

CHAPTER XII

The Operations Performed by the Most Holy Soul of Christ our Lord in the First Instant of His Conception, and what His Most Pure Mother Then Did.

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 (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, and thus we cannot say that in any moment of time Christ our highest Good was only man. From the first instant He was true 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 Man-God and Godman. And since the active exercise of the faculties is coexistent with the 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 himself, 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 both in essence and in operation He was entirely deified.

145. The wonder regarding this sacrament is that so much glory, yea, the greatness of the immense Divinity, was enclosed within such a small volume, not larger than the body of a bee, or not greater than a small almond, for the volume of the most holy body of Christ was not any greater than that at the instant when the conception and hypostatic union took place; also, that in this great littleness there remained the highest glory and capability for suffering, for since his humanity was at the same time glorified and also passible, He 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 divinity itself, always infinite, within the curtailed sphere of such a small body 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 the superior part of the most noble operations would be glorious and a comprehensor, and that all that glory without measure would remain as it were compressed in the supreme part of his soul, suspending the effects and the gifts of glory which would otherwise have naturally communicated themselves to his body; thus He could be at the same time a viator, subject to suffering, enabling Him to procure our Redemption by means of his cross, Passion and Death.

146. In order to perform these operations and the others He was to accomplish all the habits which were appropriate to his faculties and necessary for their activity and operation both as a comprehensor and a viator were infused into his most holy humanity at the moment of his conception; thus He was furnished with the infused science of the Blessed and with the sanctifying grace and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, which according to Isaias rested upon Christ (Is. 11:2). He possessed all the virtues except faith and hope, for these are incompatible with the beatific vision and possession, and hence were lacking in Him; likewise were lacking in the Saint of the Saints all other virtues which presuppose any imperfection, since He could not sin, nor was guile found in his mouth (I Peter 2:22). The dignity and excellence of his science and grace, and the virtues and perfections of Christ our Lord, need not be mentioned here, for these are

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 measure, as David says (Ps. 109:7); hence He must have possessed the plenitude of all virtues and perfections.

147. Thus adorned and deified by the Divinity and his gifts, the most holy soul of Christ our Lord proceeded in his operations in the following order. First He began to see and know the Divinity intuitively as He is in Himself, and as He is united to his most holy humanity; then He loved Him with the highest beatific love. After that He perceived the inferiority of human nature in comparison with the essence of God, and He humbled Himself profoundly; in this humiliation He rendered gratitude to the immutable being of God for having created Him and for the benefit of the hypostatic union by which, though remaining human, He was raised to the essence of God. He also recognized his most holy humanity was made capable of suffering and was adapted for attaining the end of the Redemption. In this knowledge He offered Himself as the Redeemer in sacrifice for the human race (Ps. 39:8-9; Heb. 10:5-6), 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 pure Mary by the force of her charity and her heroic virtues furnished its substance. He took possession of that holy tabernacle and dwelling, rejoicing in her most exquisite beauty, and being 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, and 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 St. Joseph, asking eternal salvation for them. All these acts and many others were most exalted and proceeded from Him as true God and true man. Not taking into account those which 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 were possible.

148. Even the act of obedience alone by which the most holy humanity of the Word subjected himself to suffering and prevented the glory of his soul from being communicated to his body was abundantly sufficient for our salvation. Yet although this sufficed for our salvation, nothing would satisfy his immense love for men except the full limit of effective love (Jn. 13:1), for this was the purpose of his life, that He consume it in demonstrations and tokens of such intense love that neither the understanding of men nor of angels can comprehend it. And if in the first instant of his entrance into the world He enriched it so immeasurably, what treasures and what riches of merits must He have stored up for it when He left it by his Passion and Death of the cross after thirty-three years of labor and activity so divine! O immense love! O charity without limit! O mercy without measure! O most generous kindness! Yet 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 correspond with Him as a Redeemer who has given us eternal life and liberty, let us hear Him as our Teacher, let us follow Him as our Captain, as our Light and Leader who shows us the way to our true happiness.

149. This Lord and Master did not work for Himself, nor merit the reward for his most holy soul, nor gain this augmentation of grace for Himself, but entirely for us. He had no need of all

of this, nor could He receive an increase of grace or glory, since He was filled with them as St. John says (Jn. 1:14), for He was the Onlybegotten of the Father at the same time He was man. In this He had no equal, nor could have one, because 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 desired to enter and go through the school of bodily experience of this life (Lk. 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 (I Peter 2:21) so we would be wisely instructed in the art of loving, for this is learned perfectly by putting into practice true and efficacious works, and not by affections and desires only. I do not enlarge upon the mysteries of the most holy life of Christ our Lord due to my incapacity, and I refer to the Gospels, selecting only that which shall seem necessary for this divine History of his Mother and 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 add besides 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 his most holy Mother had, and which we have mentioned in the preceding chapter (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 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 was not directly active in the union of the Divinity with the humanity, She did not for this reason lose her right to be called the Mother of the true God, for She concurred by administering 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 is called Mother of God, for She alone concurred as a Mother in the generation of Christ, true God and true man, to the exclusion of any other natural cause, and only through this concurrence of Mary in his generation Christ, the Godman, was born.

