

CHAPTER XIII

Mary Most Holy is Informed of the Will of the Lord that His Onlybegotten Son be Circumcised; She Confers about This with St. Joseph; the Most Holy Name of JESUS is Brought from Heaven.

513. From the moment the most prudent Virgin found Herself Mother by the Incarnation of the divine Word in her womb, She began to confer with Herself concerning the labors and sufferings in store for her sweetest Son. And since the knowledge She had of the Scriptures was so profound She understood all the mysteries contained therein, and began to foresee and prepare with incomparable compassion for all He was to suffer for the Redemption of man. This sorrow, foreseen and expected with such a full knowledge of details, was a prolonged martyrdom for the most meek Mother of the sacrificial Lamb of God (Jer. 11:19). But in regard to the Circumcision which was to take place after the birth of the Child the heavenly Lady had received no command or intimation of the will of the eternal Father. This uncertainty excited the loving solicitude and sweet complaints of the tender and affectionate Mother. Her prudent foresight enabled Her to conjecture that since her most holy Son had come to honor and confirm his law by fulfilling it (Mt. 5:17), and had moreover come in order to suffer for men (Mt. 20:28), He would be constrained by his burning love and by other motives to undergo the pains of circumcision.

514. On the other hand, her maternal love and compassion inclined Her to exempt her most sweet Child from this suffering if it was possible; She also knew circumcision was a rite instituted for cleansing the newborn children from original sin, whereas the Infant God was entirely free from this guilt, not having contracted it in Adam. In this hesitation between the love of her divine Son and obedience to the eternal Father the most prudent Virgin practiced many heroic acts of virtue, unspeakably pleasing to His Majesty. Although She could have easily escaped this uncertainty by directly asking the Lord what was to be done, yet being as humble as She was prudent She refrained. Neither would She ask her Angels, for with admirable wisdom She awaited the opportune time and occasion assigned by divine Providence for all things, and She would not presume curiously to search or pry into his decrees by consulting supernatural sources of information, especially in order to rid Herself of any suffering. When any grave and doubtful affair arose in which there was danger of offending God, or some urgent undertaking for the good of creatures in which it would be necessary to know the divine will, She first asked permission to submit her petition for enlightenment regarding the divine pleasure.

515. This does not conflict with what I said in Book Two, chapter X, namely that most holy Mary undertook nothing without asking permission and counsel of God, for this consultation concerning the divine pleasure was not coupled with the desire of special revelation. In this, as I have said, She was most discreet and diffident, rarely asking for such extraordinary intervention. Without aspiring to new revelation She was in the habit of consulting the habitual and supernatural aid of the Holy Ghost, who governed and guided Her in all her actions. In directing her faculties by this interior light She perceived the greater perfection and sanctity open to Her in the affairs and transactions of everyday life. Although it is true the Queen of heaven possessed special claims and rights to be informed of the will of God in different ways, yet since She was the model of all sanctity and discretion She would not avail Herself of this supernatural order and direction except in such cases as were appropriate. As for the rest She guided Herself by fulfilling to the letter the words of David: *As the eyes of the handmaid are on the hands of her mistress, so are our eyes unto the Lord our God, until He have mercy on us* (Ps. 122:2). But this

natural and ordinary light in the Mistress of the world was greater than that of all mortals together, and in it She sought the *fiat* of the divine will.

516. The mystery of the Circumcision required a special and particular dispensation; it demanded a separate enlightenment from the Lord, and for this the prudent Mother was waiting. In the meanwhile, addressing in these words the law that required it, She said: "O law, made for all, thou art just and holy; yet thou dost afflict my heart by thy hardness if thou art to wound Him who is thy life and thy true Master! For thee to inflict thy sufferings upon those who must be cleansed of guilt is just; but visiting with thy severity the Innocent, who is without fault (Heb. 7:26-7), seems the excess of rigor unless his own love authorizes thee! O would it might please my Beloved to exempt Himself from this punishment! But how shall He refuse to undergo it, since He came to seek pain, embrace the cross, and fulfill and accomplish the law (Mt. 5:17)? O cruel knife! Would thou couldst direct thy attacks upon my own life, and not upon the Lord who gave it to me! O my Son, sweet Love and Light of my soul, is it possible for Thee so soon to shed thy blood, which is more precious than heaven and earth? My loving compassion inclines me to hold Thee exempt from the common law from which Thou art excluded as its Author; yet the desire to fulfill it urges me to comply with it, leaving Thee a prey to its rigor, unless Thou, my sweet Life, art willing to change the decree and punish me instead. The human existence which Thou hast from Adam I, my Lord, have given Thee, but without its fault or guilt, and for this purpose didst thy omnipotence dispense me from the common law of contracting it. Since Thou art the Son of the eternal Father and the figure of his substance (Heb. 1:3), and since thy generation is eternal, Thou art infinitely removed from sin. Why then, my Lord, would Thou subject Thyself to the remedy provided for sin by the law? Yet I am aware, my Son, that Thou art the Teacher and Redeemer of men, and must confirm thy precepts by example; Thou shalt not yield the least point in this matter. O eternal Father, let the knife now lose its sharpness and the flesh its sensitivity! Let pain descend rather upon me, a vile wormlet; let thy onlybegotten Son fulfill the law, but let me alone feel the punishment. O inhuman and cruel sin, which so soon dost proffer the gall to Him who cannot be guilty of thee! O sons of Adam, abhor and fear sin, which for a remedy demands blood and pains from the Lord God himself!"

