

CHAPTER XV

Most Holy Mary is Informed of the Will of the Lord that She Visit St. Elizabeth; She Asks St. Joseph for Permission to Go, Without Manifesting Anything Else.

190. By the words of the heavenly messenger, the archangel Gabriel, most holy Mary had been informed that her cousin Elizabeth (who was considered to be sterile) had conceived a son and was already in the sixth month of her pregnancy. Afterwards in one of the intellectual visions the Most High revealed to Her that in a miraculous birth Elizabeth would bring forth a son who would be great before the Lord (Lk. 1:15), a Prophet and the Forerunner of the incarnate Word, and other great mysteries of the sanctity and mysterious life of St. John. On this same occasion and on others the heavenly Queen was informed it would be agreeable and pleasing to the Lord if She would visit her cousin Elizabeth so she as well as the child in her womb could be sanctified by the presence of their Redeemer, for His Majesty was anxious to communicate the benefits of his coming into the world and his merits to his Precursor in order to make of him as it were the well-seasoned first fruit of his Redemption.

191. At the news of this sacramental mystery the most prudent Virgin, with admirable jubilation of spirit, rendered gratitude to the Lord for such great condescension and favor vouchsafed to the soul of the Precursor and Prophet and to his mother Elizabeth. Signifying her readiness to fulfill the divine pleasure She spoke to His Majesty and said: "Most high Lord, beginning and cause of all good, let thy Name be eternally glorified, acknowledged and praised by all the nations. I, the least of thy creatures, give Thee humble thanks for the liberal kindness which Thou dost desire to show to thy servant Elizabeth and to the son of her womb. If it is according to the promptings of thy condescension that I serve Thee in this work I stand prepared, my Lord, to obey eagerly thy divine mandates." The Most High answered Her: "My Dove and my Beloved, elect among creatures, in truth I say to Thee that due to thy intercession and love I shall as a Father and most generous God take care of thy cousin Elizabeth and the son who is to be born of her. I shall choose him as my Prophet and the Precursor of the Word who is made man in Thee; I shall look upon them as belonging to Thee and intimately connected with Thee. Therefore I desire my and thy Onlybegotten to go to visit the mother in order to free the son from the chains of the primordial guilt, so his voice and praise may sound in my ears (Cant. 2:14) before the common and ordinary time decreed for other men, and so the mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption may be revealed to his sanctified soul. Thus I desire Thee to visit Elizabeth, for We three Persons of the blessed Trinity have chosen her son for great deeds conformable to our pleasure."

192. To this command of the Lord the most obedient Mother responded: "Thou knowest, my Lord and God, that all the desires of my heart seek but thy divine pleasure, and that I desire to fulfill diligently whatever Thou commandest of thy humble servant. Allow me, my God, to ask permission of my husband Joseph, and make this journey according to his will and direction. And so I might not diverge from what is thy pleasure, do Thou govern me during this journey in all my actions and direct my footsteps to the greater glory of thy holy Name (Ps. 118:133), and for this receive the sacrifice I make in going out in public and leaving my secluded retreat. And I wish, King and God of my soul, to offer in this more than my desires, meeting that suffering for thy love which shall be for thy greater service and pleasure so the affection of my soul be not unfulfilled."

193. When our great Queen came out of this vision She called upon her thousand Guardian Angels, who appeared to Her in bodily forms, and told them of the command of the Most High. She asked them to assist Her with careful solicitude in this journey in order to teach Her how to obediently fulfill this command according to the greater pleasure of the Lord, and to defend Her and guard Her from dangers so She could conduct Herself in all things during this journey in the most perfect manner. The holy princes with wonderful devotion offered to obey and serve Her. In the same manner the Mistress of all prudence and humility was also accustomed to act on other occasions, for though She was Herself more wise and more perfect in her deeds than the angels, yet because She was yet in the state of pilgrimage and endowed with a nature lower than the angels She was always solicitous to attain the plenitude of perfection by consulting and asking for the aid of her Guardian Angels, though they were her inferiors in sanctity. Under their direction, as also by the promptings of the Holy Ghost, all her human actions were well disposed and well ordered. The heavenly spirits obeyed Her with alacrity and punctuality such as was proper to their nature and due to their Queen and Lady. With Her they spoke and conferred in most sweet colloquies, and alternately with Her they sang highest songs of praise and adoration of the Most High. At other times they conversed about the supernal mysteries of the incarnate Word, the hypostatic union, the sacrament of human Redemption, the triumphs He would achieve, and the fruits and blessings accruing from them to mortals. It would necessitate lengthening this work too much if I were to write all that has been revealed to me about these conversations.

194. The humble Spouse proceeded immediately to ask the consent of St. Joseph for executing the mandate of the Most High, and in her consummate prudence She said nothing of these happenings, but simply spoke to him these words: "My lord and spouse, by the divine light it was made known to me that through the condescension of the Most High the prayer of my cousin Elizabeth, the wife of Zacharias, has been heard: She has conceived a son, though she was sterile. Since she has obtained this singular blessing I hope through the infinite bounty of God her son will greatly please and glorify the Lord. I think that on this occasion I am under obligation to visit her and converse with her on certain things for her consolation and spiritual encouragement. If this is according to thy liking, my master, I shall perform it with thy permission, for I am entirely subject to thy will and pleasure. Consider then what is best for me and command what I am to do."

