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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 blessing,  
I remain

Devotedly in Domino,

H. J. ALERDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

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BY  
REV. GEO. J. BLATTER

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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

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SPECIAL NOTICE TO THE READER

REVELATIONS

NOTHING that essentially differs from the teachings of the Catholic Church can rightfully be taught or believed by any man or under any pretext. Moreover, even the essential doctrines can be taught and expounded only in the sense and spirit approved, or at least not disapproved, by the Church. This at once will establish the position which private revelations, whether coming from Heaven or originating 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 surrounds private revelations with evidences of their heavenly origin, He will be pleased with a rational and loving belief and dissatisfied with a captious and obstinate unbelief of the facts or truths thus privately revealed. Where, however, these external evidences are wanting,

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#### 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 approval 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 mankind 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 tendencies 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 preternatural 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 un failing tests. All that is necessary, is to ascertain the character and motives of the writer and the result or drift of his writings. 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 lunatic in a bankrupt Zion, yet leaving millions to his relatives. The humbugging Eddy, after crazy-quilting scraps from the Bible with shreds of Buddhism, Brahmanism and Theosophy, shuffles off her wrinkled coil amid a numerous following of dupes who rather expected 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 inspiration and very often contain passages which show sources of information and deceit not altogether human. The sinister manifestation of spiritism and the astounding 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 communication with evil spirits or departed souls, damned or otherwise, (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 privately 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 people who refused to believe these truths because they were privately revealed, or those who examined those revelations and finding them humanly credible, and not contrary to the true religion, simply accepted them as revealed by God? I should think the latter showed themselves 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 revelations has been a faithful adherent of the one true religion 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, pecuniary 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 certainly, 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 government 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 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 commands of her superiors. Reluctantly she began her history 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 rewriting 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 finished 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 inspired message to mere human proportions, whereas private revelation is given precisely for the purpose of communicating higher truths than can be known or understood 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 understanding. 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 perception 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 immediate 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 subjected 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 Sorbonne 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 interpolations and false versions of the original. Dr. Louis Elias du Pin and Dr. Hideux of the Sorbonne made this translation the foundation of virulent attacks. Du Pin was called by Pope Clement XI. "Nequioris doctrinse hominem," "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 influential Gallican courtiers and church dignitaries, both in Paris and at Rome, they secured a clandestine prohibition of the "City of God," which appeared in the acts of the Congregation of the Office. When it was discovered, 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 decreeing 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 department not concerned with the examination of books, proves that it owes its insertion to Gallican intrigue, secretly extending even to high circles in Rome, and to the fair-minded, this sectarian attempt will be a convincing argument 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 Spanish, 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 epidemic 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 perfect a rendition of the original Spanish into English, as ten years of assiduous labor and a considerable experience 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 written 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 revelations 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 resulted 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

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## 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 following\* terms :

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approbation 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 occasion 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 recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, 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 comparison 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 Venerable 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 episcopal 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 edition of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo, chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immaculate 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 having 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. Wishing 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 secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment 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 publication 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

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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 tftte  
f abor# conferred upon l^er during tfttotfe 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 condemned 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 opportune 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 attempting 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 undertake 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

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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 mysteries 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 attempting to describe that which is so far above their thoughts and capacities. The life of this Phoenix 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 receive 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 exalted as much above our 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,

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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), assigning 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 regarding this history.

5 In the eighth year after the foundation of this convent, in the twenty-fifth of my life, obedience imposed upon me the office which I unworthily hold at the pres-

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ent day, namely to be the abbess of this convent. I found myself much troubled, sorrowful and discouraged, because 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 although 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. Relying 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 continually that it was his will and He consoled me, admonishing me through his holy angels to obey.

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

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to my only refuge in all troubles, and after I had manifested 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 affliction." 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 continued her intercourse with my soul, receiving me, listening to me, teaching me with ineffable condescension, giving 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 magnificent 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 occasions when I was instructed in many mysteries; yet it was not so full, frequent and clear as that which was afterwards vouchsafed to me when She added the command that I write the history of her life according as her Majesty herself should dictate and inspire me. Particularly

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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<sup>^</sup> 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 manifesting to them how great was my disturbance and affliction 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 declared 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, doubttest and hesitatest in a matter, where we angels ourselves would do the same, as considering ourselves unable worthily 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 reprehensible in obeying (Prov. 21, 28). And when He created the first man and gave him the command not to eat

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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 Messiah 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 assurance to men that they, who should obey this second Adam, imitating Him in the obedience, by which He restored 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, because 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 possess in its proper proportion as wayfarers through the words of the Lord concerning your prelates and superiors : "He who hears you, hears Me ; and who obeys you, obeys Me." (Luke 20, 16). Now since obedience is rendered 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 sinful. 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

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all the living from Adam, multiplied from his natural being in his posterity; so also all superiors are constituted by God as by the supreme Lord on whose account we yield obedience to them ; human beings to their living superiors, 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 occasions 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 relate 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 mysteries 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 undertaking.

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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, commanded 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 pertaining to my Mother and the saints have been made manifest in the Church militant; but many are still hidden, 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 certainly 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-

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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 experiences, 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 keeping 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 deferred, or to speak more appropriately, I resisted this undertaking many years ; I refused compliance, as I will describe 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-

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fluences. In addition to this, there was still another reason, 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 judgment and free will, are offered as a holocaust to the Lord ; but also because no other virtue ever assures success more unfailingly than obedience ; for by it the creature 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 figurative ark of the old covenant, but the living Ark of the New Testament, which contained the manna of the Divinity, the source of grace and the New Law. But if I

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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 efforts ; 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 deceitful 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 accomplished. 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 humility. Let them flow from the hollow of his hands filled with hyacinths into thine (Cant. 5, 14), and from

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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 highest 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, knowing 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 declare 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 dispensations 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

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 command 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 myself better prepared to write at this second time Nevertheless there always remains much of what I understood 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 within 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 permission of the Lord, for in the turbulence 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 Sacrament, 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,

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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 discarding of my own misery (Wis. 8, 1). And these different things, which were placed before my understanding 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 existence. At the same time I felt a most vehement sorrow and contrition for my grievous sins, joined to the determination 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 to 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

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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 preparation, 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 perfections for that which the divine right hand is to accomplish in thee. I have asked Him that, through my intercession 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 spiritual 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 capable 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 estimate. 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 assistance thou mayest again resume thy writing."

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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 performed 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 Ascension 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 Immaculate 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

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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 unworthily 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 being so counseled by a confessor (who directed me during 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 reproaches 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 censures. The Most High and the Queen of heaven also repeated their commands that I obey. During this second writing, so abundant was the light concerning the divine Essence, so copious were the blessings of the divine right hand for the renewal and vivification of my soul in the teachings of my heavenly Mother, so perfect

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were the instructions and so exalted were the sacraments communicated to me, that it was necessary to write another book in connection with this history, the title of which will be: "Laws of the Spouse; heights of his divine 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-Ordalment 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 ENLIGHTENMENTS 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 reluctance 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 enlightenment which illumined the intellect, subjected the rebellious will, tranquillizing, directing, governing and attracting the whole range of interior and exterior senses, thus

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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 (Eccclus. 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. Surrounded 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 visions of fallacious and deceitful delights for the misleading of my senses and the capture of them by pretended pleasures, 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 spiritualized and angelic, and obliged me to live so cautiously, that in the midst of the furnace, the fire touched me not (Ecccli. 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 deflections 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 repeatedly, 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),

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who am the light and the way (John 8, 12), he that follows 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 omnipotent 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 presented me before the Lord. His Majesty gave to my interior 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-

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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 detain 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 disordered 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 indeed 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 powerful, 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 consumed, can prevent also the fire of the passions which encompass and beset the soul, from consuming it, if it

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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 commands (Phil. 4, 13) ; take off thy shoes and weep in bitter 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 following 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 describe 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 angels spoke to me: "This is that blessed Woman, whom

Saint John saw in the Apocalypse, and in whom are enclosed, deposited and sealed up the wonderful mysteries of the Redemption. So much has the most high and powerful God favored this Creature, that we, his angelic spirits, are full of astonishment. Contemplate and admire 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 manifest to thee." I was made to see such wonders, that the

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greatness of them took away my speech, and my admiration 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 discourse.

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 thyself 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 savor 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 accept 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

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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 model 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 offered 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 ladder 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 mysterious 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 reform 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 explained 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 unsuspecting ; I repudiated all visible and sensible things. Having passed some days in these

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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 guardians of Mary, as the defenders and sentinels of the citadel 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 perfection 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 omnipotent finger in order that it might be studied and observed (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, paying 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-

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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 practice, the reverence due to the Lord omnipotent. On account of this ignorance his justice is provoked to afflict and humiliate men. They are sunken in their carelessness 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 reject the instruction which She had promised me for narrating 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 opportune time, saying to me in this regard: "My daughter, when I sent my Onlybegotten, the world, with the exception of the few souls that served Me, was in worse condition 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 judgment and following Me, who am the way, the truth and

the life (John 14, 6), and by carefully observing my commandments 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 committed 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 forgetfulness. In fatherly love I sent them eternal salvation and a remedy for the incurable infirmities of human nature, 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 because my love must not be idle, I will offer to them an opportune remedy, if they will but make use of it for returning 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

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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 affairs of state, which are as hostile as they are contrary to my Providence; when the wicked least deserve my mercy; 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 shall search into and shall understand its marvels and hidden mysteries. I desire to make known to mortals how much intercession of Her is worth, who brought restoration of life by giving mortal existence to the immortal 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 admiration of them at a time when it was more necessary to establish firmly the law of grace and of the Gospel. Although all mysteries of religion are in perfect harmony with each other, yet human ignorance might have suffered 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.

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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 receive 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 necessity urges Me to disregard their evil disposition. And if men would now seek to please Me by reverencing, believing, 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; describe and delineate it to them, as far as thy shortcomings 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 occasion before mentioned. Obedient to the authority, which commands me, I will in the following chapter describe the manner in which I receive my information and enlightenment, and how I see the Lord. Thus complying with his orders, I will explain, once for all, the illuminations 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 conscious 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 judgments (Ps. 118, 120), and I live continually in the dreadful 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 without 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 Virgin, that I may be guided and led along the secure paths hidden from the eyes of men.

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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 security, 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, unobstructed, 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, according to the measure of his communication. It is a knowledge of light, holy, sweet and pure, subtle, penetrating, sure and agile, causing love of good and hatred of evil. It is a breath of the power of God and an emanation of a most subtle light, which acts as a mirror for

my understanding. Thus the higher faculties and the interior 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 mentioned. The perception of that which it covers is not

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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 dispositions 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 perceived 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 knowledge produces a pleasing constraint, powerfully and efficaciously 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 treasure is its exercise and preservation. The beauty and security 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

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 delightful sensations, the soul lovingly calls out to the Most High: "Trahe me post Te" (Cant. 1, 3) let us run together; 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 appetites 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 enlightenment, 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 uninterrupted activity of love which it causes, and of intimate 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 manifests 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).

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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 accompanied 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 Omnipotent 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 fermented 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 without 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 secretly 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 passing over the smallest point.

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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 compels, 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 fallacies of its lovers and clients. Above all, it teaches me to despise the world, to tread it under foot and to raise myself 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 harmony 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 ordinary 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^rcould not do it if I tried, for

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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 necessities, 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 knowledge 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

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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 sacraments, graces and virtues, and to the exterior and interior 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 nature 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 manner 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

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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 accompanied 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 enlightening me. I understand this to be similar to the mode in which the angels themselves enlighten, communicate and

speaking with each other, when the superior orders enlighten 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-

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municated to him by the superior spirits. I recognize Her also by the doctrine which She teaches, by the efficacy 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 conversing 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 understanding 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 spiritual 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

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most blessed Virgin, or the holy angels, in all of them I obtain most abundant light and help of salvation, enabling 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 rejoicing 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 reverence through all the ages. Amen.

### CHAPTER III.

OF THE KNOWLEDGE) OF THE DIVINITY, WHICH WAS CONFERRED UPON ME, AND OF THE DECREE OF THE CREATION 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 forever 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 exaltedness 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 perceived. 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 operations, 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-

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donments of love my eyes flow over in tears and my tongue becomes mute. O my most high and incomprehensible 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 proceeds 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 substance separated or divided in order to form three Persons, being distinct as the Father, as the Son and as the

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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 sanctity, 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 Powerful, 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 intelligence 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 perfections in their highest and in an infinite degree.

29. I learnt also to understand the quality of these perfections of the highest Lord : that He is beautiful without 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 without occupying any space. There is no contradiction in his kindness, nor any defect in his wisdom. In his wisdom 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 restraint, his will does not vary, the sorrowful does not cause Him pain, the past has not passed for Him, nor

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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 empyrean 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 admitted, 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 exist 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 existence 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

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(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 understanding 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 uncreated knowledge and science, just as they are comprehended 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 simplicis intelligentie*), we must, according to the natural precedence of the intelligence before the will, not overlook 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 intelligence 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 opportunity 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 perceive 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

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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 according to moments or instants, for it is impossible to accommodate 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 knowledge, than we can ever have of them.

34. Although this divine knowledge is one, most simple 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 dependence 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 dependent on each other and that they succeed one another. In order to be able to comprehend the manner of creation 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 following instants. The first instant is : God recognizing his infinite attributes and perfections together with the propensity and the ineffable inclination to communicate Himself outwardly. This knowledge of God as being communicative ad extra comes first. The Majesty of God, beholding the nature of his infinite perfections, their virtue 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 magnificence 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 itself. 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.

36. All this did God see in the first instant after the communication ad intra by means of the eternal emanations. 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 possess, 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 incomprehensible 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 creatures 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!

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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 exaltation God saw as the end, for which He would communicate 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 determining the order and arrangement, or the mode of this communication, so as to realize in an adequate manner the most exalted ends. The order namely, which it is proper should be maintained in regard to the communications 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 beautiful and admirable sequence, harmony and subordination. In this instant was decreed first of all, that the divine Word should assume flesh and should become visible. The perfection and the composition of the most holy humanity of Christ our Lord was decreed and modeled in the divine intelligence. Secondly, 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 faculties 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

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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 order, know and love that, which approaches most intimately 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 expended itself in its fullest measure on that which was most immediately connected with It, namely, the hypostatically 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 comprehension) 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 creatures, He should create them in such harmony and subordination, 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 Incarnation of the Word; through Him Creation should possess the most beautiful order, which without Him was impossible.

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 Omnipotence 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 understand, was ordained that pure Creature before aught else whatever. Thus, before all other creatures, was She conceived 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 divine mind from the beginning and before all the ages, I

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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 Areopagite: "If faith would not instruct me, and if the understanding 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 sorrowful 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 treasures 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 defense, which was to be provided for this true City of God, in which his Majesty contemplated the graces and

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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 instant, and as it were in the third and last place, God determined to create a locality and an abode, where the incarnate 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 arrangements 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.

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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 predestinating, 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 decreed the creation of the empyrean heaven, for the manifestation of his glory and the reward of the good ; also the earth and other heavenly bodies for the other creatures ; 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 already 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, similar but inferior to Himself and a people of his own nature, 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 foreknown were reprobated with exact justice. All that was convenient and necessary for the conservation of the

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human race and for obtaining the end of the Redemption and the Predestination, was preordained, without interfering 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 creation.

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 Creator 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 forgetfulness. His Majesty commanded and exhorted me not to be guilty of such ingratitude, 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

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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 ignorant 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 highest mystery, transforms my interior, and in silent admiration 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 understanding. 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 understanding 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 beginning 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."

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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 decreed 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

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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 humanity 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, providing 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 :

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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 foreseen 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 intervention of most holy Mary. Both were ordained together, 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 admirable 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 ordainment, 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 decrees ad extra. He was to be the Head and Ideal of all other men and creatures; for this was the most appropriate order and harmony to be instituted among creatures, that they have One, who is the first and the highest, and that from Him should descend the order of all

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 decreed, 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 between the being of God and that of creatures. This distance 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-

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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 Imensity, 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 delineated 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 manifestation, 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 already 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

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had conceived the most holy Humanity united hypostatically 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 inferiors 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 inferior in his nature, one Man is found who is of superior 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 hypostatic union. In a proportionate degree his most holy

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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 determined 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 creation 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

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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 entangled 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 enclosed the depths," namely, when He decided to close the abysses of his Divinity in the person of the Son according 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

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of the most holy Mary, afterwards, in the small quantity and species of the bread and wine, and finally, in the narrow 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 remains 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 divided 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

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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 perfection. 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 unavoidably 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 contained 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

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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 changefulness of men, and how He was nevertheless 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 because the conception of these ideals and the efficacious decree of the divine Will in their regard were to be followed 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 unbend my Divinity for this purpose, and to clothe it with human nature, to constrain and debase Myself, and to suspend the glory of my body in order to make Myself capable of suffering and of meriting for men the friendship 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.

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70. O eternal and incomprehensible Goodness ! how am I ravished with admiration, when I compare the immensity 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 affection in beholding such a mystery! Filled with admiration and with sadness of heart, I lament over the unhappy 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 signified 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 contained in the last two chapters a doubt occurred to me, and I have often heard and been informed by learned persons, 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 communicate his attributes and perfections, in a manner befitting his grace and glory, to the predestined; and, if to assume 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 comprehend 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.

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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 Incarnation, even if the first man had not sinned : for it was an express decree, substantially independent of any condition. Therefore, the intention of my will, which was primarily to communicate Myself to the soul and humanity 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 rendered 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

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them with mercy, I offered them an opportune remedy by executing the rigor of my justice upon my onlybegotten 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 sacraments 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

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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 concerning 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 expedient, 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 mysteries in different senses, and that there exist different explanations and different meanings regarding the different passages in Scripture; for each adheres to his opinion according to his understanding. Many have a good intention and the light and truth is essentially one, but it is made use of with diversity of judgment and inclinations, 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-

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 mentioned 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, except 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 Redemption 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 Incarnation 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 giving existence to the creatures. Therefore He should be honored, not only because He has redeemed the human

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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 doctors 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 permitted 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 investigation 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 ; \who 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, supremacy 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

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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 emulation and earnestness. But with all this I have directed, governed and enlightened them, giving them my protection 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 interpreted 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

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 disdain 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 manner. 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 OF MAN, WHILE ANGELS AND MEN WERE CREATED TO BE

HIS PEOPLE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE INCARNATE WORD.

80. The Cause of all causes is God, who created all things that have being. His powerful arm gave existence 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 understanding thereof, I will mention what I think useful for elucidating 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 darkness 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 immutable 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

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hands, as being the perfect and adequate results of his operations. And before creating intellectual and rational 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 announce 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 announced that there would be creatures and men to inhabit 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-

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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 darkness 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 intimate relation between the merciful liberality of the Creator 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 probation; 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 instant or interval, Saint Michael and his angels fought

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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 punishment, 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, nevertheless I understood, that the kind consideration of the Most High permitted a certain delay. With the interposition 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 opposed 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 chastisement. Although they did not know in the same manner 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 suffice 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 confirmed in eternal grace and glory. All this was consummated in the third instant, and thus it became truly manifest that no being outside of God himself is impermissible by nature, since the angel, who held such an

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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 concerned, 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 acquired 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 inclinations 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 inferior 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 nothing, and against all his creatures.

86. Hence arose his disobedience, presumption, injus-

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tice, infidelity, blasphemy, and perhaps also a certain kind of idolatry, for he coveted for himself the adoration and reverence due to God. He blasphemed the divine 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 arrogance is greater than his strength, for in this he cannot increase (Is. 16, 6) and in sin, one abyss calls the other (Ps. 14, 8). The first angel who sinned was Lucifer, 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 I also explain what was made known to me concerning the kind of honor and excellence, 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 nature. 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 command 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

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admitting and believing what was above their intelligence, 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 charity, for he, as it were, was divided in his will between himself and the infallible truth of the Lord. In consequence 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 began with them; for there remained with him a certain weakness and laxity of virtue and spirit, and the perfection of his nature did not shine forth as it should. It appears to me that the effect of this remissness in Lucifer, is similar to that which is caused in the soul by a deliberate venial sin. I do not say that he sinned mortally, nor even venially at that time, since he fulfilled the precept of God; but this fulfillment was remiss and imperfect, 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 creatures 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 acknowledge Him as their Head, not only as God, but as God and man, adoring Him and reverencing Him as God-

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man. Moreover, these same angels were to be his inferiors in dignity and grace and were to be his servants. 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 Man-God 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 creatures should be created for his glory, and that He was to be their Head. All those that were capable of knowing 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 permission was granted. But also another mystery was concealed in all this: When it was revealed to the angels that they would have to obey the incarnate Word, an-

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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 angels by obeying this command of the Lord, with still increasing and more alert humility, freely subjected themselves, 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 disorderly 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 consummated in him.

91. The decree constituting him inferior to the Mother of the Incarnate Word, our Mistress, he opposed 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 Lucifer: "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 salvation of mortals shall enter through the humility of this

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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, answered 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 another 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 representing 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 incarnate 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 implacable 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 Apocalypse 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 delivered; 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.

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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 unto 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

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keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony 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 seeing 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 creating 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 committed, God would not let the decree of creating man be unfulfilled, 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 remission, but would be furnished with salutary medicine and

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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 according 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 rebellion. 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 (Esther 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 precepts 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

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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 beginning of their punishment. For they saw at once, that having failed to profit by this sign, they were to be conquered 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 beneath her feet, and never must rise either to her soul or to her body, which on the contrary were to be ever superior 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,

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and the bad ones, (though they did not attain full knowledge 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 Israel, by which all the elect and the predestined are designated, 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 degree, 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 manifest 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 Mistress 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 incarnate. For on account of their inseparable union and coexistence, 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 hidden in the beginning in order that God might be born

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 although her soul always enjoyed his presence as to his Divinity, yet She was to be a long time without his bodily 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 corresponding to the reward, which was prepared for Her. Thus the sorrows of this birth were not the effect of sin,

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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 punishment of Lucifer and his allies; for after uttering his blasphemies against the Woman, who had been symbolized 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 followers 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 originating the seven capital sins.

104. The ten horns were the triumphs of the iniquity

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and malice of the dragon, and the vain and arrogant glorification and exaltation which he attributed to himself in the execution of his wickedness. In his depraved desire of attaining the object of his arrogance, he offered to the unhappy angels his malicious and poisonous friendship and his counterfeit principalities, commandments and rewards. These promises, full of bestial 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 perpetual 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

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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 honor (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 being only and alone, unsurpassed in sanctity and exempt from all sin. For She, being of the same nature as mortals, 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 creatures, 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 instant 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

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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 happened 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 understanding 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 APOCALYPSE 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 permission of God, gave battle to the dragon and his followers. 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 anything that is not most just. To us He gave grace such as we have, creating us and forming us out of nothing. 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 judgments, 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,

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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 Incarnation 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 Divinity."

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. Nevertheless 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 belongs 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

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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 sacraments 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 followers and amid the astonishment of the holy angels. All this was the effect of this new manifestation of the justice and power of God.

109. It is difficult to describe in words what passed in that memorable battle, since there is such a wide difference 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-

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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 angels were blotted out and were no more found in heaven. O unhappy wickedness and never to be described misfortune, which drew after itself such a horrible and dreadful chastisement! The Evangelist adds:

110. "And the dragon was cast out, that ancient serpent 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 consigned to hellish regions, as Isaias says in the fourteenth chapter, to the profound abyss, and his cadaver was de-

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livered to the moth and the worm of his own bad conscience ; 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 Incarnation 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 Word 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

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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 conceiving 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 passions 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 second 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

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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 capabilities, 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 enemies. 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 permission to the bad ones to oppress the good, thus helping them to gain the crown, while for themselves they increase 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 humble; 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 perverseness."

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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 accuser 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.

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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 angels 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 sanctity opposed to the vices, into which Lucifer had proposed to seduce mankind. They were to guard and defend 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 designation 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

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can equal this in importance ! What sacrament is so worthy of the Omnipotence of God! How great was the triumph of the power of Christ! Happy, infinitely happy, 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 Evangelist 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 consummation 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 Commandments, 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 assumed human nature and as the High Priest and holy Pontiff (Heb. 6, 20), was given the power to communicate 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 Trinity 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

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 origin, 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 decrees, 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 wonderful 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) overcame him (the dragon)." For although the blood of Christ was entirely sufficient and superabundant to enable all the faithful to overcome the dragon, their accuser, and although the testimonies and teachings of the Prophets are of great power and help for eternal salvation ; yet the just attain the fruit of the Passion and Redemption, 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 succeed in fulfilling the ordinary commandments and counsels 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 promised 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

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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 creatures 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. Rejoice, 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 because 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 particular witness of all its effect to the end. Let all his allies and all the defenders of Jesus Christ and his Mother rejoice, 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, knowing that he hath but a short time." Woe to the earth, where so many sins and such wickedness shall be perpetrated! 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 insults 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

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the most unhappy place and state to which he had fallen, 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 furious 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 immediately 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 Sunday, 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 succeeded all the other events, which have been recorded above, up to the morning of the second day, corresponding 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 intervened 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-

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venge for the chastisement, to which he had been subjected. 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, "toward this end we must apply all our forces, all our solicitude 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 deprive 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 reward which I will give to those who follow me."

124. "I will wage fierce war against the incarnate

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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 together with me, follow me and obey me in the pursuit of this vengeance, as you have followed me in disobedience ! 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 permission 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 Thursday. 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 ;

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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 occasion, and, in spite of the great violence occasioned to his pride by the humiliation, he humbled himself nevertheless 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 omnipotent, 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

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will be allowed to draw Her to the contrary, or persecute 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 permission 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 afterwards 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 described 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

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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 attention. She flew like the royal eagle, without ever directing 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 conflict. By "time and times" is also understood the felicity, 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 conceded to Her in order that She might enjoy the peace and quiet, which She had merited after having conquered the enemy, as I will describe farther on (Part III, 526). Concerning the time of the combat the Evangelist 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

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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 inclination to sin "fomes Peccati" (Gen. 3, 17), which continues 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 representations and apparent sweetness and delight, he draws us toward sensible and earthly things.

131. But the most blessed Mary, the holy and sanctified earth without touch of bad inclinations or evil dispositions, was free from all danger of corruption arising from the earth. On the contrary, since all her inclinations 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 disorderly 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.

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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 toward 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 particular hatred does he seek to destroy the virtue of virginity 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 manifest to the angels in the decrees of the divine Will regarding 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 manifestation.

#### 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, ordering 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 prototype 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 subsist for their use.

135. The Most High looked upon his Son and upon his most holy Mother as models, produced in the culmination of his wisdom and power, in order that They

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might serve as prototypes according to which He was to copy the whole human race. Thus the rest of men depended 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 intended 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 banquet of his knowledge and love be one and the same act. Man was not to lose any time in that which concerned 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

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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 account 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 creation 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, perfect 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 describe 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

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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 mystery 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

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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 enraged 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 temptation ; it is enough for my purpose to mention what Scripture 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 violated 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 interior 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-

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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 repetition 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 following satan. The elect cling to their Leader by faith, humility, charity, patience and all the virtues and in order to obtain victory, they are assisted, helped and beautified by the divine grace and the gifts, which the Redeemer and Lord of all merited for them. But the reprobate, 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, presumption, 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

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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, humility 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 before 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

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High, that He has shown to me many times the incomparable love, which He bore toward his people, the favors shown to it, and the mysteries and holy Sacraments, which He entrusted to it, as was afterwards made manifest 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 Essence by many revelations, and they again transmitted these revelations to us by the holy Scriptures, containing 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. Although 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 aspirations 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 descend 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

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 succinctly according to the order given in the holy Scriptures. Genesis contains that which concerns the beginning and the creation of the world for the human race ; the division of the earth, the chastisement and the restoration, 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 towards 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 punishments, 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 themselves 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 sacrificed 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.

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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 kingdom of the devil, the separation and the division of the good and bad, which will happen in the last day.

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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 delivered 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 coming 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 concerning 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

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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 mysteries 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 accomplished 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 calling 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 complete 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

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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 sacrifice 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), principally to represent the incarnate Word as the way and the means of ascending to the Father, and of his descending 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 Pharaoh 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 humanity, 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

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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 concerning 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 mysteries 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 provided 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 mysteries 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 himself 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

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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 Mediatrix, to induce the eternal Father to send his Onlybegotten, 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 figure 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

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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 advance 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 forgetfulness of so great benefits, and, forsaking the light, continue to seek the darkness.

#### 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 multiplied; 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 preparation for the advent of the Messiah. 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 perceived the approach of the salvation and the presence of the Redeemer, and they increased their clamors, beseeching God to fulfill the prophecies and the promises made to his people. Before the high throne of the divine 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

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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 confusion of so many gods was repugnant to all goodness, order, and peace, when by these errors malice, ignorance 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 excellent cause for annihilating all creation and reducing it to its original nothingness :

166. At this Juncture (according to our way of understanding), 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 approaching dawn of the sun of Justice, Christ our Salvation. These were saint Joachim and Anne, prepared and created by especial decree according to his own heart. Saint Joachim had his home, his family and relations in

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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 heavens. 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 Bethlehem 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 enlightenment 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 Messiah. 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 Testament, 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

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Joachim made the same petition : both prayers were presented 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 furtherance of this divine decree the archangel Gabriel was sent to announce it to them both. To saint Anne he appeared 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 sacramental 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 supplications and be not solicitous for anything else, for the Lord will see them fulfilled. Walk in the straight paths

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of justice and let thy soul's converse be in heaven. Continuing to pray for the Messiah, be thou joyful in the Lord, who is thy salvation." With these words the angel disappeared, leaving her enlightened in many mysteries 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 : "Joachim & 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 divine 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 themselves 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.

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170. They themselves lived with each other in undisturbed 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, confiding 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 command 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), communicating 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 consummate, 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 neighbors and acquaintances, for all those that were childless, 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

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order that in patience and submission they might tearfully 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 command 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 coming 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 engendered. 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 certain delay in creating Her.

174. Having, at the command of the Lord, persevered 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 reprehended 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 offerings and sacrifices, which are not pleasing in the eyes of

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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 servants 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 confidence, 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 obedience, in which Thou hast promised to grant my petition. If my sins hinder the exercise of thy mercies,

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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 petition, 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 accomplishment 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 desires and intentions, was pleasing to the Almighty. Having thus recognized the will of God and of her husband Joachim, she prayed with humble subjection and confidence, 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 ! Prostrate 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

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order that we may offer it to thy service in the temple (Gen. 18, 27). Remember, O Lord, that Anne, thy servant, the mother of Samuel, was sterile and that by thy generous mercy she received the fulfillment of her desires. I feel within me a courage which incites and animates 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 inclinations 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 impoverished 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 shortcoming 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 parents 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 follows: "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 announce 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 according 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 regard the multitude of those, who shall distinguish themselves 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

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out for our delight and pleasure; because She is to conceive 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 regard 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 intellectual 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 message were revealed to saint Gabriel. With it he descended from the vault of the empyrean heaven and appeared to holy Joachim, while he was in prayer, saying to him: "Just and upright man, the Almighty from his

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sovereign throne has taken notice of thy desires and has heard thy sighs and prayers, and has made thee fortunate 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, powerful 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 family 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 nation 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 rejoice 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

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saint Joachim awoke in great joy of soul and with solicitous 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 judgments. In order to do this more appropriately he hastened 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 understanding 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 following words: "Most high King and Lord of all creation, 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! Remember, 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

Her ! How sweet shall be the sight of Her and her company ! 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 meditating 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 fulfillment of their prayers, it is in order to dispose them to receive and to oblige Himself to give much more than

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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 conceding your petitions: because those, who in humble confidence 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 human 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). David 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 order to give thee news full of joy for thy heart : His Majesty wishes, that thou be most fortunate and blessed. He chooses thee to be the mother of Her who is to conceive and bring forth the Onlybegotten of the Father. Thou shalt bring forth a Daughter, who by divine disposition shall be called MARY. She shall be blessed among women and full of the Holy Ghost. She shall

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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 tidings. Thou art the one, who art especially 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 human 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 wonderful 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

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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 accept 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 communicating 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 Messiah, 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 mysterious 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 virtues 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-

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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 impede 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 inheritor 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 Redeemer. 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 communicating itself to the human race. Now, at this time do I wish to show mercy, giving them the person of the eternal 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

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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 creature 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 instructed 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 understood many other mysteries, which were to be fulfilled in the Incarnation of the divine Word. By these enlightenments 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 ANGELS 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 inevitable 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 fulfillment of the decree. All the spheres and the inhabitants contained in them are dependent on this ineffable government that rules them and cooperates with the natural causes unflinchingly 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 assume 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

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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 stage according to the wishes of his divine Providence; and when the predetermined time had come for the creation of that marvelous woman, whose sign had appeared in the heavens clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12, 1), and who was to rejoice and enrich the earth, the most holy Trinity executed 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 speaking and to our limited mode of understanding, we conceive that his Majesty remembered the decrees of the creation of a Mother befitting and worthy of the Incarnation 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

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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 intended for our children, and the finishing crown of creation. 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 prerogatives and graces which in our first and conditional resolve 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 serpent 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 overlook what is most apt, perfect and holy, and choose that

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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 foundation 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 existence 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 excellent 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 without a father, as in heaven He has a Father without a mother. And in order that there may be the proper correspondence, 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 perfection 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 redeeming his own flesh, like that of sinners. Being united to the Divinity his humanity is to be the price of Redemption, wherefore it must before all be preserved from sin,

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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 fallacies 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 Persons 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.

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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 Almighty to the angels on this occasion.

197. "Now the time has arrived" added his Majesty, "which was resolved upon by our Providence for bringing 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 mortals, a medicine for the sick, a consoler for the sorrowful, 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 pleasure, 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

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that most blessed Soul be created. Although her generation 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 Almighty power."

199. "You do already know how the ancient serpent, since he saw the sign of this marvelous Woman, attempts to circumvent all women, and how, from the first one created, he persecutes all those, whom he sees excelling in the perfection of their works and life, expecting 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 pursuance 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 particular charge of this our holy City and tabernacle of the incarnate Word, protecting, guarding, assisting and defending Her against our enemies, and that you enlighten, strengthen and console Her with all due solicitude 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 arrived 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

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 commenced 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 persevered 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 escutcheons of the Redemption. These are the twelve which are mentioned in the twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse as guarding the portals of the city; of them I will speak in the explanation of that chapter later on. Besides these the Lord assigned eighteen other angels, se-

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lected from the highest ranks, who were to ascend and descend by that mystical stairs of Jacob with the message 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 pleasure, 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 because 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.

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204. These mighty princes and captains were assigned 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 incarnate 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 principal 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

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be well appointed, saint Michael, the prince of the heavenly militia was placed at their head, and although not always in the company of the Queen, he was nevertheless 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 manner the holy prince Gabriel was appointed to act as legate 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, according 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 beginning concerning his most holy Mother. For in accepting the divine decree each was moved by different affections and inclinations toward the sacraments which became 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-

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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 mysteries, as I will relate farther on. Some of them showed the emblems of the Incarnation, others those of the Passion, 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 wisdom ; 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 inadequate my brief terms and words, for the manifestation of these exalted lights and intelligences.

#### CHAPTER XV.

#### OF THE 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 angels 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

pure body of Mary. The age of Anne, when She married Joachim, was twenty-four, and that of Joachim, forty-six. Twenty years they lived in married life without 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 conception happened according to the ordinary course of nature, yet the Most High freed it from imperfections and disorders, permitting only what was strictly required according to nature, in order that the proper material might be furnished for the formation of the most perfect substance within the limits of a mere creature.

211. God limited the natural activity in the two parents and by his grace prevented any fault or imperfection, substituting for them virtue and merit, and entire propriety in the manner of conception, which though natural and according to the common order, was nevertheless directed, supplemented and perfected by the action 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 miraculous, 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 moderation, his natural powers were in a measure suppressed

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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 overflowing, powerfully and generously; absorbing, yet not confounding nature, exalting it and perfecting it in a miraculous manner. Thus grace was the origin of this Conception, 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 faculties of conception; for thus restored, she would have conceived in no way different from the rest of women; the Lord concurred with her sterile faculties in a more miraculous 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 conceive 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 requiring any miraculous intervention except that of thus suddenly changing it into ice ; but without thus changing the water, the Lord gave it the power to sustain the body of

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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 wonderful, 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 conception, 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 imperfection, 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 corruption 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, melancholic, phlegmatic and choleric, were compounded in

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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 serenity 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 supplemented 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 anything 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 necessary for her perfect existence and without excess or default 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 constituted, 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; nevertheless, on the other hand, the delicacy of its composi-

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tion made even ordinary influences much more penetrating 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 between her miraculous Conception and sin and its cause, concupiscence; for not only was She, as the dawn of

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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 instrument to the supreme Artificer, who is superior to the laws of nature and of grace It was here that He commenced to destroy sin, and to lay the foundations, building up the castle of the strong armed One (Luc. 11, 22) who was to undermine evil and deprive it of the possessions 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 angels 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 disposition 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 Conception, the Almighty wrought the second Conception by creating the soul of his Mother and infusing it into

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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 beginning to the work of the divine Word and to the Redemption 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 Saturday be consecrated to the Virgin in the holy Church, since that was the day on which She received the greatest 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 her\* 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 correspond 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

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most blessed Trinity, repeated with greater affection of love the words, recorded by Moses at that time concerning man : "Let us make Mary to our image and likeness 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 together, 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 offered 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

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against sin, disregarding those of the common order, overpowering those of guilt, conquering those of nature 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 interiorly 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-

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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 generations 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 INSTRUCTIONS 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 Goodness, by which and whence He had resolved to deposit within this heavenly Lady the greatest graces and virtues ever to be given to any other creature for all eternity. 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 according 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 faithful 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 measure 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, descending 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

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the first thus exercised were the three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, which relate immediately to God. These She at once practiced in the most exalted 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 demonstrate. 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 upward 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 appreciation 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 proportion corresponding to the theological virtues. The moral and natural virtues were hers in a miraculous and supernatural measure, and in a still more exalted manner 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-

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tures have been or ever will be in eternity, excepting of course her most holy Son. And all this perfection consisted not only in the habits, which were infused in Her in such a high degree; but in the acts which She exercised 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 history, of all these virtues and graces and of their exercise, 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 cardinal virtues consequent upon it, She perceived God as He is and as the Creator and Glorifier; in heroic acts She revered 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-

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theless superior to all the other ways, in which God can manifest Himself or does manifest Himself to the created intelligence; for there were shown to Her images of the Divinity so clear and manifest that She understood the immutable being of God, and in Him, all creation, with a greater light and clearness than any creature 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 possible by the images of the infused science already vouchsafed 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 misfortune 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 maintained 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-

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nected with the Incarnation, by which God was to become man in order to redeem the whole human race, while the fallen angels were left without a remedy.

231. In correspondence with this wonderful knowledge 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, glorification, 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 fervent desire to bless Him, love Him and honor Him, because 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 faculties of her body at the creation of her most holy Soul were hardly large enough to be distinguished, nevertheless, in order that none of the miraculous excellence with which God could endow his Mother might be want-

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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, intercession 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 existence 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 Creature ; 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 Conception 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

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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 entranced 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 knowledge 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 proceed 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 enraptured 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,

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were asleep, and that heavenly heart, more marvelous on account of the greatness of its gifts than by the smallness 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 superior ones, nor that they should operate in an inferior, or merely in a manner equal to those of any other creature. 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 prerogative 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 excels that of servants, and that of Queen, the estate of vasals ; 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-

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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 greatest devotion and piety, free from the spirit of contention (Rom. 13, 12) ; then we will be permitted to examine 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 substantial 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 highest grace and glory. Just as the man, Christ, our highest 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 comprehensor. But the soul of his most holy Mother was not united substantially with the Divinity and therefore

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She did not begin her activity as a possessor of God, but entered into life as a wayfarer. However, She entered 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 abstractively 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 instruct 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 heavenly presence and the explanation of these mysteries, began 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:

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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 perfection 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 thyself 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 perfect 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 desirest. 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

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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

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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, confer 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 forward 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 considering thy insignificance and vileness. Advert that when these truths are well understood, repeated, and meditated 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

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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 unpardonable 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 sweetest 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 repugnance to the law of the spirit, retarding me and embarrassing 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 consideration 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 understanding 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 explanation 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 following 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 saying: 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.

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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 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."

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 creatures. But also the old heaven after the mystery of the Incarnation could be called new, for through it the novelty 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

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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 reprobation; 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 malediction of the old earth that in this blessed earth were renewed all the rest of the children of Adam. For on account 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 remained 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 renovation 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 matter, should disappear. There was now a new heaven for the Divinity in that human being, which, being preserved from sin, could furnish a new habitation to God through the hypostatic union of the person of the Word.

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Already the first heaven ceased to exist, that one which God had created in Adam and which had become deficient and unfit for the indwelling of a God. This disappeared 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 abominations 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 prevail 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, prepared 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-

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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 reproduced 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 reproduced 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.

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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 companion 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 exalted 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 creation 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 merely accessory and of minor importance. Hence the Evangelist 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

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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 Person, 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 preparation, 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 niggardly with his Mother and Spouse, when He so prodigiously lavishes the treasures of the Divinity upon other souls, who, in comparison, with Her, are less than servants 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 recognize, proclaim and magnify as the immaculate and most

happy among women, of whom in wonder and with joyful 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

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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 possession 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,

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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 Conception, 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 encouragement of the mortals. The Evangelist proceeds: 254. "And I heard a great voice from the throne saying: 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 understand 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

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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 Evangelist had said : the King has taken possession and is holding 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 human 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

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seest descending from heaven, by her conception and formation. 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 assume 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 continues :

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 Redemption, 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 intercession of his Mother, there is no more death, no sorrow, no tears: since the death of sin and all that resulted from sin is abolished and has ceased. The true

mourning is now left to the sons of perdition that dwell in the abyss whence there is no deliverance. The sorrows 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, seeing that his Majesty, their supreme Lord and model, was slaughtered on the frightful Cross in order to repair the damages wrought by our impatience and want of confidence (Phil. 2, 8). Why should our human nature be permitted to complain of labor and trouble, in view of such an example? Or how can hateful distinction 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 incarnation 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 highest 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

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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 performed 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 forgetfulness. Although it is true, that the Catholics believe and trust in these mysteries, 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

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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 perfecting 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 fountain 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 understood, that all that God does or has done for men, was of his free grace, and not through obligation toward

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 dullness 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 exceeded 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 possible, that we, being so desirous of honor, glory and delight, 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 sorrow 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

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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 perfections, 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 entered 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 sorcerers, 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 will fully close their eyes and who have allowed and are allowing themselves to be fascinated and deceived by the fraudulent tricks of satan. According to the different

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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 unbelievers," neither admit that truths are revealed, nor give belief to them, like the heretics, pagans and infidels; 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 pleasure, which is abhorred as soon as it is attained, and yet

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in its disorder is never satiated, they despise the friendship 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 pervert 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 surroundings (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 highest 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 fountain 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

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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 revered 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 Jerusalem 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 written 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 foundations, 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 thereof, and the wall;

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16. And the city lieth in a four-square, and the

length thereof is as great as the breadth ; and he measured the city with the golden reed for twelve thousand 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 existence. 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,

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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 prophesied 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 overwhelmed 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 understand such high mysteries the Evangelist was exalted in spirit to a great height of sanctity and light; for without going out of himself and being raised above human weakness, he could not understand them; just as we, imperfect, earthly and abject creatures, cannot encompass them for the same reason. Then elevated thus high, he says: He showed me the holy city of Jerusalem,

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coming down out of heaven," for Mary was built up and formed, not on earth, where She was like a pilgrim 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 Divinity.

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 perfections, 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

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jasper, as it is to understand how She can be similar to God. But from this comparison we derive a certain understanding of similarity to God. The jasper sparkles and glitters in colors of many different shades, while the crystal is characterized by limpid and uniform transparency; 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 conferred 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 portals 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 moment 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

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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 following 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 toward the creatures. Above all We shall give to Her dominion 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 annihilated. 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

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before his most just tribunal nothing would ever be denied 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, protection and defense of all men, wherein they would find all the security of a city of refuge and of a strong fortress 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 inferior 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 incarnate Word. The service of these twelve angels, besides attending to their Queen, was to assist especially and to

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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 especially 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 generation 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 portal 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

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connection with his flesh and blood, She in a manner died and suffered in Christ, freely of her own will accompanying Him in his Passion and Death, suffering with Him according to Her power with heavenly humility and fortitude. Thus, as She cooperated in his Passion 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, admirable Treasurer of God! How secure are in thy heavenly 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 concedes free entrance and admission to this most pure Queen, in order that before the tribunal of the immutable and triune Being She may intercede, solicit and receive 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 anywhere 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-

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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 foundations, 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, corresponding 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 Ascension of Christ. Although She was always their Instructress and model, yet in those times She alone was the chief support of the primitive Church. Now, because 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 measurements 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 dignity and benefits, which the Almighty conferred upon Her, were exceedingly great, yet they were within pos-

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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 deficiency, 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 mention that the measure of the dignity, the merits and graces of most holy Mary, was none other than the humanity 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 Divinity. 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

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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 thousand" with which the heavenly Queen at her Conception was measured, indicate most exalted mysteries. The Evangelist calls the perfect measure, by which are measured 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 submit 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 assume 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 in its height, must appear of huge dimensions. The measurement and number of stadia of all the predes-

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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 thousand 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 measure 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

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of them She performed with such a plenitude of perfection 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 proportion 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 mortals 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 penalties and necessities of our common life, as I shall describe 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

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 contain 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.

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

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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 sovereignty 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 himself and in virtue of which this most exalted Mistress subdued the demons and sent them repeatedly to the infernal 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 scattering 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,

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heavenly and serene peace, free from any cloud of disorder and illumined from the moment of her Conception 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 pilgrimage 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. Therefore 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 beaconlight. 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

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invoking Mary's name, it is certain that their understanding would quickly expel the darkness, their errors would be drowned as in a sea in virtue of the power conceded 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. Accordingly 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 transparent, though favoring the flesh-color and usually containing three different tints : dark below, whitish in the centre, 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 labors 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

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interceding and obtaining for her clients the efficacious application of the superabundant merits of the Incarnation 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 conflagration of love in her bosom. From the very moment of her Conception, which was the time and place of its beginning, 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 brighter 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 especially during the night of the Death of her most holy Son, also during the time, when in the beginnings of the evangelical 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

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Coadjutrix of Christ our Lord. This includes the prerogative of being able to obtain for those that invoke Her, the grace of a good disposition toward the fruitful 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 brilliancy. 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 servants 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 prerogatives 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 intercession, She could obtain these virtues and perseverance 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

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hope planted in the heart of the most holy Mary at her Conception, and the love with which it was impregnated 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 mankind. 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 meditation was given Her, so that She might obtain the same firmness of hope for her clients.

295. "The eleventh, hyacinth," which is of an exquisite 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 corresponds 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 devilish 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

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 sweetest 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 deprived 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 number 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 communication with the Divinity, and that all mortals, if they wished to make use of her merits and powerful intercession, should enter into participation of the Divinity. The priceless value, magnificence, beauty and fairness 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 prerogative 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

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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 marketplace, 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 mysteries 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 poverty 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 virtues, 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

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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 revered and adored in spirit, and more worthily than in all the 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, surrounded and enclosed by the Divinity and the humanity, both of which served Her as a habitation and a tabernacle. For being in God, she never ceased to adore, worship 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 befitting 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 accomplished 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 salvation 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

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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 supplicate and obey the most abject among men in those things in which it was not unbecoming. Being the disciple of Him, who corrects the wise, She drew the divine philosophy of humility from Him, her great Master. 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 burning 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

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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 behold 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 Advocate. 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 herself says, that through Her kings do reign, princes command, 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 vouchsafed 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 people, 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

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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 devotion 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 unbridled 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 reformation and amendment of our sins would also spring victory 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 consequent 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

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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 Restoratrix 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 treasures 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,

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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 reserve 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 ignorant 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, consider 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 command 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-

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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. Therefore 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, however, 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

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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 abomination 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 contrition 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, loving 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, beware 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 Being and perfections of God and never allowing thy attention to be drawn away to another even otherwise necessary object. With this continual presence and

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 enlightens thee. Adorn thyself for entrance into the bridal chamber of thy Spouse, and permit the hand of the Almighty to array thee in such a manner as He wishes, always 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:

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311. "Queen and Mistress of all creation, whose servant I am and wish to be for all the eternities ! Forever will I praise the Omnipotence of the Most High, because He chose thus to exalt Thee. But since Thou art so fortunate and so powerful with the Almighty, I conjure 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 powerful 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 DOINGS 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 maternal 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 wonderful 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 before 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

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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 happened, 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 Beloved 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 divine 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 existence; 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-

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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 converse 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

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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),

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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 ability 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 Messiah and Redeemer of the world, if only he could obtain knowledge of their whereabouts. His arrogance was founded upon the superiority of his angelic nature to the condition and power of mere human nature: 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

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not afford some opening for the perversion of her will.

318. But the invincible matron resisted these onslaughts 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 guarding her most holy Daughter. Nevertheless in his insatiable malice the enemy did not desist on that account; and since his arrogance and pride far exceeds his powers, 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 mockery 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 humility 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 immediately 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

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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, because divine power interfered to foil their natural womanly weakness. They were not only powerless against the saint, but they were overcome by her admonitions 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 exasperated her against the holy matron. Through her he created even a greater annoyance than through the other women, for she was a domestic enemy and more stubborn and dangerous than the others. I will not stay to describe, what the enemy attempted through this servant, 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, enriched 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 admonitions, which I receive with highest joy and exultation of my spirit

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 creation, 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 recognized my innocence and the stainlessness of my Conception. 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

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to its nature. As they are seen to belong to such a high Master, to whom they can revert to be distributed according 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 order 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 preservation 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 according 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 discretion, not to ask or to examine too closely this mys-

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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 necessary dispositions of a Christian life ; the one a quiet preservation of tranquillity in the soul, the other the constant 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, governing 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 excellence of the benefits which descend from the Father of lights, that they give assurance and confidence while making the soul humble, and that they encourage while exciting solicitude and watchfulness, though still preserving tranquillity and peace in this solicitude; for all these effects 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 disturbance of excessive fear, and leave thy cause with the Lord and make his cause thy own. Let fear be with thee

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 Master 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 judgments of men are only too easily blinded by their passions, 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 restrain 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 superiors and willingly accept that, which the Most High works in thee and teaches thee. Although thy undertakings may be good as regards the intentions, they must nevertheless also conform to the requirements of obedience 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 interior 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 providence 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

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the Princess of heaven might be spared the sensible experience 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 conditions of grace, that it was the most wonderful and miraculous 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 circumstances.

