

CHAPTER XII

What was Hidden from the Demon Regarding the Mystery of the Birth of the Incarnate Word, and Other Happenings until the Circumcision.

500. As far as depended upon the Lord the coming of the eternal Word made man was most fortunate and blessed for all mortals, for He came in order to give light and life to all those who were *in darkness, and in the shadow of death* (Lk. 1:79). If the foreknown and incredulous stumbled and hurt themselves on this cornerstone (Rom. 9:33; Mt. 21:44; I Peter 2:8), seeking ruin where they could and should have found resurrection to an eternal life, that was not the fault of the stone but of those who made of it an occasion of scandal and harm to themselves. Only for hell was the birth of the infant God terrible, since He was the strong and invincible One (Ps. 23:8) who came to despoil that armed enemy of his tyrannical rule (Jn. 12:31), founded in lies, who had held his fortification in unjust yet peaceful possession for a long time (Lk. 11:21). In order to depose this prince of the world and of darkness it was proper for the sacrament of the coming of the Word to be hidden from him; for not only was he unworthy because of his malice to know the mysteries of infinite wisdom, but it was just that by divine Providence the malice of this enemy be blinded and confused (Wis. 2:21), since in his malice he had brought into the world the deceit and blindness of sin (Ib. 24), and had cast down the whole human race by the fall of Adam (Rom. 5:12).

501. Accordingly Lucifer and his ministers were left in ignorance of many things which they could naturally have known concerning the Nativity of the incarnate Word and other events in the course of his most holy life, a fact of which it is necessary to take notice in this History (*Inc.* 326; *Tran.* 217, 226, 284, etc.); for if he had known for certain that Christ was true God, he evidently would not have procured his death (I Cor. 2:8), but would have sought to prevent it as will be said in its proper place (*Tran.* 494, 540, 613). Concerning the mystery of the Nativity he knew only that most holy Mary had given birth to a Son in poverty and in a forsaken cave, and that She had not even found lodging and shelter; also that the Child was circumcised and otherwise treated as a mere man, all of which was designed rather to mislead his pride than to enlighten it. Yet he did not know the manner of his birth, or that the happy Mother had remained a Virgin before and after; neither did he know of the message of the Angels to the just and the shepherds, or their conversations and adoration of the infant God. He did not see the star, nor did he know the purpose of the holy Magi Kings in coming to Bethlehem, and though he saw them make the journey he judged it as being for other temporal ends. Neither could the demons fathom the cause of the alteration in the elements, stars and planets, though they saw these changes and effects. The purpose of the visit of the Magi to Herod, and the conversation they held with him, were hidden from them, along with their arrival at the cave, their adoration, and the gifts offered. Although they knew the fury of Herod against the children and abetted it, yet at that time they did not understand his depraved intention, though they fomented his cruelty. Even though Lucifer suspected that Herod was seeking to kill the Messiah, he considered him demented and treated him with derision; in his pride he obstinately held fast to the opinion that the Word upon entering into the world in order to set up his dominion would not come humbly and in a hidden

manner, but with ostentatious power and majesty, while in reality the infant God chose a far different way,* being born of a Mother poor and despised by men.

502. In this error Lucifer, having recognized some of the strange events which happened at the Nativity, called together his ministers in hell and said to them: "I do not find cause to fear the events which we have noticed in the world, because the Woman whom we have persecuted so much, though She has given birth to a Son, yet this has happened in total poverty, and so unknown that She could not even find a lodging place where She could give birth. We all well know how far this is from the power and greatness of God. If He is to advance against us as weak as He has demonstrated to us and as we have understood, He certainly has not the strength to resist our power. There is no need to fear He is the Messiah, especially seeing He was circumcised like the rest of men; this does not indicate He has come for the purpose of being the Savior of the world, since He needs to atone for his own fault. All these signs are contrary to the intentions of the coming of God into the world, and therefore it seems to me we can be assured that He has not yet come."[†] The ministers of malice approved of the decision of their chastised leader and were satisfied the Messiah had not yet come, for they were all accomplices in the malice and pride which blinded him (Wis. 2:21). It was inconceivable to Lucifer in his vanity and implacable pride that God, in his majesty and grandeur, would humble himself; and since Lucifer craved applause, ostentation, reverence and exaltation, and if possible obtain that all creatures adore him, obliging them to do so, it was therefore unimaginable in his judgment that God, being almighty to work his will, would consent to the contrary and subject Himself to humility, which Lucifer so much abhorred.

