

CHAPTER X

The Most Blessed Trinity Sends the Archangel St. Gabriel to Announce and Proclaim to Most Holy Mary that She is Chosen for the Mother of God.

109. The appropriate and opportune time and hour had arrived in which the great sacrament of piety prophesied to men, which had been determined for infinite ages, though hidden in the secret bosom of the eternal Wisdom, was to be *manifested in the flesh, justified in the spirit, appear unto angels, and believed in the world* (I Tim. 3:16). The fullness of time (Gal. 4:4) had arrived, that time which until then, although filled with prophecies and promises, was nevertheless void and empty, for it lacked the fullness of most holy Mary, by whose will and consent all the ages were to receive their complement, namely the eternal Word made flesh, capable of suffering and redeeming man. Before all ages this mystery was prearranged (I Cor. 2:7) in such a way that it would be fulfilled through the mediation of this heavenly Maiden. Since She now existed in the world the Redemption of man and the coming of the Onlybegotten of the Father was no longer to be delayed, for now He would not need to come and live as if by sufferance merely in tents (II Kg. 7:6) or in a strange house,* but He could enjoy a free welcome as in his temple and his own house, one which had been built and enriched at his own preordained expense, more so than the temple of Solomon at the expense of his father David (I Par. 22:5).

110. In this predetermined time the Most High resolved to send his onlybegotten Son into the world. Comparing (according to our way of understanding and speaking) the decrees of his eternity with the prophecies and testimonies made to man from the beginning of the world, and all this together with the position of sanctity to which He had raised most holy Mary, He judged all the circumstances were favorable for the exaltation of his holy Name and the execution of his eternal will and decree to be made manifest to the angels and be commenced by them. His Majesty spoke to the archangel Gabriel in such words or language as He was accustomed to use in intimating his will to the holy angels. Although God usually illumines his heavenly spirits by commencing with the superior ones, who in turn purify[†] and illumine the inferior ones in their order down to the last one, thus manifesting the revelations of the Divinity, yet on this occasion this custom was not maintained, for the holy Archangel received his message directly from the mouth of God.

111. At the bidding of the divine will St. Gabriel presented himself at the foot of the throne, attentive to the immutable being of the Most High. His Majesty then expressly charged him with the message which he was to bring to most holy Mary, and instructed him in the very words with which he was to salute and address Her. Thus the first Author of the message was God himself, who formed the exact words in his divine mind and revealed them to the holy Archangel for transmission to most pure Mary. At the same time the Lord revealed to the holy prince Gabriel many hidden sacraments concerning the Incarnation. The blessed Trinity commanded him to go to the heavenly Maiden and announce to Her that the Lord had chosen Her among women so She could be the Mother of the incarnate Word, and could conceive Him in her virginal womb by the

* cf. II Kg. 6:9-11 [Ed.]

† Purify here denotes a purgation of nescience; cf. *Conception* par. 646 [Ed.]

work of the Holy Ghost while remaining always a virgin, and all the rest of the divine message he was to manifest and speak to his great Queen and Lady.

112. Then His Majesty announced to all the other angels the time of the Redemption had come, and He had commanded it to be brought to the world without delay, for already in their own presence He had prepared and adorned most holy Mary to be his Mother and had given Her this supreme dignity. The heavenly spirits heard the voice of their Creator, and with incomparable joy and thanksgiving for the fulfillment of his eternal and perfect will they intoned new canticles of praise, repeating therein that hymn of Sion: "*Holy, holy, holy art Thou, Lord God of hosts* (Is. 6:3). Just and powerful art Thou, Lord our God, *who dwelleth on high and looketh down on the humble of the earth* (Ps. 112:5-6). Admirable are all thy works, O Most High, and exalted are thy thoughts."

113. The supernal prince Gabriel, obeying with singular delight the divine command, and accompanied by many thousands of most beautiful Angels in visible forms, descended from the highest heaven. The appearance of the great Prince and legate was that of a most handsome youth of rarest beauty. His face emitted resplendent rays of light, his bearing was grave and majestic, his advance measured, his motions composed, his words powerful and efficacious, his entire bearing displaying a mixture of seriousness and pleasantness, more deified than all the other angels until then seen in visible form by the heavenly Lady. He wore a diadem of exquisite splendor, and his vestments glowed in various colors full of refulgent beauty. On his breast he carried as if inlaid a most beautiful cross, disclosing the mystery of the Incarnation which he had come to announce. All these circumstances were calculated to rivet the affectionate attention of the most prudent Queen.

114. The whole of this celestial army with their princely leader St. Gabriel directed their flight to Nazareth, a town of the province of Galilee, to the dwelling place of most holy Mary. This was a humble cottage and her chamber was a narrow room, bare of all those furnishings which are accustomed to be used by the world in order to deny its emptiness and lack of higher goods. The heavenly Lady was at this time fourteen years, six months and seventeen days old, for her birthday was the eighth of September, and six months and seventeen days had passed from that date to this, on which the greatest of all the mysteries ever performed by God in this world was enacted in Her.

115. The personal appearance of the heavenly Queen was well disposed and taller than is usual with other women of her age, yet very elegant and of consummate proportion and perfection. Her face was rather more oblong than round, gracious and beautiful, without leanness or grossness; its complexion clear, yet of a slightly brownish hue; her forehead spacious yet symmetrical; her eyebrows perfectly arched; her eyes large and serious, of incredible and ineffable beauty and dovelike sweetness, dark in color with a mixture tending toward green; her nose straight and well shaped; her mouth small, with red-colored lips, neither too thin nor too thick. All the gifts of nature in Her were so symmetrical and beautiful that no other human being ever had the like. To look upon Her caused at the same time feelings of joy and seriousness, love and reverential fear. She attracted the heart and yet restrained it in sweet reverence; her beauty impelled the tongue to sound her praise, and yet her grandeur and her overwhelming perfections and graces hushed it to silence. In all who approached Her She caused divine effects not easily explained. She filled the heart with heavenly influences and divine operations tending toward the Divinity.