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-

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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 dwelling-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, fulfilling 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 permission and her mother's rights without losing her reverence, 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-

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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 devices and habiliments, 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. Immediately the heavenly ambassador descended, illumining that deep cavern and rejoicing the just who were detained 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 Messiah, 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

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the empyrean heaven for the fulfilling of his further intentions regarding Her. The holy princes obeyed the divine mandate and receiving the child Mary from the arms of her holy Mother Anne, they arranged a new and solemn 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 Obaddon, 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 revered 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 foreseen 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 understanding of it, but most of all to those who, by divine 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 presence of the Most High. Then (according to our way of

understanding), was verified what long before had happened 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. Similarly, 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 universe. 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 manifestation, 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 wonder, and the astounded angels, who in some measure perceived these mysteries in God Himself. The Queen seated 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 inaccessible 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-

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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 besought 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 fulfilled, 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 wisdom) 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 Objects 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 receive 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

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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, lovingly prostrate before the throne, rendered most acceptable and human thanks to the eternal Being; and She received the name with most admirable and sweet jubilation. 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 honored and acknowledged most holy Mary as the future Mother of the Word and as their Queen and Mistress enthroned 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 devices over their breast. All of them gave forth canticles of praise for these great and hidden mysteries. In the meanwhile 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 remained 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, exalted mysteries concerning the dignity of Mother of God,

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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 heaven, and which divine Providence had selected and now ordained to be given to their child by Joachim and herself. The saint called for her husband and they conferred 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 Infant 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-

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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 beautiful (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 foreshadowing of the birth of sweetest Mary, heaven and earth should rejoice at the birth of Her, who gave a beginning to the restoration of heaven and the sanctification 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 consolation 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

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scarcely noticed by terrestrial eyes in the material light, yet in the eyes of the highest King and his courtiers, excellest 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 illustrious 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 occurred to me in describing the mystery of thy most admirable and holy birth, namely : regarding an act of the Almighty at the hour of thy coming forth into the material 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 interdicted to man, until thy most holy Son should open it through his life and death, and until He himself, as Redeemer and Chief, should enter it on the day of his admirable Ascension, He being the first one for whom these eternal portals were to be opened after their being closed up by sin ?

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339. My dearest daughter, it is true, that divine justice 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 Redeemer, who had united to Himself the redeemed mem-

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bers and opened heaven, should as their Chief enter before 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 already 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 saying: "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

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reigned in the world, had taken away his reign and 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

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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 privileges, 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 exercise, 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

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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 givenness 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 perfect, 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 turtle-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 Daughter and Child. With the offerings prescribed by law and accompanied by innumerable angels, she betook herself

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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 privilege 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 dignity 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 turtle-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 certainly 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 inflamed and moved to extraordinary joy. Careful not to manifest anything exteriorly and communing with himself, 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 Daughter 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 already made, to offer her Firstborn to the temple on arriving at the proper age. In renewing this offer she

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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 temple, 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, abject 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 Thee 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 acceptance by

the Most High, a most resplendent light shone down from heaven, enveloping the mother and Child, and rilling them with new splendors of grace. Again saint Anne was made aware that she would be expected to devote 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 occasion 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 sensible light. Thereupon saint Anne, rich in her Treasure and endowed with new gifts of the most high God, returned 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 prescriptions 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.

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352. The sovereign Child was treated like other children 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 annoyance, 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 permit) for the sins of the world and for its Redemption

through the coming of the Savior. Ordinarily She maintained, even in her infancy, a pleasant countenance, yet mixed with gravity and a peculiar Majesty, never showing any childishness. She sometimes permitted Herself to be caressed, though, by a secret influence and a certain outward austerity, She knew how to repress the imperfections connected with such endearments. Her prudent 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 reverence 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

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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 interrupted. 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 measure 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 pilgrimage 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 engaged in the contemplation of the mysteries and the excellencies 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 ignorant talk, I will ask of thy kindness the solution of some doubts which have occurred to me in this chapter.

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If my ignorance and boldness should transgress the limits, 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 annoying 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 infants 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 capacity of judging of things, it seems to me almost impossible that there should have been no inconveniences in this matter, in the time or the measure, or in other circumstances regarding the treatment allotted to Thee during 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 Majesty in all things. All these considerations excite my admiration and arouse in me the desire of knowing the mysteries thus concealed.

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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 possession 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 infirmities of the body, and as a daughter of Adam I was subject to these accidental necessities; for it was just that I should imitate my most holy Son, who subjected Himself 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 imitation. 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 augmentation 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 composition 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 unseasonable 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 opportunity 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 I was alone during my childhood

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I placed myself in the form of a cross, praying in imitation of Him; for I knew that my Beloved was to die in that position, although I did not know then that the Crucified was to be my Son. In all the difficulties, which I underwent after I was born into the world, I was resigned and contented, for I never lost sight of one consideration, 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 correct 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 nourishments which preserved me, and of all the other things of this life. I gave thanks to the Author of all things, acknowledging 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 remained in peace and contentedness and deemed it all perfectly 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 perhaps 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

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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 mortgage 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 blindness 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 restless 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

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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 justice 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 received thy being and life gratuitously, and that, gratuitously, 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 makest thyself daily less worthy of favors, while the liberality of the Most High grows continually with thy indebtedness. Let this thought be uppermost in thee always, in order that it awaken and move thee to many acts of virtue. If any of the irrational creatures fail thee, I desire thee to rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to his Majesty, 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 console 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

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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 liberally 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 humbly obeyed the law and thereby we merited great increase of virtue and grace. Despising just and wise laws and frequently dispensing with them, destroys the worship and fear of God, and fatally confuses government among men. Beware of easily dispensing in the obligations 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 Creator. 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 excuse, though thou mayest sometimes excuse thy sisters and subjects on such account. Note moreover, my dear-

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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 thousand guardian angels watched over Mary more solicitously 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 human 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 accidental 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-

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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 material images and words the perfections and the operations 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 continual. 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 reverence 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 courtesousness. Their bodily forms showed but little

resemblance to earthly matter, for they were transparently pure and like animated crystals bathed in glory, similar to a glorified and transfigured body. With their

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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 incomparably 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 adornment 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 behold, 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

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changeable, in order to indicate the variety of the mysteries and excellences enclosed within that City of God. It contained the most exalted name and title, and intimated 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 Mistress, no one besides Herself could ever properly describe. They manifested to Her in a mysterious manner the greatness of the attributes of God, the blessings, which He showered upon Her in creating Her and choosing 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 meaning 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 obligation 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.

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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 consummated in the womb of a woman. Their reward of essential and accidental glory corresponded to their particular and signal love. This latter, the accidental glory, which I have mentioned, consisted in their being privileged specially to attend upon most holy Mary and take a part in the mysteries consummated in Her.

368. Whenever these seventy seraphim showed themselves to Her in a visible manner, the Queen saw them in the same form in which Isaias saw them in imagination, that is with six wings. With two they covered the head, wishing to signify by this humble gesture the insufficiency 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 inferior extremities in closest contact with the earth, referring thereby to the Queen and Mistress of heaven and earth as being human and earthly in nature and acknowledging Her as the Creature excelling all others in dignity and grandeur above all understanding and calculation 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.

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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 operations 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 closest 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 intercourse, 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 enlighten 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 influence 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 twenty-first chapter of the Apocalypse (Apoc. 21, 12) as explained above. They distinguished themselves by the lov-

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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 merits, was their loving wonder at the important part, which most holy Mary performed in this mystery of the Redemption. 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 particularly in order to draw them from sin, whenever they invoke them and the most holy Mary.

372. These twelve angels appeared in the same corporal 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 especially 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

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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 number 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 wonderful display excited great admiration in the Queen, a most tender and compassionate love toward the sufferings 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 captivity. 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 movements 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 without 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

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to the senses and to the object intended. All these angels of the Queen Mary were selected from the most distinguished 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 enjoyment from her presence and company. Although ordinarily only some of them are sent to execute the special 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 incessant praise and acknowledgment, show thyself thankful for the favor which God vouchsafed thee in appointing 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 ordained these holy princes as helpers, guardians and defenders 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 otherwise 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

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 vigilance, 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 recollection 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 patiently 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 benefits 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 faculties, 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 astonishment 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,

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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 silence 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 messengers, 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 impediment, 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 perfection 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-

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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 mentioned 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 order (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 languo." "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 suffers it, longs to hear him spoken of, whom he loves, thus

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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, immense 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 beginning 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, becoming more and more like to Him. As her fervor and longing to see our highest Good increased, being en-

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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 degrees, orders and hierarchies, and many sacraments were made manifest to Her on each occasion. As these visions were often repeated She gradually, by becoming accustomed to them and by acts of virtue which She exercised 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 herself would have been deprived of life, if She had not been preserved by a miracle.

384. When in her childhood it was necessary to accept 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 comparisons, She ascribed to herself the last place of all. Even of the nourishment necessary to sustain life, She considered 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

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 myself to this one with great predilection, resolving to adhere 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 discretion. With creatures it is very difficult to preserve the

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golden middle, without danger of passing from the correct and necessary to the imperfect and superfluous.

387. The way to avoid this danger is to tend continually toward the other extreme, striving rather to reflect and be silent. For the prudent medium of speaking 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 signaling 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 inflame 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 conversation of men and thou wilt learn to relish conversation

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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 repeatedly, 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 creatures, and least of all deserve thy favors. What shall I do in thy divine presence? How shall I requite what

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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 nothing. 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 magnificence 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 sending my Onlybegotten, in order that they may not be deprived 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 eternal 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-

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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 benevolence, 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 outward 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 Majesty, 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 creatures 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 moment."

395. This was the answer of the most holy child Mary, for She was full of apprehension on account of

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the new and dangerous duty of conversing with men which was now enjoined on Her. As far as her inclinations were concerned, if God had allowed it, She desired 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 understanding 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 according to thy word" (Luc. 1, 38) Thou wilt give the plenitude 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, reparation; 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 decree and ordain. Since thus the greatest work of divine Omnipotence and the welfare of all creation depends entirely on thy word how canst Thou desire to be speechless, 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!

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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 petition, 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, beloved 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 regard to thee, this law does not hold, nor do We wish that it should extend over thee. Thou humblest thyself, 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 festive 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

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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 consoled in her humble solicitude concerning the first exercise 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 petitioned 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 considered, and let thy footsteps be directed aright toward the service and honor of our Creator."

398. The most holy Child heard these and other exhortations 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 addressed to her mother; for holy Anne, in order to hear

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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 describe 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 gratitude 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 Messiah, 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, innocently 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 inadequate for the fulfillment of the exercises and practices 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,

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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. Conformable 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 modesty. The most humble Child yielded to this maternal solicitude during the time of her voluntary silence without 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 color 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 devout life. Although She desired them to be coarser and

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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 obedience 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 distinguished 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 fulfilling them to the minutest point. She asked the permission and blessing of her mother for whatever She undertook to do Herself, kissing her hand with great humility and reverence. The mother outwardly permitted this, while inwardly She venerated the grace and exalted dignity 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 burning 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, sparing 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-

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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 encouraging 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 purpose, in order that from her infancy it might be said of Her more truly than of Job: from my infancy compassion 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 obedience 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 teaching of all. Her holy mother Anne, as far as her intuition and love permitted, observed with rapture the heavenly Princess and blessed the Most High in Her. But with her love, as the time for presenting Her in the

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temple approached, grew also the dread of the approaching 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 dedicated 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 unfaithful 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-

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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 dedicated and consecrated to his service. Her most pure soul was filled with new joy and gratitude at this prospect 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 abject 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

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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 certain, whether he is worthy (Eccles. 9, 1) of his love or

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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 disposes 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, disturbing the reason and enthraling 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 according 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

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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 goodness of God, so much the more unworthy does he become 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 obtained 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 enemies and punctually solicitous in fulfilling the pleasure of thy Lord, for thereby thou wilt gratify Him and attend 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 Virtues and Visions, Her Most Holy Espousal and other Events up to the Incarnation 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 inseparable ferment of disorderly passions. The finest and purest gold (Exod. 25, 11), which covered it on the outside and inside, certainly indicated the most perfect and exalted graces and gifts, which shone forth in her heavenly thoughts, in her works and activities, in her habits

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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 foundation-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 depository 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 mankind 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 deposited.

415. Accordingly the ark of the testament (not in itself, 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 listen 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

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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 tribunal 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 spiritual 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 wonderful 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 people, as is shown by the solemn processions arranged by David from the house of Abinadab to the house of Obededom (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-

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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 second 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 material and irrational, and this ostentation and celebrity

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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 desire 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 working 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, illumines 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 unjust 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

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and unfortunate, while riches, pomp, ostentation, splendor, 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 mortals might perceive the terrible danger of loving and entertaining 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 justice; 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 provided 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 instruction 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 dishonors 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

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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 themselves 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 having 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 aspirations, hastened after the ointments of her Beloved, seeking in the temple Him, whom She bore in her heart. This humble procession was scarcely noticed by earthly creatures, 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 beautiful steps along in the sight of the highest and the true Solomon. Thus they pursued their journey from Nazareth 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.

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 splendor 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 themselves 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 buildings, where many young girls lived to be brought up in retirement and in virtuous habits, until old enough to assume the state of matrimony. It was a place of retirement 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 fervor 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

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strange majesty and firmness of mind, excited the admiration of all those present. The priests received Her among the rest of the maidens, and saint Simeon consigned 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 divine 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 retraced 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 brought to fulfillment, that, which Jacob saw happening in sleep ; for here too were angels ascending 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

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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 solicitude." 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 hampered 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 torment and a stormy sea, full of sorrow and unhappiness. Through the hardness of their heart and the total forgetfulness 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

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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 receiving 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 finding 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 toward 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 vocation, make no progress in religion, nor find any spiritual

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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 adoration 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, reminding me of all that I should do ; instructing me and directing 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 particular 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 solitude."

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430. While the twelve angels executed her command, Mary remained with the others in heavenly conversation. 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 preparing her most holy soul. Instantly She was filled with a divine light and force, which perfected and proportioned her faculties in accordance with the mysteries now to be manifested to Her. Thus prepared and accompanied 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

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works. Take notice, my Spouse, how ineffably true it is, that he who follows Me does not walk in darkness. I desire 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 suffer 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 remain 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 magnificence, overflowing in thy riches, unspeakable in thy mysteries, 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 deprived 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 petition of the heavenly Child and He gave Her to under-

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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 happen to thee in the course of thy life, and thou dost not yet understand why it is impossible to fulfill thy fervent desires 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 renounce 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 coming law of grace; for, in order to imitate thee and to serve Me, they will make these same vows and live together 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 without binding Herself, She renounced all affection for terrestrial 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

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of the Divinity ceased, but She was not immediately restored 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 effulgent light, which filled them with grace and beauty. Then they robed Her in a mantle or tunic of most exquisite 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 emblazoned with letters or figures of the finest and the most shining gold, proclaiming: Mary, Daughter of the eternal Father, Spouse of the Holy Ghost and Mother of the true Light. This last name or title the heavenly Mistress did not understand; but the angels understood it,

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who, lost in wonder and praise of the Author, were assisting 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 glorious 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 nothingness. 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 contempt 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

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mercy in raising up from the dust her who in it is poor, and placing her among the princes (Ps. 112, 7) ! I accept 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 faculties 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 assuring 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 natural parents, Joachim and Anne, receive an increase of the loving gifts of his right hand; that the poor and afflicted 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.

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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 discreet matron, (who was, as I have already said, the prophetess Anne) by divine impulse accepted and approved of the offering of the beautiful Child and dismissed Her entirely poor and stripped of everything except 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 spending 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 humiliation. I confess my great ignorance, my vileness and insignificance, which make me entirely unworthy to explain 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

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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 THE 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 incomprehensible essence I acquired knowledge of the most hidden sacraments and mysteries, and in this adornment and espousal I received incomparable blessings and felt the sweetest workings of the Divinity in my spirit. My desire to take the four vows of poverty, obedience, chastity and enclosure pleased the Lord very much, and I merited 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 religiously 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 perfectly all that I proposed to the Lord, as far as was possible 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 incline toward any creature, rational or irrational, nor toward 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

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is consecrated and ordained by the Most High for maintaining 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 forgetfulness 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 chastisement await them than others. The demon also, ancient and astute serpent as he is, uses more diligence in his attempts 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 becoming 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

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 according to thy commands and according to my obligation, though I am so unworthy and remiss therein; yet I beseech 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 instruction 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 ensnared with the words of thy mouth, and caught with thy own words" (Prov. 6, 1). Accordingly he who has made vows to God 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

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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 comprehend, what and how many are the blessings and treasures 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 better part; but remember well that thou hast bound thyself to the eternal and mighty God, to whom the inmost secrets of thy heart are manifest. If it is so base and detestable 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 Benefactor, 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

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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 profession. 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 deliver 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

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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 punishment 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 itself 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 tremendous 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 wanting 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 displeasure 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 virtues, 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 indiscreet zeal for perfection, are wont to invert; thus, while they fail seriously in the obligations of their state, they

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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 desire to be looked upon as distinguished in zeal and perfection, 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 inspiration 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 religion; 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 obedience, 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, revered and put into execution, without any pretense of examination 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 inclination and repress all thy appetites and passions; and when by this efficacious determination thou art dead to

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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 nothing be thine and all in thee be of obedience without contradiction or resistance.

451. Remember that the most perfect manner of obeying 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 sufferings and death in special love for the obedient, and procured for them special rights in regard to mercy and grace, and special privileges toward the success and perfection 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

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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 allayed, 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 voluntary poverty, and all this the sons of the world are ignorant and deprived of, precisely because they are lovers 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 countless hosts that have fallen into hell with their burden, proclaim 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-

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untary poverty restores to man the nobility of his condition and, liberating him from vile servitude and reinstating 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 alienated from themselves the spirit of Christ, my most holy Son, and all that We have come to teach men in abnegation and poverty. Although they do not now feel it, because the Judge delays and they enjoy the abundance

which they desire, yet in the judgment they will find themselves 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 perpetual and unintermitting, as it has come to be among men. It is the height of perverseness for man to mix up the end

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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 not 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 undeceived thee in regard to such a dangerous error. Renounce all affection or inclination for earthly things ; even under the pretext of the necessity and poverty of thy convent 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 according 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-

fluorous 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 insipid 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, according to the manner of losing it, even impossible to repair. 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 security. 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 dictates 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 activity, unless fomented and excited by the images and impressions admitted through the exterior senses. Thou shouldst not touch, nor look upon, nor speak to any person 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 conversing with creatures ), do it with all gravity, modesty and reserve.

459. In regard to thy own person live as if thou wert

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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 thyself, 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 earthly 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, therefore holy Scripture expressly mentions that virgins accompany 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 expanded : it is a privilege granted by heaven to the spouses of Christ in religion, dispensing them from the burdensome and dangerous tribute, which the freedom of the

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world pays to the ruler of its vanities. By this vow the religious live as in a secure port, while other souls navigate and are tossed about in the storms of a dangerous sea. With so many advantages enclosure cannot be considered 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 mysteries, 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 begin to feel narrow confinement in this, the greatest freedom. For thee, my daughter, let there be no other playground, 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 portals, 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 obedience. 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 circumspection wilt thou find thy peace. Thereby wilt thou give me pleasure, and merit for thyself copious fruit and the reward 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 embark 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 perfect, 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-

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nunciation and abnegation of all that is human and visible. Follow Her by a perfect imitation according to the measure 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 intercession 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 punishment 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 exercised in the temple, thou wilt find a summary of all the highest perfections according to which thou shouldst arrange thy life ; an exact and reliable copy of all her sanctity ; the beauty of virginity, the loveliness of humility, the utmost promptness in devotion and obedience, the steadfastness 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 regulate 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."

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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 blemish 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 sovereign Mistress; follow Her in close imitation, and meditate without ceasing upon her admirable excellence and virtues. Remember, that the life and conversation She led in the temple is the original, which all the souls, that consecrate 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 description 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 instructress 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 assume. The priest and her instructress, having together considered her petition with the aid of a special enlightenment 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 remained kneeling before them during this interview and, although they bade Her rise, She begged most humbly to

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be allowed to remain in this reverent position in the presence 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 Daughter, 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 prepared 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, wishing to obey you in all things."

469. The priest and her teacher Anne felt within themselves a great enlightenment and a divine impulse to attend 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 inspired, 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 extend only to the exterior and visible actions, they were 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.

470. The priest also gave Her a rule for her occupations and said : "My Daughter thou wilt assist at the exercises 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 befitting moderation. Then thou wilt go to hear the instructions of thy teacher; the rest of the day thou wilt engage 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 mistress, 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 orders as if She were the least of all the scholars. Her desires 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 acquiescence of obedience, than in following the highest aspira-

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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 former 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. Although this seemed extraordinary, especially in one of the

firstborn children, who were treated with greater consideration 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 opportunity 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 submissive 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 profound humility.

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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 manner, 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? Who 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 reality 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 banish all presumption and let her not account herself obe-

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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 outward 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 contemplation (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 prudence 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 mysteries, 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

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conferences with the holy angels of her guard, familiarizing Herself with them and asking about them with incomparable intelligence and great acuteness. If this sovereign 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 understanding 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 loving in her thoughts, most prudent in her choice and arrangement, 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 altogether according to his heart and pleasure.

#### INSTRUCTION OF THE SOVEREIGN MISTRESS.

477. My daughter, human nature is imperfect and remiss in practicing virtue, and easily weakens in its exercise ; 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 engross 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 ministers and in religious : they, as a matter of course, are supposed 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-

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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 regard 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 necessary to intercept from afar the current of sin, for the practice 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 fortress 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 bulwarks 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-

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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 correspondence 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 exercise of perfection, which ever will seem small to thee; despise or forget none of them ; observe them all with rigor, for in the eyes of God all is precious and of great import when practiced according to his pleasure. It is certain, that He finds pleasure in seeing his commands fulfilled, 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 exercise 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 perform with a loving constancy and thus thou wilt be pleasing in the eyes of my Son and myself. In the works of supererogation, after praying for a holy alacrity, ask advice 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 ADVANCE 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 sovereign 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 toward licit repose, and to the inertia, disinclining Her

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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 perfection 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, efficient 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 creatures were in purest Mary as if in their own sphere and center, and all virtues reached in Her the highest perfection, 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 necessary 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,

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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 acquired, are founded upon a third kind, called natural virtue ; this is born within us as part of our rational nature and is called synderesis. 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 sentiment, 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 synderesis 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 swiftness 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 theological virtues, being faith, hope, and charity. To the second class belong all those other virtues, which have as their

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 intimately 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 infuse 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 degree. In addition to all this her virtues continually augmented : the infused virtues, because She added to them by her own merits, and the acquired virtues, because She nurtured and multiplied them by the intensity of her meritorious acts.

## INSTRUCTION OF THE 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

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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 happiness 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, familiarizing 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 supernatural, 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 acquisition 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

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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 blessedness 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 reported 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 estimated from the greatness of her good fortune and beatitude, and from her ineffable dignity; for her faith inspired 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 Incarnation, that it surpassed all human and angelic understanding, 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 interior 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

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Her, who was greater in faith than all of them taken together. 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 highest 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 beginning 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 example and rule for the rest.

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 correspondence 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 highest 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 approach the perfection of her incomparable faith. Therefore She was set as Teacher and example of all the believing, 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 understanding, 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,

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and the infallible certitude of what is believed, which present those strong motives for prompting the will to strive after what it desires and hopes. According to this doctrine, it seems, that, if the most holy Virgin had ever enjoyed 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 vision 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 ordinary 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-

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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 causing 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 necessary 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 accepted 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 proper 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 meritorious. When most holy Mary assented to the message

of the archangel, She merited an ineffable reward on account 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

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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 utilized 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 operations 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 prevent 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 mentioned above, was suspended only during those times, in which She enjoyed the clearness of the intuitive, and the

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evidence of the abstractive visions of the Divinity. Although 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 renewed the memory of his presence by her faith. The interchange 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

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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 therefore 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

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faith attained its ultimate perfection and where it completely 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 enlightened in their falsehoods and darksome errors and in order to find the sure way toward the last end of their being. Let also Catholics approach and learn to understand 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, because 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 conception; 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 divine 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 justified him, namely circumcision.

502. But our supereminent Lady, Mary, possesses much greater rights and titles to be called the Mother of

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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 virtue. But what the Lord could not do in his own Person, He did in the person of his most holy Mother, constituting 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 example, have not believed during their stay on earth.

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##### INSTRUCTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD, OUR LADY.

503. My daughter, the inestimable treasure of the virtue 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 incomparable 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 received 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; 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 desires 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 wayfaring, 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.

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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 nothing 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 understands with infallible certainty what is far above his powers and assures him of it no less than if he saw it clearly before him. He is thus freed from the gross and vile narrow-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, therefore, 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 LADY 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 appetite 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 obtaining 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 himself, 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.

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Thus hope, by means of the reasoning powers, maintains the middle road between despair and presumption, not permitting man to presume on his own powers for the attainment of eternal glory or to set aside meritorious activity 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 pertains 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 security of the divine promises, in which one believes, but which one falsely supposes unattainable in one's own regard. Between these two dangerous extremes hope directs 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 absolutely, 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 attain 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-

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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 impede these aspirations, but followed them up with all the perfection possible in a creature. Not only did She possess 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 occasion to make use of hope, while enjoying the vision and possession of the Divinity; nevertheless, after again resuming Her ordinary state, She was impelled by the memory 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 faithful joined together: namely the greatness of the prospective 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

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hope in the blessed Virgin in regard to its principal object must also be affirmed in regard to its secondary objects, 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 the Most High, and if the acts of hope corresponded to these acts of faith, who, except the Lord himself could ever comprehend 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 especial 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

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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 happiness, 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 regalement and caresses, and with maternal solicitude and assistance, 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 children, which Christ our Lord engenders every day by his merits and at the petitions of this Mother of mercy. She

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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 continuous 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 enlightenment 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 unshaken confidence in their divine truthfulness, raise thy

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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 companionship 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 disagreeable, and thou wilt esteem them as vile and contemptible ; 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, consider 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 undeceived, 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

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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 Mistress, 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. Charity 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 consents 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.

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517. On account of the nobility of this most excellent of all virtues, our God and Lord, according to the Gospel 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 attributes the divine perfections of omnipotence to the Father, of wisdom to the Son, and of love to the Holy Ghost. For the Father is the beginning, the Son is engendered 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 distinction of Persons, since the Evangelist says indiscriminately: "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 reciprocal 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 offspring 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 charity 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.

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But we call God our charity, not only because we receive 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, redounds in our souls, transforming it more perfectly and abundantly than any other virtue.

518. Other admirable qualities of charity are manifested 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 knowledge 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 excuse for not loving Him after that sacrifice. For although 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 excused for not acknowledging the favor.

519. The example which divine Charity furnishes for our own, manifests still more the excellence of this virtue, although it is difficult for me to explain my perception 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 allows 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

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to show us how to imitate it; for this most noble star, from its very nature, without hesitation and entirely according 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 without desiring acknowledgment, without imposing any obligation on any one, without asking for benefits or requiring 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 signature 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 prototype? 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 deliberate 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

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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 impelled 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 distribution 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

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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 entirety be reproduced in that Creature alone. It was intended that this chosen Creature should in Herself be endowed with the gifts of charity, without the shortcomings 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 possible 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 perfectly 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 return 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 better 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-

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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 excellence conferred upon Her by the eternal Father, when

He appointed Her as the one, who as Mother was to conceive 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 correspondingly 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

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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 better 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 princess 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 creature for the sake of God, also how to practice and execute 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 operate in Her according to his pleasure. This was not possible in other creatures, since in none of them it found the same disposition as in most holy Mary.

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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 precept, 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 fulfillment of it among men.

528. O most sweet and most beautiful Mother of beautiful love and charity ! Let all the nations know Thee, let all generations bless Thee, and let all the creatures magnify and praise Thee! Thou alone art the perfect One, the beloved One, the chosen Mother of uncreated Charity. 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 approach 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

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the beloved from other of the same kind, and charity implied in addition to these, a high appreciation and esteem 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 qualities. In Her we learn to love God for his own sake, resting 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 virtues, 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

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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 grieveest to see Him offended and rejoicest to see Him served by all creatures, whether thou desirest and art delighted to speak continually of his love; see whether thou delightest in the memory of his presence, whether thou grieveest at thy forgetfulness of Him and at his absence from thee, whether thou lovest what He loves, and abhorrest 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 blemish, 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 passing (Cant. 5, 1). And as charity is the mother and the

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root of all virtue, its fecundity will immediately show itself 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 practice 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 charity 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 participates 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-

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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 reward, 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 virtuous and well ordered motives, are not infused charity. As it is usual in men to be moved by these partial excellences and for selfish and earthly ends, there are few who embrace and appreciate the nobility of this generous virtue 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 desire 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 understand 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 except 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.

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Thou wilt also know whether thou lovest with pure charity, 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 advantages. All this sort of distinction does not come from pure charity, but from the natural inclinations and passions of the appetites, which thou must govern, extinguish 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 precede 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 tending 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 intellect is theologically good, when matters of faith are concerned, 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 accompanied by prudence, and faulty and reprehensible when devoid of it.

534. The sovereign Queen Mary possessed this virtue 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-

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dence the Church calls her the "Virgin most prudent." 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 continual 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 qualities 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 ponders and weighs all that is to be done and reduces it to

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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 visible or worldly matters so as to make them useful for divine 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 prevented 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 particular 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 forgetfulness ; for that which once She had understood and learnt,

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was ever present and immovable in her memory. In regard 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 goodness 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 angels themselves. One of these gifts was a fixed and constant 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 humble 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 angels 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

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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 prudence 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 performing there and then each particular work in a virtuous and perfect manner. Thus when I have a deep understanding 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 libly rectitude, and in participation of the divine righteousness. In the light of this intelligence, derived from the splendors of the Divinity itself, there could be no deceit, no ignorance, no doubt, no mere opinions, as is the case with other creatures. For She understood and penetrated all the truths, both in their general and their particular 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

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that this part of prudence was hers in an unequalled fullness 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 providence. Our Lady and Queen practiced this part of prudence 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 understanding 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 preparation for the future and nothing could come upon Her unawares 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 consider 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, reasonableness, cleverness, circumspection and caution. Docil-

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 understood 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 happens, enabling us to judge rightly and follow the best course of action, just as docility is attention to the teachings 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 circumstances. Cautiousness is a discreet attention to the dangers 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 fullest perfection. Docility belonged to Mary as the legitimate daughter of her incomparable humility; for though She had received the plenitude of science from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, and though She was the teacher and the mother of true wisdom, She nevertheless 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 prudence than that of the serpent (Matth. 10, 16). As a Child She accepted instruction from her parents, from

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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 humility, 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 discourse of reasoning by a simple intuition and intelligence 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 noticing 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 admirable was most holy Mary in her circumspection; for all her works were so accomplished that no point of perfection 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,

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and all of them most opportune; therefore in all her teaching, admonishing, consoling, beseeching and correcting of her neighbor, the efficacious sweetness of her reasonable and pleasing manners met with its full success.

545. The last complement of prudence, called cautiousness, 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 virtue, found Her unprepared and unprovided with a counter 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 occasion to practice this caution many times, thereby exciting the wonder of the Apostles. On account of the cautious discretion of the most holy Mary the demon pursued Her with a terrified wrath and envy, burning with a desire to know by what power She foiled such powerful 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 undertakings and works.

546. After having mentioned and described the parts and complements of prudence, let us also examine the different species or kinds, into which it can be divided, ac

according to the object or the ends to which it is applied. Prudence can be used either in our own actions and affairs, 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

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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 already been said above about the manner in which She regulated her own life. The prudence which regulates the government of others is called polyarchic ; this is subdivided into four kinds, according to four different ways of governing others. The first kind is that which facilitates 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 sanctification 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 depository 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 incomparable was the government of her domestic affairs,

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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 useful 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 government 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 enlightened, consoled and astonished at the wisdom, prudence 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

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primitive Christians in particular, how to proceed in public 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 instructed and taught them what was required to carry on a just war with their enemies, so as to conduct them according 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 darkness, teaching us thereby how we must battle with him; for She overcame him by an exalted wisdom and prudence, greater than that shown by David in his combat with the giant, or by Judith with Holofernes, or by Esther 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 intercession 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

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sane judgments; eubulia, the faculty of giving and suggesting good counsel; gnome, which teaches what exceptions 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 possible 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 require 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 assimilated entirely to his, since She was to be the Coadjutrix in all the works of wisdom and prudence, performed 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,

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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 mistakes 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 inconstancy 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 imprudently 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 goodness, 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

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a pure submissive and docile heart will draw from Him superabundant aid. Keep in mind always the misfortune of the imprudent and foolish virgins, who, in their thoughtless negligence, rejected wise counsel and cast aside fear, instead of being solicitous; and when afterwards 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 determined 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 fortitude and temperance, yet in many instances, precisely on account of the failure to moderate and regulate the passions, justice toward the neighbor is set aside. This

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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 according 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 doctrine 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 being the Queen and free from sin, She was exempt from them; but no one except her most holy Son, ever advanced 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 belonged to most holy Mary in a heroic degree. Distributive 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 Church : as for instance in the distribution of the common property for the sustenance and other necessities of each person. Although

She never distributed money, (for that She never handled), 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 distribution of offices and ministerial dignities among the Apostles and the first children of the Church in their

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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 dispositions 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 acceptance of persons.

556. Commutative justice procures reciprocal equality 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 destroy 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 buying 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

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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 conformable 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 equitable 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 suspicions, 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 injustice 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 accordance with their wishes. From all these consequences of sin our Queen was free, as She had no part in sin : all was chasty, purity, sanctity and perfect love, whatever

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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 desire was to fill all men with the sweetness and the graciousness 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 highest 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 explanation 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,

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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 reverence, though his magnificence and his gifts exceed infinitely 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 offering of praise. For in all these actions, if they are performed in the proper manner, God is honored and revered 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 participate in a manner of the quality of parents, such as for instance 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 pretext of the worship of God. In the third place must be mentioned veneration, which inclines us to give honor

and reverence to those, who possess some superior excellence 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 veneration 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 veneration (observantia) were possessed by Mary in such great plenitude and perfection, that nothing possible pertaining to them was wanting. What intellect can ever comprehend 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 according to her knowledge She rendered due honor, teaching 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, contemplations and devotions, together with the wonderful effects and the power of her intercession, are known to all the

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angels and saints, but cannot be comprehended by them, exciting their endless admiration. To Her all the intellectual 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 Patriarchs 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

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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 virtues, 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 commands of her most holy Son, or of her husband, but submitting 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 gratitude 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 inclines 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

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 punishment. 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 niggardliness. Friendship or affability consists in conversing and acting in a decent and becoming manner toward all, without 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 Mistress 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 exalted above all created understanding, this eminent Mistress gave a return of gratitude proportionate to his benefits

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, although all favors were due to Her in justice, She nevertheless gave thanks for them with gracious affability. She alone knew and practiced this virtue to such an extent, 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 considered 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-

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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 exalted 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 concealed it with rare prudence, She would have drawn to Herself all the world, entranced by her most sweet intercourse; her mildness and kindness, though tempered by a divine seriousness and wisdom, displayed in her intercourse 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

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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 especially 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 summary to direct thy intercourse with creatures and thy worship of the Most High. In regard to this latter I remind 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, inattentive and discourteous, that they do not merit reward but chastisement. They revere and adore profoundly 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-

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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 highest 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 reverence 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 activity 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 fortitude is exerted against that which opposes concupiscence; nevertheless we must first treat of the activity of the choleric affections and their moderation through fortitude. 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 themselves. 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,

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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 pusillanimity, 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 affections for the exercise of fortitude ; for in the most innocent Queen all the passions were well ordered and subject 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 obstacles placed by the devil in diverse ways, seeking to prevent 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 human 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, knowing no disorderly fear in her generous heart, as She was superior to all creation. Neither was She rash, or audacious, 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

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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 admirable manner, for She alone participated in the excellent patience of her most holy Son, who bore punishment 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 continual suffering and tribulation, especially during the life and passion of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Her patience during this time exceeds the comprehension of all creatures ; 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.

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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 crucified 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 following 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

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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 magnanimity and magnificence because they in a manner partake 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 peculiar 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 inclined 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, without at the same time seeking honor anxiously and unreasonably. 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 undertakings, fortitude, especially the fortitude called magnanimity, 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 presumption, disorderly ambition, or vainglory ; for all these vices magnanimity abhors.

578. Magnificence similarly points to the execution of

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 difficulty 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 liberality regulates the temperate love and use of money. One can therefore be liberal without being magnificent, as liberality may stop short of its course, when there is question of great and important favors.

579. These virtues of magnanimity and magnificence were possessed by the Queen of heaven in a manner, unattainable 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 perfection 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 commendation. Yet though She deserved honor and praise from all

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creatures, She was nevertheless most magnanimous in despising it and referring it to God alone, and She preserved her humility while practicing the highest perfection of virtue. The acts of her heroic humility stood as it were in heavenly rivalry with the magnanimous excellence of all her other virtues and were like richest jewels set in contrast with the beautiful 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 virtue, which, on account of their vile customs and inclinations 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 occasion presents itself for the performance of a magnanimous 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, excellent and worthy of admiration nevertheless remains,

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they have recourse to other measures, proportionately deceitful and really vicious, such as getting angry, showing 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 obtain a full understanding of the excellence and the propriety 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 resisting and overcoming all the machinations of thy enemies, 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 opposing what is hostile to the object sought after by the concupiscible powers. On this account the irascible will deteriorate 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 excellence and distinction, and vainglory, which are the sources of pride and vanity, will breed many vices pe

cular to the irascible passions, such as discords, conten-

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tions, quarrels, boasting, strife, impatience, obstinacy; moreover also vices peculiar to the concupiscible passions, such as hypocrisy, lying, 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, although 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 highest 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 faculties 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 virtue 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 concupiscence 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

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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 common 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 concupiscence 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. Therefore a certain decorous honorableness and comeliness distinguish 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 abstinence 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 coveted 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. Besides these virtues, which are the principal ones belonging

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 under 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 entirely 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 virtues; 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 information, 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 exercise, dancing, jesting and the like. Although this virtue seems to have no special name, it is of the greatest importance. It goes under the generic name of modesty or temperance.

586. It always seems to me when I describe the excellence 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-

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 virtues, and what of the beauty of that soul which contained the perfection of all virtues? All the domesticities 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 subjected 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 advanced so far, that they denied themselves all indulgence in those concupiscences, which could be withdrawn without 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 preventing 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

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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 temperance 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 affections 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 pleasures 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 humors 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 experienced the changes of corruption arising from superfluous 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 supplemented 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,

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but He did not do it ; for it was not right that She should lose the merit of virtuously using these things, thus affording 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 conform Herself to others, She imitated the mode of living followed by the Lord, although at all times She was wonderful in her temperance.

589. Of the virginal purity and modesty of this Virgin 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 privilege 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 resolved upon this purity from the moment of her Immaculate Conception, She vowed it at her nativity, and She

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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 exercise 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 regulates 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 outward 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 overflow 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

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we see that the most holy Mary was a fit instrument of their distribution and application, we will then partly understand the clemency of this Lady. All her corrections were undertaken more by pleading, teaching and admonishing 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 depository 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, especially 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 disposal, that ocean of humility which was able to contain and embrace the Incomprehensible and the Immense himself. 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 dignity 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).

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592. That the pillars of heaven, the angels (Job 26, II), should quake and tremble in the presence of the inaccessible light of the infinite Majesty, is not to be wondered 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 themselves, embracing contempt and reproach, and acknowledging themselves unworthy of the least favors of grace, and even of the service and succor of the creatures outside themselves; all this was most just and only according 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 reprehend. And if any one should be of consummate perfection, he nevertheless would still remain within the sphere of the common graces and benefits, since no one is superior 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 Herself 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

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the dignity of being the Mother of God and of all the graces connected therewith, but She did not esteem Herself 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 undeserving. 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 infinite 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 exaltation 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 deserved 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 belong 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 happened 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 gesture and carriage, which serves sensuality and vanity, testifying to the levity of the heart according to the saying of Ecclesiasticus (19, 27) : "The attire of the body and

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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 disinclination 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 frugality 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 behavior 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

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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 damage, 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 concupiscences like irrational beasts. Without this virtue it is not possible for man to divest himself of the spoiled human nature, nor to dispose himself for the graces and wisdom of God; for they will not enter into a soul subject to the body of sin (Wisdom 1, 4). He that knows how to moderate his passions by denying them their immoderate and bestial desires, will be able to say and experience 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 Almighty.

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 influence of modesty in words and actions, the exalted nobility of poverty in the use of created things. With the help of these virtues, thou wilt attain the divine enlightenment, the peace and tranquillity of thy soul, the serenity of thy faculties, the right government of thy inclinations ;

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, abominable, horrible and monstrous the world is in the sight of God and the saints on account of the enormous abominations, which men commit against this lovable virtue. Look how some follow like brutes after the horrors of sensuality, how gluttony degrades others, how some follow after pleasures of play and vanity, how others are dominated by pride and presumption, how many are entangled in avarice and the desire of gain, how they all follow the impulse of passions, seeking in this life only pleasure, while in the life to come they pile up for themselves 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, although they pursue the same object. Every benefit conferred 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 virtues, 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 communicating 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 treasures of divine wisdom and science (Coloss. 2, 1).

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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 correspondence, 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 consist 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 influence of the Holy Ghost, which impels him, sweetly and pleasingly (Sap. Wisdom 8, 1) to follow the enlightenment, and freely to execute and accomplish what the will under the efficacious influence of the Holy Ghost, undertakes (Rom. 8). Therefore this impulse is called instinct 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 prudence, 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 toward 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

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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 accompanied 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 inclinations which arise from human ignorance and folly;

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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 stubbornness; 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 necessary also because She enjoyed at the same time impeccability, while the other creatures stand in such a distant 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

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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 received 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

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 perception or knowledge is supplied to wisdom by the gift of intellect, 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 profound 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 Herself, 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 without 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 manifested Itself to the world, This most wise Virgin knew

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in her wisdom the arrangement of the whole world and the powers of the elements (Wisdom 7, 17), the beginning, 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 dispositions 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 delighted 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.

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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

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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 sweetness 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 intuition, 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 pertains to the service of the Most High and to the welfare of the neighbor. By means of this softening and sweet mildness of the mind, our will is ever ready, and our memory always attentive, so that in all times and places and circumstances 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

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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 foundation 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 conceit, and thus rilling it with awe, as the Apostle teaches (Rom. 11, 21). This gift of fear has its different degrees ; 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 selfcontempt, 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-

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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 enable 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 commonly 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 understood, in what holy fear, piety, fortitude, science and counsel 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 themselves 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

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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 disconcerted 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 introduce 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 experience can it actually be known, who does attain it.

613. Take heed therefore, my dearest, and study profoundly 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 invited 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

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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 foolishness of men makes them stupid and deaf, their impious malice makes them scoffers, and their unbelieving perversity 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 invincible fortitude to strive after the most arduous and exalted, and to endure the most adverse and exacting labors.

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By discretion choose the means for attaining to these results. 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 distinguish 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 raptures, (I do not speak here of the beatific visions), although 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

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different aspects. Thus it happens, that charity and virtue, which make their possessors holy and perfect, depend 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 revelation; 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, inspired 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 deposit, 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-

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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 revelations 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 perfect union of the soul with the highest Good, is the supernatural 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 oftentimes shown in holy Scripture 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

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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 frequent 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

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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 passions 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 revelation, 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 deceitful 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 tribunal 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 intention 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

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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 reception 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 creatures 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 prerogatives 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

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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 common measure of the saints. Many more favors and graces than were even possible in them actually were consummated in the Mother of grace, and it is at least possible that beatific vision can take place in men yet in their pilgrimage, 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 inclination to sin. Just as a vessel, which has contained any impure liquid and which is to be filled with another pure substance, must be cleansed, washed and purified until not

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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 inclinations 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 enjoy the vision of God, it is necessary to cauterize the infection 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 afterward, 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. According to my understanding there are two kind of incongruities 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

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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 extremes can be united, and before the creatures can rest in this supreme manner in the Deity and before it can assimilate 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 degree than even by the angels ; for She was touched neither by original nor by actual sin, nor by any of their consequences. In this regard divine grace acted more powerfully 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 regard to most holy Mary and that the most high Ruler should and really did proceed differently with Her during 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

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less grace and merits, are enjoying the supreme beatitude. 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 appropriate, that She should know by fruition and experience 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 purified by the seraphim (Isaias 6,7). It has two effects in the soul: first it spiritualizes and separates in it (according to our mode of understanding) the dross and earthliness 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 deplores these sins with incomparable sorrow and contrition, with a sorrow, that cannot be equaled by any other human

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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 impressions and images, acquired by the senses distort the intellectual vision and serve only as a hindrance to the clear vision of the supreme spiritual essence of God. Therefore it is necessary to clear and evacuate from the faculties 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 soul 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 illuminations 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 addition to this they caused in this most pure soul new sentiments and movements of humility and knowledge of the nothingness of the creature in comparison with the Creator and his blessings. Thus her inflamed heart was incited 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 quality 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

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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 blessedness. 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 applies 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, preparations 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 encompass 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

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the lowest of those who enjoy God, it is infallibly true, that neither eye has seen, nor ears heard, nor mind conceived, 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 ENJOYED BY MOST  
HIGHEST MARY.

631. The second kind of divine visions enjoyed by the Queen of heaven was the abstractive, which is very different 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

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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 manifest, 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. Although 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 sweetness, inflaming it with divine love, transforming it and causing a forgetfulness 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 sovereign 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

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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 negligence 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 higher order. First, because the object of the abstractive visions is altogether supreme among intellectual things, whereas the range of these more ordinary intellectual visions extends to many various objects, since they include the material and the spiritual things, and the entire field of intellectual truths and mysteries. The second reason is, because the abstractive visions of the divine Essence are brought about by the most exalted and supernaturally infused 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

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objects revealed are all infused; at other times not necessarily all the subject-matter of the revelations is infused; because then the same species or images, which the imagination or phantasy already possesses are sufficient for the revelation. For the understanding, endowed with a new light and a supernatural power, can apprehend the mysteries of God from imaginary images, as happened with Joseph in Egypt (Gen. 40, 41), and with Daniel in Babylon (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, terminated 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 prophetic, 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

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) . Therefore these revelations demand a very excellent predisposition 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 revelations 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 Divinity. Moreover the clearness and the extent of this intellectual 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 profoundly and clearly, more unerringly and securely all that She did know. By means of this intelligence She penetrated to the very being of God and to his attributes as manifested in the very smallest of his works and creatures. Not one of them existed in which She did not perceive 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

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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 emburdened 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 imaginary 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 manner, 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 Testament 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 heading. On this same account the demon can reproduce them in appearance by exciting phantasms of the imagination; he does not, however, reproduce them in reality,

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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 concerned.

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### CORPOREAL VISIONS OF DIVINE ORIGIN ENJOYED BY MOST HOLY MARY.

639. The fifth and lowest order of visions and revelations 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 different 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 quantitative body constructed from the ether in external dimensions. 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 corporeal visions, such as She really enjoyed.

640. In the holy Scriptures are many instances of corporeal visions granted to the saints and Patriarchs. Adam

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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 Pharaoh

(Gen. 41, 2) in the vision of the cows; Nabuchodonozor, 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 Pharaoh, Baltassar, Nabuchodonosor. Moreover those are the more important revelation and visions, which are accompanied by a higher intelligence, although, to judge from outward appearances, others may be called higher, namely, those which represent God or the Mother of God, and the saints according 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 Pharaoh (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 ;

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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 enraptured during many of the beatific visions, (which in ordinary mortals is always required), and also during her intellectual and imaginary visions ; yet, even while She was in the full use of her senses, She received higher revelations 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 Evangelists 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 happened also in another way, as we shall see in the following chapter.

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643. Other souls must be very circumspect and careful 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 desire 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 purpose; 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

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reverence of God to acknowledgment of thy littleness, to abhorrence of the earthly vanities, to desire of being despised by creatures, to joyful suffering, to love of the cross and an earnest and generous acceptance of it; it will move thee to seek the last place, to love those that persecute thee, to fear and abhor sin, even the slightest, to aspire 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 kindness 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; renounce all human esteem and consolation, all the delight and pleasure of the world. All that thy earthly inclinations demand, refuse to thyself, although it may be small and licit in itself; turn thy back on all sensible things, seeking 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 accomplish them. Be constant in thy faith regarding these admonitions, believing in them, esteeming them and writing them in thy soul with an humble and loving affection 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 COMMUNICATIONS, WHICH THE MOST HOLY MARY ENJOYED 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, understood 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 representation 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

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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 attention paid to Her by the heavenly courtiers, her vassals, and She treated and conferred with them in a more exalted 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 ordinary 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 foregoing 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 communicated 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, making 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

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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 illuminating 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 voluntary mirror, there are infinite secrets and mysteries, (besides 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 essential glory, the want of these revelations cannot be called ignorance in the angels or a privation of knowledge ; but it is called nescience or negation ; while revelation 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

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active in communicating it to their inferiors; and moreover 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, according to the divine will, it seemed befitting and necessary. 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 hindrance 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 Himself 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 enlightenment 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

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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 operation and estate though yet living in mortal flesh and subject 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 frequently as to his most holy Mother, nor with such a plenitude and under such exalted conditions as in Her. If many doctors (not without good 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 corresponds to the third mentioned in the same place, although it does not proceed by means of imprinted images. 652. The truth is, this privilege is not ordinary or common 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 disproportion. With the divine grace, however, the creature (although yet in earthly and corruptible body) can deny it-

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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 revelations, which they communicate to each other, and of experiencing 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 comparison ; 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 attributes 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 canticles of praise, celebrating the incomparable glory of the Divinity, so that She excited the admiration of the heavenly 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 immediately received new impulses of the torrent of the Divinity (Psalm 35, 9) by which She was inundated. And

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 knowledge 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 communion 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.