503. O sons of vanity! What examples are here given to you for your enlightenment! Great is the lesson which the humility of Christ, our Teacher and our highest Good, teaches and urges upon us. But if this does not move us, at least let the pride of Lucifer deter and frighten us. O vice, O sin, dreadful beyond human imagination, since it confused an angel of such high intellect so much that he could judge the infinite bounty by no other standard than that by which he judged himself and his own malicious disposition! Hence what shall happen to man, who of himself is ignorant, if to this he joins pride and guilt? O unhappy and most foolish Lucifer! How wrong wert thou regarding an event so full of reason and beauty! What is more lovable than humility and meekness joined with majesty and power? Vile creature, why dost thou ignore the fact that not knowing how to humble thyself is weakness of judgment and is born from a base heart? He who is magnanimous and truly great does not seek to pay himself with vanity, nor does he crave what is so vile, nor can he be satisfied with what is false and apparent. It is manifest that regarding truth thou art tenebrous and blind, and a most darksome guide for the blind (Mt. 15:14), since thou didst fail to understand that the grandeur and goodness of divine love manifested and magnified itself by humility and obedience even to the death of the cross (Philip. 2:8; Rom. 5:8-9).

504. All the errors and insanity of Lucifer and his ministers were observed by our Lady, the Mother of Wisdom, and with worthy consideration of such high mysteries She confessed and blessed the Lord because He had concealed them from the proud and arrogant and revealed them to the poor and humble (Mt. 11:25), thus beginning to overcome the tyranny of the demons. The most kind Mother offered up fervent prayers and petitions for all mortals who, because of their own sins, were unworthy of seeing the light which for their remedy had been born into the world

* cf. Is. 55:8-9 [Ed.]

† cf. *Transfixion* 50 [Ed.]

(Jn. 1:9-10), and all this She presented to her most sweet Son with incomparable compassion and love for sinners. In these affections She spent most of the time of her stay in the grotto of the Nativity. Yet since this place was bare of all comfort and much exposed to the inclemencies of the weather, the great Lady was most solicitous for the shelter of her tender and sweet Infant. As a most prudent Mother She had brought along a mantle with which She covered Him in addition to the ordinary swaddling clothes; moreover, She held Him continually in the embrace of her sacred arms, except at times when in order to make St. Joseph happy She asked him to hold his incarnate God in his arms and serve him as a father.

505. The first time the holy spouse received the infant God in his arms, most holy Mary said to him: "My spouse and helper, receive in thy arms the Creator of heaven and earth, and enjoy his amiable and sweet company, so my Lord and God may receive in thy benevolence his regalements and delights (Prov. 8:31). Receive the Treasure of the eternal Father, and participate in this blessing of the human race." And speaking interiorly with the infant God She said: "Sweetest Love of my soul and Light of my eyes, rest in the arms of thy servant and friend Joseph, my spouse; receive from him thy delights, and through them overlook my shortcomings. Much do I feel being without Thee even for one instant, yet to whomever is worthy I desire to communicate without envy (Wis. 7:13) the good I have truly received." Her most faithful spouse, acknowledging this new happiness, humbled himself to the earth and answered: "Lady and Queen of the world, my Spouse, how can I, being unworthy, dare to take into my arms God himself, in whose presence the pillars of heaven tremble (Job 26:11)? How can this vile wormlet have courage to accept such an extraordinary favor? I am but dust and ashes (Gen. 18:27); but do Thou, Lady, make up for my littleness, and ask His Majesty to look upon me with clemency and dispose me by his grace."

