

CHAPTER XXVIII

Lucifer with his Seven Legions Persists in Tempting Mary Most Holy; She Conquers Him and Crushes the Head of This Dragon.

359. Even if the prince of darkness and wickedness had now retreated, his exorbitant pride would have been sufficiently discomfited and humiliated by the victories which had been gained by the Queen of heaven. But since he continues to rise up against God with insatiable malice (Ps. 73:23), even when vanquished, he did not acknowledge his defeat. He burned in flames of his unextinguished furor in finding himself conquered, and conquered thus by a humble and tender woman, though he and his hosts had overcome so many valiant men and magnanimous women. God had ordained that this enemy come to know most holy Mary was pregnant, though they thought her Child was a mere man, for his divinity and other mysteries connected with Him always remained hidden to these enemies. Hence they persuaded themselves this was not the promised Messiah, but a child like the rest of men. This error also confirmed them in the mistake that most holy Mary was not the Mother of the incarnate Word, both of whom were to crush the head of the dragon (Gen. 3:15); however, they were persuaded that of a woman so valiant and victorious some man of distinguished sanctity would be born. The great dragon, convinced of this, conceived against the fruit of most holy Mary that vast fury mentioned in chapter XII of the Apocalypse and referred to in this History (*Con.*105), and he awaited the birth of her Son in order to devour Him.

360. Whenever Lucifer directed his looks toward this Child enclosed in the womb of most holy Mary he felt a mysterious power oppressing him. Although the presence of the Child seemed to cause only a certain weakening and deadening of his strength, yet this was sufficient to enrage him and make him seek by all means the destruction of this suspicious Child and his victorious Mother. Assuming the most fearful shapes of ferocious bulls and terrible dragons, and in other forms, he sought to approach Her without ever being able to succeed. He rushed upon Her but found himself repulsed, without knowing by whom or how. He struggled like a wild beast in chains and gave forth awe-inspiring howls, which if God had not prevented them from being heard would have terrified the world and frightened many men to death. He shot forth from his mouth fire and fumes of sulfur mixed with poisonous spittle. All this the heavenly Princess Mary saw and heard, without being moved more than if She saw a gnat. He caused disturbances in the air, upon the earth, or in her house, disarranging and overthrowing it in all its parts; yet most holy Mary still remained unmoved, retaining her inward and outward tranquility and peace, and showing Herself invincibly superior to all his attempts.

361. Lucifer, finding himself thus vanquished, opened his most impure mouth and set in motion his lying and defiled tongue. He released the floodgates of his malice, proposing and pronouncing in the presence of the heavenly Empress all the heresies and infernal sects which he had concocted with the help of his depraved ministers; for after they had been hurled from heaven, and having been informed the divine Word was to assume human flesh in order to be the Head of a race which He would replenish with graces and celestial teachings, the dragon resolved to concoct errors, sects and heresies in opposition to all the truths concerning the knowledge, love and worship of the Most High. In this occupation the demons consumed many years before the coming of Christ, the Lord of the world, and all this poisonous deceit Lucifer, the ancient serpent, had stored up within himself. Now he poured it out in the presence of the Mother of truth and purity, hoping to infect Her by all the errors against God and his truth which

he had conceived up to that day.

362. These errors are not fit to be described here, even less so than some of the temptations indicated in the last chapter, for it would be dangerous not only for weak souls, but even the strongest must fear the pestilential breath of Lucifer, who on this occasion exhaled all his deceitful malice. According to what I saw, I believe without a doubt there was no error, idolatry or heresy known to have existed in the world to this day which this dragon did not vomit forth in the hearing of the sovereign Mary; hence the holy Church can indeed sing that She by Herself has destroyed and extinguished all the heresies of the whole world (Office of the Blessed Virgin Mary),* congratulating Her for her victories in all truth. Thus advanced our victorious Sulamitess (Cant. 7:1), in whom nothing was found which was not of the choirs of virtues ordered in the form of squadrons to oppress, behead and confound the infernal hosts. She refuted all their falsehoods, and each one in particular, contradicting, detesting and anathematizing all of them with invincible faith and sublime constancy. She proclaimed the various truths opposed to these falsehoods, magnifying the Lord by means of them as true, just and holy. She broke out into songs of praise in which his virtues and doctrines were extolled as true, holy, immaculate, and altogether praiseworthy. In fervent prayer She besought the Lord to humiliate the arrogance of the demons by preventing them from spreading so freely their poisonous errors throughout the world, and asking Him to diminish the influence of the false teachings which they had already sown and those which they intended to sow later among men.