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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 forgetfulness, 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 paternal 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 watchfulness 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 incomparable 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 blessing. Since He has dealt with thee liberally in his appointment of angels for thy guard, be attentive to their intercourse and listen to their injunctions with reverence; give thyself over to their guidance, honor them as the am-

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bassadors of the Most High, seek their favor, in order that, having been cleansed of thy sins and freed from imperfection, inflamed with divine love, thou mayest become so spiritualized, as to be fit to treat with them as their companion in the participation of the divine illuminations. 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 communicated with me in so many kinds of visions, I will respond 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 fitting, that this life should be altogether uniform in regard 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 received 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.

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 influx of supernatural grace. But in regard to these favors, my dearest daughter, I wish thee to remember, that although 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 cooperation 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 blessings 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 intercourse 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 gathering-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 Princess : the divine power, in order to enrich Her, daily drawing 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

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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 continual 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 Messiah 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

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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 admiration : "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 concerned, He waited in order to conceal and. disguise more

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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 Himself 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 possess abundantly sufficient matter of that kind in the writings 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 accidental 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 remain 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 proceeded 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

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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 mysteries 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

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in human flesh. Therefore, my Spouse, thou wilt understand, 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 sorrows 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 beseech 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 before 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

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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 Redemption 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 sorrow for the loss of her father Joachim could not be wanting, for She loved him with a holy love. The tender and sweet Child therefore felt, that this sorrowful compassion 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-

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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 received 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

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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 Majesty, 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 Messiah 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 prepare 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 patriarch lost the use of speech and, treading into the path common to all flesh, he commenced his agony in a marvelous 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

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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 happened 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

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death of Joachim to the instructress of the heavenly Princess, 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 modesty 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 highest 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 accelerated 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 children 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-

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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 enjoying 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 ignorance. 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-

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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 tribulations and trials of suffering.

676. Take notice, my dearest, that my most holy Son and myself are trying to find among those who have arrived 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 wisdom, in which the sons of Adam, with blind stubbornness, 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 dispenses 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 understand better the science of suffering, which only experience can bring to its ultimate perfection and thoroughness. 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

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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 proportion 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 except such as were conformable to her humility and incomparable 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 inflamed 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 illumined 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

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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 composition (Psalm 102, 14) and in what kind of a vase Thou has placed thy treasures. My soul wastes away in bitterness (Psalm 30, 11) ; and in thy absence, since Thou art its sweetest life, only Thou canst restore its drooping 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 unthankfulness 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 gatherings 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!"

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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 exasperated 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, courageous 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 inflamed 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

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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 aspirations, 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 highest 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

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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 anxiousness 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 exertions 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 supplicate, 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 conflict 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

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great was the grief of that burning heart, which had known how to love so much. To weigh this grief belongs to God alone, and in order that She might feel it in its fullest extent, She was left by God to the overwhelming 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 understand 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 suffering to the soul, knowing at the same time, that it has not lost Him, but still possesses Him, though hidden and disguised 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,

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they take no thought or reckoning of It. And although my most holy Son has brought a remedy for this dreadful ignorance contracted by the first sin, by meriting for men faith and charity, thereby affording them the possibility 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 without any fruit and is involved in death! The sons of darkness 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 preparation 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 Himself from thee, hope in patience and seek Him solicitously without ceasing, since thou knowest not his secret judgments. For the time of his absence and temptation provide 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 affliction, 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

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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 imperfections, 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 common 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 impossible 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

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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 forsakenness, 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."

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694. Lucifer expressed his thanks for these encouraging 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 continued 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 intended. 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."

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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 prudence 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

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me great wonder, especially when I considered the extremes, to which the fury of Lucifer was allowed to proceed against the most holy Mary in her tender years and when I beheld the hidden and vigilant defense and protection 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 despised, by a feeble Woman, by a Child in its natural weakness. 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

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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 inexpressible 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 emulation 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 distinguished 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 negligences were more clearly apparent to the priests and their teacher; and that Mary alone was preferred in the estimation and judgment of all.

701. The companions of our Queen allowed the devil to sow this bad seed in their bosoms ; for they were heedless and little experienced in spiritual ways. They allowed

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it to increase until it grew into a sort of interior abhorrence of 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 scheming to obtain the favor of the priests and of their teacher, while seeking to discredit all the other girls by her complaints and her exaggerations of their faults, whereas She was the most useless of them all and therefore deserved 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."

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 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 suggestions; and the farthest which they were allowed to proceed, 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, yielding 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 persecuting Her; and She excited the admiration of the angels, by humiliating Herself as if She were the vilest of mortals deservedly treated in that way. In all these things

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She surpassed the conceptions of men and the highest merits of the seraphim.

704. It happened one day, that, impelled by the diabolical 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 discordant 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 prostrating Herself at our feet with feigned humility, and afterwards She quarrels anew and throws all into uproar."

705. The priests and the instructress brought the Mistress 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

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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 profound humility of the most holy Mary will also understand 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 prudent 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 imperfect 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 companions, 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

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punishment and the warning of the priests and the instructress, whom they had induced to act thus in pursuance of their badly governed passions. The dragon, who was secretly contriving this entanglement, urged the incautious hearts of all these girls to still greater haughtiness and presumption, and as they had now made headway in the estimation of the priests themselves, they proceeded to greater audacity in discrediting and lowering the good name of the most pure Virgin. Accordingly by instigation 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

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merits ; nevertheless I will always acknowledge and confess 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 negligences 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 considering 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 persecution, 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

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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 refuses 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 example of these events of my life should serve thee for thy instruction and direction. Treasure up this example lovingly 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 happiness. The sons of perdition, who serve vanity, are ignorant of the treasure of suffering injuries and of pardoning 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 beastly, rather than from a human. On the other hand, he who pardons injuries magnanimously and forgets them, although 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 revenge.

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 abominable 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.

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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 attempt 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 confounded 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 creature 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.

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712. Strive after, therefore, and labor for the imitation 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 vengeance 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, delighting in the prolonged exercise of her sufferings, which occasioned so many glorious triumphs and the admirations and praises of the supernal spirits. The smouldering 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 altogether 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

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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 defend Her from the persecution and the sufferings consequent 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 deserves 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 approved 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,

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She addressed Him: "Why, O Lord and most beloved Master, such severity with me? Why such a long absence 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 instruction concerning Mary abated the persecutions of the maidens. The Lord also restrained them and prevented 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 Beloved; 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

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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 enlightenment, 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 visitations 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. Having passed this age, the holy angels on a certain day, without manifesting themselves, spoke to Her as follows : "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 fulfillment."

718. At this unexpected and sorrowful message the heart of the affectionate Daughter was filled with compassion. 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 :

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"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 portal 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 marvelous 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 bodily 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

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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 instituted 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 return 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, fulfill now thy obligation by not forgetting me in the presence of our Lord God and Creator and reminding Him of the need I have of his protection in this hour. Remember what thou owest to her, who has conceived Thee and bore Thee in her womb nine months, who afterwards nourished Thee at her breast and has always held

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Thee in her heart. Beseech the Lord, my Daughter, that He extend a hand of mercy toward me, his useless creature, 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 Beloved, 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 justifications 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 generosity. 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 colloquies the blessed mother saint Anne felt the throes of death approaching 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

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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 revered 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

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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 pertain 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 Superior 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.

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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 Himself 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 corrects 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 delightful and beautiful. All this happened to me in that

which thou hast written of me ; He visited me and prepared me in his mercy with many different kinds of blessings, 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 consolation 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

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the creatures. Instead of all this men are given over to their own solitudes, which are inefficient and weak, blind, uncertain and inconsiderate. From this false beginning 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 himself, 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 conscience; and although thou mayest find thyself surrounded 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 attentive by this new clearness, She questioned her angels and said to them : "My friends and lords, my most faithful 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 approaches." 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 during her first years in their own essence, without hindrance or dependence of the bodily senses.

729. With these hopes and with the vision of the heavenly 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

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and saints, the heart, wounded by the arrows of the Omnipotent, will not come to rest Nevertheless, our heavenly 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 insignificant creature, bitterly bewail the cause of this punishment. 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

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the full meaning of this title under pretense of her position as Spouse of the Most High ; for She knew that they had been eye-witnesses of the espousal, which his Majesty had celebrated with their Queen. And as his wisdom 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 solicitous 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 enlightenment of her faculties ; a sure pledge of the beginning 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 without light?"

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732. To her sweet complaints the holy seraphim answered : "Lady, thy Beloved is not absent when for thy good He tarries and withholds Himself ; in order to console 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 afterwards 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 appreciation 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 withdraw Her from her present state and raise Her to a position, where She could enjoy new and different favors, for in order that her faculties might again be proportioned to the high Object and to the manner of enjoying It, they must necessarily be renewed and redispensed. All this the holy seraphim proceeded to do with Her in the manner already described in book second, chapter fourteenth. 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

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particular affections and sentiments of love and virtues which the Lord desired, and in the midst of these elevations 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 abstractive 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 suffered 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.

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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, together 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 answered: "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-

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tiously through the violent waves of tribulation, arriving- 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 increase 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 pleasing to the will of the Most High, and to fulfill and execute 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 condition of mortals were not so low, they would covet sufferings merely for the sake of their God and Lord,

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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 engrave 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 become 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 preference is to be given to sufferings rather than to delights, wherever it can be done without sin, what foolishness 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

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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 sentiments, by what actions, and in what occasion thou mayest 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 within 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 thyself ; 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 reserves 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.

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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 approving her vow of chastity, and solemnizing it by the presence of the glorious hosts of angels. The most innocent Dove had withdrawn Herself from all human intercourse, 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 heavenly 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 preserved the calmness of her hope and belief more perfectly 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 worthless wormlet, according to thy pleasure, without making me fail in that which I have promised to Thee ; and

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if it be not displeasing to Thee, my good Lord, I confirm and ratify anew my desire to remain chaste during 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 obedience which until then had fallen to her lot, and She resigned Herself entirely into the hand of the Lord. His Majesty answered her: "Mary, let not thy heart be disturbed, 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 meantime, while our great Lady applied Herself to vigilant prayer, and to her resigned and prudent sighs and solicitude, God spoke in sleep to the high priest, saint Simeon, and commanded him to arrange for the marriage 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

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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 custom 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, having 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 consider well to whom She was to be entrusted. He added also that Mary of Nazareth did not desire to be married; 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 interfered, 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

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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 completed 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 before 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 inclinations 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 return 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 fulfilling the duties connected with it. This was my inclination, 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 Messiah 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

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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 appointed for the execution and realization of their resolve. During this time the most holy Virgin multiplied 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 yearnings 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 perfect 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."

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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 expected 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 almighty and unfailling 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 elements, 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 ordain 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

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 husband, 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, without at the same time knowing the mystery concealed from me by the Lord, was the greatest sorrow and affliction, 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

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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 cooperates 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 creatures 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 matrimony, 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 obedience more excellent and pleasing in his eyes. By this example thou thyself must regulate the subjection to that which thou perceivest to be according to the pleasure of the Lord thy Spouse, resigning thyself entirely to his protection and confiding in the firmness of his promises. And wherever thou hast the approbation of thy priests and superiors, allow thyself to be governed without 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 preceding chapter, our Princess Mary completed the fourteenth 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 temple. 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 descendants of the royal race of David. He was then thirty-three years of age, of handsome person and pleasing 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 chastity. 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 command 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-

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 remembering the vow of chastity which he had made and resolving anew its perpetual observance, he resigned himself 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 admirable 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 acceptable 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 declared saint Joseph as the spouse selected by God himself 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 countenance and as the Queen of majesty, most humble yet uniting all perfections within Herself, took leave of the

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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 during her stay in the temple. The humility of her behavior 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 possessions and estates of her blessed parents, they were welcomed and visited by their friends and relatives with the joyful congratulations customary on such occasions. 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 conversation 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

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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 myself 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 pleasure, 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 fortunate, 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 answered Her, saying: "Speak, Lady, thy servant hears." On this occasion the Mistress of the world was surrounded by the thousand angels of her guard, in visible form. She had asked them to be present in that manner, because the Lord, in order that the most pure Vir-

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gin might act with greater grace and merit, had permitted 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 company 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 Creator, 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 deceitfulness 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 acknowledge as my Spouse and Lord, with fixed resolve to preserve 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, offering 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:

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"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 before knowing thy own. I also acknowledge myself under greater obligation to the Lord of creation than other

men; for very early He has called me by his true enlightenment 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, without 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 perfection of all virtues, lovingly corresponded to the desires of saint Joseph. The Most High also gave to saint Joseph new purity and complete command over his natural 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

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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 offered 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 according to his judgment. Our Queen reserved for Herself only the privilege of serving Him and of attending to the household duties. For from intercourse without sides 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 approved of this resolve, saying that the Lord did not wish

them to be rich, but poor and lovers of the poor, desirous of helping them in as far as their means would allow. Then arose between the two Spouses a holy contest, 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 enlightenment learnt to know more and more the qualities

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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 Companion 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 responded: "Most high Lord, I praise and magnify Thee for thy admirable disposition and providence in my regard, though I am so unworthy and poor a creature; I desire to obey Thee and please Thee as one having greater obligation to Thee than any other. Be-

stow upon me, my Lord, thy divine favor, in order that I may be assisted in all things and governed according 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, commandest."

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 following, 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 excellence? Dost thou understand, that thy Spouse is the Queen and Lady of heaven and earth and that Thou art the depository of the inestimable treasures of God himself? Be mindful, man of God, of thy entrusted pledge

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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 sacramental 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 resign themselves entirely to his divine Providence. I lived in the house of my spouse with the same perfection 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 themselves; for the hindrance to a holy and perfect life, is not the state, but the vain and superfluous cares and

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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 obligations 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 assume 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 perfection.

#### CHAPTER XXIII.

#### AN EXPLANATION OF CHAPTER xxxi OF THE PROVERBS

OF SOLOMON, TO WHICH THE LORD REFERRED ME REGARDING THE LIFE OF MOST HOLY MARY IN MATRIMONY.

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 obligations 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 describing 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

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another like Her : She is the only one, without a peeress or one resembling Her, who was exalted in dignity according 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, uncreated 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 (according 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 purchase price by which the Most High acquired and appropriated Her, included his wisdom, goodness, omnipotence, 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."

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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 Creator 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 Patriarchs ended: they in all their lives and all their sanctity did not arrive at the point where Mary merely commenced. 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, innocence and sanctity came from her most holy Son as the exemplary, antecedent 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 virtues all true blessings would come to him. But especially did he trust in Her when he perceived her pregnancy

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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 foundation 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 abundantly 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 Solomon 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, assuming 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

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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 recognized 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 Scripture 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 blessing, 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, will 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 adjunct 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 distance ?

778. "She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands." A well beseeming praise and worthy of a valiant woman: that she

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should be industrious and diligent within her home, spinning 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 industrious and not idle; for the idleness of a woman, who lives from hand to mouth, is a proof of base foolishness 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. Nevertheless, 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 continued 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 unquiet 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

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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 perspiration 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.

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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 necessary 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 vigilant 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 untiring 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 sustenance in the labor of the day, so that while they were

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engaged in the outward service, the spirit might not find itself needy and unprovided. She commanded the faculties of her soul to follow the inviolable rule of seeking 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 allowing 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 nourishment; making use of the jurisdiction, which She possessed 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 ancient 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 domestics and to the servants, namely her own people, to

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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 EXPLAINED.

785. No quality of a valiant woman could be wanting 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 fragrant 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 property 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-

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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 restricting 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 disorderly 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 inclinations 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 disorderly passions, as our Princess Mary exerted in governing and mortifying more and more all her faculties and senses. She chastised her most innocent and virginal body by incessant penances, watchings, fasts, prostrations in the form of the cross, as we shall say

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later on (Part II, 12, 232, 442, 568, 898, 990, 991 ; Part III, 581) ; She denied to her senses all rest and indulgence, not because they were in disorder, but so as continually 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 violence 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 commerce, 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 reproaches of a bad conscience, nor by the fear of actual

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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 Omnipotence, 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 fulfillment is futile and of no practical consequence, therefore 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, exactly as She had intended and proposed in her most well ordered mind. In all things She was found true,

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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

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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 distribution 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 garments." Having lost the Sun of Justice, the warmth of grace and original justice, our nature was buried under 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-

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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 necessary 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 sanguinary 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 humanity 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

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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 pronounced 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

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

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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 secundum 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 unfaillingly 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

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reached. She attained to this knowledge so expeditiously, 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 exalted 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.

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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; therefore 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

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men and of the Lord himself. And because God himself 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 inmost 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 faculties with double vestments against the influences of lukewarmness 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-

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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

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What the Universities of Europe, the Religious  
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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 contribute their opinions. The following religious orders complied: The Augustinians, Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Jesuits, Cistercians, Basilians, Trinitarians, Mercedarians, Minims, Hieronymites, Premonstratensians, Reformed Augustinians, Theatines, Minors of the Regular Clergy, all unanimously endorsing the favorable decision previously published by the University of Salamanca. To the approbation of nearly all the Universities 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 witnesses said concerning the wonderful "Ciudad de Dios," we here select the official approbation of the University of Louvain, one of the great Universities of Europe,

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After pointing out that God's power of giving private revelations to whom He chooses, must not be circumscribed, 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 concerning 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 conclusion that it will be most useful for enlivening and augmenting 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 doctrines 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 unknown, and which had been hidden beneath the mere

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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, painting 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 experience a delight not met with in ordinary writings; and the more they are read the greater is the delight experienced. 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 inspiring 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 commendation 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 consistent throughout. Nor can it be believed to be the work of a perverted mind, for, with a constant equanimity, 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 judgment, 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 written 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 revelations 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 resulted 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

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#### 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 following 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 occasion 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 Germany, 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 recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, 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 comparison 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 Venerable 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."

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"We therefore do not hesitate in granting our episcopal 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 edition of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator 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 having 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.

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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. Wishing 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 secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment 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 publication 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.

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#### 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 lowliness. 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 conformity 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 repugnance rising up in the flesh against the spirit. The

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#### 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 punishments similar to those of the chief of the angels (Is. 14, 12), since I had sought in my pride to comprehend, 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 persons, 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 intention 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 reassure 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 describe, the demon sought to deprive me of my health, causing many aches, indispositions and disorders of the whole body. He harassed me with insurmountable sadness 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

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 frailty. 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 embarrassment 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 committed 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 difficulties 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, propitiate 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 consolation either human or divine : without the former, because I was without the help and the counsel of obedience, and without the latter, because the Lord had interrupted 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 approaching; 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 obedience 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 redemption, 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 desired 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

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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 faculties. 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 understanding 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 knowledge 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 between 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

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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 consciousness 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 question 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 innermost 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 thy 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-

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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 abnegation 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 dwelling-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 findest Him not or enjoyest not his caresses. He, with whom thou art to con-

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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, without 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

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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 virtues. 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 confusion for having offended Him, in order that it may make thee ashamed of offending Him in the future, comparing 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

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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 acknowledging 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 perfections. where the view of the intellect is without restraint, 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 companionship 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 frequent conversations and intercourse with thee, their virtues 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

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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 condescension, thou hadst not been selected to write this history, but the eternal Father chose thee for his daughter, in view of this work, and for a spouse of his Onlybegotten Son ; and the Son received thee to his close embraces, and the Holy Spirit selected thee for his enlightenments. 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 bondsmen 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. Although 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 manifestations 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 introduction too much to mention them now . I continued my prayers for some days, asking the Lord to govern and

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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 obedience. 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 recognizing 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 received 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, furnished 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

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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 useless 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 happiness 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 received 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 ;

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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,

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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 corrects 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 : receive it then from the divine right hand and in the divine vision, where Thou standest in the presence of God enjoying 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 I 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

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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 obligation, 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 continued to increase. Although they seemed to be all of

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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 significance these increases and advances in the blessings conferred. 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 Incarnation of the Word in Mary most Holy; the Circumstances Accompanying this Mystery; the Exalted State, in which the Blessed Mother was placed; her Visit to Saint Elisabeth and the Sanctification of 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 intercourse 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

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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 praising the Lord for the light, which they felt within themselves. Filled with marvel they suspended their judgment, 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 presence, 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

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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), compelled, to hasten his steps and extend the arms of his Omnipotence to bring about the greatest of wonders conceivable in the world before or after: namely the Incarnation 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 possibility 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

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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 especially of God s communications ad extra in the work of

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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.

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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 punishment 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

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 understanding) 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 continually 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 impetuous 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

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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 understanding 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

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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-

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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 rehearse 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, becoming 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 conceived 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 superior 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-

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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 insight 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 transformed 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

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 consequences: 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 terrestrial 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 concerned, to be governed by his Mother according to the

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constitution and law of nature? This privilege of sovereignty 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 inconvenient 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 knowledge 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,

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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 deprecate 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 knowledge 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, participating 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 comprehended 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 knowledge an infinity, because it seems to partake of the qualities of infinite knowledge and because, in one and the same action of her mind and without successive advertence, 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

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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 fulfillment of the ineffable mercy of the Most High. She continued during these days her most fervent prayers for the coming of the Messiah, 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 preparation for the dignity of Mother of God, I wish thee to perceive the admirable order of his wisdom in the creation 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 devoted 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 without 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

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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 visible 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 creatures 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 Creator 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 HOLY 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, continued 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 perceived. I can only express

myself by saying, that the divine wisdom and power proceeded 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 creature, can comprehend so much the better, what is necessary 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 beneath 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

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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 history (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 privilege 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 himself and therefore She gave a greater license, or rather a more strict command, to creatures to afflict Her, since

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She saw the results of this activity in their own Creator. Hence, as the Most High did not wish his only and chosen Spouse to be continually molested by the creatures, even though She herself desired it, He often restrained them and neutralized their operations, so that the heavenly Princess, unhindered by them, might occasionally 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 participation 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 mankind. 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

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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 communicate without envy the treasures of grace, which She had comprehended and received; and therefore such an admirable 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, because 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 conceive and give birth to the Word made man, since He in his mercy, clemency and love desired to humiliate Himself 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 concurrence 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 commanded Her by the Lord. The heart of her Spouse was

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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 remembrance 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

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as in that of reason, how exactly mortals ought to correspond 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 preference 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 holiness 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, offering 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

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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 participation 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, petitions, 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

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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 indicating 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 understood 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 communicable and since it would contribute to Mary's excellence, it should not be denied to Her. Has He not conferred upon Her greater favors, and has He not made Her the Queen of the stars and of all other creatures?

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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 commanded 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 manifested to our great Queen in this vision, and what I have said and will say of all these mysteries, leaves me dissatisfied 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

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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 Incarnation 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 correspondence 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

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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 legitimate 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 ignorant 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 SACRAMENTS TOGETHER 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.

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 enlightenments 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 ineffable 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 treasures, 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.

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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 regarding 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 incomprehensible sanctity, what mystery is this, which Thou hast manifested to me? Without measure are the misdeeds of men, so that only thy wisdom can comprehend them. But can all these and many more, perhaps, extinguish 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),

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and it is also true, that Thou hast many times given thy word through the holy Prophets; and Thou hast promised them by word of mouth, a Redeemer and our salvation. How then, my God, can these promises fail of fulfillment 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 dwelling 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 generous mercy; and the end of all these evils will be for them the privation of my vision in eternal torments.

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 sacraments 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 account, O my eternal Good, Thou relinquishest thy undertaking, 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

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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 responded : "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 Melchisedech" (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

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clothed, O my sweet love, with the strength of this Man God, which will not allow me to put a stop to my importunity, 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 contention 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

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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 produced 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 conditions, 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

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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 exaltation 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 convinced, 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 blessings 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 excellent 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 immediately shown the works on the sixth day of the creation of

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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, because 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 singularities. 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

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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, considering 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 Trinity, 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 locomotion ; 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

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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

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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 acclamation 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 Restoratrix 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 chastised 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

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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 humility, 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 daughter, 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 moreover, 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 occasioned 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 thyself. 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

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obligation of brethren and of servants of one true Master. Just as thou wouldst shed tears of humiliation and confusion 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 inclinations, 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 knowledge and goodness, ordained in equity and number (Wis. 11, 21). None of them is faulty, useless or ineffectual, superfluous or vain ; all are exquisite and magnificent, finished and executed according to the full measure 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 themselves great, stupendous and marvelous, more to be admired 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 excels 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 Godhead, broke forth and communicated itself to men, uniting 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, deserved to be so perfectly adorned with the plenitude of

his treasures, that no gift or grace within the range of possibility be omitted, and all these gifts be so consummate, 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 courtiers 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 represent 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 penetrating light, piercing to new and more profound mysteries, 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."

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73. On hearing these words the most Humble among the humble abased and annihilated Herself in the presence of the Most High more than can be comprehended by human power. Entirely submissive to the divine pleasure 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. Accompanied 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 oblivious 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.

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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 completely 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 conceived 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 commanded, 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 immediate 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

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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 profound understanding of the obligation entailed thereby : namely, that She must make a befitting return to his Majesty, by proportioning her faithful love and the exalted 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 prudence, and She asked the divine assistance for corresponding 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 converse 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 embellishment was conceded to Her the privilege of spending her whole life in exalted and divine thoughts,

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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 beautiful (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 participation 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 purpose and in all respect making her doings grand and admirable. To this they added a necklace, set with inestimable 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

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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 according 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 different 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 illuminating 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

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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 pregnant 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 omnipotent King, and therefore without number or limit are the riches and treasures which they contain for the endowment of his chosen brides. He can enrich innumerable 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 obstacle 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

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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 distinguished 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 ingratitude 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 falling 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 thanklessness. 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 goodness, 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 Mediatrix 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

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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, according 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."

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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 enriched by the treasures of his graces and gifts, so fortunate 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 incomparable 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 speaking, 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.

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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 celestial 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. During 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 happened. 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,

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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 beseech 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 inhabitants. 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 Messiah, expected for so many ages, arrive. These are my anxious desires, and for this do I breathe forth my

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 protracted and prolix night of sin and of the ancient Law was approaching and that the brightness of human Redemption 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 Redemption, 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. I must grieve at my ignorance 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

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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 incessant 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 derives 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

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chosen for his blessings; and in proportion as they dispose 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 complacency 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 described, 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 delight 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, repeating the favors and benefits which up to this day He had conferred upon the Princess Mary. But the Almighty chose to work in such a way, that in drawing forth from his infinite treasures his gifts of old, He always added thereto such as were new. All of these different 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 ascending 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

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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, manifested 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

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the Queen of creation was above all creatures and inferior 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 admiration of what the Almighty showed to Her, and was wrapped in praise and exaltation of the Lord, his Majesty 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 friendship. 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 therefore I make thee Mistress of all these goods and I give thee dominion and possession of them all, so that, if

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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, consecrating 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 befitting 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 Divinity, 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 possible. Thus then, was She presented to the holy angels,

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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 extended 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 essential 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 nowhere 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 humility, 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

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meanest of the creatures; so that, by the force of this humility, no thought of her being destined for the Mothership of the Messiah 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 Almighty 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 supposed 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 readiness 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

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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 disaffection 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 domestic 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 prepared 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 Omnipotent 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 convenient 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 manifested 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 delayed. 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).

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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 understanding and speaking), the decrees of his eternity with the prophecies and testimonies made to man from the beginning of the world, and all this together with the position 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 language 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 received his message immediately from the mouth of God.

111. At the bidding of the divine will the holy Gabriel presented himself at the foot of the throne intent upon the immutable essence of the Most High. His Majesty then expressly charged him with the message, which he was to bring to the most holy Mary and instructed 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

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had chosen Her among women to be the Mother of the eternal Word, that She should conceive Him in her virginal womb through operation of the Holy Ghost without 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 instructed 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 dignity. The heavenly spirits heard the voice of their Creator, 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 singular 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 handsome youth of rarest beauty; his face emitted resplendent 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-

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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 affectionate attention of the most prudent Queen.

114. The whole of this celestial army with their

princely leader holy Gabriel directed their flight to Nazareth, 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 grossness; 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

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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 expectation 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 inaccessible 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-

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loved, now shall you raise your heads and throw off the yoke of your ancient servitude! (Is. 14, 25). O, ye ancient Forefathers and Prophets, and all ye just, that are detained in limbo and are waiting in the bosom of Abraham, 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 salvation!" (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 perfect 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 powerful means of our Redemption and to Her we owe it on many accounts. And therefore it is just, that all generations 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 admiration, 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

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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 charity. And therefore the Lord provided Her with no special 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 explain 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 condescension, 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 thyself accordingly, thou wilt not reach the fulfillment of thy desires, nor shall I reap the fruit of my instructions, which I give to thee as thy Teacher.

121. Since thou has found, without any merit of

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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 entirely purified will. In imitation of me be thou so humble, that as far as thou art concerned, thou be persuaded and convinced of thy entire worthlessness and incapability, 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 coming. 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 perceived without error and without any deviousness ; I see my insignificance and I am made aware of the emptiness 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 Omnipotence. 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 fulfillment. 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

descent from the bosom of the Father, the midnight of mortal perversion (Wis. 18, 14), when the whole posterity 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 darkness, 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 inaccessible light had not arrived, though some of the mortals, 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 Redemption 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 mention of some hidden sacraments connected with the descent of the Onlybegotten from the bosom of the Father. 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 Persons, yet there is no inequality in wisdom, omnipotence or

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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 operations ad extra, which proceed from God himself for the production of some creature or temporal object. These operations are indivisibly wrought by three divine Persons; for not one Person alone produces them, but all Three in so far as They are one and the same God, possessing 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 mystery 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 intelligence 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 humanity to be received by Him, made a conditional request, that, on account of his foreseen merits, his salvation and satisfaction of the divine justice for sins be extended 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

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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 inheritance 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 sufficient, 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 commotion. On account of the inseparable union of the divine 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 celestial army, issued from heaven, full of invincible strength and splendor. Although it was not necessary to prepare 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 inferior 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

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the service of their Maker, anxious to witness the greatest of his wonderful works.

129. Mortals did not perceive this commotion and renewal of all the creatures ; both because it happened during 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 wonderful 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 Messiah 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

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eternal Word from on high, the demons felt an impetuous 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. However, although they held several conferences among themselves, they were unable to find the cause.

The divine Power concealed from them the sacrament 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 accompanied 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,

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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 companions and brethren of the angels, as the angel said to Evangelist Saint John, when he refused to be worshipped (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 salutation 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 creatures 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 began 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 perturbation, having such an humble opinion of Herself. On account of this perturbation the angel proceeded 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 admiration. But She raised her humble heart to the Lord,

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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 elevations, 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 Elisabeth has likewise conceived a son in her sterile years and this is the sixth month of her conception ; for nothing is impossible with God. He that can make her conceive, 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-

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SOIL Thou knowest also of the great mystery of the bush, which Moses saw burning without its being consumed 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 Messiah shall conceive and give birth without violation of her virginal purity. Remember 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 ambassador 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 generation as follows:

"The mystery of this fourth generation is that there are four generations: 1st, 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."

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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 promises 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 connected 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 admiration, 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 magnanimity and nobility, that perforce his confidence in Her was not misplaced. The operations, which proceed within the divine Essence, depend not on the co-operation 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.

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137. Therefore this great Lady considered and inspected 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 comprehended the ways of his hidden benevolence and adorned Herself with fortitude and beauty. And having conferred with Herself and with the heavenly messenger Gabriel about the grandeur of these high and divine sacraments, and finding Herself in excellent condition 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 Redemption 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 pronounced 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

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blood furnished by the heart of most holy Mary. Secondly, 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 Redeemer. 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 Martyrology 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 superiors. 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 perfect 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 intermission, 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 celebrated 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 sacraments, 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

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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 descendants of Eve and which was wanting in Her, was supplied 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 humors 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 recreated 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

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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 perfection 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, elevated 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 consecrated by the Divinity as a new sanctuary of God. The heavenly spirits, who as witnesses of this marvelous transformation were present to contemplate it, magnified 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

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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 humiliated 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 attends 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. Therefore 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, rejoices 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 Divinity, when thou wilt understand, that without thy God

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and without his coming, all creation would be as nothing 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 powerful, sweet and affluent ; who, being such a great and infinite God, humiliates Himself to thy lowliness in order to raise thee from the dust and enrich thy poverty, performing 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 universal 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 decorum 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 teachings 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 instant He was man and true God; as soon as his humanity 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 instant 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 activity were united with the essence of God himself, so

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 almond. 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 humanity 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, however, 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 themselves 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-

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 incompatible 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 excellence of his science and grace, the virtues and perfections 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 human 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 perfections.

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 itself 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.

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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 offered 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 mankind to the eternal Father. He recognized the composition 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 substance. 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 descendants 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 suffering 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 salvation, nothing would satisfy his immense love for men except the full limit of effective love (John 13, 1) ; for

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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 immeasurably, 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 kindness! 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 happiness.

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

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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 essential 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 perceived 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 cooperate 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 by ad-

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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 conception 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 necessary, without however concurring directly in the creation 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 delay also in its union with the most holy humanity. She gave Him thanks for having favored Her with the dignity 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

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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 performed 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 occasions. 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 onlybegotten 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

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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 conscious 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 continue to enjoy spiritual delights and pleasures, free from suffering and pain. Not so, for in closest possible imitation 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 continued 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

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concealed in her bosom without companionship or alleviation from any creatures.

154. With this loving sorrow, full of the sweetest anguish, She often looked upon her holiest Son both before 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 immutable and immortal God. If therefore I have furnished Thee the instrument or the matter of thy sufferings, 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 executed. Let the will of the Lord be fulfilled." These

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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 sweetest 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 encouraging 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 remembrance of our lowly human nature and confess the greatness of the Divinity, greater than any creature can comprehend. 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 incomprehensible 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 possible 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

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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 themselves 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-

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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). Ponder in thy mind, how it has waited upon thee and consoled 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 daughter, that thou must confess in thy heart, that the Most High has not done such things with any other generation; 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 effects and conditions which were caused by the conception 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 complicated 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 insuperable, 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-

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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 summed 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 husband the use of them, so also in glory these gifts are made to the saints as their own, while their use is common 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 Himself 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

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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 comprehensors, 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 permanently, 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 celebrating this marriage in the name of the Church militant and to make promises in the name of all its members

(Eph. 5, 32) ; for in this matter, as She was the Mother of the Savior, his foreseen merits found their application 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 burning 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 Salvation, 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. Although 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 excellent 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 beatification of the most holy Mary and the conferring upon Her the gifts of glory, the same reward was also prom-

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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 correspond with that highest of all dignities possible to a creature: 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 possessed 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 wandered from It even for a moment. However, during the nine months in which She bore in her -womb the

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incarnate Word, She enjoyed even greater visions and gifts of the Divinity.

164. The second of these gifts is comprehension, possession 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 possessed 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 wonderful 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,

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 incite 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 understood 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 necessarily 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 profound humility the Lord condescended to an arrangement, 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 toward 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-

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 grossness, 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 clearness 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 participated in this privilege in a measure beyond all human calculation. The after-effects of this purity and clearness 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

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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, suspended 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 clearness, 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 respects 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

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restrained and concealed, it was sufficient to cause in them the same effects, which saint Dionysius the Areopagite 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 participated 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 regard 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 original 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 privilege 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

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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 sufferings, as her love called for, or as much as, on account of this very love, the Lord allowed Her to endure.

172. Subtlety is a gift, which takes away from the glorified body the density or grossness natural to quantitative 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 enclosing 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 appearances to some persons, of which we shall yet relate;

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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 allowed hardships to produce their effect. She was so admirable and perfect in the possession and use of these privileges, that I find myself wanting in words to express 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 according 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

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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 doubttest 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 adequacy necessary for constituting it as the highest and most perfect happiness. At the same time it is incompatible 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 because 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 without 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

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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 mortal body and by gaining merits in a state of suffering, such as is the present life of men (Rom. 6, 23). Although 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 incongruous in this for me, but it afforded me many advantages, 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 themselves, 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. However, 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

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canst thou describe in human words what thou hast understood.

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 showing 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 salvation, 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 Sacraments, many divine effects, wrought by his condescension, are communicated to the souls. Some are communicated 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 dispose 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 likeness of Himself and communicating to them many of

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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 overshadowing of the Most High and the fruits of the highest 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 darkneses; 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 begins 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,

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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 repeating 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 attention toward frequent and fervent prayer. She was solicitous in sending up many and reiterated petitions to be able worthily to preserve the heavenly Treasure confided 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

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in all these actions She was inflamed more and more with divine love.

181. On the day following the Incarnation, the thousand 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 servants of the supreme and omnipotent King, whose Mother Thou art." These protestations and homages of the holy angels excited in the Mother of wisdom incomparable 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 according 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 demonstrations 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 form, and they assisted Her in

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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 comprehend and properly weigh them.

183. Besides the ordinary guidance during the time in which She carried in her most holy womb the incarnate Word, She felt his divine presence in diverse ways, all admirable and most sweet. Sometimes He showed Himself to Her by abstractive vision, as mentioned 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 monstiance, 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, communicating to It some of the effects of its own blessedness 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

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effects as no created capacity can explain. Let the intellect 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 greatness, in a measure that even the vast confines of the heavens themselves could not encompass.

184. These and other prerogatives alternated and succeeded 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 undertaken and accomplished by this prudent Maiden to produce 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 ending of her life. But in this necessity the powerful arm of the Most High was wont to strengthen Her in a supernatural manner.

185. Sometimes, in order to afford Her sensible relief, innumerable birds would come to visit Her by the command of the Lord. As if they were endowed with intellect, 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-

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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 accustomed 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 presumptuous 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 forgetfulness

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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 intermission; whereas we men, who are made to the image and likeness of God, furnished with the powers of knowing\* 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 intercourse with the supernal Deity. And this ill-bred coarseness entails another disorder: namely, that whenever they converse with their neighbors, they do it without order, measure or discretion, become entangled in

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their outward actions, and losing the memory and presence 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 releasing 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 particular 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 account of thy naturally weak and yielding character, so

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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 likings. The risks of this negligence all the human creatures 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 disgraceful occasions for those religious, who would willingly 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 faithful in consoling the sorrowful and in assisting the afflicted.

#### 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 personality of saint John were revealed to Her. On this same occasion and on others the heavenly Queen was informed, 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

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 servant 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 intercession 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 ordinary 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 pleasure and that I wish to fulfill diligently whatever Thou commandest to thy humble servant. Allow me, my God,

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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 sacrifices, 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 because 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 ordered. The heavenly spirits obeyed Her with alacrity

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and punctuality, such as was proper to their nature and due to their Queen and Lady. They held sweet intercourse and delightful colloquy with Her, and alternately with Her they sang highest songs of praise and adoration 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 accruing 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 conversations.

194. The humble Spouse proceeded immediately to ask the consent of saint Joseph for executing the mandate 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 condescension 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 according 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 command 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 capable of receiving the deposit of the great sacraments

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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 cooperation 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

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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 benediction ; 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 Onlybegotten 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 guidings 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

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and obedience, and, as if in ethereal flight or like the quickest sunbeam, hasten to execute it and thereby 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 mysteries, 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 diligent in following it up in deed. In order to hear this most delicate and spiritual voice of the Lord it is necessary, 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 elevated things of the Divinity (I Cor. 2, 14). Be attentive 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).

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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 inestimable 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 preparations 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 interiorly 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 Precursor 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-

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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 humble 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 accompaniment of any human creatures; but all the thousand angels, which were set to guard the couch of Solomon, the most holy Mary, attended upon them (Cant. 3, 7). Although the angels accompanied them in corporeal 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 presence and with the divine praises, in which She unceasingly occupied Herself. Sometimes She conversed with

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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 contemplation, 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 courteous 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 and 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-

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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 attention 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 interior 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

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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 affection; since his faithful services certainly deserved a corresponding 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 delay 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

(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 revered 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, making 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

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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 remained 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 therefore the Evangelist saint Luke specifies it, calling it

Juda, although the commentators have commonly believed 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 expressly revealed to me that the town was called Juda and that the Evangelist calls it by its proper name; although the learned expositors have understood by this name of Juda the province, in which that town was situated. This confusion arose from the fact that some years after the death of Christ the town Juda was destroyed, 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

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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 transpired, 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 effaced 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 sacraments. Thus we ourselves, the faithful of our times, can enjoy the blessing of venerating and worshipping 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;

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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 Incarnation. 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 Elisabeth received a divine revelation that a great calamity and slaughter impended over the infants of Bethlehem and its vicinity. And though this revelation was indeterminate and unclear, it nevertheless induced the mother of saint John to betake herself with Zacharias, her husband, 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

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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 obedience 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 Elisabeth 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 reward 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 following 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

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the Lord commands for his glory, it will feel within itself great facility of operation, great sweetness in undertaking them, and a readiness and alacrity in continuing and pursuing them. These different feelings then give testimony of their being truly useful and commanded 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 perfectly, 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 solicitude to the works of virtue and perfection, which thou knowest to be desirable in the eyes of the Lord. Despise none of them nor withdraw from any of them and

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cease not to exercise them, no matter how violently thy inclinations and thy weakness should oppose their exercise. Trust in the Lord and proceed to put them into execution, and soon his power will overcome all difficulties. 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 corporeal 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 compassion of my tender heart to procure for them eternal salvation. 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.

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#### 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, according 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 Precursor by conferring the light of his grace and justification upon him six months after his conception by saint Elisabeth, in order that he might be distinguished

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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 enlightened interiorly, that in one instant she perceived the most exalted mysteries and sacraments. These emotions, 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 chamber 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 posture 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 Precursor saint John, whom the Lord mentioned by name in

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his prayers to the Father. Such was the great good fortune 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 appointed 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 pronounciation 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 subordinated 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 fortunate 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

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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, devotion 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 exercise 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 occasion, 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 effects 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 contained 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 Elisabeth was wrapt in the joy of the Holy Ghost; and, looking upon the Queen of the world and what was

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contained in Her, she burst forth in loud voice of praise, pronouncing the words reported to us by saint Luke: "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 accomplish through Her in time to come. All this also the child John perceived and understood, while listening to the words of his mother; for she was enlightened 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 instrument 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 generations shall call me blessed.

49. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me; and holy is his name.

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50. And his mercy is from generation unto generation 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 sentences. 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 conferring upon them his abundant spirit of divine love (Ps. 137, 6). She saw how worthy of mortals it is to perceive, understand and ponder the gifts that were conferred 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 fortune. By one word also She expressed all the mercies,

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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, communicating itself to them that fear Him. And just as the infinite mercies raise up the humble and seek out those that fear God; so also the powerful arm of divine justice 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 occupied 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 contrary 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 Lord, which scattered and cast down the proud angel and all his followers (Apoc. 12, 8). In their place were

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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 presumptuous 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 mercies 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

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only those, which I am able to express here, did this fortunate matron understand, but many more and greater sacraments, which my understanding cannot comprehend ; 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 mysteries 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-

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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 accommodated to that purpose. The heavenly Princess accepted 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 admirable 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 Elisabeth, and conjointly with Her, her son, for he being yet in the womb of his mother, cannot be considered as distinct 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

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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 permission of his heavenly Spouse Mary to return to Nazareth and leave Her in the company of saint Elisabeth

in order to assist her in her pregnancy. The holy husband 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 burden, which they had brought with them. At home, in the absence of his Spouse, he was served by a neighboring 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, excellence and happiness of a soul, that has been endowed with this privilege; however, remember that it is so admirable and of so great a value that thou canst not comprehend 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,

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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 participations 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 entertainments, and more beautiful than all that in its entirety 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 understanding 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 perpetual 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

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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 conferred 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. Although 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, difficulty and labor; for imperfect human nature takes occasion of the slightest circumstance to relax its vigilance.

#### CHAPTER XVIII.

MOST HOLY MARY ARRANGES THE ORDER OF HER DAILY EXERCISES IN THE HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS; SOME INCIDENTS IN HER INTERCOURSE WITH SAINT ELISABETH.

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 principal object of Mary's visit was fulfilled, the great Queen proceeded to arrange her daily life in the house of Zacharias; 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 petition 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 offenses against my bounty. Conjointly with thy prayers thou shalt offer to Me the Lamb without spot (I Pet. 1,

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19) which thou bearest in thy womb and which takes away the sins of the world (John 1, 29). Let these now be thy occupations."

232. In conformity with this instruction and new mandate of the Most High, the Princess of heaven ordered 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 waking 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 frequent 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 continual 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 proportions. 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-

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teriorly, while She was engaged for many hours in manual 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 attention, had secured for saint John this good fortune, humbly 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 surpassed 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 attentive 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 anxieties 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 answered: "My beloved Lady, it beseems much more that

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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 reverence." 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 kingdom 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 humility to mortals (Matth. 11, 29), condemning fastidiousness 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 Mistress 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, although thou shouldst adore the Creator, who chose my

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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 concerning 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 highest 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 virtue 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 permission 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.

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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 Himself 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 servant (Heb. 1, 3, Philip 2, 6, 7). This Lady was the Mother of God, Queen of all creation, superior in excellence and dignity to all creatures, and yet She remained 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 senseless 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 correct, but to be taught and to be corrected, I beseech and pray all the faithful children of light to place this example 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 lowliness 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,

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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 surrounded 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 without 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 example 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 Virgin 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

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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 prostrated 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 conversed 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 balance. And this is the most proper order of right reason which overthrows and as it were exerts violence against

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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 superior 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 interior quietly grows a desire or an ardent hunger for self-abasement and for the last place ; it is violently disturbed 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 instructors, therefore do it always. But I desire that thou go much farther, and that thou obey the most insignificant of thy fellow beings in all that is not sinful, and in

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 unbecoming. Thou canst do much good by giving them the good and orderly example of obedience, without causing 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 passion. I wish also, that thou use great prudence in hiding and concealing the favors of the Lord, for the sacrament 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 accomplish 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 perfection, 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 intellectual 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 continually 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 attention to them, as the most prudent Mistress could fittingly spare for each in particular. And as her most frequent conversings during the three months, in which

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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 mention 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 Zacharias, She spoke to them in the following manner : "Heavenly 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 limitations in that it cannot properly respond to the obligations which are known to it and which dictate its desires. 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 companions; for you do know the secrets of my Treasure, which the Lord has deposited within me in the narrowness of so fragile and constrained a vase. Great are these sacraments and admirable these mysteries; and I contemplate them with sweet affection, but their supernal greatness overwhelms me, the profundity and the

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 because I find myself continually falling short and vanquished 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," answered the holy angels, "Thou possessest truly the Almighty 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 repose 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

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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 divine love was more and more enkindled in the heart of most holy Mary; in Her was exactly fulfilled the command 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 augmented its flame day by day, by administering new material 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 extinguished on this altar through all the eternities of God himself. For as lasting as this eternity and as continuous 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 conversation turned about the mystery of the incarnate Word ; and in this She manifested so profound a knowledge in citing the holy Scriptures and the Prophets that She caused wonder even in the angels. On one occasion in speaking to them of these venerable sacra-

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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) concerning the most bitter pains and torments in store for Him. Solomon says (Wis. 2, 20), that they shall condemn Him to a most ignominious death and the Prophets always speak in weighty and superlative terms of his Passion 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 suffer. 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 Father 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 offenses. 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-

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nancy. The holy spirits met all her anxieties and comforted her with great reverence, consoling Her by renewing the memory of the very sacraments, which She already knew and by reminding Her of the reasonableness and propriety of the death of Christ for the salvation 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 exalted were the mysteries touched upon in these discourses of the Queen with the holy angels, that neither can the human tongue describe, nor our capacity comprehend 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 blessings 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

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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 prudent 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 villainess 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 astonishment 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

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all things to conduct Thyself as his Mother, thy greatness 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 to thy most holy Son, easily have excused Thyself without failing against the duties of thy most perfect Motherhood. 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 foregoing 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, despises none of them, nor is He offended, or irritated by

their smallness. The soul that loves Him, is not disconcerted by any of these little things in his divine presence; for it seeks and finds Him as the beginning and the end of all creatures. And because terrestrial creatures cannot exist without these humble performances and without others that are inseparable from our lowly condition and the preservation of our nature, it is necessary to understand this doctrine well, in order that we may be governed by it. For if we engage in these

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thoughts and occupations without reference to their Creator, 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 removed from the earthliness of creatures.

252. According to this doctrine thou must so regulate thy terrestrial occupations, whatever they may be, that thou do not lose thy -time, which can never be recovered. 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 describe 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

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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 creatures let thy intercourse be such as will continually increase 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 creatures, so that when the occasion and the time of exercising 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 weakest and most useless of all the creatures.

#### CHAPTER XX.

SOME SPECIAL FAVORS WHICH MOST HOLY MARY CONFERRED UPON SEVERAL PERSONS IN THE HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS,

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 object 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 accomplished 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 conferred on the souls by Her, nevertheless, in order that from some of them, many more may be inferred, I will

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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 perverse inclination, restless, subject to anger, and accustomed to swear and curse. With all these vices and disorders, 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 surrounded 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 Mistress of heaven, most holy Mary, these enemies withdrew; for, as I have said in other places, the virtue issuing from our Queen tormented them, and especially during that time when She carried within her virginal repository 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 attracted and moved toward Mary and she sought to be in her presence and offered to serve Her with much affection, 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 toward 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 conscience, the danger of her soul and the malice of the

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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 demons, 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 consternation, not knowing how to account for such power of the most holy Mary. They conferred about it in astonishment 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 Elisabeth. 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

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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 impertinent and presumptuous ; but far different the effect : for having succeeded in scrutinizing most holy Mary, she left 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 knowing 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 account 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 perseverance 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-

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 necessary 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 happiness 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. Whenever She saw any one in sin, She asked from the bottom 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 heartfelt 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 reposed in accomplishing great things.

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## 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 opportune 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

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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 diligence (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 ASSIST AT HER CONFINEMENT AND IS ENLIGHTENED CONCERNING THE BIRTH OF JOHN.

261. Already two months had passed since the coming of the Princess of heaven into the house of holy Elisabeth; 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 conversation, and all this combined had ravished her heart, so that

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without divine aid, she could not have survived the parting, after once having known and conversed with the blessed Lady.

