

CHAPTER VI

Some of the Conferences and Conversations of Most Holy Mary and St. Joseph Regarding Divine Things, and Other Admirable Happenings.

428. Before St. Joseph had been instructed in the mystery of the Incarnation the Princess of heaven made use of opportune occasions for reading to him some of the passages of Holy Scriptures, especially from the Prophets and the Psalms. As a most wise Teacher She also explained them to him, and her holy spouse, who was indeed capable of the exalted truths contained therein, asked Her many questions, wondering about and consoling himself with the heavenly answers of his Spouse, and thus both of them alternately praised and blessed the Lord. But after he himself had become instructed in the great sacrament he conversed with our Queen as with one who was Herself to be the Coadjutrix of the admirable works and mysteries of our Redemption, for now they could more openly and clearly discuss the divine prophecies and oracles concerning the conception of the Word through a Virgin Mother, his birth, his upbringing, and his most holy life. All these things Her Highness discussed and explained, delineating beforehand the course of action which they were to pursue when the day so much desired would arrive in which the Child would be born into the world and She would hold Him in her arms and nourish Him with her virginal milk, and the holy spouse would participate in this highest happiness among all mortals. Only of his Passion and Death, and what Isaias and Jeremias wrote about this (Is. 53:2ff.; Jer. 11:19), did the most prudent Queen speak more rarely, for since her spouse was of a most kind and tender heart She thought it best not to dilate upon or anticipate that which he himself remembered of the sayings of the ancient writers concerning the coming and the sufferings of the Messiah. The most prudent Virgin also waited until the Lord would grant more particular revelation of what was to happen, or until She herself would know better the divine will in this respect.

429. Her most faithful and happy spouse was wholly inflamed by her sweet words and conversations, and with tears of joy he said to his heavenly Spouse: “Is it possible that in thy most chaste arms I shall see my God and Redeemer? That I shall hear Him speak and touch Him, that my eyes shall look upon his divine face, and the sweat of my brow be so blessed as to be poured out in his service and for his sustenance? That He shall live with us, and we shall eat with Him at the same table, and speak and converse with Him? From whence comes to me this good fortune which nobody could ever merit? O how much do I regret that I am so poor! Would I possessed the richest palaces in order to receive Him and many treasures to offer Him!” And the sovereign Queen answered: “My master and spouse, there is abundant reason for thy desires to extend to all things possible for the reception of thy Creator, but this great God and Lord does not desire to enter into the world in the pomp of ostentatious riches and royal majesty. He has need of none of these (Ps. 15:2), nor does He come from heaven for such vanities. He comes to redeem the world and to guide men on the straight paths of eternal life (Jn. 10:10), and this is to be done by means of humility and poverty; in these He desires to be born, live and die, in order to destroy in the hearts of men the fetters of covetousness and pride which impede their happiness. For this reason He chose our poor and humble house, desiring us not to be rich in apparent, deceitful and transitory goods, which are but *vanity of vanities and vexation of spirit* (Eccles. 1:2, 14), and which oppress and obscure the understanding.”

430. At other times the Saint asked the most pure Lady to teach him the nature and essence of virtues, especially the love of God, so he could know how to behave toward the Most High

become man and not be rejected as a useless and incapable servant. The Queen and Teacher of virtues complied with these requests and explained to him the nature of true virtues and the manner of exercising them in all perfection; however, in these discourses She proceeded with so much humility and discretion that She did not appear as the Teacher of her spouse, though such She was, but managed to give her information under the guise of conversation or in addressing the Lord, or at other times asking questions of St. Joseph which of themselves suggested the information. In all circumstances She knew how to preserve her most profound humility, without permitting even the least gesture not in accordance with it. These talks they held at certain times, and at other times readings from the Holy Scriptures, interspersing them with manual labor when it was necessary to do so. Not only was the hard and tiresome labor of St. Joseph lightened by the admirable words of sympathy of our Lady, but in her rare discretion She also knew how to add instruction so his manual labor became more an exercise of virtue than a work of the hands. The mildest Dove, with the prudence of a most wise virgin, administered her consolations by pointing out the most blessed fruits of labor. In her estimation She held Herself unworthy of being supported by her spouse, and She felt Herself in continual debt to the sweat of St. Joseph, like one who is receiving a great alms and most generous gift. All these considerations caused in Her sentiments of deepest obligation as if She was the most useless creature on earth. Although She could not assist the Saint in his trade, since that was above the strength of women and unbecoming the modesty and retirement of the heavenly Queen, yet in all that was appropriate She served him as a humble handmaid, since her discreet humility and gratitude would not suffer any less return for the faithful services of St. Joseph.

