so painful as these

diabolical flatteries. In order to confound them, She

excited acts of humility, annihilating Herself and debas

ing Herself in such an admirable and resistless a manner,

that hell could not bear it nor remain longer in her pres

ence; for the Lord had ordained that Lucifer and his

ministers should recognize and feel these acts of humil

ity. All the devils fled with dreadful howls, saying : "Let

us away to the abyss, for less painful to us is the confusion

of that place than the humility of this invincible Woman."

They left Her, and the most prudent Lady gave thanks

to the Almighty for this first victory.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN AND LADY OF

HEAVEN GAVE ME.

453. My daughter, the pride of the demon includes a

desire which the devil himself knows is absurd : namely,

his desire that the saints serve and obey him as god, and

THE CORONATION 403

thus make him like to God in this respect. But the ful

fillment of this desire is impossible, since it implies in

itself a contradiction. The essence of holiness consists in

the creature s conforming itself to the divine will, loving

God above all things in obedience, whereas sin consists

in deviating from this rule by the love of some other

object and obedience to the demon. But the uprightness

of true virtue is so conformable to reason, that even

the devil cannot ignore it. On this account he seeks, if

possible, to cause the good to fall in order to satisfy his

wrath and envy at not being able to draw them to his

service, and satiate his intense desire of preventing the

glory of God in his saints, which he cannot appropriate

for himself. Hence also his violent efforts to fell to

the earth some cedar of Lebanon in sanctity and to enslave

those who have been the servants of the Most High.

With this in view he exerts all his ingenuity and care, and

often he seeks to induce his devotees to practice some of

the moral virtues, even if only in appearance, as is done

by hypocrites and as we have seen in the virgins of Diana.

He hopes thereby to have his share in what God loves

and desires, and to sully and pervert what the Lord

wishes to use as a channel for his purity.

454. Remember, my daughter, that the byways, snares

and schemes of this serpent for the fall of the just are

so numerous, that without the special favor of the Most

High the souls could never know them,, much less over

come them or escape his treacherous plots. In order to

deserve this protection of the Lord, God wishes the

creature on its part never to relax in vigilance, nor trust

in its own strength, nor ever be remiss in asking and de

siring this help ; for without it, man can do nothing and

will soon perish. What especially draws down the divine

clemency is fervor of the heart and promptness in divine

404 CITY OF GOD

worship, and above all, persevering obedience and hu

mility, which give stability and fortitude against the

assaults of the enemy, I wish to impress upon thy mind,

not for thy discouragement, but for thy advice and warn

ing, that the works of the just, to which this serpent does

not impart some of its poison, are very rare. For usually

he tries with utmost subtlety to excite some terrestrial

passion or inclination, by which he secretly deflects or

perverts the intentions, preventing man from acting pure

ly for God and for the legitimate ends of true virtue.

Since the cockle of some foreign affection, either in part

or the whole, is thus sown with the wheat, it is difficult

to detect, unless souls strip themselves of all earthly in

clinations and examine their works in the divine light.

455. Thou art well warned, my daughter, against this

peril and against the ceaseless efforts of the demons,

which are more violent against thee than against other

souls. Let not thy vigilance be less than his, and do

not trust in the mere appearance of good intention in

thy works; for, though appearances must always be

good and upright, yet this is not sufficient, nor can the

creature always discern them. The demon often deceives

the soul under the cloak of a good intention, proposing

some apparently or remotely good end, in order to lead

them into proximate danger; and thus it happens, that,

enmeshed in this danger, the men never attain the good

which drew them into action. At other times he pre

vents the soul, under cloak of this good intention, from

examining into circumstances, which vitiate the act by

imprudence in the performance. Then again, under the

outwardly good intention, are often hidden the earthly

passions and inclinations, which dominate the heart.

Hence, amid so many dangers, thou canst find safety

only in scrutinizing thy actions by the light which the

THE CORONATION 405

Lord infuses into the superior part of thy soul; by it

thou wilt know how to distinguish the good from the evil,

the truth from the falsehood, the bitter from the sweet,

passions from right reason (Jer. 15, 19). Then the di

vine light in thee will not be obscured by darkness, the eye

will be single and will purify the body of thy actions

(Matth. 6, 22), and thou wilt be entirely and in all things

pleasing to thy Lord and to Me.

CHAPTER V.

THE MOST HOLY MARY, CALLED BY THE APOSTLE SAINT

PETER, RETURNS FROM EPHESUS; SHE CONTINUES HER

BATTLE WITH THE DEMONS ; IS OVERTAKEN BY GREAT

STORMS AT SEA; SOME OTHER INTERVENING MYSTER

IES.

456. After the death of the unhappy Herod the primi

tive Church of Jerusalem enjoyed some measure of quiet

and tranquillity for a considerable time. The great Lady

of the world merited this favor through her maternal

solicitude and care. During this time saint Barnaby and

saint Paul preached with wonderful success in the cities

of Asia Minor, Antioch, Lystra, Perge and others, as

is related by saint Luke in the thirteenth and fourteenth

chapter of the Acts of the Apostles and in connection with

the miracles and prodigies performed by saint Paul in

those cities and provinces. The apostle saint Peter, after

his liberation from prison, fled from Jerusalem and re

tired to another part of Asia not under the jurisdiction

of Herod. From that place he governed the faithful

accruing to the Church in Asia and those that were

in Palestine. All of them acknowledged and obeyed

him as the Vicar of Jesus Christ and head of the Church,

believing that all he ordained and enacted upon earth

was confirmed in heaven. With this firm faith they

came to him with all their doubts and difficulties as to

their supreme pontiff. Among other matters they asked

him to decide the questions raised by some of the Jews

concerning the doings and teachings of saint Paul and

406

THE CORONATION 407

Barnaby as well in Jerusalem as in Antioch, in opposition

to the circumcision and the law of Moses, as I will relate

later on and as is recorded by saint Luke in the fifteenth

chapter of the Acts of the Apostles.

457. On this occasion the Apostles and disciples of

Jerusalem begged saint Peter to return to the holy city

in order to settle these controversies and establish order,

so that the preaching of the faith might not be hindered;

for since the death of Herod the Jews had no one to assist

them in their persecutions, and therefore the Church en

joyed greater peace and tranquillity in Jerusalem. On the

same grounds they also asked him to request the holy

Mother of Jesus to come to that city; for all the faithful

longed for Her with loving hearts, expected to be con

soled in the Lord and hoped for the prosperity of all the

affairs of the Church through her presence. On account

of these appeals saint Peter resolved to return at once to

Jerusalem, and before setting out, he wrote the follow

ing letter to the most holy Queen.

458. Letter of Saint Peter to most holy Mary.

"To Mary, the Virgin, Mother of God :

Peter, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, thy servant and

the servant of the servants of God."

"Lady, among the faithful some doubts and differences

have arisen concerning the doctrine of thy Son and our

Redeemer, whether the ancient law of Moses is to be

observed in conjunction with his teachings. They wish

to know from us what is proper, and that we state to them

what we heard from the mouth of the divine Teacher. In

order to consult with my brethren, the Apostles, I am now

setting" out for Jerusalem and, for the consolation of

all and by thy love for the Church, we beseech Thee like

wise to come to that city, where, since the death of

Herod, the Jews are more peaceful and the faithful

408 CITY OF GOD

more at ease. The multitude of the followers of Christ

desire to see Thee and console themselves in thy presence.

When we shall have arrived at Jerusalem, we shall notify

the other cities, and with thy assistance will be established

what shall be conducive to the interests of the holy faith

and to the excellence of the law of grace."

459. This was the tenor and contents of the letter.

The Apostles usually observed the same method, address

ing first the person or persons to whom they were writing,

then mentioning the writer, or inversely, as is apparent in

the letters of saint Paul, and of saint Peter and of the

other Apostles. To call the Queen Mother of God was

agreed among the Apostles after they had composed the

creed ; and in speaking of Her they used indiscriminately

the term of Virgin or Mother, because it was very im

portant that all the faithful of the Church should accept

the doctrine of the virginity and maternity of the

great Lady. Some of the other faithful called Her Mary

of Jesus, or Mary of Jesus, the Nazarene. Others less

significantly called Her Mary, the daughter of Joachim

and Anne. Such were the titles given to our Queen by

the faithful in their conversation. The holy Church,

preferring the names given Her by the Apostles, calls

Her Virgin and Mother of God, and to these it has added

other titles, still more illustrious and mysterious. A

messenger brought the letter of saint Peter to the heav

enly Lady, and in giving it to Her, he mentioned that it

was from the Apostle. She received it on her knees, in

reverence for the Vicar of Christ, and kissed it ; but She

would not open it, because saint John was absent preach

ing in the city. As soon as the Evangelist returned, She

as usual asked his benediction on her knees, and handed

him the letter, telling him that it was from saint Peter,

the supreme high-priest. Saint John asked her what it

THE CORONATION 409

contained; but the Mistress of all virtues answered:

"Do thou, my master, first read it and then tell me what

it contains." This the Evangelist proceeded to do.

460. I cannot restrain my wonder and confusion at the

humility and obedience of the most holy Mary in a

matter of so small moment; for only her heavenly pru

dence could inspire Her, the Mother of God, with the

thought, that it would be more humble and submissive

not to read this letter of the Vicar of Christ except in

the presence and under the obedience of the one to whose

guidance She had submitted Herself as her superior. Her

example reproves and stigmatizes the presumption of

inferiors, who try to find excuses and pretenses for evad

ing the humility and obedience due to their superiors.

But the most holy Mary was a model and a teacher of

holiness in all things, great or small. Having read the

letter to Her, he asked Her, what She thought best to

write to the Vicar of Christ. But also in this She did

not wish to give any appearance of her being his equal

or superior, preferring to obey; and therefore She an

swered : "My son and master, do thou arrange what

ever shall be proper; for I, as thy servant, will obey."

The Evangelist replied, that it seemed to him best to

obey saint Peter and return immediately to Jerusalem.

"It is right and proper to obey the head of the Church,"

answered the purest lady; "let us prepare even now for

our departure."

461. Thus resolved, saint John went out to seek pas

sage for Palestine and to prepare whatever was necessary

for a speedy departure. In the meanwhile, at the re

quest of the Evangelist, most blessed Mary called to

gether the women who were her acquaintances and dis

ciples in Ephesus, in order to take leave of them and

instruct them in what they must do to persevere in their

410 CITY OF GOD

holy faith. There were seventy-three of them, many

of them virgins, among whom were also the nine saved

from the ruins of the temple of Diana. These and many

others Mary herself had converted and .catechized in the

faith ; and She had formed of them a community in the

house of their hostesses. Through this congregation of

women the heavenly Lady had begun to atone for the

sins and abominations, perpetrated in the temple of

Diana for so many ages, and She established the observ

ance of chastity in community life in that very city of

Ephesus where the devil had profaned it. Of all this,

these women had been informed, though they did not

know that She had destroyed the temple of Ephesus; for

this remained a secret, in order that neither the Jews

should find a pretext, nor the heathens be stirred to

anger against the gentle Mother by their insane love of

Diana. The Lord provided that the ruin of the temple

should be looked upon as an accident and be soon for

gotten, so that profane authors wrote nothing about it,

though they had written much concerning the burning

of the first temple.

462. The most blessed Mary, in her desire to console

them for her absence spoke to these disciples in

sweetest words. She left them a paper, in which She had

written with her own hand : "My daughters, the will

of the Almighty calls me back to Jerusalem. In my ab

sence keep in mind the doctrine, which you have received

from me and which I heard from the mouth of the Re

deemer of the world. Look upon Him always as your

Lord and Master and as the Spouse of your souls, serv

ing Him and loving Him with all your heart. Remember

the commandments of his holy law, in which you shall

be instructed by his ministers and priests, reverence and

obey them in humility, without ever accepting other

THE CORONATION 411

teachers, who are not disciples of Christ my divine

Son, or followers of his doctrine. I shall always see that

his ministers assist and protect you, and I shall never

forget you or cease to commend you to the Lord. In

my place will remain Mary, the elder: obey her in all

things with great respect, and she will care for you with

the same love and solicitude as I have done. You will

observe inviolate retirement and recollection in this

house, and no man shall ever enter it; and if it is neces

sary to speak to anyone, it shall be in the portal, in the

presence of three of your number. Your prayers shall be

uninterrupted and in private, reciting and singing those

I have left you written in my chamber. Observe silence

and meekness and treat your neighbors as you would be

treated yourselves. Speak always the truth and be ever

mindful of Christ crucified in all your thoughts, words

and actions. Adore Him and confess Him as the Crea

tor and Redeemer of the world; and in his name I give

you his blessing, and I ask Him to live in your hearts."

463. These and other exhortations the most blessed

Mother left for the congregation, which She had dedi

cated to her Son and true God. The one She had ap

pointed their superior was one of the pious women, who

had offered Her hospitality and who owned the house.

This woman was well able to govern, for she had had

much intercourse with the Queen and had been well

informed concerning the law of God and its mysteries.

She was called Mary the elder, because the most holy

Mother had given her own name to many others in Bap

tism, communicating, as the Wise man says, without

envy the excellence of her name (Wis. 7, 13) ; as this one

was the first thus baptized in Ephesus, She was called

Mary the elder, to distinguish her from the later ones.

The most blessed Mary left them also in writing, the

412 CITY OF GOD

Our Father, the Creed and the ten Commandments to

gether with other prayers, which they were to recite

vocally. To encourage them in these and other exercises

She also left them a large cross made quickly at her re

quest by the hands of the angels and set up in her oratory.

Besides all this, as a kind Mother, and in order to bind

them to Her still more, She distributed the things in her

possession, which, though of trifling human value, were

nevertheless rich and inestimable to them as being

pledges and proofs of her maternal love.

464. Moved to great pity because, having engendered

them in Christ, She was now obliged to relinquish them

as orphans, She took leave of them. They all prostrated

themselves at her feet with great wailing and abundant

tears ; for now they were to lose in one moment the con

solation, the refuge and the joy of their heart. But on

account of the continued solicitude of the most blessed

Mother for her devout congregation all the seventy-

three afterwards persevered in the fear of God and the

faith of Christ our Lord. Yet the demon raised up

violent persecutions against them and against the in

habitants of Ephesus. Foreseeing this the prudent Queen

fervently prayed for them before leaving and asked her

divine Son to guard and preserve them, and to appoint

some angels for the defense of this small flock. All this the

Lord granted Her according to her wish ; and She after

wards often consoled them by sending exhortations from

Jerusalem and by charging the disciples and Apostles at

Ephesus to watch over these virgins and retired women.

The great Lady continued this loving care during her

whole life.

465. When the day of departure- arrived, the Hum

blest of the humble asked saint John for his blessing and

with it they betook themselves to the ship, having re-

THE CORONATION 413

mained in Ephesus two years and a half. On leaving

their dwelling all her thousand angels manifested them

selves in visible human forms, but all of them were armed

for battle and formed into squadrons. This unwonted

sight gave Her to understand, that She was to be prepared

to continue her conflict with the great dragon and his al

lies. Before reaching the sea She saw a great multitude of

the infernal legions meeting Her in various dreadful and

terrific shapes; in the midst of them came a dragon with

seven heads, so horrible and huge as to exceed the size of

a large ship, and so fierce and abominable as to cause

torment by its mere presence. Against these formidable

hosts the invincible Queen fortified Herself by the most

firm faith and fervent love, repeating the words of Psalms

and the sayings from the mouth of her most holy Son.

She ordered her holy angels to assist Her, for those

terrific shapes naturally inspired Her with some human

dread and horror. The Evangelist knew nothing of this

conflict until the heavenly Lady afterwards informed him

and gave him an insight into it.

466. Our blessed Lady embarked with the saint, and

the ship s sails were set. But it had proceeded only a

short distance from the port, when those dragons of

hell, making use of the permission given them, stirred

up the sea by a tempest such as had not been seen before

that time nor until now; for the Almighty wished to

exalt the power of his arm and the holiness of Mary and

therefore He permitted such liberty to the malice and

powers of the demons in this battle. The waves rose

with terrific roarings, piling themselves upon the winds

and apparently even upon the very clouds, forming with

them mountains of water and foam, as if they were pre

paring for an onset to break the bounds of the abysses

that imprisoned the ocean (Ps. 13, 9). The ship was

414 CITY OF GOD

lashed and battered to and fro, and it seemed a miracle

that it was not shattered to splinters at each shock. Some

times it was hurled up into the clouds, at others sent to

plow up the sand of the ocean s abysses; often its sails

and masts were buried in the foaming waves. During

some of the onsets of this unspeakably furious hurri

cane the ship was held in the air by the angels in order

to save it from some of the vaster billows, which would

inevitably have overhelmed and sent it to the bottom.

467. The mariners and passengers perceived the effects

of this assistance, but remained ignorant of the cause; in

their distress they were beside themselves, bewailing their

ruin, which they deemed inevitable. The demons added

to their terror ; for, assuming human shapes, they loudly

called upon the mariners as if from neighboring ships

sent to their aid and urged them to forsake their ship

and save themselves in the others. For though all the

vessels suffered in this storm, yet the wrath of the demons

and their power of doing harm was confined principally

to the ship on which our Lady sailed and the distress and

peril of the other vessels was not so great. The malicious

designs of the demons were known only to the most

blessed Virgin and not to the sailors, and therefore they

believed these voices as of true passengers and sailors.

Thus deceived they at times gave up caring for their own

ship and left it to the fury of the sea, expecting to save

themselves on one of the other ships. But the angels sup

plied their place directing and steering it when the sailors

gave it up in despair to the destruction of the waves.

468. In the midst of this confusion and distress the

most holy Mary preserved her tranquillity, serenely borne

up by the ocean of her magnanimity and virtue, but at

the same time practicing all the virtues by acts heroic

in proportion to the exigencies of the occasion and the

THE CORONATION 415

dictates of her wisdom. As during this tempestuous voy

age She personally experienced the dangers of naviga

tion, which She had understood on her former voyage by

divine inspiration, She was moved to new compassion

for all voyagers at sea and renewed her former prayers

and petitions. The most prudent Virgin also admired

the indomitable forces of the sea and was led to consider

the wrath of divine justice, so well represented by this

insensible creature. And passing from these consider

ations to that of the sins of mortals, who drew it upon

themselves from the Almighty, She entered into the most

ardent prayers for the conversion of the world and the

increase of the Church. For this She offered up the

hardships of this voyage ; since notwithstanding the tran

quillity of her soul, She suffered much bodily inconven

ience and still greater affliction at the thought that all

her fellow-voyagers were made to suffer this persecution

and tribulation of the demons on her account.

469. A large share of this suffering fell to the evangel

ist saint John on account of his deep solicitude for his

true Mother and Mistress of the world. To this was

added his own actual suffering. All was so much the

more dreadful to him, because at that time he did not

know what was passing in the interior of the most blessed

Virgin. He sought a few times to console Her and con

sole himself by assisting and comforting Her. Al

though the voyage from Ephesus to Palestine usually last

ed only about six days, this one lasted fifteen, of which

fourteen were tempestuous. One day saint John was very

much disheartened at the continuance of this measureless

hardship and, no longer able to restrain himself, said "My

Lady, what is this? Are we to perish at sea? Beseech

thy divine Son to look upon us with the eyes of a Father

and to defend us in this tribulation." The blessed

416 CITY OF GOD

Mother answered him: "Do not be disturbed, my son;

for we must now fight the battles of the Lord and over

come his enemies by fortitude and patience." I shall beg

of Him that no one who is with us shall perish, and that

He sleep not, who watches over Israel (Ps. 70, 4) ; the

strong ones of his court assist us and defend us; let us

suffer for Him who placed Himself upon the Cross for

the salvation of all." At these words saint John re

covered the necessary courage.

470. Lucifer and his demons with increasing fury

threatened the powerful Queen by telling Her that She

would perish in this sea and not escape alive. But these

and other threats were but spent arrows and the most

prudent Mother despised them, not even listening to

them, or looking upon the demons, or speaking to them

a single word. They themselves on the other hand could

not bear even to glance at her face on account of the

virtue of the Most High shining from it. And the more

they strove to overcome this virtue, the weaker they be

came and the more were they tormented by those

offensive weapons, with which the Lord had clothed

his most holy Mother. But in all of this lengthened con

flict He concealed from her his purpose and also his

countenance, never showing Himself to Her in visions

as had been usual.

471. But at the end of fourteen days of this stormy

voyage her divine Son deigned to descend and visit Her

in person. He appeared upon the sea and saying: "My

dearest Mother, I am with thee in tribulation." This

vision and the words of the Lord, ineffably consoling on

all occasions, were especially consoling to the most blessed

Mother in this extremity; because help is more welcome

in necessity. She adored her Son and God and answered :

"My God and only Good of my soul, whom the winds

THE CORONATION 417

and the sea obey (Matth. 8, 27), behold, my Son, our

affliction : let not the works of thy hands perish." The

Lord said to Her: "My Mother and my Dove, from

thee have I received human form ; therefore I desire that

all my creatures obey thy orders ; command them as the

Mistress of all, for they are subject to thy will." The

most prudent Mother had desired the Lord to command

the waves, as He had done in the storm on the sea of

Galilee; but the occasion was different, since at that

time there was no one else but He to command the winds

and the sea. The heavenly Mary therefore obeyed and,

in the name of her divine Son, She first commanded

Lucifer and his hosts instantly to leave the Mediterranean

and cease to harass it. Immediately they fled in the

direction of Palestine; for She had not commanded them

to hell, not wishing to put an end to the battle. The

enemies having retired, She commanded the waters and

the winds to subside. They immediately obeyed, becom

ing tranquil and serene in the shortest space of time to

the great astonishment of the passengers, who knew not

the cause of this sudden change. Christ the Lord took

leave of his Mother, having filled her with benedictions

and joy and told Her to disembark on the next day. Thus

it also happened; for on the fifteenth day after their em

barkation, they arrived happily at port and left the ship.

Our Queen and Mistress gave thanks to the Almighty for

these benefits and offered Him songs of thanksgiving

and praise for having saved Her from the dreadful

dangers. In this also the Evangelist joined, and the

blessed Mother thanked him for having accompanied Her

in her hardships. She asked his blessing and then they

both set out for Jerusalem.

472. The holy angels accompanied their Queen and

Lady in battle array as I have said ; for also the demons

418 CITY OF GOD

were awaiting her arrival resolved to continue the conflict

as soon as She had reached the shore. With incredible

fury they led on the assault by suggesting various tempta

tions against all the virtues; but all their darts fell back

upon themselves ; they could make no breach in this tower

of David, of which the Spouse says, that it is furnished

with the thousand shields and all the arms of the strong,

(Cant. 4, 4), and that it is fortified by towers of silver.

Before entering her house in Jerusalem the great Lady,

in her piety and devotion, yearned to visit the sacred spots

consecrated by our Redemption, which was also the last

thing She had done on leaving the city; but as saint

Peter, at whose call She had come, was waiting, and as

She knew the proper order to be maintained in all the vir

tues, She preferred obedience to her private devo

tions. Accordingly She betook Herself directly to the

house of the Cenacle, where saint Peter then stayed, and

falling on her knees before him, She asked for his bless

ing and begged his pardon for not having complied sooner

with his command. She sought his hand in order to

kiss it as that of the high-priest ; but She did not lay the

blame for her delay on the storm, nor did She mention

any other circumstance in excuse. Only from the ac

counts furnished to him afterwards by saint John, did

saint Peter learn of the hardships encountered on the

voyage. The Vicar of our Savior and all the disciples

and faithful of Jerusalem received their Teacher and

Mistress with indescribable joy, reverence and love, and

they prostrated themselves at her feet, thanking Her for

having come to fill them with gladness and consolation

and live where they could see and serve Her.

THE CORONATION 419

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST HOLY

MARY, GAVE ME.

473. My Daughter, I desire that thou continually re

new the remembrance of what I have told thee of these

sacred mysteries of my life; for it is not my will that

thou be only an insensible instrument for manifesting

them to the Church, but rather that thou be the one, who

before and above all others shall draw fruit from this

new blessing by practicing my teachings and following

my example. For this purpose has the Lord called thee,

and for it have I chosen thee as my daughter and dis

ciple. Since thou hast duly noticed my act of humility

in not opening the letter of saint Peter without consent

of my son John, I wish to dilate further upon the lesson

contained in this instance. I desire thee to notice that

in those two virtues, humility and obedience, which are

the foundation of Christain perfection, there is nothing

small, and all that pertains to them is most pleasing to

the Most High and draws down the most abundant re

ward of his generous mercy and justice.

474. Consider then, my dearest, that, just as in the

present condition of man nothing is more contrary to his

nature than the subjection of one s will to that of an

other, so nothing is more necessary than this subjection

for the bending of that stiff-necked pride, which the

demon seeks to stir up in all the children of Adam. Hence

the enemies labor sleeplessly to induce men to follow their

own judgment and will. Thereby the devils gain many

triumphs and lead many souls into diverse roads of de

struction; for in all states and conditions of life the

demon seeks to instill this poison into mortals, secretly

420 CITY OF GOD

soliciting them to follow their own judgment and refuse

to obey the laws and the will of their superiors, but rather

to despise and rebel against it, perverting the order of

divine Providence for the well-ordering of all things.

And because men overthrow this government of the

Lord, the world is filled with confusion and darkness,

created things are thrown out of order and subjected to

opposite force without regard or attention to God and

his laws.

475. But though all this damage is odious in the eyes

of the supreme Governor and Lord, yet it is especially

displeasing to Him in religious, who, being bound by the

vows of religion, seek to widen these restrictions or al

together free themselves from their obligations. I am

not now speaking of those who transgress their rules in

open daring or break their vows in small or in great

things ; this is nothing else than a dreadful temerity en

tailing eternal damnation. But, in order that they may

not incur such a danger. I wish to exhort those who seek

their salvation in religion, to guard themselves against en

tertaining opinions or explanations for relaxing the

obedience due to their superiors in the name of God, or

against trying to determine what liberties they might

take without committing sin by infringing on obedience

and their other vows or against studying whether they

may not act according to their own judgment in certain

matters great or small. Such disquisitions are never made

for the better observance of vows, but always in order to

stifle the remorse of conscience in breaking them. I

remind them, that the demons seek to induce them to

swallow these poisonous gnats, in order that, little by

little, after being accustomed to those that seem insig

nificant, they may arrive at swallowing the camels of the

more serious sins. Those that continually hover about

THE CORONATION 421

the entrances to mortal sins, will, to say the least, make

themselves liable to a strict inquiry by the Judge and thus

receive the smallest reward. For they have studied all

their lives to give to the Lord the least in their power to

oblige Him.

476. These attempts to explain away the binding

force of the love of God, tending to remodel it according

to the inclinations of the flesh, are very abominable to

my divine Son and to myself ; for it is a sign of great

disaffection to obey the divine law out of necessity, mak

ing it apparent, that only the fear of punishment urges

one on, and not love toward Him who commands, and

that nothing would be done, if no punishment were in

store. Many times, in the effort to avoid humiliation

at the hands of the immediate superior, the subject ap

peals to the higher authority and thus asks for exemp

tions from those who have only a general information

and cannot know or understand his particular needs or

danger. It cannot be denied, that this is still a kind of

obedience; but it is also certain, that it is a shift for

greater liberty, diminishes the reward and incurs danger ;

since without doubt it is more meritorious to obey and

subject oneself to the inferior authority, to those in

a lower condition, and to those less favorably disposed

to one s own views and inclinations. I learned no such

doctrines in the school of my divine Son, nor did I show

them in practice; for all things I sought the permission

of those I held as superiors, never being without them

as thou hast seen. Even for opening and reading the

letter of saint Peter, the head of the Church, I waited to

find out the will of his inferior, who was my more imme

diate superior.

477. My daughter, I do not wish thee to follow the

teachings of those who seek liberty and license in fol-

422 CITY OF GOD

lowing their own inclinations; but I choose thee and

conjure thee to imitate me and walk the secure path of

perfection. Hankering after dispensations and exemp

tions perverts the Christian and the religious life. At

all times thou must live in humble and obedient sub

jection, and thou must not hold thyself excused there

from on account of being a superior, for thou hast thy

confessors and superiors. If sometimes in their absence

thou canst not act in obedience, ask counsel and obey

one of thy subjects. For thee, all of them should be

as superiors; and let not this seem strange to thee;

since thou art the least of the human born and shouldst

consider thyself so, humiliating thyself beneath them

all in order to be my true follower, my disciple and

daughter. Besides this thou must punctually tell me

thy faults twice a day and ask my permission for all

that thou art to do during each day, confessing also

every day the sins thou committest. I shall exhort thee,

and command thee what is proper, both through myself

and through my ministers of the Lord; and thou must

not shrink to tell many others of thy ordinary faults,

in order that in all things and before all men thou hu

miliate thyself in the eyes of the Lord and in mine. This

science, hidden to the world and the flesh, I desire thee

to learn and impart to thy nuns. In teaching thee this

lesson I wish to reward thee for thy labor in writing my

life ; for by these instructions in so important a doctrine

I wish to impress thee, that, if thou wishest to imitate

me as thou shouldst, thou must communicate or speak

with no one, nor undertake anything, nor write letters,

nor move about, nor allow any thoughts (if possible),

except in obedience to me and to those who govern thee.

The worldly and carnal men call these virtues impertinent

and vain observances ; but their ignorant pride will have

THE CORONATION 423

its punishment when, in the presence of the Judge,

truths will be revealed; then will be seen who were

the ignorant and the wise, and those will be rewarded,

who as true servants have been faithful as well in small

as in greater things (Matth. 25, 21) ; when there is no

remedy left, the foolish ones will know the damage done

by their carnal prudence.

478. As thou wert moved to a certain envy on learn

ing that I myself governed that congregation of women

at Ephesus, I now advise thee to have no such feeling.

Remember that thou and thy nuns have chosen me for

your Superior and special Patroness in order that I

might govern you as your Queen and Lady ; and I desire

them to know, that I have accepted this office and have

constituted myself in it forever on condition, that they

be perfect in their vocation and very faithful to their

Lord, my divine Son, to whom I have assigned them as

his spouses. Remind them often of this, so that they

watch over themselves and retire from the world, de

spising it with all their hearts; that as my daughters

they do not degenerate, living in recollection and peace;

that they follow and execute the doctrines which I have

given thee in this history for thee and for them and

that they hold it in high veneration, gratefully writing

it in their hearts. For in having presented to them my

life for the rule and government of their souls, as it is

now written by thy hands, I am fulfilling my office as

Mother and Superior, in order that as subjects and as

daughters they may tread in my footsteps, imitate my

virtues and correspond with me in faithful love.

479. Another important lesson canst thou draw from

this chapter, namely: those that do not obey willingly,

when any adverse circumstance turns up in what is com

manded, will immediately be cast down, afflicted and

424 CITY OF GOD

disturbed, and, in order to justify their impatience, they

will blame the one that commands, and complain about

him either to his superiors or to others, as if he that

commands were responsible for the untoward accidents

happening to the inferior, or as if he had it in his power

to direct the government of the whole world accord

ing to the wishes of his subject. Indeed, many times

God, in reward for complete submission, raises hindrances

in order that the one who obeys may increase his merit

and crown, at other times he punishes those who show

any repugnance in obeying by withholding full success;

and all these accidents can in nowise be blamed upon

the superior, who commands. The Lord simply said :

He who hears you, and who obeys you, hears and obeys

Me (Luke 10, 16). The labor connected with obedience

always redounds to the benefit of those who obey; if

they do not profit by their obedience, it is no fault of

the one that commands. I made no complaints against

saint Peter for asking me to come from Ephesus to

Jerusalem, although I suffered so much on the voyage;

but I asked him pardon for not having fulfilled his com

mand more expeditiously. Never show any grievance

or sign of being displeased toward thy superiors, for

this is a very ugly spirit and such liberty will destroy

all the merit of thy obedience. Look upon them with

reverence, as taking the place of Christ, and thy merit

will be abundant ; follow my footsteps, my example and

my doctrine, and thou wilt be perfect in all things.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VISIT OF THE MOST BLESSED MARY TO THE HOLY

PLACES; SHE GAINS MYSTERIOUS TRIUMPHS OVER THE

DEMONS; SHE SEES THE DIVINITY IN HEAVEN BY A

BEATIFIC VISION ; THE APOSTLES CONVOKE A COUNCIL;

THE HIDDEN MYSTERIES CONNECTED WITH ALL THESE

EVENTS.

480. All our efforts are gloriously insufficient to de

scribe the plenitude of perfection of all the doings of

the most blessed Mary; for unfailingly are we over

come by the grandeur of even the smallest virtue (if

indeed there be any of them small) when we come to

consider the matter upon which She wrought them.

But our efforts, shall always be full of blessings for us,

if, without presumptuously attempting to fathom this

ocean of grace, we humble ourselves to glorify and exalt

in Her the Creator and to discover more and more in

what we can imitate Her. I shall esteem myself very

fortunate, if by making known the favors conferred by

God upon our great Queen, I can show to the children

of the Church something of what is so far above that

for which I cannot find adequate and appropriate terms

to describe; for in all that I can say, I shall still speak

as one that is dull, stuttering and without fervor of devo

tion. Wonderful are the events which have been mani

fested to me for the purpose of being recorded in this

and the following chapters.

481. After the most blessed Mary had complied obedi

ently with the will of saint Peter, as I have related in the

425

426 CITY OF GOD

preceding chapter, She thought it proper to satisfy her

piety in visiting the sacred spots of our Redemption. She

performed all her works of mercy with such prudence, that

She omitted none, assigning to each one its place in order

that no circumstance necessary to bring it to perfection

might be wanting. Applyingher heavenly wisdom She first

performed that which was greater and foremost in order,

then what seemed of less importance; but, as well the

one as the other, with all the attention of her soul in

the measure as each required. She left the Cenacle to

visit the sacred places and was accompanied by all her

holy angels, as well as followed up by Lucifer and his

legions for further conflict. These dragons, forming in

battle array and presenting the most fearful shapes,

uttered their threats and suggested their temptations.

But as soon as the great Lady approached any of the

holy places to perform her devotions, the demons fell

back, repelled by divine power; they also felt themselves

crushed by the hidden virtue communicated to these

holy places through the Redemption of Christ. Lucifer,

urged on by the temerity of his pride, attempted to come

nearer; for, relying upon his permission to tempt and

persecute the great Lady, he was anxious, if possible,

to gain some victory over Her in the very places where

he had been so signally vanquished ; or at least to hinder

Her from showing the veneration and worship required.

482. But the Most High ordained, that the power of

his arm against Lucifer and his demons should be shown

through this very Queen, and that her exercises, which

he tried to disturb, should be the sword with which he was

to be overcome and cut down. And thus it happened;

for the devotion and piety with which the heavenly

Mother worshipped her divine Son and with which She

renewed the grateful remembrance of the Passion, caused

THE CORONATION 427

such terror to the demons, that they could not tolerate

it and they felt a force so oppressive and tormenting

proceeding from Her, that they were obliged to recede

still farther from the invincible Queen. They broke

out into fearful roarings, audible to Her alone, and they

exclaimed : "Let us fly from this Woman, our Enemy,

who so confounds and oppresses us by her virtues. We

seek to blot out the remembrance and the veneration of

these places, in which men were redeemed and in which

we were despoiled of our dominion; and this Woman,

being a mere creature, hinders our designs and renews

the triumphs gained by her Son upon the Cross."

483. The most holy Mary made all the stations of the

holy places in company of her angels; and having ar

rived on mount Olivet, where her Son ascended into

heaven, the Lord himself, in effable beauty and glory,

descended from his throne to visit and console his most

pure Mother. He manifested Himself to Her with the

affection and bounty of a Son, yet as the infinite and

powerful God. He so filled Her with his Divinity and

elevated Her above the terrestrial, that for a long time

She was separated from visible things ; and though She

ceased not to attend to external works, She performed

them with a greater constraint upon Herself, being com

pletely spiritualized and transformed into her Divine

Son. Through her divine Son She perceived that these

favors were part of her reward for her- humility and

obedience toward saint Peter and in attending upon his

commands in preference not only to her devotion, but

also her convenience. He also promised Her anew his

assistance in her battle against the demons and in imme

diate fulfillment of this promise, the Lord ordained that

Lucifer and his hosts should then and there become con

vinced of a power in Her such as they had not ex

perienced before.

428 CITY OF GOD

484. The Queen returned to the Cenacle and as the

demons again sought to renew their temptations, they

rebounded like inflated rubber balls, when thrown swiftly

at a stone wall. These vainglorious hosts were hurled

back upon themselves with greater force than that with

which they had assaulted the most holy Mary. They

broke out in still more furious bowlings and, driven to

confess certain truths by their own dismay, they said:

"O we unhappy ones, who are obliged to look upon such

happiness of the human nature ! What great excellence

and dignity man has now attained in this pure Creature !

How ungrateful shall men be, and how foolish, if they

do not profit by the blessings bestowed upon them in

this Daughter of Adam! She is truly its salvation and

our destruction. Great things her Son does with Her;

but She is not unworthy of them. A cruel punishment

is this, that we must confess all these truths. O would

that God conceal from us this Woman, who adds such

torments to our envy! How shall we vanquish Her, if

the mere sight of Her is insufferable to us? Let us

console ourselves in the fact, that men lose so much of

what this Woman merits for them, and that they fool

ishly despise Her. In them shall we avenge our injuries,

through them we shall exercise our fury, filling them

with illusions and errors; for if they but pay attention

to her example, all of them would profit by this Woman

and follow her virtues. But this is not enough to con

sole me (added Lucifer) for this Woman, his Mother,

can please God more than all the sins we can lead men

into shall displease Him; and even if this were not so

my position does not permit me to remain indifferent

at seeing human nature so highly exalted in a mere weak

Woman. This wrong is unbearable : let us return to

persecute Her; let us give vent to the fury of our envy

THE CORONATION 429

even in spite of torment : and though we all suffer by it,

let our pride be not dismayed, for possibly some triumph

may yet be gained over this our Enemy."

485. The most blessed Mary knew of and heard all

these wrathful threats; but as the Queen of virtues She

despised them all. Without the least sign of disturbance

in her countenance She retired to her oratory in order

prudently to confer with Herself concerning\* the mysteries

of this conflict and concerning the difficult business now

before the Church in seeking to end circumcision and the

ancient law. In this the Queen of the angels labored

for a few days, engaged during her retirement in con

tinual prayers, petitions, tears and prostrations. In her

own affairs She also asked the Lord to stretch out his

almighty arm against Lucifer and grant Her the victory

over him and the demons. Although the great Lady

knew Him to be on her side and that He would not

leave Her in tribulation, She ceased not her prayers and

She acted on her part as if She had been the weakest of

creatures in the time of temptation. She taught us

what we ourselves should do in temptation, since we are

so subject to them and so apt to be overcome. She

prayed for the holy Church, asking the Lord to grant

to it his evangelical law, pure, unsullied, without wrinkle,

and unhampered by the ancient ceremonies.

486. This petition the most blessed Mary urged with

the most burning fervor; for She knew that Lucifer and

all hell sought through the Jews to unite circumcision

with Baptism and the rites of Moses with the truths of

the Gospel. The admission of these fallacies would help

to maintain the Jews in their stubborn adhesion to the

old Law during the coming ages. One of the fruits and

triumphs of the great Lady in her battle with the dragon

was, that circumcision was immediately rejected by the

430 CITY OF GOD

council of which I shall speak; and from that time on the

pure grain of evangelical truth was separated from the

dried and barren stubble of the mosaic ceremonies, as

it is to this day in our holy mother the Church. All

this the most blessed Mary procured through her merits

and her prayers. She knew, in the meanwhile, that

saint Paul and saint Barnaby were hastening from An-

tioch to Jerusalem in order to confer with saint Peter and,

as related by saint Luke in the fifteenth chapter of the

Acts of the Apostles, solve the difficulties raised by the

Jews.

487. Saint Paul and saint Barnaby were aware of th6

return of the Queen of heaven when they came to Jeru

salem. In his ardent desire of seeing Her saint Paul

with saint Barnaby, at once sought her presence, and

they cast themselves at her feet, shedding abundant tears

of joy. Not less was the joy of the heavenly Mother at

meeting these Apostles, toward whom She bore an es

pecial love in the Lord on account of their zealous labors

for the exaltation of God s name and the spread of the

faith. The Mistress of the humble desired them to

present themselves first to saint Peter and the rest, and

last to Her, judging Herself to be the least of all crea

tures. But they, preserving the proper order in their

reverence and love, thought that none should be preferred

to Her who was the Mother of God, the Mistress of all

creation and the beginning of all our happiness. The

great Lady prostrated Herself before saint Paul and

Barnaby, kissed their hands and asked for their bless

ing. On this occasion saint Paul was favored with a

wonderful ecstatic abstraction, in which were revealed

to him great mysteries and prerogatives of this mystical

City of God, the Blessed Mary, and he saw Her as it

were completely invested with the Divinity.

THE CORONATION 431

488. Through this vision saint Paul was filled with

admiration and with incomparable love and veneration

for the heavenly Mary. Somewhat recovering himself,

he said to Her: "Mother of all piety and clemency,

pardon this vile and sinful man for having persecuted

thy divine Son, my Lord, and his holy Church." The

Virgin Mother answered and said : "Paul, servant of

the Most High, if He who created and redeemed thee,

deigned to call thee to his friendship and made thee a

vessel of election, how can I, his slave, refuse to pardon

thee? (Acts 9, 15). My soul magnifies and exalts Him,

because He wished to manifest Himself so powerful,

liberal and holy in thee." Saint Paul thanked the heav

enly Mother for the benefit of his conversion and for

the other favors conferred upon him by Her in saving

him from so many dangers. The same also saint Bar-

naby did, and both again asked for her protection and

help, which the most holy Mother promised.

489. Saint Peter, as the head of the Church, had called

upon the Apostles and disciples then in and around Jeru

salem, and convoked them to a meeting in the presence

of the Mistress of the world. In order that the most

prudent Virgin, in her profound humility, might not

absent Herself from this council, saint Peter had inter

posed his authority as Vicar of Christ. All of them

being gathered, saint Peter said: "My brethren and

children in Christ our Savior, it was necessary that we

meet in order to solve the difficulties and decide upon the

affairs, which our most beloved brethren Paul and Bar-

naby have brought to our notice, and to determine other

matters touching the increase of the holy faith. For

this it is proper that we engage in prayer to obtain the

assistance of the Holy Ghost and we shall persevere

therein for ten days as is our custom. On the first and

432 CITY OF GOD

on the last day we shall celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass,

by which we shall dispose our hearts to receive the di

vine light." All of them approved of this arrangement.

In order to celebrate the first Mass on the next day the

Queen prepared the hall of the Cenacle, cleaning and

decorating it with her own hands and holding all things

in readiness for the Communion of Herself together with

the Apostles and disciples during those Masses. Saint

Peter alone celebrated, observing all those rites and cere

monies which I have described, when speaking of the

Masses on other occasions.

490. The other Apostles and disciples communicated

at the hands of saint Peter; then the most blessed Mary,

taking the last place. Many angels descended to the

Cenacle. All those present saw them and at the time

of the consecration the Cenacle was filled with a wonder

ful light and fragrance, through which the Lord wrought

wonderful effects in their souls. Having celebrated the

first Mass, they agreed upon certain hours, in which they

were to persevere together in prayer, as far as they

could without neglecting the necessary ministry of souls.

The great Lady retired to a place, where She remained

alone and motionless for those ten days without eating

or speaking to any one. During that time She experi

enced such hidden mysteries as to move the angels to

astonishment; and I find myself unable to describe what

has been manifested to me concerning them. I will

briefly indicate a small part of these mysteries, for to

state all is impossible. The heavenly Mother having

received holy Communion on the first of the ten days

and retired to pray alone, at the command of the Lord,

was immediately raised up by her angels and others there

present to the empyrean heavens. Since She was taken

up body and soul, one of the angels took her shape in

THE CORONATION 433

order that the Apostles in the Cenacle might not become

aware of her absence. They bore Her up with the

splendor and magnificence described by me on other oc

casions, and on this occasion it was even greater on

account of the designs of the Lord. When Mary arrived

in a region of the air far removed from the earth, the

almighty Lord commanded Lucifer and all his hellish

hosts to come into the presence of the Queen into those

higher regions. Immediately all of them came before

Her and She saw them and knew them all just as they

were and the condition they were in. The sight was some

what painful to her, because the demons are so abomi

nable and disgusting; but She was armed with divine

virtue, so that She could not be harmed by this horrible

and execrable sight. Not so the demons; for the Lord

gave them to understand by an especial insight the great

ness and superiority of that Woman, whom they were

persecuting as their Enemy. They were made to per

ceive how foolishly presumptuous they had been in their

attempts against Her. To their still greater terror they

saw that She carried in her bosom the sacramental Christ

and that the whole Divinity held Her as it were envel

oped in its Omnipotence for their humiliation, overthrow

and destruction.

491. The demons moreover heard a voice proceeding

from the Deity itself, saying: "With this shield of my

powerful arm, invincible and strong, I shall always de

fend my Church. This Woman shall crush the head

of the ancient serpent (Gen. 3, 15), and shall forever

triumph over its haughty pride for the glory of my holy

name." All these and other mysteries of the most holy

Mary the demons perceived and understood while they

were gathered around Her in dismay. So great

was the despair and crushing pain which they felt,

434 CITY OF GOD

that they, with loudest clamors, said: "May the power

of the Almighty cast us immediately into hell, and let

it not keep us in the presence of this Woman, who tor

ments us more than the fire. O invincible and strong

Woman ! Recede from us, since we ourselves cannot fly

from thy presence, where we are bound by the chains

of the Almighty. Why dost Thou also torment us be

fore our time? (Matth. 8, 29). Thou alone of all

human nature art the instrument of the Omnipotent

against us ; and through Thee men can acquire the eternal

blessings we have lost. Those that have sunk into de

spair of ever seeing God eternally, are now rewarded

for the accredited good works of their Redeemer by

the vision of Thee, which in our hate is to us a torment

and chastisement. Release us, almighty Lord and God;

let this new punishment, in which Thou renewest that of

our fall from heaven, cease ; for in it Thou executest the

punishment Thou hast threatened us with in this wonder

of thy powerful arms."

492. During these and other lamentations of despair

the demons were held spellbound in the presence of the

Queen for a long time, and although thy made the most

violent efforts to fly, they were not permitted to do it

as fast as their fury urged them on. In order that the

terror of the most holy Mary might strike them so much

the deeper and become the more notorious, the Lord

ordained, that She herself should use her authority as

Mistress and Queen in permitting them to leave. At

the instant in which She did this, all of them cast them

selves, with all the swiftness in their power, from the

upper regions into the abyss. They gave forth dread

ful howls, terrorizing all the damned souls with new

punishments, and, full of dismay and torments in not

being able to deny their defeat, they proclaimed in their

THE CORONATION 435

presence the power of the Almighty and of his holy

Mother. Having won this triumph the most serene Em

press proceeded on her way to the empyrean heaven,

where She was received with new and admirable jubilee,

remaining there for twenty-four hours.

493. She prostrated Herself before the throne of the

most blessed Trinity and adored It in the unity of its

undivided nature and majesty. She prayed for the

Church, in order that the Apostles might understand and

resolve what was proper for the establishment of the

evangelical law and the termination of the law of Moses.

In answer to these petitions She heard a voice from the

throne, by which the three divine Persons, One after the

Other and each One for Himself, promised to assist the

Apostles and disciples in declaring and establishing the

divine truth, assuring Her, that the Father would direct

its establishment by his Omnipotence, the Son, as head

of the Church, assist it by his Wisdom, and the Holy

Ghost, as its Spouse, by his Love and his enlightening

gifts. Then the heavenly Mother saw, that the most

holy humanity of her Son presented to the Father the

prayers and petitions, which She Herself had offered

for the Church, and how, approving of them, He pro

posed the reasons why they should be fulfilled, in order

that the faith of the Gospel and his entire holy law might

be established in the world in accordance with the de

crees of the divine will and mind.