262. In order to find some consolation, saint Elisabeth 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 Testament, 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. Possibly, 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

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 complacency the petition of her cousin Elisabeth and answered 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 movements must be guided by the divine will of my Lord and Son and I must not desire anything except what is according to his pleasure. Let us present to his Majesty thy desires, and whatever He in his goodness shall ordain, 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 commend to Thee my sincere affection and heartfelt devotion to thy service. If my wishes cannot be fulfilled and are contrary to the will of God, I desire at least, if possible, 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 Redeemer in thy own, so he may enjoy his divine presence

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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, present 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 maternal kindness be strained or diminished by my sins ; deny not this consolation to me, nor to my son this great happiness, 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 know 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 petitions 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-

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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, having 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 happiness 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.

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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 intention, the Most High is not offended at our making them known, as long as it is done with submission and resignation to the dispositions of his divine Providence. When the soul presents itself before the Lord with such sentiments, 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 arranged 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 intercession, 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,

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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 obtaining 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 announce the wished-for day of the law of grace, had arrived (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 revealed 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 perfection, 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

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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 execute 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 pregnancy 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 understood 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 departed 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

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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 Evangelist was exact in his words. Accordingly most holy Mary, our Lady, was present not only at the confinement 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 incarnation 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

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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 venerable 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 blessing.

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

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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 infant 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 seeking to attract her caresses and to remain with Her. The sweetest Lady fondled him, but with such majestic moderation, that She did not kiss him, as his age would have permitted; for She preserved her most chaste lips intact

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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 became 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 affectionate 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

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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.

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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 retirement, 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 retirement 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

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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 occasions 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 dangerous precipices. They are surrounded by innumerable enemies, who pursue them with diabolical treachery, unceasing vigilance, unquenchable wrath and restless diligence. 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 REQUEST; SAINT JOHN IS CIRCUMCISED AND RECEIVES HIS NAME; ZACHARIAS PROPHESES.

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 resigning 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 conform 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 enlightened 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

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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 condescended 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 unchangeable and infinite being of God and the remembrance 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 removed 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. Therefore, 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-

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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 wonderful 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 revered 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 heavenly 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 Zacharias has given this work into thy hands. With his permission thou canst be generous. Confirm thy hopes in all the tasks imposed upon thee by the Lord, and with

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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 unabated love and zeal. Pray also for me, that his Majesty may govern and guide me worthily to preserve the sacrament 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 circumcision of the child, for the time appointed by the

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law was approaching. Complying with the custom observed among the Jews, especially among the more distinguished, 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 Elisabeth 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 countenance 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 Humble 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 Elisabeth, 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

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Gospel of saint Luke, some of those present in the meeting 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 Elisabeth again expressed herself to the effect, that the child should be called John.

291. The relatives then appealed by signs to Zacharias, 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 astonishment 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 announced 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

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John and his mother, so her secret mandate and her intercession had the effect of loosening the tongue of Zacharias, 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 remember 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-

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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 ancestors (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-

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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 (Apocalypse 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 Testament, 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, affirming 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 receiving his own Son made man, we may serve God free from the fear of our enemies ; for by our adoption and regeneration 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 beginning of all these sacraments, he turns to him and con-

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gratulates him, because of the dignity and sanctity 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 Messiah (Mark 1, 41). Thus might they dispose themselves by the baptism of penance for the remission of their sins and become convinced that the Messiah 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 Messiah 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 accordance with the letter of the law, and with the concurrence of his father and mother, the child was then circumcised and named John ; and the report of these wonders 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

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the Lord in his servants Elisabeth, John and Zacharias. At the same time I reflect on the different courses pursued 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 Elisabeth were concealed, while those in Zacharias were manifested. 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 Messiah 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

time. Although the words of God have their own inherent force; yet the more sweet and acceptable manner of communicating with the ignorant and the unskilled 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. Moreover 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 dignity, 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 foolhardy 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 priesthood my behavior toward saint Zacharias was different from that toward Elisabeth. For, although the Lord

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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 dominion 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 Elisabeth, 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

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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, deceitful, 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 unfaithfulness, trusting in thy beloved Master and Spouse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MOST HIGH 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 welcomed 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 treasures 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 enjoyed 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

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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 profound 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 holiness; 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

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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 forgive 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 Messiah, 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 presentation 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

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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, being 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 departure, 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 ourselves 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 console 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 Elisabeth until her petition was granted. Elisabeth then insisted on her part and asked the blessing of the heavenly Lady in return, and not wishing to deny her this consolation, most holy Mary complied.

309. The Queen visited also the child John, received him in her arms and bestowed upon him many mysterious blessings. The wonderful infant by divine dispensation spoke to the Virgin, although in a low and infantile voice: "Thou art the Mother of God himself,

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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 according 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 sanctified 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 himself 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 themselves on their journey.

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##### 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 hesitation 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 ordered 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 command 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 hindrances toward its attainment are the leanings and special likings to earthly things; for these make the soul unworthy 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

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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, pursued her way through the mountains of Judea in the company of her most faithful spouse saint Joseph. Although 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 spiritual 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

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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 consciousness 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 lightness of her pregnancy, She nevertheless was subject to the exertion and the fatigue of the journey; for the sovereign 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 husband. 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

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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 advanced 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 possession 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

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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 mentally, in such a way as to be perceptible to the impure spirits. It was so powerful that Lucifer and his companions 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 delivery; 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-

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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 kindness 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 increased 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, providing 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,

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incomparable delights and blessings. Thus She continued to gain vast merits and made Herself unspeakably 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 creation, 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 children 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

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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 instructions, 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 particular. 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

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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 dwelling 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 consequence 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 extraordinary defeat must have some new cause, and our weakness, I fear, is the beginning of our ruin."

324. "This matter will require renewed diligence, for my fury is unquenchable and my vengeance remains insatiable. 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

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Her who is to be the Mother of the Messiah. 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). Nevertheless I fear and detest this Maiden, since such a virtuous Woman might give birth to the Mother of the Messiah 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 forgetfulness, 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 persons 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 intentions, 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

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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 connected with Her. Accordingly Lucifer and his companions in malice immediately entered upon a mighty conflict with the heavenly Princess, thus making it possible 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 mysteries (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

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matter according to what is most appropriate to his infinite 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 concealed 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 performed (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 know the dignity of Mary the Mother of God at the time of this persecution, 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

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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 greatness, 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 ignorant 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 insignificance? 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 Messiah, for whom men were waiting; for besides having a husband, She with her husband belonged to the poorest, humblest, and the most insignificant 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-debasement 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 arrogance 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 arrogance and haughtiness of the dragon. For his thoughts

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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, humiliating 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 presumption, 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, meekness, 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 returned to his demons and laid before them the great difficulty of tempting Her. All of them projected mighty

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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 malicious 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 continual 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 carelessness 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 except 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 invisible 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 recognized.

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

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pass them by unheeded, I will cease to speak to thee. Hear what thou hast not until now known of the disposition 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 famishing 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 inordinate 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 torments for all eternity. Thou shouldst be rilled with fear and wonder, my daughter, to see such horrible and dreadful foolishness among the impenitent mortals and to see even the faithful, who have come to know and confess

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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 restlessly 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 experience 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 prepared 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 indescribable 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.

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Illumined anew with additional light of wisdom She recognized the highest and most hidden mysteries impossible 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 convinced 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 happened. 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 invincible 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

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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 Redemption 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 sacrificing 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 commanded Her, saying : "My Lord and highest Good, from whom I have received my being and all the grace and

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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 pleasure. 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 decaying 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 exerting 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

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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

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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, pretending 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

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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 unknowable (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 terrible 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 flattering 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). Despising 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

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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 offering what they neither knew nor were able to give, but also in being ignorant of the sacrament of the King so intimately 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 prostration 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,

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gold, silver, and most precious gems and in order that these might not seem empty promises, they 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 disarrangement 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 manifest 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 118th Psalm : "Haereditate acquisivi testimonia tua in aeternum." "I have acquired for my heri-

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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 rejected and overcame the second temptation, to the confusion 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 meekness 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

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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 assumed 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 Princess of heaven. For this purpose one of the demons assumed 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 insults. 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, appeased 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

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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 humility, 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 multitude 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 astonishment, (though of a different kind), at seeing such behavior 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 afterwards 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 allureances; 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,

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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 perdition, while our Queen conquered for our rescue and salvation.

351. Much dismayed by the discomfitures of the preceding 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 invincible 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 immeasurable 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 representations 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 privilege of being the Mother of the Author of grace. Precisely because his Majesty had so favored Her and because 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

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those, who in their riches and good fortune, considered themselves happy and exalted in this world. They induced 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 excellence 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 indisposition, or a feeling of weakness and fatigue, accompanied by dejection of spirit. This is a trick of satan little known and under its cover the sin of laziness causes

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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 despise 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

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of recovery and is without sorrow for his wickedness. Relying on this indubitable truth thou shouldst show thyself 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 exceed 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 confusion, 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

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falsehoods. Thus the souls will be made unable to distinguish 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, concealed 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 exercise of the virtue contrary to the vice to which he tempts thee, and especially in acts of faith, hope and love, which

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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 pretense. 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 counterfeiting of the good and the true. As long as this slave of wickedness is not despised, he never believes himself discovered 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 destruction. 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-

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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 persecutors with sweet words, and undeceive those who are led astray by false reports. Do this not in order to excuse 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 disorderly 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 onward, 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 Messiah, 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 distinguished sanctity would be born. The great dragon, convinced of this, conceived against the fruit of the most

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holy Mary that vast fury mentioned in the twelfth chapter 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 enrage him and to make him seek by all means the destruction 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 approach 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 disturbances in the air, upon the earth, or in her house, disarranging 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

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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 chapter; 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 congratulate 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 refuted, 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

holy. She broke out into songs of praise, in which his virtues and doctrines were extolled as true, holy, immaculate 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 conflict 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 fulfillment 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

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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 refuted 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 magnificent 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 victory 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 Gospel; 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-

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down all the heresies of the world? For this very purpose 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 Gospel 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 fulfill 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 kindness 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

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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 reasons apparent to us in faith, the Almighty gave into the hands of our victorious Chief tainness the sword for cutting 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 visible forms persisted in his unhappy attempts, the most serene Mary never looked upon them nor paid any attention 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 command 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

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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, detained them by a secret force. His Majesty permitted and ordained that the demons themselves should humiliate 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 therefore her words were so much the more weighty. Although 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

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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 dissatisfaction did not arise from a certain disgust at his poverty and his lowly habitation, the demon hesitated between two different courses. On the one hand he suggested 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 exerting Herself to improve their poor circumstances. But saint Joseph, upright and magnanimous of heart, readily despised and rejected such considerations. The solicitude with which he was secretly filled in regard to the

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pregnancy of his Spouse easily smothered all other anxieties. 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 besought her most holy Son to relieve him of these assaults, and to be satisfied with the service which he rendered 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 Lucifer. 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 separately, 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 understood from what has been described in the two preceding chapters. She met them all and awaited their fearful onslaught with the same tranquillity, high-mindedness 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 emotion 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

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against this strong and unconquered Woman, most holy Mary.

370. While She thus in the midst of this conflict exercised 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 Messiah 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 command, 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 vanquished 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

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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 communicated to Her new gifts and privileges ; Her thousand guardian angels visibly presented themselves with innumerable hosts of others, and sang to Her new canticles 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 figuratively 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 defendest them against their proud enemy! O Mary! Thou art 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 confusion. 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

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power which we possess as children of God, and to use the advantage which this confidence gives us by exercising 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 destruction. But as soon as he sees that he cannot succeed in his attempts, because the soul takes refuge in the unfailling 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 authority 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 surrounded 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. Therefore love must not be satisfied merely with mere protestations of affection without looking for more valuable fruit; for the desire which costs nothing is not a sufficient 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

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also then when thou findest thyself most afflicted and forsaken 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 intercourse 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 Flight 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 remarked (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-

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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 perfect 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 response to his affection and service. He never manifested or spoke of this desire, as well on account of the reverence 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 himself 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.

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 disgrace and shame of himself and his Spouse in each circumstances. 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 considerations, 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 observations, 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 suspect, they melted away as the ice before the sun, or vanished like the dust before the wind, as soon as he remembered the well-tried holiness of his modest and circumspect 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

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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 violent waves of sorrow (Ps. 31. 10) which through my senses have come to afflict my heart. I have given myself 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 confidence 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 holiness : 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

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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 concerning our vows of chastity, and we have both promised 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 being 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 indignation, 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 presume 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 Messiah did not come to his mind. If at times he

drove away his conjectures, they would return in greater

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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 condition 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 forbearance 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 sufferings 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 outward 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 Lady 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 Patriarchs. For he knew that they demanded subjection and prompt obedience of their wives, and he did not wish to

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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 devoted 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 suspicion 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. Although 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 showing her devoted and submissive affection. Many times

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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 uncertain 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 manifested to Her his pleasure in any way. It seemed as if God had left this whole matter in her hands and entrusted it all to the wisdom and virtue of his chosen

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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 example 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 prolonged invocations and delayed answering them until his own opportune and fitting time.

[INSTRUCTION OF OUR MOST HOLY QUEEN AND I<sup>^</sup>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 themselves 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

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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 creature 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 themselves as his children and creatures, his Majesty will constitute 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 quarters 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 husband 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.

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Nor canst thou, my daughter, manifest what thou knowest, 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 executes 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 resignation in the divine Providence. If He sends thee tribulations, 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 salvation. 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 tribulations 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 persuading 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 advanced, 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 gracefulness 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 turbulent 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 weakness 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

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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 completely, and occupy her faculties in the loving care of saint Joseph, her spouse. Her sorrow therefore only incited 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 continued 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 sacrament 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 feeling 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

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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 company, 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 accomplice 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 conscience. 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 delivery 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 absent 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

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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 I 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 always 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 concluded 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-

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kind, to be pleased to console thy servant Joseph and dispose 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 permit, 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 consolation; 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 happen." 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 admirable order, measure and weight. For besides the consolation, 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 before the great mysteries should be entrusted to his care.

393. In the meanwhile saint Joseph was anxiously debating 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 punishment of the law ; yet at the same time I cannot stand

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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 depart 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, because I see in Her great virtue and perfection ; yet I certainly 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

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which he held the heavenly Lady. After this prayer he composed himself for a short sleep with the intention of departing 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 retirement 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 journey, 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 ordained events, that both most holy Mary and saint Joseph 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. Although 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, concerning 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 companion and a protector, on whom She could rely for consolation 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

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of the mystery on account of its greatness; silence, in signaling Herself as a woman who knew how to refrain from speaking about that which so many human reasons urged Her to make known ; forbearance and humility, 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 useful to reveal them for the consolation of some soul, thou must not act upon this opinion without having first consulted 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 danger 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. Although 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

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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 supervision 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 practice 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 compassion 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 defend 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-

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ward warrants of thy judgment; for perfect and sincere charity will teach thee to find a prudent evasion and excuse 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 instructions 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, daughter, 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 MYSTERY 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 sorrow 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 reasons 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 troubles. 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,

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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 conjecture in the imagination, engendered by these passions; the tempests of alternate desire and abhorrence; of loving 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 necessary in his case in order to cause such vehement sorrows ; for in the possession of a spouse, no rival can be tolerated. 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 captivates the heart and most powerful is the dominion which

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 Incarnation 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 mention 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 necessary to convince him by strong evidence, in order to

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assure him of her dignity and of the mysteries of the Incarnation; for in hearts well-disposed the divine inspirations 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 occasion for deception or suspicion, should as it were be deadened 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 scandalized, 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 intercourse 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 sanctifying use of sensible Sacraments, by which men in some

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degree are spiritualized and elevated, their torpid faculties 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 implied by the visits and the caresses of the Lord. It is not at all uncommon, that, no matter how much tribulations 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

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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 inconceivable happiness, and at the same time deeply moved by sudden 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 recognitions and these acts of virtue, the spirit of saint Joseph remained tranquil and apt for the reception of new influences of the holy Spirit. His doubts and anxieties of the past few months had laid in him those deep foundations 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

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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 company 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 before 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."

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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 herself desired. In the meantime the man of God unwrapped the small bundle, which he had prepared, shedding 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 accustomed 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 Highness, 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

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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 tranquillity and interior peace, without allowing thyself to be deprived of it by any troublesome event of this life whatever, 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 tranquillity 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

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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 operations. 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 hesitation 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 reasons 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, saying 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 greatness 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

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 recognized 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 myself, 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 therefore 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 because I failed to esteem thee as my lord and spouse did

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I remain silent: for I was and always will be thy faithful 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 generations. 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 dwelling-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

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his name as He has done in thy humility; and me, the most insignificant of the living, He has in his divine condescension 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 surrounded 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 profound humility and reverence he adored Him and recognized 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 prescribed bounds.

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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 overwhelmed 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 taking 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 husband, 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 profound 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, tranquilizing and soothing his sorrow, thus fittingly disposing him for the influence of the divine Spirit. Just as the Princess of heaven had been the instrument for the sanctification 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

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the most faithful and fortunate man understood and for it, as a most faithful servant, was proportionately thankful.

413. These great sacraments and many others connected 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 because 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 wisdom. He wished that, after the Church had been already established and the Catholic faith well grounded, the faithful, standing in need of the intercession, the assistance 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 loving 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.

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In this crying need, when the blood, shed by her children 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, resounds 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 resurrection, 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,

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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 direction 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 plenitude 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, concentrating all their interest upon earthly and trivial affairs, exciting themselves without reason, swelling with indignation, creating discords, quarrels, indulging in

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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 temptation 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

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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 permit their eyes to be torn out and their hands chopped off, than allow themselves to fall into this crime of scandalizing 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 monsters of rational creatures, and wipes out in them the image of the eternal Father ! What thing more unbecoming, 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 wickedness, 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-

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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 perfect 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 compelling 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 ingenious chasty 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 persons, who offend against it. Among these there are many, who should distinguish themselves as perfect children of the Father and Teacher of this virtue; nevertheless 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 veneration 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.

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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 himself in these duties during the time which She spent in contemplation, he frustrated her continual desire of serving him and of performing all the duties of the household, 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 immutable Being of God to clemency. He heard Her petition 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

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serve thee and interiorly treat Her with highest reverence, and at all times and in all places worship the incarnate 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 excellence 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 practice 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

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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 following 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 enriched 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 disposition of all his great works.

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422. The humble but blessed house of Joseph contained 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 retirement 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

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which comforted him and filled him entirely with jubilation 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 communicated 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 garment; for he never saw any other part of her clothing except the outside garments, which were open to the

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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 circumstances demanding a change, as I shall relate further on. 425. In all things the most pure Mary exhibited consummate perfection, without any fault or want of grace ; and all her actions both in the natural and the supernatural order reached the pinnacle of excellence. But words fail me in describing it: for I am never satisfied,

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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, encouraging 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 treasures 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 subject 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

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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 themselves 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

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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 carelessness or forgetfulness concerning what so much concerns thee, and to lose no occasion of practicing humility and laboring for the glory of the Lord ; but do thou seek and 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 HOLY 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 himself 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 admirable 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 bringing 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

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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 converse 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 master 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

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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 virtues 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 proceeded 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 profound 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 consolations by pointing out the most blessed fruits of labor. In Her estimation She held Herself unworthy of being

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supported by her spouse, and She felt Herself in continual 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 return for the faithful services of saint Joseph.

431. Among other wonderful happenings in connection 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 creatures 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, however, am but a creature and therefore I deserve no veneration, nor is it right that I accept it; it is my duty to

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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 destitute 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 considered 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 ordinarily, 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

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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 furnished 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 occasions succored by the holy angels in an admirable manner. In order properly to understand some of the great miracles 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 entrance 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 payment 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-

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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, perceiving 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

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 happiness, 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 asking 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 entangled 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,

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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 understood and written ; since He supplied our wants in various

manners, even commanding the angels to help us and prepare 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-

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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 inculcate them on other mortals. Thou must especially impress 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 correspond 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 coverings 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

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soft texture and an humble color from which I may prepare other coverings; and later on I will weave a seamless 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 condemn riches, to destroy vanity and establish 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 assumed, 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

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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 admiration 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 remained of it after She had completed the furnishings of the infant God as a gift to the temple of Jerusalem, according 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-

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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 incomparable grace and loveliness, full of sanctity and exalted merit, of a greater perfection than human intellect 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 sovereign Queen understood better than all the rest of creation the ineffable greatness of the mystery of the Incarnation 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 expenditure 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?

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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 sanctification 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 sacrifices, 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-

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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

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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 possible to revoke the decree of the eternal Father, which requires that Redemption be abundant (Ephes. 2, 4) and thy excessive charity 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 sentiments of love uttered by the Queen made Her most beautiful in the eyes (Esth. 2, 9) of the Prince of the eternities, 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-

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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 crucified, 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 comprehended, 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 reprehensible 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 ingratitude, which they ordinarily show by handling the sacred ornaments and objects of worship without atten-

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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 astonishment 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 themselves 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 sentiments when, on the one hand, we reflect on the incomprehensible being of God, who in his goodness has created 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 ingratitude 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

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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 vestments of which they stand in need. Let them be convinced 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 appropriate 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 existence 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 distractions, 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;

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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 intercession with my most holy Son, if they do not displease me. For this purpose thou shouldst exhort them to continual 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 worship, 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<sup>A</sup>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 accordingly 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 decree 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 acknowledge 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

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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 reveal She concealed with admirable prudence, notwithstanding her desire of consoling her most faithful and holy spouse. She wished to entrust Herself to his direction 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 parturition 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 necessary that I go alone. Yet, although this order refers only to the heads of families, I dare not leave Thee without 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

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to place Thee in any risk, as well on account of thy condition 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 submissive 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 command 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

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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 prepared, She offered Herself to the Lord without any disquietude 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 answered: "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

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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 difficulties."

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 protracted 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 preparation for the events which She expected. Their house

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they left in charge of some neighbor until they should return.

453. The day and hour for their departure for Bethlehem 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 courageously the hardships of the journey, assuring him anew that the Almighty was pleased with his affectionate solicitude. She also informed him of the will of his Majesty that they meet with patience and joy of heart the hardships 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 objected on account of the dignity of his Spouse, She nevertheless remained victorious in her humility and prevailed upon him to give Her his benediction. Saint Joseph complied with great timidity and reverence, and immediately 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, attended solely to the divine activities and colloquies of the Lord, observing Him in the virginal chamber of her

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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 Himself 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

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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 judgment. 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 careful intercourse. Always bear in mind that thou ask the blessing of the Lord for all that thou wishest to undertake, 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.

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#### 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 venerated 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

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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 ambassadors 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 watchfulness. 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.

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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, however, 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 assigned 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 contemptible 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

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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, however, 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

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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 frustrated 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. Concerning many souls She also knew whether they were predestined 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

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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 pregnancy, which was already evident to all. Such was the

return which the Mother of mercy made for the inhospitality 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 refused 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.

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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 followed her spouse through the crowds of people, while he went from house to house and from door to door. Although 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 manifested 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 sacraments, 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

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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 my master, let not thy kindest heart be afflicted because the ardent wishes which the love of thy Lord excites in thee cannot be fulfilled. 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 satisfactory 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.

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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 advantage 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

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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 destitution and poverty, not because He had any need of them for bringing the practice of virtues to the highest perfection, 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 enlightenment to forget the terrestrial and visible and to gird thyself with fortitude (Prov. 31, 17), to raise thyself 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 knowledge 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 Matthew : "Be ye perfect as my heavenly Father is perfect" (Matth. 5, 48). This command of the Most High imposed upon his holy Church is not impossible of fulfillment, 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 hinder them from maturing within themselves the fruits of his Redemption.

467. Of thee particularly I expect this perfection, and

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I invite thee to it by the sweet law of love which accompanies 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 wisdom of the eternal Father had reserved it for Them, consecrating it in all its bareness, loneliness and poverty as

the first temple of light (Malachy 4, 2, Ps. 111, 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

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knees and praised the Lord, giving Him thanks for his benefit, which they knew had been provided by his wisdom 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 intended to bring about during that night, and in this forsaken 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.

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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 considered as his alone ; and he hastened to set about cleaning the floor and the corners of the cave, although the humble 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 incarnate 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 prepared a sort of couch with the articles of wear in their possession, making use of a crib or manger, that had been

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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 consciousness 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 intuitively 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 convince me of the poverty and want of proper expression in created language.

474. The Most High announced to his Virgin Mother,

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that the time of his coming into the world had arrived and what would be the manner in which this was now to be fulfilled and executed. The most prudent Lady perceived 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 profoundest 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 nothingness 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

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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 breast, 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 hundred 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 particulars, which all the faithful assume to have miraculously accompanied this most divine Birth; but as the only witnesses were the Queen of heaven and her courtiers, they cannot all be certified, except only those which

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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 understanding of these same happenings and it was then expounded 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 penetrated the virginal chamber as the rays of the sun penetrate 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 commonly 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 is 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

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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 accidental 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 imperfections 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 wonderful 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 purpose : 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 conception 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 prerogative 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

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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 subject to all the laws of the sons of Adam; but it was consequent 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 connected 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 outside of the womb could be wrought much more appropriately 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 presence of the Apostles (Matth. 17, 2). This miracle was

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not necessary in order to penetrate the virginal enclosure and to leave unimpaired the virginal integrity; for without this Transfiguration God could have brought this about by other miracles. Thus say the holy doctors, 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 she be filled with new graces, corresponding to the greatness of her most holy Son, which was thus manifested to Her in a visible manner. 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 virginal chamber by divine power, issued forth to the light,

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and they received Him in their hands with ineffable reverence. 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 doves 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

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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 furnished 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 benediction 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 Onlybegotten 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 creature 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 presumption 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 mysteries, 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 suffering. In this form the most pure Mother now saw

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Him and, still remaining in a kneeling position and ador

ing Him with profound humility and reverence, She received 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 sacrifice 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 exalted ; 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

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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,

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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 becoming 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

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 acknowledge and adore their Creator. The humble animals obeyed their Mistress and prostrated themselves before the Child, warming Him with their breath and rendering 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 prophecy, 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 disengaged 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 conducting 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, entering 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

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world? Who will dare to love the vanity and pride, which was openly abhorred and condemned by the Creator 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 obligation, 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 reverence, 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

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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 extent, 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 redeem thee alone and as if He had instituted all his wonders 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 enjoined 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 banishment. All of them acknowledged this new Godman as the true Author of eternal salvation, and they composed 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

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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, although he was yet of so tender an age, prostrated themselves 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 happened, saint Elisabeth hastened to send one of her domestics 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 circumstances 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-

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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 company 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 brightness; 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

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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 intellectual 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 seeking 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 Messiah, 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 diabolical 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

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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 enveloped 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 swaddling-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 wisdom of the world, they were easily made proficient in

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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 interior 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, acknowledged and magnified Him as true God and man, as Restorer 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 inmost hearts. In highest wisdom and prudence She preserved 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-

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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 Bethlehem, 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 departed 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 uncultured 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 sacrificed by him, there were also some belonging to these holy men. Their parents consented joyfully to the martyrdom, 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 regarding 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-

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structive. Thou hast been called and chosen to receive knowledge and enlightenment for avoiding such dangerous 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 communicating 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 obligation, 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 dispositions 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

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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, losing 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 receive 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 CIRCUMCISION.

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 themselves. 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. Because 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

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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 mislead 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 adoration 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 demons 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

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up his cruelty. Although Lucifer suspected, that Herod was seeking to kill the Messiah, 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 procure 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 Messiah, 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 conflict with the purpose of the Messiah 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 Messiah 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

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majesty and greatness of God should humiliate itself; because he himself sought after applause, ostentation, reverence and exaltation, wishing if possible to appropriate all honor to himself. Since all honor was attainable by God, it never entered his mind, that He would consent to the contrary and subject Himself to humiliation, 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 infinite bounty by no other standard than that by which he judged himself and of his own malicious disposition! 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 understand, that the greatness of the bounty and love of God (Rom. 5, 8) manifested and magnified itself in

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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 appeared 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 continually 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-

man race." And speaking interiorly to the divine Infant, 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, presume 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 reverence. 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 efficacy as no words will suffice to explain. He broke out in new canticles of praise at seeing himself thus enriched with such magnificent blessings and favors. After having for some time enjoyed in spirit the sweetest effects 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

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their knees in receiving and giving Him. Similar reverence 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 giving the Child from and to one another.

507. When the heavenly Mother judged it time to nourish Him at her breast, She reverently asked permission of her Son; for although She knew, that She was to nourish Him as her true and human Child, She nevertheless 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 unailing in the most prudent Virgin, her reverence remained faultless and undiminished and permitted not the least forgetfulness 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, reverence 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 attention and remembrance, that we cannot deny our negligence in forgetting them, and we cannot acknowledge

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sufficiently, what harm we are doing ourselves in ceasing 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 reverence, with which most holy Mary and the glorious saint Joseph as well as the angelic hosts treated the Incarnate 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 audaciously 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 watchful 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

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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 looking upon Him with her bodily eyes, understanding all that She herself and her Child did exteriorly in the meanwhile. 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 supernatural 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 inestimable value to the saint and caused him immeasurable delight; on this account his heavenly Spouse delighted in using this appellation when conversing about her Son.

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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 afforded me, my spouse and the holy angels, since we beheld 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 sufficiently understood concerning the ways of God in raising up those souls, whom He seeks with paternal love and affection. Thou hast attained this knowledge by being favored with so many particular calls and enlightenments 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 drawing 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 cooperate 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

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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 thyself to be animated if thou hadst seen and adored my most holy Son in his birth and infancy, toward the fulfillment 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

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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 regulations, 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 began 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 incomparable 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 complaints of the tender and affectionate Mother. Her prudent 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 love and by other motives to undergo the pains of circumcision.

514. On the other hand her maternal love and com-

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passion longed to exempt her sweet Child if possible, from this suffering; moreover She knew, that circumcision 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 prudent Virgin practiced many heroic acts of virtue, unspeakably 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 Providence for all things, and She would not presume curiously to search or pry into his decrees by consulting supernatural sources of information, especially in order to rid Herself of any suffering. When any grave and doubtful affair arose, in which there was danger of offending God, or some urgent undertaking for the good of creatures, 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 counsel of God, for this consultation concerning the divine pleasure was not coupled with the desire of special revelation. In this as I have said, She was most discreet and diffident, rarely asking for such extraordinary intervention. 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

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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 Herself 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 natural 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 separate enlightenment of the Lord, and for this the prudent 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

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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 fulfill 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 himself."

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

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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 circumcision, 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 remember: He is my natural Son by an eternal generation (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 Daughter, 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

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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, saying: "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 requested 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 Circumcision, saying that the time appointed by law for the 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 fulfill in all things the divine pleasure in return for his incomparable favors. To these words

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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 Circumcision 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 medicine, 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 Circumcision 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

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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 receiving 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 conferring 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 escutcheons 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

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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 conjointly 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

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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 experienced in these various and wonderful events surpasses human language, and certainly my own powers, and I cannot find adequate words for expressing my conceptions.

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 increase 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.

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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 affections, 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 consciousness 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 inviolable 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

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 important 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 weakness, 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

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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 promoting 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 intercourse 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 guidance 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 Providence 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

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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.

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#### 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

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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 holiness 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-

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 subjecting 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,

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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 interior 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 surprised 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

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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 perform. 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 affliction 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 failing 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

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relieve your needs." Most holy Mary and Joseph answered 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 knowledge 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 applied 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 comprehension 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 behavior. 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

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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, instituted 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 measureless charity, which is not extinguished by the overwhelming 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 thyself 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.

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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 contained 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.

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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 sufferings 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 because 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 foreknowledge of these mysteries ; because they had not been revealed to him, nor had his most prudent Spouse informed him of this secret. In all things She was most wise and discreet, awaiting the sweet and timely dispositions 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 habitation 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.

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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 affection, 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 celestial 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

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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 encouraged 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 distant and wearisome journey to Nazareth during the inclement 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 conformed 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. Awaiting 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

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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 : "Restrain 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 subjection. 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 inclemency 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

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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 permission beforehand and his pardon for the indignity, considering Herself and acknowledging Herself unworthy 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 manifested his love toward Her, so much the more deeply did

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 magnanimity.

546. There was an interchange of caresses of another 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, holding Him in her arms, She was privileged to see through his humanity as through a crystal casement, thus perceiving 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 transformed 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 Holofernes 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 saying 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

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is called into existence as is my Mother among the children 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 pleasing 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 members 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 longings, 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

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the power of man! How circumscribed his capacity! How insufficient is human affection, as it cannot sufficiently render a just return for thy love! But the victory 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 overcome and vanquished by thy power. Let us be humiliated and let us grovel in the dust, while thy greatness is magnified and exalted in all the eternities." The heavenly 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 martyrdom 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 understanding of these words as well as their actual fulfillment. 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

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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 healthfulness ; 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 becomes 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 happened 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 continually enriched : She by holding her most holy Son, he by his sacred blood and deified flesh. They preserved it in a crystal vase, which saint Joseph had purchased with the money sent to them by saint Elisabeth. In this they had enclosed the particle of flesh and

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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

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to express my desire, even when asked about it by my spouse; for I preferred obedience to this pious inclination, 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 insignificant things, and very often they occupy themselves with trifles as if they were important matters, and with vanities, 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 together 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 enjoyment 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-

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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 inclination 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 Israelites, 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 conferring with some of the Jews, they were imbued with a belief in the coming of the Messiah 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

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Ghost says, that He holds their hearts in his hands in order to direct them like irrigated waters to the fulfillment 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 belittles the spirits of princes. Because these Magi governed 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 acquired, 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 following 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 Incarnation and of the birth of Christ our Redeemer. Immediately 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 enlightenment of the Kings concerning the mysteries of the Incarnation was very copious and clear. They were informed that the King of the Jews was born as true God and man; that He was the Messiah and Savior who was

expected ; that it was the One who was promised in the Scriptures and prophecies (Gen. 3, 10) ; and that they

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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 acquired; 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 mysterious 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 executing 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-

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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 immediately 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.

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557. The Magi pursued their journey under the guidance 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 people, 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 Scriptures. 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,

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may go to recognize and adore Him." The Magi departed, leaving the hypocritical king ill at ease and in great consternation at such indisputable signs of the coming of the legitimate King of Israel into the world. Although 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 prosperity is so unstable and deceitful that it can be overthrown 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 composed 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 approaching 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 necessary for establishing the truth of the mystery. Nevertheless 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

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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 devout kings, standing with the Child in her arms. Amid

the humble and poor surroundings of the cave, in incomparable 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 overwhelmed 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 enlightenment. 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 accustomed 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,

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Him who is the eternal Word incarnate (Luke 10, 24). Let us extol and praise his name on account of the sacraments 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 compassion at the great poverty, beneath which were hidden the greatest mysteries of heaven and earth. In this intercourse 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

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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 himself without restriction or moderation. But let this remark, together with the other teachings of the holy church, suffice for those that live in the world. To thyself 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 impress 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 accompany 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

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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 perfection 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 therefore understand two things : first, how great a damage it is to neglect the exercise of any virtue and not to practice perfection according to the dictates of the divine inspirations; 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 overlook 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 themselves 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

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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.

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#### 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 Jerusalem, 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 supernatural mysteries? O greatness of his Omnipotence un-

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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 remembered 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. Arriving they prostrated themselves anew in profound humility; and opening their treasures, as Scripture relates, 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 government of their countries; for they wished to return

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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 conferred 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

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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 countries 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 fulfilled ; 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 preceding 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

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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 Patriarchs, 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, congratulated their Queen, that her most holy Son had been manifested 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 mystery 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 having 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

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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 deprive 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 senseless 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 sustenance, 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 acceptable sacrifice in the eyes of his Majesty. In order to make those incessant offerings, it is necessary that

divine faith and light continually inflame thy heart, having before thy eyes the great object of thy praise and exaltation, 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 heavenly 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-

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cumcised the Child, in order that he might use it for himself 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 revealing 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 improved 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

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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 account 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 possession 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, consecrated by the blood and the labors of the Lord and of his most holy Mother, and by the works of our Redemption. And even if this would not be possible, there is no

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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 mountains (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 unnecessary expenses could be avoided by employing their resources in such a pious enterprise, which would be pleasing 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 requirements 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

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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 although 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 infant 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 Infant 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

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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 seeing 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 continually sought to imitate. There is much to say concerning this great mystery of her imitation in this history; for She had this example and model incessantly before her eyes, and according to it She regulated her

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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 incarnate 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 indeed 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 without divine predisposal), the belief, that the birth of the Messiah 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 Herself about all that She saw and heard, but also by directing many souls toward the knowledge of God, by confirming them in the faith, instructing them in the practice

of virtues, enlightening them in the mysteries of the Messiah whom they were expecting, and dispelling the ignorance, in which they were cast as a low-minded people, little versed in the things of God. Sometimes their talk about these matters was so full of error and womanish 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 consoled, 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 according to my own will, but according to the wishes of my spouse Joseph. In this resignation I managed to act as if I 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 attribute any of the goods of the earth, be they of material

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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 influence 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 convent; 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 particularly 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

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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 inferior 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 loving 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 concealment 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 deprived of the divine sweetness (Cant. 1, 7). When afterwards 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 delights 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 constant in keeping up the fire of the sanctuary (Lev. 6,

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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 considered unclean and during which she was obliged to continue her purification for her re-admittance into the temple, were coming to a close (Lev. 22, 4). In order to comply with this law and satisfy another obligation contained 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 ardent longing of her heart after humiliation and annihilation to the dust, She desired to do this of her own free will.

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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 Victim (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 mortals. 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 blessings 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 venerating that sanctuary so humble and yet so rich in happiness, though at that time this was yet unknown to the world. The Mother handed the Child Jesus to saint

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Joseph in order to prostrate Herself and worship the earth which had been witness to such venerable mysteries. Having done this with incomparable devotion and tenderness, She said to her husband : "My master, give me thy benediction for this journey, as thou art wont to do at departing from home. I beseech thee also to allow me to perform 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 reverence 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 appropriate.

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 mortified himself in commanding Her, it happened that both of them exercised humility and obedience reciprocally. That he refused Her permission to go barefoot to Jerusalem was occasioned by his apprehensions, lest the cold should injure her health; for he did not know the won-

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derful qualities and composition of her virginal and perfect 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 sanctuary 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 shielding 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 visible 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

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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 compassion and love for men than by the effects of the inclemency of the weather upon his body. The mighty Empress turned to the winds and elements and as Mistress 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 occasions 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 deprivest 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

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not so ungrateful toward the Most High and so cruel to yourselves. Open your eyes and recognize your dangers. 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 Onlybegotten 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 Jerusalem. These two holy persons, immediately conferring with each other about their revelations and enlightenments, 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 receive them into his house with all benevolence and hospitality. 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

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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 demonstration, 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 offering 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

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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 chapter. 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 prophetically of the Child's future.

#### INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

594. My daughter, one of the misfortunes, which deprive 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

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arrive at an intimate friendship of God, which they can attain only by fervent love. This is called fervent precisely 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 conflagration 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 incessantly demanded what was most perfect and agreeable 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 exercise of thy love, which the Most High is desiring and expecting of thee, and, as is mentioned by the spouse in the

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Canticles (Cant. 2, 9), He is watching thee so close at hand, that not more than a slight screen intervenes between 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 excellent 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 mysterious 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 Messiah (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 offering of the incarnate Word, which by so many titles already belonged to Him.

597. This will of the eternal Father, which was conformable 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

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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 return 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, having 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 preceding day. On this occasion however the holy spirits added

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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, innumerable others descended from heaven, who, accompanied 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 however 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 Herself 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

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heaven he offered Him up to the eternal Father, pronouncing at the same time these words so full of mysteries: "Now dost thou dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according 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 gentiles, 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 welfare 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 throughout the universe and derive therefrom guidance and salvation. 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 canticle 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

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he gave his blessing to the happy parents of the Child. Then also the prophetess Anne acknowledged the incarnate Word, and full of the Holy Ghost, she spoke of the mysteries of the Messiah 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 mentioned the sword and the sign of contradiction, which were prophetic of the passion and death of the Lord, the Child bowed its head. Thereby, and by many interior 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 advance 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 sorrow 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

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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 prophecies also made to see many of the mysteries of the Redemption 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 company 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. Although 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 happened 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

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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 exercises 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

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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 sentiment 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 refuseth to embrace the cross and rejoice 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

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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 remained in peace and tranquillity, without any sign of disturbance, although my heart and soul were transfixed 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 creature, 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

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the old, since the divine Word has now united Itself with human nature and become the eternal High-Priest according 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 engender 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 immense blessing for which they had been singled out from among all men. The heavenly Lady had a special veneration 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 acceptable 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

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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 continue 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 human 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 perceive 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 handmaid. But now my heart is revived and rejoices in possessing 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

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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 return 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 Onlybegotten, 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 advocate, 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 themselves of her intercession, should find salvation; that in

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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 remain, 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 confirmed upon the heavenly Mother in answer to her prayers. 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 purification, 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

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it all for my sake; for I am, and always will be, with Thee."

610. Any other faith and virtue might have been disturbed (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 follow 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 spiritualized 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

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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 should 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." Immediately the holy spouse arose full of solicitude and sorrow, 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. Encourage 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,

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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 annihilate 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 comprehend 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

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and loading it on the beast of burden which they had brought from Nazareth, they departed shortly after midnight, 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 understand 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 describes the adoration of the Kings and the flight into Egypt, while these events were not mentioned by saint Luke. He again describes the Circumcision, Presentation and Purification, which are omitted by saint Matthew. Thus saint Matthew, after referring to the departure 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 presented 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 Matthew. And this flight took place immediately after the

Presentation before most holy Mary and Joseph returned to Nazareth. As saint Luke had received no commission 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 returned to Galilee, was not to deny the flight into Egypt, but it was merely continuing the narrative without mentioning the flight from Herod. Even the very text of saint Luke intimates that the return to Nazareth happened 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 cornerstone 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 sending Him there and in calling Him thence are most exalted 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 judgment can dispute or ignore the sweet providence of God

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in directing the secondary causes, while allowing- full liberty to the human will (Eccli. 15, 14). For this reason, 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 sinners time, hoping for their conversions, as in the case of Herod. If He would use his absolute power and perform great miracles for preventing the course of secondary 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 independently 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

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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 unworthy and undeserving of all thou receivest, and so poorly furnished for giving thanks and for making payment. 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 receivest 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"

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(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 accommodate 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 furnishes to each one an oblation which no one could otherwise 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 practice 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

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precious in his sight and which He has purchased with his life-blood. Never shouldst thou fly from labors, difficulties, 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, discourage 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 heavenly 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

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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 entrance 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 Messiah ; 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 diligent 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.

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She therefore revered from afar the sacred place of the birth of her Onlybegotten, renewing the memory of the mysteries there wrought and the favors there received. 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 danger. 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 Elisabeth, 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 murder 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

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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 command of the heavenly Mother. The holy Elisabeth was filled with joy and wonder at this message, and she expressed 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 affectionate greetings to the Son and Mother. The angel then returned with his message to the Queen. Saint Elisabeth immediately despatched a servant with some

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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 assistance 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

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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 admirable 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 occasions the Son of God favored his sovereign Mother with new visions of intellectual clearness, in which She perceived 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 happens that we conceive these operations with the idea of duration or succession of time. She also perceived how

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these three Persons comprehend each other by one and the same act of understanding, and how this comprehension 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 thousands, 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 responded 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 neglecting the care and comfort of her Child, giving Him nourishment 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

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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 salvation of men and caused by their ingratitude ; in this sorrow and weeping the sweetest Mother imitated Him. She was wont to answer his tearful complaints like a compassionate turtledove lovingly caressing and soothing Him as his affectionate Mother, and kissing Him with matchless reverence. The fortunate Joseph often witnessed these divine mysteries; and shared in some of the enlightenments, 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, kissing 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.

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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 understanding, 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 iniquitous 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 chastisement 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-

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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 constant 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 persecutions 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 understandest 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 HELIOPOLIS 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 occasioned by the want of shelter. There were many incidents 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 Onlybegotten, with his most holy Mother and saint Joseph, to suffer the inconveniences and hardships naturally connected 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 inconveniences and discomforts, while the Mother, in addition thereto, was afflicted still more on account of the sufferings of her Son and of saint Joseph ; and the latter

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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 rejoiced 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 colloquies 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

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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 condescension, 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

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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 creatures, commanded the elements not to afflict their Creator, 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 complied 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 defended more effectually than all the wealthy and powerful 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 acceptable prayers of his Spouse, He might make provision 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

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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 permitted 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 ?

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(Ps. 17, 31). When has He ever turned away his countenance 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 confidence, 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 nourishment for our Pilgrims, but also visible relief against the tediousness 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

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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 exhortations 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 blessing 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 sweetness, and alternated their offerings of praise with that of the great Lady and of these simple birds. All this produced 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 entertained by thy words." Sometimes the Son and Mother conversed with each other interiorly; and these conversations 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 journey, forgot his hardships, feeling within himself the

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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 conception of the infinite bounty, which gave them being and which preserves them, that they fail to place full confidence 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 worthless 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,

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who is willing\* to provide for his children, who will nourish 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 ministers to worldly pride. If men would confine their desires 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 confide 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 confused; hope patiently, even when help is somewhat delayed. 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

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 withholding the alms due to the poor ; all of them have reasons to dread lest divine Providence, showing Itself just as niggardly 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 blessings 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 persecution. The flight into Egypt was to afford the infant Savior an occasion of visiting that country and performing 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, according 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

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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 concomitant 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 rescue these forsaken people and deliver them from the oppression 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 sovereign and divine power and drove the demons from the

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idols and hurled them to the infernal abyss. Like lightning flashed from the clouds they darted forth and descended 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 teaching 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

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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 intercourse 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 powerful prayers of the incarnate Word wrought a change of hearts, and the crumbling of the idols caused an incredible 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, performing 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 instructions 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

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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 herself 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 certain favors, in order that the Lord may be justified before 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-

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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

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their habitations with such suddenness, confusion and torment that at their departure they were unable to ascertain 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 understand 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. Nevertheless, 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 victory, 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 Her. But they were astonished to find that when they attempted to approach Her in order to begin their diabolical 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 issuing 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 unconquerable Queen ; while She witnessed their struggles, holding

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in her arms the omnipotence of God himself. As Lucifer 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 Messiah had not come into the world. But since he knew nothing of the mystery, and expected the Messiah to come in great splendor and renown, he remained in uncertainty and doubt, full of tormenting 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 esteemed, 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 creation 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

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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 existence of thy God. In this endless sea, engulf and annihilate 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 seraphim, 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.

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#### 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 another. 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 prognosticated 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

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neighborhood ; and the Lord ordained that he should find a poor and humble, yet serviceable house, at small distance from the city, just such as the Queen of heaven desired.

654. Having therefore found this dwelling near Heliopolis, they took their abode therein. At the first entrance of the heavenly Lady with her divine Son and saint Joseph, She prostrated Herself to the ground, kissing 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, dedicating 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 ministry of the angels, failed them; and the Lord left them

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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 sustenance 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 relations 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 excruciating anxieties we are apt to be cast at finding ourselves

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threatened with poverty or privation! Immediately we begin to rail at occasions lost, at having missed or neglected 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 justification 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 example 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 themselves 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-

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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 attain 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 prudence 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

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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 desires ; 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

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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 fulfilled the end for which the divine Word had assumed flesh in her virginal womb, namely, to draw on and elevate 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.

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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 Pilgrim and yet a Comprehensor, while at the same time his bodily faculties were lost in the tranquil and beautiful sleep of childhood, his whole humanity being hypostatically 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. Refresh 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

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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 suffered, since the Lord permitted them to come over Us. Thou canst not understand with what patience and forbearance We accepted them ; and even the angels cannot estimate the reward I merited from the Most High by

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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 husband 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 serviceable 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, consult 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 happened 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 Samaria. 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

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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 immediately cured some of their sick, She quieted and encouraged 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 Strangers; 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 worship, 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-

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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 understand that there cannot be more than one God. She explained to them the several articles of truth pertaining to the Creation and Redemption of the world. She impressed upon their minds the commandments of the decalogue, 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

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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, winning all by loving kindness and beneficence and admonishing them with sweet earnestness.

668. In regard to the cure of the sick and wounded the heavenly Lady hesitated between two different sentiments : 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 empowered Her to cure the men by her mere word and exhortations; 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

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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 abundantly, 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

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the blessed Lady was offered some gift that seemed serviceable 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 communicating with others, yet the will of my Son and Lord governed me in all things. Of thee, my friend, I desire, that in imitation of me, thou work for the benefit and salvation of thy neighbors, seeking to follow me in the perfection and quality of my works. Thou needst not seek

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occasions, for the Lord will send them. In some extraordinary circumstances, however, thou mayst find it advisable 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 perfection 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 extending 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 personally 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 CONCEALED 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

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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 wickedness, 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 command 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 executed 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

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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 sacrifice 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 enlightenment, 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-

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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 disposition 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 herself and her son.

676. The heavenly Lady also knew that saint Elisabeth, 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 perceived 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

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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 sustenance, 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 compassion 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 tenderness 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

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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 insufficient 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 attention 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

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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 harmony 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 connection : 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 different 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 apprehension 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,

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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 COMMENCES TO CELEBRATE THE DAY OF HIS INCARNATION 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 excessive 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 intelligible 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

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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 coverings usual with other children; for He did not wish to be distinguished in this from others, and He wished to

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bear witness to his true humanity and to his love for mortals, enduring this inconvenience otherwise not required 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

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of visible things, which being earthly, oppress and darken the heart of man. At the very moment of my conception 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, renouncing 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 provide 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

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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 Incarnation 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

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 assist 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 mindfulness of the crucifixion of the Lamb of God, She practiced 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 celebration 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.

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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 understand 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 Creator 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 proportion 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 abnegation. Thus would the Physician justify his cause before 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 adornment of the spouses of my most holy Son, without which I assure thee, my dearest, He will disavow and repudiate

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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 abhorred 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 forgetfulness 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 memorable 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 remembrance 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 coverings 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 extended 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 itself according to her wishes. He never divested Himself of this tunic, until the executioners themselves tore

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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 Infant 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

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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 thoughtful 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 always 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 imitating 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

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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 knowledge 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 revered, 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-

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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, witnessed 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 esteem 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 behavior, 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 honoring 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

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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, afterwards 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 returned 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 blessing 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 incarnate 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 angels themselves, who, interchanging among themselves 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, reverential 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 devoted 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 mysteries 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

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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 ingrattitudes.

