

CHAPTER XXV

The Journey of Most Holy Mary from the House of Zacharias to Nazareth.

314. Returning from the town of Juda to Nazareth most holy Mary, the living tabernacle of the living God (Apoc. 21:3), pursued her way through the mountains of Judea in the company of her most faithful spouse St. Joseph. Although the Evangelists do not make mention of any haste in this journey homeward, such as is recorded by St. Luke (1:39) and occasioned by the special mystery connected with it, yet the great Princess also made this return journey with great expediency because of the events which awaited Her at home. All the journeys of this heavenly Lady were a mystical counterpart of her spiritual and interior advances, for She was the true tabernacle of the Lord which was to find no definite resting place in this mortal pilgrimage (I Par. 17:5); on the contrary, progressing daily from one very high state of wisdom and grace to another more exalted and superior, She continually pushed forward on her pilgrimage to the promised land, always bearing with Her on her journey the true propitiatory (Num. 7:89) where without intermission, by increases of her own gifts and favors, She solicited and acquired our salvation for us.

315. The great Queen and St. Joseph again consumed four days on their return journey as they had done on their coming. On the way they maintained the same divine conversations and experienced events similar to those already mentioned in chapter XVI (207). In the ordinary practices of humility in which they vied with each other our Queen always came out victorious, except when St. Joseph called obedience to his aid, because She considered obedience the greater humility. Since She was already in her third month of pregnancy She was more attentive and careful in her journey; not that her pregnancy caused Her any difficulties, for it was on the contrary a most sweet alleviation of any hardships, but this careful and prudent Mother was filled with the consciousness of her Treasure, for She beheld day by day the natural growth of the body of her most holy Son in her virginal womb. Despite the ease and lightness of her pregnancy She nevertheless was subject to the exertion and the fatigue of the journey, for the sovereign Lady made no use of her privileges to diminish her sufferings, but rather gave free scope to the fatigues and inconveniences of travel in order to be in all things our Teacher and the faithful image of her most holy Son.

316. Since her divine pregnancy was naturally most perfect, and her person most elegant and delicate without any defect whatsoever, it was natural that her condition would become noticeable, and She knew it would be impossible to conceal it much longer from her husband. Already She began to look upon him with greater tenderness and compassion in view of the shock which his love would feel on noticing her condition. Gladly would She have given the reason for it if She had known that such was the will of God; yet the Lord gave no response to these concerns, for He had ordained for the event to occur in such a way as to increase his glory and the merits of both St. Joseph and the Virgin Mother. Nevertheless regarding her secret the great Lady implored His Majesty to fill the heart of her spouse with patience and wisdom, and assist him with grace so he could act at this juncture according to the divine pleasure, for She was convinced it would occasion him great grief to see her pregnant.

317. In the course of the journey the Lady of the world performed some wonderful works, though always in secret. It happened that when they arrived at a place not far from Jerusalem some people from a small town came to the same inn that night on their way to the holy city, bringing with them a sick young woman seeking a cure in the larger and more populous city. She

was known to be very sick, but no one knew what her sickness was or the cause of it. This woman had lived a very virtuous life, and thus the enemy, who knew her character and her advanced virtues, began to direct his attacks especially against her (as he always does against his enemies, the friends of God); he persecuted her and brought her down into some sins, and in order to force her from one abyss into another he tempted her with despondent thoughts and disorderly grief at her fall. Having thus upset her judgment this dragon found entrance into her body, and now he with many other demons had possession of her. I have already said in the first Part (*Con.* 131) the infernal dragon conceived a great wrath against all virtuous women after he saw in heaven the woman clothed with the sun (Apoc. 12:1), of whose seed are all those who follow Her as may be judged from that same chapter of the Apocalypse. Hence he exerted all his arrogance and tyranny in the possession of the body and soul of this afflicted woman.

318. The heavenly Princess saw her in the tavern and knew of her affliction, which was unknown to the others. Moved by her motherly pity She begged her most holy Son to give health of body and soul to the unfortunate woman. Perceiving the divine will was inclined to mercy, She used her power as Queen and commanded the demons instantly to leave this creature, never to return; moreover, She banished them to the infernal depths, their lawful and appropriate dwelling. This command of our great Queen and Lady was not given vocally but mentally, in such a way as to be perceptible to the impure spirits. It was so powerful that Lucifer and his companions hastened to leave that body and hurl themselves into the infernal darkness. The happy woman was freed and astonished at the unexpected delivery, and in her inmost heart she was drawn toward the most pure and holy Lady. She looked upon Her with special veneration and affection, and by this sight she received two other benefits: One, she was filled with a most sincere sorrow for her sins; the other, the evil effects and remnants which she had for some time felt and suffered in her body from those unjust possessors were removed or undone. She was aware the mysterious Stranger, whom she had so fortunately met on her way, had a part in the relief she felt and had received from heaven. She therefore spoke to Her, and our Queen answered with words which went straight to the heart. She exhorted her to perseverance, and also merited it for her during the rest of her life. Her companions likewise recognized the miracle, but they attributed it to their promise of bringing her to the temple of Jerusalem and offering some gift for her. This promise they fulfilled, praising God yet remaining ignorant of the source of their good fortune.