363. Due to this victory of the great Queen, and because of her prayers, I perceived the Most High in justice set narrower bounds to the demons so they would not be able to scatter the seeds of error as much as they intended and as much as the sins of men would merit. Although their sins are the cause of so many heresies and sects unto this day, yet they would have caused many more if most holy Mary had not crushed the head of the dragon by such great victories and by her prayers and petitions. I have been informed of a great mystery which gives us consolation in this conflict of the holy Church against her wicked enemies; namely, due to this triumph of most holy Mary, and another which She gained over the demons after the Ascension of our Lord (*Cor.* 528), the Almighty as a reward of her battles decreed that through her intercession and virtue all the heresies and sects of the world against the holy Church were to be destroyed and extinguished. The time appointed for this blessing was not made known to me; probably the fulfillment of this decree is dependent upon some tacit and unknown condition. Yet I am sure if the Catholic princes and their subjects would seek to please this great Queen of heaven and flee to her intercession as being their special Patroness and Protectress, and if they would direct all their influence and riches, all their power and sovereignty toward the exaltation of the faith and the honor of God and of purest Mary (for this may perhaps be the condition imposed), they would be as it were the instruments by which the infidels would be refuted and vanquished, the sects and errors infesting the world would be repressed, and splendid and magnificent victories would be gained for the Catholic truth.

364. Before the birth of Christ our Redeemer it seemed to Lucifer, as was intimated in the foregoing chapter (336), that his coming was retarded by the sins of the world. In order to prevent his coming altogether he sought to increase this hindrance by multiplying the aberrations and crimes of mortals; and this most iniquitous pride of the demon the Lord confounded by the magnificent triumphs of his most holy Mother. After the incarnate God was born and died for us, the malicious dragon sought to hinder and divert the fruits of his blood and Redemption. For this

* cf. Common Mass of the Blessed Virgin Mary, *Tract* for Septuagesimatide [Ed.]

purpose he began to sow and spread the errors which after the times of the Apostles have afflicted and do now afflict the Church. The victory over this infernal malice was likewise left by Christ in the hands of his most holy Mother, for She alone could and did merit such a victory. Through Her was idolatry extinguished by the preaching of the Gospel; through Her were brought to naught the ancient sects of Arius, Nestorius, Pelagius, and others; She it was who instigated the zeal and solicitude of kings, princes, Fathers and Doctors of the holy Church. Hence how can it be doubted that if the Catholic princes, both of the Church and of the state, would use the proper diligence, aiding as it were this heavenly Lady, She on her part would not fail to help them, conferring upon them happiness in this life and in the next, and cutting down all the heresies of the world? For this very purpose the Lord has enriched so greatly the Church as well as the Catholic reigns and monarchies; and if it was not for this purpose, it would be better for them to remain poor. It was not proper that all the results of the Gospel be obtained through miracles, but also through natural means, obtainable by the proper application of riches. But it is not for me to judge whether they fulfill this obligation or not. I have only to report what the Lord himself has made known to me, that those who hold the titles of honor and sovereignty conferred by the Church without coming to her aid and defense, and without applying their riches toward preventing the waste of the blood of Christ our Savior, are usurpers and unjust possessors of those titles, for in this very point should the difference between Christian and infidel princes consist.

