

CHAPTER XIV

The Attention and Care which Mary Most Holy Bestowed upon the Infant Jesus, and Other Things She Experienced Regarding Him.

180. As soon as our Lady and Queen issued from the ecstasy in which She had conceived the eternal incarnate Word, She prostrated Herself upon the earth and adored Him in her womb, as I have already said in chapter XII, number 152. This adoration She continued all her life, commencing it at midnight every day and repeating these genuflexions three hundred times until the same hour of the following night, and more whenever She had the opportunity. In this She was even more diligent during the nine months of her divine pregnancy. In order to comply entirely with the new obligations in which She found Herself due to the new deposit of the eternal Father She contained in her virginal bridal chamber, She directed all her attention to many and fervent petitions (without failing in the duties of her state) in order to guard the Treasure of heaven He had confided to Her. For this She dedicated anew her most holy soul and its faculties, exercising acts of all the virtues in a degree so heroic and supreme that it caused new admiration in the angels themselves. She also dedicated and consecrated all the rest of her bodily actions to the honor and service of the infant Godman within Her. Whether She ate, slept, labored or rested She did it all for the nourishment and conservation of her most sweet Son, and in all these actions She was inflamed more and more with divine love.

181. On the day following the Incarnation the thousand Guardian Angels who attended upon most holy Mary appeared in corporeal form, and with profound humility adored Him in the womb of the Mother of their incarnate King, and they acknowledged Her anew as their Queen and Lady, rendering Her due homage and reverence, saying: “Now, O Lady, Thou art the true Ark of the Testament, since Thou dost enclose the Lawgiver himself (Dt. 10:5) and dost preserve the manna of heaven (Heb. 9:4), which is our true bread.* Receive, our Queen, congratulations for thy dignity and consummate good fortune, for which we also thank the Most High since He has justly chosen Thee for his Mother and his tabernacle. We offer Thee anew our attentiveness and service in order to obey Thee as vassals and servants of the supreme and omnipotent King, of whom Thou art the true Mother.” This offering and new veneration of the holy Angels excited in the Mother of Wisdom incomparable sentiments of humility, gratitude, and love of God, for in this most prudent Heart, where all things were weighed with the scales of the sanctuary according to their true value and weight, this reverence and acknowledgment of the angelic spirits proclaiming Her as their Queen was held in high esteem. Although it was greater to see Herself the Mother of the King and Lord of all creation, yet all her blessings and dignities were made more evident by these demonstrations and courtesies of the holy Angels.

182. The Angels rendered this homage as executors and ministers of the will of the Most High (Heb. 1:14). When their Queen and our Lady was alone all of them attended upon Her in corporeal form, and they assisted Her in her outward actions and occupations; and when She was engaged in manual labor, they administered to Her what was needed. Whenever She happened to eat alone in the absence of St. Joseph they waited upon Her at her poor table and her humble meals. Everywhere they followed Her and formed an escort, helping Her in the services rendered to St. Joseph. Amid all these favors and helps the heavenly Lady did not forget to ask permission

* cf. Ps. 77:25; Jn. 6:30-35, 48-59 [Ed.]

from the Master of masters for all of her operations and undertakings, imploring his direction and assistance. So exact and so well governed were all her exercises according to the plenitude of perfection that the Lord alone could comprehend and properly weigh them.

183. Besides the ordinary guidance during the time in which She carried in her most holy womb the incarnate Word, She felt his divine presence in diverse ways, all of them admirable and most sweet. Sometimes He showed Himself to Her by abstractive vision as described above (*Con.* 628-30). At other times She saw and beheld Him as He was now present in the virginal temple, united hypostatically with the human nature. At other times the most holy humanity was manifested to Her as if in a crystalline monstrance composed of her own maternal womb and purest body; this kind of vision gave special consolation and delight to the great Queen. At other times She perceived how the glory of his most holy soul overflowed into the body of the divine Child, communicating to his body some of the effects of the blessedness and glory of his soul, and how the clarity and light of the natural body of her Son passed over in a wonderfully sweet, ineffable and divine manner into Herself as Mother. This favor transformed Her entirely into another existence, inflaming her Heart and causing in Her such effects as no created capacity can explain. Let the intellect of the highest Seraphim extend and dilate as much as it may, it would nevertheless find itself overwhelmed by this glory (*Prov.* 25:27), for the entire being of the heavenly Queen was an intellectual and animated heaven, and in Her was summarized the divine glory and greatness in a measure that even the vast confines of the heavens themselves could not encompass (*III Kg.* 8:27).

184. These and other prerogatives alternated and succeeded each other in accordance with the exercises of the divine Mother with such variety as suited the different kinds of work which She performed. Some were spiritual, others manual and corporal; some in the service of her Spouse, others for the benefit of her neighbor; and all this together governed by the wisdom of a Maiden producing a harmony admirable and most sweet in the hearing of the Lord and wonderful to the angelic spirits. Yet when among this variety the Mistress of the world was left in her natural state (the Most High thus disposing it) She suffered mortal agony caused by the force and violence of her love, for to Her could in truth be applied what Solomon says in the name of the Spouse: *Stay me up with flowers, because I languish with love* (*Cant.* 2:5). Thus it would happen that by the piercing wounds of these sweet arrows of love She was brought near to the ending of her life; but in this necessity the powerful arm of the Most High was accustomed to strengthen Her in a supernatural manner.