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 attention of mortals to the debt contracted by their unfeeling forgetfulness of his divine love and of mine toward 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 remember 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

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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 possible 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, joining 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, proclaiming 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 pertinacious 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 greatest 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 thyself 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-

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fering so much and that He wished to increase his sufferings 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 ordinarily the case with ignorant men. Add thou virtue to virtue and seek thereby evermore to meet all thy obligations, 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 certain 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

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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 consecrated 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 virtue 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 themselves indeed fortunate to occupy the same house, in which these Strangers had lived for seven years. This affectionate 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

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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 complaining, 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 dispersed 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 demons 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 compelled them to the pursuit of virtue and, while withdrawing 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

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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 tribulation in order to afford Them occasion of merit and provide a proper relief. He administered to these necessities 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, however, 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 inherited also his cruelty, saint Joseph turned from his

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 proceeded 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 imitation of her Son, had always observed the most perfect order according to circumstances. But being now peacefully 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

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 occupations and his work so as most worthily to earn sustenance for the divine Child and his Mother as well as for himself. That which in other sons of Adam is considered a punishment and a hardship was to this holy Patriarch a great happiness. For while others were condemned 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 unable to make any return for either this benefit or, according to her estimation, for any of the others, She established 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

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creatures as to the instruments of his bounty. To some\* 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 prepared 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 endure 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 looking 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-

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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 contrary 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, boundlessly desiring what it loves and likes, and, on the other hand, grieving and sorrowing at what it abhors and dislikes. 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 presently to desire another, expecting a balm for its disappointment in the former. And if it is successful, the soul becomes involved and flurried in the desire of retaining 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 occupations, and much less thy regard or attention to creatures, 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

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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 accusation 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 promoting 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*) expressly 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 September 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 Congregation of Rites of May 8, 1757, and of May 11, 1771, officially 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

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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, Abbatissae Monasterii

Conceptionis Oppidi de Agreda, Ordinis S. Francisci.

Cum pervenerit in Urbem assertum Autographum Operis Mysticae Civitatis Dei Ven. Servae Dei Sororis Mariae a Jesu de Agreda, ex Monasterio Agredano Tirasonen. Dioecesis extractum, et ad Ss. D. N. transmissum 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 tunc Ministrum Generalem Ordinis Minorum die 16. Januarii 1748, habita est Congregatio particularis Sacror. Rituum de mandate Ss., in qua interfuerunt Eminentissimi et Reverendiss. 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 fuerunt 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, existat 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 Sacrae Congregationis, nee non restitui, mandavit Eminentissimo D. Cardinali Portocarrero Autographum dicti Operis Mysticse Civitatis Dei, in Hispanias remittendum. Hac die 8. Maji 1757.  
Loco % Sigilli.

D. F. Card. Tamburinus Praef.  
M. Marefusus S. R. C. Secret.

2. Tirasonen. Beatificationis et Canonizationis Ven. Servae Dei Mariae a Jesu etc.

Optimo providoque consilio aeternae memoriae Pontifex Benedictus Papa XIV., pro ea qua pollebat sapientia, die 16. Januarii 1748 datis litteris ad P. Raphaelem a Lugagnano Ordinis Minorum de Observantia S. Francisci Ministrum Generalem declaravit in judicio operum Servorum Dei, quod fit ex more Congregationis Sacrae 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 inscriptum perhibetur; quamobrem ad rectum iudicium efformandum de Opere cui titulus : La mystica Ciudad de Dios, quod iterate impressum constanterque vulgatum fuit sub nomine Venerabilis Servae Dei Sororis Mariae a Jesu ab Agreda, constituit, quod cum alia existant scripta certo Ancillae Dei caractere exarata, advocatis Peritis, qui compararent codicem de quo agitur, cum eisdem scriptis, primum de identitate characteris juxta artis regulas iudicium 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 Civitatem Dei tot alia existant Opera, quae ab eadem Dei Serva

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procul dubio confecta fuere, quumque ex artis criticae regulis validissimum argumentum pro dignoscendis librorum auctoribus in comparatione styli, ejusque similitudine aut difformitate constituatur, easdem adhibendas opportunas diligentias praecepit ad comprobandum uniformitatem 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 indagazione 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 Clementis Papa XIV. rescripto altera habenda peculiaris Congregatio, in qua Rmi Cardinales Carolus Albertus Guidobonus Cavalchini Episcopus Ostien., Joannes Franciscus Albani Episcopus Sabinen., causae relator Marius Marefusus et Flavius Chisius Sac. 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 sentiendum. Hac in Congregatione die 9. Martii 1771, postquam Rmi Patres Cardinales diligenti trutina examinarunt iudicium trium Peritorum, quibus Reverendissimus Cardinalis Episcopus Sabinen. dederat in mandatis, ut praevia instructione R. P. Promotoris Fidei compararent stylum mysticae Civitatis Dei cum stylo aliorum ejusdem Servae Dei Operum, quae eisdem tradita fuerant consideranda, responsum fuit : Constare de uniformitate styli Operis Mysticae Civitatis Dei cum aliis Operibus, quae a Serva Dei Mariae 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 relatione, 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 written 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 revelations 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 resulted 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

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#### 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 following terms:

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approbation 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 occasion 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 Germany, 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 recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, 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 comparison 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 Venerable 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 episcopal approbation to "Ciudad de Dios" 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 edition of 1911-1912.

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

and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo, chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immaculate 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 having 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.

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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. Wishing 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 secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment 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 publication 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.

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of 4BotJ from tft e Return out of  
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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 dwelling 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 vastness 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 incidents 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.

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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 Redeemer, 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 evidence 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

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 themselves 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 Jerusalem. During all those years Mary alone was the disciple 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 knowledge, 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 reflected 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 privation 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 continued to show exterior reserve. Just as the flame of a forge or a conflagration is intensified by the application 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 revered Her Son in deepest adoration; 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 magnify 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 affection 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 affliction." The lovelorn Mother replied: "Will it perhaps be presumption to appear before Him and prostrate myself 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 displeased by the clamors of those who act in love."

9. These colloquies and answers of the holy angels somewhat gladdened and consoled 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 countenance. 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 speaking 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. Although 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 Redeemer 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 toward 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 darkness, 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 overlooked 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 practice whatever is most perfect and most holy. Thus He acts toward all without exception, although according to his divine ordainment, and according to the disposition 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 despised 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 memory 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 punctuality. 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-

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#### 14 CITY OF GOD

tomed to withdraw from other creatures in order to visit them with merited punishment for their many sins, outrages, ingratitude 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 partaking 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 inquiries 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

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#### 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 suffering 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 wisdom; 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 Beloved 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 sufferings 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 possess 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 further the immense force of his love for his sweetest Mother; for also the Lord suffered a delightful and wonderful violence in thus holding Her in such a suspense and affliction. It happened that the humble and sovereign Queen one day approached her Son Jesus, and, throwing Herself at his feet, with tears and sighs coming

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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, mingling 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 sweetness 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 elevated 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 sufferings 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 Redemption 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 contained, 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 trodden 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 thy 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

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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" (Eccli. 24, 5-16).

21. A little farther on Ecclesiasticus continues to enumerate 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 everlasting" (Eccli. 24, 22-31). Let these words of Scripture suffice for pious souls; for in them they will immediately 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 faculties 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 Architect 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 another 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.

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23. I well know that it belongs to this history to manifest the most hidden mysteries, which passed between 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 explain 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 support 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 perform 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 Scriptures. 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; meditate and ponder within thyself the doctrines and mys-

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 creatures have any part in thee; guard thou thy secret (Is. 24, 16), and thy treasure (Matth. 13, 44) from the fascination 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, conforming thyself to the evangelical law and to the example of thy Redeemer, running after the odor of his ointments 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 peerless 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, prepare and enable thee to receive proper light and intelligence 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 commands 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 attainment 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 without 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

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### 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 preparation. 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 remained at home praying for him, he offered up the mysterious sacrifices of his prayers and as he therein repre

sented Jesus and Mary, his offering was more acceptable 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 accompanied 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 accompaniment both in going and returning.

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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 carrying Him in their arms; yet this was but a slight alleviation 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 delight 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.

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 manifested 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 sweetest Mother and they afforded Her subjects for affectionate 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 manifest 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-

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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 lodging-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 acknowledged 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 inexpressibly 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 petitions and offerings She accompanied, imitated and followed 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 temple 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 panorama all the affronts, ignominies, and sufferings awaiting 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 mentioned 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 ignominious 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 sorrows the divine Child was wont to turn toward Her, telling 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

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 incarnate Word. Principally in these occupations the sweetest 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 foundation 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 prevent 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 account of human frailty and the astuteness of the enemies. In addition to this the time is short (I Cor. 7, 29), the end uncertain (Eccli. 9, 2), being either very happy,

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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 fascinate 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 hazardous 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 follow, both for thee and for all men, is to welcome bitterness 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 imitate me, for to this I call and invite thee, desiring that thou arrive at the summit of virtue and holiness. Consider 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

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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 HIMSELF 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, according 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

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recollection during their return homeward. The children 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 indifference. 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 supposing 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 accompanied 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 gradually thinned out, each taking his own direction and joining 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 mysterious 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, however, none could give them any information or any comfort 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 Circumcision), 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 concerning 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 Redeemer, 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 manifesting to Her the whereabouts and the doings of their Lord.

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This evasive answer raised new doubts in the most prudent 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 conversations 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 profoundest humility She also had misgivings, lest perchance She had in any way displeased Him by her conduct 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

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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, tribulations, or whatever Thou wilt. My Lord, my soul desires to merit at least in part to share thy sorrows and torments, 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

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 whereabouts 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 reverence 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 petitions for the human race, and for the finding of her most holy Son.

42. With this heavenly wisdom and with greatest diligence She sought Him for three successive days, roaming through the streets of the city, asking different persons 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-

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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, thinking that among the afflicted She would find the Spouse and the Originator of patient poverty among his own legitimate 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 increase 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 another, 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

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 happened 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 possessed 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 punishment 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

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says, is blessed (Eccli. 9, 1); for it then lives in constant fear and dread of such a loss, knowing that man, until the end of this life, is uncertain, whether he deserves 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 conscience, 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

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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 tribulation, nor trouble, nor necessity, nor danger, nor persecution, 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 Himself of the great concourse of people, our Lord was obliged to use also supernatural means to elude the attention 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 almighty Lord visited his heavenly Mother with an abstractive vision of the Divinity, which with divine power centered and withdrew all her faculties toward her interior. 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

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guided in his behavior by the circumstances already mentioned; 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, remaining 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 restored 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 afterwards 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 teachers 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

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coming of the Messiah 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 Redeemer 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 considered as learned. The Child Jesus came to the meeting 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 Messiah was already come, or, if not, concerning 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 affirmative, 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 Messiah 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

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of the promised Messiah and the Redemption was intended for themselves only ; and they believed this Redemption 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 discussion 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 confirmed 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 concerning eternal life and its Author, our Redeemer. Therefore the divine Child presented Himself to the disputants, 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.

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52. The divine Child spoke to them as follows : "The question concerning the coming of the Messiah and the answer given to it, I have heard and understood completely. 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 forward. 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 enemies of the Messiah 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

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(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 Messiah."

53. "Hence," added the divine Child, "how will it be possible to reconcile these prophecies, if we suppose that the Messiah 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 explanation. 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 overthrow 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 example 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 Messiah must fulfill in the first coming. The second coming 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

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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 and riches of grace and virtue 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 sovereignty, 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 patriarch Jacob has pointed out this very sign for the guidance of his posterity, commanding them to expect the Messiah 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

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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 suspect 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 arguments. 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, entirely 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

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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 longing 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 revered 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 sweetest 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 perceived in the interior of her most holy Son all the mysteries 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.

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 mysteries, interiorly manifested to Her concerning the discussion with the teachers. He repeated by word of mouth, what He had shown Her interiorly. In particular He told Her, that these doctors had not recognized Him as the Messiah because they were inflated and arrogant 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 sorrowful; 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

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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 evangelist 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. Although his subjection and obedience was to a certain extent a natural result of her motherhood; yet, in order to make proper use of this maternal right and superiority, a different grace was necessary than the one by which She conceived and gave birth to Him. The graces necessary 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

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it were an incomprehensible humility and a most heartfelt 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, according 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

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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 sanctity, 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 moderation. 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 diligently 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

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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 inspirations 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

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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 dangerous human folly. Consider all delights and joys of the world as insanity, its laughing as sorrow, sensible enjoyment 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 protection, yet never be remiss or careless in guarding thyself from contamination. Do not trust thy natural disposition 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). Perfect 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 chapters : 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 intercourse 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 intervening 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

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of her most holy Son, chosen among all creatures as the model of the new evangelical law and its Author, according 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 greatness 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 incomparable holiness they are all surpassed and they all partake 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,

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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 enjoined 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 Enlightener 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,

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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 account. 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

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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 commandest; 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

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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 measure, 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 participation, the great gifts merely disposed Her for still greater ones. The divine power, therefore, not finding 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 pleasure 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 declared 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

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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 instruction such as enabled Her to prepare for the reception of the whole evangelical Law, the understanding and practice of all its precepts and counsels in their highest perfection. 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, reflected 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

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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 advantage over thee and they will prevent thee from becoming 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 receive 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 reasonable end or purpose, which move them to act, and having 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 wonderful 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 connected 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

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 exhibited 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 Redeemer; for the work of our Redemption was to correspond 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 reparation 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

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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 explanation 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 manifest.

77. Another motive for this mystery, though here men

tioned in the third place, is first in regard to the intention; 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, correspond 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 matters, 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 manifest 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

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of man, and these were preserved in the world. The first tablets, made by the hands of God and having\* written 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 teaching the most blessed Mother the mysteries of the evangelical 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 wisdom, 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 frequently 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,

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which her divine Son was to establish in the Church; their efficacy, the results in those that receive them, varying according to the different dispositions of the recipients, 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 doctrines, 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 knowledge 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

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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 Redeemer 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 wanting 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 necessary 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 providential care to none, faithfully supplies all souls with

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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 creature 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

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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 diverting 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 become 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 teachings 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 influence 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 succeeded 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

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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 precipice to another, from abyss to abyss (Ps. 41, 8) : a chastisement 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 danger, 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 laboring 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 justification. This, thou knowest, consists in acts of living faith, trustful hope, ardent love, all coming from a contrite and humble heart (Ps. 50, 19).

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#### 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 fulfilling 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 sorrowful. 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

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cherished flock, of the merits which He wished to accumulate 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 Redeemer 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 converse 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 spiritualized and exalted to a participation and likeness of Myself, and that they, in their mortal flesh, become depositaries 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-

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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 contained 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 making 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 powerful activity of God and his blessings. She was the one who, without embarrassment and without opposition, re-

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ceived the impetuous torrent of the Divinity communicated 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 according 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 understood 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 mountain 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

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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 meekness 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 subjection. 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 enjoyment. 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 mortal 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 innocent tears the great consolations and favors of the Lord.

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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. Having 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

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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 pilgrimage, 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 kingdom of heaven," Mary reached the pinnacle of perfection. 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 Passion and understood fully, that to such extremes must be executed the law of her divine Teacher in the Gospels.

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93. In this manner I am able to explain part of what I have understood of the knowledge of the Gospel possessed 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 witness 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 children of the light, by believing and practicing its teachings, might regulate their lives in imitation of his. For

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 children 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 remember 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 correspond 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-

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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 erroneous 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 necessary that She come into possession also of all the truths

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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 afterwards, 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 mysteries of his inscrutable Judgment and Providence. She became aware of the infinite bounty, whereby He established 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 perceived all these mysteries and all that is contained in them. She saw how the holy Church propounded fourteen special articles of Catholic belief from the very beginning, and how She afterwards, in diverse times, defined

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many truths and dogmas, which are contained in them and in the holy Scriptures as in roots ready to be cultivated 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 application 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 understood 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 explain 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

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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 intellect 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 personal distinctions, which result from the emanations and processions of the infinite intellect and will. Although, 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

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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 creatures; 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 necessity 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 offered to them by divine mercy, lose eternal happiness. The most faithful Lady perceived also how the work of salvation is common to the three persons; and how it pertains 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.

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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 humblest heart. That He was conceived as man by the operation 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 knowledge 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 penetrated 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 Virginité 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

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 without a doubt this kind Mother and Commandress of the

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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 connected 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 preserved 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 Catholic faith?

INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN ME BY THE HEAVENLY  
LADY, MOST HOLY MARY.

104. My daughter, mortal mind is not capable of comprehending 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

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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 comprehending 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 substantial 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 negligent, 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

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they gradually become conscious of their unhappy infidelity, they fall into greater wickedness than the unbelievers. For such is the result of their abominable ingratitude 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 penetrating 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 wonderful 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 pertain 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 immediately 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 permits no commands of the intellect, nor any kind of violence. 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-

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lar to that mentioned in the last chapter. It was vouchsafed to Her for the purpose of renewing in Her the understanding of the ten commandments of the Decalogue. In it were manifested to Her, with great clearness 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 Divinity. 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 conformable 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 concerning 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 transformed 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

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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 continual 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 propounded to Her the new law and precepts in their bearing 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 shortsighted understanding.

109. With a most humble and ready heart She subjected Herself to the observance of all his commandments, and petitioned God to instruct Her and grant Her this divine grace to execute all that He had commanded. 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

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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 immaculate 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 conforming 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

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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 committed 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 sanctifying 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 goodness 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 commandments by the rational creatures She conjured her attending 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 revered 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,

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 sanctify 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 Commandments, 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

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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 preserved 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 awakened 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, consoled 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

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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 compliance 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 Commandments, 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 Commandments. The labors, misfortunes, and unhappiness of the people are the inseparable effects of the transgressions of mortals, and, though each one contributes his share in causing our misfortunes, yet we are so senseless, 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-

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 satisfied with the territories given into their charge by the highest King? Seeking to extend their sway and influence they have left in the world neither peace, nor quiet possession, nor any souls for the service of their Creator. 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 violate 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 provided 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

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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 evangelical law and asking for the grace to observe them perfectly. 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 humanity 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

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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 faculties 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 inviolably 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

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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 CONCERNING THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS WHICH WERE TO BE INSTITUTED BY CHRIST THE LORD, AND CONCERNING 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 sacraments, 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

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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 admirable 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 Sacrament 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, afterwards really fulfilled.

121. A like understanding the great Lady also received concerning the second Sacrament, that of Confirmation. 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 Sacrament, 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-

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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 Penance, 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 Confession, where the Lord, with ineffable kindness, relieved and solved all doubts of the souls in regard to their justification or condemnation, leaving it to the judgment of the priests, whether they should grant or deny absolution.

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

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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 revered and adored in the holy Sacrament in so many temples of the Catholic Church throughout 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 conception of human intellect. Although She had invented new canticles of praise and worship at the enlightenments, 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

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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 tabernacle, 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, prostrate 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 Sacrament; 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

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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 previously 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

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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 provident Founder of grace and of the Church, thereby constituted apt ministers of his Sacraments for the sanctification 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 faithful children of the Church, and all the other mysteries

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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 partake 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, establishing days consecrated to the Lord, that men might seek their God, assist at the sacred and mysterious sacrifice 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 forgetting or neglecting the use of these two Sacraments, men commit another injury by frustrating the loving

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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 necessary 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 eternal 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 explanations 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

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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 veneration 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

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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 thankful 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 judgments 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

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 reverence, 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 Sacrament 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

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remedy of this evil. But let them know at present that his sentence shall be dreadful and without mercy, rendered 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 evident 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 foretold Her all by word of mouth, pointing out the time

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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 experience 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 imaginary 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

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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 ordinarily 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 foreknowledge 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 prostrate in the form of a cross or at other times raised in the air in this same position which He loved so much.

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 interior 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 ingratiitudes 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-

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stand how highly the Lord esteems his image and likeness 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 endearments. 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!"

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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 concerning 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 humanity of Christ the secret decrees of predestination, repro

bation or condemnation of some souls. All this our

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blessed Lady heard, humbling Herself to the dust With unequalled reverence and fear She adored the Omnipotent, 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, converting 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 weakness, and, by the true light, which thou hast received concerning the works of my Son and my own, contemplate 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 perfection in thy works, I wish that thou write this

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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 (according 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 beginning 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

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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 gradually 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

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whole human frame, in spite of the greatest care, commences 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 likeness 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, wishing 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 having 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

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my most holy Son, the true God, and in this thy solitude, thou hast spent thy strength and the best part of thy health and of thy life in protecting me and attending upon my welfare. From the hands of the Almighty thou shalt receive the reward of thy works and the blessings 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 gratitude 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 acknowledgment 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 virtues. As He had the happiness and good fortune of continually 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,

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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 pinnacle of all virtues and perfections and in order to furnish 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 interiorly 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

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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 retirement, 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 consideration, 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

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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 doctrine 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 zealous 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 support him, deeming myself obliged thereto; and I fulfilled this obligation with ardent charity until he died. Although the Lord had given him to me for my support, 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

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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 perverseness 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 tread 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;

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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 distribute 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 subjection 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 fulfilllest thy own obligation; therefore, thou shouldst see to it that they understand thee in that way. All this

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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 sacrilegious 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 inculcated 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 following 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

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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 suffering 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 objection 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 admiration, 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 overwhelm Him in proportion to his innocence and sinlessness.

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-

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 vouchsafed 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 knowledge 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 sufferings. 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

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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 commanded 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 disabled 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

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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

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not interfere with the contemplation of Mary. She imitated 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 occasions 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,

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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 comprehend.

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-

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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 careful 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 consoled 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

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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 virtue, providing for the needs of the sick and weak, comforting 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 exercised 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 solicitude 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 departure 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

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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 dwelling 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 Essence, 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 commissioned 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

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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 mysteries, 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 without 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-abasement, 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."

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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 immediately recognized by all as clothed in the splendors of incomparable grace, as the putative father and the intimate friend of the Redeemer, worthy of highest veneration. Conformably to the will and mandate of the Lord, his arrival spread inutterable joy in this countless gathering 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

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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 withdrawn, 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 separation of the soul from the body in which death consists 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 its 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 admiration. 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

common burying place. But on all these occasions and in these occupations, the most prudent Queen preserved her composure and gravity, without allowing her countenance to exhibit any unwomanly or disorderly excitement; 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 acknowledgment 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 company; 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

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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

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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 tremendous 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. Giving 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 provide 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

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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 accidental. The best precaution is to take a good start from afar; and therefore I admonish thee, that, at the dawning 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 purpose of confessing them as soon as thou findest thyself guilty of any and of amending the least of thy imperfec-

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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 frequently 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 intentions and desires and to prepare themselves to receive

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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 privileges 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 OF 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-second). The twenty-seven years of her married life completed 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

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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 meritorious 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 measured the holiness of saint Joseph; and from my understanding 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 perfected 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

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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 movement. 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 wonderful in the sight of God and men.

178. The holy child Joseph was born most beautiful

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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 irreproachable 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

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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 simplicity 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

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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 vouchsafed to saint Joseph, I have particularly mentioned in the course of this history (Vol. II 422, 423, 471); but there were many more than can be described, and the greatest of them all was his having 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 intercession of saint Joseph is most powerful: first, for attaining the virtue of purity and overcoming the sensual 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.

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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 privileges 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-

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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 operations of the body and the senses, practiced in our intercourse 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-

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ance and cannot raise itself up to penetrate the high things of God ; while the contemplative life is most beautiful, although, in the beginning, not so productive, because 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 combining 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 contemplation 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 difficulty and only for a short time, except by a special privilege of the Most High. On this account the saints that wished to give themselves up to contemplation sought the

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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 perfection, they attained the merits and reward of the two kinds of life, founded on love and grace as their principal 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 interrupt or curtail her heavenly contemplations, nor was She under any necessity of seeking solitude or retirement, 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-

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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 refreshment of the Sovereigns of the heaven and earth. Although 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, commencing 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

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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 imitating 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 devotedly) 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 ordinary 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 perform all the humble work Herself and with her own

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hands to scrub the house and arrange its poor furnishings, 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 perform 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 : "Ministers 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 is 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 rewards of thy humility, take notice that we would be deficient in obedience to the Lord if we would knowingly omit any of these works permitted us by the Most High. The merits which Thou lovest in not perform-

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ing this service, Thou, O Lady, canst easily make up by the mortification of denying thyself the desire of executing 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 creatures, 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 contentions 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 indiscriminately for all men. But if the contagion of worldly

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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 dishonorable ?

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 reprehension to be found wanting in the same zealous contention 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.

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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 servile 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.

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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 subjected 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 occasion 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 children, 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-

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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 meekness 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 communities. 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 careful to add retirement as an additional observance of perfection and prudence, since retirement

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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 mortification 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,

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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 carefulness 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 conceived 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 accidental 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 possible to a God man. In the measure as He approached its consummation and the full accomplishment of its sacra-

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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 Providence 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 blessed Mother co-operated and grew in knowledge with the increase and progress of her Son, without remaining 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;

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 conformity 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. Entering 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

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regions, and, on the other hand, the hardness and blindness 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 celestial 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, experienced 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 Beloved from his sleep, which cured the sorrows and infirmities 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

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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 unworthy, were awarded to the predestined according to their different dispositions. Among the predestined She also saw those, whom the Lord in his wisdom and solicitude 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 different 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 predestined, 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 supernatural 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

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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 likewise 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 efficacious; 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 beginning 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 praise, performing heroic acts of love and adoring the secret judgments of the Most High. Entirely transformed and penetrated 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

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hardness be softened and your misfortunes relieved?" After these ardent exclamations, the blessed Mother conversed 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,

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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 adamant! 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,

I 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-

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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 outraged 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 themselves 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 recalls it to their remembrance, although few show themselves 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 possesseth 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

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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 PUBLIC 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 burning 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 restrain 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

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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, attended upon Her in visible forms, and the great Lady spoke to them of her sorrows, and sent them as messengers 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 undertakings, 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

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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 gratitude, 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.

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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 message 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 preaching 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 Messiah, 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 expected ; 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 certainty. 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

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whom He conversed and treated. Thus disposing their souls by faith, He prepared them to receive Him afterwards 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 Redeemer 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 testimonies of the Prophets, already fulfilled, and He explained 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 nevertheless 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 Messias 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

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the powerful gifts of his Divinity. It is not possible to enumerate or estimate the admirable works of the Redeemer 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, drawing them to the sweet teachings of her Son and giving them intimation of the coming of the Messiah. Yet She practiced these works of mercy more among women, imitating 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. Although 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-

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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 necessary 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 accompanied 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 manifest authority confirmed by miracles, He addressed Himself rather to the humble and poor, who are led to the truth with less show of authority. Nevertheless the attention 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

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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 entrance 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 protection of the Lord. As the dragon felt this divine power without being able to account for it, he conceived an insane 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 information, 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

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and forgetfulness. 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 damnation. In thy amazement then, my dearest, weep ceaselessly 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 governments, as well among chiefs as among subjects of the Church and of the secular state, all originate and flow ; from the forgetfulness 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 acknowledged

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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 surpassing 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 follow 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 proclamation of truths unknown to the Jews. In spite of all these multiplied advantages, blessings, truths and enlightenments, 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 circumstances, 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

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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. Imitate 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 doing 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

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spoken in this history, and also the one of which I now speak.

223. Finding himself then full of uncertainty concerning 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 tremendous 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 companions, 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 imposed upon us the command, that we adore and serve the person of the Word, in the human form, which He intended 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 grievances I took exception and you with me. We objected to them and resolved to deny Him obedience. On account of our behavior at that time we are punished and |

made to suffer the pains of our present condition. Although we are aware of these truths and acknowledge them with terror among ourselves, it will not do to confess 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 Messiah, 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 already 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

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as would induce the Word to become man and which would oblige mortals to adore Him and offer Him sacrifice, for by this homage we shall be able to recognize Him. The certain indication of his coming and the distinguishing mark of the Messiah 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 Lucifer, "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 opposition 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 always 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

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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 presume 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 information 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 darkness, 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 infernal minds. But Christ our Lord in his wisdom concealed his own person and that of his Mother for many

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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 regions, 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

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precipitously repel them in virtue of the prayers, triumphs 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 understanding 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 cherishes 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 innumerable other favors, which are pointed out by faith, offered

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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 difference 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 darkness 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 remembrance 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

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vanities and to deliver themselves over to an extinguishable 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 himself 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 faithful 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 happened 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, forgetful 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 perdition. 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 forgetfulness of the worldly people. Let the despairing 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 ourselves in the ways of iniquity and destruction, we have sought difficult paths and erred by our own fault from

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the way of the Lord. What has pride profited us? What advantage has the boasting 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 ponder 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 conferred on saint John by the blessed Mary during her sojourn 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 mentioned, 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 conversation 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 altogether 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.

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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 mysteries, and what the holy doctors and other authors have written of his prerogatives, I must confine myself to relate 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 console 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

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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 continually sending her holy angels to bring messages from his Beloved. The great Hermit inquired into all the particulars 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 blessing 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 ordinary 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 Harbinger 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 Caiphaz, 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 penance for the remission of sins and preparing the hearts for the reception of the promised Messiah, pointing Him out with his finger, who had been expected for so many

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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 plenitude 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 transformed 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 wonderfully 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, avaricious and proud priests, without enlightenment, without prophets, without piety, without fear of God, though they had been visited by so many calamities and chastise-

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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 exercises 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 earth 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 performing 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 instruments 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 received this token from their hands with innermost emotions 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 prudent Lady left these crosses, with other remembrances,

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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 salvation. 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 contempt 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 account 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

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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 veneration to the Cross for several reasons : We knew for certain, 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 execution 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 Precursor, 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

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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 boundless 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 introduce 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

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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.

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#### 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 meritorious 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-

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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 hindrance 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 diligent 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 limitation 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-

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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 sacrifice." 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

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morning star Thou hast engendered Him (Ps. 109, 3), and Thou begetttest 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 magnificence 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 begetttest 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 satisfaction 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

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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 intimately 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 surpassed 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 executed by this same decree, since this decree was to be fulfilled on condition, that the Mother s will should coincide with that of the eternal Father. Such is the obligation which the children of Adam owe to most holy Mary.

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245. Having I accepted the offering of the great Lady, it was fitting that the most Blessed Trinity should reward 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 manifested 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 communicate his fathomless treasures to the rational creatures 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 sacramental mysteries, the heavenly Mother renewed the offering of her divine Son to the Father ; and God comforted Her with the life-giving bread of heavenly understanding, 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 exalted rapture in the description of which I will not further detain myself; for it was accompanied by the same circumstances as the other intuitive visions already mentioned. 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

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 permission 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 begin 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 company 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

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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 return 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 Baptism 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-

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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 torments which He was to undergo. O my dearest Love! Why does not our ingratitude and hardness of heart allow 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 anxiously seek us out and care for us? Why dost Thou, at the cost of thy Passion and the Cross, purchase our happiness? 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 penetrate more and more this mystery of which thou hast written, so fixing it in thy soul, that thou wilt be drawn

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to imitate my example at least in some part of it. Consider 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. Knowing this, I not only offered to deliver my Son over to Passion and Death, but I asked Him to make me his companion and partaker of all his sorrows, sufferings and torments, which request the eternal Father granted. Then, in order to begin following in the footsteps of his bitterness, I besought my Son and Lord to deprive me of interior 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 desire 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 fulfilled: 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 occasions, when He abstained from words of tenderness. So far was this from being 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

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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 repugnant 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 advance in this knowledge, welcome labors and suffering, and give up ever desiring human consolations. Remember also that in the spiritual consolations the demon conceals his pitfalls for thy ruin and destruction, for thou shouldst know his continual attempts to ruin the spiritually inclined. The pleasures of contemplating and looking upon the Lord, and his caresses great or small, are so enticing, that delight and consolation overflow in the

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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 consequences, 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 beguile 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 embraces and for abstaining therefrom. To seek to prescribe 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

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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 already 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 desire to imitate, or an actual imitation, of all that was most perfect in his works. In this consisted my greatest perfection 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 judgment as to admitting or rejecting the good; for thou

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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 thyself 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 inclinations, 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 INTERCOURSE 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 burning love of the seraphim. As all the operations of her faculties, 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 separated 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 incarnate Word and therefore the most prudent Lady resolved not to converse with any human creature, in order to imitate Him in his fasting and retirement of the desert,

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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 manifestation 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 Redeemer, 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 unworthy 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 contemplations 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

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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 ministers of the Most High, fashioned by the hands of my Beloved, my friends and companions, give me intelligence 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,

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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 wandered. 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-

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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, informed 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-

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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 mortals. 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 sufferings. In this desire of following Him in his sufferings, 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 greatest pains precisely because of the want of such suffering.

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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, because 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

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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 intercourse with creatures; let them alone, avoid them, despise 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 creature, nor allow human sentiment to rule thee; for the Most High has not destined thee for such useless entanglements, 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

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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 farther 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 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 destitution.

264. As the Evangelists have passed over in silence the doings of our Savior during his early years, and so many

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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 unnoticed what has not been written, therefore we examine 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 acknowledged, 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 Redemption? 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 !

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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 certain 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

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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 happiness ? 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 Evangelist 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 Baptist 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

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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 because he knew Christ then both by sight and by intellectual 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

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Father himself wished to be the first to testify to the Divinity of Christ in order that by virtue of his testimony 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 having 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 Redeemer 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 instituted the sacrament of Baptism, which was to wash away

the sins of the world through his merits. By thus humiliating 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 requirements 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-

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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 sacramental 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 administered. 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-

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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 fulfilled," 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. Immediately 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 Baptism 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 magnifying her most holy Son for having thus humiliated Himself in receiving Baptism at the hands of one of his creatures.

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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 correspondence 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 thankfulness, 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

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man, He hesitated not to lower Himself to the nothingness 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 afflictions 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 thyself 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 thyself 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 VICIES; 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 before 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 Messiah 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 Christian 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 nevertheless wished to overcome in his human nature, by his personal justice and holiness, all the vices and their

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author ; and, therefore, He offered his most holy humanity to the bufferings of temptation, concealing his superiority from his invisible enemies.

275. By his retirement Christ our Lord began to conquer 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 supernatural favors, as long as our passions are not conquered 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

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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 journey 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 beetling rocks, where there was also a cavern much concealed. 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

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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, offering 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 overcame 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 vouchsafed 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 committed through them by the exercises of the virtues contrary 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 horrible 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 poverty 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

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ceaseless labors; for our deceitfulness 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 addition 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 faithfully 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 fulfill 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 remained 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

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the same course of rigorous fasting. In all his prayers and exercises, his prostrations and genuflections She followed 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 information obtained from the angels and by that other knowledge, which I have already described. Whether He was present or not, She knew the interior operations 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 portions of her time She spent in composing hymns with the angels, as I have said in the last chapter. Thus imitating 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 creature.

INSTRUCTIONS WHICH THE QUEEN AND LADY  
GAVE ME.

281. My daughter, corporal penances are so appropriate 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

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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 precipitated 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 satisfaction 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, certainly pays his debts, but will remain poor and destitute.

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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 penance 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 mortification? Shall then only Christ, our Lord, and I suffer all these hardships while the guilt-laden debtors and deserters 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 position, 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 afflictions and mortifications of my most blessed Son, the defects 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

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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 ordinarily 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 observed their Opponent more closely, they began to feel great fear and discouragement. Not because they recognized his Divinity, for of this they had no suspicions as long as they saw Him so despised ; nor because of any previous 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 perfect and heroic, that they inspired great fear and dread. His behavior and his condition were totally different

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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 courage 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 concealed 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

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eternal Father from his inmost soul, to which the intelligence 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 presumption of Lucifer. I wish thereby to crush his head in order that when mortals are attacked by his temptations 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 encouraged 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 temptation 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,

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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 signification 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, hypostatically united to his humanity. Though that was precisely 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 unhurt, 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

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 demons; 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 boldness, and more than insane madness and perfidy! Offering to the Lord what he did not possess, nor ever could give, since the earth, the stars, the kingdoms, principalities, 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: Thie Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt tliuu serve." By this command, "Begone satan," Christ

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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 multitude 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 mountain 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 disciple and by so many sinful members of the Church, who

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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 anxiously 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,

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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 messages 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, although 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 misusage. 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 account 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 commanded 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,

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since it came from and was blessed by the hands of her Son; and by it She was again rejoiced and strengthened 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 blessings, 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 universe, 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 occasions, 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

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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, consider 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.

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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 ministered 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 instruction 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 squadrons under these leaders in order to maintain the sort

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 consternation, 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 furnish 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 persecuted 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 substance, they were entirely the same, only of greater

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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 ourselves 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

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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 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.

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-

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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 attracted 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 instructions 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

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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 beforehand. Both saint Matthew and saint Luke also mention, 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

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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 Messiah 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 hearing of Andrew and the first Apostles; and immediately

afterward He called Philip, as related by John the Evangelist (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 Redeemer. 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 Messiah had come. They did not admit such belief even afterwards, when this truth had been confirmed by his preaching and when his miracles and other testimonies had so clearly given witness to Christ our

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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 Redeemer 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 performed great miracles, although in a hidden manner, just as the incarnate Word was doing in Judea. She spoke of the advent of the Messiah without revealing who He was; She instructed many in the way of life,

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 beginning his public preaching and miracles, happened what I shall relate in the following chapter.

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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 retirement and solitude, carry it with thee in the secret of thy heart in such a manner that thy senses and thy occupations shall not deprive thee of it. Attend to thy outward 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 justification 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.

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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 advance this enterprise.

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#### 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 exclusively only in private of the truths of eternal life; but He had not until then proclaimed Himself publicly as the Messiah 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

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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 turning 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 consequence of his express testimony and without being outwardly called by the Lord. Saint Andrew immediately sought his brother Simon and took him along, saying that he had found the Messiah, who called Himself 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. There 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 Messiah 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.

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 undergone by the divine Teacher in His vocation and education 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 incomparable gifts and blessings; He received them with admirable 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 exquisite 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 of 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 significant for us sinners are the proofs of His fatherly kindness: for He was not satisfied with simply bearing with their faults and defects, their natural inclinations and passions: but He allowed His tender kindness

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to overflow thus wonderfully toward them, in order that we might be cheered on to trust Him and not permit ourselves to be dismayed amidst the countless imperfections and weaknesses natural to our earthly existence.

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 disciples and in His public preaching. She gave thanks to the eternal Father for these the first disciples, acknowledging 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

favoured by a neV revelation of the Most High in which She was informed again of his holy and eternal decree 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 wisdom and goodness in order to enrich men by my treasures. 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

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friends and chosen ones and make known the greatness of my name. In the execution of this, my holy and eternal 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 creatures 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-

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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 understood concerning the heroic and wonderful acts performed 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 similar 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.

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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 different 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 advantage 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 fountain 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. Although 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-

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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

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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 applies 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 instruction and the practice of the highest and most excellent virtues. Raise thyself above thyself, labor diligently 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, established by our Redeemer and Master, its wise and prudent 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 Messiah and the Redeemer of the world, who had descended from the bosom of his eternal Father to assume human flesh, it was urgently necessary to explain to them the manner of his Incarnation in the womb of his most blessed Mother. It behooved 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 profoundest reverence and love and filled with the desire

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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 journeyed 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

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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 absence 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 excellence 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 Redeemer 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, performing 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 prepared to receive Him and his disciples at Nazareth; for She was aware of all that happened, and therefore hospitably 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

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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 received 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-

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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. During 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 departure 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

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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 impressed by this Sacrament, namely, that of the children of Christ in his holy Church. In addition to the ordinary effects of this Sacrament (outside of the remission 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 increase 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 emulation 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 children 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,

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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 consequent upon it are totally extinguished; that thou seek to restore within thee that dove-like sincerity and simplicity which destroys all malice and duplicity. In all thy doings thou must be an angel, since the condescension 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.

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BOOK TWO

BOOK V, VI OF II PART

The Marriage at Cana; How Most Holy Mary Accompanied the Redeemer 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 Ascension 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 marriage" (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 inquire 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 different 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:

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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. Having 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 coming of the Redeemer into the world and of his having chosen some disciples had already spread. By the disposition 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 impossible 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

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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 Evangelist 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 invited 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 miracle 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

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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 Galilee" (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 concerning 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 perfectly 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 matrimony, 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 intention of separating the two married people immediately

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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 bridegroom 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 wedding; 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 attended 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 behavior 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 religious, but especially for women in the secular state, if they could only keep it before their mind in similar

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circumstances (such, for instance, as this marriage feast afforded), thus learning to keep silence, to restrain themselves, 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 abstinence. 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, accommodated Themselves to all circumstances without any extremes or noticeable singularity wherever it was possible 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

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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 ignorant 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 suppressed 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 received 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 determined 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 miracles depended upon a higher than the human will, on

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a will divine and above that of his Mother and altogether 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 nature from his Mother and of the divine by generation from his eternal Father.

329. The blessed Lady well understood this mystery 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 spoke 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."

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 doctrine 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 Messiah and they followed Him to the City of Capernaum, whither the Evangelist tells us He, with his Mother and disciples went from Cana. There, according 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

of men for the enlightening words of the incarnate Word and drive from them the darkness of their ignorance.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE QUEEN, THE MISTRESS OF HEAVEN.

331. My daughter, without any excuse is the forgetfulness 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 ministers 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 Redeemer. 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 prelates of the Church, whose particular duty is the advancement 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

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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 advancing 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 nations, 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 zealous helpers for harvesting it. Let what I have told thee of my maternal and loving solicitude in gaining followers for my Son and in preserving them in his doctrine 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, moderation and discretion of words, especially in the presence 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 contained 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-

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vancement. The others, which the Evangelists recorded in their Gospels and of which I have not been commanded 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 celebrate 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

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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 stopping-place for a few days; while again on certain occasions, 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 worship 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 securing for them the blessings of her most ardent and tearful 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

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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 piercing and cruel sorrow, that God should not be known, adored and served by all his creatures : and this sorrow was in proportion to the unequalled knowledge and understanding 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 misfortune. 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 incomparable 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

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encourage them by the peerless light and charity shining 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 perseverance 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 possession 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 attended upon Him and served Him from the very beginning of his preaching. The divine wisdom so ordered it for certain purposes, among which was also the desire 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 catechising them and bringing them as listeners to the sermons of her divine Son. Although She herself was fully enlightened and instructed in the evangelical doctrine 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

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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 knowledge 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

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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 Omnipotence 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 exaltation 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 ministers 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 assistance She could render by private instruction and conversation, which She did with celestial wisdom and efficacy. By this assistance and by her prayers, She secured 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, disposition, 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

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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 greatest gentleness, like the simplest dove, with extreme patience and forbearance, overlooking the imperfections and rudeness of the new faithful ; enlightening the ignorance of the vast number of those that came to subject themselves to the doctrines of the Redeemer. On all occasions 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.

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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 accompanying 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 imitate 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

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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 eloquent, 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 depraved 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 important 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 acceptance of persons so common among the children of Adam. My divine Son and I rejected and condemned all such

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 considers 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 hypocrisy 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 conscience and it is not necessary to conceal them.

## CHAPTER III.

THE HUMILITY OF THE BLESSED MARY NOTWITHSTANDING THE MIRACLES WROUGHT BY THE LORD & THE INSTRUCTION ON HUMILITY WHICH SHE GAVE TO THE APOSTLES IN REGARD TO THE WONDERS WHICH THEY THEMSELVES WERE TO PERFORM; OTHER REFLECTIONS.

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 sufficiently 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 bitterness 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,

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 account 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 spiritual soul, but it belongs to the lowest order of spiritual

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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 purpose, intending that the slime of the earth should always 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 passions 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 existence.

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 perfection; 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 origin, but with their own sins. Other men, if they become humble, were first humiliated and must confess with David: "Before I was humbled, I offended;" and "It

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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 passion, 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 humility on the part of the blessed Virgin and made her humility surpass all perfection of this virtue ever attained 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!

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 protest, 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 weakness 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

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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 account 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 experience 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 acknowledged 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 Messiah and many times congratulated Her on account of the wonders wrought by her Son. All this, however, was for Her a new occasion 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 humility 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

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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 neutralized the praise given to Her as Mother; 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 multitude. 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-

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count of her holiness; but referred it to Her above all others; yet in such a way that the attention of the bystanders 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 context of these chapters; for saint Luke mentions the incident 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

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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 necessities 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 mentioned, 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 several 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

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them power to expel the demons from the possessed and to cure the sick. The great Mistress of the humble counseled 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 instruments; that, just as the brush does not deserve the glory attached to a work of art, nor the sword that of victory, 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 returned 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

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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 accompanied 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 affection 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

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 attain, 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 without 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 inestimable 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 concerning this sacrament, thou art under great obligations to correspond to my wishes, not losing the least occasion of humiliation and advancing in this virtue. Neglect none of them, since thou knowest how much I

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sought after them, who was the Mother of God himself, most pure and full of grace. The greater my prerogatives, 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 themselves 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 themselves 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 beautiful 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

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boasts 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 injury 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 instruments, while it is divine mercy which inflicts punishment 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 correspond 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 commissioning 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 Aïnon 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 fulfillment 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-

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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 incomparable and unheard of merits.

356. When by divine permission Lucifer and his followers 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 mystery 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 between 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 considerations 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

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multiply, so that my fears lest the divine Word has come into the world according to the promise are growing 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 disheartened 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 investigate 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;

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 confusion, 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 concealed some of the more extraordinary wonders performed 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 deserved 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 Enemies 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

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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 Messias; 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

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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 Lucifer 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 outgrew 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 sayings; 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 perverted 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

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lent herself readily as an instrument of demoniac malice. This woman, having 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 kingdom. 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 Baptist, 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 degradation, 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

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and by his Mother. The Lady comforted him many times by sending her holy angels, sometimes also ordering 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 implored 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, wishing 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

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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 sycophants more criminal than the state prisoners in their dungeons below, the cell of saint John was entirely sanctified 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

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shalt thou enjoy the happiness of suffering I 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 penetrated 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 I 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 unworthy 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 enduring 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 acceptable than life."

365. While They were yet engaged in this conversa-

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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 I 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 begun 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 Baptist, 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 returned to the place, whence they had come. Of the holiness and excellence of the great Precursor many things are written in the Church, and although I have been informed 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.

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INSTRUCTION GIVEN TO ME BY THE MOST HOLY  
QUEEN MARY.

366. My daughter, thou hast been very short in describing 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, according 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 wickedness 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 witnessing so many and such terrible examples, men remain callous to the fearful danger to which they expose themselves by their sins in imitation of Herod and his adulter-

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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, representing 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 necessities. 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. Follow 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 impossible to human tongue, and if I would wish to describe no more than what I have been made to understand 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 intercourse 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

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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 prudence, 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 concentrated 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 disposition of each of the disciples, his measure of grace, his present condition and future office, She proceeded according 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

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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 upon and conversing with the heavenly Lady upon earth. As therefore 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 urgings 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 understanding or conception, the evangelist saint John penetrated deeper into the mysteries of this City of God and received 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 especially 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

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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 commenced 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 bodily 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 reporting 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 presence 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

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"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 procured 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

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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 inflamed 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 mysteries of solitary life. This life She afterwards embraced 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 Magdalen 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 kindness 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

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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 blessings. The understanding, which has been given me concerning 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 beginning 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

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be put into action, might not have the shadow of an excuse 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 themselves concerning their standing with the Queen (as, according 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 confirmed 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 intermeddler 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.

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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 extinguished; 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 tormenting 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 interior 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.

By thus designedly rejecting the kindness and the intercession 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 abhorrence of his Master; he grew dissatisfied with his doctrines 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 assistance, 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 obtaining 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 conduct in this regard.

379. It was indeed an admirable example of patience and charity which Christ, our Savior, and his most

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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 intercourse. 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

pitions 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 ; therefore 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.

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380. O ignorance and folly of men ! How differently do we behave, if we are slightly affronted, though we deserve 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 concealing 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 received ; 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

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 temptations, 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 darkness, 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,

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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 adamant 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. Boundless ambition and avarice roused his fury against Her who seemed to hinder him in his projects and he considered 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

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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 reasoning 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 ambitious 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 himself: 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 attempted to deceive Christ, his divine Master, by wearing 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 disciple : "For they that will become rich, fall into temptation and into the snares of the devil and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is

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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 perfidious and avaricious disciple, and his avarice was so much the more blamable, since he had the striking and admirable 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 disciple 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 increase 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 occasion 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

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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 particulars 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

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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 vehemently 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 efficacious 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 kindness which I had shown him. At that time, also, the Evangelist understood other great mysteries communicated and wrought in me ; that I should take part in the

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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

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cause his eternal perdition. Sometimes the Lord, according to hidden judgments, grants these petitions in punishment 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 consider 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 command 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, although 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

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 transfigured, 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 Apostles ; for She was invincibly confirmed in faith. But the Lord had many different objects in view at his Transfiguration; and there were special reasons for his not wishing to celebrate this great event without the presence 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

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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 transformed 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 distinguished 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 fortified and enlightened for looking upon the Divinity. Hence She was enabled to look fixedly upon the glorified body, without experiencing the terror and weakness of the senses which overtook the Apostles. The

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most blessed Mother had already on other occasions seen the body of her divine Son glorified, as was related 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 describe 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-

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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 beautified 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. Immediately 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 immediately 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 Jerusalem. 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

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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, received 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 children 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 themselves, 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 virtue, and all those that put themselves under its protection, 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 receive Me in thy arms ? O sweet ignominies and affronts !

