

CHAPTER XI

How the Holy Angels Announced in Diverse Places the Birth of Our Savior, and the Shepherds Come to Adore Him.

489. After the courtiers of heaven had thus celebrated the birth of God made man in the cave at Bethlehem, some of them were immediately dispatched to different places in order to announce the happy news to those who according to the divine will were properly disposed to hear it. The holy prince Michael went to the holy Fathers in limbo and announced to them the Onlybegotten of the eternal Father, made man in the womb of the Virgin Mary, was already born into the world, and humble and meek as they had prophesied was in a manger among animals (Is. 1:3). He spoke in a special manner to Sts. Joachim and Anne in the name of the happy Mother, who had enjoined this upon him. He congratulated them that their Daughter now held in her arms the Desired of nations foretold by all the Patriarchs and Prophets (Is. 7:14; 9:7; Mich. 5:2; Jer. 23:6; Ez. 34:10, 23; Dan. 9:24; Ag. 2:8; Acts 10:43). It was the most consoling and joyful day which this great gathering of the just and the saints had yet experienced during their long banishment. All of them acknowledged anew the true God made man as the Author of eternal salvation, and they composed and sang new canticles of adoration and worship in his praise. Sts. Joachim and Anne enjoined the messenger of heaven, St. Michael, to ask Mary their Daughter to worship in their name the divine Child, the blessed fruit of her womb, and this the great Queen of the world immediately did for them, listening with great jubilation to all the holy Prince reported concerning the Patriarchs of limbo.

490. Another of the holy Angels who attended and guarded the heavenly Mother was sent to St. Elizabeth and her son John. Upon hearing this news of the birth of the Redeemer the prudent matron and her son, though he was yet of so tender an age, prostrated themselves upon the earth and adored their God made man in spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). The child, who had been consecrated as his Precursor, was renewed interiorly with a spirit more inflamed than that of Elias, causing new admiration and jubilation in the Angels themselves. St. John and his mother requested of our Queen, through the medium of the Angels, that She in the name of them both adore her most holy Son and offer Him their services, all of which the celestial Queen immediately fulfilled.

491. Having received this news St. Elizabeth immediately sent one of her domestics to Bethlehem with presents for the happy Mother of the Infant God, consisting of some money, linen, and other things for the comfort of the newborn Child, his poor Mother, and her spouse. He left with no other instruction than he visit her cousin and Joseph and take notice of what comfort or need was theirs so he could bring back certain information regarding their circumstances and wellbeing. He had no other knowledge of the sacrament except what he himself could perceive with his own eyes; however, amazed and touched by a divine force he came back interiorly renewed and with admirable joy he described to St. Elizabeth the poverty and charming grace of her Cousin, of the Child, and of St. Joseph, and the effects which upon beholding them he had felt. Admirable were the sentiments roused in the well-disposed heart of the pious matron by his sincere narration; and if the divine will had not intervened to safeguard the secrecy and lowliness of such an exalted sacrament, she could not have restrained herself from visiting the Virgin Mother and the newborn Infant God. Of the things sent by her the Queen appropriated some for relieving their extreme poverty, while She distributed the rest of them to

the poor, for She did not wish to be deprived of their company during the days in which She would need to remain in the grotto or cave of the Nativity.