494. Immediately, in execution of this will and pro

posal of Christ our Savior, the Lady saw issuing forth

from the Divinity and immutable essence of God the

form of a temple or Church, beautiful, clear and re

splendent as if built of diamond or of sparkling crystal,

adorned with many enamels and reliefs to enhance its

beauty. The angels and saints saw it and in astonish-

436 CITY OF GOD

ment exclaimed: "Holy, holy, holy and powerful art

Thou, Lord, in thy works" (Apoc. 4, 8). This Church

or temple the most blessed Trinity placed in the hands

of the most holy humanity of Christ, and, in a manner

which cannot be described in words, He united it with

Himself. Thereupon He turned it over to the most

holy Mother and as soon as Mary received it, She was

filled with new splendor. She annihilated Herself within

Herself and then saw the Divinity, clearly and intui

tively, by eminent and beatific vision.

495. The great Queen remained in this joy for many

hours, truly introduced into the cellar of fermented

wine spoken of in the Canticles (Canticle 8, 2). Since

what She experienced and received there surpasses all

created thought or capacity, it suffices here to say, that

anew was ordered in Her love (Cant. 2, 4) and di

rected with new fervor toward the Church consigned

to Her under the above symbol. Enriched by these fa

vors, She was borne back by the angels to the Cenacle,

having in her hands the mystical temple She had re

ceived from her divine Son. She remained in prayer

during the other nine days without motion and without

interrupting the acts, in which She had been left by the

beatific vision. They fall not within human thought,

and can much less be indicated by human words. Among

other things which She did, was to distribute the

treasures of the Redemption among the children of the

Church. Commencing with the Apostles and going

through the different ages, She applied them separately

to the just and the saints, according to the secret dispo

sition of eternal predestination. The execution of these

decrees her divine Son had consigned to the most holy

Mary, giving Her dominion over the whole Church and

the dispensation of all the graces, that each one earns

THE CORONATION 437

through the merits of the Redemption. Regarding a

mystery so exalted and hidden, I cannot say more than

this.

496. On the last of the ten days saint Peter celebrated

the other Mass and all received holy Communion as in the

first. Then, all being gathered in the name of the Lord,

they invoked the Holy Ghost and began to consult about

the solution of the difficulties that had arisen in the

Church. Saint Peter, as the head and the highpriest,

spoke first, then saint Paul and Barnaby, and saint James

the Less, as is related by saint Luke in the fifteenth chap

ter of the Acts. The first decision of this council was,

that the exact law of the circumcision and the law of

Moses should not be imposed upon the baptized; since

eternal salvation was given through Baptism and faith

in Christ. Although saint Luke principally mentions

only this decision, yet there were others, which defined

certain matters concerning the government and the cere

monies of the Church, in order to stop some abuses in

troduced by the indiscreet piety of some of the faithful.

This is held to be the first council of the Apostles, al

though they had also gathered to establish the Credo

and other things as mentioned before. However, at

that only the Apostles had convened, whereas now also

those disciples took part, who could come. Also the

manner of conferring and of resolving was different,

being a formal decision, as is clear from the words of

saint Luke : "It has seemed good to the Holy Ghost and

to us," etc. (Luke 15, 28).

497. Couched in these terms the decision of the coun

cil was sent by letter to the faithful and to the churches

of Antioch, Syria and Cilicia; and they remitted these

letters through the hands of saint Paul and Barnaby and

of other disciples. In order that the approbation of

438 CITY OF GOD

the Lord might not be wanting, it happened, that, both

in the Cenacle at coming to their decision, and in An-

tioch when the letters were read before the faithful, the

Holy Ghost descended in visible fire, so that all the faith

ful were consoled and confirmed in the Catholic truth.

The most holy Mary gave thanks to the Lord for the

blessings thus bestowed upon the Church. She imme

diately despatched saint Paul and Barnaby with the rest

and for their consolation She gave them as relics part

of the clothes of Christ our Lord and some objects She

had still left of the Passion. Offering them her protec

tion and prayers, She sent them filled with new consola

tion and spiritual force upon the labors still awaiting

them. During all these days of the council, on account

of the terror with which most holy Mary had inspired

him, Lucifer and his ministers could not come near the

Cenacle ; yet they prowled about in the distance, without

being able to execute any of their malice against its

members. Happy age, and fortunate congregation!

498. Since, in spite of his continual prowling about

the Queen and his roarings as of a hungry lion, Lucifer

saw that he could gain no advantage himself, he engaged

some sorceresses, with whom he had made an express

pact, and persuaded them to attempt the life of Mary

by magic means. These unhappy dupes tried it in sev

eral ways; but their enchantments were of no avail.

Many times, when they purposely placed themselves in

the way of the Queen, they were struck dumb and mo

tionless. The most blessed Mary, in her boundless char

ity, labored much to undeceive and convert them by kind

words and deeds; but of the four, who were thus sent

on by the demon, only one was converted and received

Baptism. And thus all his attempts came to naught,

Lucifer was so confused and enraged, that he would

THE CORONATION 439

many times have given up tempting the most blessed

Mary, if his unquenchable pride had permitted him. The

Lord almighty ordained all this, in order that the vic

tories and triumphs of his Mother might be more glo

rious, as we shall see in the following chapter.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS, MOST

HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

499. My daughter, in the constancy and invincible for

titude with which I vanquished the demons, thou hast one

of the most urgent motives for persevering in grace and

acquiring great crowns. The human nature and that

of the angels (even though they be devils) are subject

to contrary and opposite conditions; for the spiritual

nature is indefatigable, and that of mortals weak and

so prone to fatigue, that it soon tires and succumbs in

labor. As soon as it finds any difficulty in the practice

of virtue it is discouraged and turns back; what it pur

sues with pleasure on one day, it contemns the next ; what

seemed agreeable today, it finds hard tomorrow; now it

wishes, then again it does not wish; sometimes it is fer

vent, sometimes lukewarm. But the demon is never

fatigued or weakened in his efforts at tempting souls.

The Almighty, however, is not wanting in his providence ;

for He limits and restrains the power of the demons, so

that they cannot pass the measure set for them, nor exert

all their indefatigable powers for the persecution of

souls. On the other hand He supports the weakness of

men, giving them grace and strength to resist and over

come their enemies on the prescribed battleground.

500. Hence the inconstancy of souls in virtuously

maintaining their position during temptation and in not

bearing with fortitude and patience the inconveniences

440 CITY OF GOD

of doing good and fighting against the demons, is not

excusable. The bent of passion, drawing man toward

the sensible and pleasurable, suddenly presents itself

across the path of duty and the demons, with diabolical

astuteness, seek to exaggerate the hardship and disagree-

ableness of mortification, representing it as dangerous

to health and life. Thus he deludes innumerable souls

to precipitate themselves from one abyss to another. In

this thou hast before thy eyes, my daughter, a very com

mon aberration of the worldly-minded, but which is very

abominable in the sight of the Lord and myself. Hence

it is, that many men are weak, wavering and indisposed

toward the practice of virtue or penitential mortification

for their sins. And the very ones who are so weak in

doing good, are strong in doing evil. In the service of

the devil they are constant and are ready to undergo

much more difficult and arduous tasks in sinning, than

the law of God commands for the practice of virtue.

They show themselves tardy and imbecile in the work of

saving their souls, eager and strong to load upon them

selves eternal damnation.

501. This damage also those who profess a life of

perfection are wont in part to incur, if they unduly

consider the hardships attached to such a life. Drawn

into this deception, they either hinder their advance in

perfection or afford the devil many victories in tempta

tion. In order that thou, my daughter, tnayest not incur

this danger, thou shouldst consider the fortitude and

constancy with which I resisted Lucifer and all hell, and

the magnanimity with which I despised his illusions and

temptations, not permitting myself to be disturbed, or

to pay any attention to them; for this is the best way

to overcome his haughty pride. Nor was I ever led by

temptation to remissness in my labors or in my exercises ;

THE CORONATION 441

but I augmented them, together with my prayers, peti

tions and tears, as is necessary in the time of battle with

those enemies. Hence I exhort thee to do the same in

eager watchfulness; because thy temptations are not of

the ordinary kind, but are directed against thee in highest

malice and astuteness. Of this I have warned thee many

times and this experience teaches thee.

502. Since thou hast noticed the great terror caused

to the demons at perceiving the sacramental Lord rest

ing in my bosom, I wish to call thy attention to two

things. First, that for the overthrow of hell and for

causing fear in the demons, all the holy Sacraments of

the Church are most powerful means; but above all the

holy sacrament of the Eucharist. This was one of the

hidden purposes of the Lord my Son, in the institution

of this sovereign mystery and of the other Sacraments.

If in our time men do not ordinarily feel these powerful

effects, it is because in the frequency of the reception

of the Sacraments much of the veneration and estimation

in receiving them has been lost. But do not doubt, that

souls who frequent them with devotion and piety, are

formidable to the demons and that they exercise great

power and dominion over them in the same way as thou

hast seen and described it of me. The explanation of

this fact is : that this divine fire, in the pure souls, finds

itself as it were in its own element. In me it was active

to the limit of possibility in a mere creature, and there

fore I inspired such terror to the demons.

503. In further proof of what I said, I wish secondly

to inform thee, that these blessings were not to have

an end with me; for in proportion God has wrought

the same effects in other souls. In our own times it has

happened that, in order to vanquish the demon, God

showed and opposed to him a soul bearing within it the

442 CITY OF GOD

sacramental species and thereby so humiliated and anni

hilated the dragon, that for many days he dared not

approach this soul and begged the Omnipotent not to be

shown any soul bearing within it holy Communion. On

another occasion Lucifer, in conjunction with some here

tics and other bad Christians, schemed to do severe harm

to these Spanish kingdoms; and if God had not cut them

short through this same person, the whole of Spain would

now be lost and in the hands of the enemies. The divine

clemency interfered for its defense by showing this per

son to the devil and his ministers after Communion. In

their terrors the demons dropped their malicious designs

for the immediate destruction of all Spain. I will not

tell thee who this person was; for it is not necessary,

and I reveal this secret to thee for no other purpose than

to show how favorably the Almighty looks upon a soul

which tries to merit its favors and worthily receives Him

in holy Communion; and how He manifested Himself

liberal and powerful not only to me, on account of my

dignity and sanctity of Mother, but how He wishes also

in other souls to be known and glorified as relieving the

needs of the Church according to time and occasion.

504. From this thou wilt understand, that, in the same

proportion as the demons fear the souls that worthily

receive holy Communion and other fortifying Sacra

ments, so they exert all their powers to cause those souls

to fall and to hinder them from accumulating all this

strength of the Lord against them. Labor then against

these tireless and astute enemies and seek to imitate me

in fortitude. I desire also that thou hold in great ven

eration the councils of the Church and all such gather

ings, and whatever is resolved and established by them;

for the Holy Ghost assists at these councils and He ful

fills his promise, that He will be with those who gather

THE CORONATION 443

together in his name (Matth. 8, 20). Hence what is

thus ordained and commanded must be obeyed. Al

though in our times no visible signs of the assistance of

the Holy Ghost occur in such councils, yet He does not

fail to govern them invisibly; for signs and wonders

are not any more so necessary as in the first beginnings

of the Church. Such as are necessary are not with

held by the Lord. For all these blessings exalt and

praise his liberal kindness and mercy, and especially for

those which He conferred on me during my mortal life.

CHAPTER VII.

THE) MOST HOLY MARY ENDS THE BATTLE WITH THE

DEMONS, GLORIOUSLY TRIUMPHING OVER THEM AS IS

DESCRIBED BY SAINT JOHN IN THE TWELFTH CHAPTER

OP THE APOCALYPSE.

505. In order to understand better the mysteries to

be described in this chapter, it is necessary to presuppose

what I have written in the eighth, ninth and tenth chap

ter, of the first book, of the first part, where I explained

the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse in so far as it

was made, known to me at that time. Not only there,

but during\* the whole course of this heavenly history,

have I referred to the present chapters of this third part

for a description of the battles of the most holy Mary

with Lucifer and the demons, the triumphs She gained,

and the state in which She was left by the Almighty

after these battles for the rest of her earthly life. Of

all these sacred mysteries the evangelist saint John had

a knowledge and he describes them in his Apocalypse

(as I have stated at other times), especially in the twelfth

and twenty-first chapters. On these two chapters I must

discourse in this history for two reasons.

506. First, the secrets contained in them are so ex

alted and magnificent, that they can never be adequately

explained or manifested; especially as the Evangelist,

considering it as the sacrament of the King and Queen,

has enveloped them in such enigmatical and metaphorical

language, as can be interpreted only through divine

revelation when and how the Lord shall please ; and in

444

THE CORONATION 445

this the Evangelist followed the express commands of the

most holy Mary. Secondly, the proud rebellion of Lucifer,

although in general opposing the supreme will and orders

of the Most High and omnipotent God, was especially

directed against Christ our Lord and his Mother, to

whose superiority and excellence the apostate angels do

not wish to subject themselves. Also the first rebellion

and war waged with saint Michael in heaven was in

protest against their authority; but at that time they

could not war with the incarnate Word and with his

Virgin Mother in person, but only against the mysterious

sign or representation of that mysterious Woman, which

they saw placed in the heavens as a prophetic symbol

of all the mysteries of the Incarnation to be enacted in

her womb. When the time came for the execution of

all these sacraments and for the Incarnation of the Word

in her womb, it was proper that this battle of the demons

should be renewed and that Christ and Mary should

triumph over them in person. For this the Lord, as

well in heaven as afterwards in paradise, had threatened

them with this enmity between the Woman and the ser

pent, and between the seed of the Woman and the serpent,

in order that She might crush his head.

507. All this was fulfilled to the letter in Christ and

in Mary; for of our great Highpriest and Savior saint

Paul says, that He was tempted in all things like we

ourselves and for our example, but without sin ; and the

same can be said of the most holy Mary. Lucifer had

permission to tempt Them after his fall from heaven,

as I have said in the tenth chapter of the first Part.

And because this battle with the most holy Mary was

to be a counterpart of the first one in heaven and was

to be for the demons the fulfillment of the threat and

menace contained in her image, it was described and

446 CITY OF GOD

enveloped in the same enigmatical words. Having suffi

ciently explained about the first battle, I must now

speak of what happened in the second. Although Lucifer

and his demons had already been punished in their

first rebellion by the eternal loss of the beatific vision

and hurled into hell, they were now punished anew in

this second battle by additional accidental torments cor

responding to their evil desires and attempts against the

most blessed Mary. The explanation thereof is, that

the natural faculties of a creature draw satisfaction and

contentment from their attaining what they strive after

and this in proportion to the vehemence with which they

have striven ; and on the other hand, pain and disappoint

ment in not attaining their object, or in experiencing

opposite results. Now, the demons since their fall had

desired nothing more vehemently than to see that One

fall from grace, who was to be the medium of grace

for the children of Adam. Hence it was an inconceiv

able torment for the infernal dragons to find themselves

vanquished and foiled in the desperate desires and hopes

entertained by them for so many ages.

508. The heavenly Mother on the other hand, on

account of the same and many other reasons, in the

overthrow of the ancient serpent gained a most joyful

triumph. For the conclusion of this battle, moreover,

and for the state which She was then to enjoy during

the rest of her life, her divine Son held in readiness so

many and such great blessings, as surpass all human and

angelic capacity. In order to say something of what I

have been made to understand, the reader must remem

ber, that, on account of our limited powers and capacity,

we are constrained to use for the most exalted mysteries

the same terms and words as we use for the more ordi

nary ones. Yet in what I am to speak of now, there is

THE CORONATION 447

infinite latitude and extent of mystery, within which

the Almighty can raise the creature from one state,

which seems to us the highest, to one much more exalted,

and from this again to a higher and more excellent state.

For, such a creature as Mary, after being destined and

confirmed in this world of graces, gifts and favors, and

after reaching (as She really did) all that is not God s

essence, must at last embrace within itself a vastness of

excellence so great, that, of its own Self, it constitutes

a new hierarchy, greater and more exalted than all the

rest of the creatures angelic and human.

509. Having premised all this, I will proceed to tell

as well as I can, what happened to Lucifer until his final

overthrow through the most holy Mary and her Son our

Savior. The dragon and his demons were not yet en

tirely subdued by the triumphs related in the last chapter,

when they were hurled down from the upper air into the

abyss by the great Lady ; nor by their ill-success with the

sorceresses in Jerusalem. But, fearing in his malice that

he should have little time left for his temptations and

persecutions, the enemy, in his implacable malice, wished

to make up for the shortness of time by an increase of

fury and temerity. Hence he sought out other men, who,

having been especially instructed by him in magic and

witchcraft, were still greater sorcerers. To these Lucifer

gave special and minute directions how to take away the

life of Her whom they held as their enemy. These

ministers of evil attempted to fulfill their commission

many times, making use of very powerful and pernicious

charms. But none of them could in any way harm either

the life or the health of the most blessed Mary; for the

effects of sin exerted no influence over Her who was

sinless and who, moreover, for other reasons, was exempt

and superior to all natural causes. Seeing this and find-

448 CITY OF GOD

ing his most deeply laid plans frustrated, the dragon

visited those sorcerers with fierce and cruel punishments ;

for the Lord permitted this, because they had merited

chastisement for their temerity and in order that they

might know, what kind of master they served.

510. Full of this new fury Lucifer convened all the

princes of darkness and reminded them of the many

reasons they had since their fall from heaven, for strain

ing all their forces and their whole malice in order to

cast down this Woman, their Enemey; since they now

clearly recognized in Her the One shown to them at that

time. They all agreed with him and resolved to unite

and assault Her alone, presuming that on some occasion

or another they would find Her less prepared and bereft

of her defense. Mary .being alone in her oratory, they

at once seized this opportunity and, emptying hell for this

enterprise, they advanced upon Her in united multitudes.

This battle was the greatest ever fought by a mere

creature, from the first one in the empyrean heaven to

the end of the world ; and it was very much like that first

one. In order to estimate the fury of Lucifer and his

demons, in coming to where the most blessed Mary

then was, one must consider their torments, as well in

perceiving the divine power emanating from Her as in

remembering how often they had been oppressed and

vanquished by Her. But their wrath and envy conquered

even these torments and drove them, in spite of their

pains, to throw themselves as it were upon the bristling

pikes and swords to avenge themselves upon the heavenly

Lady; for, not to make such an attempt, was a greater

torment than any other.

511. The first assault of the demons was directed

principally upon the exterior senses of Mary, consisting in

terrific howlings and confused clamors. Arraying their

THE CORONATION 449

hosts in the air, they produced such a fearful noise and

trembling, that the machinery of the whole world seemed

on the point of destruction. To make all this appear

more real, they assumed diverse visible shapes, some of

horrid and different kinds of demons, other of angels

of light. In these shapes they pretended to begin a

darksome and formidable contest or battle, seemingly

without cause and so that only the confused and terrible

noise could be heard. Thus they sought to produce fear

or disturbance in the soul of the most blessed Lady.

And truly they would have excited terror in any other,

even the most holy creature, if left to the ordinary re

sources of grace, and no one could have encountered

them without losing life ; for this onset lasted for twelve

whole hours.

512. But our great Queen and Lady remained im

movable and serene, as tranquil as if She heard or saw

nothing of all this; She was disturbed or altered in no

wise, showed no change in her countenance, no traces of

sorrow during the whole of this infernal uproar. Then

the demons proceeded to other temptations directed

against the internal faculties of the invincible Mother,

pouring out their diabolical malice more than I can de

scribe; for all that devilish multitude exhausted the full

measure of their hellish astuteness in concocting their

false revelations, lights and suggestions, their promises

and threats in attempting to infect each of her virtues by

temptations to the contrary vice. I will not stop to

enumerate in particular these temptations, as it is neither

necessary nor convenient. But our Lady and Queen

overcame them all, since in opposition to the vices She

performed acts of the contrary virtues, which reached

an excellence fully in proportion to the impulse and force

of her then acquired state of grace, gifts and perfection.

450 CITY OF GOD

513. As one who was experiencing the strength of

hellish malice and who knows the necessity of divine

assistance, She prayed on that occasion for all that are

afflicted and tempted by the demon. The Lord granted

Her the power of extending her protection to all those

who are tempted and who invoke her intercession. The

demons persevered in this battle until no kind of malice

was left unattempted against the most pure Mother.

Then She on her part called upon the divine justice, ask

ing God to rise up and judge his cause (as David says

Ps. 73, 22), that his enemies might be dispersed and

those who abhorred his presence be put to flight. To ful

fill his judgment the incarnate Word descended from

heaven to her retirement in the Cenacle, appearing to his

Virgin Mother as her sweetest and loving Son, and to

the enemies as the severe Judge on the throne of his

supreme majesty. He was accompanied by innumerable

angels, by the ancient saints, Adam and Eve and many

patriarchs and prophets, and saint Joachim and Anne.

All these presented and manifested themselves to the most

blessed Mary in her oratory.

514. Prostrating Herself as usual in deepest venera

tion and worship, the great Lady adored her Son and

true God. The demons did not see the Lord, though

they were made aware of his royal presence and tried to

fly from the imminent punishment. But the divine power

detained them, fettering them in the manner in which

their spirit nature permitted; and the ends of their fet

ters or chains the Lord placed into the hands of his most

blessed Mother.

515. Then a voice issued from the throne saying:

"Today comes upon you the wrath of the Almighty, and

the first sentence, fulminated against the ancient serpent

from on high and afterwards in paradise, shall be ex-

THE CORONATION 451

ecuted: a Woman descended from Adam and Eve shall

crush its head (Gen. 3, 15), because in your disobedience

and pride, you have despised the humanity of the Word

in the virginal womb." Immediately the most holy Mary

was raised from the earth by the hands of six seraphim

nearest to the throne of God and, enveloped in a reful

gent cloud, was placed at the side of the throne of her

divine Son. From his own essence and Divinity issued

an ineffable and supereminent splendor, which enveloped

and surrounded Her like the globe of the sun. Beneath

her feet appeared also the moon, indicating that She was

to subject to Her all that was inferior, earthly and

variable, symbolized by the concavity of the moon. Over

her head was placed a diadem or crown of twelve stars,

as an emblem of the divine perfections communicated to

Her to the fullest extent possible in a mere creature. She

was also shown as pregnant, not only of the concept of

God in her mind, but also of the corresponding love.

She gave forth a voice as if of the sorrows of the birth

of what She had conceived, in order that all creatures

might participate in it; and they rejected it, although She

desired it with tears and groans (Apoc. 12, 1).

516. This sign, in all the grandeur in which it had

been conceived in the divine mind, was shown in heaven

to Lucifer, who was present as the great, red dragon with

seven heads crowned with seven diadems and ten horns.

In this horrid shape he represented himself as the author

of the seven capital sins, who attempted to crown these

sins with his invented heresies as diadems and who armed

by his astuteness and strength as with ten horns, had

sought to overthrow the divine law contained in the ten

commandments. In like manner he had encircled with

his tail and drawn to hell with him a third part of the

stars of heaven; (Apoc. 12, 4) ; not only in seducing the

452 CITY OF GOD

myriads of angels, who followed him in disobedience,

but also in casting from heaven of the Church many of

the believers, who seemed to have risen above the stars

either in dignity or sanctity.

517. In such a fearful and horrid shape stood Lucifer,

and with him, in many other and various, all of them

abominable, shapes, stood his fellow-demons, arranged

in battle array around Mary, who was about to bring

forth in spiritual birth the perpetual existence and enrich

ment of the holy Church. And the dragon, in furious

envy, that this Woman should be so powerful in estab

lishing and spreading this Church, and that She should,

by her merits, example and intercession, enrich it with

so many graces and raise so many myriads of men to their

predestined eternal happiness, stood in readiness to de

vour if possible, what She was to bring forth and to

destroy this new Church. In spite of the envy of the

dragon She brought forth a man-child, who was to govern

all the nations with a strong rod of iron. This man-

child was the most righteous and strong spirit of the

Church, which in the righteousness of Christ our God

holds sway over all the nations in justice; and likewise it

signified all the apostolic men, who in the same righteous

spirit are to judge (Matth. 19, 28) with the iron rod of

divine justice. All this it was that most holy Mary

brought forth, not only because She gave birth to Christ,

but also because through her merits and diligence She

brought forth the Church in holiness and rectitude,

nourished it during the time She lived in it, and even now

and forever preserves it in the manly spirit, in which it

was born, maintaining the uprightness of the Catholic

truth, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail

(Matth. 16, 18).

518. Then, says saint John, this man-child was taken

THE CORONATION 453

up to the throne of God and the Woman fled to her

destined place in the desert in order that She might there

be nourished one thousand two-hundred and sixty days.

This signifies, that all the legitimate offspring of the

heavenly Mother, as well that which is the fruit of the

general spirit of holiness in the Church, as also the par

ticular souls which She engendered and engenders as

her proper spiritual children, shall arrive at the throne

where is her natural Offspring, Christ, in whom and for

whom She engenders and raises her children. But the

solitude to which the most blessed Mary was carried was

a most exalted and mysterious state, to which She was

raised after her battle and of which I shall say some

thing presently. It is called a solitude, because She

alone of all creatures was in that state, and none other

could ever reach or attain it. In it She was without

the company of creatures; and She was moreover left

alone by the dragon, who more than any one else was

ignorant of this mystery, and could not any more tempt

or persecute Her in person. There the Lord nourished

Her one thousand two hundred and sixty days, which

was the time She lived in this state before passing to

another.

519. All this was darkly known and intimated to

Lucifer and his demons before this heavenly Woman and

living Sign was hidden away from their sight. The

knowledge of her destiny took away the confidence,

which, for more than five thousand years, had inspired

the dragon with the hope of being able to vanquish Her

who was the Mother of the incarnate Word. Hence the

despair and torment of Lucifer and his demons can to a

certain extent be imagined; especially as they now saw

themselves overcome and held bound by the very Wom

an, whom they had with such insane fury sought to cast

454 CITY OF GOD

down from grace and deprive of the merits and fruits of

the Church. The dragon in agonizing efforts to escape,

said : "O Woman, give me leave to hurl myself into hell,

for I cannot bear thy presence, nor will I ever venture to

come before Thee as long as Thou livest upon this world.

Thou hast conquered, O Woman, Thou hast conquered,

and I acknowledge thy power in Him who has made

Thee his Mother. Omnipotent God, chastise us Thyself,

since we cannot resist Thee ; but do not send thy punish

ments through a Woman of a nature so inferior to ours.

Her charity consumes us, her humility crushes us, and

She is in all things a living manifestation of thy mercy

for men. This is a torment surpassing many others.

Assist me, ye demons! But alas, what can our united

efforts avail against this Woman, since all our power

cannot ever deliver us from her presence until She her

self casts us forth? O foolish children of Adam, who

follow me, forsaking life for the sake of death, truth or

falsehood? What absurdity and insanity is yours, (so

in despair I must confess), since you have in your midst

and belonging to your own nature the incarnate Word

and this Woman ? Greater is your ingratitude than mine

and this Woman forces me to confess the truths, which

I abhor with all my heart. Cursed be my resolve to

persecute this Daughter of Adam, who so torments and

crushes me!"

520. While the dragon thus gave vent to his despair,

the prince of the heavenly hosts saint Michael appeared in

order to defend the cause of the incarnate Word and his

most blessed Mother; and by the arms of the under

standing they began another battle with the dragon and

his followers (Apoc. 12, 7). Saint Michael and his

angels hurled at them the convincing arguments of old,

reproaching them with their pride and disobedience in

THE CORONATION 455

heaven and with their temerity in persecuting and

tempting the incarnate Word and his Mother, and con

tending with those in whom they had no part or right

whatever, since they could accuse Them of no sin, injus

tice or imperfection. Saint Michael justified the works

of the divine justice, declaring them most righteous and

unblamable chastisements for the disobedience and

apostasy of Lucifer and the demons. Anew they anathe

matised them and confirmed the sentence of their dam

nation, confessing the Almighty as holy and just in all

his works. The demon and his angels on the other hand

likewise tried to defend their rebellion and the audacity

of their pride; but all their reasonings were false, vain,

and full of diabolical presumption and error.

521. A silence ensued in the altercation and the Lord

of hosts spoke to the most holy Mary: "My Mother

and my Beloved, chosen from the creatures by my eternal

wisdom for my habitation and holy temple! Thou hast

given Me human form and restored the human race;

Thou hast followed Me, imitated Me and merited the

graces and gifts communicated to Thee above all my crea

tures and Thou hast never permitted them to be unprofit

able in Thee. Be Thou the worthy object of my infinite

love, the protection of my Church, its Queen, Mistress

and Governess. To Thee is commissioned my power,

and, as the almighty God, I place it in thy most faithful

disposal. In virtue of it do Thou command the infernal

dragon, that as long as Thou shalt live in the Church, he

shall not sow the seed of error and heresy which he

holds in readiness; cut off his hardened neck, crush his

head; for during the days of thy life I desire that the

Church shall derive this advantage from thy presence."

522. The most holy Mary executed this command of

the Lord and as Queen and Mistress enjoined the infer-

456 CITY OF GOD

nal dragons to become mute and powerless to spread their

false doctrines among the faithful, and that, as long as

She was to live upon earth, none of them presume to

deceive mortals by their heretical tenets and doctrines.

And so it happened; for although the demon, in his

wrath and vengeance, had intended to pour out this poison

in the Church, the Lord, for the sake of his love of the

heavenly Mother, hindered it during her lifetime. After

her glorious Transition, permission was given to the

demon to spread his heresies because the sins of men

subjected them to the just judgments of the Lord.

523. Thereupon, (as saint John says), the great drag

on, the ancient serpent called satan and devil, was cast

forth and with his demons banished from the presence

of the Queen. Their chains were lengthened and they

fell upon the earth, where they were permitted to re

main. The voice of the archangel was heard in the

Cenacle, saying: "Now is come the salvation, and the

strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power

of Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast

forth, who accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and

by the word of the testimony, and they loved not their

lives unto death. Therefore rejoice, O heaven, and you

that dwell therein. Woe to the earth and to the sea, be

cause the devil is come down unto you, having great

wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time" (Apoc.

12, 10). By these words the angel proclaimed, that in

virtue of the victories and triumphs of the most blessed

Mary, united to those of her Son and Savior, the reign

of God, his Church, and the effects of the Redemption

of man were assured to the just. All this he called the

salvation, the strength and power of Christ. And as,

without doubt, if the most blessed Mother had not over-

THE CORONATION 457

come the infernal dragon, this impious and powerful

enemy would have hindered the effects of the Redemp

tion; therefore this voice of the angel resounded victo

riously at the conclusion of the battle and at his casting

forth unto the earth and the sea. He congratulated the

saints, because now the head and the plottings of the

demon, by which he slandered men, were crushed, and

the angel calls them brethren because of their relation

ship with the angels through the soul, through grace and

glory.

524. The calumnies, by which the devil persecuted and

accused the mortals were the illusions and deceits by

which he expected to pervert the beginnings of the

evangelical Church, and his appeals to the justice of

God, alleging that men, through their ingratitude and

wickedness and by their having taken away the life of

Christ the Savior, did not merit Redemption or mercy,

but deserved to be punished by leaving them to their own

sinfulness and to the darkness of eternal damnation.

Against all these accusations, however, Mary, as our

most sweet and kind Mother, rose up in our defense,

meriting for us faith and its spread, the abundance of

mercies and gifts accruing to us from the death of her

Son, all of which the sins of those that crucified Him

and the others, that would not receive Him, have indeed

failed to deserve. The angel, by his prediction of woe,

warns the inhabitants of the earth to be prepared for the

serpent, which now descended to them in such -great

wrath; for without a doubt this dragon knows, that he

has little time for wrecking 1 his fury upon men, since he

has learned of the mysteries of Redemption, the power

of most holy Mary, the abundance of grace and wonder

ful favors in the primitive Church. From all these facts

he suspects, that the end of the world is at hand, or that

458 CITY OF GOD

all men will follow Christ our Lord and avail themselves

of the intercession of his Mother to gain eternal life.

Alas, that men themselves should be more foolish and

ungrateful than even the demon himself dared to think!

525. In further explanation of these mysteries, the

Evangelist states, that when the dragon saw himself

cast upon the earth, he attempted to persecute the

mysterious Woman, who had brought forth the man-

child. But to Her were given two wings as of a great

eagle, in order that She might fly into the solitude or

desert, where She was nourished for a time, and for two

times, and for the half of a time, hidden away from

the sight of the serpent. And therefore the serpent cast

forth after the Woman a great river to overwhelm Her

if possible. By these words the wrath of Lucifer against

God, his Mother and the Church are more definitely

declared ; for, as far as this dragon is concerned, he never

permits his envy to slumber, his pride to weaken, or his

malice to sleep in tempting anew this Queen as long as he

has power and permission. But they were taken from

him in regard to the Queen; and hence it is said, that

two wings were given to Her for flying into the desert,

where She is nourished during the stated times. These

wings were the divine power of ascending to the vision

of the Deity given to Mary and of descending to dis

tribute the treasures of grace to men, as we shall describe

in the next chapter.

526. From that time on the serpent had no more power

to tempt Mary in person, wherefore it is said that her

solitude or desert is removed from the sight of the demon.

The times and the time and half of a time are three

years and a half, which contain the thousand two hun

dred and sixty, less a few days, as mentioned before. In

this state, and in others yet to be spoken of, the most

THE CORONATION 459

blessed Mary spent the rest of her mortal life. But since

the dragon was forced to give up tempting Her, he shot

forth the blood of his venomous malice after the heavenly

Woman; for after her victory he sought astutely to

tempt the faithful and to persecute them through aid of

the Jews and gentiles; and especially after her glorious

Transition into heaven did he loosen the flood of his

heresies and false schisms locked up within himself. The

threats which he uttered after her victory, referred to the

war he intended to wage against men in order to avenge

himself upon Her; for, being now unable to vent his

rage upon the person of the Queen, he resolved to con

tinue it against those, whom the Lady loved so much.

527. Hence saint John says that the dragon proceeded

to make war upon the others, who are of her generation

and seed, who observe the law of God, and have the

testimony of Christ. And the dragon stood upon the

sands of the sea, namely; he relied upon the countless

infidels, idolaters, Jews and pagans, through whom he

has made and does make war upon the holy Church, be

sides secretly waging the war of temptation against the

faithful. But the solid and firm set earth, which is the

immutability of the Church, and the imperishable Catho

lic truth "helps the mysterious Woman; because She

opens her mouth and swallows and absorbs the flood

poured out against Her by the serpent. And so it hap

pened in reality, since the holy Church, which is the

organ and the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost, has con

demned and overthrown all the errors, the false sects and

doctrines by her definitions, by holy Scriptures, by the

decrees of her councils, by the teachings of her doctors,

instructors and preachers of the Gospel.

528. All these mysteries and many others the Evange

list intimates and describes under the image of this battle

460 CITY OF GOD

and triumph of most holy Mary. In order to end the

conflict, though Lucifer was already cast from heaven

and given over, fettered in chains, into the hands of the

victorious Queen, the great Lady perceived it to be the

will of the Lord her divine Son, that She hurl him and

his hosts into the infernal caverns. Fortified and

strengthened by God, She released them and commanded

them immediately to depart into hell. As soon as She

pronounced the word, all the demons fell into the most

distant caverns of hell, where they remained for some

time giving forth terrible and despairing howls. Then

the holy angels sang new hymns to the incarnate Word

on account of his victories and those of his invincible

Mother. The first parents, Adam and Eve, gave thanks

to God, because He chose this their Daughter for his

Mother and thus repaired the ruin they had caused to

their posterity; the Patriarchs, because their great ex

pectations and prophecies were so happily and gloriously

fulfilled; saint Joachim, saint Anne and saint Joseph,

with still greater jubilee, glorified the Almighty for their

Daughter and Spouse ; and all of them together sang the

glory and praise of the Most High, so holy and admirable

in his counsels. The most blessed Mary prostrated Her

self before the royal throne and adored the incarnate

Word, offering Herself anew to labor for the Church,

and asking his blessing, which She received with admir

able effects. She asked also her parents and her Spouse

for their blessing, recommending the holy Church and

all the faithful to their prayers. Thereupon the whole

celestial gathering took their leave and returned to

heaven.

THE CORONATION 461

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY, THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS,

GAVE: ME.

529. My daughter, with the rebellion of Lucifer and

his demons in heaven have commenced the battles be

tween the kingdom of light and that of darkness, between

Jerusalem and Babylon; and these battles will not cease

to the end of the world. The Captain and Head of the

children of light is the incarnate Word, as the Author

of holiness and grace; and Lucifer, as the author of sin

and perdition, has constituted himself as the leader of

the children of darkness. Each one of these chieftains

defends his followers and seeks to increase his reign

and the number of his adherents. Christ seeks to draw

men to Himself by the truths of his divine faith, by the

favors and gifts of his grace, by the holiness of his

virtues, by his consolations in labors and by the certain

hope of his promised happiness, commanding his angels

to accompany, to console and defend them until they

should be able to bring them to heaven; Lucifer, on the

other hand, gains his followers by lies, deceits and treach

ery, by the allurements of ignominious and abominable

vices, by darkness and confusion ; he treats them in this

life like a tyrant, afflicting them relentlessly and depriving

them of all consolation ; while in the next life he holds in

readiness for them eternal and horrible torments, which

he himself and through his demons shall inflict upon them

with inhuman cruelty as long as God is God.

530. But alas ! in spite of this truth, so infallible and

so well known to mortals, in spite of the infinite differ

ence of the recompense, how few, my daughter, are the

soldiers that follow Christ, as their legitimate Lord, as

462 CITY OF GOD

their King, their Chief, and their model ; and how numer

ous are those that band with Lucifer, who gives them no

existence, no life, who affords them no nourishment, nor

any return ; who deserves nothing nor in any way obliges

them, as was and is the case with the Author of life and

grace, my divine Son? So great is the ingratitude of

men, so foolish their infidelity, so unhappy their blind

ness. Merely because God has given men freedom of

will, either to follow their Master or not, to show them

selves thankful or not, they side with Lucifer and serve

him freely, permit him to enter the house of God and his

temple, that he may tyrannically confuse and profane it

and draw after him the greater part of the world to his

eternal torments.

531. This conflict will last to the end, because the

Prince of eternity, on account of his infinite goodness,

will not cease to defend the souls He created and re

deemed by his blood. But not only He himself battles

with the dragon, nor only through his angels; for it

redounds to the greater glory and exaltation of his name,

if He overcomes the enemies and confounds their pride

through the human creatures, in whom they seek to

avenge themselves upon the Lord. I, being a mere

creature, next to my Son, the true God, was the Leader

and Sovereign in these battles. Although through his

Passion and Death, He vanquished the demons, who had

become very haughty by the dominion of sin inaugurated

among men by Adam ; yet, after He, and I in his name,

had triumphed over the enemies and through our victories

established the Church in such high perfection and holi

ness, the Church would have persevered and Lucifer

would have remained crushed (as I said before), if the

ingratitude and the forget fulness of men had not im

pelled him anew toward the perdition and ruin of the

whole globe.

THE CORONATION 463

532. Nevertheless my divine Son did not forsake the

Church, which He had acquired by his blood, nor have I,

as its Mother and Protectress, forsaken it ; and We con

tinue to look within it for some souls to defend the glory

and honor of God and fight the battles against hell for

the confusion and crushing of the demons. Hence I

wish thee to dispose thyself by divine grace for this

battle and not to wonder at the strength of the demon,

nor to be downcast at thy misery and poverty. Thou

knowest that the wrath of Lucifer against me was greater

than against any of the creatures, and greater than

against all of them together; but by the power of the

Lord I vanquished him gloriously, and thou, in the same

power, canst resist him in thy smaller temptations. Al

though thou mayest be weak and wanting in what is

required, I wish thee to understand, that my divine Son

acts now as a king who is short of subjects and soldiers

and will admit any one who wishes to serve in his army.

Encourage thyself then to conquer satan in present mat

ters, for then the Lord will afterwards arm thee for

greater battles. I tell thee, that the Church would not

be entangled in its present difficulties, if a number of the

souls belonging to it had taken it upon themselves to

defend the cause and honor of God; but the Church

stands very much alone and forsaken by the children,

whom it nourished at its own bosom.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STATE OF CONTINUAL ABSTRACTIVE VISION, IN WHICH

GOD PLACED THE MOST BLESSED MARY AFTER HER

VICTORY OVER THE DEMONS, AND HER BEHAVIOR

THEREIN.

533. In the measure in which the mysteries of the in

finite and eternal Wisdom were being fulfilled, so the

great Lady was raised in the sphere of holiness beyond

all human thought above the rest of the creatures. As

her triumphs over the infernal dragon were gained un

der the conditions and circumstances I have described,

and resulted in the rewards I have mentioned; and as

all these events of her life were the sequel of the mys

teries of the Incarnation and Redemption and of all the

rest, in which She had associated with her divine Son, it

is impossible that our lowly human faculties should even

faintly comprehend the effects of these mysteries upon

the purest heart of the heavenly Mother. She conferred

within Herself upon these works of the Lord and weighed

them by the scales of her most exalted wisdom. The

devouring flame of her celestial love grew into a con

flagration, which excited the astonishment of all the

angels and courtiers of heaven; and\* her natural powers

of life could not have withstood the impetuous onsets

of her desire to annihilate Herself entirely in the essence

of the Divinity, if they had not been sustained by miracu

lous influence. At the same time She was drawn toward

men by her most sweet and maternal charity; for they

all depended upon Her, just as the plants upon the sun

464

THE CORONATION 465

that vivifies and nourishes them. She therefore lived in

a state of violent longing to unite both the objects of

her love in her bosom.

534. In such a state the most blessed Mother found

Herself after the victories over the dragon. Notwith

standing her having, through the whole course of her life

from its first instant, at all times done what was most

pure, most holy and exalted, without ever being em

barrassed by her travels, labors and cares in the service

of her divine Son; yet at this juncture there arose as it

were a contest in her heart between her love of God and

of the souls. In all her works of charity She felt the force

of her aspirations drawing Her to the higher and new

gifts and workings of grace. On the one hand She was

impelled to withdraw Herself from all the sensible things

in order to wing her flight to the continual and supreme

union with the Divinity, and, in imitation of compre-

hensors and especially of the state of her divine Son on

earth, free Herself from all hindrance of creatures in

order to enjoy all that He enjoyed outside of what be

longed to Him in virtue of the hypostatic union. This

latter was indeed not possible in the blessed Mother;

yet the height of her sanctity and love seemed to demand

all that was next below the state of comprehensors. On

the other hand She was drawn by her love of the Church

to hasten the relief of the faithful in all the necessities;

for without thus being engaged in these duties of a

Mother of the family, She could scarcely rest satisfied

with the favors and delights of the Most High. As each

of these activities- of Martha required time, She con

tinued to study how She might adjust her life so as to

be wanting neither in the active nor the contemplative

life.

535. The Most High permitted this sort of solicitude

466 CITY OF GOD

to arise in his most blessed Mother in order that the

favor of her new state, held in readiness for Her by his

omnipotence, might come to Her so much the more

opportunely. Therefore He spoke to Her and said : "My

Spouse and my Beloved, the anxious aspirations of thy

most ardent love have wounded my heart and by the

power of my right hand I wish to operate in thee what

I have done to none of the creatures, nor ever shall do;

for thou art chosen as none other of my creatures for

my delights. For thee alone have I prepared a state

and condition, in which I shall nourish thee with my

Divinity as one of the blessed, yet in a different manner ;

in it thou shalt continually enjoy my sight and my em

braces, my peace and tranquillity, without being embar

rassed by created things or by thy condition as a pilgrim.

In this habitation thou shalt wing thy flight freely and

without bonds through the infinite regions required by

thy love ; and from it thou shalt also fly to the aid of the

holy Church, of which thou art Mother. Charged with

my treasures, thou shalt distribute them among thy

brethren according to thy pleasure in their necessities and

labors, so that through thee they all may be relieved."

536. This is the favor which I pointed out in the last

chapter and which the Evangelist clothes in these words :

"And the Woman fled into the wilderness, where She

had a place prepared by God, that there they should feed

Her a thousand two hundred and sixty days," and a

little farther on : "And there were given to the Woman

two wings of a great eagle, that She might fly into the

desert unto her place, where She was nourished" (Apoc.

12, 14). It is not easy to make myself understood re

garding this mystery; for it contains many supernatural

effects, which have no counterpart in any other creature

and are wonders reserved by God exclusively to the

THE CORONATION 467

faculties of the most blessed Mary ; and since faith teaches

us, that we cannot measure or comprehend the power

of the Almighty, it is proper to confess, that He can

operate in Her much more than we can understand and

that we need only deny such excellence in Her, as would

imply an evident and manifest contradiction. In that

which has been shown me for the purpose of recording

it in this history, supposing that I understand it, I do not

see any contradiction in the way I see it; although the

proper terms for recording it fail me in what I write.

537. I say then, that after Mary our Leader and

Mistress had triumphed in her battles over the dragon

and his demons, God raised Her to a state in which He

manifested to Her the Divinity, not by an intuitive vision

like that of the blessed, but by another clear vision

through created species, which in this history I have al

ways called abstractive vision; because it depends not

upon the actual presence of the object seen, nor moves

the understanding by the object itself; but by other

species, which present the object as it is in itself, although

absent ; namely in the same manner as God can show me

the city of Rome as it is in itself by infusing into my

mind all the images and likenesses of that city. This

kind of vision of the Divinity the most blessed Virgin

had enjoyed before during her life, as I have often

demonstrated in this history. Although it was thus not

altogether new to Her, since She enjoyed abstractive

vision at the moment of her Conception (as said at the

time), yet it was new now in two respects. First, from

this time on it was permanent and continual, enduring

till her death and till She passed into the beatific vision ;

while before that time it had been occasional and passing.

Secondly, from this time it continued to increase in in

tensity day by day, and thus reached a degree more

468 CITY OF GOD

exalted, more admirable and excellent than before, and

beyond all created thought and measure.

538. For this purpose all her faculties were touched by

the fire of the sanctuary, causing new effects of the

Divinity, illuminating and exalting Her above Herself;

for this state was to be a participation of that held by

the comprehensors and the blessed, yet at the same time

different from theirs. Hence it is important to note

wherein it was like and wherein it was unlike to theirs.

The likeness consisted in Her seeing the same object of

the Divinity and the same attributes which they enjoyed

by secure possession, only She understood them more

deeply than they. The differences consisted in three

points: first the blessed see God face to face and by in

tuitive vision, whereas the most blessed Mary saw Him

by an abstractive vision as described; secondly, the bea

tific vision of the saints in the Fatherland and their

essential fruition, in which the glory of the understanding

and the will consists, cannot increase ; whereas the ab

stractive vision of Mary in her pilgrimage had no limit

or restriction, but her knowledge of the infinite attributes

and the divine essence increased day by day; and for

this were given to Her two wings of an eagle, by which

She was to soar continually in this limitless ocean of

the Divinity, comprehending ever more and more of its

infinity.

539. The third difference was, that the saints can

neither suffer nor merit, this being incompatible with

their state; whereas our Queen could well accumulate

suffering and merit in her state of vision, as being still a

wayfarer. And without this possibility this state would

not have been so great and valuable in her eyes, nor for

the Church ; for the meritorious works of so great a Lady,

in this state of so great grace and holiness, were of the

THE CORONATION 469

most inestimable value and price to all men. She pre

sented a new and wonderful spectacle to the angels and

saints, a sort of portrait of her divine Son; for as the

Queen and Mistress She had the power to dispense and

distribute the treasures of grace, and at the same time,

to add to them by her own ineffable merits. And though

She was not a comprehensor, as the saints in heaven ; yet

in her state of pilgrimage She held a place so near to

Christ and so like to his on earth, that, if compared with

Him, She was indeed a pilgrim in body and soul ; but

if compared to the other pilgrims on earth, She seemed

a comprehensor and one of the blessed.

