

CHAPTER II

A Singular Favor which the Most High Conferred upon Most Holy Mary as soon as She was Left Alone in the Temple.

428. When the heavenly child Mary had taken leave of her parents and entered the temple in order to live in it, 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 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 the ground itself for receiving Her and supporting Her, holding Herself unworthy of that benefit and of treading upon it and being in the temple. Then She turned toward her holy Angels and said to them: “Celestial princes, messengers of the Most High, my most faithful friends and companions, I beseech thee with all the affection of my soul that in this holy temple of my Lord thou exercise with me the office of vigilant sentinels, assisting me in all I must do; teach me and direct me as masters and guides of my actions so in all things I discover and accomplish the perfect will of the Most High, please the holy priests, and obey my teacher and my companions.” And addressing in particular the twelve Angels (of whom I spoke above as those of the Apocalypse [201, 272]) She said: “And I beseech thee, my ambassadors, if the Most High permit thee, go to console my holy parents in their affliction and solitude.”

429. The twelve Angels obeyed their Queen, while She 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 powerful and high Lord as She was accustomed to do in all her visions, and adored Him in profound humility and reverence. She was further transformed by new workings of divine light and then saw intuitively and face to face the Divinity himself. This was the second time He manifested Himself to Her in this intuitive manner during the first three years of her life.

430. 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 and my Beloved, I desire Thee to see the treasures of my immutable being and my infinite perfections, and the hidden gifts I have destined for the souls whom I have chosen as heirs of my glory, who shall be rescued by the blood of the Lamb who must die for them. Recognize, my Daughter, how generous I am toward my creatures who know and love Me, how true in my words, how faithful in my promises, how powerful and admirable in my works. Take notice, my Spouse, how infallibly true it is that *he who followeth Me walketh not in darkness*.^{*} I desire Thee, as my chosen One, to be an eyewitness of the

^{*} cf. Jn. 8:12 [Ed.]

treasures which I have prepared in order to raise up the humble, enrich the poor, magnify the downtrodden, and reward all mortals shall do or suffer for my Name.”

431. The most holy Child came to know other great sacraments in this vision of the Divinity, for the Object is infinite, and though He thus manifested Himself clearly again in this vision, yet there always remains infinitely more to communicate with great admiration and greater love in the one who receives this favor. Most holy Mary answered the Lord and said: “Most high, supreme and eternal God, incomprehensible Thou art in thy grandeur, rich in thy mercies, abundant in thy treasures, ineffable in thy mysteries, most faithful in thy promises, true in thy words, and most perfect in thy works, for Thou art the Lord, infinite and eternal in thy being and perfections. But what, most high Lord, shall my littleness do at the sight of thy greatness? I acknowledge my unworthiness to look upon thy greatness, yet I need Thee to look upon me from it. In thy presence, Lord, all creation is as nothing; what then shall thy servant do, who am but dust? Fulfill in me all thy desire and pleasure; and if humility, patience and meekness in labors and the contempt coming from mortals are so esteemed in thy eyes, do not consent, O my Beloved, that I be deprived of such a rich treasure and pledge of thy love. Give the reward of these labors and virtues to thy servants and friends who deserve it more than I, since I have not yet labored in thy service and for thy pleasure.”

432. The Most High was much pleased with the petition of the heavenly Child, and He gave Her to understand that He would admit Her to suffering and labor for his love in the course of her life, without at that time revealing to Her the order and 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 name and glory of God. Burning with desire of securing such favor, She asked His Majesty to be allowed to make four vows in his presence, those of chastity, poverty, obedience, and 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. Thou dost not yet understand why it is impossible to completely fulfill thy fervent desires in the manner in which Thou dost now think. The vow of chastity I permit and desire Thee to make; as well Thou mayest renounce earthly riches from now on. 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, and thy desire shall be fulfilled in many other virgins in the coming law of grace, for in order to imitate Thee and serve Me they shall make these same vows living together in community, and Thou shalt be the Mother of many daughters.”

433. Then in the presence of the Lord the most holy Child made the vow of chastity; as for the rest, without binding Herself, She renounced all affection for terrestrial and created things, and 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 shall make them. With this the clear and intuitive vision of the Divinity ceased, yet She was not then restored to the earth, for remaining in the empyrean heaven, though in another more inferior state, She had another kind of vision, imaginary, of the same Lord, so in this manner the beatific vision of the Divinity was followed by other imaginary visions.