365. Coming back to my subject, I say the Most High in his infinite foresight well knew the iniquity of the dragon, and in the pursuit of his wrath against the Church he would bring to disorder many of the faithful, striking down the stars of the heaven of the Church Militant (Apoc. 12:4), namely the just, and thus seeking to rouse still more the divine justice and diminish the fruits of the Redemption. The highest Lord in immense kindness resolved to meet this danger which threatened the world. In order to be moved in this by so much the greater equity, and for the greater glory of his Name, He ordained that most holy Mary would oblige Him to give this help. She alone was worthy of the privileges, gifts and prerogatives by which She was to conquer hell, and this most eminent Lady alone was capable of such an enterprise as drawing toward Her the Heart of God by her sanctity, purity, merits and prayers. Thus it would redound to the greater exaltation of the divine power that for all eternity it would be known He had conquered Lucifer and his followers by means of a mere creature and a Woman, just as Lucifer had cast down the whole human race by another woman; and for all this there was no creature more worthy than his own Mother to whom the Church and the entire world would owe this victory. Because of these and other reasons apparent to us in faith, the Almighty gave into the hands of our victorious Captainess the sword for cutting off the head of the infernal dragon,* a power never to be diminished in Her and with which She defends and assists the Church Militant according to the labors and necessities of future times.

366. While Lucifer with his infernal legions in visible forms persisted in his unhappy attempts, the most serene Mary never looked upon them nor paid any attention to them, though by the permission of God She heard the uproar. Since the hearing cannot be so easily stopped as the sight, She took precaution lest what She heard would enter her imagination or interior faculties, nor did She deign to speak to them other than to command them to stop their blasphemies; and this command was so powerful that it forced the demons to press their mouths to the earth, while She in the meanwhile sang great canticles of praise and glory in honor of the Most High. This

* cf. Judith 13:8-10 [Ed.]

conversation of Her Majesty with God and her profession of the divine truths was likewise so oppressive and painful to them that they began to attack each other like bloodthirsty wolves or rabid dogs; every action of the Empress Mary was for them a burning arrow, and every one of her words a flame of fire more dreadful than hell itself. This is not an exaggeration, for the dragon and his followers truly strove to flee and escape from the presence of most holy Mary, while the Lord, in order to enhance the triumph of his Mother and Spouse and confound entirely the pride of Lucifer, detained them by a secret force. His Majesty permitted and ordained that the demons humiliate themselves so far as to ask the heavenly Lady to command them to go and be driven from her presence which they had previously sought. Accordingly She commanded them to return to the infernal regions. There they lay prostrate for a time, while the great vanquisher Mary remained absorbed in divine praise and thanksgiving.

367. When Lucifer by the permission of the Lord rose from his defeat he returned to the conflict, selecting for his instrument some of the neighbors of the holy spouses, and sowing among them and their wives the hellish seed of discord concerning temporal interests. For this purpose the demon took the shape of a woman known to them all and told them they should not disagree among themselves, since the source of all their differences was none other than Mary, the wife of Joseph. The woman whose shape the demon took held the esteem and regard of all these persons, and therefore her words were so much the more influential. Although the Lord did not allow the good name of his most holy Mother to suffer in any important point, yet He permitted for her greater glory and merit that all of these deceived persons would give Her an opportunity of exercising her patience on this occasion. They went in a group to the house of St. Joseph, and in his presence they called forth most holy Mary and spoke very harshly to Her, accusing Her of disturbing their homes and their peace. This event was painful to the most innocent Lady because of the worry occasioned to St. Joseph, who had already noticed the growth of her virginal womb, and who, as She had perceived, was already troubled by the thoughts beginning to arise in his heart. Nevertheless, in her prudence and wisdom She sought to meet this disturbance with humility and overcome it by patience and lively faith. She did not defend Herself, nor fall back on the faultlessness of her conduct; on the contrary, She humbled Herself and begged her deceived neighbors to pardon Her if in anything She had offended them. With sweet and wise words She enlightened and pacified them,* making them understand that none of them had committed any offense against the others. Satisfied by this and edified by the humility of her response, they peacefully withdrew to their houses, while the demon fled, not being able to endure such great sanctity and heavenly wisdom.