151. The Virgin Mother of God 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 clear presence of the Divinity and furnished with the plenitude of divine gifts and science as befitted the Mother of the incarnate Word, lost in humility and love, adored the Lord in his infinite essence, and without delay also in his union with the most holy humanity. She rendered Him gratitude for having favored Her with the dignity of Mother of God and for the favors granted to the whole human race. She gave thanks and glory also for all mortals. She offered Herself as an acceptable sacrifice in his service and in the raising and nourishing of her sweetest Son, ready to assist and cooperate (as far as possible on her part) 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 ministrations of her office as Mother of the incarnate Word, so She could treat Him with the veneration and magnanimity due to God himself. She offered to her most holy Son all the children of Adam yet to be born and the saints of limbo, and in the name of all and in her own name 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 (*Con.* 232, 333, 436; *Inc.* 11, 50-53, 88, 93, etc.), 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. She was especially persistent and fervent in her prayer to obtain the 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, to be guided in all her actions as appropriate for the Mother of God. The Almighty answered Her: "My Dove, do not fear, for I shall 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 happened all that I have said, and which was the most wonderful She had experienced. Restored to her faculties, her first action was to prostrate Herself on the earth and adore her most holy Son, God and man, conceived in her virginal womb, for this She had not yet done with her external and bodily senses and faculties. Nothing She could do in the service of her Creator did this most prudent Mother leave undone. From that time on She recognized and felt new and divine effects in her most holy soul and her exterior and interior faculties; and though her entire life had been spent in the most noble state of her most holy soul and body, yet on this day of the Incarnation of the Word She became more spiritualized and divinized by new enhancements of grace and indescribable gifts.

153. However, let no one think the purest Mother was thus favored and so closely united with the divinity and humanity of her most holy 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 most sweet Son this Lady lived to share both joy and sorrow with Him, since the memory of what She had so vividly been taught concerning the labors and death of her most holy 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 conversation 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 sincere 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 always present; and by this continual sorrow of thirty-three years She took upon Herself the long vigil of our Redemption, and during all this time this sacrament was 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 most holy Son both before and after his birth, and speaking to Him from her inmost 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 their sins; O would the justice of the eternal Father be 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 also suffer with Thee the same death. O inhuman sin, so cruel and the cause of so much evil, how couldst thou nevertheless be so fortunate that thy Repairer shall be One who because 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 it was the will of the Father that I guard Thee and save Thee from death, or die in thy company, so Thou wouldst never leave mine! But that which happened to the patriarch Abraham shall not now take place (Gen. 22:11-12), for the predestined decree shall be executed. Let the will of the Lord be fulfilled." These loving sighs were many times repeated by our Queen, as I shall say farther on (513, 601, 611, 685, etc.), and the eternal Father accepted them as an agreeable sacrifice, while they were the sweetest diversion of her most holy Son.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY OUR QUEEN AND LADY.

155. My daughter, since thou by faith and divine light hast come to know the grandeur of God and his ineffable condescension in coming down from heaven for thee and for all mortals, let not this benefit be for thee idle and fruitless. Adore the being 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 since He was the true God and I his Mother (for insofar 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 Blessed Sacrament. In this admirable Sacrament my most holy Son, with his divinity and humanity, comes to thee and remains with thee in a new and incomprehensible way, and He manifests his great condescension, though little noticed and respected by mortals in giving 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 shall always fall short of what thou owest to God and what He deserves.[†] And so 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, to grieve and in sweet affection mourn over the gross ignorance and dangerous tardiness of the sons of men, and over the ingratitude also of the children of the Church, who having received the light of divine faith yet live in such interior forgetfulness of the works and benefits of the Incarnation, yea of God himself, that they seem to differ from infidels only in some ceremonies and exterior worship; these they perform without spirit or heartiness, many times offending and provoking the divine justice which they should placate.

* cf. *Exsultet* of the Easter Vigil [Ed.]

† cf. *Lauda Sion*, v. 2, Mass for Corpus Christi [Ed.]

157. This ignorance and torpidity engenders a lack of preparation 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 neighbor, and pray for help from the bottom of thy heart. And so thou mayest put away from thy own self such formidable dangers, do not undervalue the favors and benefits which thou receivest, nor belittle or forget them, even under the pretense of humility. Remember and consider how far the grace of the Most High has coursed in order to call thee (Ps. 18:7). Ponder in thy mind how He has waited upon thee and consoled thee, assured thee in thy doubts, quieted thee in thy fears, ignored and pardoned thy faults, and multiplied his favors, caresses and blessings. I assure thee, my daughter, thou must confess in thy heart that the Most High has not done such things with any other generation, and thou of thyself canst do nothing and art poor and more useless than others. Let then thy gratitude be greater than that of all the creatures.