185. Sometimes in order to give Her sensible relief innumerable birds would come to visit Her by the command of the Lord. As if endowed with intellect they would salute Her by their lively movements, and dividing into harmonious choirs would furnish Her with sweetest music, and they would wait for her blessing before again dispersing. This happened especially after She had conceived the incarnate Word, as if tendering Her their congratulations on her dignity in imitation of the Angels. The Mistress of all creatures on that day spoke to the different kinds of birds and commanded them to remain and praise with Her the Creator in thanksgiving for the creation, existence and beauty given to them, and to sing his praises for their conservation. Immediately they obeyed Her as their Lady and anew they began to form choirs, singing in sweetest harmony and bowing low to the ground to worship their Creator and honor the Mother who bore Him in her womb. They were accustomed to bring flowers to Her in their beaks and place them into her hands, waiting until She would command them to sing or to be silent according to her desires. It also happened that in bad weather some birds would come and seek

the protection of the heavenly Lady, and She took them in and nourished them, in her admirable innocence glorifying the Creator of all things.

186. Our tepid ignorance must not be surprised at these wonders, for though the incidents might be called small the purposes of the Most High are great and venerable in all his works; moreover, the works of our most prudent Queen were magnificent, no matter what kind they were. And who is so presumptuous as to ignore the importance of knowing how much of the essence of God and his perfections are manifest in the existence of all creatures? How important it is to seek Him and find Him, to bless Him and magnify Him in all his creatures as admirable, powerful, generous and holy? How most holy Mary accomplished this, overlooking no visible creature and having no time or place in which She was idle? How also shall our ungrateful forgetfulness not be confounded upon knowing this? How can our callousness not be softened? How can our lukewarm heart not be enkindled, finding ourselves reprehended and instructed by the irrational creatures? Solely for the participation in the being of God consisting of the existence received from Him they praise Him without offending Him; whereas men, who participate in his very image and likeness, with the capacity of knowing Him and enjoying Him eternally, forget Him without even knowing Him, or if they do know Him refuse to praise Him, and without desiring to serve Him rather offend Him! With no right can these men be preferred to the brute animals, since they have become worse than the brutes (Ps. 48:13, 21).

INSTRUCTION OF OUR LADY, THE MOST HOLY QUEEN.

187. My daughter, thou hast received my instruction until now in order to desire and strive after the heavenly science which I desire thee so earnestly to acquire, and which shall teach thee to understand profoundly what decorous reverence is due to God. I remind thee once more that among mortals, due to their ignorance, this science is very daunting and little coveted, resulting in much damage to them; for thence it arises that in conversing with the Most High or rendering Him service or worship they fail to form a worthy concept of his infinite greatness and free themselves from the darksome images of their earthly occupations which make them apathetic and carnal, unworthy and unfit for the magnificent communication with the sovereign Divinity. Upon this coarseness follows another disorder, namely whenever they converse with their neighbor they do it without order, measure or discretion, become entangled in their outward actions, and losing the memory and presence of their Creator in the excitement of their passions are completely entangled in what is earthly.

188. Hence I desire thee, my dearest, to flee from this danger and learn the science of the immutable being and infinite attributes of God. Thou must study Him and unite thyself to Him in such a way that no created being shall come between thy soul and the true and highest Good. At all times and in all places, occupations and operations thou must keep Him in sight, without releasing Him from the intimate embrace of thy heart (Cant. 3:4). Therefore I command thee to treat Him with a magnanimous heart, with decorum and reverence, and with deeply felt fear of the soul. And whatever pertains to his divine worship I desire thee to handle with all attention and care. Above all, in order to enter into his presence by prayer and petitions free thyself from all sensible and earthly images. And since human frailty cannot always be stable in the force of love, nor bear its violent movements due to its earthly nature, accept some proper alleviation and such that by it thou also findest God himself. Such help, for instance, is provided by his praise in the beauty of the heavens and the stars, in the variety of the plants, in the pleasant vista of the

fields, in the forces of the elements, and especially in the nature of the angels and the glory of the saints.

189. But bear continually in mind especially this particular caution, not to seek any earthly alleviation in any event or in any labor which thou art to undergo, nor to indulge in any diversion coming from human creatures, and especially not in those coming from men, for due to thy naturally weak and yielding character, so much adverse to giving pain, thou dost place thyself in danger of exceeding and overstepping the limit of what is allowed or just, following thy sensible likings more than is proper for the religious spouses of my most holy Son. All human creatures run the risk of this negligence, for if full rein is given to frail human nature it will not give heed to reason nor to the true light of the spirit, but forgetting them entirely it will blindly follow the impulse of its passions and pleasures. Against this general danger is provided the enclosure and retirement of the souls consecrated to my Son and Lord, in order to cut off the root of those unhappy and disgraceful occasions for those religious who would willingly seek them and entangle themselves in them. Thy recreations, my dearest, and those of thy sister religious must be free from such danger and deadly poison. Seek always those which thou shalt find in the secret of thy breast and in the chamber of thy Beloved, who is faithful in consoling the sorrowful and assisting the afflicted (Ps. 90:15).