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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 wisdom, 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 nevertheless 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-

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selves entirely, merely in order to avoid a small inconvenience, 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 conformed 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

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deigned to glorify the power of thy arm by raising me to the dignity of Mother of thy Onlybegotten and magnified 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 company 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 mankind. There is no sorrow like unto my sorrow at seeing 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 subjected 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 sorrows which await Him, and that I might suffer death in order to save his life ! Accept, heavenly Father, the sacrifice 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-

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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 departure from Nazareth, her prayers and petitions to the eternal Father, her most sweet and sorrowful conversations with her divine Son, the greatness of her grief and the vastness of her merits. For, on account of the conflict between the love of a true Mother, by which She naturally desired to preserve Him from the terrible torments, 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 sorrows 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 between 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

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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 enlightenments 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 affection, 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,

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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 presence 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 console 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 Redeemer and commanded all those that had any knowledge 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 privately 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

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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 Redeemer. 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 devotion 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

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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 expense 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 Magdalen against this accusation of inconsiderate prodigality. 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 mysterious unction the Savior was so soon to undergo in the torments 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 Magdalen. Lucifer, profiting by the disposition of this depraved 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-

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 instigated by the same prince of darkness, they gladly accepted 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, redoubled her admonitions and gentle endeavors to 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 persuasive 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 adamant 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

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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 declarest 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 nearest 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 desire in thy heart, for I wish thee to be very proficient in this science, which the world abhors so much. But remember, at the same time, that God does not afflict creatures 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 permitted the Transfiguration of Himself on Mount Tabor

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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 always 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 followers. 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 irritated 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

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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 patience 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, suffering and dying for the salvation of men. This sacrament 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 Catholics 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 intention of the Lord in commanding me to write this history (as I have often said and yet oftener understood), was to manifest many of these hidden mysteries without admixture of mere human opinion and con-

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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 venerable 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 retirement. 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 resignation 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, accompanying 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-

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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, addressing 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 wonderful 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 mysteriously 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

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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 mysterious 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 intelligence 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 wonderful 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 Redemption 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 afterwards 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

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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 Redemption 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 confounded 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 Beginning. 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 beginning is with Thee and Thou was engendered in the day of thy virtue; for from the instant in which Thou ha<sup>^</sup>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

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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 Melchisedech (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 assisted 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

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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 confront 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 doctrines 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. Although some of the verses are quoted as of another person, 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 payment of the universal exaltation of Christ after his Ascension, and especially at the final judgment, the Father decreed that the inhabitants of Jerusalem should

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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 corresponds 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 salvation. Having walked more or less of two miles and arrived in the village of Bethphage, He sent two disciples 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 Messiah, the Son of David, the Savior of the world and as their legitimate King. Some of them exclaimed : "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

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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 Conqueror, Christ our Lord.

411. All these demonstrations of worship and admiration, 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 declared enemies, who nevertheless hailed Him as the true Messiah, Savior and King, and subjected themselves to a poor, despised and persecuted Man, who came not in triumphal chariots, or in the prancing of steeds and ostentation of riches, but without any show of arms or outward 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 outward happenings of this day proclaimed his divine power, which directly moved the hearts of men to acknowledge 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

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acknowledge Him as Redeemer, but He caused his triumph 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 cavernous 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 Redeemer 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 glorious, 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 triumph 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

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whatever place they lurked throughout the world, were hurled into the dark caverns of the infernal abyss. During 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 Messiah be already 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 dismounted from the foal, and directed his divinely beautiful 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 occasion (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. Although 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

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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 having 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 understand 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 Jerusalem and its preparations; but thou wilt understand

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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 understand 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 daughter (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 say, 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, lavishing 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

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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 manifested 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, beseeching 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 triumph 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

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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 sorrows 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 enlightenment and especial vision all that thou has already written concerning this event. This behavior should instruct 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 confounded 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, although they performed miracles; nor did they ever succeed in hiding from me so many of their doings as this 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

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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 vanishing 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 incarnate 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 country, 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-

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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 Messiah 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 excited. 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 consultations concerning this enterprise. They deeply deplored 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

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hinder his death, for they were by this time confirmed in their suspicion, that He was the Messiah, although they did not reach altogether definite conclusions in this matter. This suspicion was for Lucifer the cause of so much anxiety and torment, that he approved of the new determination 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 mistaken 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 prevent 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

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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 influences 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 counsels 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 injure the guiltless Originator of so many blessings conferred 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.

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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 induced 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 attained; 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).

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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 contrary 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 Messiah 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

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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 reported 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 presence 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

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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 withholding 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 permitted 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 become aware of so many unheeded mysteries. The infernal 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

make themselves unworthy by delivering themselves over to the enemy and listening to his deceits and his malicious 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 Redeemer 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 entirely 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.

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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 sentiment 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 increasest 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

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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 punishment of Judas which has been made clear to thy understanding. 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 particularly 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 meekness 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 SUFFERINGS 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 relating 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

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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, during the day immediately preceding his Passion, communicated 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 comprehension 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

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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 accomplishing the salvation and restoration of the human race and imposed upon Me by his most holy and acceptable will, has now arrived ; it is proper that now We subject to Him our own will, as We have so often offered to do. Give Me thy permission to enter upon my suffering 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 Incarnation, 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

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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 perfections, 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 countenance, 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 unmeasurable! But with the magnanimity of a Queen, vanquishing 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

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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 salvation 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 inhuman 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 sentiments, 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

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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: "Beloved 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 sacramentally 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 received 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 companionship. All my desires and exertions I have devoted to the worthy reception of this holy Communion from the moment 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 habitation 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

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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, thankfulness, 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 Jerusalem 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 encourage them, in order that they might not be scandalized in seeing Him suffer the great ignominies and torments 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

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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 compassion. 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 journey 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 professed 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 restored 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

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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 account 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 courageously the Death and the frightful scourging and torments 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 distinguished 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 fulfilled 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

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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 sacrament of the Passion, which was yet hidden to her companions and to all the human creatures. They well perceived 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 eternal 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 occasion 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 Redemption, and on the other beheld the vileness, ingratitude, 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 amazement of the angels arose not from any ignorance on their part, but from indignation at our unbearable in-

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 forgetfulness, 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 bitterness 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 faculties 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 detach 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

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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 measure 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 neglect 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 correspondence 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

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the saints, that men should despise and neglect the frequent reception of the holy Communion, and that they should approach it without preparation and fervent devotion. Principally in order that thou mayest understand 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 children 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 pleasures and attended upon the outward and deceitful vanities of this earthly life? Be thou amazed at this insanity as were the holy angels, and guard thyself against falling into the same error.

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, manifested 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 disgusted by adversity, and we deem it a great thing not to revenge ourselves on those who offend us; but the love

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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 connection 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 commission 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

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hall, appropriately tapestried and adorned for the mysteries 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 observed 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 beneath 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 fulfillment ; that, as the light of the new law of grace had begun to shine, the shadows were dispelled and the natural

law, which had been reconfirmed by the precepts of Moses, was now placed permanently upon its real foundation, 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 concerning 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-

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sideration than our Savior, let them accord to his ministers, 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 having 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 arrived, 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 prefigured the one I am now voluntarily to make of Myself for the children of Adam, for the members of my mysti-

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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 voluntary 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 celestial acts of virtue She imitated the doings of Christ, our Savior; for all of them awakened fitting resonance in her bosom and :oused 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 accordance and in fulfillment of the figures of the old Law.

453. Very wonderful and worthy of all admiration

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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 superabundance on this occasion. Being filled with the intelligence of which I have spoken, She was sensible of the mysterious fulfillment and accomplishment of the ceremonies 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 establishment 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 forgetting 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 bitter 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

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Mother. But as She was a living and faithful reproduction of her most holy Son, all these sentiments and operations 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 consolation and of eternal life for their instruction. O admirable 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 passions, 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 Mistress 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,

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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 sincerest self-abasement to offer him my friendship and salvation. 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 mercy, 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 comparison 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

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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 proclaimed as the Son of God, being again renewed and enlightened 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

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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. Without 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 presumptuous judgment.

459. Saint Peter did not understand this doctrine contained in the first answer of our Lord ; for though he belonged 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 permitting 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 perform 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

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whenever there is not an evident error in what is commanded, 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 communicate 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 submitted 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 Communion with so much the more worthiness and better

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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 prevent 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 interior 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

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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 creatures 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 chestnut hair, freely growing after the manner of the Nazarenes; 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 Person was clothed in such entrancing loveliness, that He drew upon Himself the loving veneration of all who beheld 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 Personage, 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

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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 proceeded 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 understanding 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

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to sell Him, and the answer of the Lord, all happened before at the Supper itself, when the beloved disciple reclined 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 commissioned 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 sacraments 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 wonderful 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.

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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 admirable 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 prolong his benefactions and his intercourse with men, leaving 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

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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 good, 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 corporal 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, accompanying 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, although earthly-minded men blindly prefer temporal blessings, 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

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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 thyself 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 humility 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

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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 apparent humility as he thus seeks to hinder the communications 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 vacillating 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 treatment 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

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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 sufficient to prepare the chalice.

471. Then the Master of life spoke words of most endearing 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 Redemption. 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

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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 intelligence 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 understanding of the doings of the incarnate Word, I must remind

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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 Person, 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 interpreted 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 immensity 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, engendered 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, bearing with Me all those whom Thou hast given Me without 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

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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 pilgrimage 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 spiritual 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, interpose 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

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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 children, 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 Thee, 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 distinguish, 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

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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 without an easy and opportune remedy, I wish to provide the sacrament of Penance. Through it men, by acknowledging their faults and confessing them with sorrow, may be reinstated in justice and in the merits of glory promised 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 proportionately 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-

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tion, I institute the sacrament of Ordination to distinguish 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 nevertheless 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 manifestation. The most blessed Mother, who from her retreat 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 salvation 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 remembered (as I mentioned in the preceding chapter) that

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 mysteries 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 rebellious 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 Messiah 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.

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480. Thereupon Christ our Lord took into his venerable hands the bread, which lay upon the plate, and interiorly 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 obedience to these sacred words. While making this petition 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 consecration 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 retreat, prostrated Herself on the ground and adored her Son in the blessed Sacrament with incomparable reverence. 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,

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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 divine 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

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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 determined 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 sacramentally 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

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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 natural 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 wonderful 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 existence of his body in the corrupted accidents, and this process is demanded also by the laws of nature ; for the substance of man cannot grow except by some other substance, 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 profoundly. In like manner saint John, the Fathers of the ancient Law, and the Apostles who were present, perceived 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

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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 humiliated 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 miraculous 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 consolation He permitted his humanity to enjoy as to its inferior 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.

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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 conferred 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 Communion. 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 figures were deposited in the ark of Moses (Heb. 9, 4).

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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 Apostles (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 Himself. 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 command of Christ the Lord, administered two of the particles 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 include 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

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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, returning 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 treacherous Judas, hearing the command of his Master to partake 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 consecrated 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

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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 omnipotent 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

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 Eucharist, 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 Eucharist. Their wrath against the Lord and against the souls alone could induce them to expose themselves to the torment 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. Therefore 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

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ceaselessly alert in striving to throw them back into their forgetfulness, 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 dispositions 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 outraged 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 unworthy and wicked priests; for by the irreverence with which they treat the blessed Sacrament the other Catholics 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

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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 beautiful 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 virtues 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

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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-operated 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 myself to have been fully repaid by being allowed to receive Him even once in the holy Eucharist ; yea, I did not consider 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 reward, 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 overwhelm 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 Thursday 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 blessing. Having received this She returned to her retirement, where, by a special favor of the Lord, She was enabled to see all that passed in connection with her

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divine Son. Thus She was enabled to accompany Him and co-operate with Him in his activity as far as devolved 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 destruction. 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 hurricane 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 related in chapter the tenth), fearing that after all Jesus

might be the true Messiah, 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 suspicions 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 already made sufficient preparation and taken enough precaution to prevent his escaping their hands by his arti-

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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. Unheard of and wonderful contest between the deepest malice 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 powers : 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 reasoning, 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 recompensed 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 compensation 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 Phoenix 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.

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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 according 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 Apostles: "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 temptation" (Luke 22, 40). The divine Master gave them

this advice, in order that they might be firm in the temptations, of which He had spoken to them at the Supper: that all of them should be scandalized on account of what

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they should see Him suffer that night, that Satan would assail them to sift and stir them up by his false suggestions; for the Pastor (as prophesied) was to be illtreated and wounded and the sheep were to be dispersed (Zach. 13, 7). Then the Master of life, leaving the band of eight Apostles at that place and taking with Him saint Peter, saint John, and saint James, retired 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 innocent 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 suffering. From that moment He suspended and restrained 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

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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 faculties of his body and soul, by which He perceived the inscrutable 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 repugnance 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 experienced 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 verified 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 sorrow. For if He had caused it to stop short of the highest which that sorrow was capable of, his love would not have rested satisfied, nor would it have been so evident that his love was not to be extinguished by the mul-

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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 perceiving, 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 confounded 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 referred especially to the three Apostles, saint Peter, John and James. For, more than all the rest, they were imbued 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 completely 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 fortified 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

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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 embraced 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 inextinguishable 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 Himself. 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,

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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 presented 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

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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 contention 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, desired that all should attain eternal salvation through his Passion; while his Divinity, in its secret and high judgments, 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 repelling 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 proportion 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 subject to a condition and failed in regard to the reprobate 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 multiplied 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

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which the reprobates made themselves unworthy, were diverted to the elect. The human will of Christ, conforming itself to that of the Divinity, then accepted suffering for each respectively : for the reprobate, as sufficient 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 salvation 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 confirmation 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 consciousness 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 recompensed 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 calculated 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-

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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 continuing 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 temptation (Matth. 14, 41 ; Mark 14, 38; Luke 22, 42). This the most vigilant Pastor did in order to show the dignitaries 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 infernal dragon, after having been routed from the Cenacle and forced into the infernal caverns, was permitted 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

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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 assistance 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 threatening 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 immediately 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,

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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 enlightenment, 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 Apostles Peter, John and James, the heavenly Queen separated Herself from the other women and went into another 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 Magdalen 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 spiritual 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

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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 incomparably 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 overcome 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 garden. 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 perception of the foreknown; for She was highly enlightened in the mysteries of eternal predestination and reprobation. 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-

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ited by the archangel Michael. The holy prince expounded 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 beloved 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 ministers 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 Magdalen, 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 incentive 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 reprobation of the souls, since my most holy Son looked upon it with such great anxiety, that the difficulty or impossibility 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-

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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 watchfulness? 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 received 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 written 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

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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 Messiah 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 certainly must weaken and be conquered in these persecutions and torments. If on the other hand He was God, He would manifest it by freeing Himself and performing new miracles.

513. Similar motives urged on the priests and phari-

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sees. At the instigation of Judas they hastily gathered together a large band of people, composed of pagan soldiers, 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 Jeremias (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 direction of mount Olivet. The prime mover of the treachery, 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

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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 Apostles and forewarned them of what was to happen. Already the confused noise of the advancing band of soldiers 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 salvation 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 joyously 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

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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 disciple 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, inhuman, disobedient, false, lying, impious and unequalled in hypocrisy ; and all this was included in one and the same

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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 fulfilled 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

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 champions 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, saying: "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 Passion 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

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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 attributes; 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 happened 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 remained 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 invincible 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 overcome with dove-like simplicity, by the peacefulness and resignation of sheep free from resistance of furious and ravenous wolves.

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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 treasures and the eternal happiness held out to them." By this expression of his efficacious will the Lord gave permission to that whole miserable band of men, demons and animals to arise and be restored to the same condition 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 execute 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

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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 Person 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

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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 reproof 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, committed 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 publicly reprimanded 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

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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 sensible, 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 captured, 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 mysteries 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 irreverence 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

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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 ministers 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 permission 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 magnified, 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 wrongs 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 friendship, and considering how shortly before his mouth had contained the sacramental body of the Lord, with whose

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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 salvation, as I shall relate in the next chapter.

525. Likewise, when the great Lady saw all the servants 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 Pharaoh and his troops in the Red sea (Exod. 15, 4). She exalted the Lord of hosts, because He was about to deliver Himself 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 petition 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

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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 producing 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 mysteries 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 suffered 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 understand 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

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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? Consider 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 Passion, 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

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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 themselves 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 favored. 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 suffering 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

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many more followers than Christ. Many are the infidels, 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 personal 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 persecutions 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,

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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 hesitating 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 persecutions 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.

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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 resisted 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 inconstancy 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 remembered their disobedience in neglecting to pray and strengthen themselves against temptations, as the Lord had commanded them. Their love for his sweet conversation 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.

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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 horrible 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 therefore 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 excitement, 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

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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 distance. 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 tribulation and temptations, their thoughts and resolves, where each one was and what he did. But although afl

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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 merciful does the love of men make Thee ! Extend thy gentle love to this little flock, which is now troubled and dispersed 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, vanquished 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 implacable fury."

534. In all that most holy Mary did on this occasion

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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 properly 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 notwithstanding this great sea of sorrow She multiplied and intensified her petitions in order to merit for them sufficient assistance and speedy pardon from her Son, so that they might again return to their faith and to his friendship 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 supplying her full share for Herself, but for the Apostles

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and for the whole human race. She it was who compensated, as far as was possible to a creature, for the deficiencies and faults in the rest of the mystical members 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 operation 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 most 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 narrative 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

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solicited his conversion, and the malice with which he had offended the Son and the Mother for such insignificant gain. All the sins he had committed piled themselves 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 treachery 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 counsels, 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 possessed 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 suggestions, 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

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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 possible, 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, although 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 himself 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

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 dispensation 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 profoundest 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 chastisements 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 themselves 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

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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 occupies. The demons torment Judas with inexpressible cruelty, because he persisted in the betrayal of his Master, 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 punishment 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 induce them to evade such a lamentable fate.

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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 Messiah 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 argument for the truth of his suspicions was Lucifer's personal experience of the power of the Redeemer, when He said "I am He," which caused him and all his associates 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 altogether 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

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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 mentioned 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 indignities 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 interfered 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 suggestion 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

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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 exhortations and they were eye-witnesses of my blameless and holy conduct ; they received great tokens of my kindness 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 presumptuous 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;

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and the others failed in faith, the foundation of all virtue. Yet all this was conformable to the just judgments 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 incomparable 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

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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 negligence 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 conception 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, permitted 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 penetrate 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

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mine, and not a terrestrial, accustoming thyself to despise 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 spiritual 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 CONNECTION 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 sorrows, 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 concepts 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 consideration of the deepest, our thankfulness heartfelt, and

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 disciple 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 outrage 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

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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 directions 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 permitted 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 hanging 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).

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548. During all this time Lucifer, while inciting these ministers of evil, watched all the actions and movements 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 violently 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

powerful example, drawing others after Him? If this is the Messiah, 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, obedient 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 consequences 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 Lucifer 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 admiration for the incomprehensible judgments of his wisdom

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(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 doctrine He was preaching and teaching. This question was put merely for the purpose of misinterpreting his answer, 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 questioned 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, because 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

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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 shamelessly 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 permitted such a criminal unfairness in his very presence, moved either him or the other Jews to moderate their

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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 weakness and hesitancy yielded to a sense of shame. Overcome also by his fear he answered: "I am not his disciple." 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 welcome 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

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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 miraculous tears of blood. She felt also the buffet in the 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 injuries offered Him by sinners, and in many most sorrowful lamentations She conferred with the angels concerning 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 receivest concerning the mysteries of the sufferings of my most holy Son and of myself for the human race, and on account of the knowledge which thou hast obtained coi-

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cerning the small return made by heartless and ungrateful men for all our pains. Thou livest yet in mortal flesh and art thyself subject to this ignorance and weakness; 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 sacraments 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 divine 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 blessings and favors. Weigh in thy heart, how much it cost my Lord to reconcile mankind to the eternal Father

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(Colos. 1, 22) and regain for them his friendship. Weep and afflict thyself that so many should live in such forgetfulness 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 forgotten, its precepts trodden under foot, charity almost extinct. My son and true God offers his cheeks in patience 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 imitate 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

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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 immediately 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 distinguished men of the Jews in order to urge the condemnation of the most innocent Lamb (Matth. 26, 57). The invincible patience and meekness of the Lord of all virtues (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

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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 merciless 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 jurisdiction 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 arrogance 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 sufferings as a compensation for their persecutions and excusing 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

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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, surrounded 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 consent they sought for witnesses, whom they could bribe to bring false testimonies against Jesus our Savior (Matth. 26, 59). Those that had been procured, advanced 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, although they founded upon it the accusation, that He arrogated to Himself divine power. Even if this testimony 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:

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"Destroy this temple" that is : destroy this sacred humanity, 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 innocence. 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 indisposed 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 Galilean, so that they might not be thought to have condemned Him to death without cause. This humble silence, which should have appeased the wicked priest, only infuriated him so much the more because it frustrated 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 different 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

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 conjured by the living God, inwardly adored and revered the Divinity, though appealed to by such sacrilegious lips. Out of reverence for the name of God He therefore answered : "Thou hast said: I am He. Nevertheless 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 blasphemed; what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, 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

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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 prophesying 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 stir up the flattery and subserviency of inferiors, that whole gathering 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 : Prophecy, prophecy 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

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ministers of wickedness were seized with unbearable consternation 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 themselves, while in his most pure Mother they were caused by the Almighty in a miraculous manner and upon request 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

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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 tribulations ; 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, imitating Me in my offers of pardon and friendship, mercifully 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 crucifying 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,

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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 deceitful 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 petitions ; 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, tribulations 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

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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 difficult 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 fulfilled 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

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his dangerous hesitation and change of mind he tried to disturb saint Peter by vivid imaginations of impending 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, remembered the warning of his divine Master (Luke 22, 61 ); for, the great Queen in her gentle love having interceded 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 circumstances 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 interceded 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 acknowledge 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 inspirations 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

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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 mystery 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 established 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

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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 Almighty 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 Redemption, 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 understanding this doctrine, which is hidden from the prudent and wise of this world (Mark 11, 25). Day for day I manifest to thee new secrets of my wisdom, in order that it may be established in thy heart and thou mayest extend

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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 Conception I was full of grace, without the least stain or participation 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 therefore 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.

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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 Caiphaz 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

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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 Caiphaz, 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 subterranean 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 darkness. 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 executed; 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

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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

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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 composed 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 alleviation 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 message, 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

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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 permitted 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 unbecoming and irreverent in his regard, yet there were insults, 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 exquisite 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

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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 ridiculous 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 anxious 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 according to suggestions which could only originate in the execrable demon. They readily yielded to this new inspiration 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

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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 paralyzed 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 indecencies. 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 extraordinary effects of her commands, they did not merit to be undeceived or recognize the divine power, although they thus saw themselves alternately paralyzed and suddenly 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 continued 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

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, surrounded by the angelic spirits, who were full of admiration 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 evangelical Church, for the spreading of the holy faith, and for the Apostles, especially for saint Peter, who during that time was beweeeping 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 incapable 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 revered, honored and praised by all creatures, since Thou art the image of the eternal Father and the figure of his substance (Heb. 1, 3), infinite in thy being and in thy perfections. Thou art the beginning of all holiness (Apoc. 1, 8). But if the creatures

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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 enlightens 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 possible, let Me suffer with Thee unto death. You, O heavenly spirits, who full of wonder at the long-suffering

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of my Son recognize his immutable Deity and the innocence and excellence of his humanity, seek ye to compensate 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 acknowledge 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 Princess 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-

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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 humanity, 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

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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 engendered 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 Evangelists (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 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 aspirations 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

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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 calumny ; for this was not becoming his innocence and wisdom. 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

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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 unanimous 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 temporal 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 people 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 happened 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 sacrilegious they would even then be than the gentile judge.

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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 countless 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 answered: 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 concerning the Nazarene. Lucifer and all his demons were very attentive to what was passing; for, seeing himself secretly overcome by the invincible patience and meekness 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 understand how his allowing Himself to be despised and ill-treated and his succumbing to so much bodily weakness and, as it were, total annihilation, could ever harmonize with his being true God; for, if He were God, said the dragon to himself, his Divinity would never consent to such annihilation, and the power inherent in his

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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 garden, 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 sufferings by saying : "O my Lady, in what a state of suf-

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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 listened 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 come 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 sorrowful events now transpiring in reference to Jesus of Nazareth. 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 related 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

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evil He had done, that He should be so misused ; others again in their astonishment and in their doubts, exclaimed: 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 composure, 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, recognized 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 children." 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.

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 conversing with each other in transports of an unspeakable sorrow. 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 goodness 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

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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, defiled 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 multitude of the people. The Jews, wishing to preserve themselves as clean before the law as possible for the celebration 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 sacrilegious 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 pretorium, 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 convinced 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

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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 permitted 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 during 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 delivered 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.

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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 hesitation, 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, hoping 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 Himself Christ, intended to constitute Himself as King, and, as Pilate was a heathen and knew nothing of the anointing of kings, they wished to persuade him, that calling oneself Christ among the Jews was identical with calling oneself 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

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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 disturbing 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

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never pierced the mystery of his Divinity and the greatness 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 determined 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 proceedings. They were bound to believe this truth, which they confessed in their words, and thus come to the understanding of the true anointment of the Savior, which

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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 Himself 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 Messiah and at the same time calumniously asserting that Jesus made of Himself a king. It seems that they sought for their Messiah 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 oppressed in proportion to the increase of sorrow and tribulation, 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.

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For the great persecutions and the vast waters of affliction and sorrow extinguished not in her bosom the fire of divine love (Cant. 8, 7) ; but they were new incenses 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 innocent, 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 torments 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-tainness of the martyrs, Queen of the courageous, Mistress 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

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heart, justly humiliated on account of its vile ingratitude. Gain for me through thy prayers the love of the eternal Father, which is so precious, that only thy powerful 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 inattention 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 attributes, denying none of his enemies sufficient help to follow the good, if only they wished to use their freedom 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 superabundant 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-

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deemer and Teacher of men. In the silence and the meekness, which He maintained during his Passion, permitting 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 pursuing 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

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they are already wounded and weakened by his lamentable 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 overcome 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 practice: 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 entangled 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 doctrine 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 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 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 marriage 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 governor. 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 Galileans during a public function in the temple, mixing the blood

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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 her 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.

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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 entertainment 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 calling more loudly to this same Lord for vengeance, than in its time the blood of Abel (Gen. 4, 10). But the unhappy adulterer, ignorant of the terrible judgment of the Almighty, received Him with loud laughter as an entertainer 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 punishment 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

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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 dangerous. 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 before 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. Conducted 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 Messiah, 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 revered and glorified. For of such influence is usually the erroneous example of the chiefs in misleading the people. In the midst of all this confusion and ignominy the Lord passed along, repeating

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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 reproach 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 retracting 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

in this house was to be executed the divine decree for our salvation. On this way from Herod to Pilate it happened, 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 followed and who were neither able, nor cared to stop in their onward rush, stepped upon the divine Lord, treading Him under foot and kicking Him. The blows and wounds He thus received, instead of stirring the compassion 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 compassion, 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 sinners. 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 mortals, 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

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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, unimpeded by the foreknowledge of the Lord concerning all things.

610. Our Savior Jesus yielded to the desire and petitions 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 happened before. But in regard to other injuries, He allowed 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 if I were to describe the doings of Magdalen, most distinguished in her ardent love of Christ and most pleasing to the Savior. For to her we must apply, what Christ

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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 prevail upon their masters and friends, not any more to ask for the release of the malefactor Barabbas, but instead demand the release of our Redeemer; and to be satisfied with some punishment he was willing to administer 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 Evangelists with some variation, though not essentially contradicting 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

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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 introduced by the Jews in grateful remembrance of the release of their forefathers from servitude by their passage through the Red Sea, when the Almighty freed them from the power of Pharaoh by killing the first-born children 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 complied 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 blindness 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

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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

spiriting 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 sentence Him he would be deprived of his rank and she herself 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

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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 innocence 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 inconceivable 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

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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 indeed 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

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pleasing hour, to use creatures for our comfort, to be crowned with roses, live in joy; let our power be unrestrained, let no one seek preference before us ; be we permitted 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 regard 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 malefactor to be preferred to him? So little is this doctrine of humility practiced, that one excites surprise if he allows 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 themselves 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 lamentable misfortune is, that even those who, by their profession and their state, have renounced and turned

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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 augmentation 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 receive 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 principal 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

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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 advantages, as happened to Pilate.

619. In the house of Pilate, through the ministry of the holy angels, our Queen was placed in such a position that She could hear the disputes of the iniquitous judge with the scribes and priests concerning the innocence 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 beweeeping 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

all the actions of the most holy Soul of Christ and accompanied 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 recollection: 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 understood, 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 refresh 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 hardened 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

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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 acquired and now lost through his ingratitude. From this dangerous distrust originates lukewarmness, want of fervor 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 undertake great works. Another obstacle there is, not less formidable, namely: the souls accustomed to the blessings of God, either through their office, as the priests and religious, or by the exercise of virtues and the abundance of divine favors, as spiritual-minded persons, usually aggravate their sins by a certain contempt of these very blessings and a certain abuse of the divine things. For by the abundance of the divine favors they fall into a dangerous dullness of mind. They begin to think little of the divine favors and become irreverent. Thus failing to co-operate with God's grace, they hinder its effect. They lose the grace of holy fear of the Lord, which arouses and stimulates the will to obey the divine

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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 physicians 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 advanced virtues, are more closely bound to their God, are weighed in the balance of God's justice in quite a different 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 account of their station or by reputation, are supposed to be advanced in a holy life, cause great scandal by their fall or by any sins they commit. There is much more of bold disrespect in their presumption and temerity against God, whom they know better and to whom they owe much more, but whom they offend with more deliberation 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 the term of each man's life is preordained for each one at the time in which he is to gain the eternal reward

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so the measure or number of sins to be borne by the patience or forbearance of the Lord is likewise preordained. 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 wanting 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 obstinacy 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 much more indebted to their God than the heathens, who knew not of the true religion. I desire that this truth, as exhibited by their example, convince thee of this terrible danger and excite in thee holy fear. And with this fear join humble thanks and an exalted esteem of the favors of the Lord. In the days of abundance, be not unmindful of the hour of want (Eccli. 13, 25). Ponder as well as thou art able, that thou art one as the other within thyself, and remember that

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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 increased 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 rigorous punishment, against which thou canst make no objection.

## 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 the sabbath and other ceremonies, as is evident from his sermons 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 regulations 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

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anger and wrath against the most meek Master was not human, not such as ordinarily is appeased by the overthrow 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 helpless 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 punishment, 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-

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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. Having 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 of 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 humiliation, 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-

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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 touching it, their arms became paralyzed and stiff, as had happened 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 paralyzed 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

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and shed forth the sacred blood until it bespattered and drenched the garments of the sacrilegious torturers, running down also in streams to the pavement. Those two gave way to the third pair of scourgers, who commenced 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 immaculate 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 exposed 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, gathering 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

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number of blows dealt out to the Savior from head to foot was 5,115. The great Lord and Author of all creation 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 experience 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 endured 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 Passion, 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

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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 intensity 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 proportioned 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 scourging, the executioners unbound the Lord from the column, and with imperious and blasphemous presumption commanded 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, making use of her power as Queen, commanded Lucifer and all his demons to leave the neighborhood, and immediately, 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,

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suffered greatly from the cold of that morning as mentioned by the Evangelists (Mark 14, 55; Luke 22, 35; John 18, 18). His sacred blood had frozen and compressed 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 creatures, there was none for Him in his affliction and necessity, 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 deceiver 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 permission 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 according to their intentions.

633. Thereupon they took Jesus to the pretorium, where, with the same cruelty and contempt, they again despoiled him of his garments and in order to deride

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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 contemptible 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 presence 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

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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 mockery 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 pretorium 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 himself 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

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Him. What this judge said was certainly the full truth ; but in his own words he condemned his outrageous injustice, 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 completely 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 sentences you render are not full of deceit; for you yourselves shall be judged and condemned by your unjust judgments! As the priests and pharisees, in their eager and insatiable hostility, were irrevocably bent upon taking 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

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 manifest 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 seeing 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 compassionate 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-

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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 accept any offer of favor from a judge.

638. But the Master of truth answered Pilate without 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 delivered 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 he permitted this One, who had aspired to be king, to escape death. They said : "If thou freest this Man, thou art no friend of Caesar; since he who makes a king of himself rises up against his orders and commands." They rejected this because the Roman emperors never permitted anyone in the whole empire to assume the title or insignia of a King without their consent and order; if therefore

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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?" Whereupon 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 pronounced 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 transfixed with the sword of unalleviated bitterness. Since the sorrow of most holy Mary on this occasion surpassed 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.

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##### 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 permitted 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 instructions and warnings suitable for making thee careful on the path to eternal life. Know then that the ancient prophecies concerning the mysteries of the Redemption 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 of having in their midst their Redeemer and Master, of knowing Him, of conversing with Him, of hearing his doctrine and preaching, of witnessing his miracles; and they 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 manifestly had cultivated his vineyard by his own hands and showered his favors upon it (Matth. 21, 33). But it brought Him only thorns and briars, and its keepers took away his life, refusing to recognize Him, as was their opportunity and their duty before all other men.

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641. This same, which happened in the head Christ the Lord and Son of God, must happen to all the members of his mystical body, that is, to the just and predestined 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 afflicting 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 the priests and pharisees, and by Pilate, who all persecute the Head of this mystic body and, in the further course of the world, by all those who persecute its members the saints and the predestined, imitating and following 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 Child tormented, afflicted, crowned with thorns and saturated with reproaches and at the same time desirest to have part in Him and be a member of his mystical body, it is not becoming, or even possible, that thou live steeped in 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 same time makes none of the neighbors suffer. On the contrary, thou must exert thyself for their conversion and

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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 indeed 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 reducing 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 DIE 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. Having 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 dispensation of God ; though on their part it was due to the concerted 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 understood nor noticed any of these circumstances, since they

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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 Nazareth, 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 preparation, or getting ready; for on that day the Jews prepared 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 continued 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

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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 teachings 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 punishment; 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 admirable; 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 Mistress of heaven. Amid all this bitterness and confusion She did nothing unbecoming or inconsiderate, but shed

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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 sorrows 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 sorrows 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 wisdom, 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 multitudes, 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 presence. 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 sentence was proclaimed also in the different streets and at the foot of the Cross; and it was afterwards published 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.

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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 Empire, and being within the executive mansion, judge, decide, and proclaim, that I condemn to death, Jesus, of the Nazarean people and a Galileean by birth, a man

sedition and opposed to our laws, to our senate, and to the great emperor Tiberius Caesar. For the execution 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 and the temple of Solomon, accompanied by a great multitude of the people carrying branches of palms. I command 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."

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"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 conducted to the summit of the mountain called Calvary, where justice is wont to be executed upon wicked transgressors. 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 execution of this just sentence ordered by me to be executed 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

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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 complete 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 Redeemer of the world, Jesus, before receiving the Cross,

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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 sanctuary in which the guilty sons of Adam shall find mercy, and the treasurehouse for the enrichment of their poverty. Upon thee I desire to exalt and recommend dishonor 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. Receive 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 understanding of them, far beyond that of all the angels. The

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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 recognized 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 exemplar, 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 sentence 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 arranged and repeated it, while the inhabitants of Jeru

saalem 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

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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

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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 intimately 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 instrumentality 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 attentive 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 followers 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

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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 discouragement 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 punishment. 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 undergoing 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 oppressor 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.

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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 children 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 forgetfulness! 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 participation 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

to live or be consoled or to partake of any rest or enjoyment. 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 contagion 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 proclaiming the sentence.

656. The executioners, bare of all human compassion and kindness, dragged our Savior Jesus along with incredible 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 repeated fall. The heavy Cross also inflicted a wound on the shoulder on which it was carried. The unsteadiness 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 pavement 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

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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-

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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

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 tears since they wept over his sufferings and injuries, and 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 possible that I be guilty of any. If I approve of your compassion 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 judgment and chastisement, in which those shall be held fortunate, who have not begotten children; and the fore-

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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 impress 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

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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 vanquished 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 venerable 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 precaution 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

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after riches, and contemn poverty; they long after pleasure 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 Master, though they neither suffer affliction nor engage in any exertion or labor. They are content with avoiding boldness 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 consider 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 sickness 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 incomplete 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 magnificent victory is gained by the Cross, by labors, penances, 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

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holy Cross and the honor which it confers upon ignominies 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 pleasure, 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 alleviation, or to mention thy afflictions. But in thee, my dearest, 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,

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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 withdraw 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 SORROWFUL 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 Abraham (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 condemned 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 altogether 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

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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 fulfilled 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 Thymself, 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 because 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

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to go no further than to prefigure and attempt the sacrifice 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 promptness of Abraham's obedience, but also because he mistrusted, 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 sorrowful and wine to those that suffer bitterness of heart, the Jews were accustomed to give to those about to be executed 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 compassion asked the Lord not to drink of it. Jesus in deference to the petition of his Mother, without rejecting entirely this new suffering, tasted of the mixture, but would not drink it entirely (Matth. 27, 34).

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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 & being bereft of his garments in the presence of his most blessed Mother, of her pious companions, and in full sight of the multitudes gathered around. By his

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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 greatest 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 covering, 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 preparations 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 incomprehensible 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 Redemption of men, my brethren. I offer Thee, O Lord, 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

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wishes are concerned, I suffer and die for all, and I desire 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 follow 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 ineffable and most holy name."

670. This prayer and supplication of our Savior Jesus were known to the most blessed Mother, and She imitated 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 operations of the sacred humanity of her Son, none of which ever escaped her knowledge and attention. Whatever

She thus perceived She imitated ; so that She was always anxious to study and penetrate them with deep understanding , to put them promptly into action, and to practice 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 bitterness of her suffering 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 different 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 possessed 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 inhuman instinct of cruelty, marked the places for the holes,

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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 knowledge of it was one of the greatest afflictions of her chastest 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 allowed 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 mysteries; 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

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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.

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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, implore 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 circumstances, and we shall find powerful motives to abhor and firmly resolve to avoid sin, as the cause of all this suffering to the Author of life. Let us contemplate and look upon his Virgin Mother, so afflicted in spirit and overwhelmed 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 unworthy 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-

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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 commanded 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 downward 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;

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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 multitude 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 suffering, 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-

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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 obstinate 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

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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 I presented this petition to the Father, She, with the zeal and authority of the Queen of the universe, addressed all the irrational creatures and said: "Insensible creatures, created by the hand of the Almighty, do you manifest your compassion, 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 Redeemer, 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 instance, 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 witnessed his miracles. For the same reason Pilate was also inspired not to change the title of the Cross which

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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 answered : 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 dismayed and astonished ; although their outrageous perfidy and malice made them unworthy of the truth and hindered 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 disposition they had brought to mount Calvary and which was the one Christ had laid aside at the washing of the feet, they divided among themselves, cutting it into four parts (John 19, 23). But the seamless tunic, by a mysterious 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

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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 partaking 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 principle of charity and fraternal love the divine Teacher had 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 loving his enemies, but excusing those under the plea of ignorance whose malice had reached the highest point possible to men in persecuting, blaspheming and crucifying 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 suffering the crown of thorns, the nails, and the Cross and unheard of blasphemy at the hands of men. O incomprehensible 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 at the same time by the prayers and intercession of most holy Mary, he was interiorly enlightened concerning his Rescuer and Master by the first word on the Cross.

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 condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man hath done no evil." And thereupon speaking to Jesus, he said: "Lord, remember 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 allowed 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 lovingly corrected thy brother, confessed thy Creator, reprehended 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

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his loving gaze upon his afflicted Mother, who with saint John was standing at the foot of the Cross. Speaking 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 consolation, 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 mentioned 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 revered 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

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She would show him this obedience during her whole life.

684. Already the ninth hour of the day was approaching, 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 unintelligible 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 cessation 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

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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 Redemption, offered for the whole human race, should not be efficacious in the reprobate and that He should find Himself deprived of them in the eternal happiness, for which He had created and redeemed them. As this was to happen 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 happiness 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 all 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

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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 mockingly 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 Redemption 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 consummated 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 sickness 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 coming into the world is perfected in so far as concerns Me, its Restorer; the secure foundation of the triumphant Church is now laid in the Church militant, so that nothing can overthrow or change it. These are the mysteries contained in the few words : "Consummatum est."

687. Having finished and established the work of Re-

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demption in all its perfection, it was becoming 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 suffered the pangs and agony of his death. She did not die in reality; but this was because God miraculously preserved 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.

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688. Of many of the sacraments and mysteries connected 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 prudent 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 toward 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.

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689. Of these eternal goods the Savior made his last disposition on the Cross, distributing them and pointing 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 testament 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 treasures 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 incarnate Word crucified before speaking any of the seven

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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 highest possible graces and glory, which from the first instant of my Incarnation Thou hast communicated to my humanity, and because from all eternity up to this present 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 universal 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 confess, exalt and magnify thy holy name."

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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 ceaselessly 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 Our mercy and of the way I have opened to them by my labors, life and death; but that many will prefer to follow their sinful ways unto perdition. Thou art just, my Lord and Father, and most equitable are thy judgments (Ps. 68, 137) ; and therefore it is right, since Thou hast made Me the Judge of the living and the dead,

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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 accept. 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 capable, 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 creatures, 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 confirmed 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

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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 recognize 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 themselves 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 blessings, my sacramental treasures, of the mysteries concealed in the holy Scriptures; of my humility, meekness 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, contempt, poverty and nakedness. This shall be their portion and inheritance in this present and mortal life.

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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 protection and defense, my holy inspirations, my favors and powerful assistance, my blessings and my justification, 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 desire 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 angels 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 demons, that they shall be feared and obeyed by my enemies; 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 sustain 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

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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 unfailling 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 listened 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

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our divine goodness and remained obstinate in their malice, and since they have renounced the rights of sonship 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 company 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 executed 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.

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#### 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 supreme 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 assimilated 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 thou renounce thy inheritance as a daughter of the first Adam, in order that in thee may bear fruit the inheritance of the second Adam, who is Jesus Christ, thy Redeemer and Teacher.

699. Thy state of life must be for thee a most rigid

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 restrictions and entire subjection necessary to observe rigorously 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 accommodate 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).

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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 movement, the least activity, or word, or thought not controlled by this virtue. Thou must not maintain any position 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, depriving 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 rigorously 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 impression within thee; thy eyes and all thy senses are to remain consecrated to chastity, without making more use of them than to fix them upon Jesus crucified. The

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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 solicitous 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 consequently 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 hallucinations, 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.

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702. This triumph of Christ our Savior was accomplished 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, according 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 intercourse and vision peculiar to the angels; for such would be necessary in order to describe and understand correctly 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 signification 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

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Lady. She forced them to come to Calvary and stand around the Cross, where She commanded them to remain motionless and witness the end of the great mysteries there enacted for the salvation of men and the ruin of themselves.

704. Lucifer and his infernal hosts were so overwhelmed with pains and torments by the presence of the Lord and his blessed Mother, and with the fear of their impending ruin, that they would have felt greatly relieved to be allowed to cast themselves into the darkness 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

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thy carrion corpse ! Thou, who hast afflicted the nations, art now more wounded and 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 mysteries 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 Lucifer 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

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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 discovered 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

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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. Moreover, 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. Lucifer 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 forsaken 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 mysteriously 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

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 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 consummated!" 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 compensated 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 vanquished 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

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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 depart 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

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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, subject 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 purpose. 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

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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 proceedings 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, covered 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

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the devils have not the power of assigning- the damned to a place of greater or lesser torment ; for all their torments are decreed by divine justice according to the measure 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 punishments 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 purpose 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

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Him. Before He assumed flesh I hated Him and refused to acknowledge Him as being more worthy than I to be adored by the rest of creation. Although on account 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 oppressed 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

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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 followers ? 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 senseless 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 mortification 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 Himself to such an extent? How could He bear so much

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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? Now 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 ceaselessly 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 suggesting 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 reference 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-

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structor of virtues, a powerful Intercessor and Advocate in this Woman; yet the natural inclinations and passions 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 strenuous warfare against mankind by suggesting new attractions, exciting them to follow their passions in forgetfulness 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 Redemption. 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 concocted among these malignant spirits the sect of Mahomet, 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 necessary nor proper to mention here. Lucifer showed himself content with these infernal counsels as being opposed 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 undertook to find the impious originators of these errors.

719. Some of the devils charged themselves with perverting the inclinations of children at their conception

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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 vengeance, 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

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 Sacraments 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 temptations; they will not see through our deceits, they will let the memory of their Redeemer and of the intercession 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 executing 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

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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 furiously 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 behind 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.

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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 remember 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

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heaven and for the beatific vision, in which these mysteries 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 continually in this work. But now his haughty pride is incensed 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 temptations 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 Redemption, the ruin and weakness caused by the demons in men; and, on the other hand, to see the power of the devil lordling it over the world in haughty presumption. 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-

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mies so full of malice. It is certain, that when hell came to the full knowledge of the sacrament of the Incarnation 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 teachings 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 performed 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 example 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 not approach and they precipitously fled from the Apostles 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

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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 blessings of the Redemption; they yielded to their carnal inclinations 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 Catholics fail to recognize this great damage and do not seriously think of a remedy, although they can presume that the times, of which Jesus forewarned the women of Jerusalem, 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-

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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 compensation 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 constant in the exercise of ineffable virtues, while contemplating within Her the mysteries of man's Redemption 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 thanksgiving. 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

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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 answered: "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 Himself 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 delaying his vengeance." This answer of the angels increased 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

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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 soldier, by the name of Longinus, approaching the Cross of Christ, thrust his lance through the side of the Savior. Immediately water and blood flowed from the wound, as saint John, who saw it and who gives testimony 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 my soul!" So far and no farther went her

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indignation (or more properly, her most merciful meekness), for the instruction of all of us who are ever injured. 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 happened; 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-

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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 composed in honor of her divine Son after his being wounded 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 acknowledged 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

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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 coming 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 intentions, 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 employment of the government, a member of the council, who as is given us to understand in the Gospel, had not consented to the resolves and the proceedings of the murderers of Christ and who had recognized Jesus as the true Messias. Although Joseph had been a secret disciple of the Lord, yet at his death, in consequence of the efficacious influence of the Redemption, he openly confessed 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

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 distinguished 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 salutary 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 Nikodemus 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 bitterly until the invincible Queen raised them from the ground and animated and consoled them; whereupon they saluted Her in humble compassion. The most ob-

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 ladders to the holy Cross. On these they ascended in order 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, answered that from the beginning She had stood by to witness 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 expediency 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 relief." 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

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it had caused. They handed it down with great reverence 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 afterward 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 Nikodemus, saint John supported the head, and Mary Magdalen 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 reverence, shedding tears of blood. In union with Her, as He rested in her arms, all the multitude of her attendant 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,

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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 excited 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 mystery 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 circumstances 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 undergone 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 Nikodemus. Thus anointed the deified body was placed on a bier, in order to be carried to the sepulchre. The heavenly Queen, most attentive in her zealous love, called

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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 assisted 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 imitated Her, all of them adoring the crucified Savior now resting in his grave; thereupon they closed the sepulchre 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

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Calvary. The heavenly Mistress of all virtues approached the holy Cross and worshipped it in deepest reverence. In this Joseph and all the rest of the mourners 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 faithful. 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 sepulchre (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

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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 consolation in his sorrows. In order that thou mayest understand 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 habitation 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-

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 afflicted 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 opportune 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 benevolence, 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 patient 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

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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.

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 defect or remissness in noticing and attending to all the duties of each occasion and at all times. By this heavenly 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, thanking 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 women. 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 my consolation shall be to see my Son and Lord arisen from the dead. Do you, my dearest friends, satisfy

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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 Mistress 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 conferred 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 appropriate; 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 in this lies my own security."

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Without further answer the heavenly Mother then asked permission to remain alone in meditating on the mysteries 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 console 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 afflictions, without ever forgetting the least point of the most perfect obedience, humility, charity and prudent foresight for all that was necessary. She did not forget 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 being 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 Mistress 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 Herself to be possessed interiorly and exteriorly by the bitterness of her soul. She renewed in her mind the recollection of her divine Son's frightful death; the mys-

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 happiness 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 hidden 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 unsearchable providence of the Lord. All of them, as the Mother of true wisdom, She contemplated and understood, 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

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the great Queen. He had just come from the cave, where he had bewept his denials; but he was now consoled 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 presence 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 prostrate 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 resolved 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 intention 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 pardon. Then also the other Apostles presented themselves,

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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 encouraged 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

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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 surface 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 circumference 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 dwellings 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 confusion 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 punishments 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

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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 particular 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 commanded 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

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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

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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 advancing 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 infernal 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 inferior 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 enjoyment 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

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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 magnifying the mysteries of this triumph and the most loving 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 subjects by his own presence in order that they might commence 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,

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such ways as are hidden to the demon and to which thy passions have no access; for they lead to the sanctuary, 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 disordered 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 attachments 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 untrammelled, 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 practice 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, occupations 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 creatures, 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

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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 descended 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 COMPANY WITH THE HOLY FATHERS OF LIMBO.

755. The divine soul of Christ our Redeemer remained in limbo from half past three of Friday afternoon, 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 prudence 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

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the incarnate Word, who had truly taken upon Himself our infirmities and sorrows (Is. 53, 4) and paid abundantly our debts, satisfying in his innocence and guiltlessness 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 goodness 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 winding-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 subtlety (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 conception, 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-

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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 inherent 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 mentioned in this history. For on these occasions He received 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 subtlety the gross and earthly matter was so purified, 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

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resurrection in their own flesh and body to all men, and that they moreover, as an effect of his own Resurrection, 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 Patriarchs, 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 communicated 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, beautiful 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

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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 foregoing chapter as being restrained and, as it were, withheld, 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 unexpectedly, 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 prepare 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 corresponding in a wonderful 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

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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 consolations 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 received 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

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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, participating 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 injury (thus I must call it, because I cannot find a more proper word), which a Creature so pure and immaculate had undergone in suffering the sorrows and torments 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 proportionate joy and delight.

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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 succession, praising the Almighty in his liberal mercy to each one of them. She was filled with an especial delight in speaking to her parents, saint Joachim and Anne, with her spouse, saint Joseph, with saint John the Baptist, 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 revered 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 continued 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.

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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 understanding 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 consideration 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, subtilty and agility.

764. Each of these gifts are correspondingly augmented 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 insignificant works the creature gains an increase of these

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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 changefulness; an increase of subtilty, 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 augmentation 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 possessed 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 account 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 compared 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 daughter, and from these wonderful rewards, gained by one little deed done for God, consider what shall be the lot

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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 necessarily 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 ineffable 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 remained 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

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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 morning, to the sepulchre, and show their veneration by visiting and anointing the holy body once more. On the Sunday, entirely ignorant of the graves 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 opening 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 accelerated 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 entrance 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.

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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 prostrate to the earth, struck motionless with fear and consternation, 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

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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 regained the use of their senses. As they saw the sepulchre 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 consternation 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 witnesses, 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

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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 wonderingly 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). Magdalen, ignorant of his being the Lord, answered Him as if He were the gardener and, without further reflection, 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 recognized by the tone of his voice.