540. This her state required that all the armory of her

senses and other faculties should be of another order and

capable of operations proportionate to her condition.

Hence the manner of her activity experienced an entire

change, and in the following way: all the species or im

pressions of creatures, which through her senses had

acted upon her understanding, were now at an end or

blotted out from her mind ; though, as I have said above

in this third part (No. 126), the great Lady had not

admitted any images or species except only those that

were necessary for the exercise of charity and other

virtues. Now even these, in as far as they were ter

restrial and in as far as they partook of the sensitive

in entering her understanding, the Lord abolished, purg

ing and distilling them of all that they yet contained of

their origin in the senses. In place of the images and im

pressions, which thenceforward She could receive through

the natural activity of her sensitive and intellectual

faculties, the Lord infused into her mind other species,

more pure and immaterial, and by means of these her

perception and understanding was raised to a more ex

alted level.

470 CITY OF GOD

541. This wonder will present no difficulty to the un

derstanding of the learned. In order to explain myself

more thoroughly, I wish to say, that,, when we call to

action the five bodily senses by which we hear, see and

taste, we receive certain impressions of the objects pre

sented to them; these impressions are passed on to an

other interior and corporeal faculty, called the general

or common sense, the imaginative, or estimative phantasy,

in which all the impressions of the exterior senses are

united and perceived or felt and are deposited and kept

in reserve, as in a storehouse of the five senses. Up to

this point our perception is like that of the animals, al

though with some difference. After these impressions

of the common sense or phantasy have thus been stored

within us, who are rational animals, our mind, by means

of the natural workings of its faculties, co-operates with

them and enables the intellect to become active, distilling

from them other spiritual or immaterial images; and by

means of these spiritual images, which it produces within

itself, it naturally comes to know and understand what

first entered through the senses. Hence philosophers say,

that, in understanding our mind speculates upon the

phantasy in order to draw from it the images of what it

is to understand according to the natural routine of our

acting faculties. This routine is maintained, because

the soul is united to the body and depends upon it in its

operations.

542. But in the most blessed Mary, after entering the

new state, this mode of procedure was not entirely pre

served; for the Lord had miraculously supplied for her

intellect another mode of action, independent of the

phantasy and the general sense. In place of the species,

which her understanding was naturally to draw from the

impressions of exterior objects through the senses, He had

THE CORONATION 471

infused into Her other kinds of images, which repre

sented exterior objects in a more exalted manner; where

as those which She acquired by the senses, remained in

the storehouse of the phantasy without being used by the

active understanding, which was instead furnished with

and illustrated by the supernatural species. These her

understanding made use of in its activity, while at the

same time those received and stored in the general

phantasy served Her for the feeling of pain and sensible

afflictions. Thus in this temple of the most blessed Mary

was fulfilled what happened in its figure long before : the

stones were shaped and wrought outside the temple,

whereas within, the strokes of the hammer or other

noise were not heard (III Reg. VI 7) ; likewise the

animals were killed and sacrificed upon the altar outside

the precincts of the sanctuary (Ex. 40, 27) ; and in it

were offered only the holocaust of the incense and spices

burned in the sacred fire.

543. Through the workings of this miracle in our

great Queen and Lady the stones of her virtues for her

adornment were hewn and polished in the lower sensitive

faculties of her soul, \vhile in the forehall of the common

senses were offered up the hardships, sorrows and pains,

which She bore for the faithful in her labors for the

Church. But in the holy of holies of her intellect and her

will were offered up only the perfume of her contempla

tion and vision of the Divinity and the fire of her incom

parable love. For this purpose the species of the senses,

representing objects in a more earthly manner and with

the turmoil natural to them, were not appropriate. There

fore the divine power excluded them altogether and

replaced them with other images of the same objects,

infused, supernatural and purer, capable of nourishing

the abstractive contemplation of the Divinity and more

472 CITY OF GOD

appropriate to her knowledge of God, whom She un

ceasingly looked upon and loved in the inviolable peace,

tranquillity and serenity of her soul.

544. These infused species in the most blessed Mary

were founded upon the essence of God himself, because

they represented all things to her understanding in the

same way as a mirror represents objects to our eyes and

make themselves known to us without obliging us to in

spect them directly. In this manner She was aware in

all things of whatever was for the good of the children

of the Church ; of what She was to do for them in their

labors and difficulties and of the manner in which She

was to promote the fulfillment of the divine will in heaven

and on earth. Favored by this kind of vision, She was

enabled to make her petitions in such a way as to have

them all granted by the Lord. From this kind of in

sight the Lord exempted in Her the works which She

was to perform in obedience to the commands of saint

Peter and saint John, and sometimes requested by some

of the other Apostles. The heavenly Mother herself had

asked for this exemption, because She did not wish to

interrupt her practice of obedience, which She loved so

much; and also because She wished to make it plain,

that through obedience the will of God is known with

such certainty, that the obedient person needs no other

means or byways of finding the will of God than this

obedience to the commands of superiors ; for this is with

out a doubt what God wishes and commands, and there

fore is right.

545. For all her other doings then (except what per

tained to obedience and holy Communion), the under

standing of the most blessed Mary did not depend upon

her intercourse with sensible creatures, nor on the images

of the senses. But of all of them She remained inde-

THE CORONATION 473

pendent and undisturbed, enjoying the abstractive vision

of the Divinity without interruption, either awake or

asleep, working\* or at rest, without need of forethought

or reasoning about what was most perfect, or more agree

able to the Lord, about the necessities of the Church, or

the time and manner coming to its aid. All this was

present to her mind in the vision of the Divinity, just like

to the blessed through the beatific vision. And just as

the least important of the knowledge of the blessed is

that concerning the creatures; so also (besides what our

great Queen knew concerning the state of the Church,

its government and of all the souls), the principal object

of her knowledge were the incomprehensible mysteries

of the Divinity, which She comprehended more deeply

than the highest seraphim and saints. With this heavenly

bread and nourishment She was sustained in that soli

tude prepared for Her by the Lord. In it She was

solicitous for the Church without being disturbed, busily

employed without inquietude, attentive without distrac

tion, and in all things She was full of God within and

without, clothed with the purest gold of the Divinity,

immersed and absorbed in this incomprehensible sea. Yet

at the same time She was attentive to all her children and

their welfare, finding no rest except in the ministrations

of her maternal charity.

546. This was the reason why the two wings of an

eagle were given to Her; for by them She raised Herself

to the solitude where the thoughts of neither angels or

men could ever soar; and by them She descended from

that unattainable height and flew to the aid of mortals,

not haltingly, but with the lightest and swiftest flight. O

prodigy of the omnipotence of God ! O unheard of

miracle, which so clearly manifests his infinite great

ness ! Our understanding fails us, our comprehension is

474 CITY OF GOD

suspended and our powers are exhausted in the con

templation of such a hidden sacrament. Happy, golden

ages of the beginnings of the Church, when it held such

treasures within it, and fortunate we, if we could in our

own unhappy times, as far as is possible and as far as

our necessities and miseries require, see these signs and

wonders renewed through his most blessed Mother!

547. The happiness of that age, and the manner in

which the most holy Mother used her powers, will be

better understood, if we adduce some practical instances

of the assistance rendered by Her to the souls. One was

that of a man living in Jerusalem and well known in the

city, because he held a prominent position and was en

dowed with more than an ordinary mind and some moral

virtues. As for the rest, he was a zealous upholder of

the ancient law like saint Paul, and a bitter opponent of

the teachings and the law of Christ the Savior. The

blessed Mary knew this in the Lord, and through her

intercession God had prepared the way for his con

version. On account of his good standing in the opinion

of others, the blessed Lady desired very much to convert

and save him. This She asked of the Most High with

ardent love and fervor, and the Lord granted Her the

request. Before the most blessed Mother entered the

new state of being, She had applied her great prudence

and insight to find means of converting this soul; but

now this kind of study was no longer necessary ; for She

needed only to attend to the Lord, where, at her request,

all that She had to do for his conversion was made clearly

manifest.

548. She saw that this man was to come to Her

through the preaching of saint John and that She need

only tell saint John to preach where this Jew would

hear him. The Evangelist obeyed her orders ; and at the

THE CORONATION 475

same time the guardian angel of that man inspired him

with the desire of seeing the Mother of the Crucified,

whom all praised as a loving, modest and pious Woman.

The Jew did not at that time foresee any spiritual good

possibfy to result from this visit, because he had not the

divine light for such knowledge; but without proposing

to himself any such ends, he desired to visit the great

Lady out of calculating curiosity, merely in order to see

who this Woman, so much spoken of by others, might

be. But when he came into the presence of most holy

Mary and looked upon Her, while with heavenly prudence

She spoke to him, He was entirely changed into a new

man. He immediately prostrated himself at the feet of

the great Queen, confessing Christ as the Savior of the

world and asking to be baptized. He received Baptism

then and there at the hands of saint John, and while the

words of Baptism were pronounced, the Holy Ghost came

in visible form upon this man, who thenceforward was

distinguished for his holy life. The heavenly Mother

sang a hymn of thanksgiving for this great and wonder

ful favor.

549. Another inhabitant of Jerusalem, deceived by her

cousin versed in witchcraft, apostatized from the faith.

As the blessed Lady knew all things in the Lord, She

was aware of her fall. In great affliction the Lady ap

plied Herself to tearful prayers and exercises of atone

ment for the return of this woman, for She knew that

such wilful falling away in those who have once given

themselves to the pursuit of eternal life, always makes a

return much more difficult. The prayers of the most

blessed Mother readily paved the way for the salvation of

this soul deceived by the serpent. Immediately the

Queen saw that this Woman should be warned and ex

horted by saint John, in order to bring her to a sense

476 CITY OF GOD

of her evil deed. Saint John spoke to her, she listened

and confessed her sin to him, thus being restored to grace.

The blessed Mary afterwards exhorted her to persevere

and resist the demon.

550. Lucifer and his demons dared not disturb the

Church in Jerusalem during the presence of the Queen,

whom they feared to approach ; for her power filled them

with fear and drove them to flight. Instead they sought

to make conquests among the baptized of those ports of

Asia where saint Paul and the other Apostles were

preaching ; they succeeded in perverting some to apostacy

and to cause disturbance or hindrance in the preaching

of the Gospel. The most zealous Princess knew of the

machinations of the dragon and asked the Lord for as

sistance, if it should be proper under the circumstances.

She received answer, that She might act as the Mother,

as the Queen and Mistress of all creation, and that She

had found grace in the eyes of the Most High. Thus

encouraged from on high She clothed Herself with in

vincible strength; and like the faithful spouse, who rises

from the couch, leaves the bridal chamber and the throne

of her bridegroom, and arms herself to defend him

against his assailants : so the valorous Lady, armed with

divine power, rose up against the dragon, snatched the

prey from his maw, wounding him by the power of her

virtues, and commanding him again to sink into the

abyss. And as She commanded, so it was fulfilled. Many

other innumerable wonders, wrought by our Queen, could

be cited; but these will suffice to indicate the state in

which She then was constituted and the way in which She

operated therein.

551. For greater perspicuity and in connection with

the reckonings given before, it remains to mention the

year in which the most blessed Lady received this favor

THE CORONATION 477

(Nos. 376, 465, 495, 435). When She betook Herself

from Jerusalem to Ephesus, She had attained the age of

fifty-four years, three months and twenty-six days; and

her voyage took place in year forty of the birth of Christ,

on the sixth of January. She remained in Ephesus two

and a half years, returning in the year forty-two on the

sixth of July; and in the year fifty-six and ten months

ef her age. The first council mentioned above was held

by the Apostles two months after the Queen returned

from Ephesus; so that during that council the most

blessed Mary completed her fifty-seventh year. Then

succeeded the battles and triumphs and her elevation to

the exalted state herein described, in the beginning of

her fifty-eighth year, and in the year of our Lord the

Savior, forty-two and nine months. This state lasted

twelve hundred and sixty days mentioned by saint John

in the twelfth chapter, and then She passed to another,

which I shall describe farther on.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

552. My daughter, none of the mortals have any ex

cuse for not ordering their lives in imitation of the life

of my divine Son and of my own; for We were an ex

ample and model for all. No one can be without blame,

if in his own state he is not perfect, having before his

eyes the incarnate God, who became the Teacher of

holiness for all states of life. Some souls, however, are

by the divine will chosen and set apart from the common

order, in order that they may enjoy more of the fruit of

his blood, imitate more perfectly his life and mine, and

cause his divine goodness, omnipotence and mercy to shine

forth more resplendently. Whenever these chosen souls

478 CITY OF GOD

faithfully and fervently correspond with the Lord, only

worldly ignorance will wonder, that He should show

Himself so liberal in exerting his power to overwhelm

them with favors and blessings beyond all human con

ception. Whoever places such wonders of his beneficence

in doubt, will only hinder the glory God seeks in his

works. Such unbelievers attempt to measure them by

the restricted and curtailed capacity of the human mind,

which in them is usually depraved and obscured by their

own sins.

553. And if the chosen souls themselves are so gross

as to doubt his benefits, or do not dispose themselves to

receive and use them prudently, or with the esteem and

appreciation due to the operations of God : then, no doubt,

they offend his Majesty much more than others, to whom

no such blessings or talents are vouchsafed. The Lord

does not wish the bread of the children to be cast to the

dogs (Matth. 15, 26) ; nor his pearls to those who tread

them under foot or despise them (Matth. 7, 7) ; for these

blessings of special grace are the reserves of his highest

Providence, and the capital of the price of the Redemp

tion. Reflect then, my dearest, that such faults are com

mitted by those souls, who are diffident in arduous or

adverse events, or who shrink from the Lord, or hinder

Him, when they are singled out as the instruments of

his power for his service. Their sin is still more repre

hensible, when they refuse to confess Christ in all such

works for fear of the difficulties connected with them and

of the gossip of the world concerning such new under

takings ; when they act in such a manner, that they serve

God and do his will only when it coincides with their

own ; or if they practice virtue only when it is accom

panied by such and such conveniences ; or love only when

it does not disturb their tranquillity; or if they believe or

THE CORONATION 479

acknowledge benefits only when sweetened by caresses.

As soon as adversity or labor is to be encountered for the

sake of God, they at once give way to discontent, sorrow,

discouragement and impatience, by which they frustrate

the designs of the Lord and make themselves incapable

of perfection in virtue.

554. All this arises from a deficiency of prudence,

knowledge and true love, which prevents these souls from

looking to their own and their neighbor s advance. For

they look to themselves, rather than to God; and are

governed more by selflove, than divine love and charity.

Tacitly they are guilty of great presumption, since they

attempt to direct God s will and even to reprehend it, pro

fessing their readiness for great labors in his service un

der such and such conditions and their inability under

other conditions. They are unwilling to risk their credit

and their comfort, even for the common good and for

the glory of God. They think that, as they do not openly

proclaim their refusal, they do not make themselves guilty

of this temerity ; yet it is the devil, who conceals it from

them, in order that they may incur guilt.

555. In order that thou, my daughter, mayest not fall

into this monstrous sin, thou shouldst discreetly ponder

what I give thee to understand and record, and how

much I desire thee to imitate me. I could not fall into

such sins, yet in continual watchfulness I prayed to the

Lord to govern me in all my actions according to his

will and pleasure only, and I gave myself no liberty of

doing anything that was not according to his greater

pleasure. Hence I sought for myself the forgetfulness

and the retirement from all creatures. Thou art subject

to sin, and thou knowest how many snares the dragon,

by himself and through the creatures, has laid in order

to lead thee into it: hence thou hast good reason for

480 CITY OF GOD

ceaselessly beseeching the Almighty to govern thee in

all thy actions, and for closing the portals of thy senses

in such a way as to exclude from thy interior every

image or figure of mundane and earthly things. Renounce

therefore thy free will into the hands of thy God and

yield it to every pleasure of the Lord and mine. In what

thou must necessarily transact with creatures for the ful

fillment of the divine law and of charity, admit no image

except what is unavoidable; and immediately ask, that

the remembrance of what is not necessary be blotted out

of thy mind. Concerning all thy works, words and

thoughts consult with God, with thy angels and with

me, for we are always with thee; consult also with thy

confessor wherever possible. All that thou dost or re-

solvest without this consultation, hold in suspicion and

as dangerous, and only by comparing it with my teach

ings, thou canst ascertain, whether it agrees or disagrees

with the will of God.

556. Above all never lose sight of the essence of God;

for the light of faith which thou hast received, is to

serve especially for this purpose. Since this is to be thy

last end, I wish that even in mortal life thou attain this

vision as far as is possible to thee with the divine grace.

It is indeed time that thou cast out those vain fears and

suggestions, by which the enemy has sought to hinder

and detain thee from giving constant credit to the bless

ings and favors of the Lord. Begin to be prudent and

strong in this confident faith and deliver thyself entirely

to the pleasure of his Majesty, in order that He may

do with thee and in thee what shall be best for his

service.

CHAPTER IX.

THE: BEGINNINGS OF THE GOSPELS WRITTEN BY THE

EVANGELISTS; THE PART WHICH THE MOST BLESSED

MARY HAD IN THEIR COMPOSITION/ SHE APPEARS TO

SAINT PETER IN ANTIOCH AND IN ROME; SIMILAR

FAVORS SHOWN TO OTHER APOSTLES.

557. I have described, as far as I was permitted, the

exalted state of the great Queen and Lady after the first

council of the Apostles, and also her victories over the

infernal dragon and his demons. Although the wonder

ful works which She accomplished during these times

and at all times, cannot be recorded in a history, nor even

summed up, I was nevertheless given special light for

the purpose of describing the beginnings of the Gospels

and the call of the Evangelists to undertake their writing,

the part which Mary bore in their being written, her

solicitous care for the absent Apostles, and the miracles

She wrought for them. In the second part, and on many

occasions I have stated, that the heavenly Mother had a

positive knowledge of all the mysteries of grace, of the

Gospels and other holy writings, which were to serve for

the confirmation of the new Law. In this knowledge

She was confirmed many times, especially on the day of

her ascension with her divine Son into heaven. From

that day on, without forgetting anything, She often pros

trated Herself in prayer before the Lord, asking Him

to send his divine light upon the Apostles and holy

writers and to order them to write, when the opportune

time should have come.

481

482 CITY OF GOD

558. Afterwards, when the Queen returned from

heaven and was put in charge of the Church (as related in

the sixth chapter of this book), the Lord made known to

Her that the time for beginning to write the holy Gos

pels had arrived and that She should make her arrange

ments for this purpose as the Mistress and Instructress

of the Church. But in her profound humility and dis

cretion She obtained the consent of the Lord, that this

should be attended to by saint Peter, his vicar and the

head of the Church; and that he should be specially as

sisted by divine enlightenment for a matter of such

importance. All this was granted by the Most High ; and

when the Apostles met in the council mentioned by saint

Luke in the fifteenth chapter of the Acts, after they had

settled the doubts about circumcision, as I described in the

sixth chapter, saint Peter proposed to them all the neces

sity of recording in writing the mysteries of the life of

Christ our Savior and Teacher, so that they might be

preached to all the faithful in the Church without varia

tion or difference, thus doing away with the old Law and

establish the new.

559. Saint Peter had already consulted with the

Mother of wisdom; and all the council having approved

of his proposal, they called upon the Holy Ghost to point

out the Apostles and disciples who should write the

life of the Savior. Immediately a light was seen descend

ing upon saint Peter and a voice was heard saying: "The

highpriest and head of the Church shall assign four for

recording the works and the teachings of the Savior of

the world." Saint Peter and all present prostrated therm-

selves, giving thanks to the Lord for this favor. When

all of them had again risen, saint Peter spoke : "Matthew,

our beloved brother, shall immediately begin to write his

Gospel in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy

THE CORONATION 483

Ghost. Mark shall be the second, who shall likewise

write the Gospel in the name of the Father, the Son and

the Holy Ghost. Luke shall write the third, in the name of

the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost. Our most be

loved brother John shall be the fourth and last to write

the mysteries of our Savior and Teacher in the name of

the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost." This decision

the Lord confirmed by permitting\* the heavenly light to

remain until these words were repeated and formally

accepted by all those appointed.

560. Within a few days saint Matthew set about writ

ing the first Gospel. While praying in a retired room

of the Cenacle and asking to be enlightened for the in

ception of his history, the most blessed Mary appeared

to him seated on a throne of great majesty and splendor,

the doors of the room still remaining closed. The great

Lady told him to arise, which he did, asking for her

benediction. Then She spoke to him and said : "Matthew,

my servant, the Almighty sends me with his blessing, in

order that with it thou begin the writing of the Gospel

which thou hast the good fortune to be entrusted with.

In this thou shalt have the assistance of the Holy Ghost

and I shall beg it for thee with all my heart. But con

cerning myself it is not proper, that thou write anything

except what is absolutely necessary for manifesting the

Incarnation and other mysteries of the Word made man,

and for establishing his faith in the world as the founda

tion of his Church. This faith being established, the

Almighty will find other persons, who, when the times

arrive in which it shall become necessary, shall reveal to

the faithful the mysteries and blessings wrought by his

powerful arm in me." Saint Matthew signified his will

ingness to obey the mandate of the Queen ; and while he

conferred with Her about composing his Gospel, the

484 CITY OF GOD

Holy Ghost came down upon him in visible form; and

in the presence of the Lady He began to write the words

as they are still extant in his Gospel. The blessed Mary

then left him and saint Matthew proceeded in his history,

finishing it in Judea. He wrote it in the Hebrew language

in the year forty-two of our Lord.

561. The Evangelist Mark wrote his gospel four years

later, in the forty-sixth year after the birth of Christ. He

likewise wrote it in Hebrew and while in Palestine. Be

fore commencing he asked his guardian angel to notify

the Queen of heaven of his intention and to implore her

assistance for obtaining the divine enlightenment for

what he was about to write. The kind Mother heard his

prayer and immediately the Lord commanded the angels

to carry Her with the usual splendor and ceremony to

the Evangelist, who was still in prayer. The great

Queen appeared to him seated on a most beautiful

and resplendent throne. Prostrating himself before Her,

he said : "Mother of the Savior of the world and Mis

tress of all creation, I am unworthy of this favor, though

I am a servant of thy divine Son and of Thyself. " The

heavenly Mother answered: "The Most High, whom

thou servest and lovest, sends me to assure thee, that thy

prayers are heard and that his holy Spirit shall direct

thee in the writing of the Gospel, with which He has

charged thee." Then She told him not to write of the

mysteries pertaining to Her, just as She had asked of

saint Matthew. Immediately the Holy Ghost, in visible

and most refulgent shape, descended upon saint Mark,

enveloping him in light and filling him with interior

enlightenment; and in the presence of the Queen he be

gan to write his Gospel. At that time the Princess of

heaven was sixty-one years of age. Saint Jerome says,

that saint Mark wrote his short Gospel in Rome, at the

THE CORONATION 485

instance of the faithful residing there ; but I wish to call

attention to the fact, that this was a translation or copy of

the one he had written in Palestine; for the Christians

in Rome possessed neither his nor any other Gospel, and

therefore he set about writing one in the Roman or Latin

language.

562. Two years afterwards, in the year forty-eight

and of the Virgin the sixty-third, saint Luke wrote his

Gospel in the Greek language. To him also, as to the

others, Mary appeared when he was about to begin it.

Having represented to the heavenly Mother, that, in

order to manifest the Incarnation and life of her divine

Son, it was necessary to touch upon the manner of the

actual conception of the Word made man and upon other

things concerning her dignity as the natural Mother of

Christ, and having received orders from Her to pass

over in silence the other mysteries and wonders connected

with her dignity as Mother of God, saint Luke obtained

her permission to write somewhat more freely of the

heavenly Mary in his Gospel. The Holy Ghost descended

upon him and in the presence of the great Queen he

began to write his Gospel, drawing his information prin

cipally from direct inspiration of her Majesty. Saint

Luke continued a most devoted servant of the Lady and

never permitted the image of the sweetest Mother seated

on the throne of majesty, as he had seen Her on this

occasion, to be effaced from his mind. Thenceforward

he lived continually in her presence. Saint Luke was

in Achaia, when this apparition happened to him, and

there also he wrote his Gospel.

563. The last of the four Evangelists who wrote the

Gospels, was the apostle saint John in the year fifty-

eight of the Lord. He wrote his in the Greek language,

during his stay in Asia Minor after the glorious transi-

486 CITY OF GOD

tion and assumption of the most blessed Mary. His

Gospel was directed against the heresies and errors,

which, (as indicated above), the devil immediately after

the transition of the Virgin Mother began to sow for

undermining the faith in the Incarnation of the divine

Word. For as Lucifer had been humiliated and van

quished by this mystery, he at once directed the on

slaught of heresy against it. For this reason the evan

gelist saint John writes so sublimely and adduces so

many arguments for the true and undoubted Divinity of

Christ our Savior, far surpassing the other Evangelists

in this regard.

564. Although when the Evangelist was about to

begin his Gospel the most blessed Mary was already in

heaven, She descended in person, resplendent with inef

fable glory and majesty and surrounded by thousands

of angels of all choirs and hierarchies. Appearing to

saint John She said : "John, my son and servant of the

Most High, now is the proper time for writing the life

and mysteries of my divine Son, so that all mortals may

know Him as the Son of the eternal Father, as true God

and at the same time as true man. But it is not yet

the opportune time for recording the mysteries and

secrets which thou knowest of me; nor shall they as

yet be manifested to a world so accustomed to idolatry,

lest Lucifer abuse them for disturbing those who are to

receive the faith in their Redeemer and in the blessed

Trinity. The Holy Ghost will assist thee and I desire

thee to begin writing in my presence." The Evangelist

worshipped the great Queen of heaven and was filled

with the divine Spirit as the others had been. Assisted

by the kind Mother, he immediately set about writing

his Gospel. Before She departed to the right hand of

her divine Son, She gave him her benediction and prom-

THE CORONATION 487

ised him her protection for all the rest of his life. Such

were the beginnings of the sacred Gospels, all of them

having been commenced with the assistance and by the

intervention of the most blessed Mary, giving the Church

to understand, that all these benefits have been vouch

safed at her hands. After having thus anticipated the his

tory of the Evangelists, in order to account for the begin

nings of the Gospels, we shall now return to our narrative.

565. In proportion as the most blessed Lady after the

council of the Apostles was exalted by her divine knowl

edge and the abstractive vision of God, so her care and

solicitude for the welfare of the Church increased ; for

the faith was now spreading out over the earth day by

day. As a true Mother and Teacher, She lavished her

special attention upon the Apostles, whose names and

whose welfare She bore written in her heart. All of them,

except saint John and saint James the less, immediately

after the termination of the council, left Jerusalem for

the field of their labors, and the kindest Mother was

deeply concerned at the thought of the hardships and

difficulties connected with their preaching. She looked

upon them with tender pity in their peregrinations, and

held them in highest veneration on account of their

holiness and dignity as priests, as Apostles of her divine

Son, founders of the Church, preachers of his doctrine,

and as the elect .of the divine Wisdom chosen for such

high ministries to the glory of the Most High. It was

truly necessary that the most blessed Lady and Mistress,

in order to attend to and take care of so many matters

throughout the holy Church, should be raised to the state

which She now held: for in any lower condition She

could not have so easily and properly attended to so many

duties and at the same time maintain that interior tran

quillity and peace, which her soul enjoyed.

488 CITY OF GOD

566. Besides her own knowledge and solicitude for

the whole Church, the most holy Mother again charged

her angels to take care of all the Apostles and disciples,

to console them in all their tribulations and to haste to

their aid in all their difficulties. For by the subtlety of

their spiritual nature they could attend to all this without

losing sight of the face of God and enjoying beatific

vision. She thus charged them because it was so impor

tant to establish the Church and because they were the

ministers of the Most High and the works of his hands.

She told them also to inform Her of all that the Apostles

and disciples were doing, and especially when they were

in need of any clothing; for to this matter the watchful

Mother wished to attend in particular, in order that they

might go about clothed in a uniform manner, such as

they wore when they departed from Jerusalem. By this

prudent foresight, the Apostles showed no difference in

their garments as long as the great Lady was alive ; but

all of them wore clothes of the same form and color,

similar to that worn by her divine Son. Assisted by

the holy angels, She wove with her own hand the tunics

for this purpose and sent them through the angels to

the Apostles on their journeys. In thus making it pos

sible for them to wear vestments similar to those which

had been worn by Christ our Savior, the great Mother

provided that even in their exterior appearance the Apos

tles preached his doctrines and his most holy life. In

regard to the other necessities of life, such as food, She

left them to begging and to the labor of their hands,

or to the alms which were offered to them.

567. At the orders of the Queen the angels frequently

assisted the Apostles in their travels and tribulations

and in the persecutions as well of the gentiles and the

Jews, as of the demons, who continually excited evil-

THE CORONATION 489

minded men against the preachers of the Gospel. The

angels often visited them in visible shapes, conversing

with them and consoling them in the name of the most

blessed Mary. At other times they performed the same

office interiorly without manifesting themselves; some

times they freed them from prison; sometimes they

warned them of dangers and snares; sometimes they

accompanied them on their way or carried them from

one place to another where they were to preach,

or informed them of what they were to do ac

cording to the circumstances peculiar to certain places

or peoples. Of all these things they also kept their

blessed Lady informed; for She took care of all of them

and labored with them more than all of them together.

It is not possible to enumerate the cares, solicitudes and

diligent doings of this kindest Mother ; for not a day or

a night passed, in which She did not perform many mira

cles for the Apostles and for the Church. Besides all

this She wrote to them many times, animating them with

heavenly exhortations and doctrines, and filling them with

consolation and strength.

568. But what is more wonderful : She not only com

muned with them by means of her angels and by letters,

but She appeared to them Herself, whenever they called

upon Her or when they were in some tribulation or ne

cessity. Although (besides appearing to the Evangel

ists, concerning which I have already spoken), She ap

peared to many of the Apostles, I will here speak only

of her apparitions to saint Peter, who, as head of the

Church, stood in greater need of the counsels and as

sistance of the most blessed Mary. Hence to him She sent

her angels more frequently, and the saint sent those,

which were assigned to him as pontiff of the Church,

and he wrote to Her and communicated with Her oftener

490 CITY OF GOD

than the other Apostles. Soon after the council of Jeru

salem saint Peter was journeying to Asia Minor and

came to Antioch, where he first established his pontifical

see. On account of the difficulties which he met in the

execution of his design, the vicar of Christ was down

cast and afflicted, and the most blessed Mary well knew

of it and how much he stood in need of her favor. In

order to confer it upon him in the manner suited to the

importance of the occasion, She had her holy angels

bring Her to saint Peter, and appeared to him, seated

on a throne of majesty as at other times. The Apostle,

seeing Her before him so resplendent, prostrated him

self before Her with wonted fervor, and bathed in tears,

said to Her: "Whence this favor to me, a sinner, that

the Mother of my Redeemer should come to where I

am?" The heavenly Teacher of the humble descended

from her throne, and, moderating the splendors which

surrounded Her, knelt before the highpriest of the

Church and asked his blessing. With none of the other

Apostles, but only with saint Peter did She observe this

conduct in her apparitions to them; although except at

these apparitions, when She conversed with them in the

natural way, She was wont to ask their blessing on her

knees.

569. But because saint Peter was the vicar of Christ

and the head of the Church She descended from her

royal throne and showed him reverence, acting as one

of the members of the Church yet in mortal flesh.

Speaking familiarly with the holy Apostle She con

ferred with him upon the weighty matters then under

consideration. One of them was the advisability of

beginning to celebrate some of the feasts of the Lord.

After they had resolved on the course to be taken, the

holy angels took Her back from Antioch to Jerusalem.

THE CORONATION 491

Later on, when saint Peter, in obedience to the orders

of the Savior, had gone to Rome with the intention of

transferring the apostolic see to that city, the blessed

Lady appeared once more to saint Peter. There it was

ordained that in the Roman Church should thenceforth

be celebrated the feast of the Nativity of her divine Son,

of the Passion, and of the institution of most holy Sac

rament in the manner as it is now done on Holy Thurs

day or Maundy Thursday. Later on, after many years,

was established also the feast of Corpus Christi to be

celebrated on the first Thursday after the octave of

Pentecost, as is still the rule. But the first feast of the

blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday, was instituted

by saint Peter, as also the feast of the Resurrection, the

Sundays, the Ascension, with the paschal and other ob

servances of the Roman Church to the present day; and

all of these were instituted by the order and according

to the counsel of the most blessed Mary. After these

doings saint Peter went to Spain, visiting some of the

churches founded by saint James and establishing others

before returning to Rome.

570. On another occasion, before (though very near),

the glorious transition of the heavenly Mother, saint

Peter being likewise at Rome, a dispute arose among

the Christians, which greatly distressed and afflicted

both him and all those concerned. The Apostles remem

bered the favors he had received in his tribulations at

the hands of the great Queen and grieved very much that

he should now be deprived of her counsel and assistance.

He therefore besought the angels of his guard and those

given him as assistants in his office of highpriest, to

manifest his troubles and necessity to the blessed Mother

in order to obtain help in his difficulties by her powerful

intercession with her Son. The Queen, who knew the

492 CITY OF GOD

fervor and humility of saint Peter, failed not in respond

ing to his wishes. She commanded the angels of the

Apostle to bring him to Jerusalem, where She then was.

They immediately executed her command and brought

saint Peter to the Cenacle and the presence of his Queen.

This singular favor inflamed the fervent affections of the

Apostle, and he prostrated himself before the most

blessed Mary, full of joy and tears to see the prayer of

his heart fulfilled. The great Lady commanded him to

arise, and She, instead, fell on her face saying: "My

master, give: thy servant thy blessing as vicar of Christ

our Lord my Son." Saint Peter obeyed and gave

Her his blessing. Then they gave thanks to the Lord

for having fulfilled their wishes ; and although the humble

Mistress of virtues was not unaware of the tribulations

of saint Peter and of the faithful of Rome, She listened

to his account of what had happened.

571. The most blessed Mary advised him of all that

he needed to know and do in order to allay the trouble

and restore peace in the church of Rome. She spoke

with such wisdom, that, although he had had a high

concept of her prudence, he was carried beside himself

in his admiration and joy of what he heard and ex

perienced of it on this occasion, and he gave humble

thanks for this new favor. Having thus informed him

of many things for establishing the Church in Rome, She

asked his blessing and took leave of him. The angels

brought him back to Rome, while, as was her wont, the

most blessed Mary remained prostrate upon the ground

in the form of a cross, asking the Lord to quiet this dis

turbance. Her prayer was heard; for on coming back

to Rome, saint Peter found matters in a better state, and

soon the consuls permitted the faithful freely to follow

the law of Christ. From these miracles, which I have

THE CORONATION 493

adduced, some insight is afforded in the doings of Mary

in the government of the Apostles and of the Church.

For if all were to be recorded, more volumes would be

required than I am now writing lines. Hence I refrain

from enlarging upon them, in order that in the rest of

this history I may describe the wonderful and unheard-of

favors, which the Lord conferred upon the most holy

Mary in the last years of her life ; although at the same

time I confess, that I can give only some stray hints of

what I have seen, in order that Christian piety may be

led to the contemplation and praise of the Omnipotent,

the Author of these venerable sacraments.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS GAVE

ME.

572. My dearest daughter, at other times I have

spoken to thee of a complaint, which I have against the

children of the Church, and especially against the women,

in whom the fault is greater. In my sight it is abomi

nable, because it is so much opposed to my own conduct

in life. I repeat it here, in order that thou mayest imi

tate me and keep away from what the foolish women

and daughters of Belial are guilty of : namely, treating

the priests of the Most High without reverence, esteem,

or respect. This fault increases day by day in the

Church, and therefore I renew this warning already

several times recorded. Tell me, my daughter, what

must be thought of the fact, that priests, the anointed of

the Lord, appointed to represent Christ and to consecrate

his body and blood, are serving vile, impure, and earthly

women? That they should stand uncovered and do

reverence to a proud and miserable woman, only because

494 CITY OF GOD

she is rich and they are poor ? I ask, has the poor priest

less dignity than the rich? Or do riches confer a greater

or equal dignity, power and excellence, than the one

given to priests and ministers by my divine Son? The

angels have no regard for the rich on account of their

possessions, but they respect priests for their exalted dig

nity. Hence, how could such an abuse and perversity

creep into the Church, that the anointed of the Lord

should be outraged and despised by the faithful, who

know and confess them to be sanctified by Christ him

self?

.573. It is true that the priests themselves are very

guilty and reprehensible when they, disregarding their

dignity, enslave themselves to the service of other men,

and much more, of women. But if priests have some

excuse in their poverty, the rich have none in their pride,

that they should, on account of the poverty of the priests,

oblige them to be servants, when in reality they are

masters. This monstrosity is very abominable to the

saints and very disagreeable in my eyes on account of

the veneration I had for the priests. Great was my

dignity as Mother of God; yet I often prostrated myself

at their feet and considered it a great happiness to kiss

the ground on which they trod. But the blindness of

the world has obscured the sacerdotal dignity and con

founded the precious with the vile (Jer. 15, 19); it

has lowered the priests to the position of the common

people by its laws and disorderly customs (Is. 25, 2),

making use of the one as well as the other for their

degradation ; and the same minister who now at the altar

offers the tremendous sacrifice of the sacred body and

blood, afterwards leaves it to serve and subject himself

to the service even of women, who by nature and by the

condition are so inferior, and sometimes are made even

more unworthy by their sins.

THE CORONATION 495

574. I wish then, my daughter, that thou seek to make

up for this fault and abuse among the children of the

Church as far as possible. I give thee to understand,

that even from my throne in heaven I look with venera

tion and respect upon the priests who are on earth. Thou

must always regard them with the same veneration, as

if they were at the altar, or holding the most blessed

Sacrament in their hands or at their breast; and even

the ornaments and all their vestments thou shouldst hold

in great veneration, just as I with reverence provided

garments for the Apostles. Then, besides what thou hast

understood and written concerning the divine Scriptures,

thou must gage thy esteem for these writings by what

they contain and enclose, and by the means which the

Almighty took to incite the Evangelists to write them.

As well in the Gospels as in the rest of holy writings the

Holy Ghost himself lent his assistance, in order that the

Church might be rich and prosperous in the abundance

of doctrine, of science and light concerning the mys

teries and operations of the Lord. To the supreme pon

tiff of Rome thou must render highest obedience and

veneration before all other men ; and when thou hearest

him mentioned, show reverence by inclining thy head

as if thou heardst the name of my divine son or my own

named in thy presence; for on earth he takes the place

of Christ, and when I lived in the world, I showed my

reverence whenever the name of saint Peter was pro

nounced. In order that thou mayest practice my doc

trine and find grace in the eyes of the Most High, whom

all these works please very much and who considers

none of them small if done for his love, I wish that thou

be very attentive and a most faithful follower of my

footsteps.

CHAPTER X.

THE EXERCISES IN MEMORY OF THE PASSION PRACTICED

BY THE MOST HOLY MARY J THE REVERENCE WITH

WHICH SHE RECEIVED HOLY COMMUNION, AND OTHER

DOINGS OF HER MOST HOLY LIFE.

575. Without ever failing in her attention to the ex

terior government of the Church (as I have until now

made plain), the most blessed Mary in secret practiced

other exercises and good works, by which She merited

innumerable gifts and blessings from the Most High, as

well for the common benefit of all the faithful, as for

myriads of particular souls in furtherance of their sal

vation. As far as I can in these last chapters, I shall,

for our instruction and admiration and for the glory of

the most blessed Mother, write of these hidden and un

known works. First of all I will state, that notwith

standing the many privileges which the great Queen of

heaven enjoyed, She constantly kept present in her mem

ory the doings and the mysteries of the life of her divine

Son; for besides the abstractive vision, by which She in

these last years continually saw the Divinity and knew

all things, the Lord had from her Conception conceded

to Her the privilege of never forgetting what once She

had known or understood ; for in this regard She enjoyed

the privilege of an angel, as I have stated in the first

part.

576. I also stated in the second part, in writing of the

Passion, that the blessed Mother felt in her body and

purest soul all the pains and torments of our Savior

496

THE CORONATION 497

Jesus, so that none of them were hidden to Her or with

out the corresponding suffering in her own self. All the

images or impressions of the Passion remained imprinted

in her interior just as She had received them; for She

had made this request of her Lord. These were not

blotted out, as were the other sensible images, through

the vision of the Divinity; rather they were made more

vivid, in order that She might miraculously rejoice in

her compassion and at the same time suffer those sor

rows, for this was her desire during the time She was

still to live in mortal flesh and to this exercise She di

rected her natural will-power. As exquisite as her

favors and privileges were (according to what I have

always maintained in my discourse), they nevertheless

were all pledges and tokens of the reciprocal love of her

divine Son, who, in our way of speaking, could not con

tain Himself or refrain from dealing with his Mother as

the God of love, as the Omnipotent, infinitely rich in

mercies. But the most blessed Virgin did not ask for

them or seek them; for her sole desire was to be cruci

fied with Christ, to continue within Herself his sorrows,

renew his Passion, and without this it seemed to her use

less and idle to live in passible flesh.

577. Hence She ordered all her occupations in such

a manner, that She might at all times preserve in her

heart the image of her divine Son, afflicted, outraged,

wounded and disfigured by the torments of his Passion,

and within Herself She beheld this image as in a most

clear mirror. She heard the injuries, outrages, affronts

and blasphemies against Him, with all the circumstances

of time and place, and She beheld the whole Passion as

in one living and penetrating vista. Throughout the

day this sorrowful vision excited Her to most heroic

acts of virtue and stirred her sorrow and compassion;

498 CITY OF GOD

but her most prudent love did not content itself with

these exercises. During stated hours and times She

engaged in other exercises with her holy angels, especially

with those I have mentioned in the first part as bearing

the tokens or the escutcheons of the instruments of the

Passion. These in the first place, and then the other

angels, She engaged as assistants in the following exer

cises.

578. For each kind of the wounds and sufferings of

Christ our Savior She recited special prayers and salu

tations, in order to give them special adoration and wor

ship. For each of the contemptuous and insulting words

of the Jews and his other enemies, which had been

spoken either in envy or in fury o r vengeance, for each

of the blasphemies uttered, She composed special hymns

of veneration and honor to make up for their attempts

at diminishing it. For the insulting gestures, mock

eries and personal injuries, She practiced most profound

humiliations, genuflections and prostrations, and in this

manner She sought continually to make up for the af

fronts and injuries heaped upon her divine Son in his

life and his passion; and thus She confessed his Divinity,

his humanity, his holiness, his miracles, his works and

his doctrines. For all She gave Him glory and magnifi

cence ; and in all the holy angels joined Her, and corre

sponded with Her full of admiration of such wisdom,

fidelity and love united in a mere creature.

579. Even if the most blessed Mother during her

whole life had engaged in no other occupation than these

exercises, She would have accomplished and merited

more than all the saints in all that they have done or suf

fered for God. By the force of love her sorrow in

these exercises was equal to martyrdom many times

over; and many times would She have died in them, if

THE CORONATION 499

the divine power had not sustained her life for still

greater merit and glory. And if, as is true, She in her

immense charity offered all these works for the Church,

let us consider how much we are in her debt as faithful

children for thus increasing the treasures of help, which

She left at the disposal of us unfortunate children of

Eve. And in order that our meditation may not be half

hearted and lukewarm, I will say, that the effects of

her contemplations were often astounding; many times

She wept tears of blood, which covered her whole face;

at other times in her agony She was not only bathed in

perspiration, but in a bloody sweat, running from Her

even to the ground. What is more, sometimes her heart

was wrenched from its natural position by the violence

of her grief; and when She was in such extremes, her

divine Son came from heaven, furnishing Her with new

strength and life to soothe her sorrow and heal the

wounds caused by love of Him, and in order that by

such assistance and comfort, She might continue the

exercises of her compassion.

580. The Lord however wished Her to lay aside these

sorrowful sentiments and affections on the days in which

She commemorated the mystery of his Resurrection,

as I will speak of later on, in order that there might

be maintained the proper relation between cause and

effect. For some of these sorrows were incompatible

with the favors overflowing in their effects upon the

body, yet excluding pain. But She never lost sight of

his sufferings and therefore felt other effects of her com

passion by uniting with her joys, the gratitude for what

the Lord endured. Thus in the sweetness of all the

favors of the Lord his Passion entered as a mixture of

bitterness. She obtained also the consent of the evan

gelist saint John to remain retired in her oratory for

500 CITY OF GOD

celebrating the death and burial of her divine Son on

the Friday of each week. On those days saint John re

mained in the Cenacle to receive those, who called upon

Her and allowed none to disturb Her; and whenever he

could not attend to this duty, it was performed by some

other disciple. The most blessed Mary retired for this

exercise at five o clock on Thursday and did not reappear

until toward noon of Sunday. In order that during

these three days no important matter pertaining to the

government of the Church might be neglected, the great

Lady appointed one of her angels to take her shape and

briefly despatch what would suffer no delay, so provi

dent and attentive was She in all affairs of charity touch

ing her children and domestics.

581. To describe or comprehend what happened with

our heavenly Mother during the exercises of these three

days can never be within our capacity; the Lord alone,

who was the Author of them, shall one day manifest it

to us in the light of the saints. Also what I myself

have come to know of it, I am unable to describe ; I will

only say that beginning with the washing of the feet, the

most blessed Mary commemorated all the mysteries up

to that of the Resurrection ; and in each hour and moment

She renewed in Herself all the movements, actions,

works and sufferings as they had happened in her divine

Son. She repeated the same prayers and petitions as

He himself had made and as we have seen described in

their place. Anew the most pure Mother felt in her

virginal body all the pains endured by Christ our Savior.

She carried the Cross and placed Herself upon it. In

short, I will say, that as long as She lived, the whole

passion of her divine Son was renewed in Her week for

week. Through this exercise the great Queen gained

great favors and blessings for those who devoutly bear

THE CORONATION 501

in mind the Lord s passion; and hence the powerful

Queen has promised to all such souls, especial assistance

and participation in the treasures of the Passion; for

She desired from her inmost heart, that the Church

should continue and preserve its commemoration. In

virtue of her wishes and prayers the Lord ordained, that

afterwards many persons in the holy Church should

follow these exercises of the Passion, imitating his most

blessed Mother, who was the first one to teach and prac

tice such an exalted profession.

582. In these exercises the great Queen sought espe

cially to celebrate the institution of the most blessed

Sacrament by new hymns of praise, of thanksgiving

and fervent love. She was solicitous to invite for this

purpose her own angels and many others from the em

pyrean heaven, in order to assist and accompany Her

in these praises of the Lord. It was a wonder worthy

of his Omnipotence, that the Most High should send

from heaven multitudes of angels to view this prodigy

of Christ s remaining sacramentally present in her heart

from one Communion to the other and to incite them to

give glory and praise for the wonderful effects of his

sacramental presence in this Creature, whom they beheld

more pure and more holy than the angels and seraphim

and the like of which they had not seen or would ever

see in all the rest of creation.

583. It was not less wonderful to them (just as it

ought to be to us) to see, that though the great Queen

was worthy of preserving within Herself the sacred

species as in a tabernacle, She was so solicitous in pre

paring Herself anew by the most fervid exercises and

devotions every time She was again to receive holy

Communion ; and this She did nearly every day except on

^those in which She remained in her oratory. She first

LIB 5

502 CITY OF GOD

offered up for this purpose her weekly exercises of the

Passion ; and besides this, whenever She retired at night

fall before the day of Communion, She began other exer

cises, such as prostrations in the form of a cross, genu

flections, prayers, and adorations of the immutable es

sence of God. She asked permission of the Lord to

speak to Him and to permit Her, in spite of her earthly

lowliness, to partake of his Son in the holy Sacrament;

She appealed to his infinite bounty and to his love

toward the Church in thus remaining sacramentally pres

ent, as a reason that She should be favored with this

blessing. She offered to Him his own Passion and

Death, the worthiness with which He had communicated

Himself, the union of his human nature with the divine,

all his works from the moment of his conception in the

virginal womb, all the virtue of the angelic nature and

its works, of all the just in past, present and future times.