195. This prudent silence of most holy Mary, so full of humble subjection, was very agreeable to the Lord, for She showed Herself thereby worthy and capable of receiving the deposit of the great sacraments of the King (Tob. 12:7). Hence due to the confidence in his fidelity with which She proceeded, His Majesty disposed the most pure heart of St. Joseph, giving him his divine light to act conformably to his will. This is the reward of the humble who ask for counsel, that they shall find it with certainty and security (Ecclus. 32:24). It is also the peculiar prerogative of a holy and discreet zeal to be able to give prudent advice to those who ask (Ib. 22). Full of this holy counsel St. Joseph answered our Queen: "Thou knowest already, my Lady and Spouse, that my utmost desires are to serve Thee with all diligence and attention, for I am bound to have this confidence in thy great virtue, knowing Thou wouldst not incline toward anything which is not according to the greater pleasure and glory of the Most High, and this is my belief also in regard to this journey. Lest thy making this journey alone and without the company of thy husband cause surprise, I shall gladly go with Thee and attend to thy service on the way. Do Thou appoint the day on which we shall depart together."

196. Most holy Mary thanked her prudent spouse Joseph for his loving solicitude and attentive cooperation with the will of God in whatever he knew to be for his service and honor. They both concluded to depart immediately on their visit to the house of St. Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39) and prepared without delay the provisions procured by St. Joseph, which consisted merely in a little fruit, bread, and a few fishes. In addition to these he borrowed a humble beast of burden in order to carry their provisions and his Spouse, the Queen of all creation. With this preparation they departed from Nazareth for Judea; the journey itself I shall describe in the following chapter. Upon leaving their poor dwelling the great Lady of the world knelt at the feet of her spouse Joseph and asked his blessing in order to begin the journey in the name of the Lord. The Saint was abashed at the rare humility of his Spouse with which he had already been impressed by experience on so many other occasions. He hesitated giving Her his benediction, but the meek and sweet persistence of most holy Mary overcame his objections, and he blessed Her in the name of the Most High. The heavenly Lady raised her eyes and her Heart to God in order to direct her first steps toward the fulfillment of the divine pleasure, willingly bearing along in her womb the Onlybegotten of the Father and her own for the sanctification of John in the womb of his mother Elizabeth.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY QUEEN AND LADY GAVE ME.

197. My dearest daughter, many times I have confided and manifested to thee the love burning within my bosom, for I greatly desire that it be enkindled in thine, and for thee to profit from the instruction which I give thee. Happy is the soul to whom the Most High manifests his holy and perfect will; but more blissful and blessed is he who puts into execution what he has learned.* In many ways does God show to mortals the highways and pathways of eternal life: By the Gospels and the Holy Scriptures, by the Sacraments and the laws of the holy Church, by the writings and examples of the saints, and especially by means of the doctrine of his ministers and obedience to them, of whom His Majesty said *he that heareth you, heareth Me* (Lk. 10:16), for obeying them is the same as obeying the Lord himself. Whenever by any of these means thou hast come to the knowledge of the will of God, I desire thee to assume the wings of humility and obedience, and as if in ethereal flight or like the quickest sunbeam hasten to execute it and thereby fulfill the divine pleasure.

198. Besides these means of instruction the Most High has still others in order to direct the soul, namely He intimates his perfect will to them in a supernatural manner and reveals to them many sacraments. This kind of instruction is of many and different degrees; not all of them are common or ordinary to all souls, for the Lord dispenses his light in measure and weight (Wis. 11:21). Sometimes He speaks to the heart and the interior senses in commands; at others in correction, advising or instructing; sometimes He moves the heart to ask Him; at other times He proposes clearly what He desires so the soul might be moved to fulfill it; and still other times He manifests as in a clear mirror great mysteries so they can be seen and recognized by the intellect and loved by the will. Yet this great and infinite Good is always sweet in commanding, powerful in giving the necessary help for obedience, just in his commands, and quick in disposing circumstances so He can be obeyed despite all the impediments which hinder the fulfillment of his most holy will.

* cf. Mt. 7:21 [Ed.]

199. In receiving this divine light, my daughter, I desire to see thee very attentive and very quick and diligent in following it up in deed. In order to hear this most delicate and spiritual voice of the Lord it is necessary for the faculties of the soul to be purged from earthly grossness and for the creature to live entirely according to the spirit, for the sensual man does not perceive the exalted and divine things (I Cor. 2:14). Be attentive then to his secrets (Is. 24:16) and forget all that is of the outside; listen, my daughter, and incline thy ear (Ps. 44:11); free thyself from all visible things. And so thou mayest be diligent cultivate love, for love is a fire which does not have its effect until the material is prepared; therefore let thy heart always be disposed and prepared. Whenever the Most High bids thee or communicates to thee anything for the welfare of souls, or especially for their eternal salvation, devote thyself to it entirely, for they are bought at the inestimable price of the blood of the Lamb (I Peter 1:18-19) and of divine love. Do not allow thyself to be hindered in this matter by thy own lowliness and bashfulness, but overcome the fear which restrains thee, for if thou thyself art of small value and usefulness, the Most High is rich (Rom. 10:12), powerful, great, and by Himself made all things (Is. 44:24). Thy promptness and affection shall not go without its reward, though I desire thee rather to be moved entirely by the pleasure of thy Lord.