

CHAPTER XX

Some Singular Benefits which Most Holy Mary Conferred upon Particular Persons in the House of Zacharias.

254. It is a well known quality of love to be diligent and active as fire if it finds material upon which to work, and this is especially true of the fire of spiritual love, for if it has no such material it will search for it. Christ our Master has taught those who love Him so many contrivances and artifices of the virtues that no room is left for idleness. Since the love of God is neither blind nor insane it knows well the condition of its most noble Object; it knows jealousy only insofar as not all men love Him, and thus it seeks to communicate this love without emulation or envy. And if in comparison with most holy Mary the love all others have for God is limited (though most fervent and holy), yet so admirable and powerful in zeal for souls since we know what this love has worked for them, what must the love of this great Queen have worked for the benefit of her neighbor, since She was the Mother of divine love (Ecclus. 24:24) and carried with Her the true and living fire* which came to enkindle the world (Lk. 12:49)? In this entire heavenly History mortals can discover what they owe to this Lady. Though it shall be impossible to note all the particular instances of the benefits conferred upon souls by Her, nevertheless so from some of them many more may be inferred I shall relate a few benefits which our Queen conferred while in the house of her cousin Elizabeth.

255. One of the servants in that house was of perverse inclination, restless, subject to anger, and accustomed to swear and curse. Despite all these vices and disorders she still knew how to make herself agreeable to her masters, but at the same time she was so given over to the power of the demon that this tyrant could easily induce her to throw herself into all sorts of miseries and errors. For fourteen years many demons surrounded and accompanied her without intermission in order to make certain the capture of her soul. Yet when this woman merely came into the presence of the Lady of heaven, Mary most holy, these enemies withdrew; for as I have said in other places (*Con.* 284, 688, 692, 694) the virtue issuing from our Queen tormented them, and more so on this occasion when She carried within her virginal reliquary the powerful God and Lord of all virtues. Since on the one hand this woman was freed from her cruel exactors, being released from the evil influences of their company, and on the other hand experiencing within herself the beneficial effects of the sweet vision and communication of the Queen, she began to be much attracted and moved toward her Reparatrix. She sought to be in her presence and offered to serve Her with much affection, striving to pass all the time possible with Her and watching Her with reverence, for among her distorted inclinations she had also a good one, which was a natural kindness and compassion for the needy and the humble, being naturally drawn toward them and ready to do them good.

256. The heavenly Princess, who saw and knew all the inclinations of this woman, the state of her conscience, the danger of her soul, and the malice of the demons against her, turned upon her an eye of mercy and watched over her with the kind affection of a Mother. Although Her Majesty knew the company and interference of the demons was a just punishment for the sins of this woman, yet She interceded for her and obtained for her pardon, remedy and salvation. She commanded the demons, with the power She possessed, to leave this creature and not dare to

* cf. Heb. 12:29 [Ed.]

disturb her or molest her thenceforth; and since they could not resist the dominion of our great Queen they yielded and fled in highest consternation, not knowing how to account for such power of most holy Mary. They conferred about it in astonishment and indignation, saying: "Who is this Woman who exerts such dominion over us? From whence comes such exquisite power that She performs all She desires?" Because of this these enemies conceived new indignation and fury against this Woman who had crushed their heads (Gen. 3:15). The happy woman, however, was snatched from their claws. Most holy Mary admonished her, corrected her, and taught her the way of salvation, changing her into a woman of kind and meek disposition. In this she persevered during the rest of her life, being well aware that all this had come to her through the hands of our Queen. Though she did not know or penetrate into the mystery of her dignity, yet she remained humbly grateful and lived a holy life.

257. Not in a better state than this servant was another woman living in the neighborhood of the house of Zacharias, who as a neighbor was accustomed to come and listen to the conversation of the family of St. Elizabeth. She lived a licentious life, far from honorable, and when she heard of the arrival of our great Queen in that town, and of her modesty and retirement, she spoke of Her lightly and with some curiosity: "Who is this Stranger, so holy and retired, who has come to us as a guest of our neighbor?" In the vain and inquisitive desire of spying out novelty, as is customary with such kind of people, she managed to get sight of the heavenly Lady and scrutinized her dress and her countenance. Her intention was impertinent and presumptuous, but the effect was far different, for having succeeded in scrutinizing most holy Mary she left with a wounded heart. The presence and the sight of the Queen transformed her into a new woman. Her inclinations were altogether changed, and without knowing by what efficacious influence the change came about she felt its power and began to shed abundant floods of tears in heartfelt sorrow for her sins. Merely by fixing her attentive gaze in curiosity upon the Mother of virginal purity this happy woman received in return the love of chastity and was freed from the sensual habits and inclinations of her former life. In that very hour she sorrowfully retired to weep over her wicked life. Whenever later on she desired to converse with the Mother of Grace Her Highness, in order to confirm her, permitted it; for since She knew what had happened, and as She bore within Her the origin of grace, the Sanctifier and Justifier by whose power She fulfilled her office of Advocate of sinners, She received her with maternal kindness, and admonished and instructed her in virtue, dismissing her strengthened and confirmed for perseverance in her new life.