584. Then she made most intense acts of humility,

professing Herself but dust and ashes in comparison

with the infinite being of God, to which the highest crea

tures are so inferior and unequal. In the contemplation

of what She was to receive sacramentally, She was so

affected and so deeply moved, that it is impossible to

describe it in words; for She raised Herself and

transcended above the choirs of seraphim and cherubim ;

and as, in her own estimation, She considered Herself

the lowest of all creatures, She called upon her guardian

angels and upon all the other angels, asking them, with

incomparable humility, to supplicate the Lord to dispose

and prepare Her for receiving Him worthily, since She

was but an inferior and earthly creature. The holy an

gels, obeying Her in joyful admiration, assisted and

accompanied Her in these petitions, in which She per

severed for the greater part of the night preceding her

Communion.

THE CORONATION 503

585. As the wisdom of the great Queen, although in

itself finite, is for us incomprehensible, we can never

worthily understand to what height rose her virtues and

works of love on these occasions. But they were often

of such a kind as to oblige the Lord to respond by a

personal visit, in which He gave Her to understand with

what pleasure He came to dwell sacramentally in her

heart and to renew in Her the pledges of his infinite love.

When the hour of her Communion arrived, She first

heard the Mass usually celebrated by the Evangelist. In

these Masses, although the Epistles and Gospels, being

not yet written, were not read, the consecration was

always the same as now, and to it were added other rites

and ceremonies with many psalms and orations. At the

end of Mass the heavenly Mother approached, making

three most profound genuflections; all inflamed with

love She received her Son in the Sacrament, welcoming

in her purest bosom and heart that same God, to whom

She had given the most sacred humanity in her virginal

womb. Having communicated, She retired, and, unless

some very urgent need of her fellowmen demanded

otherwise, remained alone for three hours. During these

hours the Evangelist was often privileged to see rays of

light darting forth from Her as from the sun.

586. The prudent Mother also provided that for the

celebration of the unbloody sacrifice of the Mass the

Apostles and priests be clothed in ornate and mysterious

vestments, different from those they wore in ordinary

life. Accordingly, with her own hands, She provided

ornaments and sacerdotal vestments for its celebration,

thus originating the ceremonious observances in the

Church. Although these vestments were not quite of

the same form as nowadays ; yet they were not materially

different in appearance from those which in the course

504 CITY OF GOD

of time came into use in the Roman Church. The ma

terial was more alike; for She made them of linen and

rich silks, purchased with the alms and presents made to

Her. Whenever She worked at these vestments, sewing

or fitting them, She remained on her knees or on her

feet, and She would not entrust them to other sacristans

than the angels, who assisted and helped Her in all these

things; likewise She kept these ornaments and all that

pertained to the service of the altar in incredible order

and cleanliness; and from such hands as hers, all came

forth with a celestial fragrance, which enkindled the

spirit of the ministers.

587. From many kingdoms and provinces, where the

Apostles were preaching, numbers of converts came to

Jerusalem in order to visit and converse with the Mother

of the Redeemer of the world, at the same time offering

rich gifts. Among others, four sovereign princes, who

were royal governors of provinces, visited Her and

brought many valuable presents, which they placed at

her disposal for her own use and for the Apostles and

disciples. The great Lady answered that She was poor

like her Son, and that the Apostles likewise were poor

in imitation of their Master; that hence these riches

were not appropriate to the life they professed. They

begged Her to console them by accepting their gifts for

the poor or for the divine worship. On account of their

persistent requests She received part of what they offered,

and from the rich silks She made some ornaments for

the altar; the rest She distributed among the indigent

and the infirmaries. For She was accustomed to visit

such places and often served and washed the poor with

her own hands, performing such services, as well as

distributing the alms, on her knees. Wherever it was

possible She consoled the needy and assisted the sick

THE CORONATION 505

in their last agony. Nor did She ever rest from works

of charity, either actually engaging in them, or pleading

and praying for others in her retirement.

588. She gave salutary advice to those princes or

kings at their visit, admonishing them and instructing

them in regard to the good government of their prov

inces. She charged them to watch over the equitable

administration of justice without acceptation of per

sons; to consider themselves mortal men as all the rest,

to fear the supreme Judge, by whom all are to be judged

according to their own works; and above all, to further

the exaltation of the name of Christ, the propagation and

security of the holy faith, in which alone the governments

and reigns can be firmly established. For without faith,

government is but a lamentable and disastrous slavery

of the demons, which is permitted by the hidden judg

ments of God for the punishment of both those that gov

ern and that are governed. The fortunate princes prom

ised faithfully to execute all her instructions and they

afterwards remained in communication with the heavenly

Queen through letters and other intercourse. The same

benefit in its degree resulted to all that visited Her;

for all of them left her presence more ardent in virtue,

full of light, joy and consolation unspeakable. Many

who were as yet unbelievers, on seeing Her, loudly pro

fessed their belief in the true God ; for they were unable

to restrain the interior forces awakened by the presence

of their most blessed Mother.

589. And such effects must not be held as surprising,

since the great Lady was entirely transformed into a

most efficacious instrument of the power of God and of

his grace among men. Not only her words, so full of

wisdom, roused the admiration and convinced the minds

by communicating new light; but on her lips was dif-

506 CITY OF GOD

fused heavenly grace for communicating it and in her

countenance shone the sweetness and beauty of heaven,

while her own quiet majesty and modesty, grave yet pleas

ing, together with the hidden virtue (like that ascribed to

her divine Son in the Gospel), attracted and refreshed the

hearts (Luke 6, 19). Some remained speechless in ad

miration, some broke forth in tears, others in exclama

tions of wonder and praise, confessing that great is

the God of the Christians, who had formed such a

Creature. Truly could they testify to what some saints

said to Her : that Mary was a divine prodigy of virtue.

Let Her be eternally known and praised through all the

generations as the true Mother of God, who made Her

so attractive to human eyes, such a sweet Mother to the

sinners, so amiable to angels and men.

590. During these last years the Queen ate or slept

very little ; and this little only, because saint John asked

Her to rest for at least a small portion of the night.

But this sleep was only a slight suspension of the senses,

lasting no longer than a half hour, during which, in the

manner above described, She lost not the vision of the

Divinity. Her food was a few mouthfuls of ordinary

bread and sometimes a little fish, taken at the instance

of the Evangelist and in order to keep him company; for

in this, as in other privileges, saint John was thus for

tunate, not only eating with Her from the same table,

but having the food prepared for him by the great Queen

and administered to him as from a mother to her son,

and moreover being obeyed by Her as a priest and a sub

stitute of Christ. Very well could the great Queen get

along without even this sleep or nourishment, which

seemed more a ceremony than the sustenance of life; but

She partook of them not from necessity, but in order

to practice obedience and humility and thus pay some

THE CORONATION 507

tribute to human nature ; for in all things She was most

prudent.

INSTRUCTION WHICH MARY THE MOST BLESSED QUEEN

OF THE ANGELS, GAVE ME.

591. My daughter, through the whole course of my

life is evident how gratefully I kept in mind the works

of the Redemption, the passion and death of my divine

Son, especially after I had actually seen Him sacrificed

on the Cross for the salvation of men. But in this

chapter particularly have I wished to draw thy attention

to the care and the continual exercises, by which I re

newed in me not only the remembrance, but the sufferings

of the Passion. I desire that the knowledge of this

cause men to feel reproach and confusion at their mon

strous forgetfulness of the incomprehensible benefit of

the Redemption. O what a shameful, what a horrible

and dangerous ingratitude of men is this ! Forgetfulness

is a clear proof of contempt, for one does not forget so

easily, what one holds dear. What reason or excuse

then can there be, that men forget the eternal blessings

they have received? That they should despise the love,

with which the eternal Father has delivered over to

death his only begotten Son ? The charity and patience

with which his and my Son accepted it for them (John

3, 16.) The insensible earth responds to the efforts of

those that cultivate it; wild beasts become tame and

domesticated in return for benefits. Men among them

selves are beholden to their benefactors; and when such

thankful feelings are not forthcoming, they resent it,

condemn it, and call it a great offense.

592. What is the reason then, that only toward their

God and Redeemer they should be ungrateful and forget

what He suffered in order to rescue them from eternal

508 CITY OF GOD

damnation? And in view of this very evil return, they

complain of not receiving his assistance as they desire.

In order that they may understand what fearful guilt

they load upon themselves by their ingratitude, I will

remind thee, my daughter, that Lucifer and his demons,

seeing so many souls oblivious of the sufferings of Christ,

draw the following conclusions and say of such souls:

"This soul does not remember or hold in esteem the

benefit of God s Redemption and we are certain of gain

ing it over to our side; for the soul that is so foolish

as not to remember such a blessing, will certainly not

detect our wiles. Let us proceed to tempt and destroy

it, since it is deprived of its strongest defense." Having

in their large experience found their reasoning on this

point to be almost infallible, they zealously seek to blot

out the memory of the passion and death of Christ and

to excite a contempt for the preaching or discoursing

about it among men ; and they have succeeded to a great

extent, causing dreadful damage to souls. On the other

hand they are wary and fearful of tempting those who

have accustomed themselves to the meditation and the

remembrance of the sufferings of Christ; for from this

source they feel issuing against them a force and influ

ence, which often prevents them from approaching those

who thus piously cherish the memory of the Passion.

593. I desire thee then, my dearest, not to detach from

thy bosom and heart this bouquet of myrrh (Cant. 1,12)

and to imitate me closely in the contemplation and the

exercises of the Passion. For thus must thou keep

alive the memory of the sufferings of my divine Son and

satisfy for the injuries and blasphemies inflicted upon

his divine Person by his enemies who crucified Him.

Seek thou, as long as thou shalt be upon earth, to com

pensate for the ingratitude and forgetfulness of mortals.

THE CORONATION 509

And in order to do it as I desire, never let thy remem

brance of Christ crucified, afflicted and blasphemed be

extinguished. Persevere in thy exercises, never omiting

them except in obedience or in a just cause ; for if thou

imitate me in this I shall make thee a participant in the

effects I myself felt.

594. In order to dispose thyself day by day for holy

Communion thou shouldst apply whatever thou perform-

est in these exercises; imitate also the other works and

practices, which thou hast come to know of me. If I,

the Mother of Him whom I was to receive, deemed my

self unworthy of Communion and by so many means

sought the purity necessary for such a Sacrament, con

sider what thou must do, so poor and subject to so many

miseries and imperfections! Purify the temple of thy

interior, scrutinizing it by the divine light and adorning it

with great virtues, since it is the eternal God, whom thou

art to receive; One, of whom nobody but Himself is

worthy. Invoke the intercession of the angels and saints

to obtain grace from the Lord. Above all I exhort thee

to call upon me and ask me to help thee ; for thou must

know, that I am the special Advocate and Protectress of

those, who desire to arrive at great purity for receiving

holy Communion. Whenever they invoke me for this

purpose, I present myself before the throne of the Most

High, and, as one well knowing the disposition required

for harboring God himself, I ask his favor and grace

for those who are about to receive Him in the holy Sacra

ment. I have not lost in heaven the solicitude and zeal,

which I exhibited upon earth. Having asked me, proceed

to ask also the intercession of the angels, for they also

are very anxious to see souls approach the holy Eucharist

with great devotion and purity.

CHAPTER XL

THE LORD, BY NEW FAVORS, RAISES THE MOST BLESSED

MARY ABOVE THE STATE DESCRIBED IN THE EIGHTH

CHAPTER OF THIS BOOK.

595. In the eighth chapter I have stated that the Queen

of heaven for a thousand, two hundred and sixty days

was nourished and maintained in the condition and state

described by the Evangelist, as described in the twelfth

chapter of the Apocalypse. That number of days made

up more or less three and a half years, and brought the

most blessed Mary to the sixtieth year of her life plus two

months and a few days and the forty-fifth of the Lord.

Just as the stone falls the more swiftly the closer it ap

proaches to its centre of gravity, so, in proportion as the

great Queen and Mistress of all the creatures advanced

toward the end of her most holy life, the more swift

became also the flight of her purest spirit and the impulse

of her desires to arrive at the centre of her eternal rest

and repose. From the moment of her Immaculate Con

ception She had issued forth like a vast river from the

ocean of Divinity, where She was conceived in the eternal

ages; and by the inundations of gifts, graces, favors,

virtues, merits and holiness, She was now grown in

greatness beyond the limited sphere of all creation. The

impetuous floods of her wisdom and love resistlessly

rushed back to unite themselves with the ocean of the In

finite; for thence She had isued only in order to shed

forth over and over again her maternal clemency upon

the Church (Eccles. 1,7).

510

THE CORONATION 511

596. In these last years of her life the great Queen

had already, by the violence of her love, begun to suffer

a sort of ceaseless martyrdom. Without a doubt it is

true in the spiritual order, what philosophers claim in the

corporal : that the nearer a moving object approaches

its centre of attraction, the more powerfully is it drawn

to that centre ; and the most blessed Mary had now ap

proached so closely to the infinite and highest Good, that

She was divided from It, as is said in the Canticles

(Cant. 2, 9), only by the grating or partition of mortality.

This did not any more suffice to impede the reciprocal

vision and love, and between Them was only the vast

force of love, impatient of all hindrances, to complete the

union, so that all other desires were swallowed up by

the one immense desire of overcoming and doing away

with these hindrances. Such was the desire of her divine

Son, held back only by his reluctance to deprive his

Church of such a Teacher; such was also the desire of

the most holy Mother, who, although She restrained Her

self from asking for the natural death, could not restrain

the forces of her love and thus felt the violence of the

constraint of mortal life and of the fetters hindering her

flight.

597. Yet as long as the conditions predetermined by

the eternal Wisdom had not arrived, She continued to

suffer the pains of that love, which is strong as death

(Cant. 8, 6) . Through them She called upon her Beloved,

who came from his retreat from the mountains to dwell

in the village of the plains (Cant. 7, 11), to view the

flowers and the fragrant fruits of his vineyard. By the

darts of her eyes and of her desires She wounded the

heart of her Beloved and drew Him from the heights

into her presence. Hence it happened once, in the time

of which I am going to speak, that the ardors of love

512 CITY OF GOD

in the most blessed Mother grew to such proportions, that

She could truly be said to be languishing with love (Cant.

2, 5) ; for without being affected by the infirmities of

our earthly passions, She languished on account of the

impetus of her loving heart drawn toward the Lord, in

order that just as He was the cause of her ailment, He

might also be its glorious medicine and cure. Her holy

angels full of admiration of the effects of their Queen s

impetuous love, spoke to Her angelic words in order to

soothe her ardors by inspiring her with hope of secure

possession. But these remedies allayed not the flame,

but rather enkindled it; and the great Lady answered

only by conjuring them to tell her Beloved, that She was

languishing with love. To Him they brought her message

and presented to Him the tokens She desired. On this

occasion, and on others of this last part of her life, (as I

wish especially to state), were fulfilled in Her, the only

and worthy Spouse, the hidden mysteries of the Canticle

of Solomon, and so it came, that the supreme princes of

heaven, who were present in visible form, were obliged

to support Her in their arms on account of the pains of

love that overcame Her.

598. Then her divine Son came down from heaven,

seated on a throne of glory and surrounded by myriads

of angels, who gave Him praise and magnificance. Com

ing to the most blessed Lady He refreshed and comforted

Her in her pains, and said to Her: "My Mother, most

beloved and chosen for our delight, the clamors and sighs

of thy loving soul have wounded my heart. Come my

Dove, come to my celestial fatherland, where thy sorrow

shall be turned to delight, thy tears into gladness, and

where thou shalt rest from thy sufferings." Immediately

the holy angels, at his command, placed the Queen at the

side of the Lord, her divine Son, and with celestial music

THE CORONATION 513

they all ascended to the empyrean heaven. Mary fell in

adoration at the throne of the most holy Trinity. The

sacred humanity of Christ kept Her at his side, causing

new accidental joy to all the courtiers of heaven and,

according to our mode of speaking, exciting anew the

attention of all the saints, He presented Her and spoke

to the eternal Father, saying :

599. "My Father and eternal God, this is the Woman,

that gave Me my human form in her virginal womb, that

nourished Me at her breast and sustained labors for Me,

that shared in my hardships and co-operated with Me in

the works of the Redemption. This is She, who was

always most faithful and fulfilled our will acording to

our entire pleasure; She, pure and immaculate as my

Mother, through her own works, has reached the summit

of sanctity according to the measure of the gifts We have

communicated to Her ; and when She had merited her re

ward and could have enjoyed it forever, She deprived

Herself of it for our glory and returned to attend to the

establishment, the government, and instruction of the

Church militant; and We, in order that She might live

in it for the succor of the faithful, deferred her eternal

rest, which She has merited over and over again. In

the highest bounty and equity of our Providence it is

just, that my Mother should be remunerated for her

works of love beyond all other creatures; and toward

Her the common law of the other mortals should not

apply. If I have merited for all infinite merits and

boundless graces, it is proper that my Mother should

partake of them above all the others who are so inferior;

for She in her conduct corresponds to our liberality and

puts no hindrance or obstacle to our infinite power of

communicating our treasures and participating them as

the Queen and Mistress of all that is created."

514 CITY OF GOD

600. To these words of the most sacred humanity of

Christ the eternal Father replied : "My most beloved Son,

in whom I have the plenitude of my pleasure and com

placency (Matth. 17, 5) : Thou art the First-born and the

Head of all the predestined (Rom. 8, 29) and in thy hands

I have placed all things (John 3, 35) in order that Thou

mayest judge with equity all the nations and generations,

and all my creatures (John 5, 22) . Distribute my infinite

treasures and communicate them as Thou desirest to thy

Beloved, who clothed Thee in passible flesh ; reward Her

according to her dignity and merit, which are so pleasing

in our eyes."

601. In accordance with the pleasure of the eternal

Father Christ our Savior decreed and as it were pledged

Himself to his most blessed Mother, in the presence of all

the saints, that from henceforth, as long as She should

live in mortal flesh, She should, on every Sunday after

finishing her exercises of the Passion, be brought by the

holy angels to the empyrean heaven and there, in the

presence of the Most High, celebrate in body and soul

the joys of the Resurrection. The Lord also decreed,

that in her daily Communion He should manifest to Her

his most sacred humanity united to the Divinity in a new

and wonderful manner, different from that in which She

had enjoyed it until that day; so that this might serve

as a pledge and foretaste of the glory, which He had re

served for his most holy Mother in eternity. All the

blessed understood how just were these manifestations of

his glory and greatness in his holy Mother, how well

they corresponded to the dignity and holiness of the

great Queen, and how well they were merited by her

full response to the divine operations in Her. All of

them sang new canticles of praise and glory to the Lord,

who was so holy, just and wonderful in all these works.

THE CORONATION 515

602. Then Christ our God turned to his purest Mother

and said : "My most loving Mother, I shall remain with

Thee always as long as thy mortal life shall last; and I

shall be with Thee in a new manner, so wonderful, as

neither men nor angels have known until now. In my

presence thou shalt not feel lonely, and where I am, there

shall be my reign, in Me shalt Thou rest from thy

anxieties; I shall be thy recompense in the narrowed

space of thy exile ; for Thee the fetters of thy mortal body

shall not be irksome and soon shalt Thou be free of them.

Until that day comes, I shall be the end of thy afflictions,

and I shall release the barriers still opposing thy loving

desires. In all this do I give Thee my royal promise."

While these promises and favors were lavished upon Her

the most Holy Mary was immersed in her ineffable hu

mility, praising, magnifying and thanking the Omnipotent

for his beneficent liberality and annihilating Herself in

her own estimation. Such a spectacle can neither be

described nor understood in this life. For here was to

be seen the infinite God freely proclaiming his Mother

worthy of assuming the highest place in the estimation

of his infinite wisdom, while She, in rivalry with the in

finite Power, humiliated Herself, abased and annihilated

Herself, though meriting the exaltation She received.

603. Besides all this She was enlightened and renewed

in all her faculties, (in the manner explained elsewhere),

for the beatific vision. When She was thus prepared,

the veil fell, and for some hours, wrapt in the intuitive

vision of God, She enjoyed the essential fruition and

glory in a manner far above that of the saints. She

drank the waters of life from their own fount; Shv\*

satiated her most burning desires ; She reached her centre

and rested from that swift motion, which She was again

to resume as soon as She was to return from her vision.

516 CITY OF GOD

After this vision She gave thanks to the most blessed

Trinity and again interceded for the Church. Then, en

tirely refreshed and comforted, the holy angels brought

Her back to/ her oratory. There, as described on other oc

casions, her body had remained in visible form, in order

that She might not be missed by the faithful. On leaving

the cloud, in which She had been borne from heaven,

She prostrated Herself as usual upon the ground and

humiliated Herself for all these favors and benefits more

deeply than all the children of Adam ever humiliated

themselves for all their sins and miseries. From that

time on, as long as She lived, the promise of the Savior

in regard to Her was fulfilled ; and on all Sundays, after

She had done with the exercises of the Passion, at the

hour of the Resurrection, all her angels raised Her in a

cloud-throne to the empyrean heaven, where Christ, her

most Holy Son, came forth to meet Her and unite Her

with Himself. The Divinity did not always manifest

Itself intuitively; but aside of this, the effects and par

ticipation of this visit were glorious beyond human ca

pacity to comprehend. On these occasions the angels

were wont to sing that hymn: "Regina Coeli laetare,

alleluia ;" and these were days of solemn festivity for all

the saints, especially for saint Joseph, saint Joachim and

Anne, and those more closely connected with Her, as well

as for her guardian angels. At these visits She consulted

with the Lord about the arduous affairs of the Church,

pray for it, particularly for the Apostles, and return to

the earth laden with riches like that ship of the merchant,

of which Solomon speaks in the thirty-first chapter of

the Proverbs.

604. This privilege, although it was a special grace

of the Most High, nevertheless was due to the most

blessed Mary on two accounts. First because, for the

THE CORONATION 517

sake of watching over the Church, She voluntarily de

prived Herself of the joys of the beatific vision, and

therefore, by the ardors of her love and of seeing God,

many times suffered the agonies of death. Hence, in

order to preserve her life it was very proper, that She

should sometimes enjoy the divine presence; and what

ever was possible and proper, was due to the Mother from

her Son. Secondly, in renewing every week the memory

of the passion of her divine Son, She as it were suffered

it on her own Person and died with the Lord: conse

quently, it was proper that She should rise with Him.

As He however was already glorified in heaven, it was

reasonable that She should, through his presence, be

made a participant in the joy of his Resurrection, and

thus reap the fruits of the sorrows and tears She had

sown (Ps. 125, 5).

605. With regard to the second privilege, which the

Lord promised her, namely, daily Communion, I advert

that, up to the time of which I am speaking, the great

Queen omitted holy Communion on some days; as

for instance during the journey to Ephesus, during some

absences of saint John, and on other occasions. Her pro

found humility induced Her to submit to these omissions,

resigning Herself without complaint in obedience to the

Apostles ; for in all things the great Lady was the model

and Mistress of perfection, teaching us self denial also in

such things as appear most holy and proper. But the

Lord, who seeks his rest in humble souls and above all

desired to rest and live in the heart of his Mother for the

purpose of frequently renewing his wonders, ordained

that from this time on, She should communicate every

day for the rest of her life. This will of the Most High,

Mary perceived in heaven; but, being most prudent in

all her actions, She resolved to wait until it could be

518 CITY OF GOD

executed in obedience to saint John; for She did all

things as an humble inferior and as a subject of those

by whom She was to be governed in such things.

606. Therefore She did not herself tell saint John of

what She had recognized as the will of God. But it hap

pened one day that the Evangelist was very much taken

up with preaching and he let the hour for Communion

pass. She spoke to her holy angels, asking their advice;

and they answered, that the command of her divine Son

ought to be fulfilled, and that they would inform saint

John and intimate to him this order of his Master. Then

one of the angels manifested himself to saint John where

he was preaching and said : "John, the Most High wishes

that his Mother, our Queen, receive Him sacramentally

every day during her life upon the earth." Thus reminded,

the Evangelist immediately returned to the Cenacle,

where the most blessed Mary was waiting for holy Com

munion, and said : "My Mother and Lady, the angel

has told me of the command of the Lord, that I administer

his sacramental body to Thee each day without excep

tion/ The most blessed Mother answered : "And thou,

Sir : what dost thou command in regard to this?" Saint

John replied : "That the command of thy Son, my Lord,

be fulfilled." And the Queen said : "Behold me ready

to obey in all things as thy servant." From that day on

She received holy Communion every day without excep

tion to the end of her life. Fridays and Saturdays, the

days of her exercises, were not excepted ; while on Sun

days, instead of holy Communion, She was raised to

the empyrean heavens.

607. At the moment when She received in her heart

the sacramental species, the sacred humanity of Christ

manifested itself through them in the form He had when

He instituted the blessed Sacrament. Although the

THE CORONATION 519

Divinity did not manifest Itself in any other than by the

abstractive vision now habitual to Her, yet the humanity

manifested Itself to Her glorious, much more resplendent

and wonderful than at the Transfiguration on mount

Tabor. This vision She enjoyed for three consecutive

hours after receiving holy Communion, and its effects

upon Her were such as cannot be described in words. This

was the second reward offered to Her by her divine Son

to recompense Her somewhat for the eternal glory, which

He had delayed at her own desire. Besides this there

was another reason for this wonder : the Lord wished to

recompense Himself and counteract beforehand the in

gratitude, the lukewarmness and evil disposition, with

which the children of Adam were to receive and handle

the sacred mystery of the Eucharist during the ages of

the Church. If the most blessed Mary had not made up

for these shortcomings of creatures, the Lord would have

earned no sufficient thanks from his creatures, nor could

He have been satisfied with the returns made by men for

the institution of this Sacrament.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE ANGELS

GAVE ME.

608. My daughter, when mortals, having run the short

course of their lives, come to the end at which God ex

pects them to merit eternal life, then will they also by their

own experience, see the finish of all their errors and

deceits. Then the just will see in what consisted their

real salvation and happiness, and the reprobate, wherein

lay their lamentable and everlasting perdition. O how

happy, my daughter, is the man, who during the short

instant of his life seeks to anticipate the divine science,

which he is so soon to possess by experience! This is

520 CITY OF GOD

the true wisdom, not to wait for the end until knowing

that end, but look to the end in the beginning of the

course, and enter upon it, not with so many doubts

whether we shall attain the end, but with some security

of attaining it. Consider then, with what sentiments

those must be animated, who, at the beginning of a race,

see a great prize, which they can attain by pressing on

their course for a time with great diligence (I Cor. 9, 24).

Certainly they will set out with all speed, without turning

aside or permitting themselves to be detained by any cause

whatsoever. And if they press not on or if they cease to

look to the prize at the end of their course, they will be

held either as foolish, or as ignorant of what they were

losing.

609. Such is mortal life of men, a short course, the end

of which shall bring to the runner either eternal glory

or everlasting torment as a reward or punishment. All

men are born to run this race by the use of their reason

and free will; and no one, much less the children of the

Church, can plead ignorance as an excuse. Hence, where

is the judgment and good sense of those in the Catholic

faith ? Why does vanity still retain its hold upon them ?

Why do they ensnare themselves in the love of what is

only apparent and deceitful? Why do they ignore the

end to which they shall come so soon? Why will they

not understand what there awaits them ? Do they perhaps

not know that they are born but to die (Ps. 138, 49),

that life is but momentary, death infallibly certain, the

reward or punishment unavoidable and eternal? (II

Cor. 4, 17). What can the lovers of this world answer

to these questions? Those that consume all of their short

life (for even the longest lives are very short), in ac

cumulating honors, or riches, in wasting their strength

and powers in the enjoyment of corruptible and most

vile pleasures ?

THE CORONATION 521

610. Alas, my friend, consider how false and treach

erous is the world in which thou art born and which thy

eyes behold. In it I desire thee to show thyself as my

disciple, my follower, a child of my desires, and a fruit

of my prayers. Forget it entirely with a heartfelt abhor

rence : do not lose sight of the end toward which thou

runnest so swiftly, the purpose for which thy Creator

formed thee out of nothing; sigh for it continually, and

direct toward it thy anxious solicitude; do not permit

thyself to be drawn away by the fleeting, vain and deceit

ful things of the world; let the divine love alone dwell

in thee and engage all thy forces; for that is not a true

love, which permits any part of them to be diverted to

other things, or which does not free them and mortify

them entirely from passing things, and subject them to

the one great end. Let this love be in thee strong as

death (Cant. 8, 6), so that thou mayest be renewed en

tirely as I desire. Do not hinder the will of my divine

Son in all that He wishes to accomplish in thee, and be

assured of his fidelity, which rewards a hundredfold

(Matth. 19, 29). Keep in mind with humble veneration

what He has until now wrought in thee ; and I exhort thee

and admonish thee to experience in thee anew his truths,

as I have commanded thee. For all this continue thy

exercises with new solicitude in finishing this history.

And give thanks to the Lord for the great and inesti

mable benefits of his having ordered and disposed thy

superiors to permit thee to receive Him daily in holy

Communion. Preparing thyself for it in imitation of

me, continue also the petitions I have recommended and

enjoined upon thee.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW THE MOST BLESSED MARY CELEBRATED HER IMMAC

ULATE CONCEPTION AND NATIVITY; AND THE BLESS

INGS WHICH SHE RECEIVED ON THOSE DAYS FROM

HER SON OUR SAVIOR JESUS.

611. All the offices and titles of honor, which the most

blessed Mary held in the Church, that of Queen, Mistress,

Mother, Governess and Teacher, and all the rest, were

given to her by the Omnipotent not as empty and fruitless

names, but were accompanied by the superabundant pleni

tude of grace which is proper and which the Almighty

can communicate to each. This plenitude consisted in

this, that as Queen She knew all that concerned her reign

and its extent ; as Mistress She knew the measure of her

power; as Mother She knew all the children and de

pendents of her household, without excepting anyone

through all the ages of the Church until the end; as

Governess She knew all that were subject to Her; and as

Teacher, She possessed the wisdom and science through

which the holy Church, by her intercession, was to be

instructed and guided, while enjoying the presence and

the influence of the Holy Ghost until the end of the

world.

612. Hence our great Queen had a clear knowledge

not only of all the saints that preceded or followed Her

in the Church, of their lives, their works, their deaths, and

rewards in heaven ; but also of all the rites, ceremonies,

decisions, and festivities of the Church in course of the

ages, and of all the reasons, motives, necessities and

522

THE CORONATION 523

opportunities, in and for which they were established with

the assistance of the Holy Ghost. For He gives us our

spiritual nourishment in proper time for the glory of the

Lord and the increase of the holy Church. As I have

spoken of this matter in the course of this history, espe

cially in the second part, I need not repeat it here. From

her full knowledge and her corresponding holiness, there

arose within the heavenly Instructress a certain thankful

eagerness, to introduce into the Church militant the wor

ship, veneration and festivities observed by the holy

angels in the triumphant Jerusalem, and thus imitate, as

far as was possible, what She had so often seen done in

heaven for the praise and glory of the Most High.

613. In this more than seraphic spirit She commenced

to practice by Herself many of the ceremonies, rites and

exercises, which were afterwards introduced in the

Church ; and these She also inculcated and impressed up

on the Apostles, in order that they might introduce them

as far as the circumstances then allowed. She not only

invented the exercises of the Passion, of which I have

spoken above, but many other customs and ceremonies,

which were later on received in the churches, in the con

gregations and religions. For whatever She knew as

pertaining to the worship of the Lord or the practice of

virtue, She performed, and in her wisdom She was igno

rant of nothing that ought to be known. Among these

exercises and rites was the celebration of the feasts of

the Lord and of Herself, in order to renew the memory

of the benefits for which She stood indebted, as well the

benefits relating in general to the human race, as those

especially referring to Herself, striving thus to give

thanks and adoration for all. Although She had spent her

whole life in this pursuit without relaxation or forget-

fulness, yet, when She entered upon this new mysterious

524 CITY OF GOD

phase of her life, She prepared to signalize these feast

days by celebrating them with exercises founded on a

deeper insight. As I will speak of the other festivals in

the following chapters, I will describe here only how

She celebrated her Immaculate Conception and Nativity,

the first mysteries of her life. These commemorations or

feasts She had begun to celebrate since the Incarnation

of the Word; but She celebrated them more particularly

after the Ascension, and especially in these last years

of her life.

614. On the eighth day of December of each year She

celebrated her Immaculate Conception with a jubilee and

gratitude beyond all human words; for this privilege

was for the great Queen of the highest importance and

value. She imagined Herself altogether incapable of

ever acknowledging it with sufficient gratitude. She

commenced her exercises on the evening before and

spent the whole night in admirable devotions, shedding

tears of joy, humiliating Herself, prostrating Herself,

and singing the praises of the Lord. She deeply reflected,

that She was formed of the same earth and

descended from Adam according to the common

order of nature; that She was preserved and exempted

from the weight of the same guilt and conceived with

such a plenitude of graces and gifts only because She was

set apart and snatched from the rest by the Almighty.

She invited her own angels to help Her to return proper

thanks, and in union with them She alternated new songs

of praise. Then She asked the same favor of the

rest of the angels and saints in heaven; but during all

this time the divine love so inflamed Her, that the Lord

was obliged to strengthen Her, lest all her natural forces

be consumed and death ensue.

615. After She had spent the whole night in these ex-

THE CORONATION 525

ercises, Christ descended from heaven and the angels

raised Her to his royal throne in heaven, where the cele

bration of the feast was continued with new glory and to

the accidental joy of the courtiers of the heavenly Je

rusalem. There the blessed Mother prostrated Herself

and adored the most holy Trinity, again giving thanks

for the benefit of her immunity from sin and her Immac

ulate Conception. Then She again took her place at the

right hand of Christ her Son and the Lord himself as

it were acknowledged the goodness of the eternal Father

in having given Him a Mother so worthy and so full of

grace, exempt from the common guilt of Adam. Anew

the three divine Persons confirmed upon Her this priv

ilege, as it were ratifying and approving it and pleasing

Themselves in thus having distinguished Her among all

the creatures. In order to give repeated testimony to

this truth, a voice proceeded from the throne in the name

of the Father, saying: "Beautiful are thy footsteps, O

prince s Daughter, conceived without sin." Another in

the name of the Son, said : "Altogether pure and with

out contact of guilt is my Mother, who gave Me human

form to redeem men." And in the name of the Spirit :

"All fair art thou, my Spouse, all fair art thou and with

out stain of the universal guilt."

616. In between these voices were heard the choirs

of all the angels and saints, singing in sweetest harmony :

"Most holy Mary, conceived without original sin." To

all these honors the most prudent Mother answered by

thanksgiving, worship and praise of the Most High, ren

dered with such profound humility that it passed all an

gelic understanding. In order to conclude the solemnity

She was raised to the intuitive and beatific vision of the

most holy Trinity; and after enjoying this glory for some

hours, She was brought back by the angels to the Cenacle.

526 CITY OF GOD

This was the manner in which her Immaculate Concep

tion was solemnized after the Ascension of her divine

Son. Now this feast is celebrated in a different manner,

as I will describe in another book, which I have orders

to write concerning the holy Jerusalem, the Church tri

umphant, if the Lord shall concede this grace to me. This

feast and others She began to celebrate from the time

of the Incarnation; for finding Herself to be the Mother

of God She wished to commemorate the blessings She

had received in virtue of this dignity, and therefore in

this latter part of her life, She requited them in company

with Her holy angels by rendering her worshipful thanks

giving to the .Son of God, who had thus favored Her.

The other exercises She performed in her oratory on re

turning from heaven, and they were of the same kind

as I have often referred to on occasions of special

favors from God ; for all of them ever increased Her ad

mirable humility.

617. The feast of her Nativity She celebrated on the

eighth of September, on which She was born. She began

on the evening before with the same prostrations and

canticles as at the feast of her Conception. She gave

thanks for having been born to life into the light of this

world, and for the favor of having been raised to

heaven in the hour of her birth to look upon the Divinity

intuitively, as I have narrated in the first part of this

history. She resolved anew to spend her whole life in

fulfilling the pleasure of the Lord, acknowledging that

for this purpose alone it was given to Her. Though in

the first beginning and entrance of her life She had ad

vanced in merit as far as the highest saints and sera

phim, She resolved now, in its latter part, to begin to

labor anew as if She were just beginning the practice

of virtue. She asked the Lord to lend Her his assistance,

THE CORONATION 527

govern Her in all her actions and lead Her to the highest

end proposed for his glory.

618. As for the rest concerning this feast, although She

was not raised to heaven as on the day of her Conception,

yet her divine Son came down from there with many

choirs of the angels, with the Patriarchs and Prophets,

and with saint Joachim, saint Anne, and saint Joseph.

With this company Christ our Savior descended in order

to celebrate the birthday of his most blessed Mother upon

earth. And this purest of creatures, in the presence of

that celestial company, adored the Lord with wonderful

reverence and worship, and again expressed her thankful

acknowledgment for having been placed upon the earth

and for the benefits connected therewith. Then the angels

imitated Her and sang: "Nativitas tua, Dei Genetrix

Virgo," etc., signifying: Thy birth, O Mother of God,

announced to all the universe a great joy; for of Thee

was born the Sun of justice, Christ our God. The Patri

archs and Prophets sang their hymns of glory and thanks

giving; Adam and Eve also, because in Her was born the

Restorer of their ruin; her parents and her spouse, be

cause they had been blessed with such a Daughter and

Spouse. Then the Lord himself raised the heavenly

Mother from the ground on which She lay prostrate, and

placed Her at his right hand ; and straightway new mys

teries of the Divinity were manifested to Her. This

vision, although not intuitive but abstractive, afforded

Her a still deeper insight and participation in the Divin

ity.

619. By these ineffable favors She was transformed,

inflamed and spiritualized to the likeness of her divine

Son in a new and special manner, as if for a new begin

ning. On these occasions the Evangelist saint John merit

ed some measure of participation in the feast, for he heard

528 CITY OF GOD

some of the music of the angels and he was privileged

to say Mass while the Lord and the angels were present

in the oratory, and to communicate the great Queen while

Jesus her Son, whom She was receiving sacramentally,

was Himself at her side. These spectacles were the

source of new joy to the saints, who served at the

same time as witnesses to this Communion, more worthy

than any ever was seen since Christ lived, or shall ever

be seen upon earth. At the moment of Communion her

divine Son remained with the great Lady in the sacra

mental form, while He himself, in his glorious and

natural form, ascended to heaven. O hidden marvels of

the divine Omnipotence! If the Lord shows Himself

wonderful in all his saints, (Ps. 67, 36), how wonderful

will He not have been with his exalted Mother, whom He

loved above all, and for whom He had reserved the great

and special manifestations of his wisdom and power? Let

all the creatures confess Him and give Him glory, virtue

and magnificence.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS, MOST

BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

620. My daughter, first of all I wish to enlighten thee

concerning certain doubts of thy heart regarding the

exalted and extraordinary mysteries of this history. Two

misgivings have disturbed thy interior : first, whether thou

who knowest thyself to be such an insignificant, useless

and ignorant woman, art a fit instrument for recording

these mysteries ; whether it would not be better to let some

other person, more learned and perfect in virtue, write

them and thus give them more authority; since thou art

the least of all, the most useless and ignorant. Secondly,

whether these mysteries, which are so extraordinary and

THE CORONATION 529

never heard of, especially the frequent beatific and in

tuitive visions of the Divinity during my life, shall ever

find credit among those who read of them. To thy first

doubt I answer, that in truth thou art the least and most

useless of all; since thou hast heard it from the mouth

of the Lord and I confirm it. But remember that belief

in this history and in all that it contains, does not de

pend on the instrument, but on its Author, who is the

highest truth, and upon the contents of thy writing; and

in this regard not even the highest seraph could add

thereto, nor canst thou diminish or omit anything.

621. That an angel should write this history is not

befitting; and if he should, the unbelievers and the slug

gish of heart will nevertheless find occasion to slander

him. It is necessary that the instrument be a human

person; but it was not proper that this person be the

most learned or wise; for then this work might be

ascribed to his knowledge and thus occasion the danger

of having the divine light esteemed no higher, or even

lower, than human knowledge, or it might be attributed

entirely to human forethought and industry. It is more

to the glory of God, that this person should be a woman,

who can rely neither on her own knowledge, nor her own

industry. I likewise take special pleasure and honor

from the fact that thou art this instrument; because

thou (and all others) wilt know, that there is nothing

of thy own in this history and that thou must not

attribute more to thyself than to the pen with which

thou writest, since thou art but the instrument in the

hands of the Lord and the repeater of my words. And,

as thou art such, so insignificant and sinful, thou wilt not

be disturbed in seeing mortals refuse to believe; since,

in disbelieving what thou writest, they will not do any

wrong to thee, but by their unbelief fail in proper rever-

530 CITY OF GOD

ence for my words. Although thy faults and short

comings are many, they can all be neutralized by the char

ity and kindness of the Lord, who has riot looked for any

other instrument of this work, but has raised thee from

the dust and manifested in thee his liberal power. He has

communicated his doctrine by one in whom the power

of his truth would appear more plainly; and hence I

desire that thou follow it up in thy conduct and reach

the perfection thou desirest.

622. In answer to the second misgiving and anxiety,

whether the greatness of these mysteries will not pre

vent belief in what thou writest, I have said many things

in the course of this history. Those that take care to

attain a worthy concept and appreciation of me, will

find no difficulty in believing me; for they will under

stand the relation and proportion of my privileges to

the dignity of Mother of God. They will understand

that God s works are perfect; and if any one begins to

doubt in these matters, it is certain that he does not

know what God is, or what I am. If God has shown

Himself so powerful and liberal in the other saints,

that many in the Church are held to have seen the Divin

ity in mortal life, and certainly have seen it, how, or on

what grounds can that be denied to me, what is con

ceded to so many others inferior to me? All that my

divine Son merited and did for them, was ordained for

his glory, and secondarily in my honor ; the end must be

held in higher esteem and valuation than the means:

hence greater was the divine love, which inclined God

to favor me than all the rest, whom He has benefited

for my sake. There is no reason for surprise in stating

that what He has done sometimes for them, He has done

many times for Her, whom He has chosen as his Mother.

623. Let the pious and the prudent keep in mind what

THE CORONATION 531

has been taught in the Church, that the measure of the

favors I received from the hands of my divine Son, is his

Omnipotence and my capacity; for He has conceded

to me all the favors which He could confer, and which I

was capable of receiving. These graces were in me not

barren, but always fruitful to the fullest extent in which

it was possible in a creature. The divine Master himself

was my Son, powerful to operate as far as the creature

placed no obstacle; since I placed no such obstacle, how

can any one dare to limit his works of love toward me

his Mother, whom He himself had made worthy of his

benefits and favors above all the rest of his saints, not

one of whom deprived himself, like I have, of his frui

tion, even an hour, for the sake of helping his Church?

And if what He did for me seem much, I desire thee and

all the rest to understand, that all his favors were

grounded upon and included in the one privilege of my

being conceived without sin; for it was a greater favor

to make me worthy of his glory, when I could not merit

it, than to show me his glory when I had merited it and

had placed no hindrance.

624. By these considerations thy doubts will be solved ;

and as for the rest, let that be my concern, and let it

be thine, to follow and imitate me; for as far as thou

art concerned, this is the purpose of all thou under-

standest and writest This should be thy solicitude, that

thou omit the practice of no virtue made known to thee.

I wish that thou also attend to what the other saints

have done in following my divine Son and me ; for thou

dost not owe less than they to his mercy, and with none

have I been more kind and liberal. In my school I wish

thee to learn the love, the gratitude and humility of a true

disciple of mine; for I desire thee to distinguish thyself

and advance thyself exceedingly. All my festivals thou

532 CITY OF GOD

shouldst celebrate with a sincere devotion and invite the

saints and angels to assist thee therein; especially the

feast of the Immaculate Conception, hi which I was so

highly favored by the divine power and from which I

derived so much joy. In these times, more than for

merly, I am solicitous of seeing it acknowledged by men

and of their praising the Most High for this extraordi

nary miracle. On the day of thy own birth into the

world thou shouldst render special thanks to the Lord

in imitation of me and perform some extra work in

his service. Above all thou shouldst resolve thenceforth

to amend thy life and to commence to labor in this anew.

And all the mortals, instead of spending the anniversary

of their birth in demonstration of vain earthly joy,

should make similar resolutions.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOST BLESSED MARY COMMEMORATES OTHER BLESS

INGS WITH HER ANGELS, ESPECIALLY HER PRESEN

TATION AND THE FEAST DAYS OF SAINT JOACHIM,

SAINT ANNE AND SAINT JOSEPH.

625. Gratitude for the benefits received at the hands of

the Lord is a virtue so noble, that by means of it we may

preserve our intercourse and correspondence with God

himself : He, as rich, generous and powerful conferring

upon us his gifts; we, as poor, humble and aware of our

needs, returning for them our thanks. It is natural that

he who gives liberally and generously should be content

with the thanks of him who, as the needy one, is receiv

ing the benefit ; and this thankfulness is a short, easy and

delightful return, which satisfies the liberal giver and

induces him to continue his liberality. If this ordinarily

happens among men of generous and magnanimous

heart, how much more in the dealings of God with men;

for we are misery and poverty itself, while He is rich,

most liberal, and if we could imagine any constraint in

Him, it would be that of receiving and not that of giving.

As this great Lord is so wise, just and equitous, He will

never reject us on account of our poverty, but only on

account of our ingratitude. He desires to give us plenti

fully, but at the same time He wishes us to be grateful,

rendering Him the glory, honor and praise contained in

gratitude. Such a return for small benefits, obliges Him

to confer other greater ones; if we are grateful for all,

He multiplies them. However it is only the humble that

secure them, since they are at the same time thankful.

533

534 CITY OF GOD

626. The great Teacher of this science was the most

blessed Mary; for, though She alone had received the

plenitude of highest blessings possible to be communi

cated to a mere creature by the Almighty, She forgot

none of them, nor ever ceased to acknowledge them by

the most perfect thankfulness within the powers of a

creature. For each one of the gifts of nature or grace,

none of which She failed to recognize and acknowledge,

She composed special songs of praise and thanksgiving

and instituted admirable exercises in special commemora

tion and acknowledgment. In view of this She had

assigned the days of the whole year, and special hours

of each day, in which She sought to renew the memory

of these graces and give thanks for them. But in the

midst of all these observances and solicitudes She forgot

not those of the government of the Church, the instruc

tion of the Apostles and disciples, the counsel and advice

to be given to the innumerable persons, who came to

Her; for She denied Herself to no one who came, nor

failed to respond to the needs of any of the faithful.

627. Hence, if due thankfulness obliges God so much

and inclines Him to renew and increase his blessings,

what human thought can ever conceive how much his

beneficence was called into action by the gratitude shown

by his most prudent Mother for his many and exalted

blessings and rendered to Him with all the fullness of

humble love and praise due to each ? All we other chil

dren of Adam in comparison with Her are slow, ungrate

ful and so dull of heart, that the little we do (if we do

anything at all), does not appear worthy of considera

tion; but the great things, which the faithful and thank

ful Queen performed, seemed little to Her, and even when

She did all in her power, She held Herself to be remiss

and failing in diligence. In another place I said that

THE CORONATION 535

the activity of the most blessed Mary resembled that of

God himself, who is a pure act, operative by his very

being or essence, which cannot cease in its infinite activ

ity. Of this quality and excellence of the Divinity our

great Queen had acquired a certain ineffable participa

tion, so that She seemed in Herself to be one continued

and untiring act. If grace is impatient of rest in others,

no one must be surprised, if in Mary, in whom grace

was without measure and, according to our way of

thinking, without known limits, it should partake in such

an exalted degree of God and his activity.