517. Such grief the sorrowful Mother mixed with the joy of seeing the Onlybegotten of the Father born of Her and resting in her arms, and thus She passed the days which remained before the Circumcision, being faithfully attended by St. Joseph, her most chaste spouse. To him alone She spoke of the Circumcision, yet only in few words and mixed with tears of compassion of them both. Before eight days after the birth were completed, the most prudent Queen placed Herself on her knees in the presence of the Lord and thus addressed Him: "Highest King, Father of my Lord, behold here thy slave with the true sacrifice and Victim in her hands (Eph. 5:2). My sighs and their cause are not unknown to thy wisdom (Ps. 37:10). I know, my Lord, what according to the law is thy pleasure and what must be done with thy Son. If by suffering much more rigorous pains I can rescue my Son and God, my heart is prepared (Ps. 56:8); yet I am likewise ready to see Him submit to circumcision if that is thy will."

518. The Most High answered Her, saying: "My Daughter and my Dove, let not thy Heart be afflicted because thy Son is to be subjected to the knife and to the pains of circumcision. I have sent Him into the world as an example, that He put an end to the law of Moses by entirely fulfilling it (Mt. 5:17). Though it is true the habitation of his humanity which Thou hast given Him as his natural Mother is to be violated, and his flesh wounded together with thy soul, yet remember He is my natural Son by eternal generation (Ps. 2:7), the image of my substance (Heb. 1:3), equal to Me in essence, majesty and glory (Jn. 10:30), and by thus delivering Himself to the

law and sacrament freeing from sin, without letting man know He is exempt therefrom (II Cor. 5:21), He suffers also in his honor. Thou knowest beforehand, my Daughter, Thou must reserve thy Onlybegotten and mine for this and other greater sufferings. Resign Thyself then to the shedding of his blood, and willingly yield to Me the first fruits of the eternal salvation of men.”

519. To this decree of the eternal Father the heavenly Lady, as the Cooperatrix of our salvation, conformed Herself with such a plenitude of all sanctity as is far beyond human understanding. With complete and most loving obedience She offered up her Onlybegotten, saying: “Supreme Lord and God, I offer to Thee this Victim and Host of acceptable sacrifice with all my heart, though I am full of compassion and sorrow that men have offended thy immense goodness in such a way as to force a God to make amends. Eternally shall I praise Thee for looking with such infinite love upon thy creatures, and for preferring to refuse pardon to thy own Son rather than hinder the salvation of men (Eph. 5:2). I, who by thy condescension am his Mother, must before all other mortals subject myself to thy pleasure, and therefore I offer to Thee the most meek Lamb (Rom. 8:32) who is to take away the sins of the world by his innocence (Jn. 1:29). But if it is possible to mitigate the pains caused by this knife at the expense of suffering in me, thy arm is mighty to effect this exchange.”

520. Most holy Mary issued from her prayer, and without manifesting to St. Joseph what She had understood therein, with rare prudence and most sweet reasoning advised him to arrange for the Circumcision of the Infant God (Lk. 2:21). She spoke to him as one consulting him and asking his opinion, for the time pointed out by the law for the Circumcision of the divine Infant had already arrived (Gen. 17:12), and since they had not received any orders to the contrary it seemed necessary to comply with it. They themselves, She said, were more bound to please the Most High, to obey more punctually his precepts, and to be more zealous in the love and care of his most holy Son than all the rest of creatures, seeking to fulfill in all things the divine pleasure in return for his incomparable favors. To these words St. Joseph answered with the greatest modesty and discretion, saying that since no command to the contrary had been given concerning the Child, he desired in all things to conform himself to the divine will manifested in the common law; that although the incarnate Word as God was not subject to the law, yet He was now clothed with our humanity, and as a most perfect Teacher and Savior no doubt desired to conform with other men in its fulfillment. Then he asked his heavenly Spouse how the Circumcision was to be executed.