492. Other Angels were delegated to bring the news to Zacharias, Simeon, and the prophetess Anne, and to some other just and holy people who were worthy to be trusted with this new mystery of our Redemption, for since the Lord found them prepared to receive this news with praise and fruit for themselves, He considered it a debt owed to their virtue not to hide from them the blessing conferred upon the human race. Even though not all the just upon earth were informed at that time of this sacrament, yet in all of them were wrought certain divine effects in the hour in which the Savior of the world was born, for all the just felt in their hearts a new and supernatural joy, though they were ignorant of its cause. Not only were there movements of joy in the angels and the just, but also wonderful movements in the insensible creatures, for all the influences of the planets were renovated and enlivened. The sun much hastened its course, the stars shone in greater brightness, and for the Magi Kings was formed that wonderful star which showed them the way to Bethlehem (Mt. 2:2). Many trees began to bloom and others to produce fruit. Some temples of the idols were destroyed, and other idols fell and the demons left them. These wonders and other happenings in the world on that day men accounted for in different ways, but far from the truth. Only among the just were there many who by divine impulse suspected or believed that God had come into the world, yet no one knew it with certainty except those to whom it was revealed. Among these were the three Magi, to each of whom in their separate Oriental kingdoms Guardian Angels of the Queen were sent to inform them by interior and intellectual enlightenment that the Redeemer of the human race had been born in poverty and humility. At the same time they were inspired with the sudden desire of seeking Him and adoring Him, and immediately they saw the star as a guide to Bethlehem, as I shall relate farther on.

493. Among all these the shepherds of that region who were watching their flocks at the time of the birth of Christ were especially blessed (Lk. 2:8), not only because they accepted the labor and inconvenience of their calling from the hand of God with resignation, but also being poor, humble, and despised by the world they belonged in sincerity and uprightness of heart to those Israelites who fervently hoped and longed for the coming of the Messiah, speaking and discoursing about Him among themselves many times. They resembled the Author of life since they were removed from the riches, vanity and ostentation of the world, and were far from its diabolical cunning. They exhibited in the circumstances of their calling the office which the Good Shepherd had come to fulfill in knowing his sheep (Jn. 10:14) and being known by them; thus they merited to be called and invited as the first fruits of the saints by the Savior himself, and the very first ones to whom the eternal and incarnate Word manifested Himself and by whom He wished to be praised, served and adored. For this purpose the archangel St. Gabriel himself was sent to them, and finding them keeping their night watches he appeared to them in human form and with great splendor (Lk. 2:9).

494. The shepherds found themselves suddenly enveloped and bathed in the celestial radiance of the Angel, and at his sight, being little versed in such visions, they were filled with great fear. The holy Prince reassured them and said (Ib. 10-12): “Ye sincere men, *fear not; I bring you tidings of great joy, which is for you this day is born the Savior, who is Christ our Lord, in the city of David.* And to thee is given as a sign of this truth: *You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger.*” At these words of the holy Archangel there suddenly appeared a great multitude of the heavenly army, who with sweet voices and harmony praised the Most High, saying: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will* (Ib.

13-14). Repeating this divine canticle, so new to the world, the holy Angels disappeared. All this happened in the fourth watch of the night. By this angelic vision the humble and fortunate shepherds were filled with divine enlightenment and were unanimously impelled by a fervent longing to make certain of this blessing and witness with their own eyes the most exalted mystery of which they had been informed.

495. The signs which the holy Angel had indicated to them did not seem appropriate or proportioned for testifying to the greatness of the newborn Babe to eyes of the flesh, for to lie in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes would not have been convincing proof of the majesty of a king if these shepherds had not been inundated with divine light by which they were illumined and taught. Since they were devoid of arrogance and worldly wisdom they were easily instructed in divine wisdom. Conferring among themselves regarding the thoughts excited by this message, they resolved to go with all speed to Bethlehem and see the wonder which they had heard from the Lord (Ib. 15). They departed without delay, and entering the cave or grotto they found, as the Evangelist St. Luke tells us (Ib. 16), *Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger*. Seeing all this they recognized the truth of what they had heard regarding the Child. Upon this followed an interior enlightenment consequent upon seeing the Word made flesh, for when the shepherds looked upon Him He also glanced at them, emitting from his countenance a great effulgence which wounded with love the sincere heart of each of these poor yet fortunate men. With divine efficacy it changed and renewed them, constituting them in a new state of grace and sanctity, and filling them with an exalted knowledge of the divine mysteries of the Incarnation and Redemption of the human race.