628. I cannot show or elucidate this mystery better

than by referring to the admiration it caused in the

angels, who were witnesses of it. Many times it hap

pened, in their wonder at what they saw in their Queen

and Lady, that they spoke to Her or to each other : "Pow

erful, great and admirable is God in this Creature more

than in all his works. Vastly does human nature in Her

rise above us. Eternally be blessed and magnified thy

Maker, O Mary; Thou art the ornament and beauty of

all the human race. Thou stirrest to holy emulation all

the angelic spirits, and to admiration all the inhabitants

of heaven. Thou art the wonder of God s omnipotence

and of the power of his right hand, the summary of the

works of the incarnate Word, the exact copy of his per

fections, the reproduction of all his actions, assimilating

Thyself entirely to the One Thou hast given form in thy

womb. Thou art a worthy Teacher of the militant

Church, the special glory of the triumphant, the honor of

our people, the restorer of thy own. Let all the nations

know thy virtue and greatness, and let all generations

praise and bless Thee. Amen."

629. With these heavenly princes the most blessed

Mary celebrated the memory of God s blessings and gifts.

536 CITY OF GOD

She invited them to accompany Her in rendering proper

thanks, not only because of her most ardent and fervent

love, which, on account of the insatiable thirst caused

by the fire of her charity, demanded such a return as of

justice; but also because of her profound humility,

which caused Her to acknowledge her obligations beyond

all other creatures. Hence She asked all creation to

help Her in paying her debt, although no one but She

could ever pay it worthily. Filled with this wisdom, She

drew down to her oratory on earth the court of the su

preme King and changed the world into a new heaven.

630. On the anniversary of her Presentation in the

temple in commemorating this benefit, She commenced

the evening before and spent the whole night in exercises

of thanksgiving as described for the feast of her Concep

tion and Nativity. She acknowledged the blessing of

having been called to his temple by the Lord, and to

the house of prayer at such an early age, and of having

received so many favors while residing there. But the

most remarkable feature of her celebration was, that the

great Mistress of virtue, full of divine wisdom, re

newed in her memory the teachings and instructions

given to Her in the temple by the priest and her teacher

at that early age. With the same loving solicitude She

preserved in her memory the teachings of her holy par

ents Joachim and Anne, and those of the Apostles. All

of them She rehearsed and practiced with greater and

greater perfection according as the advancing years of

her life demanded. Although the teaching of her di

vine Son were eminently sufficient for all her doings ; yet

She recalled those received from all the others ; She per

mitted Herself no cessation in the practice of humility

and obedience, nor ever overlooked the least point or per

mitted any of the ingenious secrets of these virtues to

THE CORONATION 537

be obscured and remain idle. O how highly did She

esteem the sayings of the wise ! "Lean not upon thy own

prudence; be not wise in thy own conceit" (Prov. 3,

5, 7). "Despise not the discourse and the teaching of

the presbyters, and live always according to their say

ings" (Eccli. 8, 9). "Do not enter into high speculation

with yourselves, but conform to the lowly" (Rom.

12, 16).

631. In celebrating this feast the great Lady felt some

certain natural regret for the quiet retirement of the

temple in her youth, notwithstanding that She had so

promptly obeyed the Lord in forsaking it and in resign

ing Herself to the exalted ends for which He had with

drawn Her. But He did not fail to requite Her by

some special favors on this feast. On this day the Lord

descended from heaven in great magnificence and in the

company of the angels as on other occasions, and ad

dressing his most blessed Mother in her oratory, He

said : "My Mother and Dove, come to Me, thy God

and thy Son. I wish to afford thee a temple and a habi

tation more exalted, more secure and godlike, one that is

within my own being: come, my most Beloved, to thy

legitimate dwelling." At these most sweet words the

seraphim raised their Queen from the ground, where She

always lay prostrate at his visits until He bade Her rise,

and with heavenly music placed Her at the right hand

of the Lord. She perceived or felt Herself at once filled

with the Divinity as a temple with his glory, and bathed,

surrounded and contained as a fish is in the sea, experi

encing by this union or contact with the Divinity new

and unspeakable effects. For She thereby attained a

possession of the Divinity, which I cannot describe and

which afforded the heavenly Mother a great delight and

joy, additional to that of seeing God face to face.

538 CITY OF GOD

632. This great favor the prudent Mother called "My

exalted refuge and dwelling," and the feast itself She

called "The feast of the Being of God" ; and She com

posed wonderful canticles to express its significance and

give thanks. At the end of this day She thanked the

Almighty for having created the ancient Patriarchs and

Prophets, including all from Adam to her natural par

ents in whom her lineage ended. She thankfully re

hearsed all the gifts of grace and nature conferred upon

them by the divine power, and for all their prophecies,

and for what is recorded of them in the holy Scriptures.

Then She turned to her parents Joachim and Anne, and

thanked them for having presented Her so young to God

in the temple. At the same time, as they were now en

joying the beatific vision in the heavenly Jerusalem, She

besought them to thank God in her stead and to ask Him

to teach Her how to be thankful and to be governed by

Him in all her doings. Above all, She besought them to

give thanks to the omnipotent Lord for having exempted

Her from original sin and chosen Her as his Mother.

These two blessings She always considered inseparable.

633. The feast days of saint Joachim and saint Anne

She celebrated almost with the same ceremonies as that

of her Presentation. Both of those saints descended

with the Lord to her oratory with an innumerable multi

tude of angels; with them She gave thanks to God for

having provided Her with parents so holy and conform

able to the divine will, and for the glory which He had

conferred upon them. In acknowledgment of all these

works of the Lord She composed new hymns with the

angels, which they sang to sweet and harmonious music.

Besides this, another marvel took place on these festal

days of her parents : the angels of the Queen and others

who came from on high, divided into choirs, some ex-

THE CORONATION 539

plaining to the Queen the attributes or perfections of the

Divinity and others those of the incarnate Word. This

colloquy afforded Her incomparable joy and new incen

tive to her loving and inflamed affections. Saint Joachim

and Anne derived therefrom also a great additional de

light. Before they returned to heaven the great Lady

asked their blessing and then remained prostrate upon

the ground in thanksgiving for these favors.

634. On the feast of her most chaste and holy spouse

Joseph She celebrated her espousal, in which the Lord

had given her a most faithful companion to conceal the

mysteries of the Incarnation of the Word and to execute

with such high wisdom the secret works of the Re

demption of man. As all these dealings and eternal

counsels of the Most High were recorded in the purest

heart of Mary, and as She held them in so worthy con

templation, She commemorated them with ineffable joy

and thanksgiving. On this feast, saint Joseph came in

the splendor of glory and with myriads of angels, in

order to solemnize the feast with joyful music and to

sing the new hymns and canticles, which the heavenly

Mother composed in thanksgiving for the blessings re

ceived by her holy spouse and Herself at the hands of

the Most High.

635. After having consumed many hours in this cele

bration She spent others of that day in conversing with

her glorious spouse about the perfection and attributes

of God; for in the absence of her Lord the most loving

Mother delighted most in such discourses and confer

ences. On taking leave from her holy spouse, She

begged him to pray for Her in the presence of the Di

vinity and to praise Him in her name. She recommended

to his prayers also the necessities of the holy Church and

of the Apostles. Then, after asking his blessing, She

540 CITY OF GOD

continued her acts of humility and thanksgiving as usual,

while the glorious saint Joseph returned to heaven. But

I wish here to mention two things: first, that on these

festivals, while her Son lived upon earth and happened

to be present, He was accustomed to show Himself trans

figured as He was on Tabor. This favor He showed

Her many times, and mostly on these occasions ; for by

them He repaid Her in a measure for Her devotion and

humility and renewed the divine effects consequent upon

these marvels. Secondly, that in order to celebrate these

favors and blessings, the great Queen, besides what has

already been mentioned, added other observances worthy

of her piety and of our attention. Namely, on the days

spoken of and on others of which I shall speak directly,

She gave food to many of the poor, preparing the victuals

Herself and serving them with her own hands and on

her own knees. For this purpose She directed the Evan

gelist to gather the most needy and destitute, which he

faithfully did according to her orders. Moreover She

had more costly food prepared to be sent to the poor

sick in the infirmaries whom She could not gather around

Her, and afterwards She went in person to console and

heal them by her presence. This was the manner in

which the most blessed Mary celebrated the festivals and

which She taught the faithful to imitate, showing them

how to be thankful for all things as far as possible,

both by making sacrifices and by good works.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS, MOST

BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

636. My daughter, the sin of ingratitude is one of

the most heinous committed by men against God and by

it they make themselves most unworthy and abominable

THE CORONATION 541

in the sight of God and the saints. For both God and

the saints have a kind of horror of this vile conduct in

men. Yet in spite of its pernicious effects, there is none

which men, each one in particular, commit more fre

quently and thoughtlessly. It is true that in order to

lessen the debt accumulating by their most ungrateful

and universal forgetfulness of his benefits, God requires

from his Church a certain recompense for this want of

thankfulness in her children and in mankind. For in

recognition of his blessings, the Church as such offers

up so many prayers and sacrifices of praise and glory as

we see ordained in her. But as the favors and graces

of his liberal and watchful Providence are not only for

the common good of the faithful, but to the advantage

of each mortal in particular, the debt of gratitude is not

paid by this general thanksgiving of the Church; each

one for himself owes thanks for what he receives from

the divine liberality.

637. How many are there among the mortals, who

during the whole course of their lives have not excited

one sincere act of thanksgiving for the gift of life, for

its preservation, for health, food, honors, possessions

and all the other temporal and natural goods! Others

there are, who, if at any time they give thanks for these

benefits, do it not because they truly love God, the Giver,

but because they love themselves and delight in these

temporal and earthly blessings and in the possession of

them. This kind of vain deceit discovers itself in two

ways : first, in seeking these earthly and transitory goods,

men are full of dissatisfaction, haste and discomfort,

and they scarcely can think of, ask for, or desire other

more spiritual things, loving only what is apparent and

passing. Although many times their being deprived of

health, honor, possessions and other things is a blessing

542 CITY OF GOD

of God, which prevents in them a blind and disorderly

attachment to such matters; yet they think it a misfor

tune and, as it were, an injury, and. they allow their

heart continually to verge on destruction by trespassing

upon what is finite and perishable.

638. Secondly, this deceit is known by the forgetful-

ness of spiritual benefits in the blind pursuit of what is

transitory, so that men neither recognize or acknowledge

what is beyond. This fault among the children of the

Church is most vile and dreadful, since, without any ob

ligation on the part of God and without any of their

merit, the divine mercy seeks to draw them to the secure

path of eternal life, signally applying to them the merits

of the passion and death of my divine Son. Every one

who is now in a state of holiness in the Church, could

have been born in other times and ages, before God came

into the world ; moreover he could have been born among

pagans, idolaters, heretics or other infidels, where his

eternal damnation would be unavoidable. Without their

merit God called such persons to his holy faith, giving

them knowledge of the certain truth; justifying them

in Baptism, putting at their disposal the Sacraments, the

ministers, the teachings and enlightenments of eternal

life. He placed them upon the sure path, granted them

his assistance, pardoned them their sins, raised them

from their falls, waited for their repentance, invited them

by his mercy, and rewarded them with a liberal hand.

He defended them through his holy angels, gave them

Himself as a pledge and as a nourishment of eternal life;

and thus He accumulated so many blessings upon them,

that they are without measure or number, and that not

a day nor an hour passes without increasing their indebt

edness.

639. Tell me then, daughter, what thanks are due to

THE CORONATION 543

his so liberal and fatherly kindness ? And how many

men deserve to experience it? The greatest blessing of

all is that in punishment for this ingratitude the portals

of his mercy have not been closed, and the fountains of

his goodness have not dried up; for it is infinite.

The root of this most dreadful ingratitude in men is the

boundless desire and covetousness for the temporal, ap

parent and transitory goods. From this insatiable thirst

grows their unthank fulness ; for as they hanker so much

after the temporal goods, they undervalue what they

receive and give thanks neither for them nor for the

spiritual goods; and thus they are most ungrateful as

well for the ones as the others. In addition to this un

bearable foolishness they are guilty of a still greater one,

namely, they ask God not for what is necessary to them,

but for things which are injurious and will bring about

their eternal perdition. Among men it is considered

mean to ask a favor from the one they have offended ; and

still more outrageous to ask a favor for the purpose of

committing a still greater offense. What must we then

say of a vile earthly being, an enemy of God, when he

petitions his Creator for life, health, honor, possessions

and other things, for which he will never give thanks,

and which he does not intend to use for any other purpose

than to offend the divine Giver ?

640. If, in addition to this, such men never thank God

for having created them, redeemed them, called them,

borne them with patience and justified them, prepared for

them the same glory which He enjoys: and if, while

expecting this glory, they do not even ask for the grace

of acknowledging and repenting of their sins, they cer

tainly show nothing but the utmost temerity and pre

sumption. I assure thee, my dearest, that this so fre

quent ingratitude toward God is one of the most certain

544 CITY OF GOD

signs of reprobation in those who are guilty of such for-

getfulness and carelessness. It is also a bad sign, when

the just Judge confers temporal blessings upon those

who ask for them in forgetfulness of the blessings of the

Redemption and Justification; for all such, oblivious of

the means of their eternal salvation, demand but the in

struments of their death, and to yield to their demands

is no blessing, but a chastisement of their blindness.

641. All these evils I manifest to thee in order that

thou mayest fear them and avoid their causes. But re

member that thy gratitude must not be of the ordinary

or common kind; for the blessings thou hast received

go far beyond thy knowledge and power of appreciation.

Do not allow thyself to be deceived into shrinking from

proper acknowledgment of graces on the plea of humil

ity. Thou knowest the efforts of the demon to make

thee forget the works and the favors of the Lord by

drawing thy attention toward thy faults and miseries

and making thee believe that the blessings of truth, which

thou hast received, are incompatible with these thy short

comings. Begin in earnest to cast off this deception and

know, that the more thou ascribest the goods thou re-

ceivest from his bounty to Him alone, the more dost thou

annihilate and humiliate thyself ; and that the more thou

owest to Him, the less able thou art to pay thy debts,

since thou canst not pay even for the least of his favors.

To be convinced of this truth is not presumption, but

prudence; and not to acknowledge this indebtedness is

not humility, but most reprehensible foolishness; for

thou canst not be thankful for what thou dost not know ;

nor will thy love be stirred to action readily without

being incited by the blessings and favors of God. Thou

art full of fear of losing the grace and friendship of the

Lord; and with good reason dost thou fear, if thou dost

THE CORONATION 545

not make them fruitful; for He has done as much for

thee, as would suffice to justify many souls. But to have

a prudent fear of losing his grace is quite a different

thing from doubting it for the purpose of escaping ac

knowledgment for it; and this is the kind of doubt into

which the enemy labors to cast thee, seeking to substitute

a stubborn incredulity for holy fear of God, by clothing\*

it in the mantle of a good intention and humility. Thy

fear must exert itself in watching over thy treasure and

in striving to imitate me with the purity of an angel and

practicing all the teachings which I give thee in this his

tory for this very purpose.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WONDERFUL MANNER IN WHICH THE MOST BLESSED

MARY CELEBRATED THE MYSTERIES OF THE INCARNA

TION AND NATIVITY OF THE GODMAN, AND HOW SHE

GAVE THANKS FOR THESE IMMENSE BLESSINGS.

642. As the most holy Mary was so faithful in smaller

things, there can be no doubt that She was faithful in

the greater. If She was solicitous and diligent in giving

thanks for the minor blessings, certainly She would ren

der the full measure of thanks for the more important

benefits conferred by the Most High upon Her and all

the human race. Among these the Incarnation of the

eternal Word in the womb of the most blessed and pure

Mother takes the first place; for this was the most ex

cellent work and the greatest grace possible to God s in

finite power and wisdom in his dealings with men. The

joining of the divine essence with the human being in

the person of the Word through hypostatic union was

the beginning of all the gifts and blessings of the Om

nipotent conferred upon the human as well as upon the

angelic nature. This truth is more intelligible, when we

take into consideration what faith teaches: that the

divine Wisdom foresaw in eternity the ingratitude of

the reprobate and their abuse and waste of the wonder

ful blessing of the Incarnation of the true God, by which

He became the Teacher, Redeemer and model of all the

mortals.

643. Hence the infinite Wisdom marvelously provided,

that among men there should be some One, who could

546

THE CORONATION 547

compensate this injustice and, by worthy thanksgiving,

be the means of placating and satisfying Him as far as

is possible on the part of human nature. This was done

in the first place by the sacred humanity of our Re

deemer and Master, Jesus, who is our Mediator with

the eternal Father, reconciling to Him the whole human

race (I Tim. 2, 5), satisfying for its shortcomings and

paying its debts by the superabundance of his merits.

However, as this Lord was true God and man, human

nature apparently remained a debtor to Him, unless some

one among mere creatures could repay the Redeemer in

as far as with the divine grace it was possible to man.

This return was made by his own Mother and our Queen ;

since She alone was the secretary of the great counsel

and the archive of his mysteries and sacraments. She

was the only one who knew, weighed and thankfully ac

knowledged it in the measure to be expected from a

human being not united personally with the Divinity.

She alone supplied a recompense for all the shortcom

ings and imperfections, and for the total want of grati

tude in the children of Adam. She alone knew how and

was able to appease and satisfy her divine Son for the

unjust behavior of all the mortals in not having received

Him as their Redeemer and Master, as the true God

made man for the salvation of all.

644. The incomprehensible and sacred mystery of the

Incarnation the great Queen kept so constantly present in

her memory, that She never forgot it even for one

instant At the same time She was ever conscious of

the ignorance of this blessing in so many of the children

of Adam ; and in order to give thanks for it in her own

name and in the name of all, She practiced many genu

flections, prostrations and other acts of adoration, repeat

ing continually in diverse variations the following

548 CITY OF GOD

prayer : "My Lord and highest God, in thy royal pres

ence I prostrate myself and present myself before Thee

in my own name and in that of the human race, I bless

and magnify Thee, I confess and adore Thee in the mys

tery of the hypostatic union of the human and divine

nature of the eternal Word. If the unfortunate chil

dren of Adam are ignorant of this blessing, and if those

that know of it fail in giving worthy thanks for it, re

member, our kindest Lord and Father, that they live in

the weak flesh, so full of darkness and passions, and

that they cannot come to Thee, if Thou in thy loving

condescension dost not draw them on (John 6, 44).

Pardon, my God, the shortcomings of their weak nature

and condition. I, thy slave and vile wormlet of the

earth, with all the courtiers of thy glory, give Thee

thanks for myself and for each one of the mortals in

acknowledgment of this blessing. And I beseech Thee,

my Son and Lord, from the bottom of my soul, to

take up this cause of thy brethren and obtain for them

the forgiveness of thy eternal Father. Favor with thy

immense clemency these unfortunates conceived in sin,

who do not recognize their own misfortune, and do

not know what they are doing nor what they should do.

1 beg for thy people and for my own ; for as far as Thou

art man we are all of thy nature, which do not Thou

despise; and in as far as Thou art God, Thou givest

infinite value to thy works. Let them be the worthy

return and thanksgiving for satisfying our debt, since

Thou alone canst pay what we have received and what

we owe to the eternal Father for sending Thee from

heaven to earth as the Savior of the poor and Rescuer

of the captives (Luke 4, 18). Give life to the dead,

enrich the poor, enlighten the blind (Matth. 11, 5) ; Thou

art our salvation, our happiness and our restoration."

THE CORONATION 549

645. This prayer and others like it were of ordinary

occurrence in the life of the great Queen of the world.

But to her continuous and daily thanksgiving She added

other exercises to celebrate the exalted mystery of the

Incarnation, especially on the anniversaries of the days

in which the divine Word assumed flesh in her purest

womb ; and on these days She was more favored by the

Lord than on others. This feast for Her lasted not

only for one day, but for nine, comprising the nine days

before the feast of the Annunciation, or the twenty-fifth

of March, during which She had prepared Herself for

this sacrament, as described in the beginning of the

second part of this history. I have there recorded in

nine chapters the marvels which preceded the Incarna

tion and by which the heavenly Mother was to be

worthily prepared for the conception of the incarnate

Word in her sacred and virginal womb. It is necessary

here to refer to them and recall them briefly in order to

describe the manner in which She celebrated and renewed

her thanksgiving for this highest of marvels and bless

ings.

646. She commenced the solemnity on the sixteenth

of March in the evening and during the next nine days

until the twenty-fifth of March, She remained in retire

ment without eating or sleeping. Saint John the evan

gelist was the only one who came to Her, and only in

order to minister to Her holy Communion during the

nine days. The Almighty renewed all the favors and

blessings which He had conferred upon Mary during

those days immediately preceding the Incarnation; with

this difference however, that her Son and our Redeemer

now added new ones; for as He was already born of

Her, He took it upon Himself to assist, regale and favor

his most loving and worthy Mother in this feast. On

550 CITY OF GOD

the first six days of this no vena, after the blessed Mother

had passed some hours of the night in her accustomed

exercises, the incarnate Word descended from heaven

refulgent in glory and majesty and accompanied by

myriads of angels ; with them He entered the oratory and

showed Himself to his most blessed Mother.

647. The most pious and prudent Mother adored her

Son and true God with the humility, veneration and

worship, such as She alone in her wisdom knew how to

render. Then by the ministry of the holy angels She

was raised from the earth and placed on the throne at

the right hand of her Son the Lord. There She felt

within Herself an intimate and ineffable union with the

humanity and Divinity, by which She was transformed

and filled with glory and new divine influences unspeak^-

able to man. In this condition and state the Lord re

newed in Her the marvels of the nine days before the

Incarnation in the order in which they had then occurred.

And to these He added other favors and admirable ef

fects, conformable to the state attained since then both

by Himself and his blessed Mother. Although the ha

bitual science of all things was always preserved in Her,

yet on such occasions Her knowledge was enhanced by

a new intelligence and divine light, which enabled Her

to apply and exercise her knowledge with greater insight

and with more powerful effect.

648. On the first of these nine days were shown Her

all the works performed by God on the first day of the

creation of the world ; the order and mode of their cre

ation; the heaven, the earth and the abysses, with their

length, breadth and depth; the light and the darkness,

their separation and all the conditions, changes and quali

ties of these material and visible things. Of the invisible

things She saw the creation of the angels, all their spe-

THE CORONATION 551

cies and perfections, their perseverance in grace, the

strife between the obedient and the disobedient, the fall

of the apostates and the confirmation of the others in

grace, and all the other mysteries, which Moses includes

in the works of the first day (Gen. 1, 1). She recog

nized likewise the intentions of the Almighty in the crea

tion of these and other things : namely to communicate

and manifest his Divinity, so that all the angels and men,

according to their faculties, might know and praise Him

in them. And lest the renewal of this knowledge be

fruitless in the most prudent Mother, Her divine Son said

to Her : "My Mother and my Dove ! I gave thee knowl

edge of all these works of my infinite power, in order

to manifest to thee my greatness before assuming flesh

in thy virginal womb, and I renew it in thee now, in

order to confirm in thee thy possession and dominion

over the angels, the heavens, the earth, the light, and the

darkness, all of which shall serve and obey thee as my

Mother ; and in order to afford thee an occasion worthily

to thank and praise the eternal Father for the blessings

of creation, which men do not know how to appreciate."

649. The great Queen faithfully responded to this

will of the Lord and satisfied for the indebtedness of

mankind in its entirety, giving thanks in her own name

and in that of all men for these incomparable blessings.

In these exercises, and in other mysterious ones, She

passed the day until the Lord returned to heaven. On

the second day at midnight the Lord again descended

in the same manner and recalled in the heavenly Mother

the knowledge of the works of the second day of the

creation: how in the midst of the waters was formed

the firmament, dividing the one from the other, the num

ber of the heavens, their harmonious arrangement, na

ture and qualities, their greatness and beauty. All this

552 CITY OF GOD

She knew with infallible certainty, just as they came into

being, without admixture of mere opinions; She knew

also what were the views of the learned and of authors.

On the third day was refreshed in Her the knowledge

of what is indicated in the Scriptures for the third day

of creation; that the Lord congregated the waters upon

the earth and formed the sea and the dry land; and how

the dry land, upon the command of its Creator, imme

diately produced plants, herbs, trees and other things

for its beauty and adornment. She knew the nature and

qualities of all these plants and the manner in which they

are useful or hurtful to man. On the fourth day She

recognized particularly the formation of the sun, the

moon and the stars of heaven, their material, their form,

properties, influences and all their movements, dividing

the time into seasons, days and years (Gen. 1, 14). On

the fifth day was manifested to Her the creation and

generation of the birds of the air, of the fishes of the

sea, how in the beginning they were formed of the wa

ters, and how these animals afterwards are reproduced

and propagated; how many were the species, the condi

tions and faculties of the animals of the land and the

sea. On the sixth day She received new enlightenment

and insight into the creation of man, as the terminus

of all the material creatures; and in understanding his

exquisite and harmonious nature as a recapitulation of

all the rest of the world of creatures, She comprehended

also the mystery of the Incarnation, which was the end

and purpose of his creation, and She possessed the other

secrets of the divine Wisdom hidden in this and the

other works, testifying to his infinite greatness and

majesty.

650. On each of these days the great Queen composed

a special hymn of praise to the Creator for the works

THE CORONATION 553

performed on the corresponding day of creation and for

the mysteries made known to Her. Then She prayed

for all men, especially for the faithful, asking for their

reconciliation to God and their enlightenment concerning

the Divinity and his works, in order that they might

thereby be helped to know, love and praise the Almighty.

And as She was aware of the ignorance of so many un

believers, who would not come to the knowledge and

belief of the true faith, and as She considered the ingrati

tude and sluggishness of so many believers, who know

of these works of the Most High, the most blessed

Mother performed heroic and admirable works in com

pensation for these defects of the children of Adam.

Because She so faithfully responded, her divine Son

raised Her to a new participation in the gifts of his

Divinity and attributes, accumulating upon Her all that

the rest of mortals lost by their most ungrateful forget-

fulness. Over all the works of that day He confirmed

upon Her anew full possession and dominion, in order

that all might acknowledge Her and serve Her as the

Mother of their Creator, and as the supreme Queen over

all creatures in heaven and earth.

651. On the seventh day these divine favors were still

further increased and enhanced, although her divine Son

did not descend from heaven in the last three days; but

instead She herself was raised up to Him, in correspon

dence with what had happened on the three days before

the Incarnation. Accordingly at midnight, at the com

mand of the most high Lord, the angels carried Her up

to the empyrean heaven, where, while She was adoring

the immutable being of God, the supreme seraphim

clothed Her in a vestment more pure and white than

the snow and more refulgent than the sun. They girded

Her with a girdle of jewels so rich and beautiful that

554 CITY OF GOD

there are none in nature for comparison ; each one shone

more brilliantly than the globe of the sun, yea of many

suns combined. Then they added bracelets and neck

laces, and other adornments befitting Her whom they

adorned ; and all these adornments the seraphim brought

from the throne of the most blessed Trinity, each of them

in its own way signifying a new participation and com

munication of the Divinity. And not only these adorn

ments signified a new participation and communication

of the divine perfections in their Queen, but also the

seraphim, those six that adorned Her, likewise repre

sented mysteries contained in their ministry.

652. To these succeeded six other seraphim who, in

another manner, adorned the Queen, as it were, retouch

ing her faculties and giving them subtlety, beauty and

grace unspeakable in human words. And still other six

seraphim furnished the celestial light by which her un

derstanding and will was made capable of the beatific

vision and fruition. Having thus adorned and beautified

the great Queen, all of the eighteen seraphim raised Her

to the throne of the most blessed Trinity and placed

Her at the right hand of the Onlybegotten, our Savior.

There She was asked what was her petition and desire.

And the true Esther answered : "I ask mercy for my

people, O Lord (Esther 7, 3) ; and in their name and

mine I desire and long to thank thy almighty clemency

for giving human form to the eternal Word in my womb

for their salvation." To these petitions and prayers

She added others of incomparable love and wisdom, sup

plicating for the whole human race and especially for the

holy Church.

653. Then her divine Son spoke to the eternal Father

and said : "I confess and praise Thee, my Father, and I

offer to Thee this creature, the daughter of Adam, pleas-

THE CORONATION 555

ing in thy eyes as the one chosen for my Mother from

all the creatures and as a testimony to our infinite attri

butes. She alone knows worthily and fully to estimate

and thankfully to acknowledge the favor I have shown

to men in vesting Myself in their nature for the purpose

of teaching them the way of eternal life and saving them

from death. We have chosen Her in order that She

might appease our indignation at the ingratitude and

small return We receive from mortals. She makes up

for what the others are either unable or unwilling to

give; and We cannot despise the prayers which our Be

loved offers for them in the plenitude of her holiness and

entirely to our pleasure."

654. All these marvels were repeated on each of the

last three days of the novena; and on the last, which was

the twenty-fifth of March, at the hour of the Incarnation,

the Divinity manifested Itself to Her intuitively and

with a greater glory than to all the blessed. The saints

received an addition to their accidental joy on all those

days; but the last was one of greater festivity and of

extraordinary jubilee for the whole of Jerusalem tri

umphant. The favors received by the most blessed

Mother on that day far exceed all human thought; for

all her privileges, graces and gifts were on that day rati

fied and increased by the Almighty in an ineffable man

ner. As She was still a Pilgrim and knew all the con

ditions of the holy Church in the present and the future

ages, She asked and merited great blessings for all times ;

to say it more briefly, She obtained all the blessings

which the divine power wrought for men from the be

ginning and shall work unto the end of the world.

655. On all these feasts celebrated by the great Queen,

She obtained the conversion of innumerable souls, which

at that time and at succeeding times were to come to

556 CITY OF GOD

the Catholic faith. On this feast of the Incarnation,

however, this privilege was made still more extensive;

for on these days She merited for many kingdoms, prov

inces and nations the blessings and favors they have re

ceived in being called to the holy Church. Those that

have persevered more faithfully in the Church are so

much the greater debtors to the petitions and merits of

the heavenly Mother. But it has especially been shown

me, that on the day on which She celebrated the Incar

nation, She liberated all the souls from purgatory; and

that from heaven, where this favor was granted to the

Queen of all creation and the Mother of the Redeemer,

She sent the angels to bring them to Her in order that

She might offer them as the fruit of the Incarnation to

the eternal Father. For in that mystery He had sent

his Onlybegotten Son to regain for Him the souls from

the tyranny of their enemies. For all these souls Mary

composed new canticles of praise, and in the jubilee of

having thus augmented the heavenly court of heaven She

returned to the earth, where She continued her thanks

giving with her accustomed humility. This miracle is

not at all incredible, for it is not strange that on the day

on which the most holy Mary was raised to the immense

dignity of Mother of God and Mistress of all creation, all

the treasures of the Divinity should be opened to the chil

dren of Adam, her brethren and her children ; for on that

same day the Divinity itself was poured out on Her,

entering her womb and uniting Itself hypostatically with

the substance derived from Her. She alone in her wis

dom could worthily appreciate this blessing special to

Her and for the common good of all.

656. The solemnity of the birth of Christ her Son

She celebrated in still another manner. On the evening

before She commenced with the exercises, hymns and

THE CORONATION 557

other devotions as for the other feasts ; and at the hour

of the Birth, her divine Son descended with myriads

of angels and in glorious majesty as on other occasions.

He was accompanied also by the patriarchs saint Joachim,

saint Anne, saint Joseph and saint Elisabeth, the mother

of the Baptist, as well as other saints. Then the angel

at the command of the Lord raised Her from the ground

and placed Her at his divine right hand amid celestial

harmony, rehearsing the hymn of glory as on the day

of Nativity and other canticles, which the Lady herself

had composed in honor of this mystery and in praise of

God s infinite perfections. After having united with

them in these praises for a long time, the heavenly

Mother, with the permission of her Son, descended from

the throne and prostrated Herself anew at his feet. In

this posture She adored Him in the name of all the

human race and thanked Him for his having been born

into the world for their salvation. In addition to this

thanksgiving She prayed most fervently for all men,

especially for the children of the Church, urging the

weakness of human nature, its need of grace and divine

help for raising itself and for meriting eternal life. As

an argument She alleged the mercy of the Lord in being

born for their salvation, the poverty of his Birth, the

labors and hardships it entailed, how He was nursed at

her breast and cherished by Her as his Mother, and

how many were the other works connected with these

mysteries. This prayer was accepted by her Son, our

Savior; and in the presence of all the angels and saints

that accompanied Him, He acknowledged his obligation

to listen to the charitable pleadings of his most blessed

Mother for her people. Again He confirmed Her as

Mistress and Dispenser of all his treasures of grace and

commissioned Her to apply and distribute them to men

558 CITY OF GOD

according to her pleasure. This the most prudent Lady

proceeded to do with admirable wisdom and to the im

mense benefit of the Church. At the close of this solem

nity of the birth of Christ She begged all the saints to

praise the Lord for the mystery of His birth in her

name and for all the other mortals. She then asked

the blessing of her divine Son, who in giving it, returned

to heaven.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT LADY OF THE ANGELS,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

657. My daughter and disciple, I desire that thy ad

miration in writing of the mysteries of my life and holi

ness induce thee to praise the Omnipotent for his liberality

toward Me; and thy confidence in my powerful inter

cession and protection should raise thee above thyself.

But if thou art astonished that my divine Son should

thus add grace upon grace and gifts upon gifts, and that

He should visit me so frequently and raise me to his

presence in heaven, remember what thou hast already

recorded concerning my depriving myself of the beatific

vision for the sake of governing the Church. And even

if this charity had not merited this recompense during

my mortal life, He was ready, on account of my being

his Mother and He my Son, to work such wonders with

me as are beyond created thought and were due to no

other creature. The dignity of Mother of God so far

exceeds the sphere of all the other creatures, that it would

be base ignorance on the part of men to deny me favors

greater than those bestowed upon other saints. Taking

human flesh of my substance carried with it such an ob

ligation in the eternal Word, that (according to thy

mode of understanding) God himself could not meet

THE CORONATION 559

it, without a return adequate to his Omnipotence and

corresponding fully to my capacity of receiving. This

power of God is infinite and inexhaustible, and will

always remain so; but that which God communicates, is

finite and limited. I, too, am a mere created being, and

in comparison with the being of God, all created beings

are nothing.

658. In addition to this, on my part, I placed no ob

stacle, but deserved the unlimited and unrestrained liber

ality of the Omnipotent in all his gifts, graces and favors

as far as they could be communicated to a creature. As

these, notwithstanding their wonderful greatness, were

always finite and the power and essence of God is always

infinite and without limit, it can easily be understood

how I could accumulate grace upon grace and blessings

upon blessings. And not only was I capable of thus

receiving, but it was equitable that I should thus receive,

in order that I might correspond with entire perfection

to his marvelous work of making me the Mother of God;

for none of his works remain imperfect or defective.

Since this dignity of being made the Mother of God con

tains all graces as in their origin and fount, therefore,

as soon as men know me to be Mother of God, they im

plicitly also know, as in their cause, the perfections due

to such excellence in dignity. It was left to the devo

tion, piety and good will of the faithful to earn the

regard of my divine Son and my protection, by searching

properly into my holiness and gifts and by recording and

confessing them in evidence of their devotion and my

dignity. For this purpose, special knowledge and en

lightenment has been given to many saints, to authors

and writers, besides special revelations to others con

cerning some favors and privileges conceded to me by the

Almighty.

560 CITY OF GOD

659. As nevertheless many of the mortals, even the

zealous ones, have been timid in this matter, and others,

in their want of piety, unduly sluggish, my divine Son

has, in his fatherly condescension and at the time most

opportune for his holy Church, manifested to them these

hidden mysteries, without depending upon human insight

and knowledge, but upon the enlightenment of his own

truth, in order that they might gather new joy and hope

from the knowledge of my privileges, and give to the

Almighty new glory and praise for the blessings coming

from me and from the works of the Redemption.

660. I wish, my daughter, that thou consider thyself

more under this obligation than all the rest of men, since

I have chosen thee for my special disciple and daughter,

in order that, by the writing of my life, thy heart may

be raised to a more ardent and anxious desire to imitate

and follow me. The lesson of this chapter for thee should

be, that thou follow me in the ineffable thanksgiving for

the blessed Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word in

my womb. Write in thy heart this marvel of the Om

nipotent, in order never to forget it, and signalize espe

cially the days corresponding to the mysteries which thou

hast there described. In them and in my name I desire

that thou celebrate this festivity with great fervor and

joy of thy soul, thanking God in the name of all mortals

for his having become incarnate in me for their salvation ;

and also praising Him for having raised me to the dig

nity of being his Mother. And remember that nothing

ever caused so much astonishment in the saints and an

gels, who have a knowledge of the infinite essence of

God, than to see Him united to the human nature; and,

although they continue to understand more and more of

this mystery, there will always remain more to find out

through all the ages.

THE CORONATION 561

661. In order that thou mayest properly renew and

celebrate these benefits of the Incarnation and Nativity

of my divine Son, thou must try to acquire humility

and purity as of an angel ; for by these virtues thy thanks

giving will be pleasing to the Lord and by them thou

wilt in a measure give some return for his having made

Himself of thy nature. Ponder deeply how heavy are

the sins of men who, while having Christ as their

Brother, fall from such excellence and neglect their

obligations. Consider thyself as a portrait or image of

the Godman, and that any kind of sin is equivalent to thy

despising it and blotting it out of thy soul. This new

dignity to which human nature was raised is much for

gotten by the children of Adam and they refuse to for

sake their old habits and miseries in order to put on

Christ (Rom. 13, 14). But thou, my daughter, forget

the house of thy father and thy people (Ps. 44, 11), and

seek to renew thyself with the beauty of thy Savior, in

order that thou mayest be pleasing in the eyes of the

supreme King.

CHAPTER XV.

OTHER FEASTDAYS CELEBRATED BY THE MOST BLESSED

MARY IN MEMORY OF THE CIRCUMCISION, THE ADORA

TION OF THE KINGS, HER PURIFICATION, THE BAP

TISM OF THE LORD, HIS FAST, THE INSTITUTION OF

BLESSED SACRAMENT, HIS PASSION AND RESURREC

TION.

662. In renewing the memory of the mysteries of the

life and death of Christ the Savior, our great Queen

sought not only to give worthy thanks for Herself and

for the whole of the human race, in order, as the Teacher

of all holiness and wisdom, to lead the Church to this

holy science of gratitude ; but besides fulfilling this debt

of thanks, She also sought to draw down God s infinite

bounty and merciful clemency to meet the weakness and

misery of the human kind. The most prudent Mother

knew that her divine Son and the eternal Father were

much repelled by the sins of mortals, and that at the

tribunal of his mercy they had no other claim than the

infinite charity by which God had lovingly reconciled

them to Him though they were sinners and his enemies

(Rom. 5, 8). As Christ our Savior had accomplished

this reconciliation by his works and the mysteries of

his life and death, the heavenly Lady thought these very

days, on which the works of Christ had been performed,

most convenient and proper for multiplying her prayers

to the Omnipotent, beseeching Him to show his love

for love s sake to call them to his faith and friendship,

and to justify them for no other reason than because

562

THE CORONATION 563

He had himself merited and gained for them justifica

tion and life everlasting.

663. Never will either men or angels fully know what

a debt the world owes to the maternal piety of this great

Lady and Queen. The many favors which She received

at the hands of the Almighty each time She was ad

mitted to beatific vision in her mortal flesh, were bless

ings not only for Her, but also for us; for on those

occasions her divine knowledge and charity reached the

highest possible degree in a created being and in the

same degree did She desire the glory of the Most High

in the salvation of the rational creatures. As She was

yet in the state of a pilgrim and thus could merit and

gain their salvation, her loving anxieties lest souls lose

the enjoyment of God overflowed all bounds in her

purest heart. Hence She suffered a martyrdom pro

longed through her whole life and it would have con

sumed her vital forces each hour and each instant, if

the power of God had not prevented it; for the thought

that so many souls should damn themselves and be eter

nally deprived of the vision and enjoyment of God, and,

in addition to this, that they should suffer the eternal

torments of hell, without further hope of the remedy

which they had despised, was really a martyrdom to Her.

664. This lamentable misfortune caused an immense

sorrow to the sweetest Mother, because She alone recog

nized and weighed it fully in her wisdom. She was

filled with a corresponding charity, and would have suf

fered without any relief, if She had been left only to

the influences of her love and merely to the considera

tion of what the Lord had done and suffered for rescuing

men from eternal damnation. But the Lord foresaw and

provided against this deadly sorrow in his most faithful

Mother; therefore He at times miraculously preserved

564 CITY OF GOD

her life; at others He withdrew her mind from it by

diverse enlightenments; at others again He revealed to

Her the secrets of the eternal predestination, in order that

her heart might be quieted by seeing into the equity of

his divine Justice. All these and other measures were

applied by Christ the Savior in order that his most

blessed Mother might not die at the sight of the sins

and the eternal damnation of the reprobate. And if this

unhappy and calamitous fate of sinners as foreseen by

the heavenly Lady, could so afflict her purest heart, and

if it could so move her divine Son, that He subjected

Himself for their salvation to the sufferings and death

of the Cross, what words can describe the blind foolish

ness of those men, who so senselessly rush upon their ir

reparable and never sufficiently to be dreaded ruin of

their souls?

665. But the manner in which our Savior and Mas

ter Jesus alleviated the sorrows of his beloved Mother,

was by listening to her petitions and prayers for mortals,

by showing his appreciation of her love, by offering

Her his treasures and infinite merits, by constituting

Her his principal almoner, and by consigning into Her

hands the free and loving distribution of all the trea

sures of his mercy and grace, and thus bring succor to

the souls whom in her deep science She knew to be in

greatest need thereof. These promises of the Lord

to his most blessed Mother, as well as the solicitude and

prayers of the loving Queen, were of ordinary and con

stant occurrence ; and they were still more notable on the

festivals commemorating the mysteries of her divine

Son. For the day of the Circumcision She commenced

her exercises at the same hour as at the other feasts;

and the incarnate Word descended to her oratory with

the same majesty and accompanied by the angels and the

THE CORONATION 565

saints. As this mystery consisted in his beginning to

shed his blood for men and in his subjecting Himself to

the law of sinners as if He were one of them, the acts

of his most pure Mother in commemoration of that great

condescension and clemency were ineffable.

666. The great Mother humiliated Herself to the low

est depths; She lovingly compassioned the sufferings of

the Child-God in such a tender age; She thanked Him

for this blessing conferred upon all the children of

Adam; She bewailed the universal forgetfulness and

want of appreciation of the blood shed for the rescue

of all. And, as if ashamed in the presence of her divine

Son for not having paid her debts, She offered her own

life and her own blood in satisfaction and in imitation

of her Master s example. She spent that whole day in

sweet converse and colloquy reiterating her desires and

petitions. Yet, though the Lord accepted her offerings,

it was not befitting 4 to let Her actually pay all the sacri

fices of her inflamed love. Therefore She added other

inventions of her charity toward the mortals. She be

sought her divine Son to divide his gifts, caresses and

favors among all the children of men; She begged that

She alone be singled out to suffer for his love; that all

should share in the reward, all should taste the sweet

ness of the divine Spirit, that all might be induced to

enter the path of eternal life, and none be lost in eternal

death, since their God himself became man and suffered

for the very purpose of drawing all men to Himself

(John 12, 32). Then She offered to the eternal Father

the blood, which his Son shed in the Circumcision and his

humility in allowing Himself to be circumcised in his

sinlessness. After She had thus exercised acts of in

comparable perfection and adored Him as true God and

man, her divine Son gave Her his blessing and returned

to the right hand of the eternal Father in heaven.

566 CITY OF GOD

667. To prepare for the feast of the Magi She began

her devotions some days before, in order as it were to

get ready some presents to offer to the incarnate Word.

The principal offering of the Queen were the souls

brought to a state of grace and called by Her the gold.

For this purpose to obtain this gift of gold She availed

Herself of the services of the holy angels, ordering them

to lead numerous souls to the knowledge and belief of

the true God by special and powerful inspirations. This

result was brought about by their ministry and much

more by her own prayers and petitions, so that She drew

many from sin, brought others to the faith and to Bap

tism, and snatched others from the talons of the infernal

dragon at the hour of death. To this gift She then

added the gift of myrrh, which were her prostrations in

the form of a cross, her humiliations, and other exer

cises of penance, by which She prepared Herself so as to

present her own Self as myrrh before her God. Her

third offering was the incense of her inflamed and soar

ing love, her words and ejaculations, and other prompt

ings of her affection, so full of wisdom and sweetness.

668. In order to receive these offerings, her divine

Son, on the day and hour of the mystery, descended with

innumerable angels and saints. In their presence, and

inviting all the courtiers of heaven to assist, She made

her offering accompanying it with wonderful adoration,

worship and love; and with the offering She combined a

fervent prayer for all the mortals. Then She was taken

up to the throne of her Son and true God and made to

share the glory of his sacred humanity in an ineffable

manner. She was divinely united with it and as it were

transfigured by its splendors and translucency. A few

times, in order to moderate the conflagration of her love,

the Lord himself embraced Her and permitted Her to

THE CORONATION 567

recline upon his arms. These favors are such as can

not be described in words; for the Omnipotent sought

each day to exhaust upon Her the treasures of his bless

ings, old and new (Matth. 13, 52).

669. After receiving these favors, She descended from

the throne and supplicated the Lord for mercy upon man

kind. She concluded her petitions by a canticle of praise

in the name of all and She asked the saints to accompany

Her in all this. On this day also a wonderful thing

happened; namely, at the end of this feast She asked all

the Patriarchs and Saints present to intercede for Her

with the Almighty, that He might assist and govern Her

in all his works. For this purpose She went from one to

the other repeating her request and as if humbly kissing

their hands. Her divine Son, ineffably pleased, per

mitted Her to exercise her humility also before her par

ents, and before the Patriarchs and Prophets related to

Her. But this demonstration of her humility was not

extended to the angels, because they were her ministers

and not in the same relations with Her as her holy fore

bears. These heavenly spirits attended upon Her in an

other way, namely serving Her in these exercises.

670. Then the Queen celebrated the Baptism of Christ

our Lord with magnificent thanksgiving for his sub

mitting to be baptized Himself and thus establishing this

Sacrament. After offering her prayers for the Church

She withdrew to fast for the forty following days in

order to commemorate the fast of the Lord and of Her

self after his Baptism, as I have recorded in its place.

During these forty days She did not sleep, or eat, or

leave her retreat, unless some great necessity of the

Church demanded her presence. Her only intercourse

was with saint John when receiving holy Communion, or

when She was obliged to despatch some business for the

568 CITY OF GOD

government of the Church. The beloved disciple was

also more solicitous in his attendance upon Her, absenting

himself rarely from the Cenacle. He relieved the numer

ous persons who sought help in their necessities, and he

cured the sick by applying some article, which had been

used by the powerful Queen. Many possessed by demons

also came, and some of them were freed before arriving;

for the demons dared not linger within the bodies of those

that approached the dwelling of most holy Mary. Others

of the demons cast themselves into the abyss as soon as

the possessed were touched by the cloak, or the veil, or

some other article belonging to the Queen. If any of

the demons still resisted, the Evangelist called the blessed

Lady, at whose presence they fled without waiting for

further commands.