258. In this manner our great Lady performed many works and caused many admirable conversions in a great number of souls, though it was done in silence and hidden to all. The whole family of St. Elizabeth and Zacharias was sanctified by her dealings and conversation. Those who were just experienced new increase of gifts and favors; those who were not She justified and enlightened by her intercession; and all of them were captured by reverential love of Her so completely that each one strove to obey Her and acknowledge Her as Mother, Protectress, and a consolation in all their necessities. The mere privilege of seeing Her, without any words, was sufficient to produce all these effects, yet She was careful not to omit whatever seemed necessary to obtain this end. Since She penetrated the secrets of all hearts and knew the state of each one's conscience She knew how to apply the opportune medicine. Sometimes, not always, the Lord manifested to Her the final end of those She met, informing Her which were chosen and which were reprobate, which were of the number of the predestined or of the foreknown as damned. At the sight of both one and the other her Heart broke forth in admirable effects of most perfect virtue, for when She knew of any who were just and predestined She bestowed upon

them many blessings, which She also does now in heaven, and the Lord looked with favor upon her beneficence. Exerting incredible and prayerful diligence She asked Him to preserve them in his grace and friendship. Whenever She saw anyone in sin, She asked from the bottom of her Heart for his justification, and ordinarily She obtained it. But if it happened to be one of the reprobate, She wept bitterly and humbled Herself in the presence of the Most High for the perdition of that image and work of the Divinity; and so others would not condemn themselves She engaged in profound prayers, offerings and humiliations, and her whole being was one flame of divine love which never rested or relaxed in accomplishing great things.

INSTRUCTION WHICH THE HEAVENLY QUEEN AND LADY GAVE ME.

259. My dearest daughter, within two limits, as between two extremes, all the harmony of thy powers and desires must move: They are to preserve thyself in the grace and friendship of God, and to procure the same for other souls. In this let thy entire life and activity be consumed. For such high ends I desire thee to spare no labor, beseeching the Lord and offering thyself in sacrifice unto death, actually accepting all that is opportune and possible. Though in order to solicit the good of souls thou need not make any extraordinary demonstrations before creatures, since that is not appropriate to thy sex, yet thou must seek and prudently apply all the hidden means within thy knowledge which are most efficacious. If thou art my daughter and a spouse of my most holy Son, consider that the possessions of our house are the rational creatures, whom He acquired as rich pledges at the price of his life (I Cor. 6:20), his death, and his own blood (I Peter 1:19), for by their own disobedience they were lost to Him (Gen. 3:6) after He had created and selected them for Himself.

260. Hence whenever the Lord sends to thee or places in thy way a needy soul and makes thee aware of his state, labor faithfully to assist him. Pray and weep with heartfelt and fervent love that God may furnish the remedy for such great and dangerous evil, and do not neglect any means divine or human as far as thou art concerned in order to secure salvation and life for the soul entrusted to thee. By the prudence and moderation of which I have given thee notice thou must not grow weary in admonishing nor in praying for that which will benefit that soul, and in all secrecy continue thy labor in his behalf. Likewise I desire thee whenever it is necessary to imperiously command the demons in the powerful name of the omnipotent God and my own to depart and leave in peace the souls oppressed by them; and since all this is to be done in secret, thou canst in all propriety animate and encourage thyself for this kind of work. Remember the Lord has placed thee and will place thee in a position to exercise this doctrine. Do not forget it, nor fail in understanding how much thou art bound to His Majesty to use care and solicitude in extending the possessions of thy Father's house. Do not rest until thou accustom thyself to do this with all diligence. Fear not, for thou canst do all things in Him who strengthens thee (Philip. 4:13), and his power will strengthen thy arm to do great things (Prov. 31:19).