671. As soon as Magdalen recognized Jesus she was aflame with joyous love and answered 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

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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 hesitate 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 admirable 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 faithful 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 apparition of the Lord to the two disciples going that afternoon to Emmaus, which is related minutely by

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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 Jerusalem, 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 conferred 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

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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 Nazareth, 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 morning 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 understand, 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 Redemption 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 thresholds 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 (Wisdom 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,

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 imparted 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 explained 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-

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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 prophesied?" And at these words He opened their minds, and they knew Him, and understood the sayings of the Scriptures concerning his Passion, Death and Resurrection 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

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eternal life, preaching repentance for sins and forgiveness 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

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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 stubborn 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 incredulous Apostle. When He yielded and all of them brought the news to Mary, their Mistress and Lady, She confirmed 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.

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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 understand; but only those are mentioned, which suffice to establish the fact of the Resurrection. The same Evangelist 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 mysterious, 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 Jerusalem, 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

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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." Immediately 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 universal Church, giving him the supreme vicarious authority over all men. On this account He had questioned 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

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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 answered: "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 concern 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 Himself 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, celebrating the glories and the virtues of the Lord.

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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, although 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 Master. In this paternal love He therefore created in them the proper dispositions by enlightening them and enkindling 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

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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 Magdalen, 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 reprehended 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 giving 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-

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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 conversing 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 goodness 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 ASCENSION.

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 account 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 incapable 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 describe 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 ascended 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,

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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 manifested to me, it would be necessary to extend this history 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 knowledge 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-

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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 exercises 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 alternating 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 enjoyed the beatific vision. All that the blessed Mary did during these days is beyond the capacity and estimation 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 resolved 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

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part of the forty days and during that time were composed 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 imagined, 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.

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788. Amidst all these delights and jubilations the kindest Mother, with ineffable generosity, did not forget 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 protection and for the extension of the fruits of the Redemption to all men. The fulfillment of this petition was regulated by the eternal decrees of the divine wisdom ; but as far as the desires and affections of the most loving Queen were concerned She wished the Redemption 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 Magdalen 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

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in it her own incarnate Son. The eternal Father commanded two of the highest angels to call Mary, which they did by approaching Her, and in sweetest voices intimating 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 effected 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 proclaiming 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

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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 satisfied without hindrance in the currents of our divine perfections. Whoever shall call upon Her from his heart shall not perish; whoever shall obtain her intercession 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

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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 knowledge 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 inestimable 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-

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bering one hundred and twenty persons. This apparition 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 commanded 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 Resurrection; 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 Baptism 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

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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 promised 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 ascending 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

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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 children 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

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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 knowledge 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 consolation as He ? Who will receive us so lovingly and kindly ? Who shall be our Father and protector ? We shall be helpless 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,

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 agreeable 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

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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 Evangelists 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 necessary 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 Providence 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 salvation through my intercession. This thou hast always understood, and thou shalt understand it still better. But above all I desire, that thou occupy thyself entirely 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 persons, 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.

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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 perfidious 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 prevented from noticing this wonderful mystery, and the Chieftain and Head of this procession remained invisible 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, another 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

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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 fortunate 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 sacrament, 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 possession 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

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days which He spent in her company after his Resurrection. 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; remaining with the children of the Church for their comfort 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 splendors of his glory and surrounded by the variety of his gifts and graces in the sight of the ascending angels and saints" (Ps. 44, 10). In order that this astounding mystery may excite the devotion and enliven the faith of the faithful, and that it may draw them to magnify the Author of this extraordinary 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 mysteries 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

limitation of a creature is not capable of such abundance. But in order that I might be enabled to write, new enlightenment was given me for each mystery in particular. 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 contemplated 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 mysteries 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 sacrament 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 hesitation 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 admirable 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-

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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 centuries 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 redound 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 governs it and procures new splendors for it according to

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the circumstances of the times, is guided by other reasons. 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 manifested 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 Incarnation 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 gradually 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

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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 happened 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 privilege 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 attaining 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 separated 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,

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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 Redeemer 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 consolation 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 admiration, 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 Redeemer disappearing through the aerial regions. And when they had almost lost sight of Him, a most resplendent 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

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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 Redemption 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,

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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 exceeding all our conceptions that new divinely arranged procession 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 reverential 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 creatures (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

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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 condition of the faithful, whom She was left free to assist. This admirable proceeding of the divine Providence was to afford the Mother of mercy an occasion of going

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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 sacrifices 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

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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 partook 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 confirmed 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 conferred 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 reverence! 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 obligation 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 momentary contentment in order to arrive at their eternal

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, setting 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 fecundity is verified more particularly in the supreme exaltation 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 understood 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

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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 tribulation, 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 sufferings 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 children 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).

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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 disciples 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

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in looking up in the air where they had seen Him disappear; 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

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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 hampered 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 concerning the most efficacious sweetness of the divine love

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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 tribulation, in order that it may become fit and capable of the divine gifts and favors and may learn to despise terrestrial 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 Providence, 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

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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 years 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 blessing,  
I remain

Devotedly in Domino,

H. J. AWARDING, Bishop of Fort Wayne.

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REV. GEO. J. BLATTEB

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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

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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 Caldonatius, Vicar General of Trent, Nov. 14, 1708.

High recommendation and approbation of the Ordinary 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 Inquisition 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

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#### 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 practically all the religious orders, namely the Augustinians, Benedictines, Carmelites, Dominicans, Jesuits, Cistercians, Basilians, Minims, Hieronymites, Premonstratensians, 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 practically 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., Theologians, 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 recommendations 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 Christianity, praising the CITY OF GOD as the most wonderful, the most useful, the most interesting, the most re

liable book in the world, were to be printed in connection 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 written 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 revelations 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 resulted 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

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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 following terms:

"We take pleasure in giving our episcopal approbation 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 occasion 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 Germany, 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 recommendations of four renowned universities, namely, of Toulouse, Salamanca, Alcalá 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 comparison 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 Venerable 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 episcopal 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 edition of 1911-1912.

"We, Dr. James Ozoidi y Udave, by the grace of God and of the Apostolic See, Bishop of Tarazona, Administrator Apostolic of the Diocese of Tudela, etc., etc.

Having charged the priest Don Eduardo Royo, chaplain and confessor at the convent of the Immaculate 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 having 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. Wishing 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 secure greater clearness. The paragraph numbers are those of the newest Spanish edition of "Ciudad de Dios" in 1912. In the abridgment 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 publication 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

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 condescension, 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 sufficiently 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 counteract my cowardice and fear. What is more, the angels themselves in visible shapes, being the prelates and ministers 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, enlightened 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 contradictions, 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 magnitude 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 practice it, I allayed the fear and faintness of my heart in executing what had been assigned to me. But fluctuating between my desire and fear of commencing, I was cast about like a vessel, combated by violent and contrary 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 manifest them immediately to my superior and to my confessor (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

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Lord, who is so even and equable in all his works, inspired them with a new energy in pressing their continual exhortations 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 disturbances 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 molestations I came to no such interior peace, as is necessary for and befitting the actual enlightenment and intelligence concerning the mysteries to be treated of. For this light cannot be perceived, nor is it properly communicated, amid the spiritual storms of temptation, but will shine only in the peace and serenity of the soul's faculties.

5. Afflicted and harassed by such a variety of temptations, I ceased not in my clamors. On one day in particular 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-

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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 consumed. 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 solitudes 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 surroundings, 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, representing 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-

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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 exaggeration 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 prepare 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 temptations were not abated, I prepared myself for labor and battle; yet I continued to distrust my weakness and inability and despaired of finding a remedy. I sought it in the Mother of life, and I resolved to ask for help

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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 imperfections 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 intimate 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 connected 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 history; and it is time thou raise thyself to a perfect imitation 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,

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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 intentions, that, precisely on this account, divine Providence 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,

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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 condition, 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 blessings and favors beyond all my comprehension. Moreover 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

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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

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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

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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 mortified 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.

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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 sacraments 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 unsatiated of that, which thou art to administer to others, nor that thou shouldst finish writing this history without 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 chapters of the first and second part, and shall continue to

do so in the third part. From all this my sluggishness 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 continually 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

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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 permitting all its activity and all its dealings to be governed 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 entrance 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 assurances 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

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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 happenings 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 wisdom knew how to use them all for his different ends. On this account He permitted the enemy to avail himself 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 opportune time (Ps. 144, 15), has now in his condescension 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

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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 according 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 sacrament 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 desire 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 solicitude 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

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of falling and thereby preserving it in the knowledge and humiliation of self.

18. I must acknowledge that by these and other continual 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 correspond 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 account 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 dangers of this laborious and dreadful life, full of temptations 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

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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 according to thy pleasure and good will." The Lord answered : "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 insignificance 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 imperfection. 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 imperfection committed. As the gifts of the Lord are

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without regret (Rom. 11, 29), He has not only bound me with this mysterious chain, but, in his divine condescension, 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 darkness, 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 remnants 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 perfection of life required of me and necessary for writing what I was commanded. While this interior battle continued, 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

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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 refulgence 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 before 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 conferring with each other, saying: "This creature is useless, slow, and not at all fervent in fulfilling the commands of the Most High and of our Queen. She will not come to a full trust in the blessings and the enlightenments, 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

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spirits relaxed somewhat in their severity and with greater kindness they told me: that, if I would diligently 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 considered 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 besought him, in all the sincerity and submission of my heart, to reprehend me severely and force me to be perfect 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

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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 account of the absentions 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 sollicitudes it happened to me one night, that my holy guardian angel showed himself 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 faithfully 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 perfections. 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

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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 attention 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 obligation 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 ungrateful 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

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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 thou 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 compel 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 seraphim, 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; for 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 contained in this introduction, will manifest partly the providence 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

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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 depraved 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 Saragossa, 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 INSTRUCTION, 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

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 establish Herself even then in the most blessed state and remain in the possession of the glory They had conferred upon Her. For, conditional to her choice and in pursuance 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 therefore 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 humility 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-

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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 gratuitously in advance, even if they happen to be those of eternal glory. Her wisdom and humility were not without 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 purpose 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 blessing: 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

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her desire, to this nether world of the earth. God ordered 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 refulgence 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 redundancy of the divine glory which She had enjoyed. 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 mountain, 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 approach in the least to that enjoyed by the Mother of God.

4. The great Lady arrived at the Cenacle as a substitute 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 astonishment of the saints; for She was a living image of Christ our Redeemer and Master. Beneath the

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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 clemency. 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 immense 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

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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 suspended 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-

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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 instructions 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 experienced 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-

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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 advancement, and for us a unique and efficacious example, reminding 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 interior 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 concerning 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 thyself to another life, more exalted and heavenly, approaching that of the eternal felicity. I desire that thou leave entirely the ancient Babylon, thy enemies and all their

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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 perfect 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 creatures. For thus will none of them interfere with thee, nor any of them draw thee into venial sin or imperfections; 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 enjoined 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 inclinations; so I desire, that thou, my daughter, be renewed. For thou must live as if thou wert re-endowed

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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 resistance 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; follow 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 DESCRIPTION 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 recognized 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 Apostles, 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,

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forgot this promise and, absorbed in the consideration of this unthought of event, he began to fear or get anxious, 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 manifest 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 acknowledge in the holy Scriptures, and especially in the Apocalypse.

12. In the course of this journey I have already spoken

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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 ;" because these words can be understood as well of the material 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 heathenism 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

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. Enlightened 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 possessing 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 describing Her under cover of all the circumstances mentioned 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

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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 applications; 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 difficulties 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 sacraments, when he speaks of this event in the twenty-first chapter. Therefore it will be necessary to explain it in

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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 humanity, 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 renewed by the lamp of the Lamb (Apoc. 21, 23), replenished 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-

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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 hundred 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 disposition of the divine Providence, a new heaven, in

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which God might dwell among all creatures in the highest glory. In this new order of things, in this new heaven, 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, holiness, immutability, and amiability, and resembling his Son in her actions and behavior. She came as an instrument 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 resolved 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 incomprehensible Divinity, suited to her present state of pilgrimage, but yet so divine and exalted, that it exceeds all the thoughts of angels and men. He adorned Her with

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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 remain 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 understanding, this great Lady was filled with influences and communications 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 beatitudes 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 account 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

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there had been no other reason, her Son would have instituted the most holy Sacrament in the world in order thus to dwell in Her; and through her merits and petitions He remained among men with new graces and benefits ; 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 eternal 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 blessings 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 Redemption, and by placing them altogether into her hands to be scattered broadcast according to her most prudent

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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 exalted 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 Onlybegotten to suffer and die for them and to teach them his doctrine; 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

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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 Onlybegotten as a Master, Redeemer, and Brother and his Mother

as a Protectress, Mediatrix and Advocate powerful before 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 overcome the repugnance of their flesh to suffering, or do not believe my testimonies and wonders wrought in their behalf, 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, following the demon; all those that work deceit and malice,

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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 abominations 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 describing 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 mystery 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 sinners 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 abominable and worthy of greater punishments. Consequently they rouse so much the greater indignation and wrath of

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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 intelligence and enlightenment concerning the hidden sacraments, 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 spacious 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, prosperous 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 beginning, 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 inaccessible light, it seemed to me, that She possessed no other splendor than that of God himself, who seemed to communicate it to Her from the fount and origin of his immutable Being. Through the humanity of his Onlybegotten the same light and clearness seemed to be both

in the Mother and the Son, each according to their degree; yet in substance seeming one and the same, not found in any of the other blessed, nor in all of them together. In variety She seemed like jasper, in preciousness She was inestimable, and in beauty of body and soul She was like translucent crystal, permeated by the very substance of clearness and light.

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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 defense 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 foundation 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 Himself and to the eternal happiness, the gentiles, Jews, barbarians, without distinction of nationality or estate: therefore 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 devotion 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.

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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 especially 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 wisdom 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

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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 measured 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 inestimable 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 commensurate with Him, as a Mother worthy of Him, without failing in anything belonging to this dignity. Her greatness was twelve thousand stadia, equal in all its dimensions ; 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 received five or two talents, She received in proportion

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twelve thousand of each gift, reaching immense magnitude. 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 fantastical 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 inexplicable 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 immaculate 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,

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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 devotion, 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 repugnance 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 eternal 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

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especial manner, and the Lamb, her own Son in sacramental 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 himself 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 abstractive and continual vision of the Divinity, was conferred upon Her, and with it was joined another kind of fruition proportionate to it. Hence, in a manner peculiar to Her, She participated in the state of the comprehensors, 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 descent from heaven, She bore with Her without intermission her divine Son and sacramental God. By a special kind of vision She also saw Him within Herself and conversed with Him without the necessity of seeking his

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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 children of Eve have, if by the divine light, which Mary gave to the world, they do not walk in the path of true happiness. 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 greatness by the wonders performed by this Queen and by innumerable favors and blessings flowing from her hands upon mankind. In these last ages, which are the present, 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

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 confidence 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 Restorer 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 themselves Catholic, whose offenses, as being those of children, 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 violence and must be gained by labors, they have nevertheless given themselves over to idleness and pleasure, temporizing 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.

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35. But the Father of Mercies, who is in heaven, does not permit the works of his kindness to be entirely undone; 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 justice 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 kingdoms, 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

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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 infidel 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 importunity, 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 pretext 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 fountains, 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.

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##### 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 satisfaction 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 commands 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 Omnipotent 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;

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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 returning 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 experiences 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 enlightenments 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 VISITS 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 unworthy 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 written 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 re novated Her in all her powers, as was stated, and if He exerted 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 beatific vision (as I said in the first chapter) and She came back from her heavenly seat on the day which corresponds to the Sunday after the day of the Ascension, called in the holy Church the Sunday within the octave

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of that feast. She remained in the Cenacle three succeeding 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 prostrate upon the ground as soon as he came into her presence. 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 virginal 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 unanimously in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus, and with his brethren after the Lord had ascended into heaven (Acts 1, 14). What I have said evidently agrees with this passage; for saint Luke writes his history according 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

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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 Creature 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-

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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 revered ; and She faithfully acts out her knowledge. Is it possible, that among the thorns sown by sin among the children 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 Almighty, should arise? (Cant. 8, 5). Let Him be eternally praised in his wisdom and goodness, who formed such a Creature, so wonderfully appointed for our emulation 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 account 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 satisfaction, and looking upon Thee He shall not repent of having 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-

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sponses. After dismissing the host of the angels, who had accompanied Her from heaven, and after having remained 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 therefore left her retirement and, like a loving Mother, began to hold tender intercourse with the Apostles and disciples. 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 sending. 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 desires 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 ;

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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 literally 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

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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 revealed to her senses, She prostrated Herself before his royal Majesty in order to ask Him humbly for his blessing 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 countenance and in the bearing of their blessed Lady, that something wonderful was transpiring. None of them, however, on account of their timidity and reverence, presumed 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 behavior 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 loneliness. 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-

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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, commit 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 inequality She attributed to Herself and although this could not be called a fault, She wished to acknowledge the inferiority 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

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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 teachings of their divine Master Jesus and to occupy themselves during some other part of the day in reciting vocally 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 perfection. After her descent from heaven, She instructed the Apostles, yet She never entered upon this duty without first being requested by saint Peter or saint John. Through her prayers She moved her divine Son to inspire them with these commands, in order that She might obey them as his vicars and priests. Thus all things happened 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 faithful. During those days She explained to them the mystery 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

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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 understanding 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 interrupt this duty, so as not to deprive the soul of this supreme benefit, the beginning of eternal life and happiness. She taught them also how to thank the eternal Father for having given us his only Son for our Redeemer 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 exhortations 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 character of each one, She accommodated Herself to the necessities, 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.

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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 ministers 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 intercourse, 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 omnipotent 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

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staff, and the sweetest manna for our sustenance and comfort" (Heb. 9, 4).

51. If the holy Apostles and the other firstborn children 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

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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 profound humility and wisdom She judged it right to leave this to saint Peter in order that he might begin to exercise 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 together 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 becoming, 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.

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54. Having I 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 proceedings, asked his blessing and, in imitation of Her, all the other faithful did the same. Then all of them continued 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

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 confer 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 presumptuously 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

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fear and veneration of the Most High ; and thus he succeeds 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 dangerous lukewarmness and negligence, wherein they overlook 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 efficaciously by example than by words. Admonish them

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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 forgettest 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 MYSTERIES 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 fulfillment 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 congregation 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

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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 perceived 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

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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 supported 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 humility, She saw, how in that consistory of the blessed Trinity, the request of the Savior was favorably accepted, 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 sending 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 inequality; 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

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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 centering 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 appeared 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 altogether 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

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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 understand.

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 condition, were infused the habits of the seven gifts : Wisdom, 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 sanctity. Thus strengthened they prayed, they labored willingly 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

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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 congregation was gathered (Acts 2, 7), not only because all of them were filled with the Holy Ghost and his admirable gifts, but because the house itself was filled with wonderful light and splendor. This plenitude of wonders 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 compassionated our Savior Jesus in his Passion and Death, deprecating his most bitter torments and reverencing his sacred Person, were interiorly 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 blessing. 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

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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 signaled

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, however, 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 confusion 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

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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 inhabitants 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 reproofing 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 impious 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 salvation, and had suffered ignominies and torments without opening his mouth or seeking retribution for those in sulcs 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

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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

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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 according to the disposition and state of the one who receives 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 terrestrial 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 thy 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 continued wariness, lest thou be disturbed or disquieted in the interior of thy soul. Guard thy treasures in secret ; enjoy

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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. Remember 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 efficaciously 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

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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 masters (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 execute 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 decides 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

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 happened 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 tranquillity. 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 understanding 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 CONVERTED 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 happenings (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 ordained 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

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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 consternation asked each other, saying : "What is this that we witness ? Are not all these that speak Galileans ? 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 languages ? O greatness of God ! How admirable is He in all His works!"

75. This miracle, that all the men of so many different tongues then assembled in Jerusalem should hear the Apostles in their own language, joined to the doctrine 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 gratuitously 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 miracle the Lord wrought at the time in order that they might be understood and believed by those different nations, and in order that saint Peter might not be obliged to repeat in the different languages of those present,

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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 nationalities 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 understand 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 dispositions of each one. Those that listened piously received a deep understanding of the Divinity and of the Redemption of man, now so eloquently and fervently propounded 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,

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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 miracles, and wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you also know : This same, being

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delivered up by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge 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 penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins ; and you shall receive 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 therefore now to make use of the remedy, and to save yourselves from this perverse and incredulous generation."

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 as no one could answer, they withdrew and left the Cenacle. 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 sufferings 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

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 praying 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 properly listening to them, the most holy Mary sent many of her accompanying angels with holy inspirations, encouraging the sacred Apostles and giving them strength to inquire and to manifest more explicitly the hidden mysteries of the humanity and Divinity of Christ our Redeemer. 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 consolation ; for this privilege of conferring great interior bless-

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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 assistance 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 desire 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

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all that the law of grace contains as preached and ordained by its true Teacher Jesus, my Son and your Redeemer. 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, communicating to you also his grace."

83. By this sweetest of exhortations those new children of the Church were filled with consolation, light, veneration 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 wonderful gifts of the Most High. The Apostles and disciples 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-

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verted them and others that came at the report of the miracles they performed. For this gift was also conferred 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 miracles 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

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they were all seeking the same grace and eternal life, in equality in other things seemed dangerous to these Christian children of one Father, the inheritors of his goods and professors of his law. It seemed to them inappropriate, 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 current 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 equitable, when the faithful neither knew avarice nor followed vanity, when they trod under foot vain pomp, were free from covetousness, pride, ambition, which later prevailed among the professors of the faith, who while confessing 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 different, 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

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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 consumed 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-

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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 decreased the power, the charity and clemency of that highest 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 remember, that in the heavenly knowledge and charity of this most loving Mother we were all present to Her, also during 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 beginning. 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,

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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 plentitude, 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 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, opening 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 conditions, enabling her by this divine knowledge and wisdom to accommodate Herself to the necessities and natural character and to render salutary assistance against the

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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 instructed 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 similar 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 richest gifts; especially the women despoiled themselves of

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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 faithful. 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 infirmities. Through the hands of saint John She supplied many secret wants, never omitting the least point of virtue. 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 humility and reverence asked to kiss their hands. This She observed especially with the Apostles, knowing and beholding 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 founders 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 predestination of souls. Be convinced that, since the Redemption was so overflowing and copious, it was sufficient for the

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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 knowledge 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 converted to the way of eternal life, as the Gospel is more widespread, its preaching is frequent, its ministers numerous, the light of the Church clearer and the knowledge 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 providence 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 reprobate will have none but themselves to blame, if afterwards, 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 goodness 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

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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 penance there shall be no grace, without reform no pardon, without pardon no glory. But just as these are not conceded 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

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 determination 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 their 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 command 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 describe the manner in which the heavenly Queen cooperated 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 increased 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

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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 Angels, being in the retirement of her oratory and considering how the little flock of her divine Son was increasing, 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. Prostrate 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 showest 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 solicit 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 befructed it and also my desire that they receive holy Baptism, since they have already been in-

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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 wishest, 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 converted 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

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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 following 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 arrangement 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

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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. Wherever in the Acts of the Apostles it is said that they baptized 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 Apostles therefore ordained, that all the catechumens should gather in the house of the Cenacle in order to be baptized; 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 mysteries 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

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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 receiving 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 Baptism 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 amassing 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 ourselves, and who, by his avarice and covetousness, went astray and has fallen from the dignity of the apostolate

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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 contagion the Lord has placed this risk and chastisement before 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 reception and the distribution of the moneys and gifts of the faithful."

105. The whole gathering of the Apostles and disciples 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 account 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 belonging 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 saying 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

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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 ascended 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-

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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 valuable 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 securely 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 congregation, 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 providing 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 legitimate 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

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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 communities, 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 inhabitants; let each one live up to the poverty which is in accordance with his state. But let all of us understand, 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 meeting of the apostolic college was closed, and six prudent

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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 catechumens 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 reverence. 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 consecrated. 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 catechumens 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 interior 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

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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 celebrated 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 Baptism.

111. Through this sermon all the converts were inspired 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, although 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

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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 blessing, the Apostles with all the disciples and the faithful spent some time in prayer. All of them prostrated themselves on the ground adoring the infinite and immutable God, and confessing their own unworthiness of receiving 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 faithfully that sacred function just as they had seen it performed 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 approaching the altar the great Lady made three profound prostrations, touching the ground with her face.

113. She returned to her place, and it is impossible

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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 absorbed in this divine conflagration of the love of her most holy Son, whom She had now received bodily. She remained 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 present 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 thousand 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 observed 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 receive both species. They considered, that there would be great danger of irreverence and other very grave inconveniences 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

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those who were not consecrating or celebrating, the practice 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 ceremonies, which later on were added for the worthy celebration of Mass, as well before as after the Consecration and Communion, had not yet been instituted. In our times the most blessed and wise Roman Church has established all that is contained in the holy Mass as celebrated 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 business 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.

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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 immense, its effects would have deprived me many times of life, if the divine power had not miraculously sustained me. These effects I felt frequently in my thanksgiving, 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 occasions 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 torments. 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.

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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 receiving 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 sorrowful, one of the reasons for being so would be the dreadful carelessness and presumption with which mortals approach to receive the sacred body and blood of my divine 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 receive 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 occasions be thy model and example. I desire especially that thou imitate me interiorly, as in the three bodily

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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 ignominiously and sacrilegiously trampled under foot; thou shouldst feel the same grief and shed bitter tears at seeing so many children of the Church treat it with irreverence 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 chapter. 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 describe 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 infinite power of Him who conferred them, and the immense 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-

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derlying all the other favors with which God distinguished 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 ignorance to seek proofs of what the Lord did in Her by comparing it with what He did or ever will do in other souls ; since Mary alone rises supereminently above the common 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,

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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 order 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 recompense Her for this privation to a certain extent, it became 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 violence, 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 continuing 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 abundantly 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 absented 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;

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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 attending 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 arrangement 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

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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 offered 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 faithful. 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 tabernacles, He was continually adored with highest reverence 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 remaining 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 comparison 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

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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 heavenly mansions and the celestial courtiers should be deprived of the presence of the most sacred humanity from that time, He would have considered that of less importance 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 consequently, 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 wonder 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. Without 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 suffering 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

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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 follows : 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 participation 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 operations of her inflamed love still more increased them, nevertheless the sacred species, while lodged in her heart, were not changed or consumed. Moreover, although multiplied miracles were required in order to preserve them, they are not to be attributed sparingly in this singular Be-

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ing : a Creature, who was altogether a prodigy and a summary of wonders. This favor began at the first Communion and through the preservation of the species continued 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 exercised a new dominion and sway over them of not permitting any terrestrial and visible images to enter except 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-

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terior meditations and contemplations were actuated by infused images and by the science connected with the abstract 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 conversing 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 spiritual 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 holiness and perfection of her state, or which were not necessary 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 seldom and sparingly, and this only at times, when saint Peter or saint John asked Her, or in order to avoid astonishment in others at not seeing Her eat. But when She thus in obedience or in humility tasted food, She perceived not the common taste or savor of it, so that her

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 history), 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 enjoy 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-

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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 without 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 understand 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 perceive the joy and pleasure of her divine Son in remaining sacramentally present in her sincerest heart, which with-

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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 virginal 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 describe 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 entrancements 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 intercession 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.

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INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF THE ANGELS, MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

132. My daughter, thou hast so far been well informed 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 supreme 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 knowing of it, approach the holy Sacrament without the proper disposition, as if by haphazard or habit, and without being solicitous for the reverence and holy fear due to it. But as thou art now informed of this secret, I desire that, since by the orders of thy superiors thou receivest 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 remembrance of what I did, and by it regulate thy aspirations, thy fervor, thy love, and all that is necessary to prepare thy heart as a temple and habitation of thy

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Spouse and highest King. Labor then to collect all thy powers within thyself; before and after receiving observe 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 immediately proceed to act upon their choice without further 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, excited 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

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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 darkness as their light, taste the bitter as sweet, take deadly poison for remedy of their souls, and hold that for wisdom which is nothing but diabolical and earthly ignorance. 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 sensible 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 disturbed and blinded by passion. This is the rule to be followed especially in the exterior works, pursuing them with recollection, with secrecy, and according to the demands 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 PERSECUTE 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 holiness 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 watchful 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 attack from the ravenous wolves of hell threatened the little sheep of her fold; for She well knew their hatred against the new-born children of the Gospel. The watchfulness of the Mother of light served as a wall of defense 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 onward ; being assisted as well by her counsels, her teachings and warnings, as by her incessant prayers and petitions. 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,

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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 therefore reasonable that I also offer my life and all my being for the preservation and increase of what is so highly esteemed 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 teachings, imitating Me in the way of my suffering and the Cross, which my Apostles and disciples and all my intimate 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 behold 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

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out of the depths of the infernal caverns, where they had lain oppressed since the time they had been vanquished 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 weakened, 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 receiving 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 concentrated 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

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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 humility, 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

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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 redeemed 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 deplorable 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 allayed 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 himself 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-

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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 despised, 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 mentioned 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 malady 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 control. 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 paralytic 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 Apostles, 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

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they could not obey this command; because God commanded them the contrary, and it was not right to obey men in opposition to God (Acts 4, 19.) With this warning they were dismissed and the two Apostles immediately repaired to the most holy Queen to report their experience, although She, by a special vision, had been informed 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 Jerusalem were struck with fear and the Apostles preached with greater freedom. But the magistrates and sadducees 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 connected 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 magistrates 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

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the paralytic, this loving Mother feared lest the conversion 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 venomous 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, immediately 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 annihilated 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 despaired 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

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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 succeed 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 annihilating 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 attack and they suggested to their imagination the expediency 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

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Baptism received at their hands. They permitted themselves 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 knowing what had happened to her husband, shortly afterwards 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 contagion 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

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and the covetousness of money. For the same chastisement, 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 ensnared 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 desisted, and the first children of the Church enjoyed much peace and tranquillity. This happiness under the protection of the great Queen and Lady would have continued 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 example and imitate that of the Apostles !

149. When the Apostles were taken prisoners as related 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 following petition: "My supreme Lord, Creator of the universe! 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

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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 also that thy Apostles and disciples must follow this doctrine 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 beseech 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 Apostles, 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-

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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 interest 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 prudent 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

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 important admonitions for thy salvation and for the salvation of the faithful in the Church. First of all thou must meditate upon the sollicitude 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 blessings 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 pernicious 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 reminder. 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 suffer greater torments in hell than those who were lost be-

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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 forgetfulness among men is very blameworthy and deserves a fearful chastisement. How unreasonable and how damnable is the conduct of a man, who for a momentary sensible 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 weakened, 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 subjected 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 infernal caverns all the rest of mankind.

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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, vanity, 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 perish. 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 fortress 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 sollicitude and attention 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 building was to depend, the most prudent Lady lavished especial care upon the apostolic college. Her heavenly sollicitude 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 conferred 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.

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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. During 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 returning 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 Mistress. So formidable the great Queen of the angels appeared 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,

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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 account; 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 ministers of her Lord. When in her absence She could not speak to the Apostles in any of their afflictions, She immediately 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 secretly 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 occasion, or what had been ordered by their Mistress. This happened very often on account of their purity and holiness and on account of the necessity of favoring them with such an abundance of consolation and encouragement. 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 double 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.

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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 their 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 sicknesses. 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 servant of all, infirm with the infirm. So great was the humility, the charity and solicitude of the great Queen of the world, that She refused no service or lowliest ministry to the faithful, no matter how humble and insignificant 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 exhibited 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 Redemption. This happiness the Queen of heaven procured to many souls during her stay upon earth. And, as far as

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was made known to me, this favor is not denied in our days to those, who during their earthly life dispose themselves properly for meriting her presence, as I have written 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 converted 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 duties, 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 attacked 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 another woman and with much cajolery told her to withdraw from those people, who were preaching the Crucified, 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 peacefully and free from danger. The girl answered : "I will do what thou sayest; but what shall I do in regard to

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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 important, 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 zealously sought to exhort and instruct her ; she on the contrary sought to hide and stop her ears in order not to hear him. From these signs the Apostle saw the imminent 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

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 petition 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 charity 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. Proceeding 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 commission 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

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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 expectest." 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 resuscitate 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 powerful 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 itself was a sufficient warranty to proceed. She arose therefore to leave her room and to walk with saint John

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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 walking 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 dismay. 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 approached 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 disciples 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,

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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 assaults. 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

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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 remark, that the heavenly Queen chose the angels for different 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 giving 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, oppressed 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 Saphira, against the astuteness of Lucifer in tempting and ruining human souls, I shall relate it likewise, as far as

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it was made known to me. May the instruction it conveys 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 children of Adam usually follow our inclinations and passions 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 fervor 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. Infected 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. Following 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 received 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-

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tachment to their own interest happened to be, they proceeded from weakness to apostasy from the faith of Christ in order not to incur the displeasure of those powerful Jews. They moreover still retained a certain unhappy 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 apparent 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 beginnings 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 prudent 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

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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 intercourse with them ; for they have very depraved habits and have become still more hardened in their evil inclinations. 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 predestined 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 defile 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 renewed 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 heavenly 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

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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 perdition 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 endless company of the devils and the damned. As the most holy Mary saw, that these two souls and an almost infinite 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 eternally 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-

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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 sorrowful, he was filled with consternation and asked permission 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 triumphant 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 requited 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

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justification for thus incurring the calamity of losing God forever?" Saint John replied: "My Mother and Mistress, if thy sorrow is occasioned by those two apostates, thou must know that among so many there must be unfaithful servants; for even in our apostolate itself was numbered Judas, a disciple in the school of our Redeemer 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 predestined 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 considerable time.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST BLESSED MARY, GAVE ME.

177. My daughter, since in this chapter thou hast particularly 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 perfection which I require of thee. No torment, nor death itself, would I have refused, if such had been neces-

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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 advancing 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 confidence, 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 attracted 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

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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 deprivest 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 accomplish 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 teaching, 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 barren 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.

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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 forgetfulness. 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 communities and families, where many eyes are always watching 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 possessing 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 position, 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 heartburnings 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 behavior 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

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Apostles and disciples, and others of the faithful, excelled 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 Mother, 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 estimation.

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 gratuitously, 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 consolation. 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 comparison 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

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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 Mother 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 presumption. 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 living example the rules of our exterior conduct, which exclude as well the loss of merit as the hindrance of the greatest perfection. Thus in her modesty She never refused to give counsel to the Apostles when they so frequently 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

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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 workings of grace. Such dispositions made him very pleasing 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, revealed 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

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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 disputes 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 testimony of the faith of Christ. In order to destroy him, he incited the most incredulous of the Jews to kill saint Stephen in secret. Lucifer was tormented by the virtue

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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 assaults, 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 complain to Her, saying: "My Lady and Protectress, when shall the day arrive, in which I shall pay to my God and

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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 mayest 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 perfect, 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 deacon. 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 converts, 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 founded the complaint of the Greeks. The daily administration 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

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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, especially 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 complained 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 superintendents 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 resentment 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 persons.

191. But saint Stephen did not on that account neg-

lect preaching or arguing with the unbelieving Jews. As these Jews could not murder him in secret, nor overcome 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 temple and the Law, and of asserting that Jesus would destroy 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 messenger, 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

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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

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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 accepting 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 according 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 intercession 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 sentence. 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-

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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 especial 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 blasphemer 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 compassion 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 receive 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. Immediately the angels of the Queen bore his pure soul to the

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 reward 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, Patriarchs, 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 participated 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 completed 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 conversion might be so much the more glorious the Lord

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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 disciples 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, appear 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, besides 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 distinguish 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

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savor of the senses; thus they become incapable of attending 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 knowledge 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 disciple. 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 acceptance 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 dictatorial 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

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hence all has gone wrong, and all the governments have been filled with injustice and thrown into frightful confusion.

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 likewise find cause for imitating me, and blessing his immense 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 account of the zealous efforts of Saul in his jealous defense 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

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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 persecutions with invincible courage. In his diabolical astuteness 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 together his demons and said to them : "I am much disturbed 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 succeeding in destroying them, we ourselves shall be overcome 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

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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 suggestions, 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 conferences, 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 torments, 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 persecution was so severe, as saint Luke tells us, that the

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seventy-two disciples fled from Jerusalem, scattering through Judea and Samaria, but at the same time they began to preach through all the land with unfaltering courage. 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, remained 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 reverently 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 encourage 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 necessary 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 operating 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

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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 confused 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 difficulties; 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 encouraged 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 Lucifer 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 encouraged them to remain firm and hope for the divine assistance in this tribulation. Strengthened by this exhortation 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 Mistress and departed from Jerusalem with her benediction. All of them She exhorted and encouraged, admonishing

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them not to be disheartened on account of persecutions, nor to give up preaching Christ crucified ; and they faithfully continued their preaching in Judea, Samaria and other provinces. In their labors She comforted and assisted 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.

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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-

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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 importance 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-

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verse, in thy ineffable kindness Thou hast begun the

magnificent work of thy holy Church. It is not according 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 future 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 children 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

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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 wording 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 himself. 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. Immediately 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

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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 infinite 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 unworthy) as the instruments of his divine will in this work and for the glory and honor of his holy name. Together 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 securely 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 depart 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

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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 established 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 Apostles, 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 began, 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.

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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 pronouncing 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 faithful, 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

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of the Church, confess and proclaim all that thou hast set down as the divine and infallible truth of the Catholic 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 recorded in this chapter, I wish for thy greater information 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 Virgin 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 intercession the Lord was induced to inspire the Church to repeat 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 reverence and gratitude, contained in the Creed.

220. Many times the holy angels sang to me the

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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 continuous 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. Recommend 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 conscience, 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-

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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 PARTITION THE EARTH AMONG THEMSELVES; OTHER DOINGS OF THE GREAT QUEEN OF HEAVEN.

222. In the diligence, watchfulness and solicitude, which the most prudent Mother devoted to the government 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 household 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 secretaries, 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 accepted 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

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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 moving 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 veneration upon all. She told them to omit no means of making 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 enveloped 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 restored the sick to health, raised the dead or expelled the demons from the possessed by merely placing the Credo

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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 according 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 prodigies 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 included 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

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was informed of two reasons for this liberality: first, just as the wisdom, goodness and power of God so ardently desired men to participate in his Divinity by sharing 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 descended 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 omnipotence 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, began 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-

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 Redeemer 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 prostrate 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 instruct us to which kingdoms and provinces each of us shall depart according to thy good pleasure for the preaching of thy holy name."

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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 appointments 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 successors, 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 afterwards 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."

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"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 persecution."

"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."

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"The servant of Christ, our dearest brother Bartholomew, 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 Mesopotamia, 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 abundance of thy wonderful works." This entire and ready obedience of the Apostles to the vicar of Christ our

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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 influences 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-

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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 children 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 Dispensatrix 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 faithful 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

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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 perfection. With this adornment and beauty, which was patent to the angels and saints, the heavenly Lady was an object of admiration, inducing them to praise and glorify the Most High for the worthy exercise of all his attributes 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. Speaking to them many other words of sweetness and life, She congratulated them on her knees in the name of her divine Son for the obedience they had shown, and in her own name, She thanked them for the zeal they had manifested 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

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, although more ungrateful than the heathens, was especially favored. Afterwards all the Apostles gradually departed 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, Calvary, the holy Sepulchre, the place of the Ascension, Bethany and the other memorable spots as far as possible. 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 Mother 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-

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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 instrument 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 Circumcision 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 tenderness of a Mother, She told them that these remembrances, 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 remembrances 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 prostrated themselves in adoration of the sacred relics. Embracing 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

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saint Peter, but in many other neighboring and more remote regions. This is not difficult to understand; because 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 frequently 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 nourishment 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 unknown 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),

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and the ancient beauty in which the Apostles have found 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 consideration 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 obstacle 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 communication 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

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co-operators and executors of the immense love of God for the souls created to be sharers in his Divinity. Secondly, thou must ponder the greatness and abundance of the gifts and favors, which the infinite power communicates 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 followers of truth. Hence they were elevated to an ineffable 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 omnipotence 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.

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243. And to the greater confusion of the negligent ministers of the Church in our days, I desire thee to understand, that in his eternal decrees the Most High dispenses 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 pervert 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 prelates 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-

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ness, which is due to priesthood. The sacerdotal dignity and the precious vestments of virtue are soiled by contagion with the worldly ; the anointed of the Lord, consecrated 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 interest; they love money, they place their hopes in treasures 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 petty whims of women, and sometimes make themselves participants in their counsels of malice and wickedness. There is hardly a sheep in the fold of Christ, which recognizes in them the voice of its Pastor, or finds from them the nourishment of that redeeming virtue and holiness, 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 necessitous 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 equally, 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

and forget to make them fruitful in themselves, how can they expect them to flow over on the rest of the human family? On this account the infidels are not converted 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 service, 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 infidels testify, whether they are converted, whether heresies are extirpated at the expense of the ecclesiastical treasures. But the public voice will loudly proclaim, that from these same treasures palaces were built, primogenitures 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 ecclesiastical 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 spiritual goods, with base acquisition of stipends; and if those

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two selfish ends are reached, they care not for other results 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 teachers 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 advancement. As the divine truths reach the ears of the sinners so adulterated, they impress upon the mind rather 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 artifices 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 preachers 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 liberal; 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

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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 sinners ; 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 Omnipotent 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, courageous 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

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the law merely from the outside, without its spirit and without the divine insight, which was necessary to understand 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 charity), 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 convinced that he was zealously promoting the honor of God in upholding the ancient law of Moses and its divine ordinances. It appeared to him that in acting thus he was defending God's honor ; for he had not really understood 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

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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 destroying 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 indignation as a virtue to be gloried in. The demons executed 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

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found the heart of Saul on that occasion so ready to execute 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 induce 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 insanity 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 conversion of Saul. Neither did he further entertain the treacherous designs against the apostles, although Lucifer sought to make their assassination appear as a deed worthy of his courageous spirit. Rejecting all these wicked thoughts, he resolved to incite all the Jews to persecute the Church, until it should be destroyed together with the name of Christ.

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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 estimated from the fact, that on that very day they held another meeting in order to consult how they could preserve 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, unless permitted by God on some particular occasion ; nevertheless 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 forethought 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 rebound 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 wonderful 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

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 immediately gave to Saul the commission he asked, especially 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 Lucifer and his demons sought to inspire him and his companions. 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 penetrating 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-

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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 somewhat discouraged at the fury and persistence of his persecution, the kindest Mother was filled with great sorrow. Considering, in her heavenly prudence, how important was this affair, She roused Herself to new courage 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 persecution of the beloved Church Thou hast commended to my care shall prevail and be not put down by thy almighty 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

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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 foreseen 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 fulfillment of all my will and pleasure, what are thy requests? 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 infinite 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 unheard 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 children 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 desired 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 conversing 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

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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 conclusive 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 efficacious 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 consolation 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 natural life, if the Lord had not preserved Her by the miraculous interference of his almighty power. Although in

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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 persecutes, and a preacher of my name and glory. I shall now proceed to receive him immediately into my friendship 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 immense 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 omnipotence." Again Saul answered with greater fear and trembling: "Lord, what dost Thou command and desire to do with me?" The companions of Saul heard these questions and answers, though they did not see the

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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-reaching 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 conception, 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 Wisdom 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 opposition 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 sufficiently glorious, if the Lord had not given more than

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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, immediately 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 invincible virtue of the divine power! O infinite efficacy of the merits of the life and death of Christ! It was certainly 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 wonderful 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 proportionately 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 ordinary vision, though in a transient manner, he saw the Divinity clearly and intuitively. Besides the being of

God and his attributes of infinite perfection, he recognized 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 justification 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 deepest 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 revealed 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 offering 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 composed 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 seeing 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

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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 admiration 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 darkness 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 induce 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 sufficiently 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 enemies." 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 conversion 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

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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 restoring sight to him by the imposition of hands. But of this vision of Saul, Ananias at that time had no knowledge. Therefore he answered: "Lord, I have information of this man having persecuted thy saints in Jerusalem and caused a great slaughter of them in Jerusalem; and not satisfied with this, he has now come with warrants 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 Damascus, 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

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 Messiah 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 increasing 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,

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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 instrument 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 Omnipotent 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 conversion, 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

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newly acquired knowledge of heavenly things in God he had recognized Her as his most kind Helper in his conversion and salvation; yet the wickedness\* of his past life abashed, humiliated and somewhat frightened him, as one unworthy 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 infinite 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 immediately 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 obtained 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 salvation, 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

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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 friendship 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 commission 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 fulfilled 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, beseech 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

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having so undeservedly marked me with the character and divine light of his children. The more I fled 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 retribution 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 protection. Let Her receive me as a child of the Church which She loves so much. All the days of my life I shall devote 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

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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 result 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 ignorant 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 inclined 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 cooperate 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 Sacraments of the Church; but not all persevere in their justification 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 exclaimed : "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

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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 wonderful grace and friendship of God ; but also because he cooperated 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, resolved 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 yielded to his divine will and disposition. He not only received him with great pleasure, but multiplied exceedingly his graces, gifts and wonderful favors, which even Paul would not have received or ever have merited without this entire submission to the wishes of the Lord.

275. Conformably to these truths, my daughter, I desire thee to execute fully my oft-repeated commands and

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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 reference 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 governed 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 particular manner obliged to this obedience, because the Most High looks upon thee with an especial love and grace and

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desires to use thee as an instrument in his hands, as sists thee, governs thee, and moves thee directly as well 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 wisdom of the most learned, the counsel of the most prudent, 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 doctrine 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 friendship 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 admonished us to throw all our care upon the Lord who is so solicitous 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

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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 earthliness 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 security, 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 protection 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 enraged 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 forgetfulness, 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 hidden schemes of malice concocted by the demons against the mysteries of Christ, against the Church and her children. These I have described in many passages, particularly 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 conversion of saint Paul, the Lord has shown to me this truth more openly, enabling me to describe and make known the continual combat and strife, which goes on,

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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 merely 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 opposed 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 proportionate 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, although changing the means to attain his end, he never changes his will in regard to persecuting mankind. On

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 proportion 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 vigilant in persecuting us, that he commences the combat 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 warfare (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 astuteness 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 deprive 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;

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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 conceived 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 Sacrament can easily be administered. For this purpose they suggest and tempt the mothers to many disorders and excesses, 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 administer 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 Providence, which insures the proper effects of natural causes in their time, independently of the perversion or hin-

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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 commanded 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 faithful, 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 particular 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

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in which a human being is conceived, the Lord commands 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 intention or rightful purpose, that they committed excess and sin in the act of generation. This is the strongest argument 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 conceived 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

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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, because 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 chastisement. 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 excess 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 effective arms against the malign spirits are the divine truths and mysteries of the Divinity and of the most holy

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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 himself. 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 repeat 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 Baptism ; 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

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so many perils, are filled with great anxiety and thus begin 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 applied to us. If we would avail ourselves of these advantages, 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 astuteness 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-

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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 example. 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 inclinations and passions, unless prevented by special influences. Hence these children, coming to the use of reason, will follow the bent of the inclinations and passions 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 possession 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 withdraw 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 demons; because those malign spirits allege all the sins of the parents against the children and likewise the wrongful 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

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up a great fight to prevent the good angels from withdrawing 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 workings 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

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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 applied to it, when it spurns them; that it should not benefit 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

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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 ordinary weapons furnished them by the sacramental character 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 powerful; 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 perfection 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

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the holy angels strenuously exert themselves in their defense, so that, as Isaias tells us (Is. 42, 3); the broken 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 eagerness, that they seemed to have renounced their God, living 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 available grounds for their defense. The demons cry out: This soul at least is altogether ours, subject to our commands, 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 inspirations 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,

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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 complete 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 repentance, 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. Although 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 appropriateness, 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

souls come out of their sinful ways and are snatched from the claws of the dragon; and as there are innumerable 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 whenever they perceive any sinner calling upon or remembering 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 resistance 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 mysteries, the power, and holiness of his Mother, and this new knowledge, filling them with consternation and confusion, 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 declaring 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

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 treachery 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 powerful aid the whole infernal reign of confusion is terrorized 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 harmony with their pride and arrogance to enter into a new contest with the One, by whom they have been overthrown 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 continue their persecutions to the end of our lives. I was made to understand, that if God were not so outrageously misused in his mercy, He would often interpose, even miraculously, his divine Omnipotence in our behalf. Especially would He do this in defense of the mystical body of the Church and of some Catholic gov-

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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 deceived 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 desire 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 solicitous 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

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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 themselves 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 command, 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

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them by such great miracles, He will gain them through Baptism and the other Sacraments, by which they can justify 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

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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 Judaism, now incensed against the new Church of the Crucified; 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 admirable protection if men will only co-operate and correspond on their part. Hence the Apostle admonishes them to walk carefully amid all these dangers and conflicts;

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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

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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 converted to the way of life through his justification (Luke

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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 inhabitants 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 immediately give notice to the demons in the eternal dungeons 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 conversion 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 confusion and misfortune in hell at the good works of the just. On such occasions, amid howls of despair, the

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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 Sacraments, 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 penitence 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 dearest, in what dangerous ignorance mortals ordinarily live, depriving heaven of its joy in the justification of souls, hindering the external glory connected therewith, holding 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

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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 authors and masters of lies and although they deal with men only in order to mislead and ruin them by their deceptions, 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 communicate 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 obligations 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 IMPLORES 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 described 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. Although 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

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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 tribulations and perils as her own and, as far as her love was concerned, She desired to suffer them all Herself, if possible, 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. Although 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 salvation.

309. She did not know on this occasion, what in particular were the resolves of the hellish foes in their

conference; for She understood only in general, that their fury was directed against Her in an especial manner. 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 admirable reverence and fervor upon the ground, thus besought Him :

310. "Most high Lord and eternal God, holy and incomprehensible, behold here prostrate before Thee thy humble handmaid and vile wormlet of the earth, supplicating Thee, eternal Father, through thy onlybegotten Son and my Lord Jesus Christ. Do not despise my petitions 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 communicated 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 during 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 rearing 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."

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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, entirely pleasing to the Divinity and worthy of being received 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 different hierarchies descended from heaven, who surrounded 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 desires and petitions." Then turning to the most blessed

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Mary, he said: "My beloved Daughter, chosen from myriads according to my pleasure, thou shalt be the instrument 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

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 discussed 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

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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 commanded 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, because 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 understanding such things) God could not will anything contrary 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, therefore the three Persons did not wish to decree the execution of anything without, as it were, consulting the wisdom and the pleasure of the Queen of all Creation.