671. It would be necessary to write many books, if all

the miracles and works of the great Queen during these

forty days were to be recorded; for, if She did not sleep,

or eat, or rest, who can estimate what She in her great

solicitude and activity accomplished during so long a

time ? It is enough to know, that She applied and offered

up all for the increase of the Church, the justification of

souls, the conversion of the world, and to assist the

Apostles and disciples preaching the Gospel throughout

the earth. At the end of this Lent her divine Son regaled

Her with a banquet similar to the one brought by the

angels to Him at the end of his fast, as I have described

in its place. Only this one was more splendid, since at

it was present the glorified Savior, full of majesty and

accompanied by myriads of angels, some of them serving,

others singing in divine and celestial harmonies ; and the

Lord himself furnished what was eaten by his most

blessed Mother. This day was very delightful to Her,

more on account of the presence of her divine Son and

THE CORONATION 569

his tokens of love, than on account of the exquisite nectars

and mannas of heaven. In thanksgiving She prostrated

Herself and asked his benediction, adoring the Lord ; and

He, having given it to Her, returned to the celestial

regions. During all these apparitions of the Lord Christ,

the pious Mother performed great and heroic acts of hu

mility, submission and veneration, kissing the feet of her

Son, acknowledging Herself unworthy of those favors,

and asking for new graces in order to serve Him better

in the future.

672. Possibly there may be those, who in their human

prudence, will consider as rather frequent these appari

tions of the Lord, which I have described for so many

occasions. But those who think so, will have to show

what is the measure of the holiness of the Mistress of

grace and virtue and the reciprocal love of such a Mother

and Son, and they will be obliged to tell us how far these

favors exceed the measure due to the circumstances. They

forget, that both faith and reason convince us, that this

measure goes far beyond all human estimate. As for

myself, the light in which I see these things excludes all

doubt, and moreover it should suffice for any one to con

sider, that each day, each hour and moment, Christ our

Savior descends from heaven, wherever in all the world

a priest legitimately consecrates the sacred Host in the

Mass. I say, that He descends not only by a bodily

motion, but by the change of bread and wine into his

sacred body and blood. Though this descent happens in

a different manner, which I will not gainsay or dispute;

yet the holy Catholic faith teaches me, that the same

Christ is actually present and remains in the conse

crated host. This wonder the Lord performs thus fre

quently for men and for their welfare, notwithstanding

that there are so many unworthy ones, and some even

570 CITY OF GOD

among those who consecrate. If any one can induce Him

to continue this favor, it is no one else than the most

blessed Mary, for whom He will do it and for whom He

has principally begun to do it, as I have explained else

where. Hence it is not astonishing that He should have

visited Her personally so many times; since She alone

was able and knew how to merit it not only for Herself,

but for all the rest of us.

673. After the fast the great Lady celebrated the feast

of her Purification and the Presentation of the infant

God in the temple. In order that She might make this

offering 1 and that God might accept it, the most blessed

Trinity appeared in her oratory with his heavenly court.

To prepare Her for offering up the incarnate Word, the

angels vested and adorned Her with the same garments

and jewels, as I have described for the feast of the In

carnation. Then she offered up a comprehensive prayer,

in which She supplicated for the whole human race and

especially for the Church. The reward for this prayer

and for the humility, with which She subjected Herself

to the law of the purification as well as for her other

exercises, was a new increase of grace, new gifts and

favors for Herself, and for others great helps and

blessings.

674. The memory of the Passion, the institution of

the blessed Sacrament, and of the Resurrection She cele

brated not only every week, as described above, but also

on the anniversaries of their happening. Each year She

observed their commemoration in the manner as is now

done in the Church in the Holy Week. Besides the exer

cises of each week She added many others ; and on Good

Friday, at the hour in which Christ was crucified, She

placed Herself upon a cross and there remained for three

hours. She renewed all the prayers of the Lord, with all

THE CORONATION 571

the sorrows and mysteries of that day. But on the fol

lowing Sunday, which corresponds to the Resurrection,

She was raised by the holy angels to the empyrean

heavens where during that day She enjoyed the beatific

vision, while on the ordinary Sundays her vision of the

Godhead was abstractive.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS

GAVE ME.

675. My daughter, the divine Spirit, whose wisdom

and prudence governs the holy Church, through my inter

cession has ordained, that in it so many different feasts

should be celebrated, not only in order that proper thanks

should be given to the Creator and Redeemer for the

works of the Redemption, of my life, and of the saints,

and that the blessings, which never can be properly re

paid, may not be forgotten by mankind; but also in

order that these solemnities might afford men an oppor

tunity of attending to holy exercises and of recollecting

themselves interiorly by withdrawing from the solicitudes

of temporal affairs; and in order that they might, by the

exercise of virtue and the good use of the Sacraments,

repair the losses sustained by their distractions, imitate

the virtues and the lives of the saints, solicit my inter

cession, merit the forgiveness of their sins and gain the

graces and favors held in readiness by the divine mercy in

these mysteries.

676. This is the spirit of the holy Church, by which

She desires to govern and nourish her children as a de

voted mother. And I, who am Mother of them all,

sought to attract and bind them to the secure path of

their salvation. But the insinuations of the infernal

serpent have always (and especially in the unhappy

572 CITY OF GOD

times in which thou livest) tended to pervert these holy

ends of the Lord and mine, and when he cannot pervert

the order of the holy Church, he exerts himself to pre

vent the greater part of the faithful from being benefited

by her institutions and strives to induce many to convert

them into greater guilt for their condemnation. And the

same demon will stand as their accuser at the tribunal of

the divine justice; for on the days of greatest solemnity

and festivity men not only fail to enter into the spirit of

the Church by employing them in works of virtue and in

worship of their God ; but just on those days they commit

the most grievous sins, as is ordinarily the case with

carnal and worldly men. Certainly most outrageous and

reprehensible is the common forgetfulness and contempt

of this duty in the children of the Church, when they

profane the sacred and holy days by spending them in

diversion and play, in excessive and disorderly eating and

drinking, irritating the justice of the Almighty instead

of appeasing Him, in succumbing to their invisible ene

mies instead of vanquishing them, and in permitting them

to triumph in their pride and malice.

677. Do thou, my daughter, bewail this damage, since

I cannot bewail it now in the same way as I have done it

in mortal life; and exert thyself to assist thy brethren

in overcoming this widespread carelessness. And al

though the life of the religious should differ from that of

seculars so as to have no distinction of days and to apply

every day for the divine worship, for prayer and holy

exercises, as thou shouldst teach thy subjects; yet I

desire thee to celebrate with them the feasts of the Lord

and mine by a more careful preparation and purity of

conscience. I wish thee to fill all thy days and thy nights

with works holy and pleasing in the sight of the Lord;

but on the festivals thou shouldst add other interior and

THE CORONATION 573

exterior exercises. Excite the fervor of thy heart,

recollect thyself, and if it seems to thee that thou art

doing much, labor still more earnestly to make certain

thy vocation and election (II Pet. 1, 10), nor ever omit

any exercise out of negligence. Consider that the days

are evil (Ephes. 5, 6), and that life disappears like a

dream (Ps. 143, 4). Live very carefully in order that

thou mayest not be found without merit, holy deeds and

perfect works. To each hour assign its legitimate occu

pation, as thou hast seen me do it, and as I have many

times admonished and taught thee.

678. For this purpose I exhort thee to live attentive to

the divine inspirations and amid all the other blessings

not to forget those contained in such enlightenments. Let

thy care be such, that no virtuous act or greater perfec

tion, which is possible to thee and comes to thy notice,

remain unexecuted. I assure thee, my dearest, that

through their negligence and forgetfulness mortals lose

immense treasures of grace and glory. All the perfection

that I knew of my divine Son when I lived with Him, I

imitated, and whatever the Holy Ghost pointed out to

me as being most perfect, I executed as thou hast seen.

This anxious solicitude was as natural to me as to

breathe ; and through it I induced my divine Son to show

me so many favors and visit me so often during my

mortal life.

679. I desire likewise that, in order that thou and thy

religious may imitate me in my retirement and solicitude,

thou establish the manner in which the customary retreat

is to be conducted; and that those who make it should

live retired during the days appointed for it in holy obe

dience. Thou knowest from experience, what fruit is

gathered in these retreats, since in it thou hast written

nearly the whole of my life; and in this solitude the Lord

574 CITY OF GOD

visited thee with greater blessings and favors for the

betterment of thy own life and the conquering of thy

enemies. In order that thy religious may understand how

they must conduct themselves in the exercises of the re

treat for their greater profit and advancement, I wish

that thou write for them a special treatise, in which thou

wilt assign all their occupations to certain hours and

times. These should be arranged in such a way, that the

one who is in retreat does not miss the community exer

cises ; for conformity to them is an obligation superseding

all the particular ones. As for the rest, those in retreat

should observe perfect silence and go about veiled, in

order that they may be known as making the retreat and

not spoken to by any of the others. Let none be deprived

of this benefit on account of their office and let their

duties be assigned to others in obedience. Ask enlighten

ment of the Lord for writing this treatise, and I shall

assist thee to understand more thoroughly my practices

in retirement, in order that thou mayest teach it to the

others.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THE MOST BLESSED MARY CELEBRATED THE FEASTS

OF THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST OUR SAVIOR, THE COM

ING OF THE HOLY GHOST, THE FEAST OF THE HOLY

ANGELS AND SAINTS AND OTHER ANNIVERSARIES OF

FAVORS RECEIVED BY HER.

680. In each one of the works and mysteries of our

great Queen and Lady are found new secrets to penetrate

and new reasons for wonder and praise; but I am run

ning short of new words to make known what I see. From

what I have been made to understand concerning the

love of Christ our Lord for his purest Mother and most

worthy Spouse, it seems to me, that for the sake of this

love, the Lord would have resigned his throne of glory

and the company of the saints to be with his most be

loved Mother, if other reasons had not demanded his

presence in heaven and that of the Virgin upon earth

during the time of her separation and bodily absence.

But let no one say that this high opinion of the excellence

of the Queen derogates from that of her divine Son or

the saints ; for the Divinity of the Father and the Holy

Ghost was in Christ in its highest individual unity; the

three Persons exist in each one in an inseparable manner,

and the Person of the Word cannot exist without the

Father and the Holy Ghost. It is certain, that the com

pany of the angels was less than that of his most holy

Mother in the eyes of her divine Son ; that is, considering

the force of reciprocal love between Christ and his purest

Mother. But for other reasons it was befitting, that the

575

576 CITY OF GOD

Lord, after accomplishing the Redemption of man, should

return to the right hand of the Father, and that his most

blessed Mother should remain in the Church, so that,

through her industry and merits, the efficacy of the Re

demption should be proved and that She should bring

forth to light the fruit of the passion and death of her

divine Son.

681. With ineffable and mysterious providence Christ

our Savior arranged his works, showing in them his

divine wisdom, magnificence and glory, confiding entirely

in this strong Woman, as described by Solomon (Prov.

31, 11). And his confidence was not frustrated, since

the most prudent Mother, by uniting her own solicitude

and merits with his passion and blood, purchased for

her Son the field in which She planted the vines of the

Church. These were the souls of the faithful, prop

agated in the Church on earth, and of the predestined,

in whom the Church was to be transplanted to the tri

umphant Jerusalem forever and forever. If it was befitting

the glory of the Most High, that all this great work

should be entrusted to Mary, in order that our Savior

Jesus might enter into the glory of his Father after his

glorious Resurrection, then it was also no more than

just that, as far as was possible, He should keep up his

intercourse with his most blessed Mother, whom He had

left in the world and whom He loved without measure.

To this He was held not only by his own love toward his

Mother, but by her state and the task imposed upon Her

during her sojourn on earth, where the grace, the means,

the favors and blessings must necessarily be in proportion

with the origin and the end of those hidden mysteries.

All these requirements were gloriously fulfilled by the

frequent visits of the Son to his Mother and by her being

raised to the throne of his glory. Thus, neither would

THE CORONATION 577

the invincible Queen be totally deprived of her court, nor

would the courtiers for so many years be deprived of the

delightful sight of their Queen and Lady. Hence as

this delight was possible, it was proper that all those con

cerned should also enjoy it.

682. One of the days (in addition to those already

mentioned) on which the celestial wonders were re

newed, was that on which She celebrated each year the

Ascension of her divine Son. This day was a great fes

tival for Her and for all heaven. She prepared for it

during forty days from the day on which She solemnized

the Resurrection of her Son. During all this time She

renewed the memory of the favors and blessings She

had received from her divine Son, and of the glorious

company of the ancient Patriarchs and Saints delivered

from limbo; and of all that had transpired day after day

during those forty days, giving thanks in new hymns

and devotions, as if they were again transpiring before

Her; for all these events were indelibly impressed upon

her memory. I will not enter upon the particulars of what

She did during those times, because I have written about

them sufficiently in the last chapters of the second part.

I will say only, that during this preparation our great

Queen received incomparable favors and experienced new

influences of the Divinity, by which She was made ever

more and more godlike and prepared for the extra

ordinary favors She was to receive on the feast itself.

683. On the mysterious day on which our Savior Jesus

ascended into heaven, He came down in person to the

oratory of his most blessed Mother, accompanied by in

numerable angels and by the Patriarchs and Saints He had

taken up with Him to heaven. The great Lady awaited

his visit, prostrate upon the ground as usual and an

nihilated in the utmost self -debasement of her ineffable

578 CITY OF GOD

humility ; yet, at the same time, being elevated above all

human and angelic thought to the highest pinnacle of love

possible to a mere creature. Then her divine Son mani

fested Himself amidst the choirs of saints, and renewing

in Her the sweetness of his blessings, He commanded the

angels to raise Her from the dust and place Her at his

right hand. Executing this command, the seraphim

placed Her, who had given Him human existence, on the

throne of the Lord. Thereupon He asked Her, what

was her request and her desire. To this the most blessed

Mary answered : "My Son and eternal God, I desire the

glory and exaltation of thy holy name; in it I wish to

render Thee thanks for the whole human race, and

acknowledge the blessings of having on this day, through

thy almighty power, raised our nature to eternal glory

and felicity. I beg that all men may know, praise and

magnify thy Divinity and most sacred humanity."

684. The Lord answered: "My Mother and Dove\*

chosen from amongst all creatures for my habitation,

come with Me to my celestial country, where thy desires

shall be fulfilled, thy petitions granted, and where Thou

mayest enjoy the solemnity of this day, not among the

mortal children of Adam, but among my courtiers and

among my inhabitants of heaven/\* Immediately that

whole celestial procession traversed the regions of the

air, as had happened on the day of the Ascension, and,

the Virgin Mother always remaining at the right hand of

her Son, reached the empyrean heavens. But on arriv

ing at the highest place, the whole celestial company

arranged themselves in choirs, and not only they and all

heaven, but the Holy of the holy Himself, were so to

say, wrapped in a new kind of silence and attention. Then

the Queen asked permission of the Lord to descend from

the throne and, prostrate before the footstool of the most

THE CORONATION 579

blessed Trinity, sang an admirable song of praise, in

which She included the mysteries of the Incarnation and

Redemption with all the triumphs and victories of her

divine Son up to his glorious Ascension to the right hand

of his eternal Father.

685. The Most High manifested his pleasure and com

placence at this hymn of praise and all the saints re

sponded with songs of glory, extolling the Omnipotent

in this wonderful Creature and being filled with new joy

by the presence and exaltation of their Queen. Then,

at the command of the Most High, the angels again

placed Her at the right hand of her divine Son, and hav

ing as on other occasions, been illumined and adorned

for the purpose, She looked upon the Divinity in glorious

and intuitive vision. In this beatific vision the Queen

spent part of the day and during it, the Lord again con

firmed upon Her the possession of that place, which

from all eternity He had destined for Her and which was

mentioned on the day of the Ascension. For our greater

admiration and obligation I advert, that each year on

that day the Lord himself asked Her, whether She would

prefer to remain in that eternal joy forever, or return

again to the earth for the benefit of the Church. The de

cision being thus left entirely in her hands, She answered :

that if it was the will of the Almighty, She would return

to labor for men, who were the fruit of the Redemption

and of the death of the Son of God.

686. This answer so full of resignation, repeated each

year, was just as often accepted by the most holy Trin

ity to the wonder of all the blessed. Thus, not only once,

but many times, did the heavenly Mother deprive Her

self of the beatific vision, descending for a new period

of time to the world in order to direct the Church and

enrich it with her incomparable merits. And since the

580 CITY OF GOD

proper appreciation of these merits can never be reached

by our curtailed faculties, it will be no blemish in this

history not to attempt an estimate of them and defer it

until we shall reach the vision of God. But the rewards

corresponding to these sacrifices were reserved for Her

according to the divine pleasure, in order that afterwards,

in the possession of the beatific vision, She might as much

as possible be like to the most sacred humanity of her Son

and worthily take her place on the throne at his right

hand. As a sequence to these happenings in heaven, the

great Queen added her prayers for the exaltation of

God s name, for the propagation of the Church, for the

conversion of the world and the victories over the devil ;

and all her petitions were granted, and successively exe

cuted in their time and will be executed in all

the ages of the Church. These favors would be greater,

if the sinners of the world would not hinder them and

make mortals unworthy of receiving them. There

upon the angels brought back their Queen to her ora

tory in the Cenacle amid celestial music and harmony,

and She prostrated Herself in deepest humility to give

thanks for these new favors. I wish to mention, that

the evangelist saint John had some knowledge of these

mysteries and participated in some of their effects ; for he

usually saw the Queen so refulgent with heavenly light,

that he could not look upon her face. As the great

Mistress of humility always humbled Herself to the very

ground and often asked his consent kneeling at his feet,

he was often seized by a reverential fear and disquiet in

the presence of the Lady, though it was always mixed

with a wonderful joy and incitement to holiness.

687. The great Queen availed Herself of the effects and

blessings of the festivity of the Ascension in order to

celebrate more solemnly the coming of the Holy Ghost,

THE CORONATION 581

and by means of them She prepared Herself for it during

the nine days that intervene. She continued without in

termission her holy exercises, exciting the most ardent

desires for the renewal of the gifts of the divine Spirit

in Her. When the day arrived these desires were ful

filled with manifestations of an almighty power; for at

the same hour in which He had descended the first time

upon the apostolic college in the Cenacle, He descended

each year upon the Mother of Jesus, the Spouse and the

temple of the Holy Ghost ; and although this coming was

not less solemn than the first, for He came in the form

of visible fire of a wonderful brightness and with a

mysterious noise, yet these signs were not manifest to

all, as had happened at the first coming. At that first time

this was necessary, but afterwards it was not proper that

any one except the most blessed Mary, and to a certain

extent, saint John, should know of this miracle. Myriads

of angels attended upon Her at such times singing the

canticles of the Lord in sweetest harmony ; and the Holy

Ghost entirely inflamed and renewed Her with super

abundant gifts and increase of the blessings She already

possessed. Then the great Lady gave humble thanks not

only for this favor, but because He had filled the Apostles

with wisdom and charismatic gifts, to make them worthy

ministers of the Lord and founders of his holy Church,

and because through his coming He had sealed the works

of the human Redemption. In a prolonged prayer She

then asked the divine Spirit to continue the influences

of his grace and wisdom through the present and the

future ages, and not to suspend it on account of the sins

and unworthiness of men at any time. All these peti

tions the Holy Ghost granted to his only Spouse, and

the holy Church is now reaping the fruit of them and

shall enjoy them until the end of the world.

582 CITY OF GOD

688. To these mysterious celebrations of the feasts of

the Lord and of Herself, the great Queen, in the course

of the year, added others for her especial jubilee and

devotion : namely, one in honor of the holy angels, and one

in that of the saints. In order to celebrate the excellences

and holiness of the angelic nature She prepared herself

for some days by exercises such as mentioned for some of

the other feasts, adding new songs of glory and praise

and retracing in them the work of the creation of the

angels, and especially their justification and glorification

with all the mysteries and secrets known to Her of all

of them and of each one in particular. When the day

She had assigned for this feast arrived, She invited them

all. Many thousands of the celestial choirs and orders

descended and manifested themselves in wonderful beauty

and glory in her oratory. Then, forming two choirs, one

of which was our Queen and the other all the supernal

spirits, the Lady and the angels sang songs of celestial

harmony in alternate verses during that entire day. If it

were possible to make known to the world the mysterious

canticles composed on those days by the most blessed

Lady and the angels, they would no doubt be reckoned

among the great miracles of the Lord and astonish all

the mortals. I cannot find words nor time to describe

what I have come to know concerning this mystery ; for

they began by praising the essence of God in Himself, and

in all his perfections and attributes known to them. Then

the Queen proceeded to bless and magnify Him for hav

ing manifested his Majesty, Wisdom and Omnipotence in

the creation of so many and beautiful spiritual beings;

for having favored them with so many gifts of nature

and grace, and appointed them as ministers and executors

of his will in the government of men and of all the lower

and visible creation. The angels on their part responded

THE CORONATION 583

by due and thankful acknowledgment of their obligation,

and all of them sang to the Almighty wonderful songs

of praise for having created and chosen for his Mother a

Virgin so pure, so holy, so worthy of his greatest gifts

and given Her command and dominion over all, in order

that they might proclaim and honor Her as the worthy

Mother of God and Restoratrix of the human race.

689. In this manner the supernal spirits rehearsed the

great prerogatives of their Queen and blessed God in Her ;

while She recounted those of the angels for the same pur

pose. Hence, this day was one of admirable joy and

jubilee to the Queen, and of accidental joy to the angels,

especially to the thousand of her ordinary guard; for they

participated in the glory given to their Lady and Queen.

As neither on the one side, nor on the other, there was

the obstacle of ignorance, nor any want of the apprecia

tion of the mysteries rehearsed, this interchange of

heavenly songs was full of incomparable reverence. And

such it shall also be for us, when we shall experience it in

the Lord.

690. The other festival in the course of the year was

that of the Saints. For this also She prepared Herself

with many prayers and exercises of devotion as on other

festivals. All the Patriarchs, Prophets and the rest of

the Saints, also those who had died after the Resurrec

tion, came from heaven in order to celebrate with their

Reparatrix this joyful day. She composed new canticles

of thanksgiving for the glory of the saints and efficacy

of the death of her divine Son. Great was the jubilee of

the Queen on this occasion, because She knew the secret

of their predestination, and because, in spite of the dan

gers of mortal life, they had now attained secure and eter

nal felicity. For this blessing She extolled the Lord and

Father of mercies and rehearsed in her thanksgiving the

584 CITY OF GOD

favors, graces and benefits, which each of the saints had

received at his hands. She asked them to intercede for

the holy Church, and for all those who were fighting its

battles and were still encountering the danger of losing

the crown. After this She remembered also and gave

thanks for the victories and triumphs She herself had

attained through the divine power over the demons.

Finally She added new canticles of humble and fervent

thanksgiving for Herself, and for all the souls to be

snatched from the powers of darkness.

691. It is a subject of astonishment to men, as it was

to the angels, that a mere Creature in mortal flesh should

accomplish so many incessant wonders, which would have

appeared impossible to multitudes of souls united to

gether, even if they had been as ardent as the highest

seraphim; but our great Queen certainly participated in

something of the omnipotence of God, which made easy

for Her what for other creatures would have been im

possible. In these last years of her most holy life her

activity increased to such an extent, that there was no

cessation or relaxation in her operations so as to exceed

all our powers of comprehension; for She was not any

more hindered by the mortality and weight of human

nature, but operated like the indefatigable spirits, and

more than all of them together ; and She had become one

devouring flame and conflagration of immense activity.

To her divine virtues all her days seemed short, all

occasions few, and all her exercises limited; since her

divine love continually tended to exceed all bounds of

what She was doing, though that was without limit. In

comparison with what her activity was in reality, all I

have said is little or nothing : I am bound to confess and

assert my deficiency in this regard, because I see an abyss

or distance as it were infinite between what has been

THE CORONATION 585

shown to me and what I am capable of understanding in

this life. And if I cannot form an idea of what has been

manifested to me, how shall I speak of that which I saw

not, since I have no gage except my own ignorance ? Let

us beware lest we make ourselves unworthy of the light,

which awaits us in heaven for seeing all in God ; for this

reward and joy by themselves, even if we receive no

other, should make us willing to endure all the labor,

pains and torments of the martyrs to the end of the

world. We would be richly repaid by the delight of un

derstanding the dignity and excellence of most holy

Mary, seated at the right hand of her Son and true God

and raised above all the angels and saints of heaven.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE

ANGELS GAVE ME.

692. My daughter, in the measure as thou advancest

in the history of my works and life, I desire that thou

also advance in the perfect following and imitation of

me. This desire increases in me in proportion to the

growth of thy enlightenment and admiration of what

thou seest and writest. It is now time that thou make up

for what thou hast so far missed and that thou wing the

flight of thy spirit to the heights, to which the Almighty

calls thee and to which I invite thee. Fill thy works with

all perfection and sanctity ; remember that the opposition

of thy enemies, the devil, the world and the flesh is most

hateful and cruel; and that thou canst not overcome so

many difficulties and temptations, if thou do not enkindle

thy heart with the most ardent fervor and the emulation

invincibly to repel and crush the poisonous serpent, which,

with diabolical astuteness, avails itself of many deceits,

either to cause thy fall or to detain thee in thy course,

586 CITY OF GOD

prevent thee from gaining thy end, and make thee unfit

for the state chosen for thee by the Lord.

693. Thou must not ignore, my daughter, that the

demon keeps a constant minute watch over the least care

lessness, forgetfulness or inadvertence of souls, and that

he is constantly prowling around and lying in ambush to

avail himself of every negligence for tempting the in

cautious to sin and misleading them by means of their pas

sions before they have a chance to know the full extent of

the wound he tries to inflict. When afterwards they

come to know it and desire to r,ise from their fall, they

feel still greater difficulty and need much more abundant

graces and efforts to resist the evil than before they fell.

In guilt the soul weakens in virtue, the enemy acquires

more influence, and the passions tend to become indomit

able and invincible; hence many fall, but not so many

rise from their sins. The remedy against these dangers

is to live in continual and unremitting anxiousness to

merit the divine grace, in ceaseless striving to do the more

perfect, not giving the enemy any chance to find the soul

off its guard or unoccupied with some exercise or work of

virtue. Thereby the weight of the lower human nature

will be lightened, the passions and bad inclinations will

be crushed, the demon intimidated, the soul will be raised

up and will gain strength against the flesh and dominion

over the inferior and sensitive faculties, subjecting them

to the divine will.

694. In all this thou wilt have a living example in my

works, of which thou now writest and which thou hast

seen manifested in such great light in order that thou

mayest not forget them. Attend then, my dearest, to all

that thou seest in this clear mirror; and if thou knowest

and confessest me as thy Teacher and thy Mother and

as the Mistress of all holiness and true perfection, do not

THE CORONATION 587

delay in imitating me and following me. It is not pos

sible that either thou or any other creature arrive at the

perfection and excellence of my works, nor does the Lord

bind any one to that ; but with his divine grace thou canst

fill thy life with works of virtue and holiness, and spend

in them all thy time and all thy faculties ; so that, adding

exercise to exercise, prayer to prayer, petition to petition,

virtue to virtue, thou let no time, no day, no Hour of thy

life be bare of good works learned of me. For this pur

pose I joined other works with those necessary for the

government of the Church, and celebrated the festivals

in the manner and with the preparations thou hast come

to know and describe. As soon as one was solemnized, I

began to prepare me for another, so that not for one mo

ment was my life void of works holy and pleasing in the

sight of the Lord. All the children of the Church, if they

wish, can imitate me and thou shouldst do it more zeal

ously than the others. This is the purpose for which the

Holy Ghost ordained the solemnities and commemora

tions of my divine Son and of myself and of the saints

recurring in the holy Church.

695. As I have exhorted thee many times, I wish that

thou distinguish thyself by their devout celebration,

especially by the celebration of the mysteries of the Divin

ity and humanity of my divine Son, those of my life and

of my glory. Then I desire in thee a special devotion to

the angels, as well on account of their great excellence,

holiness, beauty and ministry, as also on account of the

great favors and blessings thou hast received through

these celestial spirits. I desire that thou assimilate thy

self to them in purity of thy soul, in the exaltedness of

thy thought, in the fervor of thy love, and in living as

if thou hadst neither an earthly body nor its passions.

They are to be thy friends and companions in thy pil-

588 CITY OF GOD

grimage, in order that they may be such also in the

Fatherland. With them thou shouldst now maintain con

versation and familiar intercourse, in which they will

show thee the attributes and the tokens of thy Spouse,

give thee certain knowledge of his perfections, lead thee

to the straight ways of justice and of peace, defend thee

from the demon, warn thee of his deceits. In the con

tinued teaching of these spirits and ministers of the

Most High thou shalt hear the laws of divine love. Hear

and obey them exactly.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ANGEL GABRIEL SENT AS AMBASSADOR TO THE MOST

BLESSED MARY TO INFORM HER. THAT SHE STILL HAD

THREE YEARS OF LIFE, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO

SAINT JOHN AND TO ALL NATURE AT THIS NEWS.

696. In writing of what still remains of the history of

our Lady, of our only and heavenly Phoenix, the most

blessed Mary, it is no more than right that our hearts be

filled with tenderness and our eyes with tears at the sweet

and touching marvels of the last years of her life. I

should wish to exhort the devout faithful not to read of

them nor consider them as past and absent, since the

powerful virtue of faith can make these truths present

to the mind; and if we look upon them with the proper

piety and Christian devotion, without a doubt we shall

gather the sweetest fruit, and our hearts shall feel the

effects and rejoice in the good, which our eyes cannot see.

697. The most holy Mary had arrived at the age of

sixty-seven years without having tarried in her career,

ceased in her flight, mitigated the flame of her love, or

lessened the increase of her merits from the first instant

of her Conception. As all this had continued to grow

in each moment of her life, the ineffable gifts, benefits and

favors of the Lord had made Her entirely godlike and

spiritual ; the affectionate ardors and desires of her most

chaste heart did not allow Her any rest outside the centre

of her love ; the bounds of the flesh were most violently

irksome ; the overwhelming attraction of the Divinity to

unite Itself with Her with eternal and most close bonds,

589

590 CITY OF GOD

(according to our mode of speaking) had attained the

summit of power in Her; and the earth itself, made un

worthy by the sins of mortals to contain the Treasure of

heaven, could no longer bear the strain of withholding

Her from her true Lord. The eternal Father desired his

only and true Daughter; the Son his beloved and

most loving Mother; and the Holy Ghost the embraces

of his most beautiful Spouse. The angels longed for

their Queen, the saints for their great Lady; and all the

heavens mutely awaited the presence of their Empress

who should fill them with glory, with her beauty and de

light. All that could be alleged in favor of Her still re

maining in the world and in the Church, was the need

of such a Mother and Mistress, and the love, which God

himself had for the miserable children of Adam.

698. But as some term and end was to be placed to the

earthly career of our Queen, the divine consistory

(according to our mode of understanding), conferred

upon the manner of glorifying the most blessed Mother

and established the kind of loving reward due to Her for

having so copiously fulfilled all the designs of the divine

mercy among the children of Adam during the many

years in which She had been the Foundress and Teacher

of his holy Church. The Almighty therefore resolved

to delight and console Her by giving Her definite notice

of the term still remaining of her life and revealing to

Her the day and hour of the longed for end of her

earthly banishment. For this purpose the most blessed

Trinity despatched the archangel Gabriel with many

others of the celestial hierarchies, who should announce

to the Queen when and how her mortal life should come

to an end and pass over into the eternal.

699. The holy prince descended with the rest to the

Cenacle in Jerusalem and entered the oratory of the great

THE CORONATION 591

Lady, where they found Her prostrate on the ground in

the form of a cross, asking mercy for sinners. But hear

ing the sound of their music and perceiving them present,

She rose to her knees in order to hear the message and

show respect to the ambassador of heaven and his com

panions, who in white and refulgent garments surrounded

Her with wonderful delight and reverence. All of them

had come with crowns and palms in their hands, each

one with a different one ; but all of them represented the

diverse premiums and rewards of inestimable beauty and

value to be conferred upon their great Queen and Lady.

Gabriel saluted Her with the Ave Maria, and added

thereto: "Our Empress and Lady, the Omnipotent and

the Holy of the holy sends us from his heavenly court

to announce to Thee in his name the most happy end of

thy pilgrimage and banishment upon earth in mortal life.

Soon, O Lady, is that day and hour approaching, in

which, according to thy longing desires, Thou shalt pass

through natural death to the possession of the eternal

and immortal life, which awaits Thee in the glory and at

the right hand of thy divine Son, our God. Exactly

three years from today Thou shalt be taken up and re

ceived into the everlasting joy of the Lord, where all

its inhabitants await Thee, longing for thy presence."

700. The most holy Mary heard this message with in

effable jubilee of her purest and most loving spirit, and,

prostrating Herself again upon the earth, She answered

in the same words as at the incarnation of the Word:

"Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum."

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done according

to thy word" (Luke 1, 38). Then She asked the holy

angels and ministers of the Most High to help Her give

thanks for this welcome and joyful news. The blessed

Mother alternately with the seraphim and other angels,

592 CITY OF GOD

sang the responses of a canticle that lasted for two hours.

Although by their nature and supernatural gifts the an

gelic spirits are so subtle, wise and excellent, they were

nevertheless excelled in all this by their Queen and Lady,

as vassals are by their sovereign; for in Her, grace and

wisdom abounded as in a Teacher, in them, only as in

disciples. Having finished this canticle and humiliating

Herself anew, She charged the supernal spirits to beseech

the Lord to prepare Her for her passage from mortal to

eternal life, and to ask all the other angels and saints in

heaven to pray for the same favor. They offered to obey

Her in all things, and therewith saint Gabriel took leave

and returned with all his company to the empyrean

heaven.

701. The great Queen and Lady of all the universe

remained alone in her oratory, and amid tears of humble

joy prostrated Herself upon the earth, embraced it as

the common mother of us all, saying: "Earth, I give

thee thanks as I ought, because without my merit thou

hast sustained me sixty-seven years. Thou art a creature

of the Most High and by his will thou hast sustained me

until now. I ask thee now to help me during the rest

of my dwelling upon thee, so that, just as I have been

created of thee and upon thee, I may through thee and

from thee be raised to the blessed vision of my Maker."

She addressed also other creatures, saying : "Ye heavens,

planets, stars and elements, created by the powerful

hands of my Beloved, faithful witnesses and proclaimers

of his greatness and beauty, you also I thank for the

preservation of my life ; help me then from today on, that,

with the divine favor, I may begin anew to perfect my

life during the time left of my career, in order that I may

show myself thankful to my and your Creator."

702. The third anniversary of the day following this

THE CORONATION 593

message, according to the prediction of the archangel

was to be the day of the glorious Transition of the most

blessed Mary. But from the very hour in which She re

ceived the announcement, She became so inflamed with the

fires of divine love and so multiplied her exercises of

devotion, that it seemed as if She wished to make up

for any relaxation or negligence in her fervor up to that

time. The traveler hastens his footsteps when a great

part of his way is still before him as the day declines;

the laborer or the merchant redoubles his exertions, when

evening overtakes him before the completion of his task.

But our great Queen hastened on in her heroic efforts,

not for fear of the approaching night or the risks of

journeying in the dark, but urged on by the loving desires

of the eternal light and in order to enter more rich and

prosperous into everlasting joys of the Lord. She im

mediately wrote to the Apostles and disciples to encourage

them in their labors for the conversion of the world, and

thereafter, during those three years, more frequently than

before, repeated her injunctions. She used still greater

diligence in exhorting and confirming the faithful living

near Her by her personal intercourse. Although She

kept her own secret, yet her behavior was that of one

who begins to take her departure and desires to leave her

friends rich and prosperous, filled with celestial benedic

tions.

703. But in regard to the evangelist saint John She

had reason to take a different course ; for She regarded

him as her son, who attended upon Her and assisted Her

in a special manner. Hence it seemed good to the most

blessed Lady to inform him of the message regarding

her death. After some days therefore and after having

asked his permission and blessing, She said to him : "Thou

dost already know, my son and master, that among the

594 CITY OF GOD

creatures of the Most High, I am the most indebted of all

and under the greatest obligations to submit to his holy

will. If all other creatures are subject to Him, certainly

in me ought to be fulfilled entirely all his pleasure for

time and eternity ; and thou, my son, shouldst help me in

this fulfillment, as one who knows by how many titles I

belong body and soul to my God and Lord. In his con

descending mercy He has revealed to me, that the end of

my mortal life is near; and that from the day on which

I have been thus informed, there remain only three more

years of banishment until my passage into eternal life.

I beseech thee, my son, to aid me during this short space

of time, in order that I labor in giving thanks to the

Most High and render Him some return for the immense

blessings I have received of his most liberal love. I beseech

thee from the bottom of my heart, pray for me."

704. These words of the most blessed Mother tore the

heart of saint John, and, unable to restrain his sorrow and

his tears, he answered : "My Mother and my Lady, thy

will and that of the Most High I am bound to obey in

whatever Thou commandest, although my merits are far

below what they ought to be and what I desired. But do

Thou, most loving Lady and Mother, help thy poor child,

who is to be left an orphan, deprived of thy most desir

able company." Saint John could add no more, because

of the sighs and tears pressed from him by his sorrow.

Although the loving Queen encouraged and consoled

him by sweet and efficacious words ; yet on that day the

heart of the Apostle was as pierced by a &lt;3art of pain and

sorrow, which struck him down and caused him to wither,

like the flowers in their bloom, which, when at evening

they are about to be deprived of the sun and, after hav

ing followed and been rejoiced in its light in its course

during the day, sadden and close up at evening. Lest

THE CORONATION 595

he should lose his life in this affliction, the most blessed

Mother came to the relief of saint John by her loving

promises, assuring him, that She would be his Mother

and Advocate with her divine Son. He informed saint

James the less, who, as bishop of Jerusalem and

according to the orders of saint Peter mentioned above,

assisted saint John in the service of the Empress of the

world. From that time on the two Apostles, mindful of

what was coming, were still more solicitous in their at

tendance upon their Queen and Lady. This was especially

true of the Evangelist, who would not leave her presence.

705. During the course of these three last years of the

life of our Queen and Lady the divine power permitted a

certain hidden and sweet force to throw all nature into

mourning and sorrow at the prospective death of Her,

who by her life beautified and perfected all creation. The

holy Apostles, although they were scattered over the

earth, began to feel new anxiety and misgivings regard

ing the time when they should be deprived of their

Mistress and her help; for already the divine light inti

mated to them, that this event could not be far off. The

others of the faithful living in Jerusalem and in the

country around, began secretly to feel that their treasure

and joy should not be theirs much longer. The heavens,

the stars and planets lost much of their brightness and

beauty, like the day at the approach of night. The birds

of the air fell into singular demonstrations of sorrow

during these last years. A great multitude of them ordi

narily gathered where the most blessed Mary happened to

be. Surrounding her oratory in unusual flight and mo

tions, they uttered, instead of their natural songs, sor

rowful notes, as if they were lamenting and groaning in

their grief, until the Lady herself ordered them again to

praise their Creator in their natural and musical tones. Of

596 CITY OF GOD

this miracle saint John was often a witness, joining them

in their lamentations. A few days before the Transition

of the heavenly Mother innumerable hosts of the little

birds gathered, laying their heads, and beaks upon the

ground, picking at their breasts in groans, like some one

taking farewell forever and asking the last benediction.

706. Not only the birds of the air indulged in this

sorrow, but also the brute beasts of the earth; for when

one day, according to her custom, the Queen of heaven

went to visit the holy places of the Redemption and

arrived on mount Calvary many wild beasts came

from the surrounding mountains to wait for Her. Some

of them prostrated themselves upon the ground, others

bowed their necks, and all of them uttered sorrow

ful sounds and thus for some hours manifested

their grief at the impending departure of Her, whom they

recognized as the Lady and the honor of all creation. The

most wonderful sign of this general mourning among the

creatures was that the light of the sun, the moon and

the stars was diminished and on the day of her Transition

they were eclipsed as at the death of the Redeemer of

the world. Although many of the wise and thoughtful

men noticed these unwonted changes in the celestial orbs,

all were ignorant of the cause, and could only express

their astonishment. But the Apostles and disciples, who,

as I shall relate further on, were present at her most

sweet and happy death, knew then that all these signs

were tokens of sorrow in insensible nature. The unin

telligent things of creation justly anticipated their mourn

ing for the loss of their Queen, while intelligent human

nature failed to weep over the departure of its Sovereign,

its legitimate Mistress, its true beauty and adorning glory.

In the former alone seemed to be fulfilled the prophecy

of Zacharias : that in that day the earth shall weep, and

THE CORONATION 597

the families of the house of God, each one for itself, and

that this mourning shall be as for the death of the first

born, over which all are accustomed to weep. This mourn

ing which the prophet predicts for the Onlybegotten of

the eternal Father, was due in proportion also to the

death of the most pure Lady, as the first-born Daughter

of grace and of life. And just as the faithful vassals and

servants clothe themselves in mourning not only at the

death of their prince or their Queen, but also at the

prospect of their danger or of their loss ; so the irrational

creatures anticipated the feeling and the tokens of their

sorrow, at the approach of the Transition of the most

holy Mary.

707. The Evangelist before all others shared in their

sorrow and in a special manner and more deeply than all

the rest felt this impending loss, without being able to

conceal it or dissemble it from the more familiar inmates

of the house. Two daughters of the master of the house,

who were much in attendance upon the Queen of the

world, and some other very devout persons, chanced to

see him shedding many tears in his sorrow. As they

knew the peaceful and tranquil disposition of the saint,

they conjectured that this unusual emotion was caused

by some very weighty event ; and in their kind solicitude

they a few times urged him to tell them the cause of this

unusual sorrow in order to relieve him if possible. The

holy Apostle suppressed his grief and for a long time

concealed its cause. But not without divine dispensation

he finally yielded to their importunities and told them

that the happy Transition of their Mother and Lady was

approaching, for these were the titles the Evangelist ap

plied to the most blessed Mary in her absence. Hence,

some time before it really took place, this impending loss

of the Church became known to some of the more fa-

598 CITY OF GOD

miliar acquaintances of the Queen ; for none of those that

came to know of it, could restrain their tears and sorrow

at this irreparable loss. Thenceforward they multiplied

their intercourse and their petitions with the blessed

Mother, throwing themselves at her feet, kissing the spots

where her sacred feet had trod, asking Her to bless them

and take them with Her, and not to forget them in the

glory of the Lord, whither She was about to carry away

with Her the hearts of all her servants.

708. It was a great mercy and providence of the Lord,

that many faithful of the primitive Church were thus

timely forewarned of the death of their Queen; for He

does not send labors and evils to his people without first

manifesting them to his servants, as is said by the prophet

Amos (Amos 3, 7). Although this loss could not be

spared to the faithful of that age, the divine clemency

ordained, that in as far as was possible the primitive

Church should find a compensation for the loss of its

Mother and Mistress, and that its tears and sorrow should

be the means of obliging Her, during the space of time

which still remained of her life, to favor and enrich them

with the treasures of divine grace, which as the Mistress

of them all She could confer upon them in her departure,

as for their consolation She really did. For the maternal

bosom of the blessed Lady in this extremity was moved

by the tears of the faithful, and during those last days of

her life, She obtained from her divine Son for them and

for all the Church new mercies and blessings of the Di

vinity. In order not to deprive the Church of these new

favors, the Lord did not wish to take away from them

unwarned his blessed Mother, in whom they trusted for

help, consolation, joy, relief in necessities, lightening of

their labors, counsel in their doubts, succor in their

afflictions and all kinds of blessings.

THE CORONATION 599

709. At no time and on no occasion were those ever

disappointed who trusted in the great Mother. She re

lieved and helped all that did not resist her loving and

clement advances. But during the last two years of her

life, no one could count or estimate the wonders of

beneficence She wrought upon the mortals of all classes

that flocked in multitudes around Her. All the sick that

presented themselves before Her She healed in body and

soul ; She converted many to the evangelical truth ; She

drew innumerable souls from sin to the state of grace.

She relieved the great miseries of the poor, dispensing

what She possessed or what was offered to Her as gifts,

and succoring many others by miraculous means. She

confirmed all in the fear of God, in faith and obedience

to the Church; and, as Mistress and only Treasurer of

the riches of the Divinity, of the life and death of her

divine Son, She wished to throw open all her riches of

liberal mercy before her death, in order to enrich all

her children in the holy Church ; and above all She con

soled them and encouraged them by her promise, that

She would continue to this day to favor us at the right

hand of her divine Son.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF THE

ANGELS GAVE ME.

710. My daughter, in order to understand the jubilee

^used in me by the announcement of the end of my mor

tal life men must consider the desire and force of the love

that urged me on to reach and see God in the glory He

nad prepared for me from all eternity. This mystery

entirely exceeds human capacity; and what the children

of the Church are able to understand of it for their con

solation, they do not seek to merit or make themselves

600 CITY OF GOD

capable of; for they do not apply the interior light, or

purify their consciences for its proper reception. On thee

my divine Son and I have liberally conferred this and

other mercies ; and I assure thee, my dearest, that happy

are the eyes which see what thou hast seen, and the

ears which hear what thou hast heard. Guard thy trea

sure, and do not lose it. Labor with all thy power to

gain the fruit of this knowledge and of my teaching. I

desire of thee that part of this fruit shall be to dispose

thyself from this hour for thy death in imitation of me;

since, having the certainty of its coming, any space of

time should seem short to thee for completing this busi

ness of eternal loss or gain. No rational creature was so

certain of eternal reward as I ; yet, notwithstanding this

certainty, I received notice of my death three years in

advance, and thou hast seen, how nevertheless I disposed

myself and prepared myself for the hour of death with

the holy fear proper to a mortal and earth-born creature.

In this I acted as a creature subject to death and as the

Teacher of the Church, giving an example to the rest of

the faithful of what they are to do as mortals and as

more in want of such preparation for avoiding eternal

damnation.

711. Among the absurd fallacies introduced by the

demon into the world none is greater or more pernicious

than the forgetfulness of the hour of death and of what

is to happen at the court of the rigorous Judge. Consider,

my daughter, that through this portal sin entered into

the world; for the serpent sought to convince the first

woman principally, that she would not die and need not

think of that matter (Gen. 3, 4). Thus continually

deceived, there are uncountable fools who live without

thought of death and who die forgetful of the un

happy lot that awaits them. In order that thou mayest

THE CORONATION 601

not be seized by this human perversity, begin to convince

thyself now that thou must die irrevocably; that thou

hast received much and paid little ; that the account shall

be so much the more rigorous, as the Judge has been

more liberal in the gifts and talents lavished upon thee

in thy sphere. I do not ask of thee more, and also not

less, than what thou owest to thy Spouse and to thy

Lord, which is always to operate the best in all places,

times and occasions, without permitting any forgetful-

ness, intermission or carelessness.

712. If in thy weakness thou incur rest the guilt of

some omission or negligence, let not the sun go down

or the day pass without having sorrowed for it, or con

fessed it, if thou canst, as if it were for the last account.

Proposing amendment, even of the slightest fault, com

mence to work with new fervor and solicitude, like one

from whom the time is slipping away for accomplishing

such an arduous and laborious task as the gaining of the

eternal glory and felicity and the avoiding of everlasting

death and punishment. This is to be the continual oc

cupation of all thy spiritual and sensitive faculties, in

order that thou make thy hope certain and joyful (II

Cor. 1, 7) ; in order that thou mayest not labor in vain

(Phil. 2, 16), nor run on into the uncertain (I Cor. 9,

26), like those who content themselves with some good

works which they mix up with many reprehensible and

detestable crimes. These cannot walk in security and joy

of interior hope ; since their own conscience assails them

and saddens them, unless they are lost in forgetfulness

and in the foolish delights of the flesh. In order to fill

all thy works with perfection continue the exercises I

have shown thee, and also those thou art accustomed to

in preparation for death, and all the prayers, prostra

tions and aspirations thou usually practicest. Then re-

602

CITY OF GOD

ceive the spiritual Viaticum as if for departure from the

earth to the other life, taking leave and forgetting ail-

that thou hast in this life. Enkindle thy heart with the

desire of seeing thy God, and rise up to his presence,

where is to be thy future habitation and thy present con

versation (Phil. 3,20).