431. Among other wonderful happenings in connection with his conversation with most holy Mary during these days of her pregnancy, St. Joseph one day saw many birds flocking around Her in order to pay their respects to the Queen and Mistress of all creatures. They surrounded Her as if to form a choir and raised up their voices in songs of sweet harmony not less wonderful than their visit to the heavenly Lady. St. Joseph had never seen this wonder until that day, and full of admiration and joy he said to his sovereign Spouse: "Is it possible, my Lady, that these simple birds and irrational creatures understand and fulfill their obligations better than I? Surely it is reasonable that if they recognize, serve and reverence Thee according to their powers, Thou allow me to perform that which in duty I am bound to do." The most pure Virgin answered him: "My master, in the behavior of these little birds the Creator offers us a powerful motive worthily to employ all our strength and faculties in his praise, just as they recognize and acknowledge their Creator in my womb. I, however, am but a creature, and therefore I deserve no veneration, nor is it right for me to accept it. It is my duty to induce all creatures to praise the Most High, since He has looked upon me, his handmaid, and has enriched me with the treasures of his divinity" (Lk. 1:48-9).

432. It also happened not a few times the heavenly Lady and her spouse found themselves so poor and destitute of means that they were in need of the necessities of life, for they were most generous in their gifts to the poor and were never anxious to store up beforehand food or clothing as is customary with the children of this world in their faint-hearted covetousness (Mt. 6:25). The Lord so disposed things that the faith and patience of his most holy Mother and St. Joseph would not be in vain, for this indigence was a source of incomparable consolation to our Lady, not only because of her love of poverty but also due to her astonishing humility. She considered Herself unworthy of the sustenance of life, and that She above all others should suffer the lack of it. Therefore She blessed the Lord for this poverty as far as it affected Her, while She asked the Most High to supply the needs of St. Joseph as being a just and holy man and well worthy of this

favor of the Almighty. The Lord did not forget his poor entirely (Ps. 73:19), for while He permitted them to exercise virtues and gain merits He also gave them nourishment in opportune time (Ps. 144:15). This his divine Providence provided in various ways. Sometimes He moved the hearts of their neighbors and acquaintances to bring some gratuitous gift or pay some debt. At other times, and more ordinarily, St. Elizabeth sent them assistance from her home, for ever since she had harbored in her house the Queen of heaven this devoted matron insisted on sending them a gift from time to time, which the humble Princess always acknowledged by sending in return some work of her hands. On some occasions, for the greater glory of the Most High, the blessed Lady availed Herself of the power given to Her as the Mistress of all creation; She would then command the birds of the air to bring some fishes from the sea, or fruits of the field, and they would fulfill her commands exactly. Sometimes in their beaks they would also bring bread which the Lord had furnished them. Many times the most fortunate spouse St. Joseph was a witness to all these happenings.

433. In other necessities they were also on some occasions aided by the holy Angels in an admirable manner, and in order to relate one of many such miracles which happened through the ministry of the Angels to most holy Mary and Joseph it must be assumed that his grandeur of soul and the faith and liberality of the Saint were so great that neither could any movement of greed nor any worldly solicitude find entrance into his affections. Although he labored for others, as did also his heavenly Spouse, yet never did they ask for any wages, or set a price on their work, asking for payment; they performed all their work not for gain, but in obedience to a request or for charity, leaving the payment of wages entirely in the hands of their employers, and accepting it not as a just return for their labors but as a freely given alms. This is the perfection of sanctity which St. Joseph learned from the heavenly school of virtue which he had in his home. Owing to the fact that he was not paid for his work, it happened sometimes that they completely lacked food and sustenance until the Lord would provide for them. One day it came to pass that the hour set for their meal passed without having anything in the house to eat. They persevered in prayer until very late, giving thanks to the Lord for this privation, and hoping He would open his all-powerful hand (Ib. 16); meanwhile the holy Angels prepared the meal and placed upon the table some fruit, whitest bread, and fishes, along with a special sort of preserve or jelly of wonderful and nourishing sweetness. Then some of the Angels went to call their Queen, and others called St. Joseph her spouse. Each came forth from their separate retirement, and perceiving the regalement provided by heaven they offered their thanksgiving to the Most High in tears of fervent gratitude and partook of the food, and afterwards they broke out in exalted songs of praise of the Almighty.

434. Many other similar events came to pass almost daily in the house of most holy Mary and her spouse, for since they were alone and there was no need of hiding these wonders from witnesses the Lord did not hesitate to perform them for his beloved, who were entrusted with cooperation in the most wonderful of all the works of his powerful arm. I wish merely to remark that when I say the heavenly Lady sang canticles of praise, either She by Herself or in company with St. Joseph or the holy Angels, new songs are meant, such as Anne the mother of Samuel sang (I Kg. 2:1), or Moses (Dt. 32:1ff.; Ex. 15:1ff.), Ezechias (Is. 38:10), and other Prophets (Is. 12:1ff.) when they were visited by great blessings from the Lord. If all the canticles which the Queen of heaven composed and sang would have been recorded there would be a large volume of them, the contents of which would excite unheard-of wonder in this world.