506. Between the desire of holding the divine Infant and the reverential fear which detained the holy spouse, St. Joseph made heroic acts of love, faith, humility, and most profound reverence. With this disposition, and a most prudent trembling, he fell on his knees to receive Him from the hands of his most holy Mother, while sweetest tears of joy and delight copiously flowed from his eyes at a happiness so extraordinary. The divine Infant gazed upon him with an affectionate countenance, and at the same time renewed his inmost soul with such divine efficacy as no words can suffice to explain. St. Joseph broke out in new canticles of praise at seeing himself thus enriched with such magnificent blessings and favors. After having for some time enjoyed in spirit the sweetest effects of holding in his arms the Lord who contains heaven and earth (Is. 40:12; 48:13), he replaced Him into the arms of his happy Mother, both of them being on their knees in receiving and giving Him. Similar reverence the most prudent Mother observed every time She took Him up or relinquished Him, and St. Joseph imitated Her as often as it was his happy lot to hold the incarnate Word. When they approached His Majesty they also made three genuflections, kissing the earth and exciting heroic acts of humility, worship and reverence. Thus both the great Queen and blessed St. Joseph observed all propriety in receiving or giving the divine Child to one another.

507. When the heavenly Mother judged it time to nourish Him at her breast She reverently asked permission of her Son, for though She knew She was to nourish Him as her true and human Child, She nevertheless bore in mind that He was at the same time the true God and Lord, and that a great distance intervened between the infinite Being and a mere creature such as She was. As this consciousness was unailing in the most prudent Virgin, her reverence remained faultless and undiminished, permitting not the least forgetfulness in Her. She was always filled with a comprehensive insight, and always reached perfection in all her acts. Therefore She

nourished, served and watched over her Child not with an uneasy haste, but with unremitting care, reverence and discretion, causing ever new admiration in the Angels, whose celestial understanding reached not so far as to comprehend such heroic acts of a tender Maiden. Since they were always corporally present during the time which She spent at the grotto of the Nativity, they served and administered to Her all things necessary for the service of the infant God and the Mother herself. All these mysteries are so wonderful and admirable, and so worthy of our attention and remembrance, that we cannot deny our negligence in forgetting them, and we cannot acknowledge sufficiently what harm we are doing to ourselves in ceasing to think of them, nor do we sufficiently understand the divine effects which the memory of them produce in the faithful and grateful children of the Church.

508. By the intelligence which has been given me concerning the veneration with which most holy Mary and the glorious St. Joseph treated the infant incarnate God, and the reverence of the angelic choirs toward Him, I could greatly extend this discourse on the subject. Though I refrain, yet I wish to confess the lack of reverence with which I have until now audaciously behaved toward God, and how many faults of which I have been guilty toward Him in this respect have become known to me. In order to assist the Queen all the holy Angels of her guard remained present in visible forms from the time of the Nativity until they accompanied the Child into Egypt, as I shall relate later on (619ff.). The solicitude of the humble and loving Mother for her divine Infant was so unremitting that She would not part with Him to place Him in the arms of St. Joseph or the holy princes Michael and Gabriel except on rare occasions when She was obliged to take some nourishment, for these two Archangels had besought Her to consign the Child to their care during meals or when St. Joseph was at his work. Thus He was placed into the hands of the Angels in admirable fulfillment of the words of David (Ps. 90:12): *In their hands they shall bear thee up*, etc. The most watchful Mother would not take any sleep in her solicitude for her most holy Son except when His Majesty commanded Her to do so. In reward for her diligence He provided for Her a new and more miraculous kind of sleep than what She had until then enjoyed, for while She slept her Heart was awake, continuing or rather not interrupting the divine intelligences and contemplation of the Divinity. But from this day on the Lord added still another miracle, namely during the sleep which was necessary She retained in her arms the power of holding and embracing the Child in the same way as if She was awake, and She gazed upon Him with the eyes of her intellect as if She was looking upon Him with her bodily eyes, understanding all that She herself and her Child did exteriorly in the meanwhile. Thus was miraculously fulfilled what is said in the Canticles (5:2): *I sleep, and my heart watcheth*.