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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 measure (Wis. 11, 21) and all their means and ends in highest 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 predestination 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 compensate Herself for not being allowed to take upon Herself 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

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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 ecstasy, 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 necessities of the Church in order to attend to its most pressing 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 preaching 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

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animate and confirm him with the hope of divine assistance in his tribulations. Obediently the angels fulfilled all these errands with their accustomed celerity, manifesting themselves in visible forms to the Apostles and disciples. All of them were exceedingly consoled and encouraged 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 manner. 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 Jerusalem, and, having preached some days in Judea, he departed 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 Carthagen where he began his preaching. He tarried but a short time in Carthagen, 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.

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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 account 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 himself 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 underwent in Jerusalem, having in the few years of his apos-

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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 miracles 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 account of the fertility of the soil and the facility of communication 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

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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, proclaiming 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

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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 resignation 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 beloved apostle saint James. Thus informed She was moved with tenderest 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 danger. 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 reminder on her part, nor fail in anything that was necessary. 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

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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 disciples 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 accompanied them and stirred them on, were hurled to the profound abysses, thus leaving saint James and his disciples 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.

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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 traversed 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 missionary tours in many parts of Andalusia. Then he came to Toledo, Portugal Galicia and Asturia. Afterwards, 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 miracles 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

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many bishops for the government of the children he engendered 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, concerning 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 without regard to opinions, and without mixing up my certain knowledge with opinions. If what I write follows naturally 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 authenticity 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

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wisdom and will, as described by thee in this chapter, is so great and extraordinary, that it exceeds all the capacity 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 vigilant 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 intervened from the descent of the Holy Ghost to my Assumption 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 perfections. 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

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other creature and fill Us with the plenitude of satisfaction. 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 equitable 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 counsels. 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 impossible 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

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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 torments 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 decrees, 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-

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enly science; and all of them understood this conformity 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 permitted 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 obligations 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

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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 distinguish 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 assure thee of a participation in the favors 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 ADVICE 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 persecution 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 inciting certain malicious men. And because divine Provi-

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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 practice 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 enjoyed 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-

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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 destruction of the Church and for the possible debasement of the great Queen from her high state of reputed holiness. But the serpent's ignorance about Her was incomparably 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 indignation 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 enterprise 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 companionship 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 unfortunate 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

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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 persecution 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 restorer 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-

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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 abhorred the Crucified 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, illusions 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 eminent 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

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 charity. It would have deprived Her of life many times, if, as I have often said, the Lord had not wonderfully preserved 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. Especially 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 innumerable souls, whom they were deceiving and perverting, 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 interior peace and tranquillity and her exterior equanimity and serenity, yet her compassionate anxiety and maternal solicitude failed not to reveal, in

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some measure, the sorrow of her heart in her countenance. 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 prosperous 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 console Her and alleviate her grief, but I find myself incapable 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,

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She thereupon rose from her prayer and sought him out saying: "Master, tell me what thou asketh of thy servant." I have already stated, that the Lady called the priests and ministers of her Son "masters." The Evangelist 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 received him as my prelate and superior, whose will and desire, as soon as they become known to me, I wish to obey 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 Apostles, 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 implacable wrath and fury for the destruction of the

Church. This city of Jerusalem will be the first and fore-

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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 children 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 ministers 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

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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 superior. 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 journey 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

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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 consoled 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

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for the needs of the Church in her absence; for at that time She had no knowledge of the duration of her sojourn or of her return to Jerusalem. The most effectual 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. Responding 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 heavenly 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

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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 commission 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 kindness 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

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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 creation. Christ the Savior gave them his blessing and ascended with the rest of the angels to heaven. The purest Mother, borne by the hands of the seraphim and accompanied 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 responded, 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

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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 wonder, with heavenly consolation, which caused them to remain 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 material. 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.

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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 refulgence 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 destined to be consecrated by thee upon earth for the erection of a temple and house of prayer, where, under my patronage and name He wishes to be glorified and magnified, 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 assistance ; for this is to be my house and temple, my inheritance 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 immediately 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 salvation of the human race."

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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 invocation of his holy Mother. As witness to this fact they immediately worshipped and revered 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 Mesopotamia, 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 worship of the Most High until the end of the world, where

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the angels were to ascend with the prayers of the faithful and to descend with incomparable blessings and favors to be distributed to all those 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 Jerusalem 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 enemies 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.

Mother, although they seem absolutely to assure the preservation of this temple and sanctuary, yet they contain an implicit condition, as is the case with many other promises of holy Scripture in regard to particular blessings 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 privilege, 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-

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tion to the sacred temple and to the great blessings promised through Mary to all her devout supplicants. Lucifer 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 possessing these advantages, would lead a more wicked life and consequently treat with contempt this condescending clemency, which no one can ever merit, then certainly their ingratitude to God and his most blessed

Mother would provoke a greater indignation and punishment 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 sincere 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 favored and indebted than other faithful. Let them esteem their treasure, happily enjoy it, and let them not make the propitiatory of their God a useless and common dwelling, converting it into a court of justice; for the most holy Mary has appointed it as a workhouse or councilhouse of her mercies.

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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 assistance of the holy angels, before he left Saragossa, completed the little chapel, in which now the image and the column are still preserved. Afterwards the Catholics erected the sumptuous temple and whatever else surrounds 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 happened 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 connection 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

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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 returning 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 afterwards. 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 apparition 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 signaled itself before all nations and kingdoms in the public veneration, reverence and devotion 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

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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 defense 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 ancient devotion toward the most blessed Mary, and consider themselves more bound and obliged to her service than other nations. Let them hold especially the sanctuary 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 happiness 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-

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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 machinations 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 unturned, 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-

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ately back into their forgetfulness, 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 occasions 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 watchfulness be more earnest and continual in order to vanquish 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 themselves 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

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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 writing 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 designs in regard to thee, as thou hast desired before beginning 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. Remember 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 Ephesus; the 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 blessed 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 ARRIVES THERE; HE VISITS THE GREAT QUEEN IN EPHESUS ; REFLECTIONS ON THE MYSTERIOUS HAPPENINGS DURING ALL THESE JOURNEYS.

365. The most blessed Mary, having enriched and blessed Saragossa and the kingdom of Spain by her presence, and her promises of protection, and having established 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

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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 resolved 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 fervor for the defense and increase of the Church, She spent the greater part of the four days after her return to Jerusalem. 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 because 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

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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 consoled 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 Mistress 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 humility 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

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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 neighborhood 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 surrounding 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 celestial 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 solicitude of saint John was met by the heavenly Mother with incredible humility and gratitude; for these two virtues,

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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 embarked 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, narrate 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 humanity 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

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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 navigation, 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 wonderful 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 missing\*, 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

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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 immediately 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 necessary and much time to describe all the doings of the most blessed Mary and the favors of heaven, which She dispensed 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 manifest 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-

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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 faithful. 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 Jerusalem, the great Queen of angels sent her angels to be his guard and protection ; for the wrath and fury of hell was

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 completion of the thirty-four years, being the seven days before 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 afterwards, 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 Jerusalem 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.

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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 assume, that saint Paul spent the first year after his conversion, 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 referring 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

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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 Jerusalem. 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 existence (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 themselves and exert all the forces of their malice for the entire destruction of saint Paul, and not to leave any stone unturned in Jerusalem and in all the world for the attainment of this object. The demons without delay set about this work, exciting Herod and the Jews against the Apostle, and directing their attention to the burning zeal with

which he began to preach in Jerusalem.

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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 immediate 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 exalted 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

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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, protected 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 sojourn of the great Queen in Ephesus. When he had brought the chapel or small temple of the Pillar in Saragossa 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

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the Most High during his travels and his preaching in Spain, and especially for her having visited him and conferred 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 friendship, 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."

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385. The most holy Mary promised to present his petition 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 consolations 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 momentary 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 enjoy 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 blessing 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 desired 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,

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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 martyrdom. 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 Apostle 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.

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#### 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 being and faculties of creatures, so also, according to right reason, He is to be their sole last end; for if man has received 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 forgetfulness 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-

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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 invoked 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 concerning 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 undesirable and humble things for thy use; for otherwise thou canst not imitate me in the spirit, in which without ostentation 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 contained 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 injured or as if God had treated them unjustly. With such a disorderly affection parents are wont to love their children, and children their parents, married men their wives,

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and wives their husbands, and all of them, their possessions, 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 impossible 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 Providence 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 willingly 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 permitted to love nothing. The anxious desire of seeing the supreme Good and of loving God eternally and forever in heaven must alone be perpetual in thee. For this happiness 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

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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-weighting 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 IMPRISONMENT 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 Jerusalem, 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 consternation 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 ignorant 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 converted to the faith some of the Jews, among whom were especially Hermogenes and Philetus, both of them magicians and sorcerers, who had a pact with the devil. Hermogenes was deeply versed in magic and Philetus was

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his disciple; the Jews wanted to engage the services of these two in order either to overcome saint James in dispute, or if that was impossible, to take away his life by their magic arts.

393. This wickedness the devils had intended to execute 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, Hermogenes, 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 doctrine. But fearing the diabolical arts of his master Hermogenes, 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 himself 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

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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 afterwards 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. Although the seed of the faith had sprung up in the hearts of these men, it took no sufficient root to resist the temptations of the demon, whom they had served and familiarly entertained for so long a time. The evil and perverse inclinations 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

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about the mystery of the Redemption, proving it to them with admirable wisdom from the testimonies of the ancient writings and moving his audience to tears of compunction, the priest and the scribe were roused to diabolical 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 disturber 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 petitions. During this her prayer, She saw a great multitude 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 execution, while numerous others approached their Queen at

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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 protection 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 possessed 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 Jerusalem 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 manifest 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

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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 inhabitants 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, composed 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 intuitive 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-

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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 protection 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 fourteenth of the moon of March. From this passage it appears 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

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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 imprisonment. Saint Peter, bound with many chains, lay in the dungeon awaiting his execution after the holidays of the Pasch. (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 tribulation. 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, prostrations and bloody tears, supplicating the Lord for the liberation of saint Peter and the protection of the holy Church. These prayers of the blessed Mother penetrated

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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 sovereign 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 threatening 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 resolved 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 tribulations 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

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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 precipitated 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 chastisement 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

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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

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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

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courtiers, angels and saints understand that, for the exaltation 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 defend and guard them against the dangers of that last hour ; I will ward off the cruel enemies that seek the perdition 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 rewarded 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 another 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 forgetfulness ; 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 charity 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.

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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 fulfillment 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 children 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 OF 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 normal 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 concerning the exalted state in which the most holy Mary lived never having dropped from it but rising higher

and higher from the first instant of her Conception without 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 Wisdom 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 complacency 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 progress. In these aspirations the liberation of saint Peter,

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which made it possible for him to continue the government 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, afforded 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), ordained 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 purpose 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, saying: "Minister of the Most High and creature of his hands, my solicitude for the holy Church strongly urges

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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 permitted 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 betook 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 somewhat 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 vengeance against them; but as far as I was concerned, always desired their salvation if possible, and never hastened their punishment. Return to the Lord, angel, and tell Him that my tribunal and power is inferior to and dependent 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 disposition of his divine Providence in order that this soul may not be lost." The angel hastened back with this second message of his Queen and having presented it before

the throne of the most blessed Trinity, was sent back to

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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 intercession 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 condescension of his charity, He has granted me in mortal life to be the Refuge of the children of Adam, the Advocate and Intercessor of sinners; that my tribunal should be that of kindness and clemency for the refuge and assistance 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 rigorous 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

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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 is the 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, considering 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 torments 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

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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 evangelist 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 descended 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

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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 Savior (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 seraphim ; 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

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learned in what, notwithstanding the admixture of many errors, could be called human sciences, the blessed Apostle convincingly taught them the true science, making use not only of miracles and signs, but of argumentation 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 prodigies 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 Creator. 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 considered him a powerful instrument for the persecution of

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the followers of Christ our Lord. The divine Providence 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 temptations 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 sovereignty; 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

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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 permitted 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 mysterious 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 exaltation 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

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dragon may exert all his wrath and fury. If they overcome 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 solicitude 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 present 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 believers 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.

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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 benefits 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 powerful, 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 unbridled, the blood of Christ is trodden under foot, the fruits of the Redemption are held in contempt; no one

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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 overcome by their cowardice and content themselves with working for themselves alone, forsaking the common cause of the souls of others. Hence thou mayest understand, my daughter, that now, after the evangelical Church has been established by my divine Son and fertilized 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 findest 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

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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 brethren 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 measure 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 EPHEBUS; HER ANGELS BRING HER TO THE EMPYREAN 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 Herself 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 greater 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

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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 abominations; 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 consent 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 dwelling 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 exercised on me, for I am willing to suffer for the salvation of

these unfortunates. Thou, O Allpowerful, whose infinite goodness and mercy forever conquers in good or evil, canst take away the obstacle, which prevents their profiting of thy blessings; let not my eyes behold the destruction 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 indignation 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 incarnation 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 possession or avarice ; in these He seeks to induce them to renounce 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

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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 men 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.

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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 approved 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 expected 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 ;

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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 themselves of extended provinces, and had constituted Ephesus as the centre of their power. For a long time they governed themselves, disdaining subjection to men and life in their company, for such a life, they in their presumptuous pride, called slavery or servitude. Since much is said of them in histories, though with many contradictions, 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 worldly 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-

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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 veneration 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 heathens, who were as prodigal as they were blind in attributing 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 rebuilt 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

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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 connection 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 deservest; 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

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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 enemies. 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 Mother; 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 therefore secretly asked permission of her Son to speak to him and said to him: "John, my Son, my heart is grieved on account 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 restrain 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.

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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 according 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 superstitions and profaning the souls; but in the shortest twinkling 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 localities 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 jurisdiction 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, continually evolving new schemes of malice and wickedness against God and his Church. Following up her victory

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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 establishment 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-

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teenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles concerning the temple of Diana, which saint Luke relates, that a renowned artificer of Ephesus, called Demetrius, who manufactured 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 temple 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 ordinary 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 temples in her honor. So ingrained was the ignorance of the true God among the heathens, that many Apostles and

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 purpose, 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 manifested Itself not by an intuitive, but by an abstractive vision. She prostrated Herself before the sovereign throne, adored the immutable being of God in profound humility 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."

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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 promote 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 understand, that I appoint Mary as the chief and leader of all my hosts, and as the conqueror of all my enemies gloriously to triumph over them." The other two divine Persons, 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 approached 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 countenance, 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

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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 most 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

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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 issuing 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 vengeance 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 concealing it in accordance with the state of sanctity, 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

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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 acknowledgments 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 debasing Herself in such an admirable and resistless a manner, that hell could not bear it nor remain longer in her presence; for the Lord had ordained that Lucifer and his ministers should recognize and feel these acts of humility. 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

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thus make him like to God in this respect. But the fulfillment of this desire is impossible, since it implies in itself a contradiction. The essence of holiness consists in the creature 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 overcome 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 desiring 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

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worship, and above all, persevering obedience and humility, 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 warning, 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 purely 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 inclinations 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 prevents 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

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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 divine 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 MYSTERIES.

456. After the death of the unhappy Herod the primitive 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 retired 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

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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 enjoyed 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 consoled 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 following 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

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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, addressing 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 important 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

only 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 preaching 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

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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 prudence 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 evading 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 answered : "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 passage for Palestine and to prepare whatever was necessary for a speedy departure. In the meanwhile, at the request of the Evangelist, most blessed Mary called together the women who were her acquaintances and disciples in Ephesus, in order to take leave of them and instruct them in what they must do to persevere in their

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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 observance 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 forgotten, 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 absence keep in mind the doctrine, which you have received from me and which I heard from the mouth of the Redeemer of the world. Look upon Him always as your Lord and Master and as the Spouse of your souls, serving 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

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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 necessary 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 Creator 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 appointed 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 Baptism, 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

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Our Father, the Creed and the ten Commandments together 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 request 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 consolation, 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 inhabitants 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 afterwards 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 Humblest of the humble asked saint John for his blessing and with it they betook themselves to the ship, having re-

mained in Ephesus two years and a half. On leaving their dwelling all her thousand angels manifested themselves 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 allies. 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 preparing for an onset to break the bounds of the abysses that imprisoned the ocean (Ps. 13, 9). The ship was

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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 hurricane 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 overwhelmed 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 supplied 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

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dictates of her wisdom. As during this tempestuous voyage She personally experienced the dangers of navigation, 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 considerations 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 tranquillity of her soul, She suffered much bodily inconvenience 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 evangelist 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 console himself by assisting and comforting Her. Although the voyage from Ephesus to Palestine usually lasted 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

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Mother answered him: "Do not be disturbed, my son; for we must now fight the battles of the Lord and overcome 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 recovered 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 became 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 conflict 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

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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, becoming 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 embarkation, 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

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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 temptations 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 virtues, She preferred obedience to her private devotions. 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 blessing 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 accounts 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.

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INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

473. My Daughter, I desire that thou continually renew 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 disciple. 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 reward 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 another, 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 destruction; for in all states and conditions of life the demon seeks to instill this poison into mortals, secretly

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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 altogether 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 entailing 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 entertaining 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 insignificant, they may arrive at swallowing the camels of the more serious sins. Those that continually hover about

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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, making 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 appeals to the higher authority and thus asks for exemptions 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 immediate superior.

477. My daughter, I do not wish thee to follow the teachings of those who seek liberty and license in fol-

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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 exemptions perverts the Christian and the religious life. At all times thou must live in humble and obedient subjection, 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 humiliate 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

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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 learning 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, despising 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 commanded, will immediately be cast down, afflicted and

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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 according 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 command 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 describe the plenitude of perfection of all the doings of the most blessed Mary; for unfailingly are we overcome 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 devotion. Wonderful are the events which have been manifested to me for the purpose of being recorded in this and the following chapters.

481. After the most blessed Mary had complied obediently with the will of saint Peter, as I have related in the

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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. Applying her 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

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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 arrived 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 completely 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 immediate fulfillment of this promise, the Lord ordained that Lucifer and his hosts should then and there become convinced of a power in Her such as they had not experienced before.

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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 foolishly 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 console 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

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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 continual 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 adherence 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

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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 Antioch 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 the return of the Queen of heaven when they came to Jerusalem. 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 especial 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 creatures. 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 blessing. 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.

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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 heavenly 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 Barnaby 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 Jerusalem, 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 interposed 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 Barnaby 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

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on the last day we shall celebrate the sacrifice of the Mass, by which we shall dispose our hearts to receive the divine 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 ceremonies 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 wonderful 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 experienced 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

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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 occasions, 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 somewhat painful to her, because the demons are so abominable 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 greatness and superiority of that Woman, whom they were persecuting as their Enemy. They were made to perceive 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 enveloped 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 defend 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,

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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 torments 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 before 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 despair 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 themselves, with all the swiftness in their power, from the upper regions into the abyss. They gave forth dreadful 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

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presence the power of the Almighty and of his holy Mother. Having won this triumph the most serene Empress 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 proposed 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 decrees of the divine will and mind.

494. Immediately, in execution of this will and proposal 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 resplendent 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-

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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 intuitively, 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 directed with new fervor toward the Church consigned to Her under the above symbol. Enriched by these favors, She was borne back by the angels to the Cenacle, having in her hands the mystical temple She had received 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 disposition 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

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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 chapter 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 ceremonies of the Church, in order to stop some abuses introduced by the indiscreet piety of some of the faithful. This is held to be the first council of the Apostles, although 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 council 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

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the Lord might not be wanting, it happened, that, both in the Cenacle at coming to their decision, and in Antioch when the letters were read before the faithful, the Holy Ghost descended in visible fire, so that all the faithful 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 immediately 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 protection and prayers, She sent them filled with new consolation 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 several 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 motionless. The most blessed Mary, in her boundless charity, 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

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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 victories and triumphs of his Mother might be more glorious, 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 fortitude 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 pursues 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 fervent, 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 overcome 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

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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 disagreeableness 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 common 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 themselves 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 temptation. In order that thou, my daughter, mayest 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 ;

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but I augmented them, together with my prayers, petitions 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 resting 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 therefore 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

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sacramental species and thereby so humiliated and annihilated 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 heretics 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 person 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 Sacraments, 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 veneration the councils of the Church and all such gatherings, and whatever is resolved and established by them; for the Holy Ghost assists at these councils and He fulfills his promise, that He will be with those who gather

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together in his name (Matth. 8, 20). Hence what is thus ordained and commanded must be obeyed. Although 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 withheld 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 OF 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 chapter, 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 exalted 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

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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 serpent, 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

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enveloped in the same enigmatical words. Having sufficiently 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 corresponding 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 disappointment 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 inconceivable 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 remember, 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 ordinary ones. Yet in what I am to speak of now, there is

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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 entirely 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-

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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 straining all their forces and their whole malice in order to cast down this Woman, their Enemy; 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

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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 resources 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 immovable 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 describe; 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.

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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, asking 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 fulfill 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 veneration 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 fetters 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-

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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 refulgent 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

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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 enrichment of the holy Church. And the dragon, in furious envy, that this Woman should be so powerful in establishing 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 devour 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

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 particular 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 something 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 Woman, whom they had with such insane fury sought to cast

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 punishments 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 herself 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

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heaven and with their temerity in persecuting and tempting the incarnate Word and his Mother, and contending with those in whom they had no part or right whatever, since they could accuse Them of no sin, injustice 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 anathematised them and confirmed the sentence of their damnation, 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 creatures and Thou hast never permitted them to be unprofitable 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-

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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 dragon, 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 remain. 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, because 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-

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come the infernal dragon, this impious and powerful enemy would have hindered the effects of the Redemption; therefore this voice of the angel resounded victoriously 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 relationship 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 wonderful favors in the primitive Church. From all these facts he suspects, that the end of the world is at hand, or that

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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 distribute 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 hundred and sixty, less a few days, as mentioned before. In this state, and in others yet to be spoken of, the most

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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 continue 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, besides 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 Catholic 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 happened in reality, since the holy Church, which is the organ and the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost, has condemned 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 Evangelist intimates and describes under the image of this battle

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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 expectations 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 Herself 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 admirable 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.

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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 between 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 treachery, 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 difference of the recompense, how few, my daughter, are the soldiers that follow Christ, as their legitimate Lord, as

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their King, their Chief, and their model ; and how numerous 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 blindness. Merely because God has given men freedom of will, either to follow their Master or not, to show themselves 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 redeemed 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 holiness, the Church would have persevered and Lucifer would have remained crushed (as I said before), if the ingratitude and the forgetfulness of men had not impelled him anew toward the perdition and ruin of the whole globe.

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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 continue 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. Although 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 matters, 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 infinite 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 under 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 mysteries 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 conflagration, 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 miraculous 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

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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. Notwithstanding 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 embarrassed 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 comprehensors 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 he 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 continued 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

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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 embraces, my peace and tranquillity, without being embarrassed 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 regarding 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

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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 always 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 intensity day by day, and thus reached a degree more

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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 intuitive vision, whereas the most blessed Mary saw Him by an abstractive vision as described; secondly, the beatific 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 abstractive 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

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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 impressions 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 terrestrial and in as far as they partook of the sensitive in entering her understanding, the Lord abolished, purging and distilling them of all that they yet contained of their origin in the senses. In place of the images and impressions, 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 exalted level.

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541. This wonder will present no difficulty to the understanding 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 presented 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, although 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 preserved; 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

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infused into Her other kinds of images, which represented exterior objects in a more exalted manner; whereas 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, \while 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 contemplation and vision of the Divinity and the fire of her incomparable 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. Therefore 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

appropriate to her knowledge of God, whom She unceasingly 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 inspect 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 insight 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 without a doubt what God wishes and commands, and therefore is right.

545. For all her other doings then (except what pertained to obedience and holy Communion), the understanding 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-

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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 agreeable 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 solitude prepared for Her by the Lord. In it She was solicitous for the Church without being disturbed, busily employed without inquietude, attentive without distraction, 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 greatness ! Our understanding fails us, our comprehension is

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suspended and our powers are exhausted in the contemplation 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 endowed 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 conversion. 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

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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 possibly 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 wonderful 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 applied Herself to tearful prayers and exercises of atonement 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 exhorted by saint John, in order to bring her to a sense

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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 parts 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 assistance, 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 invincible 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

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(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 of 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 excuse for not ordering their lives in imitation of the life of my divine Son and of my own; for We were an example 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

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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 conception. 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 Redemption. Reflect then, my dearest, that such faults are committed 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 reprehensible, 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 undertakings ; 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 accompanied by such and such conveniences ; or love only when it does not disturb their tranquillity; or if they believe or

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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, professing their readiness for great labors in his service under 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

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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 fulfillment 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 resolves without this consultation, hold in suspicion and as dangerous, and only by comparing it with my teachings, 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 blessings 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 wonderful 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 prostrated 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.

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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 Gospels had arrived and that She should make her arrangements 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 assisted 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 necessity 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 variation 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 descending 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 themselves, 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

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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 beloved 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 writing the first Gospel. While praying in a retired room of the Cenacle and asking to be enlightened for the inception 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 concerning 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 foundation 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 willingness to obey the mandate of the Queen ; and while he conferred with Her about composing his Gospel, the

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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. Before 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 Mistress 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 began 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

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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 principally 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-

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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 vanquished by this mystery, he at once directed the onslaught of heresy against it. For this reason the evangelist 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 ineffable 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-

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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 vouchsafed at her hands. After having thus anticipated the history of the Evangelists, in order to account for the beginnings 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 knowledge 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 tranquillity and peace, which her soul enjoyed.

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 important 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 possible 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 Apostles 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-

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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 according 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, solitudes 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 communed 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 necessity. Although (besides appearing to the Evangelists, concerning which I have already spoken), She appeared 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 assistance 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

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than the other Apostles. Soon after the council of Jerusalem 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 downcast 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 himself 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 conferred 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.

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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 Sacrament in the manner as it is now done on Holy Thursday 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 observances 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 remembered 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

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fervor and humility of saint Peter, failed not in responding 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 experienced 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 disturbance. 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

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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 abominable, because it is so much opposed to my own conduct in life. I repeat it here, in order that thou mayest imitate 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

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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 dignity. 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 himself?

.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 confounded 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.

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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 veneration 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 mysteries and operations of the Lord. To the supreme pontiff 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 pronounced. In order that thou mayest practice my doctrine 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 exterior 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 salvation. 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 unknown works. First of all I will state, that notwithstanding the many privileges which the great Queen of heaven enjoyed, She constantly kept present in her memory 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

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Jesus, so that none of them were hidden to Her or without 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 sorrows, for this was her desire during the time She was still to live in mortal flesh and to this exercise She directed 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 contain 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 crucified with Christ, to continue within Herself his sorrows, renew his Passion, and without this it seemed to her useless 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;

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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 exercises.

578. For each kind of the wounds and sufferings of

Christ our Savior She recited special prayers and salutations, in order to give them special adoration and worship. 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 or 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, mockeries and personal injuries, She practiced most profound humiliations, genuflections and prostrations, and in this manner She sought continually to make up for the affronts 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 magnificence ; and in all the holy angels joined Her, and corresponded 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 suffered 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

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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 compassion 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 evangelist saint John to remain retired in her oratory for

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celebrating the death and burial of her divine Son on the Friday of each week. On those days saint John remained 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 provident and attentive was She in all affairs of charity touching 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

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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 practice such an exalted profession.

582. In these exercises the great Queen sought especially 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 empyrean 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 preparing 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

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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 exercises, such as prostrations in the form of a cross, genuflections, prayers, and adorations of the immutable essence 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 present, 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 creatures 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 angels, obeying Her in joyful admiration, assisted and accompanied Her in these petitions, in which She persevered for the greater part of the night preceding her Communion.

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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

of time came into use in the Roman Church. The material 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

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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 provinces. She charged them to watch over the equitable administration of justice without acceptation of persons; 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 judgments of God for the punishment of both those that govern and that are governed. The fortunate princes promised 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 professed 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-

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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 pleasing, 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 admiration, some broke forth in tears, others in exclamations 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 fortunate, 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

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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 renewed 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 monstrous 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 themselves 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

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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 gaining 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 influence, 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 compensate for the ingratitude and forgetfulness of mortals.

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And in order to do it as I desire, never let thy remembrance of Christ crucified, afflicted and blasphemed be extinguished. Persevere in thy exercises, never omitting 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 performest 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 myself unworthy of Communion and by so many means sought the purity necessary for such a Sacrament, consider 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 Sacrament. 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 approaches 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 Conception 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 Infinite; for thence She had issued only in order to shed forth over and over again her maternal clemency upon the Church (Eccles. 1,7).

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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 approached 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

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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. Coming 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

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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 according 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 reward 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."

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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 reserved 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.

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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 humility, 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 infinite 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.

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After this vision She gave thanks to the most blessed Trinity and again interceded for the Church. Then, entirely refreshed and comforted, the holy angels brought Her back to/ her oratory. There, as described on other occasions, 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 participation of this visit were glorious beyond human capacity 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

sake of watching over the Church, She voluntarily deprived 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: consequently, 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 profound 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

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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 happened 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 Communion, 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 exception/ 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 exception to the end of her life. Fridays and Saturdays, the days of her exercises, were not excepted ; while on Sunday, 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

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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 ingratitude, 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 expects 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

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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 accumulating honors, or riches, in wasting their strength and powers in the enjoyment of corruptible and most vile pleasures?

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610. Alas, my friend, consider how false and treacherous 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 abhorrence: 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 deceitful 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 entirely 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 inestimable 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 IMMACULATE CONCEPTION AND NATIVITY; AND THE BLESSINGS 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 plenitude 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 dependents 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

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, especially 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 worship, 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 congregations 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 ignorant 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 forgetfulness, yet, when She entered upon this new mysterious

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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-

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ercises, Christ descended from heaven and the angels raised Her to his royal throne in heaven, where the celebration of the feast was continued with new glory and to the accidental joy of the courtiers of the heavenly Jerusalem. 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 Immaculate 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 privilege, 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 without 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 without 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, rendered 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.

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This was the manner in which her Immaculate Conception 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 triumphant, 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 returning 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 admirable 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 advanced in merit as far as the highest saints and seraphim, 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,

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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 Patriarchs and Prophets sang their hymns of glory and thanksgiving; Adam and Eve also, because in Her was born the Restorer of their ruin; her parents and her spouse, because 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 mysteries of the Divinity were manifested to Her. This vision, although not intuitive but abstractive, afforded Her a still deeper insight and participation in the Divinity.

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 beginning. On these occasions the Evangelist saint John merited some measure of participation in the feast, for he heard

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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 sacramental 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

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never heard of, especially the frequent beatific and intuitive 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 depend 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 sluggish 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-

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ence for my words. Although thy faults and shortcomings are many, they can all be neutralized by the charity and kindness of the Lord, who has not 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 prevent 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 understand 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 Divinity in mortal life, and certainly have seen it, how, or on what grounds can that be denied to me, what is conceded 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

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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 fruition, 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 understandest 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

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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 extraordinary 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 BLESSINGS WITH HER ANGELS, ESPECIALLY HER PRESENTATION 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 receiving 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 equitable, He will never reject us on account of our poverty, but only on account of our ingratitude. He desires to give us plentifully, 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.

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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 communicated 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 commemoration 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 solitudes She forgot not those of the government of the Church, the instruction 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 children of Adam in comparison with Her are slow, ungrateful and so dull of heart, that the little we do (if we do anything at all), does not appear worthy of consideration; but the great things, which the faithful and thankful 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

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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 activity. Of this quality and excellence of the Divinity our great Queen had acquired a certain ineffable participation, 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 happened, in their wonder at what they saw in their Queen and Lady, that they spoke to Her or to each other : "Powerful, 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 perfections, 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.

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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 supreme 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 Conception 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, renewed 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 parents 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 divine Son were eminently sufficient for all her doings ; yet She recalled those received from all the others ; She permitted Herself no cessation in the practice of humility and obedience, nor ever overlooked the least point or permitted any of the ingenious secrets of these virtues to

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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 sayings" (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 resigning 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 habitation 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, experiencing 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.

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 composed 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 parents in whom her lineage ended. She thankfully rehearsed 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 enjoying 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 multitude of angels; with them She gave thanks to God for having provided Her with parents so holy and conformable 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-

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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 incentive to her loving and inflamed affections. Saint Joachim and Anne derived therefrom also a great additional delight. 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 Redemption 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 contemplation, 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 received by her holy spouse and Herself at the hands of the Most High.

635. After having consumed many hours in this celebration 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 conferences. On taking leave from her holy spouse, She begged him to pray for Her in the presence of the Divinity 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

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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 transfigured 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 Evangelist 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

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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 frequently 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

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of God, which prevents in them a blind and disorderly attachment to such matters; yet they think it a misfortune 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 forgetfulness 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 indebtedness.

639. Tell me then, daughter, what thanks are due to

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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, apparent and transitory goods. From this insatiable thirst grows their unthankfulness ; 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 unbearable 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 certainly show nothing but the utmost temerity and presumption. I assure thee, my dearest, that this so frequent ingratitude toward God is one of the most certain

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signs of reprobation in those who are guilty of such forgetfulness 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 instruments 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 remember 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 humility. 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 shortcomings. Begin in earnest to cast off this deception and know, that the more thou ascribest the goods thou receivest 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

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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 acknowledgment 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 history for this very purpose.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

THE WONDERFUL MANNER IN WHICH THE MOST BLESSED MARY CELEBRATED THE MYSTERIES OF THE INCARNATION 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 render 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 excellent work and the greatest grace possible to God's infinite 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 Omnipotent 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 wonderful 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

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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 Redeemer 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 acknowledged 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 shortcomings and imperfections, and for the total want of gratitude 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 genuflections, prostrations and other acts of adoration, repeating continually in diverse variations the following

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prayer : "My Lord and highest God, in thy royal presence 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 mystery of the hypostatic union of the human and divine nature of the eternal Word. If the unfortunate children of Adam are ignorant of this blessing, and if those that know of it fail in giving worthy thanks for it, remember, 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.

I 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."

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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 Incarnation 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 blessings.

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 retirement without eating or sleeping. Saint John the evangelist 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

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the first six days of this novena, 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 unspeakable to man. In this condition and state the Lord renewed 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 effects, conformable to the state attained since then both by Himself and his blessed Mother. Although the habitual 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 creation; 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 qualities of these material and visible things. Of the invisible things She saw the creation of the angels, all their spe-

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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 recognized likewise the intentions of the Almighty in the creation 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 knowledge 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 number of the heavens, their harmonious arrangement, nature and qualities, their greatness and beauty. All this

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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, immediately 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 waters, and how these animals afterwards are reproduced and propagated; how many were the species, the conditions 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

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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

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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, supplicating 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-

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ing in thy eyes as the one chosen for my Mother from all the creatures and as a testimony to our infinite attributes. 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 Beloved 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 triumphant. 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 ratified and increased by the Almighty in an ineffable manner. As She was still a Pilgrim and knew all the conditions 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 beginning 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

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, provinces and nations the blessings and favors they have received 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 Incarnation, 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 thanksgiving 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 children 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 wisdom 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

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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

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according to her pleasure. This the most prudent Lady proceeded to do with admirable wisdom and to the immense benefit of the Church. At the close of this solemnity 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 admiration in writing of the mysteries of my life and holiness induce thee to praise the Omnipotent for his liberality toward Me; and thy confidence in my powerful intercession 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

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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 obstacle, but deserved the unlimited and unrestrained liberality 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 contains all graces as in their origin and fount, therefore, as soon as men know me to be Mother of God, they implicitly also know, as in their cause, the perfections due to such excellence in dignity. It was left to the devotion, 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 enlightenment has been given to many saints, to authors and writers, besides special revelations to others concerning some favors and privileges conceded to me by the Almighty.

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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 Omnipotent, in order never to forget it, and signalize especially 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 dignity of being his Mother. And remember that nothing ever caused so much astonishment in the saints and angels, 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.

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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 thanksgiving 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 forsake 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 ADORATION OF THE KINGS, HER PURIFICATION, THE BAPTISM 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

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He had himself merited and gained for them justification 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 admitted to beatific vision in her mortal flesh, were blessings 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 prolonged through her whole life and it would have consumed 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 eternally 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 recognized and weighed it fully in her wisdom. She was filled with a corresponding charity, and would have suffered without any relief, if She had been left only to the influences of her love and merely to the consideration 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

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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 foolishness of those men, who so senselessly rush upon their irreparable and never sufficiently to be dreaded ruin of their souls?

665. But the manner in which our Savior and Master 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 treasures 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 constant 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

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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 lowest depths; She lovingly compassionated 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 to let Her actually pay all the sacrifices of her inflamed love. Therefore She added other inventions of her charity toward the mortals. She besought 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 sweetness 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 incomparable 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.

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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 Baptism, 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 exercises 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 soaring 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

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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 blessings, old and new (Matth. 13, 52).

669. After receiving these favors, She descended from the throne and supplicated the Lord for mercy upon mankind. 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, permitted Her to exercise her humility also before her parents, 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 forebears. These heavenly spirits attended upon Her in another way, namely serving Her in these exercises.

670. Then the Queen celebrated the Baptism of Christ our Lord with magnificent thanksgiving for his submitting 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

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 numerous 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

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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 humility, 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 apparitions 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 consider, 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 consecrated host. This wonder the Lord performs thus frequently for men and for their welfare, notwithstanding that there are so many unworthy ones, and some even

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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 Incarnation. 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 celebrated 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 exercises 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

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the sorrows and mysteries of that day. But on the following 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 intercession 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 repaid, may not be forgotten by mankind; but also in order that these solemnities might afford men an opportunity of attending to holy exercises and of recollecting themselves interiorly by withdrawing from the solitudes 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 intercession, 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 devoted 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

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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 prevent 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 enemies 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 although 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

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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 occupation, 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 perfection, 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 obedience. 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

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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 retreat 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 exercises ; 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 enlightenment 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 COMING 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 running 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 beloved 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 company 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

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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 Redemption 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, propagated in the Church on earth, and of the predestined, in whom the Church was to be transplanted to the triumphant 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

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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 concerned should also enjoy it.

682. One of the days (in addition to those already mentioned) on which the celestial wonders were renewed, was that on which She celebrated each year the Ascension of her divine Son. This day was a great festival 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 extraordinary 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 innumerable 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 annihilated in the utmost self-debasement of her ineffable

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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 manifested 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 arriving 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

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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 complacence at this hymn of praise and all the saints responded 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 having 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 confirmed 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 decision 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 Trinity 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

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 executed 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 oratory 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,

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and by means of them She prepared Herself for it during the nine days that intervene. She continued without intermission 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 fulfilled 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 petitions 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.

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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 having 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

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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 purpose. 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 appreciation 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 Resurrection, 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 dangers of mortal life, they had now attained secure and eternal felicity. For this blessing She extolled the Lord and Father of mercies and rehearsed in her thanksgiving the

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favours, 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 together, 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 impossible. 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

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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 understanding 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,

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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 carelessness, 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 incautious to sin and misleading them by means of their passions 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 rise 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 indomitable 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

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delay in imitating me and following me. It is not possible 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 purpose 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 moment 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 zealously than the others. This is the purpose for which the Holy Ghost ordained the solemnities and commemorations 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 Divinity 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 thyself 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-

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grimage, in order that they may be such also in the Fatherland. With them thou shouldst now maintain conversation 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 continued 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,

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(according to our mode of speaking) had attained the summit of power in Her; and the earth itself, made unworthy 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 delight. All that could be alleged in favor of Her still remaining 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

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Lady, where they found Her prostrate on the ground in the form of a cross, asking mercy for sinners. But hearing 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 companions, 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 received 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 ineffable 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,

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sang the responses of a canticle that lasted for two hours. Although by their nature and supernatural gifts the angelic 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

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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 received 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 immediately 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

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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 condescending 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 desirable 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 part 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 having followed and been rejoiced in its light in its course during the day, sadden and close up at evening. Lest

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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 attendance 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 regarding the time when they should be deprived of their Mistress and her help; for already the divine light intimated 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 ordinarily gathered where the most blessed Mary happened to be. Surrounding her oratory in unusual flight and motions, they uttered, instead of their natural songs, sorrowful 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

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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 sorrowful 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 unintelligent things of creation justly anticipated their mourning 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

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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 mourning 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 applied 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-

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 Divinity. 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.

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709. At no time and on no occasion were those ever disappointed who trusted in the great Mother. She relieved 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 consoled 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 mortal life men must consider the desire and force of the love that urged me on to reach and see God in the glory He had 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 consolation, they do not seek to merit or make themselves

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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 treasure, 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 business 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 unhappy lot that awaits them. In order that thou mayest

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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 forgetfulness, 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 confessed it, if thou canst, as if it were for the last account. Proposing amendment, even of the slightest fault, commence 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 occupation 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, prostrations and aspirations thou usually practicest. Then re-

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ceive the spiritual Viaticum as if for departure from the earth to the other life, taking leave and forgetting all 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 conversation (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. Admirable 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, hurling 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 destruction. 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

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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 operations 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 supernatural 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 spoke to the Lord: "My sweetest Love, highest Good and Treasure of my soul, draw me now after the sweetness

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of thy ointments, which Thou hast permitted thy handmaid 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 faculties 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 banishment, 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 ) .

716. With such and other still more fervent aspirations 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 occasion 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 perfections 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, forgetfulness 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 participation 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

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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 embraces 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 multiplied 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

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with the most blessed Mother during these last years, there was one, which was manifest not only to the Evangelist, 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 occasion 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 human 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

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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 destroyed 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 Redemption, 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 continually 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 accord 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 returned to the right hand of his eternal Father. Comforted 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

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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 children, belonging to it." She was made aware of the consent 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

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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 received 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 promised land, and thou shalt safeguard them on their dangerous and difficult pilgrimage. Thou shalt be the mistress of the nations to whom all owe reverence; in thee are the rich and inestimable jewels of the anxieties, labors, 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 militant, 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

fyng 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 beloved 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.

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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 manifested this most prudent wish to the Lord, He deigned to approve of it by his own royal presence. For this purpose, with myriads of attending angels, the three Persons 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 wanting 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 reverence of my inmost soul as the Father, the Son and the

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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 heavens, the stars and planets, to the elements and all creatures 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 fellowmen. 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 residuary 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

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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 protection 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 sinful 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 conclusion of this testament of the Queen, the most blessed Trinity approved and confirmed it; and Christ the Redeemer, 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 obligation 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 compare them with the infinite merits and treasures left by

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Christ our Savior in the Church, because that is not possible. 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 torment 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

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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 unblemished 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 effectually 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 faithful 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 children and as a fountain of grace, a viaticum and certain pledge of eternal life. In addition to this He sent upon

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his holy Church the Holy Ghost, to fill 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 merits of his Life, Passion and Death,, applying them by means of the Sacraments, furnishing all that was necessary for men from their birth to their death for rigang them from their sins, for persevering in grace, for defending themselves frff""5t the demons and vanquishing 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 participants in ill's lWM\*n and secret favors ; He works wonders and miracles for them, and when it is for his glory, assumes 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 dignitaries. In order that all may proceed in harmony. He placed over it a supreme head, 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

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abysses (Matth. 16, 18). Among all these blessings bestowed 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 possession; 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 thyself with it ; for in it thou findest thy refuge and thy salvation, consolation in thy labors, hope in thy banishment, 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 secretary 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

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, unrelieved 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 leisure, 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 PRESENT AT HER DEATH.

732. And now, according to the decree of the divine will, the day was approaching in which the true and living 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 Solomon 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 completely to love's effects.

733. The great Lady came to the entrance of her oratory 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

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 Mistress of all creation; but with a sorrow equal to their reverence, because they knew that they had come to witness 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, reverence and love, asking each one to bless Her. All 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 occasion, 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

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without a cause most urgent and sorrowful to us. The Most High wishes now to raise up to the throne of eternal glory his most blessed Mother, our Mistress, our consolation 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 uncontrollable 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 betook 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 wrinkles 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

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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 because 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 faithful, 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 desires." Saint Peter answered that all listened with attention 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 position 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

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 admiration than the tears of the Apostle and of all the bystanders. 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 commanded 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-taking, speaking to each of the Apostles in particular and to some of the disciples; and then to all the assembly together ; 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 exaltation 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

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(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 arrows 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 occasion 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

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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 answered: "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 consented to its fulfillment. Then all the angels began to sing in celestial harmony some of the verses of the Canticles 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 divine 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 ordained that multitudes of the people of Jerusalem gathered 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 beau-

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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 virginal 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 heavens. The sacred body of the most blessed Mary, which had been the temple and sanctuary of God in life, continued 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 sweetness. 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 admiration 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 intervening between the thirteenth of August, on which

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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 manner: 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 sorrow for some hours. Many birds of different kinds gathered 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.

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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 festivities 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 recorded, 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 satisfied 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

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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 memory of my happy Transition and of my desiring to imitate 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 experience 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 Omnipotent, 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 preventing it from rising above the things loved in this world.

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O my daughter! How greatly do mortals misunderstand 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 original 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 perfect and holy; and this holy freedom I did indeed experience 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 advancing years thou mayest find thyself more free, more detached 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 oppressed 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 incomparable 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 protection 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 occasion 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

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 excitement and wonder they told the Apostles what had happened. 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 perceived 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-

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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 diminished 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 consolation 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 impure 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

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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 inspired 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 shoulders 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 composed 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 continued for three days. In addition to these many other spirits had descended from heaven, namely, many thousands 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.

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753. In the midst of this celestial and earthly accompaniment, 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 occasion 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 astonishment 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

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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 lessened 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 during the next three days. Saint Peter and saint John, however, 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

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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 wickedness in such souls force the Lord and the saints to withdraw 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

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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 daughter, 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 ignorance, pusillanimity, or weakness, nor much less, fear. Weigh thy obligation, estimate thy indebtedness, attend to the continual light; operate with the grace thou re-

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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 succeed 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 extraordinary 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. Consider, my dearest, what persecutions the devil has roused against thee in secret through the world and its inhabitants 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 weakness, 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 EMPYREAN 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 incomprehensible, 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

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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 ineffable, 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 sovereign 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 deficiency of our words and expressions rather tend to obscure 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

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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 between a Godman and a creature. In this light the Redeemer himself presented Her before the throne of the Divinity ; and speaking to the eternal Father in the presence 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 accorded 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 equitable 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

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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 creatures, 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 infinite 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 saints 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

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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 satisfaction. 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 children 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.

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 himself descended from heaven bringing with Him at his right hand the soul of his most blessed Mother and accompanied 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 stainlessly 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 Redemption; 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 thanksgiving 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 communicating to it the four gifts of clearness, impassibility,

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agility & 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 sufficient 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 regeneration, 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 solemn 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 therefore 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

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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 spreading 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 corresponds 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 Omnipotent happened other wonders, I shall speak of them as far as possible in the following chapter.

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 forgetfulness ; 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 remembrance 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, possessions 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

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punishment as for eternal glory. This abominable foolishness 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 exchange 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 altogether with the temporal death ; but as the most of them act against justice, and others, who still seek to be just, live in forgetfulness of their end, the ones as well as the others incur the eternal death.

772. This is a sorrow beyond all sorrows, and a misfortune without equal and without remedy. Afflict thyself, 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 blessing 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 trying 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

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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 inclinations 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 ascendancy 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 resolve to reap the highest rewards. But to despise them or wilfully undervalue them shows not the love of children or of true friends, but the base fear of slaves, who are content to live and be let alone. If the saints could

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return to merit some additional degree of glory by suffering 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 confirms 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 mansions. 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 scriptures 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 creatures ; He is comprehended or circumscribed by none, but

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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 principal 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 communicates 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 proportionate 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

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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 exalted 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 recognize 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 consistency 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

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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 distribute 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 countries; 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 distribution; 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."

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779. In the execution of this decree and privilege conceded to the Mistress of the world, the Almighty commanded 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 kingdom, it was just, that She should be venerated, worshipped and extolled by them as her inferiors and vassals. 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 demonstrations 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 fortunate spouse saint Joseph, saint Joachim and Anne and all the other relatives of the Queen, together with the thousand angels of her guard.

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780. Within the glorious body of the Queen, over her heart, was visible to the saints a small globe or monstrance of singular beauty and splendor, which particularly roused and rouses their admiration and joy. It was there in testimony and reward of her having afforded 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 regard 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 beatific vision, where each one shall perceive them in proportion as his doings and his devotion shall have merited. In the foregoing chapter I mentioned that the Transition of our Queen happened on the thirteenth of August, while her Resurrection, Assumption and Coronation 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 eternity. 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, noticed that the celestial music had ceased; for they failed

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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 conjecture now in the mind of all and the reasons for manifesting the truth of this wonder to the Church, namely, that it should be revered 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 Assumption 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

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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 Resurrection 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 commanded to write.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN, MOST HOLY MARY, GAVE ME.

783. My daughter, if anything could lessen the enjoyment 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, notwithstanding that men know me to be their Mother, Advocate 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

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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 saving 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 myself 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 doctrine, 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 addition 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 fulfilling 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?

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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 improving the Catholic reigns, of spreading the faith, of furthering the welfare of families and of states, of bringing 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 received, both in what thou hast written and in other favors and blessings of the Almighty. Consider well, my dearest, thy strict obligation of serving me as thy only Mother, as thy legitimate and true Teacher and Superior, 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 intercourse be with those purest spirits ; and just as they converse 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 exercise of all virtues, especially of the mistress of all of them, charity, by which thou mayest be inflamed in the love of

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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 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.

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, scatterest 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 humblest 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-

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ence no flesh may boast, nor the strongest presume upon his strength, nor the weakest fear or distrust his weakness and his lowliness.

787. I confess Thee, true Lord, as the King and Savior 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, beginning 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 instrument of his omnipotence. I confess Thee as the sweetest Mother of mercy, refuge of the unfortunate, Protectress 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 concerning 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, ingratitude, 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-

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tating between my unworthiness and my desire of wisdom. I stretched forth my hands and bewailed my insipidity; I led on my heart and I encountered knowledge, 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 guiding 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 immaculate 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

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this I desire now to do, O Mother and Queen of the virtues. 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 commands, 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 clemency 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, cherish it, O Mother, sweet Mistress, that it may bring forth

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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, command me as my Queen, instruct me as my Teacher, correct 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 nevertheless 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.

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