

CHAPTER XXIII

Explaining Part of Chapter XXXI of the Proverbs of Solomon, to which the Lord Referred Me in Order to Manifest the Order of Life which Most Holy Mary Arranged in the State of Matrimony.

769. As soon as Mary the Princess of heaven found Herself so unexpectedly in the new state of matrimony, She raised her pure soul to the Father of lights for illumination 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 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 shall say as much as I can of what I was made to understand regarding Her. The passage begins with the words:*

770. *Who shall find a valiant woman? Far and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her* (Prov. 31:10). 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 in all the rest of human nature and the common law no other woman could be found as valiant as the Princess of heaven. All the others are weak and lacking, not one being exempt from tribute to the demon through the guilt of sin. Who then shall find another valiant 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 God had not created another like Her. She is the only one, without peer 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, of his own substance, equal, immense, increate and infinite.

771. Consequently the price of this Woman is as something 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; its price is known when it is known at what value it is held or estimated. The price of this valiant woman Mary was assessed in the council of the most blessed Trinity when before all other mere creatures God claimed or purchased Her for Himself, having received Her from human nature itself as a sort of return by this precise purchase. The price and payment which He gave for Mary was the incarnate Word himself, 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 determined his only Son to be at the same time his Son and hers, and only from Her the Son himself took human flesh and chose Her as Mother. For this price the Most High gave all his attributes, his wisdom, goodness, omnipotence, justice, and the rest, and all the merits of his incarnate Son in order to acquire and appropriate Her for Himself, taking Her from nature beforehand, so 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, and thus it came from afar.

* N.B. In the original English edition Rev. Blatter here omits the new paragraph, number 770. Hence from paragraphs 771 – 800 (the end of *The Conception*) all his paragraph numbers are two greater than in the Spanish edition of Most Rev. Samaniego which he took verbatim from the original handwritten manuscript of Ven. Mary. I have corrected these paragraph numbers for this New English Edition. [Ed.]

772. This word *far* also designates the ends of the earth, because God is the beginning and the last end of all creation, from whom all things proceed and to whom all things return as the rivers return to the sea (Eccles. 1:7). In like manner the empyrean heaven is the corporeal and material end of all the rest of corporeal matter, and it is called in a special manner the footstool of the Divinity (Is. 66:1). Yet in another sense the end of natural life and the full perfection of virtue could 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 began.* And if Christ, her Son and our Lord, is called the end of the works of the Most High, 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 sole exemplary, antecedent and principal cause of Her.

773. *The heart of her husband trusteth in Her, and he shall have no need of spoils* (Prov. 31:11). It is certain the heavenly Joseph is called the husband of this valiant Woman since he had legitimately espoused Her, and it is also certain his heart confided in Her, believing due to her incomparable virtues all true blessings would come to him. But especially did he trust in Her when he perceived her pregnancy and was yet ignorant of its mysterious origin, for then he believed and confided in hope against hope (Rom. 4:18) regarding the indications he recognized, without having any other assurance concerning the evident truth of her pregnancy than the sanctity of such a spouse and woman. And though he resolved to leave Her (Mt. 1:19), since he saw the outward signs of pregnancy with his own eyes without the slightest knowledge of the cause, yet he never ventured to mistrust her integrity and modesty, nor did he ever diminish in the holy and pure love with which his most upright heart was bound to such a Spouse. He never found himself frustrated in anything, or devoid of spoils; for if spoils are things that are above that which is necessary, all was superabundant for this man when he came to know who his Spouse was and what belonged to Her.

774. But this heavenly Lady 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 of these, his life and his honor, for neither could God confide more to Her, nor could She correspond better in order to assure Him of a superabundant return. O stupendous wonder of the infinite power and wisdom! That God would entrust Himself to a mere creature and a woman, taking human flesh in her womb and of her very substance! To call her Mother in unchangeable truth, and She to call Him Son, nurse Him at her breast, and have Him obedient to Her! That He made Her the Coadjutrix in the rescue and restoration of the world, the Depositary of the Divinity, and the Dispensatrix of his infinite treasures and of the merits of the life of his most holy Son, of his miracles, preaching, death, and of all the other mysteries! All this He confided to most holy Mary. But our wonder increases when we find 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 plenitude of all sanctity. Her Man

* cf. Ps. 86:1-2 [Ed.]

found Himself in no need of spoils, but rich, prosperous, and well supplied with honor and renown. Therefore Scripture adds:

775. *She will render him good, and not evil, all the days of her life* (Prov. 31:12). Regarding this verse I understood the return which her own Man, Christ her true Son, gave to most holy Mary, since what He on his part had received from Her is already declared. And if the Most High rewards the smallest works done for his love with a superabundant and lavish recompense, what return of goods and treasures of the Divinity would He give in order to reward the works of his own Mother? Only He who made Her knows it. But the equity which the Lord observes in rewarding 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 began from the first instant of her existence and were showered upon Her more abundantly than upon the highest Angels, along with her preservation from original sin. Properly corresponding to this benefit She grew in grace and proportionately worked with it; thus all the works of her life were without lukewarmness, negligence or tardiness. Hence is it any wonder that only her most holy Son was superior to Her, and all the rest of creatures were left behind as it were at an infinite distance?

776. *She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands* (Ib. 13). This is legitimate praise and worthy of the valiant woman, that she would be industrious and diligent within her home, spinning flax and weaving linen for the shelter and comfort of her family, providing these necessities for her household and for others who may be benefited thereby. This is wholesome counsel which is put into 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 womankind, for She was never idle but diligently engaged in preparing linen and wool for her spouse, 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 idle in her interior, but labored to increase the gifts and virtues of her soul. Thus the text says:

777. *She is like the merchant's ship, she bringeth her bread from afar* (Ib. 14). Since this visible world is called an unquiet and stormy sea, those who 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 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 type of contract between God and man, that they as servants labor and sweat to till and cultivate the earth, while He as Lord of all helps them by means of the secondary causes with which He concurs, giving bread to man to sustain him and repay the sweat of his face;* and what happens in regard to this contract in what is temporal also happens in regard to what is spiritual, namely that he who does not work shall also not eat (II Thes. 3:10).

778. 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

* cf. Gen. 3:19 [Ed.]

zealous in the government of her family, no one so solicitous for that which with heavenly prudence She deemed necessary for her poor family and for the succor of the poor. 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; yet still more estimable and admirable was the spiritual and living Bread which She drew down from heaven for us,[†] for She not only drew Him from the bosom of the Father, from whence He would not have descended if He had not been drawn by this valiant Woman, but He would never have come to this world, so highly unworthy of Him, if He had not been brought in the ship of Mary. And though She could not, being a mere creature, merit the coming of God into the world, yet She merited the hastening of his advent, and that He 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, to communicate Himself, and to nourish those who were so far off.

779. *She hath risen in the night, and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens* (Prov. 31:15). Not less laudable is this activity of the valiant woman, that she deprives herself of the repose and sweet rest of the night in order to govern her family, distributing by her legitimate occupations to each of her domestics, her spouse, her sons and relatives, and also her servants, everything necessary for them. 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, because 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, for though She had no servants in her family because her love of obedience and humility did not permit Her to charge anyone 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 will have occasion to relate in the whole of the succeeding discourse.

780. But what tongue could ever describe the untiring watchfulness of this valiant Woman? She arose and was on her feet in the hidden night of the secrets of her Heart, and when in the hidden mystery of her matrimony She awaited attentively what would be commanded in order to execute it humbly and obediently. 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 while they were engaged in outward service the spirit would not find itself needy and deprived. She commanded the faculties of her soul to follow the inviolable rule of seeking their sustenance from the light of the Divinity, and to be incessantly occupied in the ardent meditation and contemplation of the divine law day and night,* never allowing them at any time to be withdrawn therefrom by exterior work or the occupations of her state of life. This was the government and the nourishment of the domestics of her soul.

781. Also to the other servants, the exterior senses, She distributed their legitimate occupations and nourishment. Making use of the jurisdiction which She possessed over these faculties, She commanded that as servants they serve the spirit; that although in the world they be dead to it and ignore its vanities, and live solely insofar as was necessary for nature and grace; that they not be taken up with sensible delights except insofar as the superior part of the soul would allow and

[†] cf. Jn. 6:51 [Ed.]

* cf. Josue 1:8; Ps. 1:2 [Ed.]

communicate by its overflowing influence. She placed boundaries and limits to all their operations so without the slightest imperfection they were appropriated to the sphere of divine love, all of them serving and cooperating with it without resistance, unwillingness or tardiness.

782. Also in another way 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 by her ineffable providence to all her domestics and servants of her people, to the rest of the human race, to the holy Fathers and her just servants, and to the sinners, slaves and captives of all the world She gave and distributed the nourishment of grace and eternal life. And She gave it so truly and with such exactitude that the nourishment was taken from her own substance and from her own blood which the Savior received in her virginal womb.