521. Most holy Mary answered that the Circumcision should be performed substantially in the same way as it was performed on other children, but that She need not hand Him over or consign Him to any other person, but rather She herself would hold Him in her arms. And because the delicacy and tenderness of the Infant would make this ceremony more painful to Him than to other children, they should have at hand the soothing medicine which was ordinarily applied at circumcision. Moreover, She requested St. Joseph to procure a crystal or glass vessel for preserving the sacred relic of the Circumcision of the divine Infant. In the meanwhile the careful Mother prepared some linen cloths to catch the sacred blood which was now for the first time to be shed for our rescue, so not one drop of it would be lost or fall upon the ground. After these preparations the heavenly Lady asked St. Joseph to inform the priest and request him to come to the cave, where without the necessity of bringing the Child to any other place he could, as a fit and worthy minister of such a hidden and great sacrament, with his priestly hands perform the rite of Circumcision.

522. Then most holy Mary and St. Joseph took counsel concerning the name to be given to the divine Infant in Circumcision, and the holy spouse said: “My Lady, when the Angel of the Most

High informed me of this great sacrament he also told me thy most sacred Son would be called JESUS.” The Virgin Mother answered: “This same Name was revealed to me when He assumed flesh in my womb; and thus learning the Name by the mouth of the Most High through his ministers the Angels, it is appropriate for us to conform in humble reverence with the hidden and inscrutable judgments of his infinite wisdom in conferring it on my Son and Lord, and that we call Him JESUS. This Name we shall propose to the priest for inscription in the register of the other circumcised children.”

523. While the great Lady of heaven and St. Joseph thus conversed with each other, innumerable Angels descended in human forms from on high, clothed in shining white garments upon which were woven red embroideries of wonderful beauty. They had palms in their hands and crowns upon their heads, and emitted a greater splendor than many suns. In comparison with the beauty of these holy Princes all the loveliness seen in this world seems repulsive. But preeminent in splendor were the devices or escutcheons on their breasts, upon each of which the sweet Name of JESUS was engraved or embossed. The effulgence which each of these escutcheons emitted exceeded that of all the Angels together, and the variety of the beauty thus exhibited in this great multitude was so rare and exquisite as neither human tongue can express nor human imagination ever compass. The holy Angels divided into two choirs in the cave, keeping their gaze fixed upon the King and Lord in the arms of his virginal Mother. The chiefs of these heavenly cohorts were the two Princes, St. Michael and St. Gabriel, shining in greater splendor than the rest and bearing in their hands, as a special distinction, the most holy Name of JESUS, written in larger letters on something like cards of incomparable beauty and splendor.

524. The two Princes presented themselves apart from the rest before their Queen and said: “Lady, this is the Name of thy Son (Mt. 1:21) which was written in the mind of God *ab aeterno* and which the blessed Trinity has given to thy Onlybegotten and our Lord, with power to save the human race, establishing Him at the same time upon the throne of David (Is. 9:7). He shall reign upon it, chastise his enemies and triumph over them (Col. 2:15; Ps. 54:20), making them his footstool (Ps. 109:1) and passing judgment upon them (Ps. 9:9). He shall raise his friends to the glory of his right hand (Mt. 25:33). But all this is to happen at the cost of suffering and blood, and even now He is to shed it in receiving this Name, since it is that of the Savior and Redeemer; it shall be the beginning of his sufferings in obedience to the will of his eternal Father. We are come as ministering spirits of the Most High, appointed and sent by the Holy Trinity in order to serve the Onlybegotten of the Father and thy own in all the mysteries and sacraments of the law of grace. We are to accompany Him and minister to Him until He shall ascend triumphantly to the celestial Jerusalem and open the portals of heaven, and afterwards we shall enjoy a special accidental glory beyond that of the other Blessed to whom no such commission has been given.” All this was witnessed by the most prosperous spouse St. Joseph conjointly with the Queen of heaven, but his understanding of these happenings was not so deep as hers, for the Mother of Wisdom understood and comprehended the highest mysteries of the Redemption. Although St. Joseph understood many more mysteries than other mortals, yet he did not penetrate them in the same way as his heavenly Spouse. Both of them, however, were full of heavenly joy and admiration, and extolled the Lord in new canticles of glory. All they experienced in these various and wonderful events surpass human language and certainly my own powers, and I cannot find adequate words for expressing my thoughts.

INSTRUCTION GIVEN ME BY MARY MOST HOLY, OUR LADY.

525. My daughter, I desire to renew in thee the enlightened teaching which thou hast received so thou mayest communicate with thy Spouse with the highest reverence, for humility and reverential fear should increase in the soul in the same measure in which special and extraordinary favors are conferred upon it. Because they are not mindful of this truth many souls make themselves unworthy or incapable of great blessings; others, if they do receive them, fall prey to a dangerous and dull rudeness which offends the Lord very much. The loving sweetness with which the Lord often treats them engenders in them a certain presumption and disrespectful forwardness, causing them to deal with the infinite Majesty in an irreverent manner and with a vain desire of searching and inquiring into those hidden ways of God which are far above their comprehension and capacity. They fall into this presumption because they judge the familiar communication with God according to the imperfect insight of mortals, presuming to regulate it according to the friendly communication of men with each other.