368. St. Joseph remained somewhat pensive and sad, and he began to give way to conjecture, as I shall relate in the following chapters (375-394). The demon, though he was ignorant of the chief cause of the troubled thoughts of St. Joseph, wished to profit by the occasion (for he allows none to escape him) in order to disquiet him still more. But guessing if perhaps the cause was some disappointment with his Spouse because of his poverty and small dwelling, the demon hesitated between two different courses. On the one hand he suggested a feeling of restlessness to St. Joseph, irritating and disgusting him against his poverty, and on the other hand he tried to persuade him that Mary his Spouse devoted too much time to her meditations and prayers, and led a life too negligent and leisurely instead of exerting Herself to improve their poor circumstances. But St. Joseph, being upright and magnanimous of heart, and of exalted perfection, readily despised and rejected these suggestions, driving them from himself;

* cf. Mt. 5:9 [Ed.]

moreover, the solicitude with which he was secretly filled in regard to the pregnancy of his Spouse easily smothered all other concerns. The Lord, leaving him in the beginning to these misgivings, freed him from the temptations of the demon through the intercession of most holy Mary, for She was very attentive to all that passed within the heart of her most faithful spouse. She therefore prayed to her most holy Son to relieve him of these assaults, and to be satisfied with the service which he rendered to God in enduring the sorrow of seeing Her pregnant.

369. The Most High ordained that the Princess of heaven would continue this prolonged battle with Lucifer, and gave permission for him, together with all his legions, to finish it by straining together all their forces and malice so they would be left thoroughly and entirely crushed, broken and vanquished. The heavenly Lady was to achieve the greatest triumph that ever was gained, or could be gained, over hell by a mere creature. These legions of wickedness arrived in all their hellish array to present themselves before the heavenly Queen. With indescribable fury, uniting all the scheming plots of which they had until now availed themselves separately, and adding what little they could, they advanced to make a universal onslaught. But I will not detain myself in describing it specially, as nearly all can be understood from what has been described in the two preceding chapters. She was as immovable, superior and serene as if She was among the highest choirs of Angels who heard these fabulations of the enemy. No strange or improper emotion could disturb the serenity of her heavenly interior, although the specters, terrors, threats, flatteries, illusions and falsehoods of the entire malicious assembly of the dragon were poured forth in torrents against this strong and unconquered Woman, most holy Mary (Apoc. 12:15).

370. While She thus in the midst of this conflict exercised heroic acts of all the virtues against her enemies, She was made aware of the adorable decree of the Most High that She humiliate and crush the pride of the dragon by her great dignity as Mother of God. Rising up in ardent and invincible valor, She turned toward the demons and spoke to them (Ps. 112:5): “*Who is like unto God, who dwelleth on high?*” And repeating these words She added: “Prince of darkness (Eph. 6:12), author of sin and death (I Jn. 3:8; Wis. 2:24), in the name of the Most High I command thee (Jude 9) to become mute, and with thy legions to cast thyself into the abyss of the infernal caverns, where thy place is appointed to thee, from whence thou shalt not come forth until the promised Messiah shall subdue and crush thee, or until He otherwise permit.” The heavenly Empress shone forth in the light and splendor of heaven; and since the proud dragon made a pretence of resisting her command, She directed upon him the full force of her power. His resistance drew upon him so much the greater pain, humiliation and torment, since such he thereby merited before all the other demons. Together they fell into the abyss and remained fixed in its lowest caverns, as had happened to them at the time of the Incarnation (130), and as I shall describe further on at the temptation and at the death of Christ our Lord (*Tran.* 288, 710). And when this dragon afterwards engaged in his last battle with this Queen, which is described in the third Part of this History (*Cor.* 452ff.), this heavenly Lady vanquished him so completely that by Her and by her most holy Son his head was entirely crushed (Gen. 3:15). In that final battle his strength was so weakened and ruined that if human creatures do not deliver themselves into the hands of his malice they can very easily resist and overcome him by divine grace.