496. Prostrating themselves on the earth they adored the Word made flesh. Not any more as ignorant rustics, but as wise and prudent men they adored Him, acknowledging and magnifying Him as true God and man, and the Restorer and Redeemer of the human race. The heavenly Lady and Mother of the Child took notice of all they did interiorly and exteriorly, for She saw into their inmost hearts. In highest wisdom and prudence She preserved the memory of all these happenings and pondered them in her Heart (Ib. 19), comparing them with the other mysteries therein contained and with the holy prophecies and sayings of the Holy Scriptures. Since She was then the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost and the representative of the Infant, She spoke to the shepherds, instructing and exhorting them to persevere in divine love and in the service of the Most High. They also conversed with Her on their part and showed by their answers they understood many of the mysteries. They remained in the cave from the beginning of dawn until midday, when having given them something to eat our great Queen sent them off full of heavenly grace and consolation.

497. During the days in which most holy Mary, the Infant God, and St. Joseph remained in the grotto of Bethlehem, these holy shepherds returned a few times and brought such presents as in their poverty they could obtain. What St. Luke says about those who wondered at what the shepherds said concerning the Holy Family (Ib. 18) happened later, after the Queen with the Infant and St. Joseph had departed and fled from the neighborhood of Bethlehem, for divine Providence so arranged things that the shepherds were unable to spread this news before that time. Not all of those who heard them speaking about this matter believed them, for they held them to be uncultured and ignorant people; however, these shepherds were saints and were filled with divine knowledge until they died. Among those who believed them was Herod, though not due to any laudable faith or piety but because of his worldly and wicked fear of losing his kingdom. Among the children he killed there were also some belonging to these holy men who

had merited this great happiness. These parents offered them with joy for martyrdom, which the children themselves desired,* and to suffering for the Lord whom they knew.

*INSTRUCTION OF THE QUEEN OF
HEAVEN, MARY MOST HOLY.*

498. My daughter, the forgetfulness and little notice of mortals regarding the works of their Repairer are as reprehensible as they are ordinary and common among mortals, these works being most mysterious and full of love, mercy and instruction for them. Thou hast been called and chosen to receive knowledge and enlightenment for avoiding such dangerous sluggishness and rudeness; therefore regarding the mysteries of which thou hast just written I desire thee to take notice of and ponder over the burning love of my most holy Son in communicating Himself to men as soon as He was born, in order to make them immediate partakers of the joyful fruit of his coming. Men do not know of this obligation because few of them penetrate into the significance of this great blessing, just as there were few who saw the Word at his birth and thanked Him for his arrival. They are ignorant of the cause of their unhappiness and blindness, which neither was nor is to be ascribed to the Lord nor to his love, but to the sins and bad dispositions of men themselves. If their evil state had not impeded or demerited it, the same light which was given to the just, to the shepherds, and to the three Kings would have been vouchsafed to all or to many; that there were so few shall make thee understand in what an unhappy state the world was at the time of the coming of the incarnate Word, and also the unhappiness of the present times, when these mysteries have become so evident and when grateful memory of them has become so scarce.

499. Consider the wicked disposition of mortals in the present age, in which the light of the Gospel has been spread out and confirmed by so many miracles wrought by God in his Church. In spite of all this there are so few who are perfect and who seek to dispose themselves for greater participation in the fruits and benefits of the Redemption. Though the number of fools is so great (Eccles. 1:15) and vices have become so measureless, there are those who think the perfect are also numerous because men do not so openly dare to act in opposition to God; there are not as many as one thinks, and many fewer than there should be, seeing God is so much offended by the infidels and continually desires to communicate the treasures of grace in his Church according to the merits of his Onlybegotten made man. Take notice then, dearest, of the obligation imposed upon thee by thy clear knowledge of these truths. Live cautiously, and with great attention and watchfulness correspond to his graces, losing no time, occasion or circumstance for acting in the most holy and perfect manner known to thee, for thou canst not fulfill thy duty otherwise. Remember what I tell thee, command thee, and urge upon thee, not to receive such singular favor in vain (II Cor. 6:1). Do not idly possess grace and light, but make use of them in the perfection of gratitude.

* cf. *Incarnation* 674 [Ed.]