

CHAPTER XIII

Declaring 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 in the Queen of heaven after conceiving the eternal Word, the more I am involved in the difficulties of describing this event, for I find myself immersed in exalted and complicated mysteries, while my intellect and my powers 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 conquer that which would do much violence to a weak and womanly mind if the assurance and strength of this help would fail me. This is especially true 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, their own perfection and their relation to God. As regards the latter, the Divinity is made clear and manifest to them with all his perfections and attributes. This is called the object of their beatitude, their glory, their substantial joy and 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 eyes have seen, nor ears have heard, nor can enter into the thoughts of men (Is. 64:4; I Cor. 2:9). Among the gifts and prerogatives of this glory of the saints there are some called endowments, given to them as to a spouse for the state of spiritual matrimony which must be consummated in the joy of eternal felicity. Just as the earthly spouse acquires possession and dominion of her endowment and enjoys in common with her husband the use of it, so also in glory these gifts are made to the saints as their own, while their use is common both to them, insofar as they themselves rejoice in them, and to God, insofar as He is glorified in them by the saints. And these ineffable gifts are more or less excellent according to the merits and the dignity of each. Yet they are not given to those who are not of the same nature as the Spouse, namely Christ our Lord, and hence only to men, not to the angels; for the incarnate Word has not entered into any espousal with the angels as He has with the human nature (Heb. 2:16) by uniting Himself with it in that great sacrament in Christ and in the Church mentioned by the Apostle (Eph. 5:32). However, since 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, being *clearness*, *impassibility*, *subtility* and *agility*, and these are properly the effects of 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 these gifts are given to the saints as comprehensors, being pledges and dowries of eternal and imperishable happiness, and as it were securities for the unchangeableness of their state, and because of this they are not conferred upon viators. Yet despite this they were conceded to most holy Mary in a certain manner, not as a comprehensor but as a viator, not permanently but for a time and in passing, and with a certain difference as we shall explain. For the appropriateness of this rare blessing in the

sovereign Queen to be better understood, let that which I have said in chapter VII and the rest until the Incarnation be remembered (70-105), 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 Word took human flesh in her virginal womb this spiritual marriage, as far as the heavenly Lady was concerned, was consummated by that most exalted and exquisite beatific vision which as we have said was then vouchsafed to Her (139). But for the other faithful the Incarnation was as it were an espousal which is to be consummated in the heavenly fatherland (Osee 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 matrimony in the name of the Church Militant and making promises in the name of all of its members (Eph. 5:32), for in this matter, since She was the Mother of the Repairer, his foreseen merits found their application through Her. By that transient glory and vision of the Divinity She became the secured guarantor for all the children of Adam that this same reward shall not be denied to any of the children of Adam if they dispose themselves to merit it by the grace of their Redeemer. The divine incarnate Word was certainly highly pleased to find his most burning love and infinite merits immediately bear fruit in Her, who at the same time was his Mother, his first Spouse, and the bridal chamber of the Divinity, and that his rewards could coincide with the merits of one in whom there was no impediment. By conferring these privileges and favors upon his most holy Mother Christ our Good indulged and partly satiated his love for Her, and in Her for all mortals; too long a delay did it seem to the divine love to wait thirty-three years until He would manifest his divinity to his own Mother. Although He had shown Her this favor at other times, as related in the first Part (*Con.* 332, 429), yet on this occasion of his Incarnation He did this 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, insofar as was compatible with the ordinary state of pilgrimage.