434. 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 varicolored 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 desired 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 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 Lady did not understand, but the Angels understood it, who lost in wonder and praise of the Author were assisting in this work so new and unusual. 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 speaking to most holy Mary, saying: "Thou shalt be our Spouse, our Beloved, and our chosen One among all creatures for all eternity; the angels shall serve Thee, and all the nations and generations shall call thee blessed" (Lk. 1:48).

435. 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, in order to deposit within Her his own divinity in the Person of the Word, and with Him 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 dost look upon me who am dust, unworthy of such mercy? In Thee, my Lord, as in a clear mirror, recognizing thy immutable Being, I see and understand without error my abjection and vileness, I behold thy immensity and my nothingness, and in this knowledge I remain annihilated and lost in admiration that the infinite Majesty would stoop to so lowly a wormlet, who can only merit to be cast aside and despised among all creatures. O Lord and my Good, how exalted and magnified art Thou in this work! What wonder dost Thou cause through me in thy angelic spirits, who know thy infinite goodness, grandeur and mercy in raising her up from the dust who in it is poor, in order to place her among the princes (Ps. 112:7)! I accept Thee, my King and my Lord, as my Spouse, and I offer myself as thy slave. My understanding shall not have any other object, nor my memory hold any other image, nor my will any other end or desire outside of Thee, my highest Good, my true and only Love. My eyes shall not be raised to gaze upon human creatures, nor my faculties and senses attend to anything outside of Thee thyself and whatever Thy Majesty shall direct me to do. Thou alone for thy spouse, my Beloved, and she for Thee only (Cant. 2:16), who art the immutable and eternal Good."

436. The Most High received with ineffable pleasure this consent of the sovereign Princess to enter into the new espousal with her most holy soul. He now lavished upon Her, as his true Spouse and Lady of all creation, all the treasures of his grace and power, instructing 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 the 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 to the blessed Trinity on this occasion. All the angelic spirits sang new canticles of admiration in praise of the Most High, and with celestial music those appointed by His Majesty returned the most holy Child from the empyrean heaven to the place in the temple from which they had brought Her.

437. In order to begin at once to put into practice what She had promised in the presence of the Lord, She went to her instructress and offered her all that her mother St. Anne had left for her comfort and sustenance, 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 ordain 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 without anything more than the garments She had. 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.

438. 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, 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 I know and say is the more insignificant part of all the mysteries and doings of this City of God, most holy Mary.

INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY.

439. “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 Being of the Most High 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 by this desire the establishment of these same vows which the religious take in the Church and in the law of grace, as is the custom in the present time. This was the beginning of what religious do now, fulfilling the words of David in Psalm XLIV, *after Her shall virgins be brought to the King* (Ps. 44:15), for the Most High ordained that my desires be the foundation of the religious orders of the evangelical law. I fulfilled entirely and perfectly all 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 upon 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.

440. “Do not forget, my dearest, that the religious state 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, for this same Lord is most indignant with 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, and a more severe judgment and chastisement awaits them than others. The demon also, ancient and astute serpent that he is, uses more diligence in his attempts to overcome religious men and women than all the rest of those on earth; and if one of these religious falls, all hell exerts the greatest solicitude and care to prevent his using the many means which religion provides for rising from a fall, such as obedience, holy exercises, and the frequent use of the Sacraments. To make all these remedies fail and be of no use to the fallen religious the enemy applies so many cunning snares that it would fill with terror anyone who saw them. However, much of this is recognized in the actions and artifices by which a lax religious soul tries to defend his remissness, excusing it by specious arguments if he does not break out in disobedience and yet greater disorders and faults.

441. “Take notice therefore, my daughter, and fear so formidable a danger; by the divine assistance of grace raise thyself above thyself, never permitting thy will to consent to any disorderly affection or movement. I desire thee to labor always in dying to thy passions and in spiritualizing thyself, so by extinguishing in thyself all that is earthly thou mayest become angelic in thy life and conversation. In order to deserve the name of a 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 thy 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 abject slaves, which are human creatures, since even the angels love and respect thee for the dignity of 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 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 desire for thee that 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 permit. Be also solicitous in recalling this instruction to the mind of thy nuns and in seeing that they live up to it.”

442. My Lady 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 desire 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 shall speak in thy presence as an ignorant disciple with her Mistress and Teacher. My Mother and Helper, in order to fulfill the four vows of my profession according to the command of Thy Majesty and my obligation, though I am unworthy and lukewarm, I desire Thee to give me a more full instruction which will serve to guide and teach me in the fulfillment of this obligation and affection which Thou hast placed in my soul.