

# BOOK TWO

## SECOND AND LAST OF PART I

*Relating 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

*The Presentation of Most Holy Mary in the Temple at the Age of Three Years.*

412. Among the types which foreshadowed most holy Mary in the written law none was more expressive than the Ark of the Covenant, not only due to the material of which it was constructed and its contents, but also due to 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 setim wood of which it was made (Ex. 25:10), not by chance but by divine arrangement, expressly signified our mystical ark Mary, free from the corruption of actual sin and from the hidden woodworm of original sin with its inseparable foment of sin and passions. The finest and purest gold (Ib. 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, her works and activities, and her habits and the operations of her faculties, so in no exterior or interior part of this mystical Ark could anything be discerned which at any moment of time was not entirely covered by gold of the most exquisite and finest carat.

413. The stone tablets of the law, the pot of 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, most holy Mary, for He was her onlybegotten Son, the living foundation stone of the evangelical Church (I Cor. 3:11). In Mary, the virginal Ark, was placed the corner stone\* (Eph. 2:20) which was to join the Gentiles and the Jews, and was cut from the mountain of his eternal generation (Dan. 2:34), so in Him would be written by the finger of God the new law of grace; thus it is understood this great Queen was to be the Depository of all God provided and operated for his creatures. She also enclosed within Herself the manna of the Divinity and of grace, and the power and staff of prodigies and wonders, so in this heavenly and mystical Ark alone would be found the fountain of graces, which is the being of God himself, overflowing onto the rest of mortals, that in Her and through Her would be worked the marvels and prodigies of the arm of God. In Mary therefore all the Lord desired to operate and manifest is contained and deposited.

414. From all this it follows that the Ark of the Testament (not by figure and shadow, but by the truth it signified) served as the pedestal and seat of the propitiatory (Ex. 26:34), where the Lord had the seat and tribunal of his mercies in order to hear his people, answer them, and take

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\* cf. *O Antiphon* for Dec. 22 [Ed.]

care of their petitions and favors. Hence the Ark of the Testament signified most holy Mary, since God made no other creature the throne of grace besides Her, and neither would He place his propitiatory in any other than in this mystical and true Ark, given He created Her in order to enclose Himself within Her. Thus it seems the tribunal of divine justice remains in God himself, while He placed the propitiatory and tribunal of mercy in Mary, in order that to Her as to a throne of grace\* we can approach with secure confidence to present our petitions and pray for the benefits, graces and mercies which outside of the propitiatory of the great Queen Mary are unheard of and unattainable by the human race.

415. 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 Testament. Therefore the Author of this wonder Himself ordained that most holy Mary would be placed in his house and temple upon the completion of three years after her most happy birth. Yet in truth it is not without great admiration I find a wonderful difference in what happened with that first and figurative Ark and what occurred with the second and true Ark; for though the first Ark had no greater grandeur than to signify most pure Mary and the mysteries regarding Her, yet when king David transferred it to different places, and when afterwards Solomon his son translated it and placed it in the temple as in its proper place and seat, all these translations and changes were done with great festivities and rejoicings of that ancient people, as testified by the solemn processions arranged by David from the house of Abinadab to the house of Obededom (II Kg. 6:10), and thence to the tabernacle of Sion, his own city (Ib. 12), and likewise when Solomon transferred it from Sion to the new temple (III Kg. 8:5) which he had built as the house of God and of prayer by the command of the Lord himself.

416. On all these occasions the ancient Ark of the Testament 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 books II and III of Kings and I and II of Paralipomenon. But our true and mystical Ark, most holy Mary, although She was the most precious, the most estimable and venerable 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 and the royal pomp and majesty were missing. 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 wanted 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. All the glory and majesty of this procession the Most High desired to be divine and invisible. All the sacraments and mysteries of 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 who holds in his hands the time and the hour for the revelation of all things and of each one in particular.

417. 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: "Take notice, soul, that if I ordained that the Ark of the Old Testament be venerated with such festivity and pomp, it was because it was an express figure of She who was to be the Mother of the incarnate Word. That first Ark was irrational and material, and that fame and ostentation could be arranged for it without difficulty; but with the true and living Ark I would not permit

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\* cf. Heb. 4:16; *Introit* for Aug. 22, the Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary [Ed.]

this while She lived in mortal flesh in order to teach by this example what thou and the rest of the souls must take care to avoid while pilgrims upon earth. Regarding my elect, who are written in my mind and approved for eternal memory, I do not desire to place them in occasions of excessive honor and ostentatious applause of men, nor expect it 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 praise them as such. One is the Creator who has made them and sustains them, illumines and defends them; therefore one must be their love and attention, and it must not be partitioned or divided, even though it be to repay and give thanks for the honors which with pious zeal are given to the just. The love of God is delicate, while the human will is most fragile and limited; if it is divided it can only be small and very imperfect in its activity, swiftly losing all. Because of this doctrine I did not desire Her, the exemplar of what was most holy, and who due to my protection could not fall, to be renowned or honored during her life, nor was She to be brought to the temple with ostentation and outward honor.