TEACHING WHICH THE QUEEN HERSELF, OUR LADY, GAVE ME.

435. My much-beloved daughter, I desire the science of the Lord to be many times renewed in thee, and for thee to acquire the knowledge of the voice (Wis. 1:7),* so thou mayest know (and also let mortals know) the dangerous deceit and perverse estimation in which they, as lovers of falsehood, hold the temporal and visible goods (Ps. 4:4). Who is there among men who is not ensnared by the bewitching of unmeasured greed (Wis. 4:12)? All of them ordinarily stake their hopes on gold and material riches, and in order to increase them they exert all the forces of their natural being (Bar. 3:18). Hence in these vanities they spend all the time of their life, which was given to them in order to gain eternal rest and happiness. They lose themselves in these dark labyrinths and mazes as if they knew nothing of God and his divine Providence, for they do not think of asking Him for that which they desire, and do not moderate their desires in such a way as will dispose them to ask and hope for what they desire at his hands. Thus they lose all, because they confide in the lying and deceitful prospects of their own efforts (Ps. 48:7). This blind greed is the root of all evils (I Tim. 6:10), for the Lord, incensed at such great perversity, permits mortals to be entangled in the vile slavery of avarice, in which their understanding is darkened and their will hardened. And then for their greater chastisement the Most High casts them from his sight like abhorrent objects, and denies them his paternal protection, thus allowing them to fall into what is the deepest misfortune which can befall man in this life.

436. Although it is true that nobody can hide himself from the eyes of the Lord (Ps. 138:7ff.), yet when the prevaricators and enemies of his law offend Him, in such manner they turn away from themselves the loving gaze and attention of his divine Providence, and are left to their own desires (Ps. 80:13); they cease to experience the paternal foresight shown toward those who trust in the Lord. Those who confide in their own efforts and in the gold which they can touch and feel shall reap the fruit of their hopes (Ps. 48:7ff.). But just as far as the divine Being and infinite power are distant from the lowliness and limitation of mortals, so far also are the effects of human covetousness distant from the effects of the divine Providence of the Most High, who has constituted Himself as the Helper and Protector of the humble who trust in Him (Ps. 17:31; 32:18). Upon these His Majesty looks with kindest love, delights in them, nourishes them at his bosom, and attends to all their desires and cares. My holy spouse Joseph and I were poor, and at times we suffered great needs, but none of them were powerful enough to engender within our hearts the contagion of avarice. We concerned ourselves entirely with the glory of the Most High, relying wholly on his most faithful and tender care. This was what pleased Him so much, as thou hast understood and written, since He supplied our needs in various ways, even commanding the Angels to help us and prepare for us our nourishment.

437. I do not want to say that mortals should yield to laziness and negligence; on the contrary, it is just that all labor, and doing nothing is also a great and very reprehensible fault. Neither leisure nor solicitude should be disorderly, nor should the creature trust in his own strength, or smother divine love in anxiety (Lk. 8:14), or seek more than is necessary for a temperate life (Prov. 30:8). Neither should he fear that divine Providence will fail to supply what is necessary (Ecclus. 2:11), nor be troubled or lose hope when the Creator seems to delay his assistance. In the same way he that is in abundance must not lay aside all exertion and forget he is a man subject to labor and travail (Ib. 31:8). Thus riches as well as poverty must be attributed to God and made use of in a holy and legitimate way for the glory of the Creator and Ruler of all things.

* cf. *Introit*, Pentecost Sunday [Ed.]

If men would observe this rule of action no one would be without the assistance of the Lord, who is a true Father; neither would the poor be led into sin by poverty, nor the rich by prosperity. Of thee, my daughter, I require the practice of these rules, and through thee I desire to inculcate them upon other mortals. Thou must especially impress this doctrine upon all thy subjects, telling them not to be troubled or fainthearted because of the needs they suffer, nor inordinately solicitous about their food or clothing (Mt. 6:25), but rather confide in the Most High and in his divine Providence, for if they correspond to his love I assure them they shall never suffer from the lack of what is necessary. Exhort them also to let their words and conversations continually revolve around holy and divine things (I Peter 1:15), engaging in the praise and exaltation of the Lord according to the teachings of the Scriptures and holy writings. Let their conversation be in heaven (Philip. 3:20) with the Most High and with me, who am their Mother and Superior, and let it be with the Angels, imitating them in holy love.