371. Then the Lord himself appeared to his most holy Mother, and in reward of her glorious victories He communicated to Her new gifts and privileges. Her thousand Guardian Angels visibly presented themselves with innumerable hosts of others and sang to Her new canticles of praise in honor of the Most High and of Herself. And with celestial harmony of sweet and audible voices they sang of Her what was said of Judith, whose triumph was a figure of this one, and which the Church applies to Her: “Thou art the glory of the celestial Jerusalem; Thou art the

joy of Israel; Thou art the honor of the people of the Lord (Judith 15:10). Thou art She who magnifies his holy Name (Ib. 13:31); the Advocate of sinners, who defendest them against their proud enemy. Thou art all beautiful, Mary our Lady, and there is no stain of sin in Thee (Office, Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary).^{*} O Mary! Thou art full of grace (Lk. 1:28) and of all perfections.” The heavenly Lady remained full of joy, praising the Author of all good and acknowledging Him as the source of all She possessed. Whereupon She began to pay more particular attention to the care of her spouse, as I shall relate in the following chapters of Book Four.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY THE QUEEN HERSELF, OUR LADY.

372. My daughter, the reserve which the soul must maintain in order not to engage in reasoning with the invisible enemies does not prevent it from commanding them with imperious authority in the name of the Most High to silence them, turn them away, and confound them. Therefore I desire thee to do this on the relevant occasions when they persecute thee, for there are no other weapons so powerful against the malice of the dragon than for the human creature to show himself imperious and superior in the faith which he has as a child of his true Father who is in heaven (Mt. 6:9), from whom he receives that power and confidence against him. The cause of this persecution is because all of the solicitude of Lucifer after he fell from heaven is focused on diverting souls away from their Creator and in sowing cockle (Mt. 13:25) and division between the heavenly Father and his adopted children, and between the spouse and the Bridegroom of souls. And when he knows anyone is united with his Creator, and a living member with his head Christ, he gathers all his strength and determination in order to persecute it with rabid fury; envious, he uses his malice and fantasies to destroy it. But when he sees he cannot succeed in his attempts, because this union with Christ is a refuge and true and impregnable protection of the Most High for souls (Ps. 17:3), he weakens in his attempts and recognizes himself oppressed with incomparable torment. And if the spouse endowed with dominion and authority despises him and casts him out, there is no worm or ant weaker than this proud giant.

373. By the truth of this doctrine thou must be encouraged and strengthened when the Almighty ordains that thou encounter tribulation, and art surrounded by the sorrows of death (Ib. 5) in the great temptations such as I have suffered, for this is the best occasion for the Spouse to experience the fidelity of the true spouse. And if the spouse is indeed faithful, its love must not content itself with affection alone without bearing other fruit; for desire alone, which costs nothing, is not a sufficient proof of love in a soul, nor of the esteem of the good which it says it appreciates and loves. Fortitude and constancy in suffering with an expanded and magnanimous heart, these are the testimonies of true love. If thou dost desire to give such a demonstration of love and please thy Spouse, the greatest way shall be when thou art the most afflicted and without recourse to human aid, then thou show thyself more invincible and confident in thy God and Lord, and if it becomes necessary hope against hope (Rom. 4:18), since *He neither slumbers nor sleeps* who is called the keeper of Israel (Ps. 120:4); in due time He shall command the sea and the wind and cause tranquility (Mt. 8:26).

374. Yet thou must be more aware, my daughter, in the beginning of temptations, when there is greater danger if the soul then begins to be disturbed by them, unleashing the concupiscible or irascible passions by which the light of reason is obscured and darkened. If the demon recognizes

^{*} Antiphon *Tota pulchra es*, 1st Vespers [Ed.]

this disturbance, and that it raises such a great whirlwind of dust in the faculties,* since his cruelty is so implacable and insatiable he gains greater encouragement, adding fire to fire, becoming more enraged, opining and judging that the soul has no one to defend and free him from his hands (Ps. 70:11). And as the rigor of the temptation increases further, so also increases the danger of not resisting its greater force, since the soul began to surrender in the beginning. Of all this I warn thee so thou mayest fear the risk of such initial carelessness. Never incur this risk in a matter of such importance, but rather thou must persevere in the equanimity of thy actions in any temptation you may have, continuing in thy interior the sweet and devoted conversation of the Lord. And regarding thy neighbors, forestall by the sweetness, charity, and prudent gentleness which thou must have toward them the disorder which the enemy desires to place in them.

END OF BOOK THREE

* cf. III Kg. 19:11 [Ed.]