526. But in this way of judging the soul is much deceived, measuring the reverence and respect due to the infinite Majesty by the familiarity and equality caused by the human love of mortals for one another. The rational creatures are by nature equal to each other, though the conditions and circumstances of each may be different, and the familiarity of human love and friendship may disregard the accidental differences in yielding to human feelings. But the love of God must ever be mindful of the immeasurable excellence of the infinite Being, since its object is as well the infinite goodness as the infinite majesty of God. Hence, because the goodness and majesty in God are inseparable, also reverence must not be separated from love of God in the creature. The light of divine faith must always go before, manifesting to the one who loves the greatness of the Object loved, awakening and fomenting reverential fear, restraining the exuberance of blind affections, and bridling them by the memory of the excellence and superiority of the Beloved.

527. If the creature is of a noble heart, practiced in and accustomed to holy and reverential fear, it is not in such danger of forgetting the respect due to the Most High, no matter how great the favors it receives, for it does not give itself up unreservedly to spiritual delights, and does not because of them lose the discreet consciousness of the supreme Majesty, but rather respects and reverences Him in proportion to the greatness of his divine love and enlightenment. With such souls the Lord converses as one friend with another (Ex. 33:11). Therefore let it be to thee, my daughter, an inviolable rule that the closer the embraces and the greater the delights with which the Most High visits thee, so much the more unremitting shall be the consciousness of his immutable and infinite Majesty, extolling and loving Him at one and the same time. In this wise consciousness thou shalt learn to know and estimate more fittingly the greatness of his favors, and avoid the dangerous presumption of those who lightly inquire into the secrets of the Lord at each trivial or even important event, imagining his most prudent providence should pay attention to or regard the vain curiosity excited by some passion, disorder, or human and reprehensible affection far removed from holy zeal and love.

528. Take notice of the cautiousness with which I proceeded in my duties, since when it comes to finding grace in the eyes of the Lord a vast difference always remains between the efforts of other creatures and my own. Nevertheless, though I held in my arms God himself as his true Mother, I never presumed to ask Him to explain to me anything whatsoever by extraordinary revelation, neither for the sake of knowing it or of ridding myself of suffering, nor for any other merely human reason, for all this would have been human weakness, vain curiosity, or reprehensible vice, none of which could find room in me. Whenever necessity urged it upon me

for the glory of His Majesty, or the occasion made it unavoidable, I asked permission to propose my desires. Although I always found Him most propitious, ready to answer me with kindness and mercifully urging me to declare my desires, I nevertheless humiliated myself to the dust and merely asked Him to inform me of what was most pleasing and acceptable in his eyes.

529. Write this doctrine in thy heart, my daughter, and guard thyself against the disorderly and curious desire of searching into or knowing anything above the powers of the human intellect, for besides the fact that the Lord makes no response to such foolish inquiry because it displeases Him very much, remember the demon is the real author of this fault in those who are pursuing the spiritual life. Since he is ordinarily the author of such blameworthy inquiries, astutely promoting them in the soul, he also satisfies its curiosity by answering them himself, at the same time assuming the appearance of an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14), thus deceiving the imperfect and the unwary. When such inquisitiveness arises from one's own natural inclination, one must be equally careful not to follow or attend to it, for in what concerns such high matters as familiar treatment with the Lord one must not follow one's own opinion or reason, these being hampered by one's own appetites and passions. Infected and depraved nature has been thrown into great disorder by sin, and is subject to much confusion and excess, making it unfit for guidance and direction in the high things of God. Equally wrong is it for the soul to rely on divine revelations in order to free itself from suffering and labor, for the spouses of Christ and his true servants must not seek his favors for the purpose of avoiding the cross but in order to seek and bear it with the Lord (Mt. 16:24), abandoning oneself to the sufferings given according to his divine disposition. This course of action I desire thee to maintain in humble fear, and to go to extremes in this regard in order to avoid so much the more securely the opposite fault. From now on I desire thee to perfect all thy motives and undertakings by divine love (Philip. 1:9) as being the great end of all thy undertakings. In this thou hast no need to observe degree or measure; on the contrary, I desire thee to create in thyself an excess of love accompanied by the degree of holy fear as shall suffice to keep thee from transgressing the law of the Most High, and to perform all thy exterior and interior acts in rectitude. Be careful and diligent therein, even if it costs thee much exertion and pain, for I have endured these in the Circumcision of my most holy Son, and for no other reason than because in his holy law this was manifested and intimated to me as the will of the Lord (Gen. 17:12), whom we must in all things fully obey.