418. “Beyond this, I sent my Onlybegotten from heaven, and created Her who was to be his Mother, in order to draw the world from its error and undeceive mortals regarding the most iniquitous law established by sinners that the poor are to be despised and the rich esteemed; that the humble are to be cast down and the proud extolled; that the virtuous are to be harshly criticized and the sinner accredited; that the timid and shy are to be considered as foolish and the arrogant to be held as valiant; that poverty should be considered as ignominious and unfortunate, while riches, luxury, ostentation, pomposity, honors, and perishable goods should be sought and prized by ignorant and carnal men. All this the incarnate Word and his Mother came to reprove and condemn as deceit and lies, so mortals could recognize the formidable danger in which they live, loving this danger and surrendering themselves so blindly to the deceitful lie of the sensible and delightful. This insane love causes them to flee so forcefully from humility, meekness and poverty, and turn away from all that has the odor of the true virtue of penance and denial of their passions; yet this virtue obliges my equity and is acceptable in my eyes, since it is holy, upright, just, and that which must be rewarded with the recompense of eternal glory, while the contrary vice must incur everlasting punishment.

419. “This truth earthly and carnal eyes do not see, nor do they desire to attend to the light which teaches it. But thou, soul, listen to it and write it in thy heart by the example of the incarnate Word and that given by his Mother, and imitate them in all things. She was holy, and in my estimation and pleasure first after Christ; to Her was due all the veneration and honor of men, though they cannot honor Her as She merits. Yet I provided and ordained that She not be honored or known at that time, in order to place in Her the most holy, the most perfect, the most estimable and secure example for my elect which they must imitate and learn from the Mistress of truth, this example being her humility, obscurity, retirement, contempt for the deceitful and formidable vanity of the world, her love of labors, tribulations, insults, afflictions, and dishonors coming from creatures. And because all of this is inappropriate and incompatible with the applause, honors and esteem of the worldly, I determined most pure Mary would not have them, nor do I desire my friends to receive or allow them. If for my glory it sometimes happens they become known to the world, it is not because they desired it or intended it, but by their humility, and without violating their bounden duty, they yield themselves to my disposition and will. By and for themselves they desire and love what the world despises, and what the incarnate Word and his most holy Mother strove after and taught.” This was the answer the Lord gave to my

wondering inquiry, by which He left me satisfied and instructed in that which I must desire and strive after.

420. The three years 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, 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 (Cant. 1:3), 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 usual 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 true Solomon. Thus they pursued their journey from Nazareth to the holy city of Jerusalem, the happy parents of the child Mary feeling great joy and consolation of spirit.

421. They arrived at the holy temple, and St. Anne, in order to enter into it with her Daughter and Lady, took Her by the hand, St. Joachim giving them special assistance. 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 desire to hear thy voice of praise and worship."\* Having offered their prayers they rose and went 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 virtuous habits until old enough to assume the state of matrimony. It was a place of retirement specially selected for the first-born daughters of the royal tribe of Juda and the sacerdotal tribe of Levi.

422. 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 who had received them, being according to the law one of a minor order, placed Her on the first step; She, with his permission, turned and knelt down before her parents Joachim and Anne, asked their blessing and kissed their hands, and recommended Herself to their prayers before God. The holy parents in most tender 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 at so tender an age so full of such extraordinary majesty and firmness of mind excited the admiration of all those present. The priests received Her among the rest of the maidens, and St. Simeon consigned Her to the teachers, one of whom was the prophetess Anne. This holy matron had been prepared by the Lord by special grace and enlightenment in order to take charge of this Child of Joachim and Anne, and thus she did by divine disposition, meriting 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.

423. Sorrowfully her parents Joachim and Anne retraced their journey to Nazareth, now poor since deprived of the rich Treasure of their house. But the Most High consoled and comforted them in their affliction. The holy priest Simeon, though he did not at this time know of the

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\* cf. Jn. 4:23 [Ed.]

mystery enshrined in the child Mary, obtained great light regarding her sanctity and 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 (Gen. 28:12), 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 her overflowing love that this truly was *the house of God and the gate of heaven*.\*

424. 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 Her with pleasure and said to Her: “My daughter, in my goodwill Thou shalt find me a mother and helper, and I will take care of Thee and thy upbringing with all possible solicitude.” Then She offered Herself with the same humility to all the maidens who were there; She greeted and embraced each one individually, dedicating Herself as their servant and beseeching them as older and more capable in their duties to instruct and command Her. She also gave them thanks that without her merit they admitted Her to their company.

#### *INSTRUCTION OF THE MOST HOLY VIRGIN MARY.*

425. My daughter, the greatest happiness which can befall any soul in this mortal life is for the Almighty to 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 (Gen. 3:19). Who is so ignorant and unthinking as not to know the danger of the worldly life, with such abominable and wicked laws and customs as the diabolical astuteness and perversity of men have introduced? The best part<sup>†</sup> is religious life and retirement; in it is found security, while 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, my daughter, be not deaf to the voice of the Most High; attend and correspond to it in thy actions. I desire to remind thee that one of the greatest snares of the demon is to counteract the call of the Lord whenever He seeks to attract and incline the soul to a life of perfection in his service.

426. 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 this act tends not only to the glory of the Lord and the joy of the holy Angels, but also 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 serving and loving Him?

427. 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

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\* cf. Gen. 28:17 [Ed.]

† cf. Lk. 10:42 [Ed.]

it and blot out from their memory all its images, forgetting all they have in so praiseworthy a manner left behind.\* Those who neglect this requirement and are ungrateful and disloyal toward God will undoubtedly fall under the punishment of the wife of Lot (Gen. 19:26), and if due to 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 and make no progress in religion, nor find any spiritual consolation in it, and do not merit to be visited by the Lord as children, but rather 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; 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 neighbor, make sure to ordain it well and safeguard beforehand the good of thy soul, its security and quiet, and its interior tranquility and peace. In these points, as far as possible without sin, I admonish and command thee to go to the greatest extremes if thou dost desire to remain in my school.

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\* cf. Ps. 44:11 [Ed.]