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW THE DESIRES AND LONGINGS OF MOST HOLY MARY

TO SEE GOD INCREASED DURING HER LAST DAYS; SHE

TAKES LEAVE OF THE SACRED PLACES AND OF THE

CATHOLIC CHURCH; SHE MAKES HER TESTAMENT IN

THE PRESENCE OF THE MOST BLESSED TRINITY.

713. I find myself indeed poor in words now, when

I am to speak of the activity of the most blessed Mary s

love during the last days of her life, of the impetuous

flights of her spirit, of her desires and incomparable

yearnings to reach the close embraces of the Divinity.

I find no similitude in all nature; and if anything could

serve for a comparison, it might perhaps be the element

of fire, on account of its correspondence with love. Ad

mirable is the activity and the force of that element above

all others, none is more impatient of bounds; for it will

either die in confinement, or burst its bonds in order

to rise up unconstrained to its proper sphere. If it finds

itself imprisoned in the earth, it will tear up the surface,

break in two the mountains and shatter the rocks, hurl

ing them with irresistible violence aside until its fury is

spent. And, as experience teaches, though its prison

be of bronze as in the cannon, if it does not burst it, it

at least forces an opening for itself with terrific violence

and sends forth the metal ball on its course of destruc

tion. Such is the activity of this insensible creature.

714. But if in the heart of the most holy Mary the

fire of divine love was concentrated to one point (I

cannot explain myself by other words), then clearly the

603

604 CITY OF GOD

effects corresponded to their cause; and the effects of

fire are not more wonderful in the order of nature, than

the effects of her love in the order of grace, and of such

immense grace. Our great Queen was always a pilgrim

in the world and the only Phoenix upon earth; but when

She was ready to depart for heaven and assured of the

happy end of her pilgrimage, although her blessed body

still lingered upon earth, the flame of her most pure love,

with irresistible flight, pressed upward to her proper

sphere, that is, the Divinity. She could not withhold

or constrain the impetus of her heart, nor seemed to be

master of her interior activities, or hold dominion over

them; for She had yielded all her liberty to the sway

of love and to her desire of possessing the highest Good,

in whom She lived transformed and forgetful of earthly

mortality. Her love did not burst the narrow prison

walls of natural life because it was preserved more by

a miracle than by natural forces ; nor did it bear up with

it her mortal body, because it had not yet arrived at its

destined ending, although the activity of her spirit and

of her love was sufficient to ravish it from earth. But

in this sweet and unquenchable contest of love the opera

tions of nature were suspended, so that this godlike soul

seemed to receive its life only from the divine love; and

in order to preserve the natural life, a continuous miracle

was necessary, requiring the intervention of some super

natural activity for encountering death at each instant

and sustaining her natural existence.

715. It happened many times during these last days,

that in order to abate somewhat the excesses of her love

and in order to prevent her bosom from being forced

asunder, She broke the silence of her retreat and spke

to the Lord: "My sweetest Love, highest Good and

Treasure of my soul, draw me now after the sweetness

THE CORONATION 605

of thy ointments, which Thou hast permitted thy hand

maid and mother to taste in this world (Cant. 1, 3).

My will always found its rest entirely in Thee, the highest

Truth and my true Good ; never have I known any other

love than the love of Thee ! O my only hope and glory !

Let not my course be prolonged, let not the beginning of

that much desired freedom be postponed! (Ps. 141, 8).

Solve now the chains of that mortal existence, which still

detains me ! Let the term of my life be fulfilled, let that

end come toward which I tended from the first instant

in which I received my being from Thee. My dwelling

among the inhabitants of Cedar has been prolonged (Ps.

119, 5) ; but all the powers of my soul and all its facul

ties look toward the Sun which gives it life, follow the

fixed North-star that leads them on, and faint away in

longing for the Good they are awaiting. O ye supernal

spirits, by the most exalted condition of your spiritual

and angelic nature, by the happiness, which you enjoy

in the never-failing beauty of my Beloved, I beseech you

to have pity on me, my friends. Do ye pity this stranger

among the children of Adam, captive in the bonds of

mortal flesh. Present to my and your Lord the cause

of my sorrow, of which He is not ignorant (Cant. 5, 8) ;

tell Him that for his sake I embrace suffering in my ban

ishment, and that I so desire it ; but I cannot desire to

live in my own self; and if I am to live in Him in order

to preserve my life, how can I live in the absence of this,

my life? Love it is, which gives my life and at the

same time deprives me of it. Life cannot live without

love ; hence, how can I live without the Life, which alone

I love? In this sweet violence I am perishing; tell me

if possible of the qualities of my Beloved, for amid such

aromatic flowers the swoonings of my impatient love

shall find recovery !" ( Cant. 2, 5 ) .

606 CITY OF GOD

716. With such and other still more fervent aspira

tions the most blessed Mother assuaged the fires of her

spirit, that She excited the wonder of the holy angels

who attended upon Her and served Her. And as they,

by means of their high intelligence and heavenly science,

were able to understand these excesses, they on one oc

casion answered Her as follows : "Our Queen and Lady,

if Thou wishest again to hear us speak of the tokens of

thy Beloved that we know of, consider that He is beauty

itself and that He contains within Himself all the per

fections beyond all desire. He is amiable without defect,

delightful beyond comparison, pleasing without the least

flaw. In wisdom He is inestimable, in goodness without

measure, in power boundless, in greatness immeasurable,

in essence infinite, in majesty inaccessible, and all his

perfections are infinite. In his judgments He is terrible

(Ps. 65, 5), his counsels inscrutable (Rom. 11, 33), in

his justice most equitable (Ps. 118, 137), in his thoughts

unsearchable, in his words most true, in his works holy

(Ps. 144, 13), rich in mercies (Ephes. 2, 4). Space

cannot overreach Him, narrowness cannot confine Him,

sorrow cannot disturb Him, joy cannot cause any change

in Him ; nor does He ever fail in his wisdom, or change

in his will (Jas. 1, 17) ; abundance cannot overwhelm,

or want come near Him, memory adds nothing, forget-

fulness takes away nothing from his knowledge; what

was, is not past for Him, and what is to come, never

happens to Him; the beginning gave no origin to his

being, and time will bring to Him no end. Without

being caused, He causes all things (Eccli. 18, 1), and

He has not need of anything, but all things need partici

pation in Him; He preserves them without labor, He

governs them without confusion. Those who follow

Him walk not in darkness (John 8, 12), those who know

THE CORONATION 607

Him are happy, who love and extol Him, are blessed;

for He exalts his friends, and at last glorifies them by

his eternal vision and intercourse (John 17, 3). This,

O Lady, is the Good which Thou lovest and whose em

braces Thou shalt shortly enjoy without intermission

through all his eternities." Thus spoke the holy angels.

717. Such colloquies took place frequently between the

great Queen and her ministers. But just as the thirst

of one laboring under a burning fever is not allayed by

small drops of water, but rather increased, so also these

incitements of love did not quench the divine flame in

that loving Mother, because they rather opened up new

sources of loving anguish. During the last days of her

life She not only enjoyed the favors mentioned above,

namely those of the feast days and the Sundays, and

many other favors impossible to enumerate, but in order

to sustain and nourish Her in her anguishes of love, her

divine Son visited Her more frequently than before.

During these visits He recreated Her and comforted Her

with wonderful favors and caresses, assuring Her again

and again that her banishment would now be short, that

He would bear Her up to his right hand, where She

would be placed on her royal throne by the Father and

the Holy Ghost and be absorbed in the abyss of the

Divinity. Thus was She to be the source of new joy

to the saints, all of whom were awaiting and desiring to

see Her. On these occasions the loving Mother multi

plied her petitions and prayers for the holy Church, for

the Apostles and disciples, and all the ministers, who in

coming ages were to serve in the preaching of the Gospel

and the conversion of the world, and for all the mortals

who were to accept its teachings and to come to the

knowledge of the divine truth.

718. Among the wonders which the Lord wrought

608 CITY OF GOD

with the most blessed Mother during these last years,

there was one, which was manifest not only to the Evan

gelist, but to many of the faithful. This was, that

when the blessed Lady received holy Communion, She

shone for some hours with a clearness so wonderful,

that She seemed transfigured and gifted with glory.

This was caused by the sacred body of her Son, who,

as I have before stated, showed Himself to Her in a

transfigured and more glorious state than on mount

Tabor. All that then beheld Her were filled with a joy

and with effects so divine that they could be indeed felt

but not described.

719. The devout Queen resolved to take leave of the

holy places before her departure into heaven, and having

obtained the consent of saint John She left the house

with him and with the thousand angels of her guard.

Although these sovereign princes had always served and

accompanied Her in all her errands, occupations and

journeys, without having absented themselves for one

moment since the instant of her birth; yet on this occa

sion they manifested themselves to Her with greater

beauty and refulgence, as if they felt special joy in seeing

themselves already at the beginning of her last journey

into heaven. The heavenly Princess, setting aside hu

man occupations in order to enter upon her journey to

the real and true fatherland, visited all the memorable

places of our Redemption, marking each with the sweet

abundance of her tears, recalling the sorrowful memories

of what her Son there suffered, and fervently renewing

its effects by most fervent acts of love, clamors and

petitions for all the faithful, who should devoutly and

reverently visit these holy places during the future ages

of the Church. On Calvary She remained a longer time,

asking of her divine Son the full effects of his redeeming

THE CORONATION 609

Death for all the multitudes of souls there snatched from

destruction. The ardor of her ineffable charity during

this prayer rose to such a pitch, that it would have de

stroyed her life, if it had not been sustained by divine

power.

720. Thereupon her divine Son descended in person

from heaven and appeared to her on this place of his

death. Answering her petitions He said : "My Mother

and my Dove, Coadjutrix in the work of human Re

demption, thy petitions have come to my hearing and

have touched my heart. I promise Thee that I shall be

most liberal with men, and I shall dispense to them con

tinually the helps of my graces and favors, in order that

with their own free will they may merit the glory earned

for them by my blood, if they do not of their own ac

cord despise this happiness. In heaven thou shalt be

their Mediatrix and Advocate; and all those that shall

obtain thy intercession I shall fill with my treasures and

infinite mercies." This promise therefore was renewed

by the Lord on the very place on which He had redeemed

us. The most blessed Virgin, prostrate at his feet, gave

Him thanks and there begged Him by his precious and

bloody Death, to give Her his last benediction. The

Lord gave it, ratified all his royal promises, and then re

turned to the right hand of his eternal Father. Com

forted in her loving anguish, the most blessed Mary

pursued her devotions, kissed and worshipped the ground

on Calvary, saying: "Holy earth and consecrated

spot, from heaven shall I look upon thee with reverence,

bathed in that light, which manifests all in its fount and

origin and from whence came forth the divine Word to

enrich thee in his immortal flesh." Then She again

charged the holy angels to assist Her in the custody of

those sacred places, to inspire with holy thoughts all the

610 CITY OF GOD

faithful who should visit them with devotion, so that they

might know and esteem properly the admirable blessing

of the Redemption wrought thereon. She charged them

also with the defense of those sanctuaries; and if the

temerity and the crimes of men had not demerited this

favor, without a doubt the holy angels would have

warded off the profanations of the heathens and the

infidels. Even as it is, they defend them in many ways

to the present day.

721. The Queen asked also the angels of the sanctu

aries and the Evangelist to give Her their blessing in this

last leave-taking; and therewith She returned to her

oratory shedding tears of tenderest affection for what

She loved so much upon earth. There She prostrated

Herself with her face upon the earth and poured forth

another long and most fervent prayer for the Church;

and She persevered in it, until in an abstractive vision of

the Divinity, the Lord had given Her assurance that He

had heard and conceded her petitions at the throne of

his mercy. In order to give the last touch of holiness

to her works, She asked permission of the Lord to take

leave of the holy Church, saying: "Exalted and most

high God, Redeemer of the world, head of the saints

and the predestined, Justifier and Glorifier of souls, I am

a child of the holy Church, planted and acquired by thy

blood. Give me, O Lord, permission to take leave of

such a loving Mother, and of all my brethren, thy chil

dren, belonging to it." She was made aware of the con

sent of the Lord and therefore turned to the mystical

body of the Church, addressing it in sweet tears as

follows :

722. "Holy Catholic Church, which in the coming ages

shall be called the Roman, my mother and Mistress, true

treasure of my soul, thou hast been the only consolation

THE CORONATION 611

of my banishment; the refuge and ease of my labors; my

recreation, my joy and my hope; thou hast sustained me

in my course; in thee have I lived as a pilgrim to the

Fatherland; and thou hast nourished me after I had re

ceived in thee my existence in grace through thy head,

Christ Jesus, my Son and my Lord. In thee are the

treasures and the riches of his infinite merits; thou shalt

be for his faithful children the secure way to the prom

ised land, and thou shalt safeguard them on their dan

gerous and difficult pilgrimage. Thou shalt be the mis

tress of the nations to whom all owe reverence; in thee

are the rich and inestimable jewels of the anxieties, la

bors, affronts, hardships, torments, of the cross and of

death, which are all consecrated by those of my Lord,

thy Progenitor, thy Master, thy Chief, and are reserved

for his more distinguished servants and his dearest

friends. Thou hast adorned and enriched me with thy

jewels in order that I might enter in the nuptials of the

Spouse; thou hast made me wealthy, prosperous and

happy, and thou containest within thee thy Author in the

most holy Sacrament. My happy Mother, Church mili

tant, rich art thou and abundant in treasures ! For thee

have I always reserved my heart and my solicitude ; but

now is the time come to part from thee and leave thy

sweet companionship, in order to reach the end of my

course. Make me partaker of thy great goods; bathe

me copiously in the sacred liquor of the blood of the

Lamb, preserved in thee as a powerful means of sancti

fying many worlds. At the cost of my life a thousand

times would I bring to thee all the nations and tribes

of mortals, that they might enjoy thy treasures. My be

loved Church, my honor and my glory, I am about to

leave thee in mortal life; but in the eternal life I will

find thee joyful in an existence which includes all good.

612 CITY OF GOD

From that place I shall look upon thee with love, and

pray always for thy increase, thy prosperity and thy

progress."

723. This was the parting of the most blessed Mary

from the mystical body of the holy Roman Catholic

Church, the mother of the faithful, in order that all who

should hear of Her, might know by her sweet tears and

endearments, in what veneration, love and esteem She

held that holy Church. After thus taking leave, the

great Mistress, as the Mother of Wisdom, prepared to

make her testament and last Will. When She mani

fested this most prudent wish to the Lord, He deigned to

approve of it by his own royal presence. For this pur

pose, with myriads of attending angels, the three Per

sons of the most blessed Trinity descended to the oratory

of their Daughter and Spouse, and when the Queen had

adored the infinite Being of God, She heard a voice

speaking to Her: "Our chosen Spouse, make thy last

will as thou desirest, for We shall confirm it and execute

it entirely by our infinite power." The most prudent

Mother remained for some time lost in the profoundness

of her humility, seeking to know first the will of the

Most High before She should manifest her own. The

Lord responded to her modest desires and the person

of the Father said to Her : "My Daughter, thy will shall

be pleasing and acceptable to Me ; for thou art not want

ing in the merits of good works in parting from this

mortal life, that I should not satisfy thy desires." The

same encouragement was given to Her by the Son and

the Holy Ghost. Therewith the most blessed Mary

made her will in this form :

724. "Highest Lord and eternal God, I, a vile wormlet

of the earth, confess and adore Thee with all the rever

ence of my inmost soul as the Father, the Son and the

THE CORONATION 613

Holy Ghost, three Persons distinct in one undivided and

eternal essence, one substance, one in infinite majesty

of attributes and perfection. I confess Thee as the one

true Creator and Preserver of all that has being. In

thy kingly presence I declare and say, that my last will

is this: Of the goods of mortal life and of the world

in which I live, I possess none that I can leave; for

never have I possessed or loved anything beside Thee,

who art my good and all my possession. To the heav

ens, the stars and planets, to the elements and all crea

tures in them I give thanks, because according to thy will

they have sustained me without my merit, and lovingly

I desire and ask them to serve and praise Thee in the

offices and ministries assigned to them, and that they

continue to sustain and benefit my brethren and fellow-

men. In order that they may do it so much the better,

I renounce and assign to mankind the possession, and as

far as possible, the dominion of them, which thy Majesty

has given me over these irrational creatures, so that they

may now serve and sustain my fellowmen. Two tunics

and a cloak, which served to cover me, I leave to John

for his disposal, since I hold him as a son. My body

I ask the earth to receive again for thy service, since it

is the common mother and serves Thee as thy creature ;

my soul, despoiled of its body and of all visible things,

O my God, I resign into thy hands, in order that it may

love and magnify Thee through all thy eternities. My

merits and all the treasures, which with thy grace through

my works and exertions I have acquired, I leave to the

holy Church, my mother and my mistress, as my residu

ary heiress, and with thy permission I there deposit them,

wishing them to be much greater. And I desire that

before all else they redound to the exaltation of thy

holy name and procure the fulfillment of thy will on

614 CITY OF GOD

earth as it is done in heaven, and that all the nations

come to the knowledge, love and veneration of Thee, the

true God."

725. "In the second place I offer these merits for my

masters the Apostles and priests, of the present and of

the future ages, so that in view of them thy ineffable

clemency may make them apt ministers, worthy of their

office and state, rilled with wisdom, virtue and holiness,

by which they may edify and sanctify the souls redeemed

by thy blood. In the third place I offer them for the

spiritual good of my devoted servants, who invoke and

call upon me, in order that they may receive thy protec

tion and grace, and afterwards eternal life. In the

fourth place I desire that my services and labors may

move Thee to mercy toward all the sinning children of

Adam, in order that they may withdraw from their sin

ful state. From this hour on I propose and desire to

continue my prayers for them in thy divine presence, as

long as the world shall last. This, Lord and my God, is

my last will, always subject to thy own." At the con

clusion of this testament of the Queen, the most blessed

Trinity approved and confirmed it; and Christ the Re

deemer, as if authorizing it all, witnessed it by writing

in the heart of his Mother these words : "Let it be done

as thou wishest and ordainest."

726. If all we children of Adam, and especially we

who are born in the law of grace, had no other obliga

tion toward the most blessed Mary than this of having

been constituted heirs of her immense merits and of all

that is mentioned in this short and mysterious testament,

we could never repay our debt, even if in return we

should offer our lives and endure all the sufferings of

the most courageous martyrs and saints. I do not com

pare them with the infinite merits and treasures left by

THE CORONATION 615

Christ our Savior in the Church, because that is not pos

sible. But what excuse or pretense have the reprobate,

who avail themselves neither of the one nor the other?

All of them they despise, forget and squander. What tor

ment and despair will be theirs, when they unavailingly

come to know that they have lost forever such great

blessings and treasures for a momentary delight? Let

them confess the justice and equity with which they are

chastised and cast off by the Lord and his loving Mother,

whom they despised in such foolish temerity.

727. When the great Queen had made her testament,

She gave thanks to the Almighty and asked permission

to add another petition, saying: "Most clement Lord and

Father of mercies, if it is according to thy pleasure, my

soul desires that at its departure be present the Apostles,

my masters and thy anointed, together with the other

disciples, in order that they pray for me and bless me

at my transition from this to the eternal life." To this

her divine Son answered: "My most beloved Mother,

the Apostles are already on the way to come to thee,

and those that are near shall shortly arrive, while those

that are far off shall be carried by my angels; because,

for my and thy greater glory it is my will that all assist

at thy glorious departure for the eternal mansions, so

that thou and they may be consoled." For this new favor

the most blessed Mary gave thanks prostrate upon the

ground, and therewith the three divine Persons returned

to the empyrean heavens.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS, MOST

HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

728. My daughter, since thou admirest my esteem and

love for the holy Church, I wish to assist thy affection in

conceiving new appreciation and love for it. Thou canst

616 CITY OF GOD

not in thy mortal flesh understand what passed in my

soul in contemplating the holy Church. In addition to

what thou hast understood already, thou wilt see more,

if thou consider what moved my heart; namely, the

loving works of my divine Son in the interest of the

holy Church; they should be thy meditation day and

night; for in what He did for the Church, thou wilt be

able to estimate his love toward it. In order to be its

Head and the Chief of the predestined in this world

and forever (Col. 1, 18; Rom. 8, 29), He descended from

the bosom of the eternal Father and assumed flesh in my

womb. In order to regain his children (Luke 19, 10),

lost through the first sin of Adam, He took passible and

mortal flesh. In order to leave the example of his un

blemished life and his true and salutary doctrine (I Pet.

2, 21), He lived and conversed with men thirty-three

years (Baruch 3, 38). In order to redeem them ef

fectually and merit for them infinite blessings of grace

and glory, which they themselves could not merit, He

suffered most cruelly, shed his blood accepting a most

painful and frightful death on the Cross (Phil. 2, 8).

In order that from his sacred body after its death might

spring mysteriously his Church, He permitted it to be

torn by the lance (John 19, 34).

729. Since the eternal Father was so well pleased with

his Life, Passion and Death, the Redeemer instituted in

his Church the sacrifice of his body and blood (Luke 22,

19), in which his memory should live and which the faith

ful might offer as a satisfaction and peace-offering to

the divine Justice. At the same time through it He

wished to remain perpetually present in his Church as

a Sacrament for the spiritual nourishment of its chil

dren and as a fountain of grace, a viaticum and certain

pledge of eternal life. In addition to this He sent upon

THE CORONATION 617

his holy Church the Holy Ghost, to fifl it with his gifts

and his wisdom, promising that He should guide and

govern it always without error free from uncertainty and

danger (John 15, 26). He enriched it with all the mer

its of his Life, Passion and Death,, applying them by

means of the Sacraments, furnishing all that was neces

sary for men from their birth to their death for rigang

them from their sins, for persevering in grace, for de

fending themselves frff""5t the demons and vanquish

ing them by the arms of his Church, for crushing their

own natural passions ; and at the same time He instituted

fit and apt ministers for securing to his faithful all these

blessings. In the Church militant He communicates

familiarly with all the holy souls ; He makes them partici

pants in ills lWM\*n and secret favors ; He works wonders

and miracles for them, and when it is for his glory, as

sumes their works ; He hears their prayers for themselves

or for others, thus maintaining the communion of -

730. He left in it also other fountains of light and

truth, the holy Gospels and writings dictated by the Holy

Ghost, the decisions of the sacred councils, the assured

and ancient traditions. He sends at opportune times

holy doctors full of wisdom ; He furnishes teachers and

learned men, preachers and ministers in abundance. He

spreads the renown of the Church through his wonderful

saints; beautifies it with a variety of religious orders,

wherein the perfect and apostolic life is professed and

preserved; He governs it by many prelates and digni

taries. In order that all may proceed in harmony. He

placed over it a supreme bead, the Roman Pontiff, his

vicar, with the plenitude of fitghggf and divine authority,

as the head of this mystical and most beautiful body.

He defends and protects him to the end of the world

against all the powers of the earth and the infernal

618 CITY OF GOD

abysses (Matth. 16, 18). Among all these blessings be

stowed and still to be bestowed upon his beloved Church,

not the least one was, that he left me in it after his

wonderful Ascension in order that it might be spread

and governed by my merits and my presence. From

that time on and forever I hold this Church as my pos

session; for the Most High has consigned it to me as

a gift and has commanded me to take care of it as its

Mother and Mistress.

731. These, my dearest, are the greatest reasons and

motives for my past and present love of the holy Church,

here made known to thee; and I desire that they rouse

and enkindle thy heart to an ardent performance of all

that pertains to thee as my disciple, as my daughter and

that of the holy Church. Love it, respect and esteem it

from thy whole heart, enjoy its treasures, gather in the

riches of heaven, deposited together with its Author, in

his Church. Seek to unite it with thee and to unite thy

self with it ; for in it thou findest thy refuge and thy sal

vation, consolement in thy labors, hope in thy banish

ment, light and truth to guide thee in the darkness of

this world. For this holy Church I desire thee to labor

during all the rest of thy life ; since this is the purpose

for which thou hast been called into existence ; thus shalt

thou imitate and follow me in my tireless solicitude for

the Church on earth; this is thy greatest good fortune,

for which thou owest eternal gratitude. I wish thee, my

daughter, to be mindful of the fact, that with this desire

and intent I have applied to thee a great portion of the

treasures of the Church for the writing of my life; and

the Lord has chosen thee as an instrument and as secre

tary of its mysteries and hidden sacraments for purposes

of his greater glory. Do not conceive, that by having

labored somewhat in this work, that thou hast made even

THE CORONATION 619

a partial return, absolving thee of thy obligations; but

rather feel thyself more deeply pledged and obliged to

put in practice the doctrine thou hast recorded; and as

long as thou refusest to do so, thou wilt remain poor, un

relieved of thy indebtedness, and subject to a rigorous

account for all thou hast received. Now is the time to

work, so that thou mayest find thyself prepared, at lei

sure, and disengaged to receive the Spouse at the hour

of death. Look upon my freedom and detachment from

all earthly things : govern thyself by it, and let not the

oil of light and of love fail thee (Matth. 25, 3), in order

that thou mayest enter the nuptials of the Spouse through

the open gates of his infinite mercy and clemency.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GLORIOUS AND HAPPY TRANSITION OF THE MOST

HOLY MARY. HOW THE APOSTLES AND DISCIPLES

ARRIVED PREVIOUSLY IN JERUSALEM AND WERE PRES

ENT AT HER DEATH.

732. And now, according to the decree of the divine

will, the day was approaching in which the true and liv

ing Ark of the covenant was to be placed in the temple

of the celestial Jerusalem, with a greater glory and higher

jubilee than its prophetic figure was installed by Solo

mon in the sanctuary beneath the wings of the cherubim

(III King 8, 8). Three days before the most happy

Transition of the great Lady the Apostles and disciples

were gathered in Jerusalem and in the Cenacle. The first

one to arrive was saint Peter, who was transported

from Rome by the hands of an angel. At that place the

angel appeared to him and told him that the passing

away of the most blessed Mary was imminent and that

the Lord commanded him to go to Jerusalem in order to

be present at that event. Thereupon the angel took him

up and brought him from Italy to the Cenacle. Thither

the Queen of the world had retired, somewhat weakened

in body by the force of her divine love; for since She

was so near to her end, She was subjected more com

pletely to love s effects.

733. The great Lady came to the entrance of her ora

tory in order to receive the vicar of Christ our Savior.

Kneeling at his feet She asked his blessing and said:

"I give thanks and praise to the Almighty, that He has

620

THE CORONATION 621

brought to me the holy Father for assisting me in the

hour of my death." Then came saint Paul, to whom the

Queen showed the same reverence with similar tokens

of her pleasure at seeing him. The Apostles saluted

Her as the Mother of God, as their Queen and as Mis

tress of all creation; but with a sorrow equal to their

reverence, because they knew that they had come to wit

ness her passing away. After these Apostles came the

others and the disciples still living. Three days after,

they were all assembled in the Cenacle. The heavenly

Mother received them all with profound humility, rever

ence and love, asking each one to bless Her. Ail of them

complied, and saluted Her with admirable reverence.

By orders of the Lady given to saint John, and with the

assistance of saint James the less, they were all hospitably

entertained and accommodated.

734. Some of the Apostles who had been transported

by the angels and informed by them of the purpose of

their coming, were seized with tenderest grief and

shed abundant tears at the thought of losing their only

protection and consolation. Others were as yet ignorant

of their approaching loss, especially the disciples, who

had not been positively informed by the angels, but were

moved by interior inspirations and a sweet and forcible

intimation of God s will to come to Jerusalem. They

immediately conferred with saint Peter, desirous of

knowing the occasion of their meeting; for all of them

were convinced, that if there had been no special occa

sion, the Lord would not have urged them so strongly

to come. The apostle saint Peter, as the head of the

Church, called them all together in order to tell them of

the cause of their coming, and spoke to the assembly:

"My dearest children and brethren, the Lord has called

and brought us to Jerusalem from remote regions not

622 CITY OF GOD

without a cause most urgent and sorrowful to us. The

Most High wishes now to raise up to the throne of eter

nal glory his most blessed Mother, our Mistress, our con

solation and protection. His divine decree is that we

all be present at her most happy and glorious Transition.

When our Master and Redeemer ascended to the right

hand of his Father, although He left us orphaned of his

most delightful presence, we still retained his most

blessed Mother. As our light now leaves us, what shall

we do ? What help or hope have we to encourage us on

our pilgrimage ? I find none except the hope that we all

shall follow Her in due time."

735. Saint Peter could speak no farther, because un

controllable tears and sighs interrupted him. Neither

could the rest of the Apostles answer for a long time,

during which, amid copious and tenderest tears, they

gave vent to the groans of their inmost heart. After

some time the vicar of Christ recovered himself and

added: "My children, let us seek the presence of our

Mother and Lady. Let us spend the time left of her life

in her company and ask Her to bless us." They all be

took themselves to the oratory of the great Queen and

found Her kneeling upon a couch, on which She was

wont to recline for a short rest. They saw Her full of

beauty and celestial light, surrounded by the thousand

angels of her guard.

736. The natural condition and appearance of her

sacred and virginal body were the same as at her thirty-

third year ; for, as I have already stated, from that age

onward it experienced no change. It was not affected

by the passing years, showing no signs of age, no wrin

kles in her face or body, nor giving signs of weakening

or fading, as in other children of Adam, who gradually

fall away and drop from the natural perfection of early

THE CORONATION 623

man or womanhood. This unchangeableness was the

privilege of the most blessed Mary alone, as well because

it consorted with the stability of her purest soul, as be

cause it was the natural consequence of her immunity

from the sin of Adam, the effects of which in this regard

touched neither her sacred body nor her purest soul.

The Apostles and disciples, and some of the other faith

ful, occupied her chamber, all of them preserving the

utmost order in her presence. Saint Peter and saint

John placed themselves at the head of the couch. The

great Lady looked upon them all with her accustomed

modesty and reverence and spoke to them as follows:

"My dearest children, give permission to your servant to

speak in your presence and to disclose my humble de

sires." Saint Peter answered that all listened with at

tention and would obey Her in all things ; and he begged

Her to seat Herself upon the couch, while speaking to

them. It seemed to saint Peter that She was exhausted

from kneeling so long and that She had taken that posi

tion in order to pray to the Lord, and that in speaking

to them, it was proper She should be seated as their

Queen.

737. But She, who was the Teacher of humility and

obedience unto death, practiced both these virtues in that

hour. She answered that She would obey in asking of

them their blessing, and besought them to afford Her this

consolation. With the permission of saint Peter She

left the couch and, kneeling before the Apostle, said to

him: "My lord, I beseech thee, as the universal pastor

and head of the holy Church, to give me thy blessing in

thy own and in its name. Pardon me thy handmaid for

the smallness of the service I have rendered in my life.

Grant that John dispose of my vestments, the two tunics,

giving them to the two poor maidens, who have always

624 CITY OF GOD

obliged me by their charity." She then prostrated Her

self and kissed the feet of saint Peter as the vicar of

Christ, by her abundant tears eliciting not less the ad

miration than the tears of the Apostle and of all the by

standers. From saint Peter She went to saint John, and

kneeling likewise at his feet, said : "Pardon, my son and

my master, my not having fulfilled toward thee the

duties of a Mother as I ought and as the Lord had com

manded me, when from the Cross He appointed thee as

my son and me as thy mother (John 19, 27). I humbly

and from my heart thank thee for the kindness which

thou hast shown me as a son. Give me thy benediction

for entering into the vision and company of Him who

created me."

738. The sweetest Mother proceeded in her leave-tak

ing, speaking to each of the Apostles in particular and

to some of the disciples; and then to all the assembly to

gether ; for there were a great number. She rose to her

feet and addressed them all, saying: "Dearest children

and my masters, always have I kept you in my soul and

written in my heart. I have loved you with that tender

love and charity, which was given to me by my divine

Son, whom I have seen in you, his chosen friends. In

obedience to his holy and eternal will, I now go to the

eternal mansions, where I promise you as a Mother I

will look upon you by the clearest light of the Divinity,

the vision of which my soul hopes and desires in security.

I commend unto you my mother, the Church, the ex

altation of the name of the Most High, the spread of the

evangelical law, the honor and veneration for the words

of my divine Son, the memory of his Passion and Death,

the practice of his doctrine. My children, love the

Church, and love one another with that bond of charity,

which your Master has always inculcated upon you

THE CORONATION 625

(John 13, 34). To thee, Peter, holy Pontiff, I commend

my son John and all the rest."

739. The words of the most blessed Mary, like ar

rows of a divine fire, penetrated the hearts of all the

Apostles and hearers, and as She ceased speaking, all

of them were dissolved in streams of tears and, seized

with irreparable sorrow, cast themselves upon the ground

with sighs and groans sufficient to move to compassion

the very earth. All of them wept, and with them wept

also the sweetest Mary, who could not resist this bitter

and well-founded sorrow of her children. After some

time She spoke to them again, and asked them to pray

with Her and for Her in silence, which they did. Dur

ing this quietness the incarnate Word descended from

heaven on a throne of ineffable glory, accompanied by

all the saints and innumerable angels, and the house of

the Cenacle was filled with glory. The most blessed

Mary adored the Lord and kissed his feet. Prostrate

before Him She made the last and most profound act

of faith and humility in her mortal life. On this occa

sion the most pure Creature, the Queen of the heavens,

shrank within Herself and lowered Herself to the earth

more profoundly than all men together ever have or

ever will humiliate themselves for all their sins. Her

divine Son gave Her his blessing and in the presence of

the courtiers of heaven spoke to Her these words : "My

dearest Mother, whom I have chosen for my dwelling-

place, the hour is come in which thou art to pass from

the life of this death and of the world into the glory of

my Father and mine, where thou shalt possess the throne

prepared for thee at my right hand and enjoy it through

all eternity. And since, by my power and as my Mother,

I have caused thee to enter the world free and exempt

from sin, therefore also death shall have no right or

626 CITY OF GOD

permission to touch thee at thy exit from this world.

If thou wishest not to pass through it, come with Me

now to partake of my glory, which thou hast merited."

740. The most prudent Mother prostrated Herself at

the feet of her Son and with a joyous countenance an

swered: "My Son and my Lord, I beseech Thee let thy

mother and thy servant enter into eternal life by the

common portal of natural death, like the other children

of Adam. Thou, who art my true God, hast suffered

death without being obliged to do so; it is proper that,

as I have followed Thee in life, so I follow Thee also

in death." Christ the Savior approved of the decision

and the sacrifice of his most blessed Mother, and con

sented to its fulfillment. Then all the angels began to

sing in celestial harmony some of the verses of the Can

ticles of Solomon and other new ones. Although only

saint John and some of the Apostles were enlightened as

to the presence of Christ the Savior, yet the others felt

in their interior its divine and powerful effects; but the

music was heard as well by the Apostles and disciples,

as by many others of the faithful there present. A di

vine fragrance also spread about, which penetrated even

to the street. The house of the Cenacle was filled with

a wonderful effulgence, visible to all, and the Lord or

dained that multitudes of the people of Jerusalem gath

ered in the streets as witnesses to this new miracle.

741. When the angels began their music, the most

blessed Mary reclined back upon her couch or bed. Her

tunic was folded about her sacred body, her hands were

joined and her eyes fixed upon her divine Son, and She

was entirely inflamed with the fire of divine love. And

as the angels intoned those verses of the second chapter

of the Canticles: "Surge, propera, arnica mea," that is

to say: "Arise, haste, my beloved, my dove, my beau-

THE CORONATION 627

tiful one, and come, the winter has passed," etc., She

pronounced those words of her Son on the Cross : "Into

thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit." Then She

closed her virginal eyes and expired. The sickness which

took away her life was love, without any other weakness

or accidental intervention of whatever kind. She died

at the moment when the divine power suspended the

assistance, which until then had counteracted the sensible

ardors of her burning love of God. As soon as this

miraculous assistance was withdrawn, the fire of her

love consumed the life-humors of her heart and thus

caused the cessation of her earthly existence.

742. Then this most pure Soul passed from her vir

ginal body to be placed in boundless glory, on the throne

at the right hand of her divine Son. Immediately the

music of the angels seemed to withdraw to the upper

air; for that whole procession of angels and saints

accompanied the King and Queen to the empyrean heav

ens. The sacred body of the most blessed Mary, which

had been the temple and sanctuary of God in life, con

tinued to shine with an effulgent light and breathed forth

such a wonderful and unheard of fragrance, that all the

bystanders were filled with interior and exterior sweet

ness. The thousand angels of her guard remained to

watch over the inestimable treasure of her virginal body.

The Apostles and disciples, amid the tears and the joy

of the wonders they had seen, were absorbed in admira

tion for some time, and then sang many hymns and

psalms in honor of the most blessed Mary now departed.

This glorious Transition of the great Queen took place

in the hour in which her divine Son had died, at three

o clock on a Friday, the thirteenth day of August, she

being seventy years of age, less the twenty-six days in

tervening between the thirteenth of August, on which

628 CITY OF GOD

She died, and the eighth of September, the day of her

birth. The heavenly Mother had survived the death of

Christ the Savior twenty-one years, four months and

nineteen days; and his virginal birth, fifty-five years.

This reckoning can be easily made in the following man

ner: when Christ our Savior was born, his virginal

Mother was fifteen years, three months and seventeen

days of age. The Lord lived thirty-three years and three

months; so that at the time of his sacred Passion the

most blessed Lady was forty-eight years, six months and

seventeen days old ; adding to these another twenty-one

years, four months and nineteen days, we ascertain her

age as seventy years, less twenty-five or twenty-six days.\*

743. Great wonders and prodigies happened at the

precious death of the Queen; for the sun was eclipsed (as

I said above in No. 706) and its light was hidden in sor

row for some hours. Many birds of different kinds gath

ered around the Cenacle, and by their sorrowful clamors

and groans for a while caused the bystanders themselves

to weep. All Jerusalem was in commotion, and many of

the inhabitants collected in astonished crowds, confessing

loudly the power of God and the greatness of his works.

Others were astounded and as if beside themselves. The

Apostles and disciples with others of the faithful broke

forth in tears and sighs. Many sick persons came who

all were cured. The souls in purgatory were released.

But the greatest miracle was that three persons, a man

in Jerusalem and two women living in the immediate

neighborhood of the Cenacle, died in sin and impenitent

in that same hour, subject to eternal damnation; but

\*In figures as follows:

Birth of Christ, 15 years, 3 months, 17 days.

Death of Christ, 33 years, 3 months, . . days.

48 years, 6 months, 17 days.

Death of Mary, 21 years, 4 months, 19 days.

Age at death, 69 years, 11 months, 5 or 6 days.

THE CORONATION 629

when their cause came before the tribunal of Christ, his

sweetest Mother interceded for them and they were

restored to life. They so mended their conduct, that

afterwards they died in grace and were saved. This

privilege was not extended to others that died on that

day in the world, but was restricted to those three who

happened to die in that hour in Jerusalem. What festivi

ties were celebrated on that occasion in heaven I will

describe in another chapter, lest heavenly things be mixed

up with the sacred things of earth.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE GREAT QUEEN OF HEAVEN,

MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

744. My daughter, besides what thou hast understood

and written of my glorious Transition, I wish to inform

thee of another privilege, which was conceded to me by

my divine Son in that hour. Thou hast already re

corded, that the Lord offered me the choice of entering

into beatific vision either with or without passing through

the portals of death. If I had preferred not to die, the

Most High would have conceded this favor, because sin

had no part in me, and hence also not its punishment,

which is death. Thus it would also have been with my

divine Son, and with a greater right, if He had not

taken upon Himself the satisfaction of the divine justice

for men through his Passion and Death. Hence I

chose death freely in order to imitate and follow Him,

as also I did during his grievous passion. Since I had

seen my Son and true God die, I would not have satis

fied the love I owe Him, if I had refused death, and I

would have left a great gap in my conformity to and

my imitation of my Lord the Godman, whereas He

wished me to bear a great likeness to Him in his most

630 CITY OF GOD

sacred humanity. As I would thereafter never be able

to make up for such a defect, my soul would not enjoy

the plenitude of the delight of having died as did my

Lord and God.

745. Hence my choosing to die was so pleasing to

Him, and my prudent love therein obliged Him to such

an extent, that in return He immediately conceded to me

a singular favor for the benefit of the children of the

Church and conformable to my wishes. It was this, that

all those devoted to me, who should call upon me at the

hour of death, constituting me as their Advocate in mem

ory of my happy Transition and of my desiring to imi

tate Him in death, shall be under my special protection

in that hour, shall have me as a defense against the

demons, as a help and protection, and shall be presented

by me before the tribunal of his mercy and there experi

ence my intercession. In consequence the Lord gave me

a new power and commission and He promised to confer

great helps of his grace for a good death and for a purer

life on all those who in veneration of this mystery of my

precious death, should invoke my aid. Hence I desire

thee, my beloved daughter, from this day on to keep in

thy inmost heart a devout and loving memory of this

mystery, and to bless, praise, and magnify the Omnipo

tent, because He wrought such sacred miracles for me

and for the mortals. By this solicitude thou wilt oblige

the Lord and me to come to thy aid in that last hour.

746. And since death follows upon life and ordinarily

corresponds with it, therefore the surest pledge of a good

death is a good life; a life in which the heart is freed

and detached from earthly love. For this it is, which in

that last hour afflicts and oppresses the soul and which

is like a heavy chain restraining its liberty and prevent

ing it from rising above the things loved in this world.

THE CORONATION 631

O my daughter! How greatly do mortals misunder

stand this truth, and how far they err from it in their

actions! The Lord gives them life in order that they

may free themselves from the effects of original sin, so

as to be unhampered by them at the hour of their death ;

and the ignorant and miserable children of Adam spend

all their life in loading upon themselves new burdens and

fetters, so that they die captives of their passions and in

the tyranny of their hellish foes. I had no share in orig

inal sin and none of its effects had any power over my

faculties; nevertheless I lived in the greatest constraint,

in poverty and detached from earthly things, most per

fect and holy; and this holy freedom I did indeed ex

perience at the hour of my death. Consider then, my

daughter, and be mindful of this living example; free

thy heart more and more each day, so that with advanc

ing years thou mayest find thyself more free, more de

tached and averted from visible things, and so that when

the Spouse shall call thee to his nuptials, thou wilt not

need to seek in vain the required freedom and prudence.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BURIAL OF THE SACRED BODY OF THE MOST BLESSED

MARY, AND WHAT HAPPENED THEREAT.

747. In order that the Apostles, the disciples, and

many others of the faithful might not be too deeply op

pressed by sorrow, and in order that some of them might

not die of grief caused by the passing away of the most

blessed Mary, it was necessary that the divine power,

by an especial providence, furnish them with consolation

and dilate their heart for new influences in their incom

parable affliction. For the feeling, that their loss was

irretrievable in the present life, could not be repressed;

the privation of such a Treasure could never find a

recompense; and as the most sweet, loving and amiable

intercourse and conversation of their great Queen had

ravished the heart of each one, the ceasing of her pro

tection and company left them as it were without the

breath of life. But the Lord, who well knew how to

estimate the just cause of their sorrow, secretly upheld

them by his encouragements and so they set about the

fitting burial of the sacred body and whatever the occa

sion demanded.

748. Accordingly the holy Apostles, on whom this duty

specially devolved, held a conference concerning the

burial of the most sacred body of their Queen and Lady.

They selected for that purpose a new sepulchre, which

had been prepared mysteriously by the providence of her

divine Son. As they remembered, that, according to the

custom of the Jews at burial, the deified body of their

632

JHE CORONATION 633

Master had been anointed with precious ointments and

spices and wrapped in the sacred burial cloths; they

thought not of doing otherwise with the virginal body of

his most holy Mother. Accordingly they called the two

maidens, who had assisted the Queen during her life and

who had been designated as the heiresses of her tunics,

and instructed them to anoint the body of the Mother of

God with highest reverence and modesty and wrap it

in the winding-sheets before it should be placed in the

casket. With great reverence and fear the two maidens

entered the room, where the body of the blessed Lady lay

upon its couch ; but the refulgence issuing from it barred

and blinded them in such a manner that they could

neither see nor touch the body, nor even ascertain in

what particular place it rested.

749. In fear and reverence still greater than on their

entrance, the maidens left the room; and in great excite

ment and wonder they told the Apostles what had hap

pened. They, not without divine inspiration, came to

the conclusion, that this sacred Ark of the covenant was

not to be touched or handled in the common way. Then

saint Peter and saint John entered the oratory and per

ceived the effulgence, and at the same time they heard

the celestial music of the angels, who were singing:

"Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Others

responded : "A Virgin before childbirth, in childbirth

and after childbirth." From that time on many of the

faithful expressed their devotion toward the most blessed

Mary in these words of praise ; and from them they were

handed down to be repeated by us with the approbation

of the holy Church. The two holy Apostles, saint Peter

and saint John, were for a time lost in admiration at

what they saw and heard of their Queen; and in order

to decide what to do, they sank on their knees, beseech-

634 CITY OF GOD

ing the Lord to make it known. Then they heard a voice

saying : "Let not the sacred body be either uncovered or

touched."

750. Having thus been informed of the will of God,

they brought a bier, and, the effulgence having dimin

ished somewhat, they approached the couch and with

their own hands reverently took hold of the tunic at the

two ends. Thus, without changing its posture, they

raised the sacred and virginal Treasure and placed it

on the bier in the same position as it had occupied on the

couch. They could easily do this, because they felt no

more weight than that of the tunic. On this bier the

former effulgence of the body moderated still more, and

all of them, by disposition of the Lord and for the con

solation of all those present, could now perceive and

study the beauty of that virginal countenance and of

her hands. As for the rest, the omnipotence of God

protected this his heavenly dwelling, so that neither in

life nor in death any one should behold any other part

except what is common in ordinary conversation, namely,

her most inspiring countenance, by which She had been

known, and her hands, by which She had labored.

751. So great was the care and solicitude for his most

blessed Mother, that in this particular He used not so

much precaution in regard to his own body, as that of

the most pure Virgin. In her Immaculate Conception

He made Her like to Himself; likewise at her birth, in as

far as it did not take place in the common and natural

manner of other men. He preserved Her also from im

pure temptations and thoughts. But, as He was man and

the Redeemer of the world through his Passion and

Death, He permitted with his own body, what He would

not allow with Hers, as that of a woman, and therefore

He kept her virginal body entirely concealed; in fact

THE CORONATION 635

the most pure Lady during her life had Herself asked

that no one should be permitted to look upon it in death ;

which petition He fulfilled. Then the Apostles consulted

further about her burial. Their decision becoming

known among the multitudes of the faithful in Jerusalem,

they brought many candles to be lighted at the bier, and

it happened that all the lights burned through that day

and the two following days without any of the candles

being consumed or wasted in any shape or manner.

752. In order that this and many other miracles

wrought by the power of God on this occasion might

become better known to the world, the Lord himself in

spired all the inhabitants of Jerusalem to be present at

the burial of his most blessed Mother, so that there

was scarcely any person in Jerusalem, even of the Jews

or the gentiles, who were not attracted by the novelty

of this spectacle. The Apostles took upon their shoul

ders the sacred body and the tabernacle of God and, as

priests of the evangelical law, bore the Propitiatory of

the divine oracles and blessings in orderly procession

from the Cenacle in the city to the valley of Josaphat.

This was the visible accompaniment of the dwellers of

Jerusalem. But besides this there was another invisible

multitude, that of the courtiers of heaven. It was com

posed of the thousand angels of the Queen, continuing

their celestial songs, which were heard by the Apostles

and disciples and many others, and which sweetly con

tinued for three days. In addition to these many other

spirits had descended from heaven, namely, many thou

sands or legions of angels with the ancient Patriarchs

and Prophets, among whom were saint Joachim, saint

Anne, saint Joseph, saint Elisabeth and the Baptist and

numerous other saints, who were sent by our Savior

Jesus to assist at the exequies and burial of his most

blessed Mother.