162. Conformable to this, on the day in which most holy Mary took real possession of the position of Mother of the incarnate Word, conceiving Him in her womb, God invested us with a right to our Redemption, founded upon the espousal of our human nature with Himself. In the consummation of this spiritual marriage by the beatification of most holy Mary, and by conferring upon Her the gifts of glory, the same reward was also promised to us if we 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 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 her soul to her body, for all of them corresponded with her innocence, sanctity and merits, and these again corresponded 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 of the soul is the clear and beatific *vision*, which corresponds to the obscure knowledge of faith in the viators. This vision was given to most holy Mary at the times and in the manner already explained and to be explained later (*Inc.* 473; *Tran.* 245, 760, 812; *Cor.* 62, 494, 603, 616, 654, 685). Besides these intuitive visions She had many other abstractive ones of the Divinity of the kind mentioned above (6-101). Though 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 insofar as was compatible with being a 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 a manner one way or another her soul never lost sight of that divine Object and highest Good, nor wandered from Him even for a moment. However, during the nine months in which She bore in her womb the 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 and corresponds to the virtue of hope, by which we seek after our last End* in order to possess Him without danger of ever losing Him. This possession and comprehension in most holy Mary corresponded to the visions mentioned, because seeing the Divinity She possessed Him. And when She was left to faith alone, hope was in Her more firm and secure than in any other creature, since her faith was greater. Beyond this, since the security of possession in the creature is founded to a great extent upon sanctity and impeccability, our heavenly Lady for this reason was so privileged that the firmness and security of her possession of God, though She was a pilgrim, equaled in certain respects the firmness and security of the Blessed, since due to her sinlessness and impeccable sanctity She was assured of never losing God, though the cause of this security in Her as a viator 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* and corresponds to charity, which never ends but rather is perfected in glory (I Cor. 13:8), because 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 is He loved for his own sake. And even now, while we are yet viators, we also love Him for his own sake; yet there is a great difference, for now we love him in desire, and we know Him not as He is in Himself but as He is represented to us by foreign species or by enigmas (Ib. 12; I Jn. 3:2), and 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 and not through enigmas. Thus we shall love Him as He should be loved and as far as we can love Him, in that order; our love will be perfected, and the fruition of Him will be satiated without leaving anything to be desired (Ps. 16:15).

166. In a certain way most holy Mary had more prerequisites for this gift than all the others, since her most ardent love, given it was inferior to the Blessed in a certain way when She was without the clear vision of the Divinity, was yet 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 aided by the memory of what She had seen and enjoyed in a higher degree than the angels. And since her love was produced by this knowledge of God, it consequently exceeded that of the Blessed in all that did not pertain to immediate fruition and possession of the last End, for these cannot grow or increase. Due to her profound humility the Lord condescended to an arrangement whereby She could act as a viator, remaining in a holy fear of displeasing her Beloved. This

* cf. Apoc. 1:8 [Ed.]

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 resulting from the gifts of glory, and other gifts of the soul constituting 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 will of the saints, which in that most happy state cannot be imperfect or opposed to the divine will. 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 shall say later on, especially in the third Part (*Inc.* 219, 239, 422, 560; *Cor.* 3, 6, 40, 449, 585, etc.); yet they were not known or perceived by all who conversed with Her, for the Lord interposed a curtain or veil so they would not always or indiscriminately be manifested. But in many respects She herself enjoyed the privileges of this gift, though it was disguised, suspended, or hidden to the gaze of others, and She was not inconvenienced by earthly opaqueness as the rest of men.

169. St. Elizabeth perceived something of this clearness when at the sight of most holy Mary she exclaimed (Lk. 1:43): *And whence is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* 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 roughness natural to the flesh, but the softness as it were of the purest and finest silk, such that I cannot find any other comparison to make myself understood. Yet all this should not appear strange in the Mother of God, since She bore Him in her womb and 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 (Ex. 34:29-30; II Cor. 3:7), though it was much inferior to that vouchsafed to most holy Mary. There is no doubt that if God had not by a special providence 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 by natural power could have sustained its brilliancy, since even thus restrained and concealed it was sufficient to cause in them the same effect which St. Dionysius the Areopagite experienced in looking upon Her (*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, since She possessed these in such weight and measure 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. Second, regarding the dominion and commanding power which She had over all creatures, as mentioned above (18, 30, 43, 56, 60), 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 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. Since the first parents possessed this privilege and could transmit it to their descendants as servants and vassals, by a much greater title was it due to the innocence of the sovereign Mary; thus She truly was endowed with it as Lady.

171. Our most humble Queen made no use of these 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 these privileges She wished to suffer, and She truly 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 point out two things: First, the sufferings of our Queen bore no relation to any sins of her own, for She had none to atone for, and thus She suffered none of the bitterness which is mixed with the pains endured in the memory and consciousness of our own guilt of sins committed; and second, in her sufferings She was divinely sustained in accordance with the ardors of her love, for She could not naturally endure as much suffering as her love demanded or which the Lord allowed Her to endure because of her love.

172. *Subtility* 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 matter and occupy the same place with it. The subtilized bodies of the Blessed are therefore endowed with qualities of the spirit and can without difficulty penetrate another quantitative body, occupying the same place without dividing or separating it. Thus the body of our Lord coming forth from the grave (Mt. 28:2) and entering the closed doors (Jn. 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 at other times 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 (*Cor.* 193, 325, 352, 399, 560, 562, 568), for in all these She made use of her gift of subtlety, penetrating other bodies.