319. Vast and furious was the wrath of Lucifer when he found himself and his demons dispossessed and cast out from their abode by the command of most holy Mary. Full of wrathful astonishment he exclaimed: "Who is this little Woman who with such force commands and oppresses us? What new event is this, and how can my pride suffer it? We must all seek to repair this damage and discuss how to destroy Her." Since I will say more of their doings in the next chapter I leave them to their wrathful designs. Our pilgrims in the meanwhile came to another tavern, the master of which was a man of bad habits and character, and as a beginning of his happiness God ordained that he receive most holy Mary and her spouse Joseph with a kind and benevolent spirit. He showed them more courtesy and good services than he was accustomed to show to others. In order to return his hospitality with still greater kindness the great Queen, who knew the sad state of his interior, prayed for him, justifying his soul and causing him to change his life. Her prayers also had the effect of adding to his worldly possessions, for because of the small favor done to his heavenly guests God increased them from that time on. Many more miracles the Mother of Grace wrought in this journey, for all her communications were divine (*Cant.* 4:13), and the souls of all were sanctified if the proper disposition was found in them.

They finished their journey at Nazareth, where the Princess of heaven set her house in order and cleaned it with the assistance of her holy Angels, for they vied with Her in humility and were anxious to serve and honor Her by taking part in these humble occupations. St. Joseph applied himself to his ordinary daily work, providing for the sustenance of the Queen, and his trusting heart was not deceived in Her (Prov. 31:11). She girded Herself with new strength for the mysteries which She awaited, and She put forth her hands to valiant deeds (Ib. 17, 19), enjoying in her soul the undimmed vision of the Treasure of her womb, and along with it incomparable delights and blessings. Thus She continued to gain vast merits and made Herself unspeakably pleasing to God.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.

320. My daughter, the faithful souls and children of the Church who know God must make no distinction of time, place or occupation in the practice of faith and the other virtues connected with it, for God is present in all things and fills them with his infinite Being (Jer. 23:24), and in all places and circumstances faith shall enable them to see and adore Him in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). Just as preservation follows upon creation, and as breathing follows upon life, and just as there is no intermission in the breathing, nourishment and growth of man until the end is reached, so the rational creature, after having been regenerated by faith and grace, must never interrupt the course of the spiritual life, continually pursuing works of life by faith, hope and charity in all places and at all times. Due to the forgetfulness and carelessness of men in this regard, and especially the children of the Church, they come to possess the light of faith as if they had it not, allowing it to die for lack of charity (James 2:26). These are the ones who have received in vain this new soul, as David says (Ps. 23:4), because they neglect it as if they had never obtained it.

321. I desire, my dearest, thy spiritual life to be just as continuous as thy natural life. Thou must continue to lead a life such as is required by the grace and gifts of the Most High, believing and hoping in the Lord, loving, praising and adoring Him in spirit and in truth no matter what changes there may be in time, occupation or place. He is in all things and desires to be loved and served by all rational creatures. I therefore charge thee whenever souls come to thee full of this forgetfulness of their faults and harassed by the demons to pray for them with lively faith and confidence. If the Lord does not always fulfill what thou dost desire and what they ask, He shall follow his own secret counsel, and thou shalt have pleased Him by having acted as a true spouse and daughter. If thou dost faithfully follow my instructions I assure thee He shall confer upon thee many special privileges for the benefit of souls. Consider what I did at the sight of souls displeasing to the Lord, and how zealously I worked for all, and for some in particular. To imitate and oblige me do thou likewise pray and work for those whose interior becomes known to thee through the Lord or through other means; admonish them with prudence, humility and resignation, for the Almighty does not desire thee to proceed noisily, nor for the results of thy labors to be always manifest, but rather to remain hidden.* In this He conforms Himself to thy naturally retiring disposition and to thy desires, and He seeks what is most secure for thee. And although thou must pray for all souls, yet thou must pray more earnestly for those whom the divine will points out to thee.

* cf. Mt. 6:6 [Ed.]