636 CITY OF GOD

753. In the midst of this celestial and earthly accom

paniment, visible and invisible, the Apostles bore along

the sacred body, and on the way happened great miracles,

which would take much time to relate. In particular

all the sick, of which there were many of the different

kinds, were entirely cured. Many of the possessed were

freed from the demons; for the evil spirits did not dare

to wait until the sacred body came near the persons thus

afflicted. Greater still were the miracles of conversions

wrought among many Jews and gentiles, for on this occa

sion were opened up the treasures of divine mercy, so

that many souls came to the knowledge of Christ our

Savior and loudly confessed Him as the true God and

Redeemer, demanding Baptism. Many days thereafter

the Apostles and disciples labored hard in catechizing and

baptising those, who on that day had been converted to

the holy faith. The Apostles in carrying the sacred body

felt wonderful effects of divine light and consolation, in

which the disciples shared according to their measure.

All the multitudes of the people were seized with aston

ishment at the fragrance diffused about, the sweet music

and the other prodigies. They proclaimed God great and

powerful in this Creature and in testimony of their

acknowledgment, they struck their breasts in sorrow and

compunction.

754. When the procession came to the holy sepulchre

in the valley of Josaphat, the same two Apostles, saint

Peter and saint John, who had laid the celestial Treasure

from the couch onto the bier, with joyful reverence placed

it in the sepulchre and covered it with a linen cloth, the

hands of the angels performing more of these last rites

than the hands of the Apostles. They closed up the

sepulchre with a large stone, according to custom at other

burials. The celestial courtiers returned to heaven, while

THE CORONATION 637

the thousand angels of the Queen continued their

watch, guarding the sacred body and keeping up the

music as at her burial. The concourse of the people less

ened and the holy Apostles and disciples, dissolved in

tender tears, returned to the Cenacle. During a whole

year the exquisite fragrance exhaled by the body of the

Queen was noticeable throughout the Cenacle, and in

her oratory, for many years. This sanctuary remained

a place of refuge for all those that were burdened with

labor and difficulties; all found miraculous assistance, as

well in sickness as in hardships and necessities of other

kind. After these miracles had continued for some years

in Jerusalem, the sins of Jerusalem and of its inhabitants

drew upon this city, among other punishments, that of

being deprived of this inestimable blessing.

755. Having again gathered in the Cenacle, the

Apostles came to the conclusion that some of them and

of the disciples should watch at the sepulchre of their

Queen as long as they should hear the celestial music, for

all of them were wondering when the end of that miracle

should be. Accordingly some of them attended to the

affairs of the Church in catechizing and baptizing the

new converts; and others immediately returned to the

sepulchre, while all of them paid frequent visits to it dur

ing the next three days. Saint Peter and saint John, how

ever, were more zealous in their attendance, coming only

a few times to the Cenacle and immediately returning to

where was laid the treasure of their heart. Nor were the

irrational creatures missing at the exequies of the Mistress

of the universe ; for as the sacred body arrived near the

grave, innumerable large and small birds gathered in

the air, and many animals and wild beasts rushed from

the mountains toward the sepulchre, the ones singing

sorrowfully the others emitting groans and doleful sounds

638 CITY OF GOD

and all of them showing grief in their movements as if

mourning over the common loss. Only a few unbelieving

Jews, more hardened than the rocks and more impious

than the wild beasts failed to show sorrow at the death

of their Restoratrix, as they had failed to do also at the

death of their Redeemer and Master.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST HOLY

MARY, GAVE ME.

756. My daughter, in commemorating my natural

death and my burial, I wish that thou also die and be

buried to all worldly things, and this is to be the fruit

and the principal result of thy having known and written

my life. Many times in the course of thy writing have

I manifested to thee this as my desire and intimated it

to thee as my will, lest thou waste this singular favor

shown to thee by the Lord and by me. It is a foul offense

in any Christian, if, after dying to sin and after being

reborn in Christ by Baptism, knowing that the Lord

died for him, he returns again to the same faults; and

this will be a still greater wickedness in those souls, who

are called by special grace to be the most dear friends of

the Lord, as is the case with those, who for that very

purpose dedicate and consecrate themselves to his closer

service in religion, each one according to his condition

and state.

757. In these souls the vices of the world cause horror

in heaven itself, because the pride, the presumption, the

haughtiness, the want of mortification, the anger, the

covetousness, the conscious impurities and other wicked

ness in such souls force the Lord and the saints to with

draw from the sight of their monstrous distortion and

rouse them to greater wrath and offense than the same

sins in other souls. Therefore the Lord repudiates many

[THE CORONATION 639

who unrighteously bear the name of being his spouses

and leaves them to their own bad counsels, because they

have so disloyally broken the fidelity promised to God and

to me in their vocation and profession. But if all souls

must fear this terrible infidelity, consider well, my daugh

ter, what abhorrence especially thou wouldst deserve

in the sight of God, if thou wert guilty of such disloyalty.

It is time that thou die to the visible things, and that thy

body be buried in thy self-knowledge and self-abasement,

while thy soul sink into the being of God. The days of

thy life in this world are coming to a close; and I shall

be the judge to execute the sentence of thy separation

from life and from the world : thou needst not any more

be seen with those who live in it, nor they with thee. The

writing of my life should be for thee the seal of thy death

to the world, as I have so often exhorted thee and as

thou hast repeatedly and expressly promised me, with

heartfelt tears.

758. I wish this to be the proof of my doctrine and of

its efficacy ; do not permit it to be discredited in thee to

my dishonor, but let heaven and earth perceive the force

of its truth and of my example in thy works. For this

thou must depend neither upon thy understanding nor

upon thy will, and still less upon thy inclinations and

passions, because all this for thee has come to a finish.

Thy law must be the will of the Lord and my own, and

the dictates of obedience. And in order that thou mayest

never mistake what is in them the most holy, the most

perfect and God-pleasing, the Lord has provided for thy

direction in all things, lavishing upon thee his own care,

mine, and that of the holy angels. Do not allege igno

rance, pusillanimity, or weakness, nor much less, fear.

Weigh thy obligation, estimate thy indebtedness, attend

to the continual light; operate with the grace thou re-

640 CITY OF GOD

ceivest, so that amid all these benefits there be no cross so

heavy, no death so bitter, as shall not be deemed by thee

very light and acceptable. In this consists all thy good,

and in it is to be thy delight; since, if thou dost not suc

ceed in dying to all things, besides that thy path will be

sown with thorns, thou shalt not reach the perfection

thou desirest, nor the state to which the Lord calls thee.

759. If the world will not forget thee, do thou forget

it; if it will not leave thee alone, remember that thou

hast forsaken it, and that I have separated thee from it.

If it follow thee, fly; if it flatter thee, despise it; if it

contemn thee, suffer it ; and if it seek thee, let it not find

thee except in so far as will be to the glory of the Most

High. But as regards all the rest, thou must not any

more bear it in mind, than the living remember the dead.

Forget it just as the dead forget the living, and I desire

that thou have no more intercourse with this world, than

the dead have with the living. It will not seem extraor

dinary to thee, that in the beginning, in the middle and

at the end of this history I repeat so often this doctrine,

if thou ponder what depends upon thy practicing it. Con

sider, my dearest, what persecutions the devil has roused

against thee in secret through the world and its inhabi

tants under different pretexts and appearances. If God

has permitted them for the purpose of trying thee and for

the exercise of his grace, it is proper, that, as far as thou

are concerned, thou take it as a lesson and a warning.

Remember that great is the treasure which thou carriest

in a fragile vessel (II Cor. 2, 7) , and that all hell conspires

and rises up against thee. Thou livest in mortal flesh,

surrounded and assailed by astute enemies. Be a Spouse

of Christ my divine Son, and I shall be thy Mother and

Instructress. Recognize, then, thy need and thy weak

ness, and correspond with me as a dearest daughter, as

an obedient and perfect disciple in all things.

CHAPTER XXL

THE SOUL OF THE MOST HOLY MARY ENTERS THE EMPY

REAN HEAVEN AND, IN IMITATION OF CHRIST OUR

REDEEMER, RETURNS TO RESUSCITATE HER SACRED

BODY; IN IT SHE AGAIN ASCENDS TO THE RIGHT HAND

OF THE LORD ON THE THIRD DAY.

760. Of the glory and felicity of the saints in the

beatific vision saint Paul says with Isaias (I Cor. 2, 9;

Is. 64, 4), that neither have mortal eyes seen, nor ears

heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man what

God has prepared for those who love Him and who hope

in Him. In accordance with this Catholic truth, we

should not wonder at what is related of saint Augustine,

the great light of the Church, that, in setting out to write

a book on the glory of the blessed, he was visited by

his friend, saint Jerome, who had just died and entered

into the glory of the Lord, and was admonished by his

visitor, that he would not be able to compass his design ;

since no tongue or pen of man could describe the least

part of the blessings enjoyed by the saints in the beatific

vision. Such is the testimony of saint Jerome; and if

through holy Scriptures we had no other information

than that this glory is eternal, it would be beyond all our

comprehension. For, however much of our intellect may

expand, it will never comprehend eternity; and as this

is infinite and boundless, it is inexhaustible and incom

prehensible, how much soever it may be known and loved.

Just as God, the Infinite and the Almighty, created all

things, without being thereby exhausted, and even if He

641

642 CITY OF GOD

had created endless worlds ever anew, would remain still

infinite and immutable; so also, although seen and enjoyed

by countless saints, He will remain an infinite source of

new knowledge and love; for in creation and in glory

all creatures participate in Him only to a limited extent,

each according to its condition, while He in Himself is

without limitation or end.

761. If on this account the glory even of the least of

the saints is eneffable, what shall we say of the glory of

the most blessed Mary, since among the saints She is the

most holy and She by Herself is more like to her Son

than all the saints together, and since her grace and glory

exceed those of all the rest, as those of an empress or sov

ereign over her vassals? This truth can and should be

believed; but in mortal life it cannot be understood, or the

least part of it be explained; for the inadequacy and defi

ciency of our words and expressions rather tend to ob

scure than to set forth its greatness. Let us in this life

apply our labor, not in seeking to comprehend it, but in

seeking to merit its manifestation in glory, where we shall

experience more or less of this happiness according to our

works.

762. Our Redeemer Jesus entered heaven conducting

the purest soul of his Mother at his right hand. She alone

of all the mortals deserved exemption from particular

judgment ; hence for Her there was none ; no account was

asked or demanded of Her for what She had received;

for such was the promise that had been given to Her, when

She was exempted from the common guilt and chosen as

the Queen privileged above the laws of the children of

Adam. For the same reason, instead of being judged

with the rest, She shall be seated at the right hand of the

Judge to judge with Him all the creatures. If in the

first instant of her Conception She was the brightest

THE CORONATION 643

Aurora, effulgent with the rays of the sun of the Divinity

beyond all the brightness of the most exalted seraphim,

and if afterwards She was still further illumined by the

contact of the hypostatic Word, who derived his humanity

from her purest substance, it necessarily follows that She

should be his Companion for all eternity, possessing such

a likeness to Him, that none greater can be possible be

tween a Godman and a creature. In this light the Re

deemer himself presented Her before the throne of the

Divinity ; and speaking to the eternal Father in the pres

ence of all the blessed, who were ravished at this wonder,

the most sacred humanity uttered these words : "Eternal

Father, my most beloved Mother, thy beloved Daughter

and the cherished Spouse of the Holy Ghost, now comes

to take possession of the crown and glory, which We

have prepared as a reward for her merit. She is the one

who was born as the rose among thorns, untouched, pure

and beautiful, worthy of being embraced by Us and of

being placed upon a throne to which none of our

creatures can ever attain, and to which those conceived in

sin cannot aspire. This is our chosen and our only One,

distinguished above all else, to whom We communicated

our grace and our perfections beyond the measure accord

ed to other creatures; in whom We have deposited the

treasure of our incomprehensible Divinity and its gifts;

who most faithfully preserved and made fruitful the

talents, which We gave Her; who never swerved from

our will, and who found grace and pleasure in our eyes.

My Father, most equitous is the tribunal of our justice

and mercy, and in it the services of our friends are, repaid

in the most superabundant manner. It is right that to my

Mother be given the reward of a Mother; and if during

her whole life and in all her works She was as like to Me

as is possible for a creature to be, let Her also be as like

644 CITY OF GOD

to Me in glory and on the throne of our Majesty, so that

where holiness is in essence, there it may also be found in

its highest participation."

763. This decree of the incarnate Word was approved

by the Father and the Holy Ghost. The most holy soul

of Mary was immediately raised to the right hand of her

Son and true God, and placed on the royal throne of the

most holy Trinity, which neither men, nor angels nor the

seraphim themselves attain, and will not attain for all

eternity. This is the most exalted and supereminent

privilege of our Queen and Lady, that She is seated on the

throne with the three divine Persons and holds her place

as Empress, while all the rest are set as servants and

ministers to the highest King. To the eminence and

majesty of that position, inaccessible to all other crea

tures, correspond her gifts of glory, comprehension, vision

and fruition ; because She enjoys, above all and more than

all, that infinite Object, which the other blessed enjoy in

an endless variety of degrees. She knows, penetrates and

understands much deeper the eternal Being and its in

finite attributes ; She lovingly delights in its mysteries and

most hidden secrets, more than all the rest of the blessed.

Although between the glory of the divine Persons and that

of the most holy Mary there is an infinite distance; for

the light of the Divinity, as says the Apostle (I Tim. 6,

16), is inaccessible and in it alone dwells immortality and

glory by essence ; and though also the most holy soul of

Christ without measure exceeds in its gifts those of his

Mother; yet the great Queen surpasses inaccessibly all

the sajlnts in glory and has a likeness to that of Christ,

which cannot be understood in this life, nor ever described.

764. Just as little can be explained the extra joy, which

the blessed experienced on that day in singing the new

songs of praise to the Omnipotent and in celebrating the

THE CORONATION 645

glory of his Daughter, Mother and Spouse; for in Her

He had exalted all the works of his right hand. Although

to the Lord himself could come no new or essential glory,

because He possessed and possesses it immutably infinite

through all eternity; yet the exterior manifestations of his

pleasure and satisfaction at the fulfillment of his eternal

decrees were greater on that day, and from the throne a

voice, as if of the eternal Father resounded, saying: "In

the glory of our beloved and most loving Daughter all

the pleasure of our holy will is fulfilled to our entire sat

isfaction. To all the creatures We have given existence,

creating them out of nothing, in order that they may

participate in our infinite goods and treasures according

to the inclination and pleasure of our immense bounty.

The very ones who were made capable of our grace and

glory, have abused this blessing. Our cherished Daughter

alone had no part in the disobedience and prevarication

of the rest, and She has earned what the unworthy chil

dren of perdition have despised; and our heart has not

been disappointed in Her at any time or moment. To Her

belong the rewards, which according to our conditional

decree We had prepared for the disobedient angels and

for their followers among men, if they had been faithful

to their grace and vocation. She has recompensed Us

for their falling away by her subjection and obedience;

She has pleased Us in all her operations and has merited

a seat on the throne of our Majesty."

765. On the third day after the most pure soul of Mary

had taken possession of this glory never to leave it, the

Lord manifested to the saints his divine will, that She

should return to the world, resuscitate her sacred body

and unite Herself with it, so that She might in body and

soul be again raised to the right hand of her divine Son

without waiting for the general resurrection of the dead.

646 CITY OF GOD

The appropriateness of this favor, its accordance with the

others received by the most blessed Queen and with her

supereminent dignity, the saints could not but see; since

even to mortals it is so credible, that even if the Church had

not certified it, we would judge those impious and foolish,

who would dare deny it. But the blessed saw it with

greater clearness, together with the determined time and

hour as manifested to them in God himself. When the

time for this wonder had arrived, Christ our Savior him

self descended from heaven bringing with Him at his

right hand the soul of his most blessed Mother and ac

companied by many legions of the Angels, the Patriarchs

and ancient Prophets. They came to the sepulchre in the

valley of Josaphat, and all being gathered in sight of the

virginal temple, the Lord spoke the following words to

the saints.

766. "My Mother was conceived without stain of sin,

in order that from Her virginal substance I might stain

lessly clothe Myself in the humanity in which I came to

the world and redeemed it from sin. My flesh is her

flesh; She co-operated with Me in the works of the Re

demption ; hence I must raise Her, just as I rose from the

dead, and this shall be at the same time and hour. For

I wish to make Her like Me in all things." All the ancient

saints of the human race then gave thanks for this new

favor in songs of praise and glory to the Lord. Those

that especially distinguished themselves in their thanks

giving were our first parents Adam and Eve, saint Anne,

saint Joachim and saint Joseph, as being the more close

partakers in this miracle of his Omnipotence. Then the

purest soul of the Queen, at the command of the Lord,

entered the virginal body, reanimated it and raised it

up, giving it a new life of immortality and glory and com

municating to it the four gifts of clearness, impassibility,

THE CORONATION 647

agility &lt;and subtlety, corresponding to those of the soul

and overflowing from it into the body.

767. Endowed with these gifts the most blessed Mary

issued from the tomb in body and soul, without raising

the stone cover and without disturbing the position of

the tunic and the mantle that had enveloped her sacred

body. Since it is impossible to describe her beauty and

refulgent glory, I will not make the attempt. It is suffi

cient to say, that just as the heavenly Mother had given

to her divine Son in her womb the form of man, pure,

unstained and sinless, for the Redemption of the world,

so in return the Lord, in this resurrection and new re

generation, gave to Her a glory and beauty similar to his

own. In this mysterious and divine interchange each One

did what was possible: most holy Mary engendered

Christ, assimilating Him as much as possible to Herself,

and Christ resuscitated Her, communicating to Her of

his glory as far as She was capable as a creature.

768. Then from the sepulchre was started a most sol

emn procession, moving with celestial music through the

regions of the air and toward the empyrean heaven. This

happened in the hour immediately after midnight, in

which also the Lord had risen from the grave ; and there

fore not all of the Apostles were witness of this prodigy,

but only some of them, who were present and watching

at the sepulchre. The saints and angels entered heaven

in the order in which they had started; and in the last

place came Christ our Savior and at his right hand the

Queen, clothed in the gold of variety (as David says Ps.

44, 10), and so beautiful that She was the admiration

of the heavenly court. All of them turned toward Her to

look upon Her and bless Her with new jubilee and songs

of praise. Thus were heard those mysterious eulogies

recorded by Solomon: Come, daughters of Sion, to see

648 CITY OF GOD

your Queen, who is praised by the morning stars and

celebrated by the sons of the Most High. Who is She

that comes from the desert, like a column of all the

aromatic perfumes? Who is She, that rises like the

aurora, more beautiful than the moon, elect as the sun,

terrible as many serried armies ? Who is She that comes

up from the desert resting upon her Beloved and spread

ing forth abundant delights? (Cant. 3, 6-9; 8, 5). Who

is She in whom the Deity itself finds so much pleasure

and delight above all other creatures and whom He exalts

above them all in the heavens ! O novelty worthy of the

infinite Wisdom ! O prodigy of his Omnipotence, which

so magnifies and exalts Her !

769. Amid this glory the most blessed Mary arrived

body and soul at the throne of the most blessed Trinity.

And the three divine Persons received Her on it with an

embrace eternally undissoluble. The eternal Father said to

Her : "Ascend higher, my Daughter and my Dove." The

incarnate Word spoke: "My Mother, of whom I have

received human being and full return of my work in thy

perfect imitation, receive now from my hand the reward

thou hast merited." The Holy Ghost said : "My most

beloved Spouse, enter into the eternal joy, which corres

ponds to the most faithful love; do Thou now enjoy thy

love without solicitude ; for past is the winter of suffering

for Thou hast arrived at our eternal embraces." There

the most blessed Mary was absorbed in the contemplation

of the three divine Persons and as it were overwhelmed

in the boundless ocean and abyss of the Divinity, while

the saints were filled with wonder and new accidental

delight. Since, at the occasion of this work of the Om

nipotent happened other wonders, I shall speak of them as

far as possible in the following chapter.

THE CORONATION 649

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST HOLY

MARY, GAVE ME.

770. My daughter, lamentable and inexcusable is the

ignorance of men in so knowingly forgetting the eternal

glory, which God has prepared for those who dispose

themselves to merit it. I wish that thou bitterly bewail

and deplore this pernicious f orgetf ulness ; for there is

no doubt, that whoever wilfully forgets the eternal glory

and happiness is in evident danger of losing it. No one

is free from this guilt, not only because men do not apply

much labor or effort in seeking and retaining the remem

brance of this happiness; but they labor with all their

powers in things that make them forget the end for which

they were created. Undoubtedly this forgetfulness arises

from their entangling themselves in the pride of life, the

covetousness of the eyes, and the desires of the flesh

(John 2, 16) ; for employing therein all the forces and

faculties of their soul during the whole time of their life,

they have no leisure, care or attention for the thoughts

of eternal felicity. Let men acknowledge and confess,

whether this recollection costs them more labor than to

follow their blind passions, seeking after honors, posses

sions or the transitory pleasures, all of which have an

end with this life, and which, after much striving and

labor, many men do not, and can never attain.

771. How much easier is it for mortals to avoid such

perversity, especially for the children of the Church, since

they have at hand the easy means of faith and hope for

attaining the truth! Even if to gain eternal happiness

were as difficult to obtain as honors and riches and other

apparent advantages, it would be very foolish to labor as

much for the false as for the true advantages for eternal

650 CITY OF GOD

punishment as for eternal glory. This abominable fool

ishness thou wilt perceive and bewail with tears, my

daughter, if thou wilt consider the world in which thou

livest : how it is disturbed by wars and discords ; how

many unhappy ones it contains, who seek death in ex

change for a short and vain honor, vengeance and other

most vile advantages, while they do not think or care

for eternal life than irrational animals. It would be a

blessing for them if like animals they could end alto

gether with the temporal death ; but as the most of them

act against justice, and others, who still seek to be just,

live in forget fulness of their end, the ones as well as the

others incur the eternal death.

772. This is a sorrow beyond all sorrows, and a mis

fortune without equal and without remedy. Afflict thy

self, lament and grieve without consolation over this ruin

of so many souls bought by the blood of my divine Son.

I assure thee, my dearest, that, if men would not make

themselves so unworthy of it, my charity would urge me,

in the celestial glory where thou knowest me to be, to send

forth a voice through the whole world exclaiming:

"Mortal and deceived men, what are you doing? For

what purpose are you living? Do you realize what it is to

see God face to face, and to participate in his eternal

glory and share his company? Of what are you thinking?

Who has thus disturbed and fascinated your judgment?

What will you seek, if once you have lost this true bless

ing and happiness, since there is no other? The labor

is short, the reward is infinite glory, and the punishment

is eternal."

773. In connection with this sorrow, which I am try

ing to excite in thee, seek to labor assiduously in order

to evade the danger. A living example thou hast in my

life, which was a continual suffering such as thou hast

THE CORONATION 651

known; but when I came to my reward all of it seemed

as nothing, and I forgot it as if it Had not occurred.

Resolve, my dear, to follow me in my labor ; and though

thy labor seem to exceed that of all the mortals, look

upon it as most insignificant; let nothing seem to thee

difficult or hard, or bitter, even to passing through fire and

sword. Extend thy hand to great things, and shield

thy domestics, the senses, with double vestments (Prov.

31, 19, 21 ), against hardships and sufferings to the utmost

of their powers. At the same time I wish thee to be free

from another error, that of men who say : let us secure

salvation : greater or less glory does not matter ; we shall

all be together in that life. By this false principle, my

daughter, eternal life is not made secure, but rather put

at hazard ; since it arises from great foolishness and want

of divine love. Who seeks to make such a bargain with

God, offends Him, and tempts Him to permit such souls

to live in continued danger of perdition. Human weakness

always tends to do less good than it desires to do; and

when this desire is small, then it will execute very little,

and hence risks losing all.

774. He who contents himself with the mediocre or

lowest in virtue, always leaves in his will and in his in

clinations an opening for earthly affections and love of the

passing things. Such an opening is contrary to divine

love and therefore unavoidably causes the loss of the

latter and the ascendency of the former. When the

creature resolves to love God from all its heart and with

all its powers, as He commands, God overlooks its human

defects and shortcomings, and is pleased with their re

solve to reap the highest rewards. But to despise them

or wilfully undervalue them shows not the love of chil

dren or of true friends, but the base fear of slaves, who

are content to live and be let alone. If the saints could

652 CITY OF GOD

return to merit some additional degree of glory by suf

fering all torments to the day of judgment, they would

doubtlessly return; because they have a true and perfect

knowledge of the value of the reward and they love God

with a perfect charity. It is not proper that this privilege

be granted to the saints; but it was conceded to me, as

thou hast recorded in this history ; and my example con

firms this truth. It also reproves the foolishness of those,

who, in order to avoid suffering and the cross of Christ,

are looking for a curtailed reward, one which is contrary

to the inclination of God s goodness and contrary to his

desire of seeing souls multiply their merits and gain

copious rewards in the eternal felicity.

CHAPTER XXII.

MOST HOLY MARY IS CROWNED AS QUEEN OF HEAVEN AND

OF ALL CREATURES; ALL HER GREAT PRIVILEGES IN

FAVOR OF MANKIND ARE AGAIN CONFIRMED UPON HER.

775. When Christ Jesus the Savior took leave of his

disciples in order to enter upon his suffering, He told

them not to be disturbed in their hearts on account of the

things He had told them; because in the house of his

Father, which is eternal happiness, there are many man

sions. He further assured them, that there was room

and reward for all, although the merits and their good

works be diverse and that no one should be disturbed

in his peace and hope, though he should see others more

favored or advanced ; because in the house of God there

are many grades and many dwellings, in which each one

shall be content with what shall belong to him without

envy; for this is one of the great blessings of that eternal

felicity. I have said that most blessed Mary was assigned

to the supreme position and state on the throne of the

most blessed Trinity. Many times have I expressed myself

in these terms in order to point out great sacraments and

similar terms are used by the saints and by the sacred scrip

tures themselves (Apoc. 1, 4; 3, 21). Although no other

argument is really necessary, nevertheless, for those who

have not such a deep insight, I will say that God, as He is

the purest Spirit and at the same time infinite, immense,

incomprehensible, has no need of a material throne or

seat; for He fills all creation and is present in all crea

tures ; He is comprehended or circumscribed by none, but

653

654 CITY OF GOD

He himself comprehends and encompasses all things. The

saints do not see God with corporal eyes, but with those

of the soul ; but as they see Him in some certain location

(in order to adapt ourselves to our terrestrial and material

ways of thinking and speaking) we say that He is upon

the royal throne of the most blessed Trinity, though in

reality He has his glory within Himself and communicates

it to his saints. But I do not wish to deny, that the most

sacred humanity of Christ our Savior and of his most

blessed Mother holds a place supereminent over all the

saints; and that among the blessed, who are in heaven

with body and soul, there will be some kind of order in

their relative position nearer or farther from Christ our

Lord and the Queen ; but here is not the place to inquire

into the manner into which this arrangement shall be

made in heaven.

776. We call that the throne of the Divinity, from

which God manifests Himself to the saints as the prin

cipal cause of their glory and as the infinite, eternal God,

independent of all things and on whose will all creatures

depend, from which He manifests Himself as the Lord,

as the King, as the Judge and Master of all that is in

existence. This dignity Christ the Redeemer possesses,

in as far as He is God, essentially, and as far as He is

man, through the hypostatic union, by which He com

municates his Godhead to the humanity. Hence in heaven

He is the King, the Lord and supreme Judge; and the

saints, though their glory exceeds all human calculation,

are as servants and inferiors of this inaccessible Majesty.

In this the most holy Mary participates in a degree next

inferior and in a manner otherwise ineffable and propor

tionate to a mere creature so closely related to the God-

man; and therefore She assists forever at the right hand

of her Son as Queen (Ps. 44, 10), Lady and Mistress of

THE CORONATION 655

all creation, her dominion extending as far as that of her

divine Son, although in a different manner.

777. After placing the most blessed Mary on this ex

alted and supereminent throne, the Lord declared to the

courtiers of heaven all the privileges She should enjoy in

virtue of this participation in his majesty. The Person

of the eternal Father, as the first principle of all things,

speaking to the angels and saints, said to them: "Our

Daughter Mary was chosen according to our pleasure

from amongst all creatures, the first one to delight Us,

and who never fell from the title and position of a true

Daughter, such as We had given Her in our divine mind ;

She has a claim on our dominion, which We shall recog

nize by crowning Her as the legitimate and peerless Lady

and Sovereign." The incarnate Word said: "To my

true and natural Mother belong all the creatures which

were created and redeemed my Me; and of all things

over which I am King, She too shall be the legitimate

and supreme Queen." The Holy Ghost said: "Since She

is called my beloved and chosen Spouse, She deserves to

be crowned as Queen for all eternity."

778. Having thus spoken the three divine Persons

placed upon the head of the most blessed Mary a crown

of such new splendor and value, that the like has been

seen neither before nor after by any mere creature. At

the same time a voice sounded from the throne saying:

"My Beloved, chosen among the creatures, our kingdom

is Thine ; Thou shalt be the Lady and the Sovereign of

the seraphim, of all the ministering spirits, the angels and

of the entire universe of creatures. Attend, proceed and

govern prosperously over them, for in our supreme con

sistory We give Thee power, majesty and sovereignty.

Being filled with grace beyond all the rest, Thou hast

humiliated Thyself in thy own estimation to the lowest

656 CITY OF GOD

place ; receive now the supreme dignity deserved by Thee

and, as a participation in our Divinity, the dominion

over all the creatures of our Omnipotence. From thy

royal throne to the centre of the earth Thou shalt reign ;

and by the power We now give Thee Thou shalt subject

hell with all its demons and inhabitants. Let all of them

fear Thee as the supreme Empress and Mistress of those

caverns and dwelling-places of our enemies. In thy

hands and at thy pleasure We place the influences and

forces of the heavens, the moisture of the clouds, the

growths of the earth; and of all of them do Thou dis

tribute according to thy will, and our own will shall

be at thy disposal for the execution of thy wishes. Thou

shalt be the Empress and Mistress of the militant Church,

its Protectress, its Advocate, its Mother and Teacher.

Thou shalt be the special Patroness of the Catholic coun

tries; and whenever they, or the faithful, or any of the

children of Adam call upon Thee from their heart, serve

or oblige Thee, Thou shalt relieve and help them in

their labors and necessities. Thou shalt be the Friend,

the Defender and the Chieftainess of all the just and of

our friends; all of them Thou shalt comfort, console and

fill with blessings according to their devotion to Thee.

In view of all this We make Thee the Depositary of

our riches, the Treasurer of our goods; we place into

thy hands the helps and blessings of our grace for distri

bution; nothing do We wish to be given to the world,

which does not pass through thy hands ; and nothing do

We deny, which Thou wishest to concede to men. Grace

shall be diffused in thy lips for obtaining all that Thou

wishest and ordainest in heaven and on earth, and every

where shall angels and men obey Thee ; because whatever

is ours shall be thine, just as Thou hast always been ours ;

and Thou shalt reign with Us forever."

THE CORONATION 657

779. In the execution of this decree and privilege con

ceded to the Mistress of the world, the Almighty com

manded all the courtiers of heaven, angels and men, to

show Her obedience and recognize Her as their Queen

and Lady. There was another mystery concealed in this

wonder, namely, it was a recompense for the worship

and veneration, which, as is clear from this history, the

most blessed Mary, notwithstanding that She was the

Mother of God, full of grace and holiness above the

angels and saints, had bestowed upon the saints during

her mortal pilgrimage. Although during the time when

they were comprehensors and She yet a pilgrim, it was

for her greater merit, that She should humble Herself

beneath them all according to the ordainment of the

Lord ; yet now, when She was in possession of the king

dom, it was just, that She should be venerated, wor

shipped and extolled by them as her inferiors and vas

sals. This they also did in that most blessed state, in

which all things are reduced to their proper proportion

and order. Both the angelic spirits and the blessed souls,

while rendering their adoration to the Lord with fear

and worshipful reverence, rendered a like homage in its

proportion to his most blessed Mother; and the saints

who were there in their bodies prostrated themselves

and gave bodily signs of their worship. All these dem

onstrations at the coronation of the Empress of heaven

redounded wonderfully to her glory, to the new joy and

jubilee of the saints and to the pleasure of the most

blessed Trinity. Altogether festive was this day, and it

produced new accidental glory in all the heavens. Those

that partook more especially therein were her most for

tunate spouse saint Joseph, saint Joachim and Anne and

all the other relatives of the Queen, together with the

thousand angels of her guard.

658 CITY OF GOD

780. Within the glorious body of the Queen, over her

heart, was visible to the saints a small globe or mon

strance of singular beauty and splendor, which particu

larly roused and rouses their admiration and joy. It

was there in testimony and reward of her having af

forded to the sacramental Word an acceptable resting-

place and sanctuary, and of her having received holy

Communion so worthily, purely and holily, without any

defect or imperfection, and with a devotion, love and

reverence attained by none other of the saints. In re

gard to the other rewards and crowns corresponding to

her peerless works and virtues, nothing that can be said

could give any idea ; and therefore I refer it to the bea

tific vision, where each one shall perceive them in pro

portion as his doings and his devotion shall have mer

ited. In the foregoing chapter I mentioned that the

Transition of our Queen happened on the thirteenth of

August, while her Resurrection, Assumption and Coro

nation happened on Sunday the fifteenth, on the day in

which it is celebrated in the Church. Her sacred body

remained in the sepulchre thirty-six hours, just as the

body of her divine Son; for her Transition and her

Resurrection took place in the same hours of the day.

According to the computation given above, I advert that

this miracle happened in the year of our Lord fifty-five,

which had advanced as many days as intervene between

the Nativity of the Lord and the fifteenth of August.

781. We have left the great Lady at the right hand

of her divine Son, reigning through all the ages of eter

nity. We now return to the Apostles and disciples,

who in flowing tears surrounded the sepulchre of Mary

in the valley of Josaphat. Saint Peter and saint John,

who had been the most constant in their attendance, no

ticed that the celestial music had ceased; for they failed

THE CORONATION 659

to hear it on the third day. Partly enlightened by the

Holy Ghost, they conjectured that the most pure Mother

had arisen and had entered heaven, body and soul, like

her divine Son. They conferred about this matter and

came to the conclusion that so it must be; and saint

Peter, as the head of the Church, decided that such a

wonderful fact should be ascertained as far as possible

and made known to those who had witnessed her death

and burial. For this purpose, on the same day, he called

together the Apostles, disciples and the other faithful at

the sepulchre. He told them of his reasons for the con

jecture now in the mind of all and the reasons for mani

festing the truth of this wonder to the Church, namely,

that it should be reverenced in the coming ages and would

redound to the glory of the Lord and of his most blessed

Mother. All approved of the decision of the vicar of

Christ and at his order immediately removed the stone,

which closed the sepulchre. This being done, they saw

the grave despoiled of the sacred body of the Queen of

heaven and the tunic in the same position as when it

had covered her, showing that it must have passed

through the tunic and the stone of the sepulchre without

disturbing any part of them. Saint Peter took out the

tunic and the mantle and, with all the others, venerated

it, as they were now certain of the Resurrection and As

sumption of the blessed Mother into heaven. In mixed

joy and sorrow they wept sweet tears at this prodigy and

sang psalms and hymns of praise and glory to the Lord

and his most blessed Mother.

782. In their affectionate wonder all of them remained

looking at the sepulchre, spellbound, until the angel of

the Lord descended and manifested himself to them,

saying: "Ye men of Galilee, why are you astounded

and tarry here? Your and our Queen now lives body

660 CITY OF GOD

and soul in heaven and reigns in it forever with Christ.

She sends me to confirm you in this truth, and in her

name I tell you that She recommends to you anew the

Church, the conversion of souls, and the spread of the

Gospel. She desires to tell you that you now return

to your ministry, with which you were charged, and that

from her throne She will take care of you." At this

message the Apostles were consoled; they experienced

her protection in their wanderings, and much more in the

hour of their martyrdom; for to each of them did She

appear in that hour to present their souls to the Lord.

Other particulars concerning the Transition and Resur

rection of the most blessed Mary were not made known

to me for record here; nor have I during the whole

course of this heavenly history had any choice of saying

except what was made known to me and what I was com

manded to write.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST

HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

783. My daughter, if anything could lessen the enjoy

ment of the highest felicity and glory which I possess,

and if, in it, I could be capable of any sorrow, without

a doubt I would be grieved to see the holy Church and

the rest of the world in its present state of labor, not

withstanding that men know me to be their Mother, Ad

vocate and Protectress in heaven, ready to guide and

assist them to eternal life. In this state of affairs, when

the Almighty has granted me so many privileges as his

Mother and when there are so many sources of help

placed in my hands solely for the benefit of mortals and

belonging to me as the Mother of clemency, it is a great

cause of sorrow to me to see mortals force me to remain

THE CORONATION 661

idle, and that, for want of calling upon me, so many souls

should be lost. But if I cannot experience grief now, I

may justly complain of men, that they load themselves

with eternal damnation and refuse me the glory of sav

ing their souls.

784. How much my intercession and the power I have

in heaven is worth has never been hidden in the Church,

for I have demonstrated my ability to save all by so many

thousands of miracles, prodigies and favors operated in

behalf of those devoted to me. With those who have

called upon me in their needs I have always shown my

self liberal, and the Lord has shown himself liberal to

them on my account. Yet, though many are the souls

whom I have helped, they are few in comparison with

those, whom I could and am willing to help. The world

and the centuries are far advanced; while mortals are

tardy in turning toward the knowledge of God; the

children of the Church are involving themselves in the

snares of satan; sinners multiply and crimes increase,

because charity is getting cold even after God became

incarnate and has taught the world by his life and doc

trine, redeemed it by his Passion and Death, established

his evangelical law for the guidance of his creatures,

illustrated them by so many miracles, enlightenments,

blessings, favors in the Church and in its saints. In ad

dition to all this God has in his goodness opened up his

mercies through me and my intercession, constituting

me as Mother, Advocate, Protectress and Helper of all

men, and, though I am most punctual and liberal in ful

filling all these offices, the result is inadequate. After all,

since the crimes of men merit the chastisements, which

threaten them and which they begin to feel, and since,

under these circumstances, the malice of men has already

reached the highest possible point, what wonder is it

that divine Justice be irritated?

662 CITY OF GOD

785. All this, my daughter, is true; but my kind and

clement love exceeds all this malice, detains justice and

still inclines the infinite Goodness toward men. The

Most High still wishes to give liberally of his infinite

treasures and resolves to favor those who know how to

gain my intercession before God. This is the secure way

and the powerful means of advancing the Church, of im

proving the Catholic reigns, of spreading the faith, of

furthering the welfare of families and of states, of bring

ing the souls to grace and to the friendship of God. In

this work, my daughter, I have desired thee to labor

and assist according to thy power with the divine grace.

Thy labor shall consist not only in having written my

life, but in imitating it by following the counsels and

salutary teachings, which thou hast so abundantly re

ceived, both in what thou hast written and in other favors

and blessings of the Almighty. Consider well, my dear

est, thy strict obligation of serving me as thy only

Mother, as thy legitimate and true Teacher and Su

perior, who favors thee with all these and many other

condescensions. Thou hast likewise often renewed and

ratified the vows of thy profession into my hands, and

hast therein promised me especial obedience. Remem

ber the promises thou hast so often given to the Lord

and his angels. Many times We have manifested to thee

our will, that thou live and act as one of them, and that

thou, in carnal flesh, participate in the condition and

activity of an angel; that thy conversation and inter

course be with those purest spirits ; and just as they con

verse with each other, and just as the higher enlighten

and illumine the lower, so they will enlighten and instruct

thee in the perfections of thy Beloved and in the exer

cise of all virtues, especially of the mistress of all of them,

charity, by which thou mayest be inflamed in the love of

THE CORONATION 663

thy sweet Master and of thy fellowmen. To this state

thou must aspire with all thy powers, in order that the

Most High may find thee apt for the fulfillment of his

most holy will and of all his wishes. May his powerful

right hand give thee his eternal benediction, show thee

the joy of his countenance and grant thee peace; see that

thou do not make thyself unworthy.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN OFFERING OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING MADE BY

ME, SISTER MARY OF JESUS, THE LEAST OF THE MOR

TALS, TO THE LORD AND TO HIS MOST HOLY MOTHER,

FOR HAVING BEEN CHOSEN TO WRITE THIS HEAVENLY

HISTORY UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE QUEEN AND

MISTRESS OF HEAVEN.

786. I confess Thee, God eternal, Lord of heaven,

earth, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, the one and true God,

one substance and majesty in the Trinity of Persons;

since, not having received aught from anybody that Thou

shouldst repay him (Rom. 11, 35), solely through thy

ineffable condescension and clemency, Thou revealest

thy mysteries and sacraments to thy little ones (Matth.

11, 25) ; and since Thou dost it in immense bounty and

infinite wisdom, pleasing Thyself and doing all things

aright. In thy works Thou magnifiest thy holy name,

exaltest thy Omnipotence, showest thy greatness, scat-

terest thy mercies and establishest thy glory, which is

due to Thee as the holy, the wise, the powerful, the kind,

the liberal God, the sole beginning and Author of all that

is good. None is so holy as Thou, none so powerful, none

so exalted, who raisest the poor from the dust and from

nothingness, and enrichest the needy (Ps. 112, 7). Thine

are, O Most high God, the ends and the poles of the

earth; Thou givest life and givest death; Thou hum

blest and castest down to the abyss the proud; Thou

raisest up the humble according to thy pleasure; Thou

enrichest and impoverishest, in order that in thy pres-

664

THE CORONATION 665

ence no flesh may boast, nor the strongest presume upon

his strength, nor the weakest fear or distrust his weak

ness and his lowliness.

787. I confess Thee, true Lord, as the King and Sa

vior of the world, Jesus Christ. I confess and praise

thy holy name, and give glory to Thee, who conferrest

wisdom. I confess Thee, Queen of heaven, most holy

Mary, worthy Mother of my Lord Jesus Christ, begin

ning of our salvation, Depositary of the treasures of his

grace, living temple of the Divinity, Restoratrix of the

general ruin of the human race, new joy of the saints,

glory of the works of the Almighty and singular instru

ment of his omnipotence. I confess Thee as the sweet

est Mother of mercy, refuge of the unfortunate, Pro

tectress of the poor and of the afflicted. All that the

angelic spirits and the saints proclaim of Thee and in

Thee and through Thee, I also confess, and I join them

in whatever glory and praise they render in Thee and

through Thee to the Divinity, blessing, magnifying and

confessing and believing with them all things concern

ing Thee. O sovereign Mistress of all creation, through

thy powerful intercession alone and because Thou hast

looked upon me with eyes of mercy, thy divine Son has

turned toward me in his clemency and as a Father, not

disdaining for thy sake to choose me, the vile wormlet

of the earth and the least of his creatures, to manifest

his venerable secrets and mysteries. The multitudinous

waters of my faults, ingratitudes, and miseries could not

extinguish his immense charity; and my torpidity and

sluggishness could not dry up or choke the flow of his

divine light and wisdom.

788. I confess, O kindest Mother, before heaven and

earth, that I have striven with myself and with thy

enemies, and that my interior was sadly troubled in hesi-

666 CITY OF GOD

tating between my unworthiness and my desire of wis

dom. I stretched forth my hands and bewailed my

insipidity; I led on my heart and I encountered knowl

edge, and with knowledge I came into the possession of

peace; and when I encountered and loved it, I found it

a goodly possession and I was not confounded. The

sweet and strong force of wisdom wrought within me;

it manifested to me the most hidden things and the

knowledge most uncertain. I placed before my eyes

Thee, the beautiful image of the Divinity and Mystical

City of his habitation, in order that through the dark

some night of this mortal life Thou mightest be my guid

ing star, and light me as the Moon of the immense Light,

in order that I might follow Thee as my Leader, love

Thee as a Mother, obey Thee as a Mistress, hear Thee

as my Teacher, and that I might see myself as in an im

maculate mirror and reach highest perfection by having

before me thy ineffable example, virtues and works.

789. But who could ever have bent the divine Majesty

to so vile a slave, if not Thou, O powerful Queen, who

art the greatness of love, the vastness of clemency, the

source of mercy, the prodigy of grace, and who has filled

up the abysses of the guilt of all the children of Adam ?

Thine, O lady, is the credit and the glory for all that I

have written, not only because it records thy most holy

and admirable life, but because Thou hast given it a

beginning, hast furthered it, and brought it to a close;

and if Thou hadst not been its Author and Controller, it

could never have entered into the thoughts of man. Let

then all thanks and credit be thine ; because Thou alone

canst give a worthy return to thy divine Son and our

Redeemer for this new and peerless blessing. That

Thou make such a return, I can only ask Thee in the

name of the whole Church and in my own name. And

THE CORONATION 667

this I desire now to do, O Mother and Queen of the vir

tues. Humbled in thy presence deeper than to the dust,

I confess that I have received this and other blessings

as favors, which I could never merit. Only what Thou

hast taught and commanded, have I written; I was but

the mute instrument of thy tongue, moved and governed

by thy wisdom. Perfect Thou this work of thy hands,

not only for the appropriate glory and praise of the Most

High, but add to it what is wanting, in order that I may

practice thy doctrine, follow thy footsteps, obey thy com

mands, and run after the odor of thy ointment, which is

the sweetness and fragrance of thy virtues diffused with

ineffable kindness through this history.

790. I acknowledge myself, O Empress of heaven, as

the most unworthy, the most indebted of all the children

of the holy Church. In order that the monstrosity of

my ingratitude may not become apparent in the Church,

before the Almighty and before Thee, I propose, offer, and

seek to make known my renunciation of all that is visible

and earthly; I again subject my liberty to the divine will

and to thy own, engaging myself not to use my free will,

except for God s glory and pleasure. I beseech Thee,

the Blessed among all creatures, that, just as by the clem

ency of the Lord and thy own I hold the title of his

spouse, and of thy daughter and disciple, and as thy Son,

my Lord, has so often deigned to confirm these titles,

Thou permit me not, O purest Lady, to fall short of these

titles. Thy protection and assistance failed me not in

the writing of thy wonderful life ; help me now to put

in practice thy teachings, wherein eternal life consists.

Thou wishest and commandest me to imitate Thee ; stamp

and engrave upon my soul thy living image. Thou hast

sown in my earthly heart the holy seed : guard it, cher

ish it, O Mother, sweet Mistress, that it may bring forth

668 CITY OF GOD

fruit a hundredfold; that it may not be snatched away

by the birds of prey, the dragon and his demons; for of

their wrath I have been warned in every word I have

written of Thee, my Lady. Guide me unto the end, com

mand me as my Queen, instruct me as my Teacher, cor

rect me as my Mother. Receive as thanksgiving for all

this thy own life and the high pleasure which Thou hast

afforded to the most blessed Trinity, as the perfection

of his marvels. Let the angels and saints praise Thee, let

all nations and generations know Thee; let all creatures,

in Thee and through Thee, eternally bless their Creator

and let my soul and all my faculties magnify Thee.

791. This heavenly history (as I have adverted

throughout the course of it) I have written in obedience

to the commands of my superiors and confessors, who

have had the guidance of my soul. They have assured

me that I would fulfill the will of God through obedience

in writing it, and that I should obey the most blessed

Mother, who for many years has commanded me to

write it; and although I have always subjected all of it

to the criticism and to the will of my superiors, with

holding not a single word from their scrutiny : I never

theless submit it again to their better judgment. Above

all do I submit it to the amendment and correction of the

holy Roman Catholic Church, to whose censure and

teaching, as her daughter, I protest I will be subject,

ready to believe and hold all that this same holy Church,

our Mother, approves and believes, and ready to reject

all that she rejects; for in obedience to her I wish to

live and to die. Amen.

THE END.

MLIBRARYIV

CITY OF GOD

COMPLETE EDITION

Conception, 610 pages $3.00

Incarnation, 608 pages 3.00

Transfixion, 790 pages 3.00

Coronation, 668 pages 3.00