173. *Agility*, the last gift of the body, enables the glorified body to move from place to place instantly and without the impediment of terrestrial gravity in the manner of pure spirits who move by their own volition. Mary most holy possessed an admirable and continuous 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, and 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 composed. During the time of her pregnancy She felt even less the weight of her body, though in order to bear her share of labors She allowed hardships to produce their effects. She was so admirable and perfect in the possession and use of

these privileges that I find myself lacking in words to express all that has been made manifest to me concerning them, for it exceeds all I have said or am able to say.

174. Queen of heaven and my Lady, since Thou hast condescended to adopt me as thy daughter, thy word shall remain a pledge that Thou shalt be my Guide and Teacher. Relying on this promise I presume to propose a difficulty in which I find myself. How, my Mother and Mistress, when thy most holy soul arrived at the vision and enjoyment of God at the times when His most exalted Majesty so disposed, didst Thou not remain in the state of blessedness? And why can we not say Thou didst remain in this state of beatitude, since there was no sin nor any other obstacle to this state in Thee, according to the dignity and sanctity revealed to me by the supernatural light?

RESPONSE AND INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN HERSELF, OUR LADY.

175. My dearest daughter, thou dost doubt as one who 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 they must be entirely perfect;* if it would last only for some time it would be lacking in the completeness and adequacy necessary for constituting it as the highest and most perfect happiness. Moreover, for the creature to be glorified and at the same time be subject to sufferings, even though it be without sin, is incompatible with the common law and ordinary course. If this law was dispensed regarding my most holy Son it was because He was at the same time God and man (Jn. 1:18, 6:40; I Tim. 6:16), and it was not proper for his most holy soul, being hypostatically united with the Divinity, to be without the beatific vision; and since He was at the same time the Redeemer of the human race, He could not suffer nor pay the debt of sin, which 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 God. In addition I could not be said to have permanently enjoyed the state of blessedness since I had this only occasionally. Under these conditions I was capable of suffering at one time and enjoying blessedness at another; however, it was more usual for me to suffer and gain merits than to be blessed, since I belonged to the viators and not the comprehensors.

176. The Most High has disposed the just law that the conditions of eternal life are not to be enjoyed in mortal existence (Ex. 33:20), and that the arrival at immortality come by passing through bodily death, preceded by the merits gained in a state of suffering as is the present life of men. Although death in all the sons of Adam is 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, enter into eternal life and happiness by the death of the body (Lk. 24:26). There was nothing incongruous in this for me, rather it gave 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. None of this would have happened if the visions of the Divinity had been continuous in me. However, after I conceived the eternal Word the benefits and favors were

* cf. I Peter 5:10 [Ed.]

greater and more frequent 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 shalt never be able to comprehend all that the powerful arm of the Omnipotent wrought in me, and much less canst thou describe in human words what thou hast understood.

177. Now attend to the instruction which I shall 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 grateful love, it follows that if thou (and in the same way the rest of souls) art solicitous in imitating me, the Most High shall come and produce the same effects in thee as in myself, though they may not be so great and efficacious. For if the creature as soon as he obtains the use of reason begins to advance toward the Lord as he should, directing his footsteps in the path of life and salvation, His most exalted Majesty shall issue forth to meet him (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 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 souls would not place any obstacle on their part the divine love would be so generous with them, as He is with those who dispose themselves, giving them greater light and notice of his immutable being, and by a divine and most sweet rapture transforming them into a likeness of Himself and communicating to them many of the effects of bliss; 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 let Him go* (Cant. 3:4). Regarding this possession and his presence the Lord himself shall give many tokens and pledges so the soul may possess Him in peace like the Blessed, though for a limited time. So generous as this shall 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 (Ib. 8:6). 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 sweet fruits of the highest Good which it loves (Ib. 3:2). These mysterious influences cause a sort of overflow into the inferior and animal parts of the creature, producing a certain transparency and purifying it from the effects of the spiritual darknesses; 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 difficulties and violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers (Mt. 11:12); it becomes alert and unhindered by earthly grossness, and thus many times the body itself begins to feel this lightness in regard to its own self, and the labors which before seemed burdensome become easy.* Of all these effects thou hast knowledge and experience, my daughter, and I have described and rehearsed them for thee so thou mayest dispose thyself and labor so much the more earnestly so the divine activity and power of the

* cf. Mt. 11:30 [Ed.]

Most High, in working out his pleasure in thee, may find thee well disposed and free from resistance and hindrance.