509. The canticles of praise and exaltation of the Lord which our celestial Queen composed in honor of the Child, alternately singing them with the holy Angels and with her spouse Joseph, I cannot express by my curtailed expressions and limited terms of speech. Regarding them alone there would be much to write, for they were uninterrupted; however, the knowledge of them is reserved for the special enjoyment of the elect. Among mortals the most happy and privileged in this regard was the most faithful St. Joseph, for in many of them he himself participated and many of them he understood. Besides this he enjoyed another favor of singular benefit and consolation to his soul and procured for him by the most prudent Virgin, namely many times in conversing with him of the Child She spoke of Him as “our Son” (Lk. 2:48); not that He was the natural son of St. Joseph, since in the supernatural order He was the Son of the eternal Father and in the natural order the Son of his Virgin Mother, but because in the opinion of men He was reputed to be the son of Joseph. This favor and privilege was of inestimable value to the Saint

and caused him immeasurable delight; for this reason his heavenly Spouse delighted in using this appellation when conversing about her Son.

*INSTRUCTION WHICH THE QUEEN AND
LADY OF HEAVEN GAVE ME.*

510. My daughter, I see thee full of devout emulation of the happiness which the conversation with my Son gave to me, to my spouse, and to the holy Angels, since we beheld Him present to our bodily eyes as thou dost desire for thyself if it were possible. I desire to console thee and guide thy affections toward that which thou thyself can and should do according to thy condition in order to attain the same happiness which thou dost covet in us. Take notice then, beloved, what thou hast thus far been able to know concerning the different ways by which God raises up in his Church the souls whom He loves and seeks with paternal affection. Thou hast attained this knowledge by being favored with so many particular calls and enlightenments of the Lord whereby He continually waits at the door of thy heart (Wis. 6:15; Apoc. 3:20), calling thee and waiting so long, urging thee by repeated favors and exalted doctrine in order to teach thee and secure for thee the close bond of his love (Col. 3:14) and conversation for which He has in his condescension disposed and chosen thee, and expecting thee to procure by most attentive solicitude the great purity which this vocation requires.

511. Nor canst thou ignore, since faith teaches thee, that God is everywhere by his presence, essence, and the power of his divinity, and that to Him are open all thy thoughts, desires and groanings, without anything being hidden from Him. And if according to this truth thou dost labor as a faithful servant to preserve the grace thou dost receive by means of the holy Sacraments, and by other channels provided by divine disposition, the Lord shall also remain with thee by divine and special assistance, and in it He shall regale thee with his love as his chosen spouse. Since thou knowest and understandest all these truths, then tell me, what remains for thee to desire or yearn after, when thou dost already possess the fullness of what thou dost anxiously sigh for? What remains for thee, and what I desire of thee, is to labor by this holy emulation to imitate the conversation and condition of the angels, the purity of my spouse, and to copy in thyself the pattern of my life, as far as possible, in order to be a fit dwelling place of the Most High (I Cor. 3:17). All those endeavors, desires and exertions with which thou wouldst have wished thyself to be animated if thou hadst seen and adored my most holy Son in his birth and infancy thou must direct toward the fulfillment of this doctrine, for if thou shalt imitate me thou mayest rest secure thou hast me for a Teacher and the Lord for an assured possession of thy soul. In this assurance thou canst speak to Him, embrace Him, and delight thyself with Him, since thou hast Him present with thee; for in order to communicate these delights to the pure and untainted souls He has assumed human flesh and become a Child. But always look upon Him as the great God, though a Child, so thy caresses can be guarded by reverence and thy love accompanied by holy fear, for the one is due to Him as God and the other befits his immense bounty and merciful magnificence.

512. In this manner of treatment thou must continue without intervals of lukewarmness, lest thou disgust Him.* Thy legitimate and chosen occupation should be none other than the love and praise of his infinite Being. All the rest thou must enter into only sparingly, in such a way as if visible and earthly things scarcely concerned thee and cannot detain thee even for a moment. In

* cf. Apoc. 3:16 [Ed.]

this soaring flight thou must consider thou hast nothing urgent to attend to outside of the true and highest Good whom thou seekest. Thou must imitate me, and for God alone must thou live; all the rest must not exist for thee, nor must thou exist for it. But the gifts and blessings which thou dost receive I desire thee to dispense and communicate for the benefit of thy neighbor according to the order of perfect charity, that by doing so thy gifts may not become void (I Cor. 13:8), but rather more augmented. In this thou must preserve thy manner of proceeding according to what is appropriate for thy condition and state, as in other places I have shown and instructed thee.