116. Her garments were humble and poor yet clean, of a dark silvery hue, somewhat like the color of ashes, and they were arranged and worn without pretense, but with the greatest modesty and propriety. When (without Her knowing it) the embassy of heaven approached She was

engaged in the highest contemplation concerning the mysteries which the Lord had renewed in Her by so many favors during the nine preceding days. And since (as we have said above [94]) the Lord himself had assured Her his Onlybegotten would soon descend to assume human form, this great Queen was full of fervent and joyful affection in the expectation of its execution and inflamed with humble love. She spoke in her Heart: “Is it possible the time so fortunate has arrived in which the Word of the eternal Father shall descend to be born and converse with men (Bar. 3:38)? That the world shall hold Him in possession? That mortals shall see Him with eyes of flesh (Is. 40:5)? That the inaccessible light is to be born in order to illumine those who sit in darkness (Is. 9:2)? O who shall be worthy to see and know Him! O who shall be allowed to kiss the earth touched by his feet!

117. “*Let the heavens rejoice*, and let the earth be comforted (Ps. 95:11); let all things eternally bless and praise Him, since already his eternal happiness is nigh. O children of Adam, afflicted with guilt, yet creatures of my Beloved, raise now thy head and cast off the yoke of thy ancient captivity (Is. 14:25)! O ancient Forefathers and Prophets, with all the just who are in expectation detained in limbo in the bosom of Abraham, now thy consolation shall arrive, for thy desired and promised Redeemer shall tarry no longer (Ag. 2:8)! Let us all magnify Him and sing hymns of praise to Him! O who shall be the servant of his servants! O who shall be the slave of that Virgin whom Isaias points out as his Mother (Is. 7:14)! O Emmanuel, true God and true man! O key of David, who art to unlock heaven (Is. 22:22)! O eternal Wisdom! O Lawgiver of the new Church! Come, come to us, O Lord, and end the captivity of thy people; let all flesh see thy salvation (Is. 40:5).”

118. In these petitions and aspirations, and in many others my language cannot hope to explain, most holy Mary was engaged at the hour when the angel St. Gabriel arrived. She was most pure in soul, most perfect in body, most noble in her sentiments, most exalted in sanctity, full of grace, and so deified and pleasing in the sight of God that She was fit to be his Mother and an instrument adapted for drawing Him from the bosom of the Father to her virginal womb. She was the powerful means of our Redemption, and to Her we owe it on many accounts; hence She has merited that all nations and generations bless and forever extol Her (Lk. 1:48). What happened at the entrance of the heavenly Ambassador I shall relate in the next chapter.

119. I wish only to state here a fact worthy of admiration, that for the reception of the Annunciation of the holy Archangel, and for the execution of the exalted mystery which was to be wrought in the heavenly Lady by her consent, His Majesty left Her without any other aid than the resources of her common human nature and those furnished Her by the faculties and virtues of her ordinary condition, such as have been described in the first Part of this History (*Con.* 674-714). The Most High disposed it thus because this mystery was to be enacted as a sacrament of faith conjointly with hope and charity, and hence the Lord provided Her with no special aid, leaving Her to her belief and hope in his divine promises. Thus prepared She experienced what I shall try to relate in my inadequate and limited terms, though the greatness of these sacraments makes my ability to explain them appear so much the more insufficient.

INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN AND LADY OF HEAVEN.

120. My daughter, with special affection I now manifest to thee my will and desire thee to make thyself worthy of the intimate and familiar communication with God, and for this purpose to dispose thyself with great zeal and solicitude, weeping over thy sins and forgetting and rejecting all visible things, so thou have no thought henceforth for anything outside of God. For

this it is appropriate for thee to put into execution all I have taught thee until now, as well as what I shall manifest to thee for what thou must yet write. I shall accompany thee and guide thee on the course which thou must maintain in this familiar conversation, and regarding the favors which thou dost receive through his condescension, conceiving Him in thy heart by means of the faith, light and grace given to thee. If thou dost not first conform to this my admonition and prepare thyself accordingly, thou shalt not reach the fulfillment of thy desires, nor shall I reap the fruit of my instructions which I give to thee as thy Teacher.

121. Since thou hast found, without any merit of thine, the hidden treasure and the precious pearl of my teachings and instruction (Mt. 13:44-45), despise all other things in order to possess and secure for thyself this prize of inestimable value, for with it thou shalt receive all other goods and make thyself worthy of the intimate friendship of the Lord and his perpetual indwelling in thy heart. In exchange for this great blessing I desire thee to die to all earthly things, and offer the grateful love of an entirely purified will. In imitation of me be thou so humble that as far as thou art concerned thou be persuaded and convinced thou dost neither deserve, nor merit, nor art worthy to be admitted even as a slave of the servants of Christ.

122. Remember, I was far from imagining the Most High had destined me for the dignity of Mother of God, and this was my state of mind, though He had already promised his speedy coming into the world and had commanded me to yearn after Him with such great affection that on the day before the execution of this mystery I thought I would die and my heart would burst with loving sighs if divine Providence had not comforted me. He dilated my spirit with the firm hope that the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father would descend from heaven without delay; yet on the other hand my humility inclined me to fear lest my presence in the world might perhaps retard his coming. Consider then, my beloved, this sacrament of my bosom, and what an example it is for thee and for all mortals; and since it is difficult for thee to understand and describe such high wisdom, look upon me in the Lord, so by his divine light thou mayest meditate and comprehend the perfection of my actions. Follow me by imitating me, and walk in my footsteps.